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Audience and Author: The Reading of the 'White Expert'

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This paper uses performativity theories to explore the question of audience as it relates to reading the performance of the 'white expert'. The 'white expert' is one whose words play them out to be someone with certain knowledges about racism; someone using those knowledges to work against racism and inequality. Yet, the 'white expert' is also bodily/performatively positioned as an accessory to racism and inequality. When audiencing a text, the audience/reader is influenced by both the identity posed by the author (expert/ally) and the white author's body (oppressor). There are times when the body's performance of whiteness upstages the text's performance of expert. This paper seeks to understand when and how the performance of 'white body' upstages the performance of 'expert body'. What are the implications of audience/reader focus for an author? What kind of imaginings and positions are produced when the white expert is abjected by the audience?

Introduction

"It was a black school principal that told the black children that more was going to be expected of them because they were black. Now the principal is being accused of being a racist. That's not racism - is it?" my white friend asks me.

"I walked into a store in a town where I was vacationing and everyone stopped and stared at me. I still can't figure out why. Was it because of my colour, or were they merely surprised to see a new face? Was it racism or curiosity?" my American Indian friend asks me.

Both of these anecdotes portray people attempting to make racism more visible, more acknowledged, more delineated. In the first instance, we have a white person who attempts to discover or delineate racism - but why, for what purpose? The desire to locate racism, I think, is really a move to locate it outside ourselves. As

Aanerud (1999) points out, the desire to locate racism often acts as an attempt to create a distinction “between identity and actions” (50). This distinction serves to bolster the “construction of an innocent whiteness” (Aanerud 1999: 50). If there is such a thing as an “innocent” whiteness, then racism can be defined and categorized in actions. If one can delineate what counts as racism, perhaps one has a better chance of governing one's actions so as to appear to be non-racist. If the definition of racism - and a racist - can be fully defined, then the performance of “non-racist” will be easier to affect. It would be easier for a white person to portray themselves as non-racist.

In the second anecdote, we have a person of colour who attempts to define racism and acknowledge it. The move here, however, is not to locate racism so as to locate it outside oneself. Rather, it is a move to define racism so as to better survive; so as to know when to be careful and worried. bell hooks (1999) explores the black imagining of the white body where the white body is associated with terrorism. She calls this move to locate racism a survival tactic. hooks (1999) recalls, “I learned as a child that to be ‘safe’ it was important to recognize the power of whiteness, even to fear it” (175). Of course, the very fact that my friend has to wonder about whether or not she is in a terrorizing environment, is an effect of racism. If racism were not sometimes covert and covered, it would be easier to know when to be on guard.

The other performer in these anecdotes is me. I am the witness, the audience to these anecdotes. I am being asked to acknowledge and define racism. I am being asked to approve of my friends’ ‘takes’ on different situations. I am being asked to comment, not just because I am a friend, but because my friends know that I study race and racism. I am being asked to evaluate racism, not merely as a friend, but as some sort of expert who is supposed to have a more sensitive or more informed opinion on these matters. I am also very obviously white. If I say, “yes, that was racism,” or “no, of course that is not racism,” or “I don't know - what do you think about it?,” does it make a difference that the response is coming from a white body? Does my colour in any way conflict with or diminish my status as “expert,” in their eyes? How will they, as an audience, respond to my reply?

For me, these kinds of experiences evoke questions about the roles of teller and listener. They evoke questions about the position and standing of a white teller vis a vis a white audience versus an audience of people of colour. These questions become particularly generative when they are applied to academic writing within Critical Whiteness Studies. In a textual encounter, the body, significantly the white body, is more easily covered over or muted with phrases and injunctions for social justice and equality. In an academic setting, whenever we attempt to write or “speak” to an issue, we position ourselves as “experts,” as knowers. So, in academic texts, we become knowers without bodies. We become experts without the weight of bodily significations. Of course, this is why naming one's

body has become an expected ritual within Critical Whiteness Studies texts. The idea is that everyone speaks from a position of bias and the body is a part of and even enacts that bias. However, even in the naming of the body, because it is a textual encounter, the body does not have quite as much weight as in a live and visual encounter. I agree with Scheie (2006) and other performance theorists, that a live body creates a tension, a conundrum, “a restless provocation,” that does not exist when the body is absent but assumed within a text (14). It becomes easy, perhaps irresistible, for a white person to fashion the body of the author, as somehow always circumspect and in-line with social justice goals. This is only one half of the textual equation, of course. In a textual encounter, there is the author within the text, but there is also the reader/audience to that text.

