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Consuming Whiteness
 Australian Racism and the ›White Sugar‹ Campaign
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At the end of the nineteenth century, there was a veritable compulsion towards ›whiteness‹. The federation of the Australian colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia was the endpoint of more than a hundred years of legitimation of British land taking and more than a decade of evocation of the ›white‹ community. The racism imported from Europe was specified and fortified by the alleged ›yellow peril‹, which was springing from the geographical location of the Australian continent. The ensuing ›white Australia policy‹ has so far largely been discussed with regard only to the political-ideological perspective. No account was taken of the central problem of racist societalization, that is the everyday production and reproduction of ›race‹ as a social relation (›doing race‹) which was supported by broad sections of the population.

In her comprehensive study of Australian racism and the ›white sugar‹ campaign, Stefanie Affeldt shows that the latter was only able to achieve success because it was embedded in a widespread ›white Australia culture‹ that found expression in all spheres of life. Literature, music, theatre, museums and the sciences contributed to the dissemination of racist stereotypes and the stabilization of ›white‹ identity.

In this context, the consumption of sugar became, quite literally, the consumption of ›whiteness‹: the colour of its crystals melted with the skin colour ascribed to its producers to the trope of doubly ›white‹ sugar. Its consumption was at the same time personal affirmation of the consumers' membership in the ›white race‹ and pledge to the ›white‹ nation; its purchase was supposedly a contribution to the ›racial‹ homogenization and defence of the country, and was meant to overall serve the preservation of ›white‹ supremacy.

»Consuming Whiteness is an important new contribution to the Australian history of race. [...] It exposes anew the tight hold that white racism maintained upon the entire history of Australian development and self-regard«, ›Cropping it sweet‹, review by Raymond Evans, *History Australia*, 12, 2015, 2.

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7. Conclusion

›Sugar‹ accompanied the British history of Australia from the landing of the First Fleet (at latest) to the constitution of the Commonwealth (and far beyond). Despite the occasional shortage, its early allocation to convicts guaranteed a much faster spreading through society than it did in the mother country. This quickly created a broad community of cane sugar consumers. The belated domestic commencement of commercial cultivation saw the planters resorting to traditional notions of sugar workers and launched the recruitment of Pacific Islanders, who entered the country as temporary yet unfree workers. Subsequently, suspicions of slavery and debates about the composition of its largely ›coloured‹ workforce accompanied the prospering of the Queensland sugar industry.

Notwithstanding the labour movement's agency, pressing for the employment of British and European workers in the sugar industry, it was only with the Federation and its legislation, which detached the industry from its recruitment policies, that a demographic change to a ›white‹ industry was successfully effected. Though this nominally freed the sugar industry of its colonial associations, it was but the prelude to a deepened debate about its ›whiteness‹ and its role in ›white Australia‹. In this process, sugar served as the focal point of social relations and ascriptions.

The initial chemical blackness of the first specimen of Queensland sugar later rubbed off as social ›blackness‹ on everyone who showed ›deviant‹ behaviour, i.e. queried the integrity of ›white Australia‹ by employing ›non-white‹ workers, being ›not-white-enough‹ or impairing the ›white‹ workers' struggle for social justice. Its general division between colonial labourers and European consumers was upheld as long as ›aliens‹ worked the fields. Once the employment of the Europeans in the sugar industry increased, some of the consumers became the producers. Precisely because, as an important consumable good, sugar in post-Federation Australia concatenated production and consumption, it not only became the ›poster

food for ›white Australia‹ but also facilitated the emergence of a specific kind of consumerism.

At the time of Federation, consumerism in Australia was at the intersection of two discourses. On the one hand, the development of a national identity, which had been carefully created by both the establishment of Australianness and the call to defence against the nations and subjects who allegedly desired to challenge the British occupation of the Australian continent; on the other hand, western deliberations about ›white supremacy‹ on a global scale, which, though still wanting to place the ›white race‹ at the top, had to witness that its supposed superiority failed to prove well-founded in empirical observation. The former reflected the internal accentuation of ›suitable‹ features in persons considered ›truly‹ Australian – ›whiteness‹ and manhood loomed large in this context. The latter was the fear that the ›white race‹ would succumb to ›foreigners‹ and ›aliens‹, who were allegedly reproducing at much higher rates than the Europeans and were populating parts of the globe where ›whites‹ had yet scantily settled.

