

## Gender and *Radiance*

Described by director, Rachel Perkins, as 'the first Aboriginal film to have jokes in it'<sup>1</sup> *Radiance*<sup>2</sup> was released in both mainstream and art-house cinemas across Australia. Audiences at the 1998 Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra film festivals voted the film the most popular that year. In addition to drawing critical acclaim at Cannes and other international film festivals,<sup>3</sup> *Radiance* received six Australian Film Institute (AFI) nominations including for best actress (won by Deborah Mailman for her role as Nona), best director and best film.

*Radiance* tells the story of Mae, Cressy and Nona, who have come together at the family home for the first time in many years. Gathered to bury their mother, the sisters explore their memories and relationships with each other, including a secret that will change these forever.

Mae (played by Trisha Morton-Thomas), emotionally and sexually repressed, has remained at home to take care of her mother in her old age. Her somewhat bitter sense of humour and general prudishness masks her loneliness, anger and sense of displacement. Aware that the house, rather than being 'theirs'<sup>4</sup> as Nona (played by Deborah Mailman) believes, is about to be repossessed by Harry Wells, their mother's former lover, Mae fantasises about burning it down before Harry evicts them. When her more mobile sisters Cressy (played by Rachel Maza) and Nona return to bury their mother, the house acts as a 'setting for, and the substance of, domestic theatre'<sup>5</sup> and the sister's storytelling. Cressy embraces Mae's 'crazy' plan to burn the house down because she, like Mae, has deeply negative associations with it. In contrast, Nona, romantic and gregarious, is pregnant and plans to have her baby in this, her beloved childhood home.

Nona is determined to scatter their mother's ashes on her ancestral 'home,' the nearby island, now a Japanese tourist resort. Nona seeks to bring her sisters with her, but it becomes ultimately her personal journey when Cressy reveals that she, and not what is now ashes in the *Radiance* licorice tin, is Nona's mother. Raped under the house by one of her mother's boyfriends at the age of twelve, Cressy has spent her life as far from the house and her family as possible. A successful international opera singer, she maintains the pretence that she is Nona's sister until she can no longer bear Nona's fantasising about her unknown father, whom Nona refers to as the 'black prince.'

As Nona runs from this revelation, the family home burns to the ground, set on fire by Mae and Cressy. It is the symbolic burning of

their unhappy pasts. Having finally made it to the island, Nona scatters her 'mother's' ashes before returning to the mainland, where she finds her sisters, now on the run, waiting for her in a car. Reconciled by the shared knowledge of the past, the three drive together into the distance. Nona's trip to the island and the sisters' united departure from their childhood home indicate their newfound connection with the mother's ancestral place and the form of home they have found through togetherness.

*Radiance*'s version of home links Aboriginal connectedness and the return to place, with the maternal and the effort to connect past and present Aboriginalities. Like all forms of home and togetherness, however, the home of *Radiance* has an exclusionary dimension. In this article, I suggest that it is Aboriginal masculinity which is most conspicuously left out of togetherness as this is constructed in the film. *Radiance* leaves (the predominantly white)<sup>6</sup> audiences with one image of Aboriginal men. In what follows, I endeavour to show how, in its gendered depiction of home and togetherness, *Radiance* portrays Aboriginal masculinity as a threat to Aboriginal women's sense of wholeness and belonging. Referring to a series of other exclusions, I explore the film's resistance to the idea that whiteness is the primary destructive force in Aboriginal lives.

The argument that it is whiteness—and not Aboriginal masculinity—which most negatively impacts on Aboriginal women, has recently been advanced from several quarters. Both Dundi Mitchell<sup>7</sup> and Deborah Bird Rose<sup>8</sup> for example, have noted how white racism dismembers, erodes and causes sickness in Aboriginal lives. In what has become known as the 'Bell-Huggins debate,' Aboriginal historian Jackie Huggins criticises what she sees as the anthropologist Diane Bell's white feminist agenda.<sup>9</sup> Arguing that Bell privileges sexual inequality over racial discrimination in her writing about intraracial rape, Huggins suggests that race is the primary source of oppression in the lives of Aboriginal women. The Aboriginal theorist, Aileen Moreton-Robinson<sup>10</sup> eloquently supports this claim. While not denying the need for Aboriginal women to discuss intraracial rape, these writers have challenged the role of white embodiment in the production of 'knowledge' about the Aboriginal 'other.' In addition, they have questioned the concomitant privileging of gender over race in (white feminist) analyses of structural oppression.

