

Institute of Social Change and Critical Inquiry Summer Scholarship Report

The ISCCI summer scholarship has proven immensely beneficial to the development of my thesis and my initiation into the honours year more generally. The time afforded by the scholarship has enabled me to spend time in consultation with my supervisors and in expanding my academic connections. Most importantly the ISCCI scholarship has enabled me undertake considerable secondary research and initiate archival investigation. In addition, I have begun to acquire the study aids which will help me in writing my thesis. Finally, the scholarship has provided me with the time and resources to engage in cultural experiences which have made me better acquainted with my area of inquiry. Overall, the ISCCI scholarship has enabled my thesis to mature considerably. It has also ensured confrontation with the problems and issues which I will have to face over the course of this year.

Consultation:

The contact which I have had with my supervisors over the course of the summer has been particularly valuable. The feedback of Catriona Elder and Adrian Vickers has helped me to clarify the direction of my thesis. My contact with Catriona Elder was particularly important as she is away on leave until next semester. In a situation which was reliant on self motivation, regular contact with Adrian Vickers ensured I kept my work on track. Adrian was able to provide advice on the direction my research and presented solutions in the face of difficulties. His input and advice has proven essential in the early stages of this thesis.

In addition to consultation with my supervisors I have also developed contacts with other academics. Of particular use was my discussions with Charles Hawksley. Charles' research experience in the context of Malaya and knowledge of relevant literature has proven insightful. In addition I am pursuing contact with post graduate student Vicki Crinis. I have read Vicki's honours thesis which explores the experience of women clothing workers in Australia and Malaysia.¹ The comparative

¹ Vicki. D. Crinis, *A Comparative Study of Women Clothing Workers in Malaysia and Australia*, A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from the University of Wollongong, Department of History and Politics, 1993

aspect of Vicki's work and her exploration of notions of gender promises to be insightful to my own honours project.

Secondary Research:

Secondary research has consumed much of my time on the scholarship. I have devoured a range works and written literature reviews for many of them.² A number of works have been of particular use. Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* has proven instructive in tracing discourses of sexuality and race.³ The 'Euro-centrism' of Foucault's work, however, makes the adaptation of his theories somewhat problematic in the broader colonial context. In this sense the work of Laura Stoler is essential.⁴ Stoler criticises Foucault for 'short-circuiting Empire' arguing that this limited view results in an inadequate assessment of the relationship between sexuality and race.⁵ By allying the work of Foucault with Stoler's critique of it I intend to develop a theory of race and sexuality with which to approach Malaya and Australia.

Stoler offers more than a theory of race and sexuality. In pursuing an analysis of Stoler's work I am seeking to test accepted historical explanations in a new context. The scholar's work focuses on the 'sexual politics of race' in French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies.⁶ Stoler acknowledges unique characteristics of colonial rule under different administration but maintains that there exists a common European discourse of race and sexuality.⁷ The direction of my research project will enable me to examine the applicability of Stoler's thesis under a different colonial administration revealing either conformity in European conceptions of race and sexuality, as Stoler maintains, or emphasising the diversity of perception and experience.

In essence, I am exploring the validity of a generalised European discourse of sexuality and race by exploring the specifics of British colonial rule within a comparative framework. Through analysis of mixed relationships in Malaya and

² Please find these literature reviews attached.

³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction*, (1976), Vintage Books, New York, 1990

⁴ Laura Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1995

⁵ *ibid*, 6 - 7

⁶ *ibid*, p vii

Australia I intend to test the validity of the historian's analysis, develop the ideas of Stoler and hopefully reveal novel historical dilemmas to be contemplated

Frances Gouda and Julia Clancy-Smith's chapter in *Domesticating the Empire* has proven essential in understanding the realm of scholarship from which my own work emerges. Gouda and Clancy-Smith plot the development of colonial and post-colonial historiography and discuss the theorists which have forged the way.⁸ My thesis is both reflective of the historiographic developments discussed in *Domesticating the Empire* aspiring to be associated with such work. The argument of Gouda and Clancy-Smith helped me to understand the possibilities and limitations of my thesis.

