School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts
Department of Social Sciences and International Studies

‘Eurasian’: negotiating a postcolonial identity in everyday life in multicultural Australia

Michelle Anne Barrett

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the notion of being 'Eurasian' through the lens of 'mixed race', and the implications this has for the wider construct of 'race' in general. An increasing number of people around the globe identify as mixed race, however the majority of literature within mixed race studies emanates from the United States and Britain. This thesis shifts the focus to Australia by examining the ambiguous and complex understandings surrounding the term 'Eurasian', which has emerged as a political, cultural and social reality from the neighbouring South and Southeast Asian region. Between 2007 and 2009, a series of informal, semi-structured interviews was conducted with nineteen men and women with mixed European and Asian ancestries in Perth, Western Australia. The interviews were conducted in the domestic spaces of participants' homes, in order to gain insight into how this particular 'mixed race' identity is understood and negotiated in everyday life, and how migration processes which include recreating senses of 'home' and belonging, have impacted on these understandings. In particular, the thesis focuses on participants' narratives of migration, understandings of hybridity and whiteness, the domestic performances of home and the objects within in relation to identity, and the ways in which clothing and food have been used to construct boundaries around particular 'types' of 'Eurasians.'

Born and/or brought up in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, the participants in this study, through their narratives of identity, revealed complex understandings that fashion 'Eurasian' as both a fluid reality of globalisation and as a fixed legacy of colonial expansion throughout South and Southeast Asia. While the ambiguous notion of 'Eurasian' can possess no single definition, some participants retain perceived authenticities and legitimacies through which they maintain the idea of a 'real' and 'pure' Eurasian identity that is grounded in colonial history and specific geographical locations. In contemporary Australia, the negative associations of being 'mixed' have largely been removed for my participants and as a result their understandings of being Eurasian have experienced a generational shift from those of their parents and grandparents within South and Southeast Asia, who often sought to erase their 'mixedness' or 'Asianness' by fashioning their homes as British. The majority of participants in this study now embrace a more 'Asianised' Eurasianness yet this is not a fixed or final positioning of their identities. In line with the notions of identity as process and strategic hybridity, participants engage in a continual shifting of their understandings back and forth along a cultural continuum so that a multiplicity of ways of being Eurasian and of representing this through the home and self are performed.

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INTRODUCTION

> Well, probably my grandfather or great grandfather, would have been of Dutch origin, or … would have been a French [man] that married a Sinhalese girl … That's where the mix starts, you see.
>
> Pam

> In a way I am torn, but I'm not sure between what sometimes.
>
> Brooke

Setting the scene

My interest in the central topic of this thesis began in my childhood in Malaysia in the 1980s. I was often asked about my 'racial' background by members of the international expatriate community that I grew up around. I have understood this as being because I have fair skin and my mother has light brown skin. It took me a while to memorise the answer that my mother gave to me when I went to her for answers: 'I am half Eurasian, half Scottish.' But, this simple answer did not suffice because I would then often be asked about the specifics of my Eurasian 'half.' I had no idea about which specific European and Asian ancestries made up my particular 'Eurasian' identity. Adding to my confusion was also my mother's vagueness about it. Sometimes she mentioned that we had a Sri Lankan background, other times that we were a part of the Eurasians in Malaysia. Only as an adult did I find out that my mother's ethnicity was actually, according to colonial categories, Dutch Burgher[1] from Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka) but that her great-grandparents had migrated to colonial Malaya during the period of British rule and had become subsumed into the Eurasian population there.

Today as an Australian citizen, I find it difficult to complete the question on ancestry in the Australian Census. I have answered this with various responses depending on my understandings of my background at the time. In the most recent Census I was thrown by the question again when I needed to fill it out for my then 10-month old daughter. Zoe's ethnic identity incorporates Dutch, Portuguese, Sinhalese or Tamil (or both),

[1] The people known as the Burghers are the descendants of the Portuguese, Dutch, British and other Europeans who initially intermarried with the local Sinhalese and Tamil populations of Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka) during the colonial era.

Indigenous Malay, Chinese, Austrian, Hungarian, Swiss, German, English, Irish and Scottish ancestries. As with increasing numbers of children today, she has a diversely woven ancestry, making it increasingly difficult to categorise her ethnically for official purposes, but adding to the rich multiculturalism of contemporary Australian society nonetheless.

Shortly after she was born a relative asked me if I considered Zoe to be Eurasian. Looking at her pale white skin, blue eyes and red-tinged hair, I did not know how to answer that question. She does not look like a 'typical' Eurasian, but since I began to seriously question these categories, have I not argued that there is no such thing as 'typical' when it comes to identity, and that a Eurasian phenotype[2] can exist anywhere along the continuum from dark to light skin colour? I realised that, as with myself, a simple way to understand ourselves is that Zoe is Eurasian because she has ancestors from both 'Asia' and 'Europe' and because the Eurasian cultural group is a part of her personal history from her maternal grandmother's side. Also, I choose to say that she is Eurasian and recognise that it is for me to tell her about her ancestry as she grows up. Until she is old enough to decide, I will be performing a Eurasian identity for her, choosing which foods, dress and ornament to surround her with, and deciding which stories to tell her. It is for me (and her extended family) to decide which aspects of her background I will emphasise over others. During all of this though, I expect that she will ask me the same questions that I asked my mother when I was trying to understand what 'Eurasian' might actually mean. It is from these confusions that this research has developed, so I can better understand a complex and unstable category of identity, one that is ambiguous and subject to spatial and temporal contingencies.

With the notions of ambiguity and ambivalence in mind, this thesis is an interdisciplinary examination of the lived experience of people who either self-identify as, or fall within the category of 'Eurasian' in Australia and how their understandings contribute to thinking about 'race' and 'mixed race.'[3] I am interested in the ways in which this identity is negotiated and how being mixed is understood by people with this heritage and how they have articulated this over time and place in their lived

[2] A person's phenotype refers to the outward expression of their genetic make-up, so includes their physical characteristics and traits.

[3] It is important to note that mixed descent is understood and articulated in various ways and contexts around the world and within Australia. Various understandings as well as government policy towards those of mixed descent has also shifted over time within Australia. It would be useful in further research to contrast the 'Eurasian' experience of mixed descent with the experience of those people of part-Aboriginal and part-White descent in order to document the reach of government policy in shaping the self-identification of individuals, however this is beyond the scope of this particular study.

experiences. In doing this, I investigate the fluidity of identity/self-identification and understandings of interracialism through various concepts such as whiteness, and in particular, strategic hybridity, which I argue best represents the multiplicity of 'Eurasian' identities. I also interrogate the interfaces between self-identification and senses of belonging within highly contested multicultural contexts.

So then, what I do in this thesis is examine the ways in which self-identity is negotiated (created, adopted, practiced) by and within the group of 'Eurasian' people and how their understandings contribute to thinking about 'race' and 'mixed race' in Perth, Western Australia. We have not engaged enough with the notion of 'mixed race' in Australia, yet we need to better understand this phenomenon as it is increasingly becoming a reality within this particular multicultural context, and this can then contribute to understandings within a more global context.

To limit the scope of my research I specifically examine those who are the 'mixed' descendants of colonial expansion throughout South and Southeast Asia and draw on my own family history to inform my decision to include both Burghers and Eurasians within the broader category of 'Eurasian.' While these ethno-cultural groups were a product of previous European intrusions (mostly Portuguese and Dutch), they were officially encoded as 'racial' categories and recorded within British colonial censuses during the period of British rule in Ceylon and the Straits Settlements (present day Malaysia and Singapore). So, although 'it's very hard to find a true definition of "Eurasian"', as Burt, one of the participants in this study told me, it is important to begin with an idea of how 'Eurasian' has been defined over time and in different places, particularly because this has shaped the scope and design of this study.

Eurasian: a definition to begin with

When I asked Rob, a participant who has two Burgher parents from Sri Lanka, if he has ever used the term Eurasian to describe himself, he replied 'No', but followed this with: 'maybe with a small "e" as a kind of adjective to describe what being a Burgher means.' Using the broadest of definitions, the type of everyday definition I have used above, Eurasians are people who are of mixed European and Asian ancestry. However, as we can see through Rob's understanding, the term 'Eurasian' has varied in meaning over time and space. Writing about the Eurasian community in Singapore, Myrna Braga-Blake and Ann Ebert-Oehlers (1992, p. 11) for example, defined a Eurasian as being 'a person born of a union between a European and an Asian, and the subsequent offspring

of that first union.' Yet, historically, the term Eurasian was first used in the 1840s by the British to refer to British children born in India. It then came to refer to the offspring of British fathers and Indian mothers and this definition was applied across the span of the British colonies in Asia (Hodgkins 2012). In Sri Lanka, the term Eurasian generally referred to the children of British planters and local Sinhalese or Tamil mothers, who were seen by the wider community to be distinct from the Burghers who were generally of Portuguese or Dutch extraction (Ferdinands 1995, p. 67). Over the years the term has generally broadened in line with Braga-Blake and Ebert-Oehler's definition to denote anyone of mixed European and Asian ancestry, whether this is at the level of parentage or further back through the generations to the moment of colonial contact (Kraal 2005, p. 2). 'It's just anyone of European and Asian origin, whether it is your parents who are European and Asian or your grandparents or no matter how far back you go', another participant, Melanie, told me.

As I write in 2013, the reality is then that there is no one 'truth' to being Eurasian; there is no single satisfying definition. As Christine Choo *et al* (2004, p. 71) argue, 'Eurasian' as a term is difficult to define and its ambiguity leads to a variety of meanings for different people in different contexts. One common factor identified by Lionel Caplan (1995, p. 745) is that a Eurasian identity marks a historical meeting of separate and unequal streams along the line of a perceived East/West divide. Aside from this however, Eurasians have varied backgrounds, experiences, and histories and there is no singular identity (Choo *et al.* 2004, p. 71). They point out that the term Eurasian inherits its ambiguity from the fluidity associated with the words 'Asian' and 'European', both of which refer to people from broad geographical areas, each with a wide range of often overlapping cultures and societies (*Ibid.*). Certainly, the complexities and shifting nature of the term 'Asian' alone is a particularly complicating issue, as it is understood differently in different locales. For example, in the United Kingdom, the term is used to refer to people from the Indian subcontinent (which in itself is subject to varying definitions), whereas in Australia 'Asian' is generally used in common parlance to refer to people with heritage from China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. So the simple definition, that anyone with a configuration of 'mixed' Asian and European heritage can claim a Eurasian identity, alerts us that there are multiple truths, multiple definitions and understandings of being Eurasian.

Nonetheless, running parallel to this are perceived authenticities and legitimacies so that amongst some Eurasians the idea of a 'real' and 'pure' Eurasian identity presents a

powerful element of their senses of self. This has its roots in European colonial policies which sought to fix social categories and bound certain Eurasian groups by naming and defining them accordingly, in order to uphold colonial structures and create social distance between the colonial elites and their 'mixed race' subjects (Caplan 2001, p. 66). In effect this was attempting to impose order on those who problematised the neat categories of colonial rule, those Eurasians who, to use the words of Ann Laura Stoler (1997, p. 198), 'ambiguously straddled, crossed and threatened imperial divides.' The result was a plethora of named groups such as the Anglo-Indians, the Burghers of Sri Lanka, the Anglo-Burmese, the Indo-Dutch, the Macanese of Macau, and the *Kristang* or Portuguese-origin Eurasians from Malacca, Malaysia. Significantly, this last group, due to economic and political incentives, pushed for and achieved *bumiputera* status in Malaysia in the 1980s (Walker 2012, p. 307). Literally meaning 'son of the soil' this status reconstructs the *Kristang* Eurasians as an indigenous ethnic group within Malaysia, and encourages a common belief within this group that only those from Malacca of Portuguese origin, can identify as 'true' Eurasians.

It is clear then that 'Eurasian' is a contested identity, contingent upon time and place and influenced by the messiness of lived experience and social interactions (Walker 2012, p. 304). Movements of 'Eurasians' occurred throughout the region following trade routes between important ports such as Singapore, Malacca, Penang, Goa and Macau so that, as Kirsty Walker points out, Eurasian family histories describe 'life trajectories lived across vast geographical and temporal spaces, and at the intersection of multiple cultural worlds' (K Walker 2007, pers. comm., 9 November). My great-grandmother Charlotte Lazaroo, for example, was a Portuguese Eurasian from Malacca. Her father came to Malacca from Macau (two interconnected nodes along Portuguese empire trade routes), and the family understands that he was Macanese – that is, he was the son of a Portuguese man and a Chinese woman. Charlotte married my great-grandfather who was a Dutch Burgher from Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka) and their children were born in Malaya where they grew up in the Eurasian community and identified as Eurasian. Yet, and despite seeming to have forgotten this for much of her life, my mother now remembers that her mother used to impress it upon her four children to always remember that they were the Dutch Ceylonese Burghers.

Image 1: My mother's parents and the extended Jansz family, Malaya, c. 1947

The multiple geographies and cultures involved, just in my one family history, can best be seen in the various skin tones and facial characteristics of my mother's family in Image 1. My grandparents sit in the middle of the photograph surrounded by family members including my great-grandmother Dulcie (to the right of my grandmother) and my great-uncles and great-aunt. Deborah Chambers (2006, p. 96) reminds us that the meanings surrounding 'the family' have been shaped by public forces such as race, nation, empire, class and gender, and family photograph albums play a central role in this process. She argues that these albums authenticate public discourses of 'family' in terms of ties, connections and belonging. This is significant in the Eurasian context because, owing to their varied skin tones and physical features, it is not always visually apparent that members of a family are related to each other. In the family photograph though, people of disparate appearances are bound within the frame as a public declaration of 'family.' Everyone in Image 1, whether through blood or marriage, is a member of the Jansz family, and all are Eurasian. Yet, while they are bound as a family unit within the photograph it is clear that they are visually diverse, and undoubtedly diverse in their understandings as well.

It is then abundantly clear, in spite of particularist understandings, that Eurasians cannot be identified as a homogenous group. In reality, being Eurasian is marked by

diversity, with ancestral ties reaching across Europe and Asia, and beyond so that many of my participants have ancestries that include Portuguese, Dutch, British, German, French and Swiss on the European side, and Malay, Sinhalese, Tamil, Thai and Chinese, on the Asian side.