The reader is an audience that is always-already perceived or accounted for by the author/performer who fashions textual performances, deploys particular discourses and desires particular results. The reader/audience intercepts and interprets performances within particular discursive contexts which influence the ways that the audience consumes a text. The author may attempt to deploy particular discourses in his/her text, and yet those intended messages or significations may become arrested or mutate into something completely different as they are consumed by the audience/reader.

This is a particularly interesting situation when it comes to white authors involved in Critical Whiteness Studies or other similar anti-racist, theoretical stances. White authors textually fashion themselves as part of an anti-racist project. They attempt to make whiteness visible, thereby disrupting the power that whiteness derives from invisibility. They attempt to comment on and disrupt racist discourses and societal structures. However, as a white body engaged in a project of dispossessing whiteness of its power, the white author is in a questionable and suspect position vis a vis the reading audience. The audience, and the implication of that readerly gaze, invites the white author to fashion a self that is somehow more acceptable to the audience. This of course, brings up the question who is the perceived audience? How does the author's definition or perception of the audience affect the textual portrayal of the author. As to the audience, how do they take up the performances of an author? Does it matter if the audience member is white or not? Just as the author attempts to define himself/herself in light of the gaze from the reading audience, do audience members define themselves, to some degree, as they go through the process of accepting or rejecting the textual performance of the author?

This paper (with some reticence on the part of the white author) seeks to explore the ways that white authors fashion themselves within their texts as a performance *for* an audience. White authors strategically deploy language that will pose the white author as acceptable and even laudable to the audience. In the context of Critical Whiteness Studies, the “audience” for which the white author is performing, is an

audience of the not-white “other” or of the “informed” white. The author attempts to position himself/herself as a kin to (skin too) the “other”. This is a difficult task given that the white body, within the context of most anti-racist projects, is always-already a signification of power and oppression, in opposition to the way the author is fashioned within the text.

This paper also seeks to theorize some of the ways that audiences consume and react to the interplay and opposition of texts and bodies. I suggest that, when the significations of the body overtake the fashionings of the author, the audience not only “reads” the author differently, but that audience members go through a process whereby they also define themselves vis-à-vis the author. However, while the white author is usually trying to position herself/himself in alignment with the audience, audience members will often position themselves in opposition, or resistance to the author. For all audience members, this usually results in a stance of “I am not you”. For people of colour, this stance is a resistance to the author’s attempts at alignment or kinship. For white members of the audience, this “I am not you” stance allows the white person to feel proud of his/her ability to discover the covered whiteness of another white. It becomes a double move whereby the white audience member can resist the white author’s text while not necessarily resisting whiteness.

Finally, this paper also attempts to theorize some of the ways that the audience can, does, and should affect the white author as he/she engages in writing anti-racist texts. In order to understand the ways that authors textually fashion a self, and that audiences read or take-up textual and corporeal codes, it is important to briefly discuss performativity in language and identity.

Performativity in Identity

The crux of this paper deals with the interplay, intersections, and crevices between what an author fashions for a reading audience, and what the audience reads onto the author. In order to explore these issues, it is important to define some terms as I use them in this paper. I want to draw attention to the differences between the terms performance, and performative - in all its various definitions.

I would like to define performance here as the ability of a subject to create, in both word and action, an identity for himself/herself. This is what Aycok (1995) refers to as a “self-fashioning” that is enacted to achieve desired results. It is the creation of a persona for the audience to see. Performance implies both desire and agency on the part of the subject. However, it does not imply that this persona is enacted to replace or cover “the real”. Rather, the person performs or enacts the body to either further corroborate the discursive and corporeal codes read onto the body, or to act against those discursive codes.