These arguments inform my own reading of *Radiance* as a film which has intraracial violence at its heart. While arguing that *Radiance* can be figured in a number of ways—many of them positive—I demonstrate that the film diminishes the significance of race, thus reproducing the notion of a 'deracialised but gendered universal subject'<sup>11</sup> on one hand, while castigating Aboriginal men on the other. The discussion that follows of the film's authorship and reception highlights the links between those who are involved in the processes

of textual production and the text itself. The discussion also contextualises my subsequent analysis of this critically acclaimed and popular film's articulation of race and gender.

### **Radiance: the Black and White of it**

In this section, I take up Moreton-Robinson's argument that white race privilege produces (racist) knowledge about the Aboriginal 'other'. Discussing the genesis of the *Radiance* screenplay as authored by Louis Nowra, I demonstrate that race continues to be significant even, and perhaps especially, when it is denied. Considering some reviews of the film, I endeavour to show why denying the significance of race is no solution to the problem of unequal power relations.

As Terry Threadgold points out, texts cannot always be 'neatly contained by the opposition between black and white'.<sup>12</sup> Indeed *Radiance* is more aptly described as having a 'fractured, multiply positioned identity'.<sup>13</sup> Adapted from a play written specifically for three Aboriginal friends of the non-Aboriginal playwright,<sup>14</sup> Louis Nowra, the film was directed by the Aboriginal filmmaker, Rachel Perkins. If a text bears 'the traces of the corporeality of its maker'<sup>15</sup> then *Radiance* has black and white corporealities 'folded ambivalently'<sup>16</sup> through it. This is the case with many texts, which may be classified as 'Aboriginal' but are also often, to greater or lesser degrees, ambiguous or 'hybrid' cultural products. As products of the 'fundamentally folded writer/text/reader relationship',<sup>17</sup> films are rarely monocultural. Initially a stageplay by a white man, *Radiance*'s transformation into a collaboratively produced film<sup>18</sup> suggests the need to categorise it as an intercultural text.

The relationship between *Radiance*'s exclusion of Aboriginal men and its status as a collaborative production between a white man and black women is complex. Discussing the relationship between Indigenous women and feminism, Moreton-Robinson notes how white women's work is limited by white embodiment. As she states, there are significant differences between 'knowing' and 'knowing about' something.<sup>19</sup> Arguably, the difference between knowing and knowing about racism and the limitations of white embodiment inform the *Radiance* screenplay.

There are undeniably positive things about the screenplay. For example, the encouragement to write which Nowra received from Aboriginal female friends is significant, especially in light of Moreton-Robinson's injunction that white writers make consultation and permission an integral part of the process of writing about Indigenous women.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the film's representation of the 'non or posttraditional'<sup>21</sup> aspects of Indigenous women's lives constitutes a concerted challenge to the hegemonic emphasis on 'traditional' Aboriginal women. Conversely, Nowra's attempts to 'deracialise' the screenplay—for example by cutting all 'references to the women's

Aboriginality'<sup>22</sup>—and thus making it something which is seen rather than spoken—are less successful and valuable. For one thing, and as I show below, the removal of references to the women's Aboriginality does not entail a concomitant deracialisation of other 'raced' subjects, for example, the Japanese and 'black' men to which the film refers. Second, Nowra's attempt to diminish the significance of race entails a further masking of whiteness as race. Arguably, the 'cutting out' of Aboriginality intersects with Nowra's white embodiment to produce a text in which whiteness, because it is not seen as a race, is not critically analysed. Informed by a (well-meaning) urge to diminish the significance of Aboriginality, the surface message of *Radiance* is that race doesn't matter. Yet, this message directly contradicts the message emanating from whiteness studies. Exemplifying this latter perspective, the Aboriginal academic and commentator, Lillian Holt, claims, 'whiteness has moulded, wounded and informed me.'<sup>23</sup>

Yet Nowra is not alone in his tendency to downplay the significance of Aboriginality to the story. Rachel Perkins' assertion that *Radiance* 'is a great story first'<sup>24</sup> also gives weight to the notion that stories are capable of being de-racialised. Similarly, the following excerpts from reviews of *Radiance* depoliticise and deracialise the film.