Definitional difficulties and limitations of the research

As I was reminded at an intellectually challenging conference on whiteness in 2008, to assume that every member of a family will identify in the same way, is to impose an ossifying and unproductive preconception on a fluid and complex set of understandings. Another conference participant, caught in this assumption, challenged me, articulating his understanding that every member of a 'Eurasian' family would perceive of and understand Eurasianness in the same way, implying that there can be only one way to be Eurasian. While multiple identity positionings in the one family is not an experience exclusive to Eurasian families, this can be a particularly prominent experience amongst Eurasians. Yet, the assumption that everyone will identify in the same way occurs within Eurasian families as well. As an example from my own experience, while talking with my mother and sisters before I started my research for this thesis, we were surprised to find that we all had differing understandings of being Eurasian and different definitions for the term Eurasian itself. Our unexpected differences in thinking were surprising, challenging my own early assumptions about the singularity of identity narratives and pushing me to be able to see complexity rather than hide from it. These stories then exemplify widespread understandings about the supposed uniformity of experience for all Eurasians, let alone 'mixed race' people. For me, the multiplicity of ways that 'Eurasians' can identify was at first a limitation to how I would define who my participants would be. In the end it has undoubtedly shaped my thesis as the story which follows shows.

It was in the early stages of my fieldwork that I encountered the definitional problematics associated with Eurasian. Due to my mother's specific ancestry, my thesis was intended to be a study on the Burghers of Sri Lanka from the perspective of mixed race studies/hybridity theory. As with many research students, my topic shifted ground in subtle ways as I progressed through the research. Aside from the political situation in Sri Lanka that prevented me from conducting fieldwork there at the time, my topic shifted from being purely a case study of the Burghers within the larger context of 'mixed race' towards the more specific task of examining the concept of 'Eurasian', where my interests had originally lain. This was wholly shaped by the process of

recruiting participants, two of whom in particular, problematised my assumptions surrounding self-identification. Firstly, Estelle, who is a member of my extended family (and so we know each other quite well), has referred to herself as Burgher in the past. Her husband was also Burgher so I asked her to participate and she accepted. However, during an interview, Estelle denied that she had ever called herself Burgher and insisted that she has always identified as Eurasian. I was initially thrown by this, but continued with the interview, both for my interview practice, a valuable experience, and for the rich insights Estelle afforded me during the rest of the interview.

Similarly, since she is married to a man who identifies as Burgher, I thought perhaps Angela might also make the same identification, so I emailed her to ask if she would participate in my research about Burghers. She accepted willingly, which I took as confirmation that she was indeed a Burgher. It was only at our first meeting that she referred to herself as Eurasian rather than Burgher. Her stories were so rich with detail and relevant for my questions about 'mixed race' identities born of the colonial encounter that, as with Estelle, I did not want to exclude Angela as a participant in order to rigidly follow my research design. Rather, and with the guidance of my supervisor, I allowed my research to take me in the direction in which it was naturally flowing.

My focus then has shifted to those people who can claim an ancestry based on the colonial encounter in South and Southeast Asia, but more specifically, to limit the scope of my research, my study focuses on the Burghers of Sri Lanka and the Eurasians of Malaysia and Singapore. My choice to do this derives from my own family background, but also from the shared history between these two broadly 'Eurasian' groups.

Specifically, the people known as the Burghers are the descendants of the Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial rulers who initially intermarried with the local Sinhalese and Tamil populations of Sri Lanka. Similarly, the Eurasians of Malaysia and Singapore are also a legacy of Empire with their ancestry derived from the descendants of the Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial rulers who intermarried with the various existing ethnic groups of the Malay Archipelago (De Witt 2006).

Both groups constitute the 'mixed' descendants of the European colonial encounter in South and Southeast Asia where the European colonists intermarried with the local populations in these locales. These often merging post-colonial identities share a

common history of successive waves of Portuguese, Dutch and British intrusions, and this has resulted in considerable cultural cross-over between the two groups. Further, many Burghers migrated from Sri Lanka to Malaysia during the post war period of decolonisation where they were often subsumed into Malaysia's Eurasian ethnic group due to their similar ancestries and shared histories. Within my own family, my maternal great grandparents migrated from Sri Lanka to Malaysia and my mother's family has since identified as Eurasian. This is an example of the porous and fluid nature of social and cultural boundaries, and also that Eurasian-ness is contingent on the situational and political context within which an individual lives. These porous boundaries are vital to an understanding of 'mixed race' identities precisely because those boundaries have been constructed by active agents and for a purpose. Rather than focusing on either one or the other 'sides' (as some of my participants express this) of the Burgher/Eurasian divide, I rather find this distinction to be fruitful in telling us much about the complexities of identity and how those identities are negotiated.

For this reason, I include both groups under the loose term 'Eurasian'. In doing so I am challenging long held assumptions by many people in these countries, and certainly by some of my participants, about the bounded nature of these two related ethnic groupings. Indeed, for some participants this has been controversial, indicative of errors in my background research, while for others it has conformed precisely with their own understandings. Most have understood that the grouping together of Burghers and Eurasians has not been a random decision on my part, but that it rather represents 'the methodological and epistemological constraints and limitations' (Metta, 2010, p. 26) that I experienced during the conception and early stages of my project and research design.

The nineteen men and women within my participant group all broadly self-identify as having a mixed European and Asian ancestry, whether that mixing occurred with their parents or as far back as the colonial era. However, as mentioned above, my fieldwork revealed that the register of who identifies as Eurasian and who as Burgher is fluid and subject to the complexities of identity formation. The ambiguities associated with a 'Eurasian' identity lead to a process of negotiation as individuals construct and reconstruct their identities within the larger context of the Burgher and Eurasian communities. For this reason, my study cannot present a history of Eurasians as a whole, rather it can only seek to gain an understanding of how a sample of Eurasians themselves understand being 'Eurasian'.

Therefore, rather than being a definitive historical or contemporary account of Eurasians throughout the world or of people who identify as Eurasian in Perth, Western Australia, I offer a glimpse into the everyday lives of a number of people who were born into the 'Eurasian' category, or who choose to identify as 'Eurasian', or who others would consider 'Eurasian', to determine how being 'mixed' (whether unacknowledged, rejected, accepted or embraced) is understood and negotiated within the complexities of identification at all levels (personal, racial/ethnic and national). In the preface of the text *People Inbetween: The Burghers and the Middle Class in the Transformations within Sri Lanka, 1790s-1960s* (1989, p. v) by Roberts *et al*, the authors point out that the book is not a history of the Burghers in Sri Lanka. Rather, they position it as a contribution to such a history of a people that they argue could be called the Euro-Ceylonese. In much the same way, the aim of my thesis is to contribute to a social history of Eurasians in South and Southeast Asia, but also to contribute to the varied literature on mixed race from an Australasian perspective.

Scholarly positions

I have approached my research and my writing from an 'in-between' space which itself is constantly shifting: I have a Scottish father and a Eurasian mother; I have 'white' skin but am not White; I am specifically of Sri Lankan Burgher ancestry but have always identified as Eurasian in Malaysia; I am an Australian citizen with dual British citizenship who is also an immigrant from Southeast Asia; I belong to neither the first nor second generation migrant group having migrated as a child with my parents;[4] and I have not always been accepted as Eurasian, either in Malaysia and here in Australia because of my Scottish father. For these reasons, I understand and acknowledge the indeterminacy of my thesis topic. Therefore, my approach towards my thesis is fluid because it draws upon and reflects the fluidity of my topic – the fluidity of identity and understandings of race, ethnicity and skin colour for example, but also the fluidity and porousness of boundaries between constructed groupings. I position my understandings of this within that of Homi Bhabha who writes of the need to allow his theory of hybridity to remain fluid because this better reflects those issues that can be examined through the lens of hybridity theory (Bhabha in Mitchell 1995). In an interview with WJT Mitchell (1995), Bhabha declared that he likes 'disobedience and transdisciplinarity' as theoretical work 'should in the fullest sense be open to

[4] I therefore belong to the 1.5 generation of migrants, according to Rumbaut and Ima (1988, p. 1). See Chapter 1.

translation', and should exist within a third or supplementary space that belongs to no particular bounded discipline. In short, the ambivalence of his conception of hybridity, should remain ambivalent across all disciplines.

Similarly, Paul Sharrad points out that hybridity takes different forms and achieves different ends and he therefore advocates the need for a strategic hybridity that 'answers to the needs of its different users according to their socio-political contexts' (2007, p. 105-106). This is in line with Pnina Werbner's thinking that hybridity must be critiqued in relation to its actual application in different contexts, rather than simply being used uncritically to celebrate mixing (1997, p. 22). So, rather than needing a single theory of hybridity, Sharrad argues that the theory should instead shift to the specific needs of the situations and people involved so that we can 'make sense of the multiplicities of contemporary life' (Sharrad 2007, p. 118). This is supported by Marafiote and Plec who see hybridity as 'a centrifugal force in decentering and disrupting limited, monoglossic discourse or dualistic meanings' and which instead points to the possibility of multiple meanings (2006, p. 61 & 68). They then stress the strategic and communicative power of a strategic hybridity through which we can examine the 'polyvalent contradictions and complexities' of individuals' beliefs (Marafiote & Plec 2006, p. 61). Strategic hybridity thus becomes an identity tactic that subverts binary logic and instead embraces multiplicity (p. 70). Using this strategy as a frame, allows us to understand the multiple and contradictory identifications of 'Eurasians'. The meaning of being 'Eurasian' varies from individual to individual and is contextual. Understandings shift to suit various situations and contexts and there is a high degree of plurality involved (Noble, Poynting & Tabar 1999, p. 39). I therefore draw on strategic hybridity as a theoretical frame from which to understand the multiple and ambivalent beliefs/viewpoints of my participants (Marafiote & Plec 2006, p.70).

Significantly, since within my thesis, I am positioned as both researcher and subject, I therefore also incorporate autoethnographic elements. Ruth Behar (1996, p. 167) rejects the role of the transcendental observer rather emphasising the key role that the observer plays in social analysis, a role that emphasises the personal experience and emotion of a 'vulnerable' observer. Reflexivity about my own intellectual processes is particularly demanded and relevant because I am studying my own family heritage: to some degree I am an insider with an emotional investment in my project, and my own position and identity is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated. At the same time

I am also an outsider due to my appearance, particularly my 'white' skin, and because as I indicated above, some Eurasians reject my self-categorisation as 'Eurasian.' Yet, despite straddling the border between insider/outsider, I cannot separate myself from my participants: because I identify as Eurasian with an understanding that I have Burgher origins, I include myself within and between both groups: insider/outsider and Eurasian/Burgher. The ambivalence of this in-between position means that I might seem to have been excluded from both groups, not belonging *enough* to either. Certainly, doing fieldwork problematised my self-identification. For the first time I was told that I should not identify as Eurasian. This shook my assumptions and served to destabilise my understandings of identity. I choose though to use my in-betweenness in my research because it both endangers and gives power to my positioning: it endangers the relationship I have with my participants who are at times more cautious of what they say to me, yet it also gives me the power to challenge dominant discourses.

In their work on the racial experience of whiteness in Australia, Haggis, Schech, and Fitzgerald (1999, p. 172) found that interrogating their own autobiographies alongside their informants' life stories played a crucial role in destabilising their own categories of analysis. I use this multi-sited approach to provide some personal distance from my project, and recognise that it also offers me greater understanding and insights into my participants' stories. The model of Luisa Passerini (1996, p. xii) is exemplary here. She uses the experience of her own memory work during psychoanalysis to interpret the oral histories collected from her participants in order to provide insights into the complexity of their subjectivity. Insights from one area can inform another.

I am acutely aware of the role that my 'white' skin plays in the relationship between myself as researcher and my participants. As Christina Beltran (2004, p. 595) points out, a postmodern perspective problematises subjectivity so that 'every subject position is understood as embedded in networks of power and history.' My light skin and hair colour variably mark me out as someone who is either accepted 'in' or kept 'out', someone to impress or perform to, or someone to be wary around so that responses to my questions are at times clearly self-censored. In order to be accepted into my participants' lives I would always have to give up something of myself, to tell my own story, so that I could become a subject myself in order for the interviews to become conversations between people meeting for the first time and with a genuine interest in each other's histories.

Yet, my racialised positioning still inevitably shapes and defines my understandings so as a researcher and writer, I am implicated in the very politics of race and respresentation that I choose to challenge. Therefore my thesis also reflexively acknowledges my own complicity, through its conception and writing, in reinforcing ideas of 'race' and the binary thinking implicit in discussions on hybridity. As Lopez (2005, p. 2) points out when discussing Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, there is an academic vacillation between negating and affirming the concept of race whenever it is being deconstructed, studied and written about.

Rina Benmayor and Andor Skotnes (2005, p. 7) remind us that racial conceptions and designations differ across societies. In *Migrants of Identity* (2005), they highlight the shifting and arbitrary nature of the concept of 'race' by using the example of a friend who was officially classified as 'coloured' in South Africa where he was born, yet through his travels was considered 'black' in the United States and 'white' in Brazil (p. 7). Indeed, while in the Western world the essentialist use of 'race' has been replaced with the constructivist use of 'culture', 'ethnicity' or 'national identity'[5], racialised understandings of identity still remain as an underlying force shaping discourses of nation (Manzo 1996, p. 3; Stratton 1998, p. 111). For my research and writing then I work from the premise that race is not biological fact, but rather exists as a socio-political construct that has varied over time and space, and therefore can and must be examined.