Consequently, ›whiteness‹ was held high in Australia as the principal feature of commonality and the sine qua non whose integrity had to be preserved even at high costs. Legislation and social action motivated by racism were meant to ensure the maintenance of the Australian society as a last refuge of the ›white race‹ in a geographically precarious location. In particular the exogenous threat of ›swamping‹ by Asian immigrants or invaders effectively created a concept of an enemy in juxtaposition to the Australian society, which was internally affected by intersectionality in terms of ›class‹, ›gender‹, ›race‹ and ›nation‹. Consumerism was a means for the broad interspersing of the everyday life in Australia with ›whiteness‹ that enabled a feeling of joint superiority, which could be experienced by all ›whites‹. ›Consuming whiteness‹ thus gave expression to keeping Australia ›white‹, on the one hand, and affirming the superiority of ›whiteness‹, on the other. It was in particular sugar in its doubly ›white‹ condition that was eventually considered the panacea of ›white Australia‹.

As in the other colonial contexts of Europe, ›whiteness‹ in Australia was a concept that emerged from situations of distinction, was constituted as a binding characteristic in society, and had to be defended against detrimental influences from the interior and exterior of the Australian society. ›Whiteness‹, at the turn to the twentieth century, was at the heart of national identity. Far from being invisible or the general norm in the Australian society, the inclusion and exclusion in terms of ›white‹ were constantly renegotiated. As a crucial element to the Australian national spirit, ›whiteness‹ was omnipresent: science fathomed its sustainability,

companies used it for advertising purposes, literature both celebrated it and warned about its vulnerability, newspapers reported about its shortcomings, politicians negotiated its preservation, and, last but not least, consumers debated and reconstructed it in the mundane and normalized activities of their everyday lives.

While Britishness was increasingly replaced by ›whiteness‹ as one of the characteristics of a ›true‹ Australian, Europeanness alone did not constitute a guaranteed admittance into the ranks of the ›desired‹ in all spheres of society. As the examples of the Italians and the Maltese show, the superficially biologicistic rationales – i.e. the purported historical infusion of African and Arabian ›blood‹ into the ›genetic blueprint‹ of the southern Europeans – was in actual fact supporting culturally discriminative behaviour, which targeted the allegedly inferior lifestyle of the unwanted competition. Then again, while in the context of ›white sugar‹ they were seen as being too ›dark‹ to be accepted as ›whites‹, in the broadened perspective of Australia being surrounded by people who were purportedly willing to conquer the continent by either clandestine immigration or hostile invasion, they seemed to be the perfect antidote to a ›black menace‹ and a ›yellow peril‹ in terms of population politics.

It was in particular the labour movement who construed ›whiteness‹ in these very narrow margins and, in distancing themselves from the ›coloured‹ labourers, substantiated the notion behind ›white Australia‹. This distinction was historically conditioned. Starting with the convicts, who made their first experiences of social inclusion in contradistinction to the original inhabitants of the Australian continent, and via the diggers on the gold fields, who put themselves in juxtaposition to Chinese miners and as such initiated their constitution as a class and movement to the strikes of the late nineteenth century, which targeted the employment and preference of Asian workers by Australian employers, the European workers of Australia acquired ›whiteness‹ and learned to emphasize it in their own interest. The struggle for jobs in the sugar industry had initially rather been an ideological one due to the absence of interest in employment on the part of the European workers. Once the jobs were emptied of their former occupants, however, the conflict was focalized on the circumstances of employment. The European workers newly recruited in the sugar industry had to overcome the traditional associations of the sugar workforce, i.e. allegedly being ›cheap and servile‹ labourers, and had to assert the value ascribed to them by the celebration of ›whiteness‹. Only after the sugar industry had additionally been freed of all these associations to the American sugar cane plantations, i.e. only after the European labourers were

employed under the conditions that were deemed appropriate for ›white‹ workers and were later declared to correspond to the comparatively higher Australian standard of living, the sugar industry could claim for itself to be the figurehead of ›white Australia‹.

When, after the Australian Federation, the consumers willingly supported the financial cost of the Queensland sugar industry in order to ensure the maintenance of their ›white‹ production, its perpetually emphasized global uniqueness was not simply the outcome of humanitarian deliberation about the unjust exploitation of ›coloured‹ workers. The ›white sugar‹ campaign was both an offer of evidence for and an invocation of the viability of ›whiteness‹. The Australian sugar farms with their ›white‹ planters and employees provided an, in their eyes, invigorating and auspicious answer to contemporary warnings about the equatorial areas being the domain of the ›black‹, ›brown‹ and ›yellow‹. The planters, who initially opposed the changes in their industry ostensibly for economic reasons, began to fall into line with this ›white Australia‹ ideology once the industrial struggle for improved conditions was settled. The success of the industry's transformation into a ›white men's industry‹ was eventually utilized by the sugar planters and capitalists to underline its prosperity and its importance for the maintenance of the nation. While, in turn, the emancipation from the colonial roots of cane sugar cultivation by the ›whitening‹ metamorphosis, precipitated by the employment of Europeans, enabled the sugar workers to understand themselves as fully ›white‹: biologically as born ›white‹, culturally as ranked ›white‹ and socially as paid ›white‹.