This idea of performance stands in slight contrast to the performative, as Butler defines it. Butler points out that identity is a “cultural accomplishment”(1999: 173). It is “a set of signs or enactments that a body reflects, takes up or upon itself. (Butler 1999: 173). Identity is constituted in and through the discourses iterated by and upon the subject. While Butler does not give up on the idea of some agency, that agency is significantly limited by the fact that a subject only achieves subjecthood through the discourses iterated onto the body. The body/subject is a production of discourse where the discourse can “produce the effect it names” (Butler 1993: 225). That is to say, it is discourses of identity and the racial imaginings produced by those discourses that are “the instruments of that subject's becoming” (Butler 1997: 11). The subject can only become known, can only speak, as a subject that is known through discourse - through the cultural imaginaries of identity.

This understanding of performativity in identity does not, I argue, take into account the extent to which desire and agency can figure into identity. Shirley Anne Tate (2005) extends Butler's definition of the performative to account for the ways that desire and performance can affect identity performatives. Tate (2005) argues that identity is a hybrid of significations both imposed upon and taken up by the subject. The body is enfolded and identified according to discursively understood corporeal codes, but identity is also constituted by the subject as the subject engages in the act of defining himself/herself. Tate (2005) envisions an identity performative where subjects are “positioned by discourse,” but then are also able to “reposition ... themselves in relation to these discourses” (127). Tate (2005) maintains that identity is a dialogical process where discourses enunciate the subject, but the subject can produce “new addressivities” that “speak back to discursive positioning” (128). For Tate (2005), identity is the interweaving of the discursive codes that enunciate the body in order to be seen in society, and the performances and understandings that the subject chooses to perform as a body.

This confluence and contradiction between the discursive body produced through societal readings of corporeal codes and the discursive body produced through subject performance is never an easy thing. There will always be a rift between the production *by* a subject and the production *of* a subject.

This conflict between identity performance and identity as the performative inscription of the body with always-deployed cultural codes, is highlighted in Sara Ahmed's (2004) “Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism”. Ahmed (2004) draws attention to the way that Austin (1975) defines “performative” as the moment when “the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action” (6). Austin (1975) uses the example of the priest who “pronounces” a couple to be husband and wife, and in that pronouncement, commits the act of binding them together. Thus, the

words accomplish the act spoken about. When words are meant to accomplish an act, but fail to do so, Austin (1975) refers to this as an “unhappy” performative.

Ahmed (2004) uses the idea of the unhappy performative to illuminate the ways that white people often use language to portray themselves as anti-racist. Ahmed (2004) gives several examples of declarations that whites use to pronounce themselves as racist - and in the pronouncement, portray themselves as, actually, not racist. As Ahmed (2004) suggests, “institutions as well as individuals admit to forms of bad practice, and in which the ‘admission’ itself becomes seen as a good practice” (3). After all, or so the portrayal goes, only the non-racist people are capable of seeing their own racism. Ahmed (2004) points out that these declarations of racism, while attempting to neutralize the racism of the pronouncer, do no such thing. Racism has not been displaced or fought or managed, simply by the pronouncement. The pronouncement is, then, an unhappy performative, as the pronouncement did not accomplish the thing intended by the speech act.

Ahmed’s (2004) exploration of white declarations of anti-racism highlights the conflict between what an author performs, and the ways those performances can be read. Even though the white individuals or white institutions portrayed themselves as anti-racist, Ahmed still read onto those white bodies all of the cultural, societal, and tangible codes and behaviors that identify whites as racist and oppressive.

This back and forth between what a subject produces and what is read by an audience is one of the focuses of this paper. In this paper, I will be using Tate’s (2005) definition of performance in identity as a hybrid and even dialogical act. This will, hopefully, open a space to point out the ways an audience may read an author even in the face of what an author performs as identity.

Fashioning the White Expert

Whiteness derives much of its power from appearing to be natural, nothing at all, normal. As Richard Dyer (1988: 44) has suggested “White power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular”. Whiteness gets positioned as the standard, and therefore, as the genuine, incontestable ideal. As Shannon Jackson (1998: 51) suggests it is “the benignity of white privilege [which] normalizes unequal relations of power”.