Damien Riggs (2004, p. 1) points out that it is largely assumed in Western liberal thinking that race no longer holds any value in academic discussions and no longer mediates social relations. The 'deconstruction of practices of racialisation' has led to the idea that race no longer matters and therefore should not be the focus of research: it should act as no more than a footnote within analyses that deal with concepts such as ethnicity and culture. Riggs rightly argues against this, using the example of a conversation he had with a colleague in which she challenged his focus on race within his research. He argues that the very fact that both he and his colleague live in a liberal

[5] I use these terms with the knowledge that each represents complex and contested histories, yet all are involved with making sense of human identity. Clifford Geertz (1973), for example, conceives of culture as essentially semiotic, in that it is a form of communication involved in meaning making. This system of communication is the means by which humans 'develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (1973, p. 89). Similarly, ethnicity is part of the human experience of the world and helps us to make sense of identity by creating boundaries between humans based on different criteria (such as by 'race', nation, culture, geography, language, and skin colour for example). Importantly, Geertz points out that ethnicity is not primordial, yet humans believe it to be. This highlights the constructed nature of these terms and the various ways that they terms intersect with each other within our understandings, all the while being involved in our attempts to make sense of the world and ourselves.

democratic society and benefit from white race privilege, structured their conversation with the normative assumptions of whiteness, therefore demonstrating 'the power that white people hold to define what will count as valid social research' and dismissing the opinions and beliefs of those with other world views (*Ibid*.). As I have found throughout my research, race still exists as a meaningful category of identity within the minds of my participants, although it no longer holds the same meanings as it once did.

Further, the location of Perth, Western Australia, shapes this study. I chose this place because this is where I and my family have lived for much of our lives, and because Perth is also often an endpoint in the common pathway for many other Eurasians and Burghers from South and Southeast Asia who have moved within old empire routes. Moreover, as Ien Ang (1996, p. 43) rightly points out in her work on the ambivalence of the Asian woman in multicultural Australia, the Western Australian capital city of Perth is closer to Jakarta and Singapore than to Sydney. Therefore it is not difficult to argue that Perth is participant in many diverse social and cultural flows from this region that extend beyond migration to include the experiences of shorter term visitors such as professional workers, students, tourists, and visiting families of migrants.

As a result Perth is an intensely multicultural city, yet it also has strong assimilationist undertones. There is a very particular understanding of multiculturalism in Australia that differs from the multiculturalism articulated and performed in other countries such as Canada. Ang (2001, p. 15) points out that Australia is one of the few countries in the world to officially define itself as multicultural: a declaration that, as a pluralist nation, it recognises its racial and ethnic communities and their right to practice their own distinct cultures within carefully prescribed limits (Batrouney 2002, p. 52). However, the sharing of national space amongst diverse cultures, what Ang calls 'together in difference', has been particularly problematic in Australia due to its historical positioning as a 'white' nation of the West. Ang argues that Asians do not fit comfortably within this imaginary because Asianness cannot be reconciled with whiteness, and the result of this is that a harmonious multiculturalism exists in Australia more as myth than as social reality (*Ibid.*). Jon Stratton (1998, p. 10) had similar concerns about multiculturalism in the Australian context a few years earlier when he suggested that ethnic communities in Australia are peripheral to a core Anglo-Celtic culture, or what Forrest and Dunn (2006, p. 212) more recently refer to as an Australo-British hegemony.

Light on these differences is shed, obliquely, in a 1997 essay by Stanley Fish (1997, p. 378) who distinguishes between two types of multiculturalism: 'boutique multiculturalism', which is more superficial and cosmetic in its celebration of 'ethnic' festivals and food, involving limited yet 'high profile flirtations with the other'; and 'strong multiculturalism', which at its core, involves a deeper respect for all cultures and their differences (Fish 1997, p. 382). I argue that Australia, and specifically Perth, still tends to embrace more of a boutique multiculturalism, so perhaps this city should be referred to as a *multi-cultural* to better reflect the politics of identity its residents and visitors negotiate. Those with Asian backgrounds in particular, are often assumed to be migrants or tourists, revealing a deep-seated belief amongst many Anglo-Celtic Australians that to be Australian is to be white (Stratton 1998, p. 10; Ang 2001, p. 15). This informs assimilationist attitudes so that an Australian identity is often thought of as a bounded and exclusive ethnicity, possessing its own performative cultural aspects that must be adhered to. This is reflected in Dianne's understanding: 'At one point I thought that you had to be white to get on in this country.' Within this context, those of mixed race, according to Minelle Mahtani (2002, p. 429), are 'hypervisible' and therefore subject to constant questioning.

My contribution to the literature

An increasing number of people around the globe identify as mixed race, however the majority of literature within mixed race studies still emanates from the United States and Britain and much of this focuses on a black/white binary. As a postcolonial identity, 'Eurasians' are a site for the investigation of different understandings and representations of the lived experience of being mixed. This thesis then, will add to the existing literature on race in general and mixed race studies more specifically, from a European/Asian perspective outside the dominant scholarly literatures. In particular it will challenge and inform changing understandings of ethnicity and race in Australia, and within its multicultural policy. This will open up a space for Eurasian Australians to explore their own understandings of identity and nation and the extent to which individuals or groups wish to be incorporated into the idea of the Australian nation. I draw particularly on those scholars who take more fluid perspectives on mixed race, such as Naomi Zack (1993, 1995), Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe (1999, 2004), David Parker (2001), Minelle Mahtani (2001, 2002), and Miri Song (2001, 2003), and within Australia's contribution to mixed race literature, Maureen Perkins (2004, 2005, 2007). I find the approach of Parker and Song (2001) in 'rethinking' mixed race to be particularly useful even a decade after their text was published. They push for the

recognition of mixed race as having its own unique experiences and therefore individuals should have the right to define their own identities (2001, p. 7-8). Perkins (2007) is similarly useful in that she takes this approach as well and has gathered together the voices of mixed race individuals involved in their own self-definition who demonstrate how their individual experiences have shaped their lives within Australia. Further, hybridity is a notion related to that of mixed race, and therefore Bhabha's (1994) notion of a liminal 'third space' is a particularly useful lens with which to examine the ambiguous and shifting nature of identity/identification. And as an extension to this, the concept of strategic hybridity offers a fuller understanding of how my participants use the ambivalence and multiplicities involved in their identities as a strategy for positioning themselves in different contexts (Noble, Poynting & Tabar 1999, p. 40).

Emma J. Teng (2010, p. 257) argues that the Euro-American dominance of mixed race literature has begun to shift towards a variety of literature being produced within Asia that seeks to re-embrace 'mixed' European and Asian identities and add them to the historical record where they were once largely missing. The increasing number of academic texts, memoirs, genealogies and cookbooks, Teng suggests, is evidence of a 'Eurasian publishing boom' that has wider implications for multiracial movements around the globe (*Ibid.*). In historical circles, the focus of much of the work on 'Eurasian' groups is to problematise the notion of race by examining the hybridised subject who challenged constructed racial categories. The various European powers dealt with *métissage* in different ways and with different intensities, however in all colonies racial mixing challenged the criteria 'by which Europeanness (and whiteness) could be identified, citizenship accorded, and nationality assigned' (Stoler 1997, p. 199). The ways in which Europeans in each colony dealt with its mixed populations have inevitably shaped the various Eurasian communities that exist as a result today. I argue however, that there are gaps in the scholarly knowledge about particular 'Eurasian' groups, and despite trying to subvert the notion of race, much of the literature examines these groups as separate and distinct categories of identity, solidifying colonial categories.

The questions that arose experientially from my own and my daughter's life have provoked deeper questions about the lived realities of the particular groups that make up my ancestry. The Burghers and the Eurasians of Southeast Asia have their own experiences of migration and settlement history, which differ in very significant ways

from groups such as Anglo-Indians who could be considered similar. Indeed, Anglo-Indians constitute a similar, but separate group, which is more strongly bound as an ethnic group within Australia. The Burghers and Eurasians fall outside this and are less known in Perth, and Australia in general, but have much value to add to the knowledge of mixed race groups. In effect these latter groups are marginal/peripheral both in terms of popular perceptions but also in the literature.

Certainly, academic literature about 'Eurasians' in the broad sense tends to privilege research and writing on Anglo-Indians as a legacy of Empire. There is a sizable amount of academic literature on both colonial and contemporary Anglo-Indian communities from across disciplines (see for example Blunt 2005b; Caplan 1995, 2001; Collingham 2001; Gaikwad 1967; Gist & Wright 1973; Hawes 1996; James 2003; Lewin 2005). Despite wanting to focus on 'Eurasian' groups outside the more dominant Anglo-Indian group, I still find the work of Blunt (2005b) and Lewin (2005) particularly useful as both have examined the lives of Anglo-Indians in Australia and therefore offer interesting points for comparison. Further, Lewin (1999) focuses on the 'othering' of Anglo-Indian women first in the context of colonialism and then within multicultural Australia, which gives me insight into the process of othering and stereotyping within Australia. Other work by Caplan (1995) and Collingham (2001) offer me rich historical accounts that intersect with the experiences of Burghers and Eurasians. In contrast to this rich literature, there is limited academic literature on people with mixed European and Asian ancestries from other locales. Most of the existing literature emanates from the perspective of various colonial histories in specific locales such as Dutch Indonesia and/or French Indochina (see for example Clancy-Smith & Gouda 1998; Stoler 1995, 1997, 2002; and Taylor 1983) and Hong Kong (Lee 2004), or at specific times such as Felicia Yap's (2010, 2011) work on the Eurasian internment experience throughout the various colonies during World War Two.

In the Sri Lankan context, despite being an official category of ethnicity, little academic literature has been produced on the Burghers, and again these have mostly been historical accounts (see for example Fernando 1972; McGilvray 1982; Roberts *et al*. 1989; Ferdinands 1995; Kumari Campbell 2005; and Jayawardena 2009). Rodney Ferdinands' (1995) text offers a less scholarly, yet well-researched account of the entire history of the Burghers, first in Sri Lanka and then in Australia, which has proven to be a good source of background information for me. Similarly, Roberts *et al.* (1989) provide me with much background information in their thorough historical and

political account of the Burghers in Sri Lanka including interesting information on how they were perceived of and treated by the local Sinhalese and Tamil peoples. Finally, academic literature on the Eurasians of Malaysia and Singapore tends to be historical and particularist in its treatment of Eurasians as a distinct category of ethnic identity (see for example Crabb 1960; Braga-Blake & Ebert-Oehler 1992; Barth 1995; Periera 1997; Kraal 2005; and De Witt 2006). Crabb (1960) is of particular interest in that he offers his own Eurasian perspective on his ethnicity, yet writes from a particularly condescending point of view that has obviously been shaped by the prevalent thinking of his era. Others such as Barth (1995) and Kraal (2005) attempt to offer more open-ended accounts of what constitutes 'Eurasianness', yet they still seem to revert to older and more specific definitions throughout their discussions so that they flatten the Eurasian experience.

In recent years, however, a number of student theses about 'Eurasians' are being produced, perhaps indicating a renewed interest amongst a younger generation searching to understand their own complex genealogies. Kirsty Walker (2012) and Ione Jolly, for example, both examine Eurasians in Southeast Asia from within the discipline of history, yet they also write from more open perspectives, acknowledging the fluidity of 'Eurasian' identities. I too share this perspective, and draw on this less bound understanding of Eurasians, much like Choo *et al.* (1995, 2007) who write about being Eurasian in an Australian context. As such, I seek to challenge the reductive portrayals of Eurasians, that appear in work by the aforementioned Crabb or Barth for example, and instead speak to the multiplicity of understandings that can inform the literature on race, mixed race, ethnicity, whiteness, migration and multiculturalism.

In effect, my thesis as a whole acts as a literature review. Each chapter introduces new theoretical frames that, as a whole, combine to work towards unpacking the notion of being 'Eurasian.' I have chosen to write in this way because it reflects the fluidity and hybridity of my topic. In addition, concepts of narrative, memory, nostalgia, and border-making and border-crossings run through all of the chapters, and of course the politics and vagaries of identity are central to the entire thesis.

Research Methods

Reflecting both field and research problems, I have taken an interdisciplinary approach, working across the borders of anthropology, sociology and cultural geography. Within this, and as I discussed above, I adopt a phenomenological approach that privileges my

participants' understandings, expressions and explanations of their identities within the contexts of everyday life. By grounding my thesis in my participants' voices and drawing upon their narratives, I gain insight into how they understand and conceive of being Eurasian and how they express their identity through various practices of everyday life.

Methodologically, in order to locate participants for the study, I began by speaking with members of my family and used the snowballing technique to meet with extended family members and then distant relatives or acquaintances. I also approached a number of Burgher and Eurasian organisations and two were to prove helpful in providing me with lists of willing participants and the opportunity for further snowballing. Following this, between 2007 and 2009, I conducted a series of informal, semi-structured interviews with nineteen men and women with mixed European and Asian ancestries. The interviews were conducted in the domestic spaces of participants' homes in Perth, Western Australia, in order to gain insight into how this particular 'mixed race' identity is understood and negotiated in everyday life, and how migration processes which include recreating senses of 'home' and belonging, have impacted on these understandings.

It should be noted here that I found the recruitment of participants to be difficult, in that many of the people that I approached were interested in my research but politely declined to be interviewed. I also received contact details for a number of participants from various associations who at first agreed to being interviewed and then, perhaps upon reflection, decided not to go through with participation. There was also one extra individual who agreed to participate and spoke with me about my interview prompts/questions on the phone, almost answering many of the questions, but then pulled out of the research. As he had not yet signed my consent form, I had to exclude everything he had said to me from my thesis and as a result, my participant group of 20 reduced to 19. This is a small group, and I attribute my difficulties in recruiting participants to apprehension over the topic of race and its associated topic of mixed race. A small research group, however, can have its merits as it lends itself to 'furthering the understanding of complex phenomena rather than making generalizations' (Bird 2007, p. 318). Further, as Svetlana Boym points out, individuals with their 'diasporic tales' are at the heart of the migration phenomenon (2001, p. 328). Therefore, to an extent I could not afford to discount anyone who was willing to participate, as all were individuals with important contributions to a collective story. As

all fit within my criteria of needing to be of 'Eurasian' ancestry, I found that, despite some differences, all participants' stories contained rich and useful material for my examination of Eurasianness.