This was only possible because it rested firmly on the traditional hierarchy of ›races‹ which gave special value to ›whiteness‹. Historically, the racist discrimination between the different abilities of the people found expression along the lines of skin colour. This was translated into the labour hierarchy of sugar plantations, where the menial tasks were done by ›blacks‹ while the ›whites‹ were the supervisors of the gangs. In pre-Federation Australia, this ›colour line‹ was legislatively enforced by the confinement of Pacific Islanders to cane field labour while assigning skilled tasks to the European labourers, thus reducing unwanted competition. Because the earlier constitution of the ›white‹ working class as a ›class of their own‹ had happened not only based on ›race‹ in distinction to those deemed ›racial others‹ but also as a demarcation from the capitalists (the class which, in their eyes, enabled and fostered the presence of those ›others‹), the workers' pledge to ›whiteness‹ could be used as a discussional leverage against their purportedly ›race‹-betraying employers.

›Whiteness‹, however, was far more than a phenotypical description or a concept applied against non-Europeans. In its social construction, not only was it not a vested right but it also had to be earned and obtained. Behaviour deemed unruly, in particular if it seemed detrimental to the concept of ›white Australia‹, had as a consequence the taking away of this prestige. The consequence of this being that cane sugar, though in general succeeding in matching its ›social‹ colour with its chemical in the first decades of the twentieth century, was under the continuous suspicion of, in actual fact, occasionally being ›black‹ sugar. It could have been either cultivated or produced by those who were considered ›non-white‹. In a role reversal with their ›non-white‹ employees, it could be British-Australian planters who became socially ›black‹ by sticking to traditional ideas of plantation labour, which were considered undermining the Australian equality, and by insisting on the sugar industry's need for continued employment of Pacific Islanders to keep the industry from collapse. After the time of the demographic change of the industry's workforce, and during the subsequent strikes, this could be ›blackleggers‹, who were hired in the southern colonies in order to replace those labourers involved in the class struggle. During the first half of the twentieth century, this could also be cane sugar provided by Italian sugar planters who, in particular in the eyes of interest groups like the British Preference movement or the Housewives' Associations, were considered detrimental to both the ›white‹ industry and ›white Australia‹ and were furthermore deemed unworthy of ›white wages‹ financed via the consumers by taxes on sugar, as they were still regarded as being ›not-white-enough‹.

As such, ›white‹ was neither as clear-cut nor as invariable as it superficially seemed. ›Whiteness‹ as a marker of inclusion was a social ascription that could be accredited and denied as it was deemed fit. In turn, even people otherwise considered ›non-white‹ proved reconcilable with the idea of ›white Australia‹ when it became apparent that they did not succumb to the ›doomed race‹ theory but were, in the light of the ›race science's‹ findings, ›black‹ only on the exterior and inwardly ›Caucasian‹.

›Whiteness‹ showed its fallacious integrative power in the case of the original inhabitants of the Australian continent. Beginning in the last decades before Federation, Aboriginal Australians were incorporated into the programme of ›whitening‹ Australia as what later came to be known as the ›stolen generations‹, which were supposed to culturally and biologically merge into ›white Australia‹. This was also a process less motivated by humanitarian reasons but based on a social Darwinist reasoning supported by eugenic methods. As ›race science‹, at the end of the nineteenth century,

regarded them as predecessors of the Europeans, the original inhabitants of the southern landmass were considered generally ›advancable‹ in their status. The line of thought saw at least those Aborigines who, in the racial scientific logic, had ceased to be ›fully‹ Aboriginal capable of being brought up the ›white‹ and thus right way. The children of the Aborigines who beforehand were dislodged from their traditional countries, deported into reserves in favour of the agricultural land-taking or dwelling at the fringes of European settlements and sometimes even working for the planters or business people, were the targets of this desired ›absorption‹ into the ›white‹ society. After undergoing education and training, it was not uncommon for them to find employment as house maids to support ›white‹ women on farms and stations. The genotypical and phenotypical brightening was meant to be followed by cultural and educational enlightening at the (intentional or accepted) cost of family ties, history, tradition and heritage – but for the benefit of ›white Australia‹ and for the sake of ›racial‹ homogeneity.