Incidentally, the sisters are Aborigines. This has some relevance, but is mostly immaterial. These are universal characters, in a universal story.<sup>25</sup>

It matters not that they are sisters, that they are Aboriginal, that they have endured much in their childhood nor that they are only together because it is their mother's funeral. What matters is that they are real Australians confronting life, death and each other with passion, humour and love.<sup>26</sup>

Despite its topic, settings and structure, the story is not only about Aboriginal problems. These are the strife and angst familiar to dysfunctional families no matter their class or culture. Perkins and her trio have coloured them emotionally larger than life and imbued them with a fascinating energy and enthusiasm.<sup>27</sup>

'[*Radiance* is] a film which isn't interested in flag-waving interracial politics. Each woman represents a life experience, not just of Aboriginal women, but people everywhere.'<sup>28</sup>

Toni Morrison points out that the 'habit of ignoring race is understood to be a graceful, even generous liberal gesture.'<sup>29</sup> Yet, as she notes, this results in a situation whereby the 'black body' has only a 'shadowless participation in the dominant cultural body.'<sup>30</sup> Seemingly 'liberal,' these reviews—like Nowra and Perkins' deracialisation of the film—reproduce the notion that there are 'universal' stories and 'universal' standards or norms against which all else can be measured. Universality, however, tends to involve white invisibility and dominance rather than racial equity.

Because *Radiance's* defining context is family rather than white society, it is freer to explore a range of issues about Aboriginal lives as they are lived outside this usually defining context. Among other things, the film asks boldly: why not an Aboriginal family? Why not an Aboriginal opera singer? Why not Aboriginal people who are unable to do things the 'right traditional way'?<sup>31</sup> Locating the meanings of Aboriginal life and family 'outside' the structuring framework of colonialism, the film's stance is in some senses an empowered and empowering one. However, while it may demonstrate what Perkins has called a 'sophisticated approach to Aboriginal content',<sup>32</sup> *Radiance's* refusal to engage directly or explicitly with interracial politics has some unfortunate consequences. Most significantly, whiteness as an oppressive force in Aboriginal lives is obfuscated. Instead, the Aboriginal 'witch' mother, the 'black prince' and the 'Japanese' capitalists are constructed as responsible for pain which seems to me to indicate far more about the particularities of Aboriginal oppression at the hands of whites, than it does about Aboriginal, Japanese or (racially unmarked) male guilt.

In contrast to the reviewers discussed above who downplay the significance of race in *Radiance*, I argue that it matters, particularly at the level of textual production. Indeed, it seems likely that *Radiance's* status as a collaboration between Nowra, a white man, and Aboriginal women—namely Perkins and the three lead actors—is central to the film's exclusion of Aboriginal masculinity. In the next section, I explore *Radiance's* construction of black masculinity, highlighting its reproduction of injurious stereotypes.

### The Racialised Nature of Guilt and Exclusion

The following discussion makes clear that *Radiance* reproduces racist discourses about Aboriginal and Asian men, even as it challenges certain problematic assumptions about Aboriginal women. The film's contestation of Nona's romantic perspective serves as an example. Despite having many merits, *Radiance's* challenging of Nona's quixotic view entails a focus on the 'black prince' as fantasy. Upon Nona's return from the island, Cressy, who is waiting in the car, asks, 'where do you wanna go?' The implication is that that they are free to go anywhere. Yet, this ability to move on to new places relies on destroying the fantasy of the Aboriginal male as 'black prince.' Contesting Nona's dreamy version of her father, Cressy replaces it with a nightmarish version of Aboriginal masculinity. Rather than presenting versions of Aboriginal masculinity between or other than the 'black prince' and 'filthy rapist' extremes, the film reiterates the stereotype of black masculine savagery. As a result, it is Aboriginal masculinity which constitutes 'the other' that is excluded from home in *Radiance*. In this way, the film remains 'iconic' of white 'control over and colonisation of the black man's story'.<sup>33</sup> Obviously, all creative texts prioritise only some perspectives: for example, in this

film non-Aboriginal women (who are absent) and non-Aboriginal masculinity are excluded from the film's definition of home. While recognising this, I find the gendered exclusion of Aboriginal men significant. Through this particular exclusion the film seems to say: while excluding non-Aboriginal people from definitions of home is acceptable, including Aboriginal men in them is not. The film's racialised version of home and belonging entails the exclusion of Aboriginal men, arguably the most displaced members of Australian society.