Two of my participants, a man in his forties and an eighteen-year-old woman, were born in Perth, Western Australia. Unlike the other participants these two were obviously not first generation migrants, however the stories told by Rob and Hayley add a valuable dimension to our understandings of the processual quality of remembering identity. Moreover, the focus of my thesis is to examine the lived experience of those of 'mixed' 'Eurasian' ancestry in Perth, and so it stands to reason that some within this group would be migrants and some would not – in other words, it was not a prerequisite that my participant group consist of migrants. Despite this, the majority of participants were not born in Perth, so therefore migration has become a central theme within my thesis and is something that must be unpacked. In addition, at the time of her interview, one of my participants lived (and still lives) outside Australia. Brooke grew up in Perth after migrating to Australia as a young child in the mid-1980s, and began working in the Middle East at the end of 2006. She has married and started a family there, however she still holds Australian citizenship and visits Perth regularly to spend time with her family. She is also in my extended family and so I did not want to discount her as a participant. Over the years that I have known her, she has often directed thoughtful consideration towards her ancestry and as a result her interview responses were deep, insightful and self-reflexive, and have contributed nuanced understandings to my thesis. The resulting participant group is therefore diverse in many ways - in age, gender, generation of migration, specific ancestry – but all have offered invaluable contributions to understandings of being 'Eurasian' and had much to say during their interviews.

My research process then involved a close textual analysis of the narrative responses of each participant to the interview questions, so that as a result of this approach, much of my thesis involves storytelling, both my own and my family's story, and my participants' stories: of being interned in *Changi* prison, of experiencing racism, migration stories, the stories attached to their homes and the objects within them and the stories surrounding food and certain dishes, for example. Oral history has increasingly come to be used as a 'history from below' methodological approach within migration studies in order to add the migrant's own story to the 'grand narrative' of national histories (Thomson 1999, p. 26). Storytelling is central to this approach, as it

helps us to understand the impacts of migration on individual and collective identities, revealing the interplay between personal and national narratives.

Further, on an individual level, in constructing themselves autobiographically (Bruner 2004, p. 692) during their interviews, participants sought to make sense of being Eurasian, and this in turn can give us insight into the various strategies involved with self-identification. Certainly, identity emerges during the process of telling stories as people move back and forth over their lives (Haggis, Schech, & Fitzgerald 1999, p. 171). What results from this storytelling in this thesis is a post-structural account of a group of people existing within the tensions between various levels of identifications (race, class, nationality, and ethnicity). It is post-structural because it embraces complexity and contradiction, acknowledging no stable conceptions of identity. Certainly, even readers of my thesis will draw differing meanings and some will reject my findings. This only serves to strengthen my position that there is no one truth to being 'Eurasian.'

In order to fully interrogate the differing ways of understanding and being Eurasian, I find it useful to examine the boundary processes that occur in everyday life. Kopytoff's (1986) diacritical 'inventories' of practices and symbols that are used to distinguish one cultural group from another are one way to conceive of these boundaries. His inventories include modes of dress, livelihood, language, cuisine, music, ritual, religious belief and any other form of symbolic content (p. 73). In this thesis, I therefore focus on the lived/practiced experience of being 'mixed' within the domestic sphere and as a result have examined the way my participants have decorated their homes, how and what they eat and how they clothe themselves. These areas of everyday life offer revealing insights into how being Eurasian is understood and expressed by my participants on a personal level and how this intertwines with a sense of a collective 'Eurasian' identity.

This expression of identity was particularly evident when participants spoke about specific home objects. This was not initially an area that I had expected to include in my thesis, however, after visiting some of my participants in their homes prior to conducting the interviews, it became apparent that home decoration and specific objects were central in their understanding of their Eurasianness. Jules David Prown, a scholar who was at the forefront of the emergence of the field of material culture in the early 1980s, posits that just as we create material culture, so too are we shaped by the material culture around us. He goes further by saying that just as we can use oral

histories as a source for interpreting material culture, we can use artefacts to enhance or shape the telling and remembering of oral histories (1982, p. 2). When talking about their objects and the memories they evoke, my participants invariably revealed how they view themselves and what aspects of themselves they choose to represent. As a result, I included more questions/interview prompts about the material cultures of home and found this to be a fruitful area for research.

Aside from the in-depth interviews, I therefore conducted home tours where possible. On some occasions, where participants were not particularly comfortable, I was only shown a few rooms of their houses and did not press to see any further rooms. These participants did however talk extensively about specific objects and described the rooms and their uses in their houses to me. Other participants were very accommodating and took me through their entire houses whilst discussing the ways in which they used their rooms, the ways that they had chosen to decorate them, and how they felt about each room. Conducting these tours (albeit on an ad hoc basis) and the interviews within their houses anchored their thinking and remembrances in relation to 'home' and often brought out emotion related to family and past experiences.

In the first chapter that deals with migration, I also include some archival research in order to ground my participants' migration experiences within Australia's larger history of migration. This is significant because the lives of non-white migrants have been directly affected and shaped by past exclusionary governmental policies, particularly those that constitute Australia's notorious 'White Australia' policy that informed migration in this country for much of the 20th century. I conducted this research using the digital archives available on the National Archives of Australia's website via their virtual reading room. This service has, in the last few years, made available hundreds of documents relating to Australia's concern over migration from Southeast Asia and particularly on the confusion surrounding the classification of 'Eurasians' throughout Southeast Asia including the Burghers of Sri Lanka.

Image 2: My maternal grandparents Ruth Dulcible (née Jansz) and Owen Rudolph Thomasz

My family story is also a constant thread running through my thesis as I interrogate my participants' understandings alongside and against my own experiences and understandings of being 'Eurasian.' I start with my grandparents, Ruth Dulcibel (née Jansz) and Owen Rudolph Thomas pictured in Image 2, since it was their story that long ago provoked my interest in my family's history and in what has become my thesis topic. I would have loved to have included my grandparents' voices more directly within my thesis, so that I could more directly hear the nuances of their understandings of themselves and their lives rather than simply hearing stories about their early years in Malaysia transmitted through the prisms of family members. By 2002 both had passed away, years before thoughts of this thesis had taken shape in my mind. So in place of direct contact with them, I use their children's stories, family photograph albums, my own memories and the familial artefacts they have left behind, to try and incorporate their stories as best I can.

Along with weaving my family's story throughout this thesis, I use a few select photographs from my grandmother's albums, and with kind permission by one of my participants, I also use a photograph of my maternal grandfather's family in Chapter 3 (see Image 5). Whilst I read these photographs as text, where 'the past can reveal itself through a silent communication' (Yannick 1990, p. 378), I acknowledge that the meanings I glean about my relatives and ancestors are subject to my position as a somewhat disconnected observer, mostly deriving what Geoffrey Poister (2001, p. 49) terms 'outside meanings.' It is only through family stories about particular ancestors that I can gain some insight into the 'inside meanings' behind my family photographs,

into the relationships and tensions within my family that are concealed by the postures and expressions demanded by the photographic conventions of the time (Poister 2001, p. 50).

Finally, to reiterate, my thesis focuses on participants' narratives of migration, understandings of hybridity and whiteness, the domestic performances of home and the objects within in relation to identity, and the ways in which clothing and food have been used to construct boundaries around particular 'types' of 'Eurasians.' I have therefore asked a variety of questions based on broader themes as well as the specifics of everyday life as I believe that this multi-lensed approach is the best way to more fully examine this complex identity.

My participants: a brief introduction

The 19 men and women in my research group varied across age, gender, homeland, and specific 'Eurasian' ancestry. At the time of the interview, they ranged in age relatively uniformly from 18 to 85 (See Appendix 1). In terms of gender, women were more highly represented with 13, and in terms of ancestry, Burghers represented the majority, again with 13 as opposed to 6 who identify as Eurasian from Singapore or Malaysia. However, within this Burgher sub-group, 8 of the 13 also identify as Eurasian having grown up in Malaysia (or had parents from Malaysia). The remaining 5 were from Sri Lanka (or had parents from Sri Lanka).

As noted above, 2 participants were born in Perth, and 4 migrated to Perth as children. The remaining participants migrated as adults and the majority of these worked in administrative or clerical positions in various government departments or industrial corporations in their previous homelands. One couple ran a plantation in Sri Lanka, one woman ran a successful sewing business in Malaysia, and another held a high administrative position on the staff of the Malaysian royal family at the time. Only four of the women did not work outside the home. All continued on with similar work here in Australia, with one woman retiring and three of the four 'homemaking' women taking up work outside the home for the first time here in Australia, in retail or administration.

In terms of religion, as is common for 'Eurasians,' all participants follow, or were born into, some denomination of Christianity (Roman Catholic for the Malaccan Eurasians and mostly Anglican for the rest) although at least 7 were not practicing. One Burgher

woman, who identified as Christian in terms of religion, has chosen instead to practice Buddhism as an adult. This could have been a controversial decision back in Sri Lanka as it would have renounced the religious basis of the Burghers and instead been associated with the Sinhalese, however she had made this decision here in Australia. As I note in subsequent chapters, I did not focus on religion in much depth in this thesis, but it is certainly an interesting area for future research.

Brief outline of chapters

I begin with my participants' stories of coming to Australia in Chapter 1, with an international focus on narrative. With the exception of Rob and Hayley who were both born in Perth, the participants in my study all migrated to Perth between 1952 and 1986. As migrants, their identities have not only been shaped through movement across geographic space, but have also been temporally defined: they live in the present with hopes for the future, but also anchor their identities in nostalgic constructions of their pasts. I draw on a humanist notion of oral history, and memory and the process of recollection as methodological approaches to determine how a particular 'Eurasian' identity is arrived at and maintained. Here I find particularly useful Alessandro Portelli and Luisa Passerini's treatments of personal oral testimonies. Memory produces personal narratives that, for Alessandro Portelli (2003, p. 16), fill the temporal gap between event and official documentation. According to Portelli what is important is not the memory and the tale, but the remembering and the telling (p. 15). Similarly, Passerini is less concerned about the accuracy of memories. Rather, she is interested in memory's 'insistence on creating a history of itself', and how identities are formed through this invocation of history (Passerini 1996, p. 23). Indeed, identity emerges during the process of telling stories as people move back and forth over their lives (Haggis, Schech, & Fitzgerald, 1999, p. 171). My thesis is therefore in part a multi-voiced oral history of a particular people who share an ambiguous identity that was born of the colonial encounter.

The next two chapters examine the theoretical notions of hybridity and whiteness from my participants' perspectives. In Chapter 2 I examine my participants' understandings of 'being mixed', drawing particularly on Maria P.P. Root's interpretations of racial border crossing and Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and splitting to understand how Eurasianness is imagined and how the ambivalence of this identity is negotiated.

From colonial thinking to present day identity politics across most of the globe, it is argued that there is no identiary middle ground between Asian and European (de Pina-Cabral 2002, p. 165). However, I argue that this is no more than a perception and in reality there is a continuum. Writing on Guyanese linguistics and the creolisation of language in 1980, Lee Drummond suggested that we refrain from viewing cultures as separate and discrete systems, proposing instead that we understand them more in terms of an intersystem or cultural continuum. He argues that there are no cultures, there is only Culture, and this is because rather than being clearly defined, cultures are like 'overlapping sets of transformations or continua' (1980, p. 372). For Drummond, embracing the notion of the continuum allows us to better understand plural societies and value creolisation processes rather than seeing some cultures as fragmentary or fractured and spoiled (*Ibid.*).

In more recent years, Lionel Caplan similarly takes a creolist approach in his studies on Anglo-Indians (1995, 2001), advocating the notion of a cultural continuum to better understand the myriad of ways of identifying that exists within this seemingly bound community. And indeed over 30 years after Drummond's proposal, and although he was referring to the process of creolisation, which has its own specific histories and meanings that do not fully equate with the notions of hybridity and 'racial' mixing, I, like Caplan, still find Drummond's concept of the continuum to be relevant and highly evident throughout my research. Strategic hybridity works alongside and extends the concept of the continuum in that it indeed shows that individuals shift between notions of essentialism and hybridity when positioning themselves in different contexts. I therefore draw on scholarly works on identity that use strategic hybridity as a theoretical frame.

Despite this, the multiple subject positionings afforded by strategic hybridity and the concept of the continuum were negated during the colonial era when various colonial administrations systematically and strategically classified peoples of 'mixed race' identities as separate and distinct ethno-cultural categories, literally to keep them in their place within the socio-political hierarchy. Within this reasoning was a desire to protect the perceived purity of whiteness, which was threatened by those 'Eurasians' who made claims to Europeanness. No examination of 'Eurasians' would be complete without an analysis of their various relationships with whiteness, so I therefore do this in Chapter 3.

Image 3: My great-grandfather Cecil sitting atop an elephant in Malaya, c. 1930

I examine the ways in which whiteness is understood and experienced by my participants who acknowledge a mixed European and Asian heritage, leading to important insights into the cultural construction of whiteness. I suggest that Eurasians experience life at the boundaries of whiteness, often shifting from one side to the other of this often internalised boundary. Some of my participants see themselves as having a claim to whiteness while others do not and this in turn affects how they experience their Eurasianness. Looking through my grandmother's photograph albums I am struck by the many performances of a British whiteness amongst my family, particularly in my grandparents generation. For example, in Image 2 above, my grandparents are posing in front of a backdrop in a photographer's studio in Malaya shortly after they were married in 1947. The backdrop is reminiscent of a stately English garden and most definitely not reflective of the tropics. The use of country or garden scenes were the fashion in British photography at the time, representing an escape from the stresses associated with urban growth and providing a less 'savage' and natural backdrop (Geffroy 1990, p. 382). The implications of 'Eurasians' using a scene like this in the tropics adds an extra dimension. Arguably, it represents my grandparents 'ideal depiction' (p. 387) as civilised, respectable British subjects who had a claim to whiteness. The social upliftment that whiteness offered many 'Eurasians' afforded them relatively lavish lifestyles as can be seen in Image 3 where my great-grandfather Cecil sits atop an elephant outside his estate house and is attended to by his darker-skinned servants.

I examine the performance and representation of 'Eurasianess' in my remaining three chapters – all deal with the everyday manifestations of the various subject positionings my participants take and therefore exemplify strategic hybridity. Specifically, I examine the ways that 'Eurasian' identities have been crafted by my participants through what

de Certeau (1984) terms the practices of everyday life. Similarly, in *The World of Goods* (1979), Mary Douglas argues that what we choose to eat, wear, and display in our houses reveals a complex set of information about ourselves and our status in the community. I therefore include chapters on displaying and representing 'Eurasianness' in home interiors, through clothing and through the cooking and consumption of food.