Concurrently, ›whiteness‹ also enfolded its potency when, at the times of external endangerment by the so-called ›yellow peril‹ and in the light of possible hostile invasion, it cast a veil of equality over the social differences present in the Australian society. Overcoming internal tension areas in the context of ›class‹, ›gender‹ and ›nation‹ was the foundation on which the Australian colonies based their racist nation building to become the Commonwealth of Australia. ›Whiteness‹ was the identity-establishing basis on which the Australian society rested and which, promoted by the perceived pressure from outside, was extolled as virtue and aspiration.

Under these circumstances, the ›wages of whiteness‹ hard-won and earned by the ›white‹ sugar workers were complemented by ›profits of whiteness‹ and ›expenses of whiteness‹ for the whole society. The subvention of specific work for ›racial‹ reasons was reflected in profits which were the result of racistly motivated policies of market foreclosure and pricing. This brought about increasing encumbrances of the processing industries, the end-consumer and the taxpayer. The share of the ideological commitment necessary for the legitimization of these relations was initially unevenly distributed. Eventually, this was accomplished, if not jointly but along the same lines, with the support from governmental, entrepreneurial and union sides. The success of such an effort could be measured quantitatively by the unabated consumerist behaviour of the population. It would have nevertheless been hardly possible, had not its argumentation of the ›rhetoric of whiteness‹, on the one hand, unfolded in a climate which before and after the nation building was shaped by a broad basis of ›politics

of whiteness< and, on the other, had happened in an atmosphere which had been informed by a ›culture of whiteness<, in which a large part of the everyday manifestations of life were racistly connoted.

This being the case, racism at the end of the nineteenth century had not been the means but rather the motivation to transform the Queensland sugar production into a ›white< industry. Its historical evolution substantiates racism as a social relation whose formation was not complete until it acquired what is seen as its substance: to have a group of humans understand themselves through the exclusion of discriminated against others as equal and thus constitute a community. The reference point for such a socialization was an altogether imagined category. Nonetheless, at the time of the First Fleet, it had already received scientific blessings and had, in the progress of the nineteenth century, been consolidated with the involvement of numerous sciences to form a universally accepted classification of humanity, according to hierarchically arranged ›races<. Applying this concept in order to understand themselves as equal posed a substantial challenge for a society whose social classes, according to the judgment of domestic politicians as well as foreign critics, opposed each other like two different nations. From the beginning, therefore, the social formation of the ›white race< was accompanied by a fear about its decay that was expressed in warnings of degeneration and led to demands for eugenics.

The situation at the colonial periphery presented itself as basically the same but was modified by the experience of its two-sided frontier. On the one hand, the violence of the land appropriation supported the solidarity of the colonists, on the other hand, they were thought prone to succumb to the violence of the circumstances or give in to the temptation of ›going native<. The colonists were thus not only the heroic occupants of colonial outposts of the so-called ›white race< but were also on probation and had to prove themselves successful in the face of (gender-specifically modified) apprehensions regarding their failure in extreme conditions.

In Australia, the part of the land declared the ›empty North< became the stage, and the development of the sugar industry the scenario, for such a spectacle. From the start, it was unable to follow a descended dramaturgy because slavery was officially abolished, and the process of colonization had been accompanied by racist claims and warnings. ›Black labour< was simultaneously considered both indispensable for a profitable production under tropical conditions and unacceptable for the opening up and retention of the continent for the ›white race<.

When the federational population policy pressed for the fostering of European settlement in the northern climes to support the latter processes,

sugar cane grown on small farms was identified as benefitting this process, as it enabled planters and their families to gain a foothold in agriculture and landholding. In order to generate ›suitable‹ migrational increment, advertisements for jobs in the sugar industry were not only published in the southern colonies of Australia, but recruitment offices in the northern countries of Europe were used to attract additional immigration.

Cane sugar itself was not free from a racist context when it arrived in Australia. Originating in a region northeast of the Australian landmass, sugar cane travelled via India and Persia to the Mediterranean. Travelling further westwards, it had acquired its characteristic as a plantation crop that was cultivated by the use of forced labour. After sugar cane had crossed the Atlantic, its plantation cultivation was in addition linked to slavery and thus shaped the association of forced, hence ›cheap‹, ›black labour‹ with the production of sugar. This was meant to be replaceable by ›white labour‹ – albeit only, on the condition of the deprivation of the European workers' rights, as convict labour.