Represented by the immoral and self-serving Harry Wells, the mother's boyfriends who only want sex, a sleazy priest, several gawking males, Nona's violent ex-boyfriend and a rapist, maleness in *Radiance* is construed as almost inevitably problematic.<sup>34</sup> In contrast and despite some of these males being white, whiteness is never the explicit target of criticism. For example, while the power of white men to deny home and family to Aboriginal women is long-established, in *Radiance* this displacing is discussed in terms of maleness rather than whiteness. Though Harry Wells' displacement of the sisters would seem to provide the perfect opportunity for Mae, Cressy and Nona to comment on the ongoing dispossession of blacks by whites, they read Harry's actions in terms of sex rather than race, commenting for example on his (masculine) betrayal of their mother's love for him. In this way, the film marginalises one account of the women's dispossession in favour of another and this elides the obvious continuities between white sexual bargaining and Aboriginal displacement. This is almost certainly an outcome of what Nowra describes as the desire to avoid making the 'Aboriginal characters ... abstractions in order to make polemical points'.<sup>35</sup> An unfortunate consequence of this desire is that *Radiance* constructs black maleness, rather than whiteness as Aboriginal women's primary problem.

While all men, both black and white, are portrayed as base and suspect, it is the 'black' man who is depicted as presenting the most severe and brutal threat to Aboriginal women. Damning Nona's rapist father, Cressy cries 'You were born from dirt. Your father was dirt ... You were born because your so-called black prince raped me. Just a filthy pig smelling of petrol.' Although the stageplay<sup>36</sup> makes clear that the rapist smelt of petrol because he had been fixing his car, the film offers no such explanation. Thus, Cressy's reference to the smell of petrol inflects with racist constructions of Aboriginal men as petrol-sniffers and pigs, consistently represented as the filthiest of animals. Moreover, while Nona's repeated references to her father's blackness leave viewers in no doubt as to the colour of his skin, because Cressy's language picks up on racist associations between Aboriginal people, dirt and petrol sniffing, it confirms that this blackness, this 'dirt' is indeed Aboriginal.<sup>37</sup> Anthropologist Dundi Mitchell notes that many of the Aboriginal women she has spoken with have talked about 'the difficulty of overcoming disempowering images which equated being

black with being dirty, dumb and lazy.<sup>38</sup> Cressy's construction of the 'black prince' only confirms this injurious stereotype. Although white men are placed on a continuum with black men, it is *Aboriginal* maleness that is represented as the greatest danger to Aboriginal women. As I have noted, this idea has been challenged elsewhere by Aboriginal writers who argue that Indigenous women are oppressed, first and foremost, by their experiences as racialised subjects within a white-dominated society.

In its repeated and explicit coding of the rapist's identity, *Radiance* can be contrasted with Sally Morgan's *My Place*.<sup>39</sup> A brief look at this popular autobiography is illustrative, highlighting the difficulties of naming white, as opposed to black, men, as the perpetrators of crimes against Aboriginal women.

In Morgan's retelling of the story of her grandmother, Daisy Corunna, it becomes clear that Daisy was fathered by the wealthy pastoralist, Howden Drake-Brockman. Subsequently, Daisy is the only 'half-caste'<sup>40</sup> that Howden takes with the family upon leaving Corunna. Both Daisy's brother, Arthur, and Daisy herself make a special point of mentioning Howden's interest in seeing Daisy's child, Gladys. Of her pregnancy and the birth of Sally's mother, Gladys, Daisy says:

Now how all this came about, that's my business, I'll only tell a little. Everyone knew who the father was, but they all pretended they didn't know. Aah, they knew, they knew. You didn't talk 'bout things, then. You hid the truth.... Howden died not long after she was born. When I came home from hospital, he said, "Bring her here, let me hold her." He wanted to nurse Gladie before he died.<sup>41</sup>