In Chapter 4 I unpack more of the texture of 'being Eurasian' and, in particular, of 'being Eurasian' in multicultural Australia, through my participants' complex and nuanced understandings of 'home.' I focus on their narratives of 'home' as well as the role that domestic objects and ornaments play in (re)creating identity and a sense of 'home' within the diaspora. I come from the perspective that domestic spaces and the material cultures within them can be read as artefacts of memory and identity, and can therefore tell us much about how Eurasianness is understood and represented throughout the home. I was reminded about this at the beginning of my fieldwork when I noticed a strong similarity between the objects and ornaments within almost all of my participants' houses. The display of 'Asian', and particularly Chinese ornaments marked many of their houses as 'Asian' spaces and through their stories of childhood houses in former homelands it became clear that this represented a significant shift from the very British oriented households of their pasts. The link between the home, its objects and identity was therefore fairly clear.

Less noticeable amongst my group of participants was the use of clothing to represent Eurasianness. During the interviews all wore what would be described as Western clothing, but within the stories of a number of participants it became clear that their respective relationships with their 'Asian' sides was often negotiated through their choices of clothing or accessories. Representative of a politics of dress that stretches back to the colonial era, all of the participants in my study made the distinction between 'Western' and 'traditional' 'Asian' clothing styles, suggesting that clothing is understood as an identiary boundary marker. In Chapter 5 then, I examine the ways in which my participants use dress to denote ethnic self-identity while at the same time creating and crossing boundaries between perceptions of authentic/traditional/'Asian' and Western clothing.

The Asian/Western binary returns in Chapter 6, this time in relation to food. The cooking and eating within 'Eurasian' groups tells an underlying story of colonialism, migration and cultural exchange, and can tell us much about the ways in which

Eurasianness is understood. I examine identity negotiations and boundary assertions through the meanings my participants' draw from their culinary narratives and memories. While food has a recuperative power for those within the diaspora, it can also be used to create boundaries between and within 'Eurasian' groups. I therefore use food as a multilayered trope and strategy in ethnic identification and border construction.

What emerges throughout the chapters are my participants' abilities to simultaneously remain ambivalent about their identities while also holding to the perception of authentic and bounded 'Eurasian' groupings; further reinforcing the notion that a strategic hybridity is the best model for examining this 'mixed' identity.

CHAPTER 1

Migration stories and pathways

> I'm very proud of where I came from, but I'm also totally proud and content, happy here. I've done exactly half of my life there and half of my life here. Thirty six years in each place.
>
> John

> Singapore is so lively. See this was the thing that really affected me … the first night we were here, oh, I just locked myself in the room and I started bawling my eyes out. I said oh, what have we come to? ... It's so quiet.
>
> Ada

'We were no longer living the life of luxury'[6]

The migration process throws personal identity and notions of self into sharp focus. My participants were pushed to question their understandings of being 'Eurasian', first through the difficult decision to leave their homelands, and then in Australia where they have often been faced with the 'where are you from?' question. Understandings and definitions of being Eurasian inevitably shift as countries, each with its own immigration policies and ethno-cultural configurations, are traversed: 'When I came over it did confuse me. At least in Malaysia you can say you're Eurasian and they know what it is' (*Dianne*). These understandings constantly surfaced during the interviews I conducted with my participants. In this chapter though I focus particularly on their responses to my opening questions/prompts, which asked them to talk about their backgrounds including where they were born, grew up and any other countries they have lived, as well as which country they consider to be their country of origin, where 'home' is for them, and whether or not they identify as Australian.[7] Remembrances of migration experiences and 'homelands' also appeared at other times during the interviews: these were triggered in particular by my questions about everyday life such as those about food and eating, celebrations, and household practices.

In his review of the contribution that oral history has made to migration studies in the last quarter of the 20th century, Alistair Thomson (1999, p. 24) suggested that the

[6] *Liz*
[7] See Appendix 3 for full schedule of interview prompts.

physical passage from one place to another is only one event within a larger 'migratory experience which spans old and new worlds' and that its impacts continue for the life of the migrant and into subsequent generations. From this understanding it can be argued that migration is a process that has temporal as well as spatial dynamics and that we can use this as a lens for the study of migrant and ethnic communities (*Ibid.*). As noted in the introduction to this thesis, Thomson also reminds us that oral history has increasingly come to be used as a methodology within migration studies so that the migrant's own story, which was previously likely to be unrecorded or ill-documented, is now part of 'an essential record of the hidden history of migration' (p. 26). This approach of history from below challenges the 'grand narrative' approach and offers more scope for understanding the impacts of migration on individual and collective identities.

This has been constantly demonstrated to me by the responses made by my participants to my questions. For example, I asked Lionel whether his household practices had changed after migrating to Australia. Rather than giving me a quick, short response, he told a story that illustrated his changing experience of home life over much of his life. After Lionel married and set up a home in Malaysia, his practice was to offer coffee to his visitors. As he 'improved in status' he offered them 'aerated waters' such as 'orange crush and ginger beer and lemonade.' His finances and lifestyle continued to improve, so he was then able to offer beer, moving on to spirits, and then 'just before I left it was champagne all the way.' He laughs as he tells me this, clearly thinking back to happy times. 'Then you come to Australia and suddenly, bang, you're back to square one again.' Lionel's story, told through a simple list of drinks for visitors, tellingly expresses his loss of both economic and social status as a result of migration to Australia. This is a personal narrative intertwined with larger narratives of decolonisation and migration that entail subsequent losses of status and standards of living which many Burghers and Eurasians had become accustomed to in previous homelands.

Many of the stories that emerged during my fieldwork helped me to unpack and understand the issues involved with the significant adjustments that were demanded, and the profound senses of loss that pervaded their lives as they learnt to live in a new culture. As Liz told me: 'Once we came here our lifestyle changed completely. We were no longer living the life of luxury', echoed by Estelle, losing hours from her days: 'I have to do more here. Because there we had maids, always had somebody.' Yet these losses

also caused them to reflect on the ways in which their former status had allowed them privileges not accessible to many: 'It was a big culture shock also', Corinne told me, 'that may sound a bit funny but I think the lifestyle here, especially then, it was fairly narrow ... it was a big shock.' Growing up in Singapore, Pam and her family did 'practically nothing' around the house: 'They were good days. They were really good days. Yeah, absolutely spoilt. I mean you know... it was a bit of a shock when we first came to Australia!'

For some, such as Marie, the shock was mitigated in some ways because she had a sense that her lifestyle in Malaya had allowed for a relatively smooth transition so that fitting in 'was no problem at all.' This was because in Malaya 'you didn't live like a Malay … my Mother lived the sort of the English style … brought up in it.' Marie spoke of having 'rice and curry or Chinese fry' for lunch, but then having 'steak, chops, chicken ... an English meal' every night for dinner. Yet, her family had cooks and *amahs*[8] to serve the meal which was indeed a stark contrast to her life in Australia, and as a result she remembered the 'struggle' of her home life when she first migrated: 'I had to cook! … wash, iron, clean. Every day, you know … And then all the shopping also I did … I had five children, and two of us, seven. One person doing all the work … when I first came it was very hard on me.'

These stories that tell of the struggle and shock of adjusting to life in a new country, add much needed texture to migration accounts, reminding us that migration is a human experience, imbued with emotion, much more than a simple rational or functional process: 'We've moved countries and that was a big, big thing … It was so hard for us to come into this country … We were in limbo, our lives' (*Liz*). In this chapter I examine the migration experiences of my participants in order to examine how movement shaped their self-identifications and understandings of 'Eurasianness.' I argue that the processes of migration and storytelling have allowed my participants to examine how they have understood who they are and how they have been shaped by external forces.

The wider contexts

Prior to the 1980s within Australian migration studies, official historical accounts tended to focus on migration policy or on the attitudes of Australian-born citizens towards migrants: effectively, within academic literature what was known about migrants could mostly be gleaned from statistics and tables and any expressions of the

[8] A female servant.

migrant voice were suppressed by the dominance of this approach from 'outside' (Thompson 1978; Thomson 1999). As Thomson (1999, p. 26) alerts us to be able to see, this ensured that little could be known about what migrants themselves were thinking or feeling and so migration, particularly migration from non-traditional areas, could be more easily represented as a social issue. Indeed, Benmayor and Skotnes (2005, p. 4) tell us that we are often encouraged to think of migrants as 'deviants', or as the cause of disruption to the idea of the nation state. The fear of a loss of Anglo-Celtic Australian culture was arguably the driving and emotive force behind representing immigrants and their various 'foreign' cultures in a negative way and the tightening of immigration restrictions was seen as an imperative to protect Australia from this perceived threat. As late as 1972, this fear of a changing Australia was particularly strong in regard to immigrants of mixed race as exemplified by the former Leader of the Labor Party (and a former Immigration Minister) Arthur Calwell when he implored (at the end of his political career) that the 'flood of Anglo-Indians, Anglo-Burmese, Dutch burghers and Mauritians pouring into Australia must be stopped' lest Australia become a 'chocolate-coloured' nation in the 1980s and beyond (*The Canberra Times* 1972).

The 1980s saw a global shift towards acknowledging and embracing the realities of ethno-cultural pluralism within the modern Western nation state while Australia under the Liberal Party/National Party coalition government led by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was just embarking on its new official policy of multiculturalism. Leading towards this, the intentional restriction of 'non-white' or 'non-European' immigrants to Australia which began at Federation with the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* and became known as the 'White Australia' policy, had been progressively and unevenly relaxed by successive governments between 1949 and 1973 when it was finally dismantled by the Whitlam Labor government (National Communications Branch, Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2009). As social attitudes changed, academic research responded with a shift toward qualitative research that sought out voices from 'below' and 'inside' – in effect to correct previous power imbalances and offer revisionist interpretations of history. Since the 1980s, oral historians have increasingly sought for the migrant 'voice' to be heard (from 'inside') adding a more representative and richer dimension to Australian migration history (Thomson 1999, p. 26) and highlighting the experience of individuals and small groups within the context of the tension that exists between the local and the global (Benmayor and Skotnes 2005, p. 3). As Benmayor and Skotnes (2005, p. 3) argue, the migrant voice offers us

glimpses into the 'interior of migration experiences' and into the complex and multi-faceted processes of constructing and reconstructing identities.

The focus of this chapter then is to position the lens of the migration story 'from inside' in order to explore the various understandings, constructions and reconstructions of Eurasian identities. As I explained in the Introductory chapter, I ground my analysis in the self-descriptions of my participants and use life narratives as a methodological approach to explore their own understandings and expressions of being Eurasian within the contexts of everyday life. In essence, my thesis as a whole presents a multi-voiced oral history of the lives of my participants and of their experiences of being 'mixed'. And as I also outlined in the Introduction, I cannot, nor do I seek to, provide a definitive account of a single Eurasian identity. Rather, I offer insight into the ways in which 'Eurasian' identities are understood and represented by a small group of people in Australia who have migrated from South and South East Asia. As Shelley Bird (2007, p. 318) points out, and as I noted in the introduction, a small sample group (in my case 19 participants) lends itself to 'furthering the understanding of complex phenomena rather than making generalizations.' At the heart of the migration phenomenon are the individual migrants, those whose 'diasporic tales do not represent the majority of immigrants, but rather individuals' (Boym 2001, p. 328). Personal testimony, Thomson (1999, p. 28) reminds us, offers unique glimpses into the 'lived interior' processes of migration, revealing the complexities involved with the matrix of policies and social forces that shape and impact individuals and migrant communities. For Thomson, these glimpses also challenge 'mono-causal, linear and economistic theories' ultimately 'reshaping the ways in which migration is understood' (*Ibid.*). Here I put these methodological understandings to the test.

Moreover, as Alessandro Portelli (2003, p. 15) explains, an important aspect of using oral sources is not the memory and the tale, but the remembering and the telling. Similarly, Jerome Bruner (2004, p. 692) highlights the importance of examining what it is that we do when we construct ourselves autobiographically. It is then the concept of storytelling - both the actual migration stories told and the interview as storytelling - that I rely on here. I argue that the processes of remembering and storytelling during the interview process allowed my participants to make sense of being Eurasian, either to clarify existing understandings or even for the first time, in self-revelatory ways.

'They were kicking the Malays out and here was I trying to get in'[9]: migrating under the 'White Australia' policy and beyond

Migration is a destabilising event that exposes identity to contestation (Benmayor and Skotnes 2005). When I asked my participants how migration affected the ways in which they identified, Dianne told me that it left her 'totally confused', and Melanie responded with: 'I just had to explain "Eurasian" more ... being Eurasian is … something that's not understood very well in Australia I think.' These are clues to understanding that as social beings, if our identity is derived from our socio-political surroundings our self-concepts are dramatically altered when we are removed from the communities with which we are familiar. The migratory experience challenges our notions of who we are, as ethnic categories change from one country to another: the constructed category of 'Eurasian' already had different historical definitions throughout Asia with various levels of acceptance as a legal category, and this has travelled to Australia with migrants and their perceptions so that understandings here also vary. Eurasians do not show up as a category of ethnicity within any official government records or in the census and owing to the varied and contested definitions amongst those who do identify as Eurasian, it is impossible to study Eurasians as a bounded migrant group. Further, Eurasians who managed to migrate to Australia under the infamous 'White Australia' policy were all classified as persons of mixed descent by the Australian government, making it hard to determine the exact backgrounds of these 'Eurasians.'

With the exception of Australian-born Rob and Hayley, my participants migrated to Perth, Western Australia between 1952 and 1988. In terms of country of origin, the majority (seven) were from Malaysia, four from Sri Lanka, three from Singapore, and three from Brunei (See Appendix 1). Only four migrated under the 'White Australia' policy - Stan, a Burgher from Sri Lanka, migrated in 1952; Lionel and Marie, both Burghers from Malaysia migrated in 1967; and Ada from Singapore, a first generation Eurasian with an English father and a Burgher mother, and who migrated in 1968. Lorraine, Corinne and John, all Burghers from Sri Lanka, and Pam and Burt, both Eurasian from Singapore, migrated just after, or as the White Australia policy was being dismantled (1973-74). My remaining participants migrated between 1984 and 1988, and therefore did not have to prove European ancestry. Significantly, the migratory experiences of all the participants in my study have been shaped by the underlying contemporary political climate of Australia, strengthening the argument that personal experience is intricately linked to local and global experiences (Benmayor and Skotnes

[9] *Lionel*

2005, p. 3). And indeed, as Blunt (2005b) has found within her research, personal experience also shaped politics in that the migration of Anglo-Indians exposed and challenged the very basis of the White Australia policy (p. 141).