For many years, people of colour have critiqued the idealization and “invisibility” of whiteness. Ahmed (2004), Chabram-Dernersesian (1999), hooks (1999), and others have demanded that whites address their own racism, and their place within racist and oppressive discourses. This was followed by many white academics calling for authors to name their whiteness (Byrne 2006; Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1999). Many authors in Critical Whiteness Studies and

other fields that deal with racism attempt to subvert the invisibility of whiteness by attempting to make whiteness and white privilege visible. Ruth Frankenberg (1999: 6) refers to this strategy as the commitment “to marking whiteness”.

It is important to note a few things about this strategy of marking whiteness. First, this strategy came about in response to the demands of people of colour and, more recently, white people to mark whiteness as a way of addressing racism. When an author marks his/her colour as white, it is always in response to and under the gaze of fellow academics, both white and non-white. This naming of whiteness allows the writer to call attention to whiteness as an identity, thereby subverting the power whiteness derives from invisibility. It allows that writer to name his/her biases - the biases that are concomitant with white privilege - thereby signaling an awareness of one's own privilege and one's own lacunae where race and power are concerned. However, the naming of whiteness also gets used as a part of a strategic fashioning of identity where the white author ends up with diminished culpability for that whiteness. Naming one's whiteness usually does double-duty. It subverts the normalization of whiteness, while at the same time allowing the white author to be fashioned as a laudable and redeemed white expert. In Critical Whiteness Studies and other anti-racist projects, the white author uses writing - text - to fashion a particular performance of the self. White authors usually see themselves as, hopefully, part of the solution to racism, and fashion themselves within their texts accordingly. Text performs identity in a very interesting way as it allows the author/self to “concurrently create itself in writing and affirm that self it has created” (Gutman 1988: 108). The author uses particular word choices and textual tactics to pose a particular type of author for the reader/audience's consumption, while at the same time, validating and authenticating that posed figure. Using what Foucault (1988: 18) refers to as technologies of the self, the white author is able “to effect . . . a certain number of operations on their own bodies . . . and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of...purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality”. Foucault's idea of technologies of the self calls up Tate's notions of both agential and non-agential identity construction. The white author is able to perform an identity that can actually speak back to corporeal significations of whiteness. The white author uses the text to performatively constitute a self that, although white, is nevertheless able to function as an expert within an anti-racist project. That is to say, through word play, word choice, and subject choice, the author fashions himself/herself to be an expert on and an ally in the fight for racial justice and empowerment.

This fashioning is particularly generative as it is done in text, in a textual context. The idea of a performer and an audience implies a certain relationship; a give and take that is, perhaps, dialectical in nature. A textual context for both performance and audiencing opens a different kind of space where the play in a performance, and the dialogical relationship becomes more obvious. While I disagree with

Barthes, (1968) about the live body being, perhaps, the irreducible sign, I do agree with Barthes (1977) that the absence of a live body in play allows an audience to have a different sort of interaction with the performer. Whereas, a live body “disorders language, troubles it,” the absence of the live body in a textual context allows for the focus to be on the *play* of language and text (Barthes 1977: 17). When the focus is on the play within the text, the fashionings of the author and discursive codes and imaginaries achieve a greater sense of juxtaposition. In a textual encounter, not only is the live body absent but any visual effects of the live body are absent. This lack of a visual body allows the audience to more readily focus on the purposeful significations being deployed.

These assumptions inform the author’s confession of whiteness. The author produces a body/persona that attempts to reconstitute whiteness as laudable. The confession of whiteness situates the author in the stance of the penitent and the punishable. This confession, as Foucault (1988: 42) would suggest, is a type of dramatic penance where the “self-punishment and the voluntary expression of the self are bound together”. The confession of whiteness signals both an annunciation and “renunciation of the flesh” (Foucault 1988: 17). However, this confession can also textually develop into the “constitution of a new and positive self/flesh” (Foucault 1988: 49). By announcing one’s whiteness, the author textually positions himself/herself as someone who is attempting to renounce the privilege associated with whiteness and invisibility. This announcement/renouncement textually recuperates the white author into the stance of the pure or unoffending, and the white author moves from guilt to innocence. The white author will announce his/her whiteness as a sort of dramatic *mea culpa*, but then insist that he/she knows how to get around/above the whiteness.

