

POSTCOLONIAL MIGRATIONS: ANGLO-INDIANS IN 'WHITE AUSTRALIA'

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On 15 August 1947, the date of Indian Independence, HMAS Manoora reached Western Australia with more than 700 Anglo-Indians and 20 Polish refugees on board. In the first year that Australia began to admit post-war refugees from Europe, the troopship Manoora had been refitted to evacuate Australians and Europeans from India. Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration, had been advised six months earlier by the Australian High Commissioner in New Delhi that 'although no actual immediate crisis has yet developed in India, a state of emergency actually exists right now,' and that 'should anything adverse happen it will happen quickly and there will be no opportunity then to evacuate the women and children' (NAA: A1068/7, IC47/46/1). In the publicity surrounding the Manoora's arrival, Australia was described as a free, democratic and peaceful home, in contrast to the instability and communal conflict of India (see, for example, the newsreel 'Immigrants' arrival,' *Westralian News*, 15.8.47; and articles in the *West Australian*, 15.8.47 and 16.8.47). In 1947, at the height of White Australia policies, these ideas of national freedom, democracy and peace were inseparably bound up with ideas of racial purity (Jupp, 1998, London, 1970, Palfreeman, 1967). Reflecting these ideas, Calwell explained in May 1947 that 'use of 'Manoora' should be confined to Australians and to British people of pure European descent' (NAA: A436/1, 49/5/6773) and the High Commissioner in New Delhi specified that 'preference will be given to Australian women and children. Any remaining passages will be given to British Europeans wishing to settle here' (NAA: A1068/7, IC47/46/1). And yet, despite these instructions, the majority of passengers on the Manoora were Anglo-Indians and were the first sizeable group of people of mixed descent to enter 'White Australia.' Several factors contributed to their unanticipated arrival: the ambiguity of the term 'Anglo-Indian,' which many officials still thought referred to British residents in India;

the austere conditions on the troopship, which meant that many Australians and British settlers preferred to wait for another passage; the political embarrassment for Calwell if the well-publicised evacuation ship should return to Australia virtually empty; and the political inexpedience of turning non-white migrants away at Fremantle, which would amount to a public admission of racist immigration policies. As the Department of External Affairs stated in September 1947, 'it was apparently impossible for the Migration Officers to interview all intending passengers [and] ... despite their efforts a number of Anglo-Indians were on board. ... The High Commissioner at no stage gave approval to the embarkation of Anglo-Indians' (NAA: A1068/7, IC47/46/1). In the event, the arrival of Anglo-Indians on the *Manoora* prompted increasingly restrictive policies to create and to maintain a 'White Australia,' and very few Anglo-Indians migrated to Australia until these policies were revised in the mid-1960s and finally rescinded in 1973. While the Polish refugees who reached Fremantle on 15 August 1947 were among the first of many 'Displaced Persons' to enter Australia from 1947 to 1953, very few Anglo-Indians were able to follow those on the *Manoora* until the liberalisation of White Australia policies.

At Independence in 1947, there were an estimated 200,000 Anglo-Indians in India, and, despite the public pronouncements of leaders such as Frank Anthony against migration, one-third had emigrated by the 1970s, first to Britain and Canada and then to Australia. English-speaking, Christian, culturally more European than Indian, and often imagining Britain more than India as home, Anglo-Indians feared discrimination, increased competition for jobs, and fewer opportunities for their children in independent India. Many believed that they would feel more at home in Britain and the Dominions than in India after 1947. According to the 1996 Census, there are an estimated 36,500 Anglo-Indians in Australia, particularly in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney (Newsletter of the Anglo-Indian Association of Canberra, 1998; as Joe Bailey writes, this figure represents 'those people born in India, with Christianity as their religion and English as their mother tongue.' For more on Anglo-Indians in Australia, see Gilbert, 1996 and D'Cruz, 2000). During the period of White Australia policies, the vast majority of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent were Anglo-Indians, and, by the 1970s, Australia was the main destination for Anglo-Indians leaving India.