Under these premises, the sugar cane setts had been taken to Australia, but when they eventually thrived, the convict system had already been abolished. The sugar production down under was therefore commenced following traditional patterns: as a plantation cultivation exploiting ›black labour‹. In search of a new location of labour recruitment, the planters turned to the islands of the South Sea. The arrival of Pacific Islanders as the sugar workforce in the latter half of the nineteenth century was accompanied by suspicions of forced labour and kidnapping. Both stood in the context of slavery and slave trade, which had been abolished in the mother country decades before, and which, it was then conjectured, were now to be implemented in Australia. Nonetheless, it was less philanthropy or the desire to amend crimes committed against the Pacific Islanders which brought forth regulations of recruitment and employment. The confinement of labourers from the islands to work in the cane fields was a means of protection on behalf of the ›white‹ agricultural workers who considered the ›blacks‹ unfair competition.

The presence of ›black‹ workers increasingly became a thorn in the side of Australia on its way to Federation, as it was not only seen as an economic problem affecting southern industries but also contradictory to the desired egalitarianism in Australia. The latter's understanding fed on elements of anti-aristocratic civism and socialist views of society, but owed its appeal mostly to the amalgamation of set pieces of contemporary racism. It also engulfed the conceptions of equality in the very same ›white‹ aura that coined all ideological conceptions, from the demands of

the women's movement to the labour movement, from the scholastic curricula to the directive of the reservations, from the programmes of the parties to the legislation of the individual states and the Commonwealth. This held true also when at the outset of the twentieth century, and due to the building of a nation based on racist legislation (the Immigration Restriction Act and the Pacific Island Labourers Act were two of the acts to be passed after Federation), the first step could be taken in the emancipation of Queensland cane sugar from its connection with a colonial plantation crop and the exploitative framework of slavery in which it was embedded in the West Indies. However, its transformation was, once again, not so much motivated by abolitionist deliberations as it was an element in a larger process of nation building that translated sugar cultivation into a new but still racist context.

The process initiated by the willingness to foster a demographic change in the workforce of the sugar industry by deporting the Pacific Islanders, and increasingly replacing them by ›white‹ workers, was the practical implementation of bio-power, which was caused by the threat in which Australia saw itself. The claim of ownership which the British asserted over the Australian continent necessitated their occupation of the landmass by settlement. However, the majority of the population was located at the seaside of the southern colonies, while the north – furthered by the initial conviction that the ›white race‹ could not prevail in tropic climes – remained thinly settled. The tropical north with its continued employment of ›coloured‹ workers in the agricultural industries, as well as the farms and plantations owned by non-European people, was, therefore, considered adverse to the interests of ›white Australia‹. Not only were they seen as the experienceable discrepancy between a racistly understood equality of all and the practical colour divide of the workforce and population; in the light of the exogenous endangerment of the Australian landmass, the presence of ›non-white‹ settlers was, moreover, seen as weakening the defence of the European-Australians, who were certain that the ›coloured‹ inhabitants would turn against the ›whites‹ and side with the Chinese or Japanese invaders. The slow pace of populating was meant to be accelerated by the fostering of agricultural employment. This being the case, the subdivision of the large sugar cane plantations during the phase of financial depression was the first factor in the struggle against the ›empty North‹, which was seen as being the gateway to invasion by Asian settlers.

The government-fostered employment of Europeans in the sugar industry was the last step in generating jobs by discouraging the recruitment of ›non-white‹ workers and, additionally, provided financial subsidies,

that allowed for an improvement of wages and work conditions. This latter, however, had initially only been nominal. It was not until the ›white‹ workers used their ›racial‹ distinction from the former sugar workers to discredit their own working conditions as inadequate for members of the ›white race‹ that they were able to transfer their racist symbolic capital, at least partially, into wages of whiteness. The latter, of course, were not least used for the purchase of Australian sugar and, later on, other products purported to support ›white Australia‹. The ›racial‹ equality substantiated by this event was thus based on the inclusivist element in the ›race‹-dividing, class-uniting ›whiteness‹ prevalent in the Australian society.

The uniting characteristics of ›whiteness‹ were shaped by a specific form of intersectionality of the categories ›class‹, ›gender‹, ›nation‹ and ›race‹, which was focussed on the character of the healthy, strong, justice-loving, national-conscious and ›race‹-proud male workers. It was he who pretended to protect the women of all classes from exotic temptations and disloyal imprudence; he allegedly needed to remind the capitalist class enemy of his duties to his nation and ›race‹; without him the individual colonies purportedly would never have overcome their egotistic partial interests in support of national unity; he was, therefore, also considered the guarantor of the ›racial‹ identity of ›white Australia‹; and, lastly, even the hope of the whole ›white race‹ supposedly rested on him.