Charles Allen's *Tales from the South China Seas* has proven essential in terms of first hand accounts of interracial relationships and perceptions of such interactions.⁹ Allen's compilation of oral history accounts communicates an intimate and personal view of colonial society impossible to attain by examining merely legislation and literature. The work altered me to the fact that a diversity of perception regarding race and sexuality could be coexisting at the same time.

Catriona Elder's work has been insightful on many levels particularly in regards to the use of fiction in historiography but also in a more generalised understanding of Australian history. In terms of the literature aspect of my thesis the work of Catriona Elder has been very influential. Elder examines fictional works 'conduct manuals'¹⁰ teaching white Australian how to 'imagine' assimilation, and race relations more generally, expressing their fears, insecurities and desires and attempting to resolve them. Elder convinced me of how rich a historical source fictional can be.

Marcia Langton has made me aware of the sensitivities in approaching the indigenous experience of colonialism.¹¹ Langton's work offers much to my thesis in the way of understanding the Indigenous perspective of colonialism and the complex

⁷ *ibid*, 11

⁸ Frances Gouda and Julia Clancy-Smith, 'Introduction', in Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, (eds), *Domesticating the Empire*, University Press of Virginia, Virginia, 1998, pp 1 - 20

⁹ Charles Allen, (ed), *Tales from the South China Seas*, Futura Publications, London, 1984

¹⁰ *ibid*, p 37

¹¹ Marcia Langton, 'Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television...', Australian Film Commission, Sydney, 1993

relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. The scholar introduced me to the possibility of producing work which was ‘anti-colonial.’¹²

Aside from the literature which I have reviewed a number of works served to be insightful. I have read Rupert Emerson’s *Malaysia* acquiring much needed knowledge of the workings of British colonialism in this area.¹³ Of particular use was Emerson’s discussion of the nature of British control officially indirect but in reality seeking total control.¹⁴ The work of Emerson in has proven fruitful to my understanding of Malaya from a legislative sense.

I have also spent considerable time reading fictional works. I found Vance Palmer’s *Cronulla* particularly interesting.¹⁵ Palmer depicts the ambivalence of attitudes concerning inter racial relationships. Friends of the principle character, Buckley, for example, question what he might be forced to say if the ‘half caste’ Elsie ‘falls in love with your son?’¹⁶ In addition, to Palmer’s work I have enjoyed many of Somerset Maugham’s short stories.¹⁷

Maugham’s work illuminates perceptions of interracial sex with a particular focus on the children resulting from such interactions. One of the Maugham’s characters declares of his half Malay children: ‘It’s funny how you get to like them...When they’re your own it doesn’t seem to matter that they’ve got a touch of the tar-brush.’¹⁸ The moral judgments of Maugham emerge in the ‘half-caste’ characters, inferior to the British born and destined to let us down, after all, ‘They’ve got no chance in the world. Ever.’¹⁹

In regards to the literature aspect of my thesis, I have confronted a number of dilemmas. This is particularly relevant in regards to the Malayan example. The

¹² *ibid*, p 7

¹³ Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*, Oxford University Press, London, 1964

¹⁴ *ibid*, p 58

¹⁵ Vance Palmer, *Cronulla: A Story of Station Life*, Cornstalk Publications, Sydney, 1925

¹⁶ *ibid*, p 78

¹⁷ Somerset Maugham, *The Complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham*, Heinemann. London, 1951

¹⁸ Somerset Maugham ‘The Yellow Streak’, in *ibid* p 461

¹⁹ *ibid*

works of Somerset Maugham and Sir Frank Swettenham certainly contain material relevant to my focus on enquiry. However, they are written earlier than my intended time period.²⁰ Following consultation with my supervisor I considered the possibility of moving my enquiry forward, to the turn of the century. However, evidence pertaining to the case study element of my question is directing me to investigate a later period. In this respect the Anthony Burgess's *Malayan Trilogy* is emerging as a possible site for attention. In this later period there are a number of relevant Australian fictional works which could prove to be of use. In the Australian context Katherine Prichard's *Coonardoo* and Xavier Herbert's *Capricornia* are possibilities.