This paper is about the contested politics of whiteness and the ambivalent place of Anglo-Indians in 'White' Australia. It is part of a larger research project in which I explore geographies of home and identity for Anglo-Indians, particularly Anglo-Indian women, in the fifty years before and after Independence. My research concentrates on the spatial politics of home and identity on domestic, national and transnational scales, and spans the community in India, Britain and Australia. In this paper I explore the ways in which White Australia policies restricted the immigration of people of mixed descent from 1947 to the mid-1960s and the internal contradictions revealed by the admission of Anglo-Indians and other people of mixed descent over the same period. My argument has three main parts: first, by considering critical 'mixed race' studies in light of postcolonial theories of space and identity, I examine the limits of hybridity in theorising migration and the importance of interrogating assumptions of whiteness. Second, turning to policy changes over time, I consider the ways in which ideas about 'race' came to be superseded by ideas about 'culture' in assessing the suitability of mixed race migrants. Third, I reflect on the resonance of these ideas today by exploring the place of Anglo-Indians in multicultural Australia.

THE LIMITS OF HYBRIDITY

Notions of hybridity have been important in recent work on mobile identities, cultures and ideas of home. Homi Bhabha, for example, charts the hybrid subject as a split and a mobile subject, located in 'third space:' an 'in-between space' that disrupts binary oppositions between 'self' and 'other.' As he writes, travelling into 'third space' 'may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' - the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space - that carries the burden of the meaning of culture' (Bhabha, 1994: 38). While the 'hype of hybridity' (Mitchell, 1997) disrupts essentialist, authentic and apparently stable notions of culture, home and identity, it continues to invoke racial divisions that underpinned colonial discourse often without interrogating racial divisions in colonial and postcolonial context (Young, 1995; for other critiques of hybridity see the essays in Brah and Coombes, 2000, and Werbner and Modood, 1997). Although metaphorical references to hybridity abound, the material histories and geographies of people of mixed descent remain largely absent from much postcolonial theorising.

For example, in her recent book *Indian traffic*, Parama Roy discusses the novel *Kim* and writes that

Kipling is particularly repulsed by the 'half-caste,' the Eurasian (known in postcolonial India as Anglo-Indian!) who is neither flesh nor fowl. The Anglo-Indian (that is, the India-raised white man)...(Roy, 1998: 87).

For Roy, the term 'Anglo-Indian' remains unproblematic, referring to British rulers of imperial India and equating it with an equally unproblematic idea of whiteness. Despite a wide range of work on hybridity and transculturation - the very Indian traffic of Roy's title - her misreading of the term 'Anglo-Indian' continues a long tradition of writing people of mixed descent out of history, geography and literary studies.

In the Indian Census of 1911, the term 'Anglo-Indian' officially designated for the first time a population that had previously been known as, among many other names, 'half-caste' and 'Eurasian.' In the 1935 Government of India Act, Anglo-Indians were defined in relation to Europeans in gendered and geographical terms:

An Anglo-Indian is a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is a native of India. A European is a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent and who is *not* a native of India (*Anglo-Indian Review*, July 1939, emphasis added).

These definitions rest entirely on paternal ancestry and domicile. While both Anglo-Indians and Europeans shared European parentage in the male line, Anglo-Indians were born in India and would, before Independence and unlike most Europeans, expect to die there. Although written out of this definition, the maternal line of descent for an Anglo-Indian would usually include an Indian woman, perhaps as far back as the eighteenth century. Enshrined in this official definition, questions of home and identity were inseparably bound. Before Independence in 1947, the spatial politics of home for Anglo-Indians were shaped by imaginative geographies of both Europe and India as home, as shown by the familial discourses of Britain as fatherland and India as motherland. Both the rise of Indian nationalism and British policies of Indianization that followed the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919

gave a new political urgency to Anglo-Indian ideas of home and identity that centred on whether Anglo-Indians could, or should, identify India as their present and future home. Anglo-Indians who felt out of place in both British and independent India responded in two main ways: first, by trying to create Anglo-Indian homelands that were part of but clearly distinct from the rest of British India. The most famous of several settlement schemes was located at McCluskieganj in Bihar, which was established in the 1930s as a homeland and independent nation for Anglo-Indians. Other settlement schemes were proposed. In the 1920s, a party of Anglo-Indians went to the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Indian Ocean to assess the prospects for settlement (Anthony, 1969), and in both the 1930s and 1950s, enquiries were made to the Australian government concerning a proposed settlement of Anglo-Indians in Papua New Guinea (NAA: A518/1, T822/1). For different reasons, these settlement schemes and proposals were short-term and largely unsuccessful, and after Independence, most Anglo-Indians who felt out of place in India tried to emigrate. The rest of my paper focuses on the migration of Anglo-Indians to White Australia from 1947.