And yet the ›worker‹ himself could by no means take for granted his manliness and ›whiteness‹. He had started out as a convict at the bottom of society and had to prove himself in his eventually won freedom against migrants from diverse origins. Furthermore, he was flanked by varying male class characters during the progress of colonization. The frontiers of civilization at which he had to prove successful in the cultivation of the country, as well as in the battle against the indigenous population, always stood in the centre of his probation (and, at the same time, he had to sow the seeds on which the women could survive and the children could thrive). Stationed in Queensland, he was able to benefit from the increased upward mobility that was enabled by the presence of a large group of ›coloured‹ workers employed for menial tasks. But, simultaneously, he felt threatened by their alleged undercutting and weakening of his position in the labour conflict which, as he successively asserted, he was only able to overcome by emphasizing his ›whiteness‹. As a bushman and pioneer, he had been ascribed the (romanticized) ›bush savvy‹ that was constituted by his prevalence against the rough nature of the outback, the alleged encroachments of the indigenous population and the lonesomeness of the bush. But with the growing urbanization, the ›uprooted‹ city dweller more

interested in leisure activities than the prosperity of the ›white‹ society formed the suspicious counterpoise to what was seen as the ›true‹ Australian. This was added by the circumstance that it was supposed to be the ›worker‹ and his family who were needed to ›conquer‹ the tropics and signal defence preparedness against purportedly encroaching neighbours.

In this atmosphere, the ›woman‹ had a tough time holding her own. For settlement in northern climes of Australia, her presence and her contribution to proliferation was inevitable. Yet – in contrast to the ›non-white‹ woman whose gender was overwritten by ›race‹ and her employability in the cane fields beyond doubt – it was considered uncertain for a long time to which extent it was possible for her to work and live in such an adverse climate. In the sexist zeitgeist, her pioneering work had mainly been narrowed to housekeeping. In the context of ›white Australia‹, her importance lay in her reproductive capability: she was to provide the appropriate progeny by bearing and educating the children. This eventually made her the weak point in the defence of the society. On the one hand, her increasingly politicized position and her role as householder made her a serious discussion partner regarding protectionism in terms of commodities. The progressive urban ›new woman‹ was even on the verge of forsaking her traditional role by pressing for her right to vote and work. This was seen as a masculinization of womanhood and as detrimental to the family-focussed position in society that she was ascribed. On the other hand, women were considered overly susceptible to the luring promises allegedly made in particular by Chinese and Japanese men. This made them potential ›race‹ traitors in the case of non-Europeans already living in Australia. But it constituted an even bigger threat in the event of Asian invasion, as they could voluntarily or forcibly compromise Australia's eugenic policies. The woman, presumably as morally frail as she was physically, with the help of the mind-weakening opium would fall prey to Asian temptations or to their overpowering violence and, carried matters to extremes, would not only be forever sullied in her reputation but would also not be available for ›white‹ procreation. According to a glut of political pamphlets and invasion narratives, she could only be saved from this shameful fate by the ›true‹ Australian man.

He was also the one to stand up against the ›capitalist‹. United in the labour movement and politicized in the Labor Party, he provided the opposition to the favouritism of employers for non-European employees. He was under the suspicion of prizing profit over ›race‹ and of starving of the ›worker‹. At a time when the immigration restriction had to be modified because Britain wanted to minimize any negative impact on their trade

agreement with Japan, his commercial relations with Asian business partners in Australia and overseas seemed to devoid the ›white‹ society of wealth and contribute to the enrichment of the ›others‹. Furthermore, he was seen as antagonizing the ›white‹ settlement in the north by preferring the recruitment of non-European workers or substituting Europeans with them. This was not only considered a manifestation of his self-enrichment and an affront to the ›worker‹ but was also undermining the ›white‹ population policy. It was only after Federation that his role model gradually changed until he was able to present himself as a defender of Australian commodities aiming for the maintenance of ›white Australia‹.

Nevertheless, the consolidation of the ›colonies‹ was anything but an undisputed programme. Instead, the elites of the individual colonies for a long time did their utmost to defend their sinecures and prevent an amalgamation. In the end, the problems of immigration restrictions turned the balance in favour of Federation. The demands for a more effective control of immigration directed the attention to the securing of exterior boundaries and thus reinforced the advance towards the Commonwealth. But on the way to Federation, too, Queensland proved to be a particular case. On the one side stood the representatives from the other colonies who considered Queensland's standing on the continued employment of the Pacific Islanders in sugar industry an obstacle to the fiscal and economic equality of the future states. On the other side stood Queensland itself, or in particular its financial interest groups. The insistence on the circumstance that without ›black labour‹ its sugar industry would collapse almost caused the exclusion of at least parts of Queensland from the merging of the colonies. The sugar capitalists supported the cause brought forth by the separationist movement to continue independently from the Commonwealth, and thus be able to maintain the recruitment of the Islanders for the industry. It was only the labour movement as a representative of the ›worker‹ who eventually tipped the scales in favour of Federation and, with this, of the ›racial‹ exclusiveness that lay at the heart of the ›white Australia‹ policy.