Immediately following the Second World War and with the government's urge to 'populate or perish', the then-Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, sought to retain the White Australia policy amidst fears that Australia would be overrun by Asian immigrants. Calwell warned of the 'dissensions and complexities which beset countries with mixed populations' (Calwell quoted in *Tomorrow's Australians*, Department of Immigration 1948), however his Labour Party government was coming under increased scrutiny for its exclusionary immigration policy. Opposition to the policy was directed from various ethnic community groups already resident in Australia, the Australian Communist Party, and others with socialist leanings such as union officials. During the Japanese occupation of Singapore and the Malayan peninsula, Australia had provided provisional sanctuary to a limited number of Chinese, Malays, and those of 'mixed descent', who were expected to return to their countries after the war. However, as noted by Calwell, many did not do so. In a 1949 speech as Immigration Minister, he accused those South East Asian refugees who refused repatriation of threatening the nation's concept of a homogenous White Australia. Yet he also relied on this as evidence of the government's 'strong humanitarian instincts' and to argue that Australia's immigration policy was therefore not 'based on claims of racial superiority'. He stated:

> *The only claim, ever made or implied in our policy, is that there are different varieties of the human species distinguished from one another, not by skin pigmentation, but by languages, religions, standards of living, cultures and historical backgrounds, and that it is wise to avoid internecine strife and the problems of miscegenation which such differences have caused in all countries throughout history where races of irreconcilable characteristics have lived in the same community* (Calwell 1949).

This is in line with Blunt's argument that the migration of Anglo-Indians during and after the implementation of the White Australia policy saw discourses of home, nation and belonging shift from an emphasis on 'race' to one of 'culture' (2005b, p. 142). Despite this, and despite Calwell's assertion that skin colour held no import, Immigration Department memoranda circulating over the next two decades revealed otherwise. The complexities of equating skin colour with racial background were

debated and discussed between government departments. Variations in how immigration officers in different locations were assessing skin tones led to a reassessment of policy and this, along with growing pressure from various ethnic and other community groups, ultimately forced reassessment of the White Australia policy in the 1960s with the recommendation that changes be made administratively and 'without public announcement' (Bunting 1964). Central to these debates was the notion of 'mixed descent' which problematised the categories of European and non-European and confused immigration officials when it came to skin colour. Prior to 1950, with only a few exceptions, non-Europeans were not permitted to settle in Australia. The term non-European was used in official documents to define 'a person who possesses not less than 50% coloured blood or in other words is at least half-caste' (Nutt 1950) and therefore applied to those of mixed descent who were also variously termed coloured or Eurasian depending on the region of origin.

Mixed race or 'coloured' applicants had to prove that they were at least 51% European to be eligible for admission - that is they had to be 'preponderantly of European origin', have 'a European outlook' and 'be of European appearance' (Nutt 1950). These ambiguous criteria caused little problem in the immediate post-war years due to the small numbers of Eurasians seeking admission to Australia, but the numbers of 'Eurasian' applicants steadily rose during the remaining years of the 1940s as they sought to leave previous homelands where their economic and social positions had become precarious within anti-colonial and nationalist contexts. In 1947, after India's independence for example, Anglo-Indians entered Australia in increased numbers raising concerns within Australia (Blunt 2005b, p. 147). The rise in numbers was without doubt what provoked Calwell's panicked defence of the White Australia policy and caused immigration restrictions to tighten. Eurasians from South and South East Asia caused confusion amongst Immigration officials and there were problems with consistency and uniformity when it came to testing the desirability of applicants based on upbringing, blood quantum and appearance (Nutt 1950).

In 1950, to reduce confusion and inconsistency, the required blood quantum level was raised to 75% European blood and mixed race applicants had to 'be fully European in upbringing and outlook' with a 'European rather than non-European' appearance (Nutt 1950). Stan migrated with his parents in 1952 when these criteria were in effect, although he only remembers that it was a requirement that you have accommodation, relatives living in Perth, and a job offer. Perhaps, owing to his young age, he did not

know of the required European features and the raised blood quantum levels, although he remembered that 'they were very strict in those days.'

Over the next two decades, questions over mixed race immigration were debated within and between government departments, all within a general air of confusion over the importance of various criteria. Arguments for 'requiring a high proportion of European descent' were premised on the 'danger of a large-scale movement to Australia of such people (e.g. Anglo Indians)' (Heyes 1957). Arguments against the high blood quantum level[10] deemed European appearance and habit to be more important, and also acknowledged the difficulty for some applicants to provide documentary evidence of 75% European blood particularly those whose parents were also both of mixed blood. The bizarre blood quantum requirement gradually gave way to 'judging descent by appearances' (Nutt 1957). European appearance 'in the eyes of Australians generally' was deemed to be of utmost importance 'so that assimilation difficulties are not unduly accentuated, and the Government's policy in relation to permanent entry of non-Europeans is not called into question in the political or other fields' (Nutt 1957).

Lionel, Marie and Ada immigrated in the late 1960s after the dictation test (of a piece of text in any European language, often one known by officials not to be understood by the applicant) had been abolished (1958) and after a subsequent relaxation of criteria for non-Europeans (1964). Lionel and Marie's first immigration application had been rejected in 1947, as they understood it, 'because of our colour of our skin' (*Marie*). 'Basically the Calwell government, they were kicking the Malays out and here was I trying to get in' (*Lionel*). Lorraine vividly remembers the differences in migration experiences within her family. When the first of her siblings migrated to Australia in the 1960s, 'they had to go and get their genealogies proven and then they presented it with their application to come to Australia.' She remembers that her brother-in-law was under added scrutiny because 'he looked like an Aboriginal. Very dark, because he came from a Portuguese ... you know the Portuguese can be quite dark.' However, he still managed to migrate to Australia 'because he had his papers' that proved his European background. 'It was easier for me', she said 'because by the time I was ready to come my other siblings had already come ... and things were easier in '73, '74 rather than in the sixties. You know, things had started to change a bit.' Skin colour was not an immigration factor for Lorraine, although she still had to provide documentary

[10] None of which questioned the scientifically nonsensical notion that ethnicity could be measured through so-called 'blood lines' in the first place.

evidence of European ancestry: '[T]hough we were dark, it didn't matter. If you could prove your genealogy, that you had white blood, you were passed.' These few examples show us how, through the process of storytelling, participants were making sense of what they had been through and attempting to understand how their personal lives were intricately linked to local and global processes.

'It's a great big story, but a story that must be told'[11]: sensemaking through storytelling

After I had conducted my fieldwork and reviewed the interviews as a whole, it became evident that each participant's migration story (or that of their parents) was a very particular starting point in their understandings and articulations of a 'Eurasian' identity. Their responses to my questions about their 'backgrounds' and migration paths opened up the idiosyncrasies and underlying assumptions of their particular understandings and constructions of identity. As a Burgher, for example, Lorraine distanced herself from the Sri Lankans 'who are coming out as refugees' today by telling me that 'you can't really class them the same ... because we are an educated class of person.' And, Lionel who now calls himself a Burgher in Australia vehemently said: 'Back in Malaya I used to say Eurasian just for the sake of trying to explain what a Burgher was … they didn't know, they *still* don't know. You say Burgher, they say hamburgers!' Both Lionel and Lorraine were allowing me to observe them crafting narratives of position, narratives which could be sustained by their memories as they recovered aspects of their lives for me.

The informal and semi-structured interviews I conducted with my participants acted as a process through which my recordings of their oral histories/testimonies captured not only their memories of migration pathways but also the stories they were crafting during our conversations. These open opportunities for us to understand their migratory experiences and the impacts these have had on their (re)crafting of their identities during their journeys and subsequent lives in Australia. This reflects Vicky Lee's (2004, p. 9) reference to 'identity as process' in her discussion of Eurasians as a legacy of the British Empire in Hong Kong. Certainly, my participants were visibly formulating their identities during the interviews I conducted with them. Further, during the course of the interview some would reconfigure these identities in seemingly contradictory ways. This opened up for me the shifting, ambiguous and contingent nature of identification as well as its complexity and multiplicity. And

[11] *Lionel*

further, to take the stance of 'interview as process' opens up the possibility that it is not just the migratory experience but also the remembering and telling of those migration stories that has contributed to and shaped an individual's identity.

Throughout the interviews the interplay between personal and collective narratives has been significant. First, participants have shaped the narrative construction of personal identity through a perception of a shared and immutable 'Eurasian' identity, whether this is rejected or embraced. Secondly, my presence as interviewer/participant observer has shaped, subtly, sometimes overtly, these narrative constructions. Both of these factors had a regulating effect on expressions of identity. As with other autobiographical forms such as memoir and life writing, the oral narration of a life story involves both self-assertion and self-censoring, equally revealing and equally silencing. In this chapter therefore I use narrative inquiry as a core frame for understanding these processes of telling/not telling through the various constructions of identity and perceptions that emerged within the making of migration stories during the interviews.

While conducting interviews in the homes of interviewees I used prompts and open-ended questions to elicit longer, rather than single word responses: these often turned into longer 'stories.' Later, writing about each interview in my field journal (my own first process of recording, remembering and thinking through), I realised that at various times during the interviews many of my participants would look up and away as though staring back into the past as they narrated a story, particularly one involving positive memories. These stories were not simply responses to my questions but, running more deeply, were also told as a way to understand themselves and to express these understandings to me. Dianne, for example, said, struggling to find the right words to explain this both to me and to herself:

> I've changed … I've spent more of my living years here than anywhere else. And, how do I say this? … It's like, and I don't know if it's just being Eurasian, I think it's being Asian, it's more collective. Whereas being Australian and living here it's more individualistic.

The interview with Dianne, like others, functioned processually: identity was formulated, reformulated, constructed and articulated. Participants sometimes initially responded to my questions with phrases such as 'I guess I haven't thought of it' (*Rob*); 'I've never thought of it actually' (*Corinne*), or 'I've never really thought about it in *that*

way' (*Liz,* orig. emphasis), as they sought meaning within certain events of their lives for the first time. Such hesitant responses alerted me to be attentive to the untold stories, both hidden and forgotten, and to be equally attentive to my growing understanding of the selective nature of interviews. From as early as the first few interviews it became clear to me that the processes of remembering and telling involved the censoring, shaping and selection of memories in order to construct a story of their lives with myself and readers of my thesis as the audience (both visible and invisible respectively).

Storytelling as sensemaking highlights the complexities and contingencies of identity: individuals are actively involved in the creation and recreation of identity whilst telling their life stories/narratives and in turn making sense of the identities that emerge. In her study of a women's resource network in a large corporation, Bird (2007, p. 317) explored the links between narrative and sensemaking, finding that 'storytelling functions as a sensemaking device, and individual, social, and group identities derive from telling stories.' However, she points out that these stories do not follow the usual convention of having a beginning, middle and end. She draws on Seyla Benhabib, 'the sense that I create for myself is always immersed in a fragile "web of stories" that I as well as others spin' (Benhabib 1999, p. 348), to demonstrate that narratives are not closed systems. They can never have closure because, as Benhabib argues, 'they are always aspects of the narratives of others' (*Ibid.*). An individual's sensemaking through storytelling is therefore a continual process of social/cultural engagement that influences and is influenced by others within this 'web of stories'. Specifically, my participants' stories are influenced and shaped by their family interactions and also through their continual engagement with others within their ethnic community and social groups and the wider community around them.

A first example: Marie uses the narratives of Burghers in her social group in Perth in her own process of remaking her identity:

> When I came here I met a hell of a lot more … Burghers, and in the crowd that I know … well some of them still [say], 'I am a Burgher', you know. Who the hell cares where you come from? I'm Australian now ... I've been here more than half my life.

The people she knows who still identify as Burgher in Australia are part of Marie's 'web of stories' in that she draws on their assertions of identity to create her own sense of

self and, because of the interconnections of stories and narratives, the interview process acts as a dynamic site for her as the storyteller to actively engage in the creation and recreation of personal identity. This occurs within the context of accepted conventions and social dynamics such as the need to conform to a (perceived) collective identity. Throughout her interview it was evident that Marie also draws on and rejects the desire for Britishness amongst many of the Burghers that she associates with in Australia: 'This is from Sri Lanka', she said to me, 'this attitude of "we were British" ... it's what they call themselves ... I don't care what you call me.' '[T]hose that come from Sri Lanka, some of them are very ... "yes, we are from Sri Lanka"', she told me, raising her nose in the air to denote snobbery, before saying, 'So what?' Through her interactions with the Perth Burgher community she finds that many Burghers have migrated to Australia with this 'attitude' so that being a Burgher from Sri Lanka is seen as a distinction above being a Burgher from Malaysia, and a distinction that she rejects. Bird (2007, pp. 318-319) found that storytelling was used by the women in her study to regulate their identities within a social network and to cultivate norms upon which to base a sense of shared identity. Marie's expression of her new identity shows that, despite rejecting old ethnic designations in favour of calling herself Australian, she is nonetheless aware of the existence of a shared identity within her social group, and she weaves this through her storytelling/sensemaking.

I interviewed some participants in the presence of one or more other people (usually a spouse or sibling), or together as a couple. Such interviews often produced rich understandings for me as the researcher as individuals collaborated in building stories or, conversely, reconstructed and even inhibited the narratives. Pam and Burt, for example, helped each other elaborate their responses, being careful to ensure that I understood what they meant.

> Burt: Since we've come out here, we've identified ourselves as 'new Australians.' So unless you ask for race … I can't recall now the last time I filled out any forms that asked for race. But we identify ourselves as Australian.
> Pam: As Australian.
> Burt: This is the country we migrated to; this is the country our kids were brought up in.
> Pam: And as far as our kids are concerned, they are Australian because they were … well my daughter was three months old when we came … And the boys were a little older.

Burt: They're aware of our background, their background.