Given Drake-Brockman's usual mode of relating to Arthur and Daisy, nothing less than paternity could explain his interest in the child. If, as is implied, Howden was also Daisy's father, then Daisy is Gladys' sister as well as her mother. Yet while in *Radiance* the truth of rape and maternity is revealed, in *My Place* this is hinted at rather than articulated. Without using the word rape, Daisy discusses related issues. For instance, she mentions being ashamed during a sermon about the importance of saving oneself for marriage, because 'most of us had already been taken by white men.'<sup>42</sup> Acknowledging that 'men get you down on the floor and they won't let you get up' and that she knew 'a lot of native servants had kids to white men because they were forced',<sup>43</sup> Daisy never directly links herself to this bodily experience. This may be because 'the rapist's invasion splits the victim's self from the bodily experience.'<sup>44</sup> In addition, Daisy's inability to 'talk 'bout things' openly is a consequence of her being a product of a generation that 'hid the truth'<sup>45</sup> about the white male rape of Aboriginal women. The stories of countless Aboriginal women have been suppressed. Because of these silences, induced by shame and an internalised sense

of inferiority, there has not been enough said about the rape of Aboriginal women by white men. *Radiance's* emphasis on the 'blackness' of the rapist needs to be placed in this light.

Because black women 'are unquestionably the main victims'<sup>46</sup> of black rapists, there is a kind of racism involved in the unwillingness to confront rape as a racialised phenomenon. I am not therefore suggesting that the Aboriginal male rape of Aboriginal women ought never to be written about, analysed or discussed. Nor am I necessarily suggesting it should not have featured as an issue in *Radiance*. Nevertheless, and without apportioning 'blame' as such, I do think the film's construction of Aboriginal men through the *singular* image of a 'filthy [rapist] pig smelling of petrol' is problematic. An Aboriginal woman, interviewed by Mitchell,<sup>47</sup> amply conveys how racism, in producing a lack of alternatives, leads to damaged lives. Discussing her ex-husband's alcoholism, the woman states: 'he had no alternative but to go in the direction he went in and men don't, in most cases, don't have any alternative but to go along the lines they go because there's no other alternative.'<sup>48</sup> The speaker's repeated use of the phrase 'no alternative' illustrates the danger of constructing Aboriginal men through singular images. Mitchell expresses the issues with clarity: 'the problem of identifying behaviours like domestic violence, incest and sexual abuse that ... seem to be on the increase ... is that these problems are likely to become essentialised as constitutive elements of Aboriginality by those with a vested interest in maintaining the status-quo.'<sup>49</sup>

It is impossible to measure whether or how *Radiance's* popular reception among predominantly non-Aboriginal audiences may be related to its reproduction of 'status-quo' discourses, including this one about Aboriginal men. However, the film's circulation of the stereotype of black masculine savagery and its popular reception by predominantly non-Aboriginal audiences are, to say the least, troubling. While audience members would have varying degrees of knowledge about white rape of Aboriginal women, the film avoids this, focusing instead on the black rape of Aboriginal women and on a concomitant and deeply damaging construction of Aboriginal men as violent, abusive criminals. Moreover, by privileging female affiliations and excluding men from the Aboriginalised belonging that it narrates, *Radiance* constructs gender rather than race as the primary source of oppression for Aboriginal women. In this way, the film obfuscates the effects of white oppression on Aboriginal lives.

In *Radiance* it is black men, rather than white Australians who are the 'guilty "other"'.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to estimate how differently the film would have been received had the rapist been white. Unfortunately, this is not the only way the film displaces the guilt of white Australia on to bodies marked as 'other.' The effects of white racism are implied by Mae and Cressy's experiences of child removal,

by the sisters' shared experience of dispossession (from the house) and by Mae's sense of dispossession from the island. However, in each instance, the dialogue between the sisters works to locate blame with bodies marked either by masculinity, blackness, Asian-ness or a combination of these. For example, Mae and Cressy's construction of the mother as a 'witch [who] handed [them] over to the authorities' overrides Nona's claim that the mother hid her from the authorities. This is partly because it is two against one, and partly because Cressy claims the mother kept Nona 'because [she] was special.' Confirming rather than challenging the notion that Aboriginal women willingly gave away their children and suffered little emotion as a consequence, the film renders the notion of stolen-ness spurious, and simultaneously perpetuates a racist construction of Aboriginal women as unfeeling, bad mothers. By blaming the mother, *Radiance* alludes to the alienation and loss experienced by stolen children, without actually confronting audiences with the role whites played in inflicting this pain. In contrast to the named blackness of Nona's rapist father, the nuns who forced Cressy to wash clothes on her days off are never racialised as whites. Second, each of the sisters explains Harry Wells' actions with reference to sex, rather than race. In these ways, *Radiance's* representation of the rape as Aboriginal, elides the 'story that is never told'<sup>51</sup> the story of white rapist guilt. Finally, the narrative relocates blame away from whites through the construction of the island as a place inhabited by Japanese men with 'small dicks.' Although viewers are reminded that the island has an Indigenous history, its white history is barely touched upon. Apart from Mae's wondering about her grandparents' displacement, it moves from being Indigenous—a place where Mae's 'ancestors' lived—to being 'Japanese.' Its intermediate history of violence, although implied, is not racialised. It is as though the island has only actually been colonised by 'external' Asian forces. Again, whiteness goes unnamed. The erasure of embodied white guilt stands in direct contrast to the visibility of masculine, black and Japanese guilt.