FROM 'RACE' TO 'CULTURE'

The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 was the first major law passed by the new Australian federal parliament and laid the foundations of what came to be known as the White Australia policy. Before 1901, immigration policies had mainly restricted the number of Chinese people working in the gold fields; after 1901, both the Chinese and Pacific Islanders working in the Queensland sugar industry were restricted; and, after the Second World War, immigration policies restricted the entry of nonwhites more generally (Fincher, 1997; Collins, 1988; Murphy, 1993). Although explained publicly in economic and social terms, the policy was rooted in ideas about white superiority. Miscegenation was seen as a significant threat to the idealised whiteness of this new nation, as shown by one politician who described 'the noble ideal of a White Australia - a snow-white Australia ... Let it be pure and spotless' (quoted in London, 1970: 12). The goals of homogeneity and assimilation underpinned both domestic and immigration policies. For the first fifty years of the twentieth century, the 'stolen generation' of children of part Aboriginal and part white descent were forcibly removed from their families to be raised in residential homes, mission schools and white families (MacDonald, 1995). At the same time, restrictions

against people of mixed descent were a central part of White Australia immigration policies. And yet, in practice, ideas about whiteness were more contested than hegemonic. As White Australia policies became less restrictive in the late 1950s and 1960s, ideas about whiteness as a *cultural* marker came to supersede ideas about whiteness as a *racial* marker. This had two main implications. First, the internal contradictions revealed by admitting people of mixed descent, the difficulties of implementing racially exclusive policies in practice, and the tensions between the Departments of Immigration and External Affairs, contributed to the demise of the White Australia policy from the mid-1960s. Second, the inscription of whiteness as a cultural marker, a new emphasis on way of life and outlook, and ideas about European culture generally rather than British culture specifically, helped to lay the foundations of official multiculturalism that replaced the White Australia policy from the early 1970s.

In April 1947, it was estimated that 1400 people travelled from India to Australia per year (NAA: A1068/7, IC47/46/1), but, by September of the same year, there were 2000 applications per month from Anglo-Indians alone (NAA: A1838/1, 169/10/8/2). In 1947, Anglo-Indians had to be 'clearly more than 50% European and from appearance and conversation ... could reasonably be regarded as predominantly European' (NAA: A1069/7, M47/9/2/5). Specifying descent in this way meant that an application to emigrate to Australia made by anyone with one Indian parent would be automatically ineligible. In the wake of the Manoora's arrival, migration officers in India considered the difficulties of assessing the suitability of Anglo-Indian migrants. At this time, suitability was regarded in terms of a migrant's potential to assimilate into an Australian way of life and society. Assimilation in Australia was only thought possible if Anglo-Indians could prove a line of predominantly European descent and if they were seen to be white in both photographs and at interview. But in practice both of these requirements revealed internal contradictions at the heart of White Australia policies. While most Anglo-Indians could not produce documentary evidence to prove their European origin, their claims could equally not be disproved. At the same time, while one Anglo-Indian might be seen as white and an eligible migrant, other family members might be rejected. As the Australian High Commission in New Delhi pointed out to the Department of Immigration in Canberra, 'the degree of apparent Asiatic blood differs so markedly in a family that selection on

this basis means either rejection of the acceptable members or acceptance of the non-acceptable' (NAA: A446/182, 60/66167). In both cases, the rejection of non-white Anglo-Indians exposed the racial basis of White Australia policies. As the Minister for External Affairs put it in September 1947, 'The official defence of our present Immigration Policy is that it is based on economic and social grounds, not on racial grounds. It is impossible to justify this defence in excluding educated and fully westernised Anglo-Indians, whose only failing is that they are somewhat dark in complexion and also that they are unable to produce documentary evidence of their predominantly European ancestry' (NAA: A1838/1, 169/10/8/2). The Department of External Affairs proposed that 'assimilability' should not be judged on appearance alone, but should grant equal significance to other factors such as 'initiative, personality, education, specialised skill [and] economic independence' (NAA: A1838/1, 169/10/8/2). But Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration, rejected this proposal and in 1949 ruled that applications from Anglo-Indians and other potential migrants of mixed race should be automatically rejected. By 1950, Anglo-Indians were required to provide documentary evidence of at least 75% European ancestry. The Department of Immigration was unambiguous in its desire to restrict the entry of Anglo-Indians and stated that 'persons of mixed blood coming from tropical countries do not on the whole prove a very desirable type of migrant and Australia would suffer no loss if the conditions governing their entry were to further limit the numbers admitted' (NAA: A446/158, 70/95021).