The naming of whiteness becomes like a mask used at carnivals or masked balls. As Danet et al. (1997: 9) have suggested, carnival masks get used to invoke both “the principle of camouflage and the principle of conspicuous marking”. Masks are used to both call attention to the wearer, and hide the wearer; usually as a means of diminishing the responsibility of the wearer. Naming whiteness becomes a strategy of calling attention to the invisibility of whiteness, while at the same time allowing the author, who dutifully named his/her whiteness, to have diminished responsibility for that whiteness. The textually purified author, then, avoids any actual struggle with white privilege.

This is what Probyn (2004) sees as the white author attempting to fashion himself/herself as the “good white”. The white author fashions the self as a “good disciplinary subject who is sometimes ‘bad’” (Probyn 2004: 8). For example, some authors confess their whiteness and the limitations imposed by whiteness, while in the same instance hoping that “these limitations can be negotiated and even transcended” (Haw 1996: 319). Other white authors confess

whiteness but claim another identity that enables them “to disidentify with the white mainstream,” and thus they pose themselves as “good whites” (Johnson 2002: 153). Authors textually attempt to orchestrate what Ahmed (2004: 4) would call the white “fantasy of transcendence”. Ahmed (2004) points out that the confession of whiteness often gets recuperated as a pronouncement of anti-racism, while not actually achieving any anti-racist effects. The text performatively iterates the identity of the author as white, but without implications of colour - the not-white/white author. It is important to note that this divestment of implications of colour is being done under the gaze of an assumed audience. In Critical Whiteness Studies and other anti-racist projects, the audience is assumed to be people of colour and “informed” whites. The author attempts this divestment of colour as a response to and in relationship to the assumed audience. Tate (2005) points out that identity construction is a dialogical process that is done in relationship to the other/another. Identity production involves an “engagement between sameness and difference” (Tate 2005: 145). A white author will fashion his/her identity persona in a relationship that posits sameness over difference vis-à-vis the audience. Thus, this confession of whiteness and the divestment of colour that supposedly follows from it becomes a way of signaling the author’s “likeness” to the audience; particularly to the non-white members of the audience. It is a bid for acceptance and absolution. It is an example of what hooks (1999) and Cohen (1999) see as the white penchant for attempting to erase difference. It is the white author pronouncing: “I am like you.” These authorial fashionings lay in tension with the discourses and performative imaginaries usually iterated onto the white body within the context of anti-racist projects. The white body is usually announced/enunciated as the domineer.

Significations of the White Body

McLaren (1995: 63) has said, “as sites of enunciation and cultural inscription, bodies are never ‘free spaces’”. Bodies always represent or signify something, and they don’t always signify the fashionings or identities that the subject desires. Discourses, particularly within anti-racist projects, and given tangible realities, position the white body as always-already the oppressor. And, as Probyn (2004: 6) puts it, the oppressor “is the very thing that the white critic of whiteness is but does not want to be”.

Crichlow and McCarthy (1993) suggest that within the matrices of discourses of identity, there are relationships of domination and subordination that are mobilized by white identity discourses. Many authors such as Crichlow and McCarthy (1993), Omi and Winant (1993), West (1993) and others have examined the real effects of discursive identities and identity performances. They have noted that these discourses mobilize and create real injustices and inequalities. White bodies are performatively iterated and invested with power and privilege. The privileges allowed to white bodies have real and tangible effects. These tangible realities serve to bolster discourses of

white bodies as always connected to identities of oppression and domination within matrices of anti-racist discourses. The white body *signifies* those who are already in power/empowered.

bell hooks (1999) gives a notable example of the significations of the white body when she describes whiteness in the black imagination. Whiteness signifies terror and terrorism. Whiteness “wounds, hurts, tortures” (hooks 1999: 169). This representation of whiteness as “terrorizing,” emerged “as a response to the traumatic pain and anguish that remain a consequence of white racist domination” (hooks 1999: 170). Discourses which performatively constitute the white body as always racist and oppressive, call into question the penitence and rehabilitation of the white author. There is a contrariety when juxtaposing the white body of oppression and the “good” white body. On the one hand, we have a body which corporeally and discursively signifies inequality and racism. On the other hand, we have a body, posed by the white author, which signifies purity and expertise.