Ultimately, *Radiance* suppresses the fact that whiteness can be equated with the infliction of pain. As such, the white racism that I read as implied by Mae, Cressy and Nona's embodied pain—their experiences of child removal, rape and dispossession—need never be acknowledged by audiences because the film itself ascribes culpability to 'others.'

Reviewing *Radiance*, Ruth Hessey describes the film as 'an act of reconciliation without race politics.'<sup>52</sup> In addition, she suggests that this 'lack' of race politics gives the film 'a resonance [that] audiences are taking to heart.'<sup>53</sup> My analysis suggests that (white) audiences may have taken *Radiance* 'to heart' less because it has no race politics than because the particularity of these politics folds with the grammar which is already 'in the body.'<sup>54</sup> As 'identity—and reality—constructing'

discourses,<sup>55</sup> films 'fold' with the bodies of audience members in unique ways. Therefore, there are as many 'versions' of the film as there are writer/text/reader relations. However, if texts, rather than consciousness have the burden of signification, then *Radiance* can be said to construct meanings of ambiguous value. Though it may 'rewrite' the possibilities for representing Aboriginal female embodiment, the film reproduces alarmingly familiar discourses in its depiction of whites as distant from and not responsible for suffering, and 'blacks' and 'Japanese' as threat. While it challenges the notion that Aboriginal films are always overtly polemical, the film does little to challenge white 'indifference to the hurt of others.'<sup>56</sup> The particular textual trace of white denial and indifference—which is already 'in the nervous system ... the musculature, the habitus of the [Australian social] body'<sup>57</sup> seems to me to be reinscribed by the film. The joint unwillingness of Nowra and Perkins to make a film about 'white guilt, black victimhood and so forth'<sup>58</sup> is costly. Reinscribing texts about black guilt and white innocence, *Radiance* undermines its own worth as a film about contemporary experiences of Aboriginal belonging. The exclusion of Aboriginal men may or may not reflect their exclusion from *Radiance* as a collaborative production between black women and a white man. Either way, it raises questions about the relation between embodiment and textuality. Moreover, and perhaps more significantly, the film and its reception indicate that the so-called 'absence' of race politics may be better described as unacknowledged white dominance.

### Conclusion

On one hand, *Radiance* encourages audiences to think differently about Aboriginal women. The complex and contemporary nature of Mae, Cressy and Nona's lives belie romanticised versions of Aboriginal womanhood, extending what Aboriginal people can be and become in the minds of non-Aboriginal audience members. However, *Radiance* displaces the cause of Aboriginal suffering on to 'non-white' bodies. As such, the film perpetuates forms of blame and denial in relation to the Aboriginal population and to 'Asians' that have been present since the early days of white settlement. Although it makes whites 'witnesses to the afflictions of Aboriginal bodies,'<sup>59</sup> the film does not depict white racism as causing this woundedness. Though corporeality is given prominence, it is made to signify oppressions other than that which many Aboriginal people designate as chief; namely, white colonial oppression. In *Radiance*, it is not whites but Aboriginals, specifically males, who are depicted as being primarily responsible for the various forms of damage and loss that mark Aboriginal lives. As a consequence, *Radiance* fails to 'unmask whiteness,' thus lending no support to a project which has otherwise gained some force in the Australian context.