But, in 1957, this policy changed to emphasize European appearance and culture rather than proof of origin. Reflecting the difficulties of obtaining documentary evidence to assess whether a potential migrant was 75% European in origin, the Department for External Affairs proposed that the policy should return to its earlier figure of more than 50%. In response, the Department for Immigration retained the figure of at least 75% European origin, but changed its policy regarding documentary evidence. The new policy meant that the appearance of all potential migrants of mixed descent 'must be such as to satisfy an officer that they are of 75% or more European descent and that they will have no difficulty in being accepted as Europeans in Australia [and that] they must be fully European in upbringing, outlook, mode of dress and way of living' (NAA: A446/158, 70/95021). And yet, 'the term European ... does not include Southern Europeans whose skin pigmentation (and

features) can provide extreme examples of the meaning of European' (NAA: A446/158, 70/95021). Despite increasing migration from all parts of Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, for Anglo-Indians to pass as 'normal Europeans' meant that they had to pass as white Europeans.

This revised policy remained in place until 1964, when the Minister for Immigration proposed that appearance and origin should not outweigh other factors in assessing 'suitability for settlement' (NAA: A5827/1, Volume 13). Migrants had to show 'by appearance, education, upbringing, outlook, mode of dress and way of living, that he is capable of ready integration into the Australian community' (NAA: A5827/1, Volume 13) and 'no overriding importance' was attached to appearance (NAA: A446/158, 70/95021). Ideas about 'normal European' origin and appearance began to give way to a broader sense of European culture. This revised policy had three main implications: it emphasized European culture generally rather than British culture more specifically; European culture was no longer seen as exclusively white; and there was, as a result, a dramatic increase of migrants of mixed descent. Applications made by Anglo-Indians in Calcutta alone increased from 400 in 1965 to over 3,000 in 1968 (NAA: A446/182, 60/66167). At the same time that White Australia policies were beginning to change, British and other western companies were withdrawing from India and the Reserve Bank of India limited the amount of money that migrants could take out of the country. Unlike British migrants who travelled to Australia on assisted passages and stayed in hostels on arrival, Anglo-Indians paid their own fare, were only allowed to take \$7 per person out of India, and had to find their own accommodation with friends, family, or through the Catholic Migration Office. Most Anglo-Indians migrated to Perth because it was the first port of call, and thus the cheapest destination from India.

FROM WHITE AUSTRALIA TO MULTICULTURALISM

Anglo-Indians could migrate to Australia from the late 1960s because they were seen as culturally European, but when they arrived they were often perceived as Indian. Many Anglo-Indians suffered racial prejudice, and, more generally, as an Anglo-Indian teacher in Sydney says, 'they take you for the country you were born in. ... Despite our background, if we were born in India we were complete Indians.' Distinguishing themselves from other Indians and from non-English speaking

migrants, Anglo-Indians occupy an ambivalent place in multicultural Australia. Many stress their successful assimilation and emphasise the 'Anglo' parts of their identity, while at the same time asserting a distinctive and visible Anglo-Indian identity in the context of multiculturalism. While this appeal both to assimilation and to a multicultural cosmopolitanism may appear contradictory, their coexistence rather reveals the tensions of what Ghassan Hage calls 'fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society' (Hage, 1998), where ideas of whiteness remain dominant in both cultural and racial terms.

Many Anglo-Indian migrants saw it as neither possible nor desirable to assimilate in independent India: 'if we had to stay [in India] then we would have had to make the best of it, and assimilate, and lose our identity.' In contrast, Anglo-Indian assimilation in Australia meant identifying with the dominant white, western culture and feeling more at home. As an Anglo-Indian writer in Melbourne explains: 'Anglo-Indians...are part of this society, they are part of British society, they are Christian, they are of the West, ... they are English speaking. They may have come from India, they may have some Indian blood way in the past. They love India, they love Indian food and they have some Indian values obviously moving into their own. But they do not dislike Christians, they do not dislike the West.' Unlike life in an Anglo-Indian enclave in India in, for example, a railway colony or small, central parts of many cities, many see Australia as offering greater spatial and social freedom to integrate into a familiar culture, and see their experiences as different from migrants of non-English speaking backgrounds: 'we are not like the Chinese, Vietnamese, Greeks or Italians or whatever, where they sort of tend to congregate in one particular area and the whole thing sort of revolves around that area.'