Upstaged

So, which identity does the audience read: the penitent white self fashioned through the author’s text, or the white body which signifies discourses of oppression and racism? It depends on which “presence,” or identity, is felt or deciphered by the audience/reader. I propose that, often, when a white author textually fashions himself/herself as an integral part of an anti-racist project, the tension between the white body (signifying oppressor) and the text (which poses the author as an ally) cultivates an audience of what Park-Fuller (2003: 300) calls “resisting readers”. Readers become resistant to the text because there is a tension between the identity produced through the text (the ally) and the white body signifying other discourses and materialities (the oppressor). I believe that the fashionings of the author are accepted only until the “presence” of the complicit white body is felt. The whiteness of the body becomes glaring. The white body upstages the expert/ally identity produced through the text. This *making present* of the culpable white body is what I refer to as the present-ification of the white body. I would like to use a re-imagining of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s theory of presence effects in order to theorize present-ification. Gumbrecht (2004) illustrates presence effects by using the example of the Catholic views of the Eucharist. In the Catholic sacraments, the Eucharist involves a sort of ritual “that makes God’s body physically present” (Gumbrecht 2004: 85). Transubstantiation occurs whereby the wafer literally turns into the presence of God’s body and the wine literally turns into God’s blood. The sacraments, used by many other religions as a representation, for Catholics, become an actual presence. In fact, the presence of the flesh eclipses and even abrogates the wafer. In the Eucharist, then, present-ification would be the making present of God’s body in substitution of the wafer. According to Gumbrecht (2004), the actual presence effaces the thing that is meant to be a

representation of it. This is a useful example for understanding what I mean by present-ification of the white body.

When the white author fashions a self that is somehow transcendent of the complicities attendant upon white identity, the text only becomes believable insofar as the “presence” of the white body isn’t felt, seen, or read. As soon as the authorially fashioned self is transfigured (transubstantiated) into the form of the white body, the believability of the text/author is arrested. As the white body is made present - present-ification - the white body upstages the expert identity fashioned by the author. The complicit white body stands in substitution of, or in greater focus than the transcendent identity posed by the author.

The present-ification of the white body calls forth alternate readings of the textually contrived self. After the moment of present-ification has been reached, the audience sees the confession of whiteness as a recentering of whiteness - “it serves to restate the white subject at the crux of discursive and psychic power” (Westcott 2004: 2). As Ahmed (2004) puts it, the confession of whiteness can then be seen as an “exercise [of] rather than a challenge [to] white privilege”. The confession can be seen as a way to “particularize whiteness in order to transcend it” (Brewster 2005: 5).

As present-ification is achieved and the complicit white body upstages the authorially fashioned self, the audience is compelled to become a “resisting reader” that will read and see the text by white authors, not as an opposition to privilege, but as a reinscription and a reification of whiteness and white privilege. This moment of present-ification is the moment where an audience member/reader becomes skeptical of whether or not the text is actually anti-racist. It is that space where a reader develops a resistance to and even an abjection of the white author. It is the moment where the reader questions whether the author is attempting to “pass” in order to re-center and sanctify whiteness and the white body. This moment can be seen as Ahmed (2004) reads or audiences the white *racist* body, rather than the white *exonerated* body, when whites declare their racism in order to actually pronounce their lack of racism. Present-ification is accomplished as hooks (1999) or Cohen (1999) are able to read or audience the white contribution to anti-racism as nothing more than an erasure of difference and re-centering of whiteness. Present-ification of the white body is reached whenever an audience member/reader steps away from (resists) the performance of the white author and starts to question what is being attempted. The audience/reader begins to question what identities and suppositions are being encouraged when a white author confesses to whiteness and then tries to erase that whiteness.

Obviously, different audience members/readers will reach this moment of present-ification at different times. I agree with authors such as hooks (1999) and Cohen (1999) who suggest that non-whites

inhabit a space - a habitus - of knowledge and position that enables them to "see" whiteness where a white person cannot. I readily assume that this positionality will allow non-whites to reach the moment of present-ification in a different way than white readers. However, I also want to agree with authors such as Byrne (2006) and Tate (2005) who discourage seeing race as an essential and monolithic habitus. As Byrne (2006) points out, we can avoid essentialising race when we acknowledge that race is "not a singular experience," and that there are many ways and venues where race is "produced" (2). Tate (2005) further denigrates essentialization when she points out that this move to mythologize a kinship inherent in race promotes a demarcation and bounding of the racial category that results in an inclusion/exclusion type of governmentality. Therefore, I feel uncomfortable suggesting, for example, that all black people will reach the moment of present-ification in this way and at this time. Such a suggestion calls forth the question: which black people? However, I do think it is important to probe the aftermath of present-ification in terms of whites and non-whites. I believe that whites and non-whites are positioned differently in terms of the gaze of the audience. This positionality impacts white audience members in particular ways.