A multi-layered narrative was constructed in the collective storybuilding process so that meanings were shaped by each other's reminiscences and stories. At times the elaborations of the narratives became very complex, building on almost invisible cues, reaching deeply back into memory:

Burt: It's a big cultural change. It's one thing visiting a place, but when you come out and live there, you then begin to realise, 'hey, it's quite different down here.' Everyone's got to put their shoulders to the wheel, share the tasks and stuff like that.
Pam: Yeah. Whereas you know, in Singapore you get up in the morning and you just get yourself ready, you come out. Because I used to work in Singapore, and the *amahs* got breakfast on the table, and ... you know, it was fantastic.

Collective storytelling or 'storybuilding' (Bird 2007, p. 319) however sometimes involved rather more self-censoring as well as censoring of each other. For example, when Corinne was speaking of needing the help of a friend in order to migrate to Australia, her husband John cut her off by saying 'That's irrelevant.' He determined the level of privacy throughout our conversation by interjecting from time to time, particularly when the conversation crossed into matters of Sri Lankan politics. It seemed that he had set his own boundary to the discussion and prescribed a specific and individual limit to the meaning of 'migration'. Yet aside from the issue of censorship, collective storybuilding often also strengthened and shaped the process of remembering, as each person reminded the other of particular events or times. Patricia, for example, was prodded to recall certain aspects of her history by her sister Liz who joined us in our conversation (and whom I had previously interviewed). Through storybuilding, Liz prompted Patricia to remember the importance their mother had placed on being a Burgher, despite also identifying as Eurasian, and, significantly, on the importance of the naming and remembering of a specific identity:

Liz: She always instilled in us that we always know our identity. The only thing she thought was the most important thing that we can remember and memorise, was that we were Anglicans, or Protestants, yeah? And we are known as the … ah what? The …
Patricia: Eurasian Dutch …
Liz: No, no, what was it called?

Patricia: Ceylonese Dutch Burghers!

Liz: Ceylonese Dutch Burghers! … she made sure we remembered that.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 2) remind us that 'humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives.' They make a useful distinction between *story* which is told by people who live storied lives and *narrative,* which is those same stories and lives as they have been collected, described and written about by narrative researchers (*Ibid.*). Narrative constructions do not necessarily exist on a linear timeline because individuals jump back and forth in time as they remember their stories and, in the case of storybuilding, as others add to those stories. For example, during their interviews both Ada and Estelle repeatedly brought up their wartime internment experiences during the Japanese occupation of Singapore. Both weaved memories of their respective experiences throughout their recollections of more recent events, or to explain how their understandings of being Eurasian have shifted over their lifetimes (see Chapter 2). Marie's interview presented another example in that her story of arriving in Perth in 1967 on her mother-in-law's birthday triggered memories of her sister-in-law which then provoked her, through memories of family relationships, to jump forward in time to the painful experience of her son's death in 1970. At that moment she pointed at and spoke to a framed picture of her son as a teenager: clearly this was a story that she had to tell, had perhaps steeled herself to tell, at some stage of her interview.

Certainly, during the interviews all of my participants were engaged in an 'ongoing experiential text' of 'living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories' (1990, p. 4) as they looked back at, and spoke of their lives to me and sometimes in the company of others. Building upon Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of narrative discourse, Brockmeier and Carbaugh suggest that an individual is always engaged in making her/himself and therefore there can be no definitive identity (2001, pp. 7-8). When I go back to listen to and read Ada and Estelle again, I see that both had ideas about their identities that wavered throughout their interviews, to the point that at one stage Estelle said, in respect to ethnicity, that 'usually you follow your dad actually', implying that she might consider herself to be Welsh. She followed this up by asking me uncertainly, 'usually that's what they say isn't it?' I was left with the impression that Estelle, especially, is still actively engaged in making her identity. Bakhtin's notion of 'unfinalizability' posits that literary texts such as novels ('fictional') and life narratives ('real') are open ended and include multiple

meanings/interpretations and identities because life always contains a multitude of options (Bakhtin cited in Brockmeier & Carbaugh 2001, p. 8). This again finds resonance in Benhabib's assertion that personal narratives cannot have closure and exist within a 'web of stories' spun by both herself and others (1999, p. 348). So, importantly, narrative constructions of personal identity are also shaped by larger narratives of nation, race and class. As with Estelle, my participants' understandings about identity are shaped by others and by larger narratives which also shape and are shaped by the narratives involved with the migration process.

'We settled on Australia'[12]: 'push' and 'pull' stories about leaving the old homeland

Thomson points out that although economic pressures play a major role in the decision to migrate, they are only part of a larger more 'complex weave of factors and influences' (1999, p. 28). Migrant narratives and personal testimonies reveal that this complex weave involves the exchange and negotiation of information within family and social networks, which not only influences the decision to migrate but also the choice of destination and the experiences of the migrant once in the host country. For Liz, it was the standard of education available to her children that she saw as the most important reason for migrating to Australia from Malaysia. 'Changes in the education system … everything was the Malay language. So it was the wrong time and for me it's like, I never had the education that I wanted.' This desire for her children was added to by her own childhood longing to live in Australia: 'I never wanted to go to England or Canada. Because we learnt so much about Australia I think. I just wanted to come to Australia … I've always had this great desire.'

Interestingly, as her options for migration she cites only the three countries of Australia, England and Canada, not only members of the British Commonwealth but the former colonial metropole and two of its most prominent European-settler destinations, suggesting that these were the three destinations which existed within her social network's cultural imaginary. Liz has a Dutch Burgher ancestry, but when discussing leaving her home in Malaysia, Sri Lanka does not figure in her imagination as a possible destination nor as an ancestral homeland to which to return. Certainly, the predominant migratory paths for 'Eurasians' during the post-colonial period led to the other British Empire/Commonwealth nations, a fact of which she was aware: 'It was easier to adapt. Some went to Canada, some went to England. But because of the

[12] *Lionel*

climate, everybody preferred Australia. Climate I think, it was the main factor' (*Liz*). The exchange of information within Liz's familial and social networks limited her choice of countries within her cultural imaginary to the existing countries of migration amongst Burghers and Eurasians. Repeated reference was made by some of my participants to siblings and other relatives living in these countries, and there was a general awareness that these countries were a part of the diasporic pathway available to them: '[T]here were heaps of people who were going to Canada. [There] was quite an emptying in general. Went to Canada, some to the UK depending if they had families there you know' (*Stan*).

Further, information transmitted to Liz from family members who had already migrated to Australia portrayed Perth's Mediterranean climate as ideal, with mild winters as opposed to the harsher winters of England and Canada, an important consideration for those who were used to living in the tropics. Perth's close proximity to South East Asia and its mild climate undoubtedly would in any case have influenced Liz's decision to migrate, but added to this her family members who had already migrated to Australia years earlier (her parents, one brother and some aunts and uncles), were arguably a major pull factor in choosing Perth. In her interview, she did not explicitly mention her family in Australia as driving her decision, although she did reveal that they helped with her immigration application. However, Liz has told me in numerous previous discussions that choosing Perth was primarily based upon reuniting with family.

Family in Perth was arguably a pull factor for at least half of my participants although it was rarely mentioned to me outright and was sometimes simply added on to a more detailed story about why they migrated. As Pam told me: 'Actually we came on holiday, in '71, Christmas '71 … we just loved the life. And all of Burt's family were here. They were in Sydney and the majority here in Perth, so we chose to come to Perth.' Estelle cited work pressures as a reason for leaving Malaysia in 1988, adding that 'At the same time, the family's all here.' Lorraine specifically mentioned her family when she described what it was like to immigrate into Australia in 1974: 'It was easier for me, because by the time I was ready to come my other siblings had already come.' For others such as married couple John and Corinne, family in the Eastern States of Australia led them to Perth. John stopped in Perth for a few days to visit friends on the way to family in Melbourne and decided to stay. He said that jobs opportunities 'had

never been better in Perth than in '73', while Corinne spoke of how Perth and its climate affected her husband's decision: 'He just liked it so much. It was early spring.'

Similarly, Angela came to Perth indirectly to reunite with extended family. After spending her entire life in Malacca, Malaysia, she married and moved with her husband for his work. They lived in other parts of Malaysia, Indonesia and New Zealand before migrating to Melbourne, Australia in 1981 and then on to Perth in 1985 for work and to reunite with family. Again, Patricia's husband's career meant that her migratory path also led from Malaysia and Brunei through a number of countries such as Italy, Scotland and New Zealand before she reunited with family in Perth in 1986. A number of others had lived in various countries such as England, India and Hong Kong before finally migrating to Perth to reunite with family, but interestingly none directly mentioned this as a reason for choosing Perth.

What was more openly evident in the stories of some participants, those from Sri Lanka, was the push factor of rising political tensions, which culminated eventually in the Sri Lankan civil war (1983-2009). These clearly marked Burgher stories. Lorraine left shortly after Sri Lanka became a republic (in 1972) and during 'a very troubled time when there was a lot of civil unrest, so we just left with our suitcases … No possessions. Three pound ten.' Similarly, Corinne 'reluctantly' left for Perth with her husband in 1973:

> That's a long story … I know [John] said he'd never leave and so did I because we were very happy with our lifestyle at the time. And all of a sudden I think he found things were changing … we suddenly made up our minds, and [John] being fairly impulsive sometimes (laughs) said 'since we're past, let's go.' And so that's how come we came.

Although a successful and happy tea planter, John's career choice and education had been shaped and limited by the government's Sinhala language policy while he was at school: 'If you were not fluent in Sinhalese, you could never get up to university. So because Sinhalese was not a language we spoke, you could do as well as you could in the other subjects, you could never go further … you were kept down because of that.' Over time, due to various changes in government policies in his sector, and rising political tensions, John realised that he could not see a future in Sri Lanka for his family and so made the agonising decision to leave: 'I said I'd never leave Sri Lanka. But we

made the decision and so we applied to come to Australia. It was one of the worst moments of your life, leaving your country.'

Stan's parents made an even earlier decision to leave Sri Lanka, in 1952 shortly after Independence in 1948, because 'Sinhalese was becoming more and more a requirement by government standards.' Stan's parents saw this as the start of a decline in education standards and moved first to India and then to Australia for their only child's education.

Similar fears underpinned some decisions to migrate from Malaysia in the years after Independence from Britain (1957). Exclusionary language policies in education were also implemented, and these were given as a reason for migration by Liz, and Lionel and Marie, all of whom feared a decline in their children's education and therefore standards of living. 'It was *Merdeka*[13] and the kids had to learn Malay … they were going to make it all Malay, no more English, and I thought oh kids, look we must go … I said we'll try Australia and see. If they don't kick us out, we'll go.' (*Marie*) This time Lionel and Marie's application was successful and they were able to migrate to Perth as a family in 1967 'for the good of the children' (*Marie*) and to reunite with some of Lionel's family. A subsidiary reason, alongside the exclusionary language policies, was Marie had been shaken by a recent robbery in Malaysia that left her feeling 'anxious to come' to Australia. Although she did not explicitly say so, Marie alluded to feeling a sense of growing lawlessness in the years leading up to *Merdeka* that arguably left her with a precarious sense of belonging.

Settling in and finding a sense of belonging

In remembering their migration experience, Corinne and her husband John recall the emotional turmoil they felt overwhelmed by after migrating to Australia:

> Corinne: I think the men and the children fitted in much more easily … I think the wives were the ones who had a serious problem.
> John: I mean after having three or four domestic staff, we had to start doing things for ourselves. But it was a problem.
> Corinne: It was. It was serious … I used to stand at the sink and cry.
> John: When you first came.
> Corinne: I felt scared. Washing someone else's ... like a slave. Dreadful.

[13] The Federation of Malaya gained independence from British rule in 1957 and Malaysia was formed in 1963. Marie is likely to be referring to the latter.

John: We never cooked a meal for ourselves.

Corinne: And when I used to see some of the other friends who used to go to work and then have people for dinner and I used to think I'll never, never reach these heights, you know. And it was awful. It really was. I mean to me, when someone said 'oh you know the good old days when we first came', I said no way. They were the worst times of my life. They really were.

Corinne took over a year to finally feel settled and believes that in part this was because she did not want to settle: 'I could only think of going back. That was it. So everything was wrong. It was terrible.' Similarly, Ada struggled to settle in Perth after migrating from Singapore in 1968: 'I wasn't settled at all coming here because I had none of my relations … we were a very close-knit family you see, very close-knit family.' Her extended family had been left behind in Singapore, she felt unsettled, she was not happy with the first house that she and her husband bought 'in a hurry,' and this compounded her depression. She told me of having to give up her job in Singapore which left her feeling further isolated in Perth:

[N]ow you come here, you're not working, and it's so quiet, everything. Half past five, everything is dead you see. So I really, really felt it … I was going backwards and forwards [to] Singapore that many times because I just couldn't settle here … I just didn't feel like coming back. I know it's not fair on my husband but I've got to think of myself as well you know.

The significant lifestyle differences between 'lively' Singapore and the 'quiet' Perth of 1968 dramatically increased Ada's sense of isolation, and it was not until she began working for a government department[14] in Perth that she started 'settling down a bit' and feeling 'a lot, lot better.' As we saw earlier in this chapter, to be negatively affected by changes, even small changes, in everyday lifestyles was a common feeling amongst my participants. Seen as part of an explanation for the differences between 'quiet' and 'lively' lifestyles in Perth and former homelands, such stories acquire meaning beyond simple complaints about a lack of servants or having to do housework oneself. 'Half past ten at night I'm washing dishes and I go to bed. Six, I'm up in the morning. It's not funny' (*Marie*). Back in Malaysia, Lionel remembers going out at night to hotels and clubs with friends for meals and drinks, while 'here, you have to go to do your own

[14] The majority of participants worked in clerical positions in various government departments or industrial corporations in their previous homelands, and most continued with similar employment in Australia.

cooking and washing. Then by the time the evening comes you're too bloody tuckered out to even do anything.' Even Melanie who migrated as a child could see that her mother 'all of a sudden had to do lots of work here. She did do housework in Malaysia but she had an *amah* to help her. Now in Australia she does everything on her own.'

Along with lifestyle changes, participants' own definitions of their identities often were modified after migration, shaping new identities around national rather than group identifications Estelle, for example, now primarily identifies through nationality: 'Well according to my passport ... It's Australian.' Taking Australian citizenship was an easy choice for her: 'I thought to myself since they have been so good to me here, and I was quite relaxed and happy, so I thought I might as well, you see. Because I can still go back on holiday any time I want.' Marie also now calls herself Australian: 'I think I should call myself … because I've lived the Australian life and when I go back to Malaysia on a holiday and I think God why are they doing … just, you know?'