And yet, since the late 1980s, ideas about Anglo-Indian assimilation have coexisted with an increasingly visible community identity. The Australian Anglo-Indian Association was founded in Perth in 1988, hosted an international reunion for Anglo-Indians in 1995, and opened the only Anglo-Indian cultural centre in the world in 1998; there is a weekly Anglo-Indian programme on multicultural radio in Perth; there is a residential home for elderly Anglo-Indians in Melbourne; and there are regular social events to raise funds for Anglo-Indians in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Government funding for multicultural projects has helped to create and shape a distinctive Anglo-Indian identity in Australia: an identity that is distinctive in its

hybridity. As an Anglo-Indian student in Perth puts it: '[Our identity] is borrowed from two places, and nothing is ours. We don't have our own country, there's no country called Anglo-India. We don't have our own flag, we don't have our own dress - it's borrowed from the British. We don't have our own food, that's borrowed from the Indians. We don't have our own language, that's borrowed from the British. So we're just bits of everything, and then when you get someone like me that's living in a whole other country...it's not really recognised as a true identity. ... Being Anglo-Indian is like a check box kind of thing, you have a survey and you choose A, B, C, D, or being Anglo-Indian you choose 'other,' so I just feel like we're not A, B, C, D, we're just other.' And yet, the articulation of a multicultural Anglo-Indian identity means that 'We have our own culture now, we don't need to be seen as a bit of British and a bit of Indian, because we are our own.' Bringing ideas about assimilation and multiculturalism together, another Anglo-Indian envisages a multiracial future: 'I think the mixed blood of any nationality, like the multicultural is now in Australia, will breed a very strong race in the future. ... The more they mix the Vietnamese with Australian or Chinese with Australian or Yugoslavs, the Serbs with Australian, the Anglo-Indian with Australian and the Anglo-Indian with all those other multinational, cultural people, it is going to be a different, stronger race.'

CONCLUSIONS

The arrival of HMAS Manoora on the date of Indian Independence had much more than merely symbolic significance. In several newspapers, Indian Independence was brought home to Australians by the arrival of the ship, bearing evacuees to a nation that was imagined as free, democratic and peaceful and a nation that was also imagined as white. The arrival of Anglo-Indians instead of the Australians or 'British people of pure European descent' anticipated by the government disrupted this fantasy of whiteness and prompted more restrictive immigration policies based on racial exclusivity. While the 20 Polish refugees who travelled alongside more than 700 Anglo-Indians on board the Manoora were among the first of many 'Displaced Persons' to enter Australia from 1947 to 1953, very few Anglo-Indians were able to follow those on the Manoora until the liberalisation of White Australia policies. Although these policies were eased to some extent in the 1950s and 1960s, it was not until 1973 that the 'racial criterion in immigration policy' was abolished and replaced with a skills-based selection criterion (York, 1996: 6).

In this paper, I have sought to destabilize a linear narrative of progress from White Australia policies to official multiculturalism: a narrative that continues to revolve around a fantasy of whiteness. I have done so in two main ways: first, by exploring some of the internal contradictions of White Australia policies and their contested rather than hegemonic politics of whiteness; and, second, by examining the dominance of whiteness in multicultural Australia and the apparently contradictory coexistence of ideas about assimilation and multicultural cosmopolitanism among Anglo-Indians. My specific focus on Anglo-Indian migration is situated within a broader concern with postcolonial migrations and the spatial politics of home. Studying migration in light of postcolonial critiques raises several, interconnected themes: the importance of decolonization both in place and over space; the resonance of imaginative geographies of home, identity and belonging in both colonial and postcolonial locations; the need to locate theories of hybridity - and mobile theorising more generally - in context; and, finally, the importance of studying the complexities of race politics: in this case, the politics of mixed race and whiteness for Anglo-Indians migrating to Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council of the UK (R000 22 2826). I would like to thank all of the Anglo-Indians that I met in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth who were so generous with their time, ideas and hospitality, and also the staff at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra and Perth for all of their help. I presented earlier versions of this paper as research seminars at King's College London and Queen Mary, University of London, and at the 'Rethinking International Migration' conference at Nottingham Trent University in 2000, and I am grateful for the questions and discussion that have helped me to revise it.

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