Archival Research:

The research which I was able to undertake within the archives was particularly productive. First hand archival research is an experience to which I am almost entirely new. Thus, my visits to the National Library and the National Archives along with contact with the State Records has ensured I can begin my honours year already equipped with essential skills and knowledge. In initiating archival research I have been confronted with problems of access and scarcity of evidence which are slowly forcing me to reconsider aspects of my thesis. This is particularly relevant in regards to the case study element of my project.

My visit to the National Library enabled me to become aquatinted with the way the library works acting as a kind of orientation. My aim in this visit was to access the *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*. This was not a simple process. Some of the material which I had hoped to access was unavailable. As the project is very new and material continues to be accumulated oral accounts may at times be unavailable as continued work is undertaken. In addition to this issue there were also legal complications in viewing and listening to the material. The library is required to submit the accounts to legal advisers to ensure no derogatory comments are made by the interviewee.

²⁰ Swettenham's *Malay Sketches* was published in 1895, the *Real Malay* in 1900 and *Also and Perhaps* in 1912.

In the end I was able to access five oral history accounts. As I had suspected much of the material was out of my period of analysis. The interviewees mostly consisted of the children of inter-racial relationships which had occurred during the 1930s. Nonetheless, their descriptions of their parents relationships proved insightful and I may be able to make use of this material in the case study section of my thesis. The final account I examined was an exciting find. It consisted of the story of a white man engaged in a relationship with an Aboriginal women. The individual discloses his feelings for this women and their struggles to be together. He discusses the negative reactions of his family and society in general but emphasizes his determination to continue their relationship. Unfortunately, this is a relationship which was initiated during the early 1940s and was also a Victorian case study. It seems, however, too relevant a piece of evidence to ignore and I am presently pursuing permission to use the material.

Aside from the Australian side of research at the National Library I also spent a considerable amount of time exploring the Malaysian resources. The library holds a range of historiographical works which are relevant to my focus of enquiry.²¹ In addition, there are memoirs from colonial administrators which could prove interesting.²² The library also holds law reports and journals written during the twentieth century with issues during 1920s and 1930s.²³ These are resources which must be pre-ordered before you visit the library as they are stored off site. I intend to view this material over the course of the next month.

The University of Wollongong Library also holds material pertinent to colonial Malaya. Within the library I found an enormous array of correspondence files acquired from the Public Record Office of London dating and from 1867 to 1896. These papers were marked only with the descriptions 'Correspondence' and a date. With no index of the material I hardly knew where to begin. I chose one microfilm randomly in order to investigate what these records contained. The collection which I accessed dealt with the successful construction of a telegraph line from Rangoon to

²¹ For example, Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly, *Maternities and Modernities* and Lenore Manderson, *Sickness and the State*

²² For example, Victor Purcell, *Memoirs of a Malayan Official*

²³ For example, Law Reports from the Federated Malay States dating from 1906 and the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* with copies ranging from 1923 to 1947.

Singapore and Bangkok and ultimately connecting India and Australia. In addition to the correspondence files the library holds Straits Settlements papers dating from 1806 to 1864. This material included Governors diaries covering marine, financial and judicial concerns as well as general issues.

There were also microfilmed papers dealing with government consultations in Singapore, Penang and Bengal and papers dealing with all sort of 'expeditions' in these areas. I chose to examine a governor's diary from 1852 which was incredibly difficult to read. From what I could gather the author was concerned with trade, labour and convicts. The Straits Settlements papers and the correspondence film provide a wealth of information concerning the government attitudes and policies and general life in Malaya. Unfortunately the amorphous quantity of the material, inadequate referencing and the fact that the material emerges out of my time frame makes this avenue of inquiry not worth the effort.

In addition to archival research at the National Library and the Wollongong University Library I also undertook investigation of the material held by the State Records of New South Wales. The State Records holds the records of the Aborigines Protection Board. Thus, material relevant to the legislative element of my thesis is available. I was also interested in accessing the correspondence files of the board in which I hoped to find letters asking for permission to marry or other material relevant to the case study aspect of my thesis. Unfortunately, the correspondence pre 1949 has been lost with only fragments remaining. In addition to this complication is that of access. I was already aware that the cultural sensitivity of much of this material has resulted in its restriction. In order to gain access to the records of the Board of Protection researches are required to contact the Department of Aboriginal Affairs which I did during February. I was told by the archive section that I need the name of the individual I am looking for and I must ask permission of their nearest living relative. I explained that I was looking for more general information seeking a case study for my thesis. The person I spoke was unsure of the process in this situation and assured me he would call back with the details.