Before this backdrop, ›nation‹ and ›race‹ did well-nigh coalesce into a reciprocally conditional unity. Australia was ›white‹, and ›whiteness‹ was eventually indeed depended on Australianness as its warrantor. In this process, Australian ›whiteness‹ was eventually seen as the nucleus and guarantor of a world-wide ›whiteness‹. In times of eugenic debates and anxieties about degeneration, the Australian men – toughened by rural life and farm work – became the bearers of hope for the ›white race‹. They did not only stand the test in the day-to-day conquest of the bush but, at least in the realms of the British Empire, also as combat-ready soldiers.

In the course of the Boer War, but above all during the First World War, they became the ›diggers of the Anzac‹, who fought simultaneously for Australianness, Britishness and ›whiteness‹. In a nutshell, intersectionality in the Australian context was overly male-centred and class-focussed. It zeroed in on the ›bloke‹, who was willing and ready to face every enemy and every difficulty, and declared him the only one able to defend everyone and everything: the women of all classes, the capitalists, the nation and the whole ›white race‹.

The invasion novels, initially published at the end of the nineteenth century, identified this focus in fictive narrations, which pointed at the vulnerability of womanhood but also at the female susceptibility to foreign seduction. They unveiled the ruthlessness of capitalists who, for the sake of their profit, forsook their ›race‹ and either employed ›coloured‹ workers, or even did business with and enabled the establishment of business people from overseas. They found the saviours of ›white Australia‹ – many a time declared the last ›white‹ stronghold of the world – not in the ranks of the political decision makers, the plutocratic groups, the education elite and sometimes not even in the hands-on labour force, but in the traditional, elementary figures of the bushmen, who were brave and keen enough to outwit the invaders and restore Australia to its imputed greatness. In some cases, the portrayal was much direr, and in an eschatological scenario the ›white‹ bastion fell with hardly any hope for persistence of ›whiteness‹. Circulated both as books and as series in popular newspapers, the invasion novels laid the ideological ground for the basic anxiety that spawned ›racial‹ cohesion. This, in turn, served as a point of reference in the subsequent campaigns for the consumption of Queensland sugar as a service to the nation and its ›racial‹ integrity.

This act of consumerism to the benefit of the nation was influenced by the consumer culture imported from the mother country in the middle of the nineteenth century. But it had been adjusted to the conditions at the colonial periphery and had been modified accordingly. In this process, it had soon happened that the consumption of sugar was no longer seen as a mere gratification of the lower social strata signalling their participation in the colonial project (as it had initially been the case when the imported plantation sugar had been a welcome component of the convict rations during the time of transportation). Its production was scandalized in particular by the emerging labour movement, and was poignantly expressed as the antagonism between socially ›black‹ and ›white‹ sugar. As a consequence, this commodity, sought after and intensively used by all parts of the population, virtually turned into a ›nucleus of crystallization‹ of the

day-to-day debates about a ›white Australia‹ and its accompanying multi-faceted cultural emanations.

The demand for doubly ›white‹ sugar was primarily confined to its production, but, at the same time, it began to politicize its consumption. The everyday consumption of sugar became a loyal act and a symbolic action. The utilization of sugar evolved into a constituent of the validation and reconstruction of ›whiteness‹. Whoever sweetened the tea with doubly ›white‹ sugar, contributed to the preservation of ›white‹ jobs in the tropical north of Australia. In this way, not only was its occupation by the Australians legitimated by the cultivation of cane, but the area was also guarded against vacantness and fortified as a ›white‹ bulwark against foreign desires. Whoever baked scones with doubly ›white‹ sugar, secured fair wages for ›white‹ workers. This allowed for the dispensation with ›black labour‹ which, in turn, enabled the elimination of what was deemed a persistent hotspot – the potential of ›alien races‹ to facilitate the degeneration of the ›white race‹ – and ensured the eugenically adjured keeping clean of the ›racial‹ corpus. Whoever prepared jam with doubly ›white‹ sugar, preserved, besides fruits, also the own entitlement to a country which had been promoted into the light of history reputedly only through ›white‹ labour and aptitude in the field of civilization. The history of sugar became the legend of the same ›white‹ ingenuity which initially brought the cane through dangerous shoals, cleared the wilderness and laid the ground for it to eventually successfully cultivate it.