When the moment of present-ification has been reached, the dialogical relationship between author and audience shifts. The author pronounces himself/herself as "like you" or "in alignment with you," and perhaps audience members accept this for a time. However, when the moment of present-ification has been reached, audience members, regardless of colour, go through an abjection of the author. Audience members dialogically pronounce: "I am not like you. You are not like me." As Tate (2005) points out, identity and demarcation are done in relationship to difference; to an other. The audience members, like the author, define themselves dialogically in relation to another. Whereas, the author defines himself/herself in alignment with the assumed audience, audience members define themselves as in conflict with or resistance to the author. The aftermath of this abjection of the author is, I think, particularly interesting in regards to white audience members.

The abjection of the white author stands as both a comfort and a warning to white audience members. On the one hand, it is a comfort because white readers can congratulate themselves on having "seen through" the performances and fashionings of the white author. This ability to "see" the white author can count as, somehow, evidence of the white reader's informed-ness and lack of racism. As Ahmed (2004) points out, the ability to see race and racism often counts as evidence of a lack of racism. On the other hand, seeing the abjection of another white may act as a warning. The white reader may not only resist the fashionings of the white author by internally pronouncing: "Ha! I am not like this"; the reader may also resist the fashionings of the white author by internally responding: "Oh! I *should* not be like you." There is a certain level of governmentality that is produced as

one witnesses (audiences) the abjection of another. Perhaps though, fearing to speak, as a white, is not such a bad thing.

The implications of this paper are, as Foucault (1991: 83) has said, “that certain phrases can no longer be spoken so lightly, certain acts no longer, or at least no longer so unhesitatingly, performed”. It means, that when we, as white authors, fashion a self, or confess to a self, we need, as Probyn (2004: 4) has said, “to develop conceptual tools to write privilege while holding ourselves accountable for it”. Probyn (2004: 2) expresses this accountability as a move from “yes, but” (yes, I’m white, but I’m a good white) to a stance of “yes, and” (yes, I’m white, and I am accountable and implicated in oppression). We need to re-examine the self that we are fashioning in our texts. We need to assume an audience of resisting readers. We need to assume an audience aware of and moved by the present-ification of the implicated and complicit white body. Therefore, we need to write ourselves in a way that struggles with white privilege. We need to acknowledge that “doing Critical Whiteness Studies as a white *necessitates* that we place ourselves in it, otherwise we’ve missed the whole point” (Probyn 2004: 5).

As white bodies become involved in Critical Whiteness Studies - as white authors attempt to deploy anti-racist discourses and performances - it is important to be aware of the ways the body is read and the ways the white body takes up (takes over) space. We need to be aware of the audience, and that it matters very much whose body and which body is seen, felt, or heard. We need to be anxious and unsettled about the way we write ourselves and our whiteness. We need to be uneasy about the ways that attempting to subvert the invisibility of Whiteness can develop into the recuperation and affirmation of whiteness and white privilege. As Hytten (2000: 391) suggests, “it is only when we are at least a bit uneasy that we regularly reflect on our practices, and work to continually improve them”. As white writers, we need to avoid the desire for a recipe for exoneration. As Hytten (2000) suggests, we need to embrace the queasiness of the struggle and our position in it. “In embracing the queasiness . . . we can be sure not to become complacent in our efforts to create a more equitable and just society. Only if we are a bit queasy will we take this challenging task seriously” (Hytten 2000: 393). Now is not the time for amnesty from whiteness, nor is it the time to avoid the subject altogether. It is the time for struggle. Perhaps, through entering into struggle, and queasiness, and awkwardness, we will find a way to write whiteness and the white author in a more equitable and accountable way.

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