The scarcity of evidence and problems of access have forced me to reconsider my focus on New South Wales. I am currently exploring the possibility of focusing on

Victoria. I initiated this change in focus by exploring the web site of the Public Records of Victoria. However, I found their web site less than accessible. With the encouragement of my supervisor I visited the National Archives to see if there might be a solution to these issues. Despite the fact that as a State responsibility most surviving records are held within state archives, I did come across some useful information. The National Archives actually holds considerable material relevant to Victoria. This is a result of the decision in 1975 to transfer records of Aboriginal Affairs to the Federal Government. The National Archives produce publication, *My heart is breaking*²⁴, which details the material pertaining to Aboriginal people in the Australian archives and also those contained within the Victorian State Records. The ICCSI scholarship ensured I had the resources to purchase this publication which has proven most useful.

It seems the Victorian records are far more extensive to that of New South Wales for the period in which I am interested. Extensive correspondence file and case files are available. In addition, regulations regarding access are not as strict as in New South Wales although some limitations do apply. This is, however, complicated by the location of the material. It is held in the Melbourne office and would require me to travel there in person. In order to make this possible I have applied for another scholarship offered to honours students.²⁵ A focus on Victoria would make the possibility of using the *Bringing them Home* material more likely. I am currently considering bringing the date forward in order to make use of this material. The first hand accounts contained within *Tales From the South China Seas* fits more conveniently into a 1930s and 1940s time frame. The later date would also work in with the literature elements of my thesis.

Study Aids:

Over the course of the summer months I have investigated study aids which will no doubt will useful in approaching my thesis. I have explored the logistics of the

²⁴ Ian MacFarlene and Myrna Deverall, (eds), *'My heart is breaking': A Joint Guide to Records about Aboriginal People in the Public Record Office of Victoria and the Australian Archives*, (1993) Commonwealth of Australia, 1997

²⁵ I successfully applied for the Mary Wade honours scholarship so I should have the resources to make the trip.

'endnote' system of referencing. Endnote has been installed on my computer and I have been able to read the program guide for the system. I remain a novice endnote user but I am fortunate enough to be aware of this system and I will take advantage of the course offered by the library later in the year.

Cultural Experiences:

The ISCCI scholarship provided me with the financial support and time to enjoy cultural experiences which I believe will make me better acquainted with my area of inquiry. The highlight was 'Black Chicks Talking', a play starring Leah Purcell and staged at the Sydney Opera House. This play provided insight into the Aboriginal perspective and the diversity of the Aboriginal experience fuelling new ideas and creative rigour. In particular, I was struck by the Malayan/Aboriginal inter-cultural experience, a connection which I can perhaps contemplate in the pages of my thesis without exploring it in detail. In addition to this play I saw productions including *Australian Rules*, *Beneath Clouds* and *Black and White* all of which proved insightful.

Progress:

The ISCCI scholarship has provided me with time to contemplate my project without the pressures of general survival. The time accorded by the scholarship enabled me to refine and develop my thesis considerably. As a result I have a clearer idea of the direction of my project which is reflected in the thesis plan included. Despite a certain clarity of direction my thesis definitely remains a work in progress. At times over the summer I felt overwhelmed by the size of my thesis. I am realising the necessity of confining my avenue of inquiry further. In addition, I continue to struggle to come up with a thesis question which encompasses all aspects of my inquiry. Overall, this has been a valuable experience for which I am extremely grateful. I believe this scholarship has given me a much needed head start which I hope will be reflected in the final product.

In addition, I feel Foucault's discourse analysis demonstrate a problem of scale. From my initial investigations I have become aware of a multiplicity of discourse in which no single dominate ideology reigns supreme.

This thesis is an analysis of the production of discourse of race and sexuality in a selection of government legislation and popular fictions from the 1920sa and 1930s and focusing on interaction between white popple and Aboringials. In doing so I will examine the relationship between official discourse and their non-official interpretations examining the impacts of such deals within society more generally.

Institute of Social Change and Critical Inquiry

Summer Research Scholarship Report

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