In spite of that, consuming sugar as ›consuming whiteness‹ was not an intoxication that dissolved all the ›non-white‹ elements of the sweet drug into a ›white‹ fog of supremacist oblivion. They were not disposed of but displaced to the exterior, where, as permanent threat against this outpost of European culture, they iridesced in the colours of racist lightning at the horizon of ›white Australia‹. For this reason, ›consuming whiteness‹ coincided with ›doing whiteness‹ and answered, at least in this case, the question what consumers are actually doing when they are consuming: The Australian sugar consumers were engaged in the daily reconstruction of their labelled-as-›white‹ ›race‹.

On the one hand, this was without doubt a feature of ideological discourses. From the political parties to the organization of workers and sugar planters, from the ›Australian-Made‹ Preference League to the Housewives' Associations, the subject of sugar was relentlessly problematized. Here, it stood in the context of a ›white‹ culture which in all fields from education to theatre, from sport to religion, from journalism to literature, from advertising to painting addressed the several dimensions of the ›race

question and, right up to the singing of the national anthem, extracted a commitment to ›whiteness‹ from the Australians. The boundaries were, in this context, by no means definitive and often contested; whereat sexist, classist and ethnic lines played a major role, and even boundaries regarded as ›racial‹ proved to not be fixed for evermore. On the other hand, the consumption of sugar went beyond production, distribution and reproduction of ideological patterns. It was a social performance by which social antagonisms were continually sugar-coated. In the production and consumption of sugar, ›profits of whiteness‹, ›wages of whiteness‹ and ›fees of whiteness‹ were varyingly allocated. Their social differentiation, however, was repeatedly overlaid as a result of its declaration as defence expenditure.

In this context, the consumption of sugar not only satisfied the caloric requirements or the craving for sweets. It also literally meant ›consuming whiteness‹, an everyday activity that stretched from breakfast via food shopping, cooking, lunch, baking, afternoon tea to the evening desert and was, in between or afterwards, supplemented by readings or events that gave the ideological dimensions of silent consumption verbose expression. ›Consuming whiteness‹ was, therefore, not only the eating of existing social relations but also the reconstruction of social relations – a permanent process of ›white‹ self-assurance, in which, on the one side, words and pictures from diverse sources were condensed into a big narration that interwove small stories of individual heroic deeds in the context of settlement, development and cultivation of the country with the bigger drama of struggle (for survival) of the ›white race‹; on the other side, ›whiteness‹ could be immediately incorporated whilst providing ideological self-affirmation as well as bodily satisfaction. Since ›consuming whiteness‹ had discursive but also dietary dimensions, the indulgence in sweetened tea during the reading of a newspaper article on ›white Australia‹ coalesced well-nigh casually with the core content of the race theories, which based their discriminatory image of humanity on the hierarchization of cultural proficiencies which were supposedly due to the differing physical conditions of the people.

All things considered, ›consuming whiteness‹ was an extensive form of ›doing race‹, in which all sections of the population participated ideologically as well as bodily. In its centre stood a sugarmania whose quantitatively measurable consumption was in direct proportion to its claim to respectability – for members of the lower class in the community of Australians as well as for the former convict colony and the remote outpost in the league of ›white‹ nations. At the same time, the accompanying political debates and propagandist enactments testified to the nationalist

and racist charging of the ›doubly white sugar‹, whose production and consumption was not only supposed to ensure but also preserve identity. The indulgence in sugar was thus made a public duty and likewise contributed, as placarded by the sugar producers and attested by politicians, to the national defence.

›Whiteness‹ was, in this context, an intensively negotiated topos that was present in all levels of society. In sugar, it virtually took on crystalline form while for the whole culture it provided a racist aura. There were practically no aspects of life which were not shaped by it. To these also belonged the endeavour to repeatedly render it visible. Even the train that travelled the country to promote national products was painted white. At the stations it visited, celebrations of ›whiteness‹ took place on a regular basis. Genders, generations, classes and nationalities congregated to declare their collective belief in ›white Australia‹.

On each day the train sojourned in a city, its citizens consumed about one hundred and fifty grams of sugar per capita. By doing so, they not only demonstrated their will to keep unadulterated the ›white race‹ but also regenerated body and mind with the help of those crystals for whose double ›whiteness‹ they were willingly going to great expense. In a market society (at least in the eyes of its ideologists), there could hardly be any more lasting proof for the deep entrenchment and wide dissemination of the advocating of ›white Australia‹ than the day-to-day procession to the sugar bags in the grocery stores and the daily voting at the tills.