## Notes

- 1 *The Age* 10 October 1998.
- 2 *Radiance*. Director: Rachel Perkins. Producer: Sydney, Eclipse Film Productions, 1997.
- 3 *The Age* 10 October 1998.
- 4 Quoted text if not otherwise attributed is *Radiance* 1997.
- 5 J. Duruz, 'Suburban houses revisited' in K. Darian-Smith and A. Hamilton (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994: 178.
- 6 I make this assertion on the grounds that Aboriginal people officially constitute approximately three per cent of the population.
- 7 D. Mitchell, 'Sickening Bodies: How Racism and Essentialism Feature in Aboriginal Women's Discourse About Health', *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 7, 3, 1996: 258-273.
- 8 D. Rose, 'Dark Times and Excluded Bodies' in G. Gray and C. Winters (eds), *The Resurgence of Racism*, Clayton, Monash Publications in History, 1997: 97-116.
- 9 See J. Huggins, *Sister Girl: The Writings of Aboriginal Activist and Historian Jackie Huggins*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1998.
- 10 A. Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 2000.
- 11 Moreton-Robinson 2000: xviii.
- 12 T. Threadgold, *Feminist Poetics: Poiesis, Performance, Histories*, London, Routledge, 1997: 198.
- 13 Threadgold 1997: 198.
- 14 See Nowra 2000: viii
- 15 Threadgold 1997: 89
- 16 Threadgold 1997: 199.
- 17 Threadgold 1997: 88.
- 18 See for example Nowra 2000: xii.
- 19 Moreton-Robinson 2000: 185.
- 20 Moreton-Robinson 2000: 66.
- 21 F. Merlan, *Caqing the Rainbow: Places, Politics and Aborigines in a North Australian Town*, Hawaii, University of Hawaii Press, 1998: 4.
- 22 L. Nowra, *Radiance: the Play and the Screenplay*, Sydney, Currency Press, 2000: x.
- 23 L. Holt, 'Pssst ... I wanna be white', *Migration Action*, 21, 1, April, 1999: 19.
- 24 *Sun Herald* 10 November 1998.
- 25 *Canberra Times* 10 October 1998.
- 26 *Sunday Telegraph* 11 October 1998.
- 27 Advertiser 10 October 1998.
- 28 *Sun Herald* 10 November 1998.
- 29 T. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992: 9.
- 30 Morrison 1992: 10.
- 31 Nona in *Radiance*, 1997.
- 32 *The Age* 10 November 1998.
- 33 Threadgold 1997: 173.
- 34 Given the number of Aboriginal women who die in domestic violence situations (more than 132 in the last decade, *The Age* 27 June 2001: 19), *Radiance's*

construction of masculinity is unsurprising and to a certain extent, warranted. Recognising the complexity of the situation and that many of the perpetrators of violence against Aboriginal women are Aboriginal men, I am not advocating silence on this issue. My point is rather that the extent to which *Radiance* constructs culpability through reference to 'non-white' subjects needs to be questioned.

35 Nowra 2000: ix.

36 L. Nowra, *Radiance*, Sydney, Currency Press (in association with Belvoir Street Theatre), 1993. As this comment suggests, there are numerous differences between the stageplay and the screenplay.

37 Rose (1997: 106) discusses the associations between the 'category of the unfree', blackness and coarseness and the notion that such people, including Aboriginal people, have been made 'to clean up the dirt and other margins of human and animal life.' See also D. Sibley 'Outsiders in Society and Space' in K. Anderson and F. Gale (eds), *Inventing Places*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1992: 107-122, for a discussion of race as connotative of the abject, and A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather, Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, London, Routledge, 1995: 31-36, for a discussion of the relationship between domestication and domination. For an application of McClintock's ideas to Australia, see Francesca Bartlett, 'Clean White Girls: Assimilation and Women's Work', *Hecate* 25.1 (1999): 10-38.

38 Mitchell 1996: 266.

39 S. Morgan, *My Place*, South Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987.

40 Morgan 1987: 325.

41 Morgan 1987: 332.

42 Morgan 1987: 329.

43 Morgan 1987: 329.

44 C. Winkler, (with Kate Winninger), 'Rape Trauma: Contexts Of Meaning', in T. J. Csordas (ed.), *Embodiment and Experience*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994: 249.

45 Morgan 1987: 332.

46 L. Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, London, Virago Press, 1990: 246.

47 Mitchell 1996: 262.

48 Mitchell 1996: 262.

49 Mitchell 1996: 271.

50 Mitchell 1996: 271.

51 Threadgold 1997: 135.

52 *Sydney Morning Herald* 10 September 1998.

53 *Sydney Morning Herald* 10 September 1998.

54 Threadgold 1997: 99.

55 Threadgold 1997: 136.

56 Rose 1997: 102.

57 Threadgold 1997: 99.

58 Nowra 2000: x.

59 Mitchell 1996: 271.