Conversely, Patricia migrated to Perth in 1986 but has never called herself Australian: 'I still see myself as Eurasian and not Australian.' Despite this, she still feels belonging in Australia and sums it up by describing herself as 'Eurasian, in Australia.' Liz migrated two years earlier and also continues to identify as Eurasian. However, unlike Patricia, she also identifies as Australian: 'I think Eurasian is always the most important for me first, and then it's "I'm Australian", and I'm a very proud Australian actually. I love being in Australia.' Similarly, Angela uses both her ethnicity and nationality but combines these so that there is a primary and a secondary level to her identification: 'I'm Eurasian Australian. I'm Eurasian first, Australian second. And all my children consider themselves that way as well, and so does my grandson' (although he was born in Australia). Later in the interview Angela reiterates her 'Eurasian Australian' identity but this time adds her home country as an extra level of identification: 'I'm you know, Malaysian, but when you ask for it, it's Eurasian. And I like to confuse people when they ask me questions' (she laughs). In contrast, Patricia tries to avoid confusing anyone in Australia. She feels that any further information will be misunderstood and so just explains that she comes from Malaysia: 'They'll ask you know, "where are you from?", and that's it… they don't go further than that, so I also just keep quiet.' She told me a story of confusing someone when she lived in Italy:

> In Sicily, they thought I was French … I went to the butchers and he asked me if I was French, and I said 'no', and then I said I was Eurasian, and they just looked at

me. They didn't understand what Eurasian was. Didn't understand. So I just left it. I thought before I make it worse! (laughs)

So far this chapter has focused on the experiences and understandings of those who made the decision to migrate, generally known as first generation migrants. Yet any discussion about migration needs to take into account the literature on other migrant generations to more fully articulate the differences in possible experiences and examine the effects this has on 'Eurasian' identities. The participants in my study who migrated as children with their parents offer a particularly unique perspective from what is known as the 1.5 generation.

Migrating as children: the 1.5 generation

The '1.5 Generation' (1.5G) is a term first conceived by Ruben G. Rumbaut and Kenji Ima (1988) who found that some of the respondents in their study of Vietnamese, Khmer and Hmong refugee youth in the United States did not fit into the official, widely used categories within migration studies of first and second generation immigrants. In their report to the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, they defined members of this group as being:

> *Those young people who were born in their countries of origin but formed in the U.S. (that is, they are completing their education in the U.S. during the key formative periods of adolescence and early adulthood); they were not the main protagonists of the decision to leave and hence are less beholden to their parents' attitudes; and they are in many ways marginal to both the new and olds worlds, for while they straddle both worlds they are in some profound sense fully part of neither of them* (1988, p. 1).

Rumbaut and Ima found that the '1.5ers' in their study occupied 'the interstices… of two societies and cultures, between the first and second generation, between "refugees" and being "ethnics" (or "hyphenated Americans")' (1988, p. 2). This in-between positioning meant that they were not defined by the decision to leave, the consequences of that decision or the need to justify it as with their parents (first generation). Neither could they be classified as second generation migrants who are born in the new homeland and for which the old homeland 'mainly exists as a representation consisting of parental memories and memorabilia, even though their ethnicity may remain well defined' (*Ibid.*). This categorisation is helpful in my research in understanding the impacts on the equivalent group amongst my participants, for

many of whom well-formed memories of their previous homeland clearly had destabilising effects.

Brooke, now in her late twenties, migrated to Perth as a child with her parents. During her interview she expressed her lack of a sense of belonging in Australia, attributing this to a lack of choice in the decision to migrate. 'I didn't choose to live in Perth, I was brought here as a kid.' She laughed apologetically as though she was ashamed of feeling this way, and when I asked her whether she had ever felt as though she belonged in Australia, she replied: 'I did as a kid growing up but then as I grew older I wanted to … I started realising that I wanted to move away from Perth, just to live a life that was more similar to how it all started.' Her childhood memories and hearing 'all the stories about Mum and Dad's upbringing' in Malaysia strengthened her ties to her country of birth and she carried this desire to return, into adulthood when she studied the Indonesian language and completed a Bachelor of Arts in Asian Studies. As an adult she has also lived in Singapore for a year, and now resides in the Middle East where she finds similarities in the lifestyles of her current city of Dubai and her childhood remembrances of Malaysia.

Brooke has Burgher ancestry on her mother's side but identifies ethnically as Eurasian. For her, it is easier to live in Dubai where the ethnic mix is more diverse than in Perth and the notion of being Eurasian is more readily understood. She told me:

> They're more understanding of it because there're so many different backgrounds in Dubai. And there're so many mixed people. There're Arabs, there're Palestinians, Jordanians, Lebanese, Syrians, Egyptians, and then mixes of all those combinations … So I feel like I can tell people about my different background and they actually understand it.

Having her ethnicity understood by others was something that Brooke sought and did not find in Australia where she felt as though 'it wasn't appropriate to ever talk about it' because no one would understand or care. 'It also didn't mean anything. Even if you did tell them they're like "yeah, and ... ? So what?" Like they couldn't see how it would affect anything.' The perceived lack of interest or understanding that she encountered in Australia affected her sense of belonging to the point that she sought belonging elsewhere. She chose to live in a place that reminded her in part of her childhood life in Malaysia and where various ethnic mixes are widely known and accepted.

> I find that a lot of Australians don't get the whole 'Mixed' thing, however people in Europe and even in Dubai tend to understand better as there are many people of different races who marry.

Being a member of the 1.5G for Brooke meant that her sense of belonging was particularly precarious in Australia. Aside from family, she felt as though she had no ties to Australia as she was not born here (as a 2nd generation migrant) and, as she said, she did not choose to come to Australia but rather was 'brought here as a kid'. In Australia she would identify as Australian and only be more specific if particularly asked about her ethnicity, while in Dubai she identifies as Australian whenever she is asked about where she comes from. She will also state that Malaysia is her country of origin, which is not unusual in a city like Dubai where a large section of the population are expatriates of other countries, that in turn may be different to their countries of origin. She also conceded that she now often foregrounds one side of her ancestry over the other:

> I haven't really changed the way I identify myself racially however I will say that since moving to Dubai where people from South Asia are considered lowly, I guess I have played up the European side more.

A lack of understanding of a Eurasian background in Australia in the mid-1980s affected a number of my other 1.5G participants:

> Melanie: I remember when we first came to Australia, a lot of the kids in primary school didn't understand what Eurasian was and I would have to explain and it kind of made me feel like there were some negative things attached to it. I felt a little looked down upon by some people … And when people didn't understand my background it made me feel unusual and excluded and a little bit ashamed.

> Dianne: When I came over it did confuse me. At least in Malaysia you can say you're Eurasian and they know what it is.

Feeling 'totally confused' about her ethnicity when she migrated with her mother from Malacca as a teenager, Dianne found that becoming an Australian citizen was a considered decision that took her seventeen years. She did not identify with being Australian: 'Mainly because it was very… like you had to be Caucasian, almost.' She believes that Australia has generally become more accepting of other ethnicities over the years, and so she decided to become an Australian citizen in 2000:

> The thing that made me change my mind was … I think it was the time when they had the Olympics and Cathy Freeman stood up there and lit the torch. And I didn't know what that was, but tears just started rolling down my eyes, and I thought ok, now that they've acknowledged that, I'm going to …

Of all my participants, Dianne seemed to have had the most experiences of racism directed toward her and she relayed these to me in story form almost as though these have become defining narratives in her life story. She attributed this to her Chinese appearance (that makes up her particular phenotype) and surname, and found that fitting in during the 1980s in Australia was especially challenging: 'I think it was more about not being Anglo-Celtic Australian ... Eighties was quite a rough time and going to school from a convent [in Malaysia] ... to a state public school ... that was confronting for me.' To be othered in various locations during migratory movements clearly adds uncertainty and confusion to a person's concept of self as well as their sense of home. Dianne spoke of how she has always felt that she has been singled out as different, even in her homeland, where at one stage she tried to pass as Chinese:

> When I was in primary school in Malaysia, it wasn't cool [to be Eurasian], and you know I used my Chinese surname to say that I was Chinese. But I was not accepted as a Chinese … One, I couldn't speak it. Two, they knew who I hung out with and they knew where I lived … I wasn't Chinese, I was never brought up that way. So then I come to Australia and then they categorised me as [Chinese] (she laughs).

In Australia, Dianne has often been asked if she is Chinese or has been told that she speaks 'very good English' after being asked the 'where are you from?' question. 'And then I have to explain the whole thing. It's like "what's a Eurasian? What's a Eurasian?" all the time … Then I go through the whole bloody history! (she laughs)

Being questioned about their ethnicity has been a common occurrence for all of my participants, and has often caused them to closely consider the way they understand their own identifications. Being questioned has not however always been perceived negatively. Anthony, who moved to Australia with his parents in the mid-1980s when he was a teenager, found that explaining his ethnicity to people in Australia was a positive for him: 'It made me feel like I belong.' Instead of a feeling of exclusion, being questioned about his ancestry helped to ground him in Australia where he feels a part

of a multicultural nation. He went on to credit his migration experiences with his current valuing of diversity and appreciation of other cultures, having also lived in Singapore, Brunei, Scotland, New Zealand and Italy before arriving in Australia. When I asked him what he considered his country of origin he replied that this was 'complex' and there was no definite answer, before he elaborated and told me that he had stronger childhood ties to Italy where he lived before migrating to Australia.

Stan differs from the other members of this group in that he migrated as a teenager with his parents in 1952 making him significantly older than the others. As mentioned above, his parents made the decision to leave Sri Lanka due to the government's exclusionary language policies which they saw as an obstacle to their English-speaking son's future success. Like many Sri Lankan Burghers at the time who were leaving for other Commonwealth countries, they immigrated to Australia for their son's sake. In his mid-70s at the time of his interview, Stan remembers growing up listening to the now extinct Perth trams rattling past his bedroom window at night and having supplies delivered by horse and cart. 'What I can remember is that we had the bread, the baker, and the milko … the milko, with the big drays, you know drays used to come along there, clip, clop.' Like Anthony, Stan also sees his immigration to Australia as a positive experience and settled quickly and easily. 'Maybe because I've been here for so long. You know I grew up more so with the younger generation from here.' He states that he knows he was born in Sri Lanka and would 'never disregard that side of it', however Australia is now his home where he has 'been allowed to assimilate easily and get on with people without absolutely no rough edges.'

The second generation

Rob and Hayley, are the only two of my participants born in Australia, forming a small sub-group of second generation migrants (children born in Australia to those who migrated). They are cognizant, to different degrees, of the backgrounds and homelands of their respective parents through what Rumbaut and Ima (1988, p. 1) call 'representation consisting of parental memories and memorabilia.' And as I noted in the Introduction chapter, Rob and Hayley stories add a valuable dimension to our understandings of the processual quality of remembering identity. For example, Rob remembers 'hearing stories' from his mother and asking questions about her migration experience and what it had meant to her: '[S]he always talked of her family as respected Burghers. So I asked her "but what about when you came to Australia" you know, and she said "no, we were migrants so we were at the bottom of the heap."'

Such familial stories of 'homelands' and migration to Australia, of remembered status and its instant loss, of identities transformed (at least temporarily) by the act of migration, have shaped the memories and identities of the second generation, becoming essential components of the scripts used to define themselves to others.

> Hayley: My whole family's from there [Malaysia], I was born here ... When they ask where I'm from and stuff, I don't just say Australian. I say my parents are from there ... you know when you meet someone new and you're just making conversation.

Hayley positions herself using the oppositional 'here'/'there' binary, although in conversation she still uses her family's background within her own self-definition: the narratives of her parents and siblings, all of whom were born overseas, are part of her web of stories and this both regulates and problematises her identity. In other situations, such as on internet social networks, she negotiates her identity differently: 'It asks where you're from. I say Australian. Yeah, because sometimes it's too hard to explain.' The seemingly simple choice of choosing 'where you're from' was provocative of a challenging articulation of identity for Hayley: this points to the complexity not only for migrants but also for subsequent generations within a migrant family of understandings about and representations of their identities.

Clearly, a lack of a sense of belonging was not exclusive to those who migrated. Rob, even in his early forties, stated that although he was born here he aligns himself with his Asian heritage as he has always felt an outsider. 'I've always felt an "other." I don't necessarily feel that I can occupy a very central position in Australia. I don't feel nationalistic, I feel I exist on the margins.' He revealed that even visiting Sri Lanka as a teenager with his parents who identify as Burghers did not help his sense of belonging:

> From the time I was in Sri Lanka, I went there thinking 'yeah this is going to be great, for the first time in my life, I'm going to fit in somewhere.' Then I realised that no, I didn't fit in. I didn't look like everybody else, and as soon as I opened my mouth people just ... 'oh you're Australian' and you know ... some had a good reaction, some had a bad reaction.

Rob did not feel the heightened sense of belonging to his country of birth that travellers often experience once they are away from home, rather he felt excluded from the

ancestral homeland where he had hoped he would finally find a sense of 'home'. When I asked where 'home' was for him, he said simply that it was wherever his partner is. He lived and worked for a year with his partner in a Welsh village, but even this experience did not heighten his attachment to Australia. He found that after arriving in the village, locals classified the couple against his expectations: '"Oh, he's Sri Lankan and she's Polish" became kind of more important than the fact that we were just Australians.' Even overseas, Rob's phenotype marked him as Sri Lankan rather than Australian. His sense of exclusion from his ancestral homeland where he was considered by locals as an Australian, and then his sense of exclusion in both Wales and Australia where he was/is identified by others as Sri Lankan, places him in a state of in-betweenness in which home is a difficult concept to conceptualise, to pin down. Rather than a meta category, an ethnic identity, a place, a country, a nation, he is led to attach his sense of home through the personal, through his partner. For him, 'each time I've come back to Australia it's been from having lived overseas. I don't actually have a feeling of I'm coming home.'

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have positioned the lens of migration stories 'from inside' in order to explore how the migration process impacted and shaped my participants' understandings and constructions of their 'Eurasian' identities. I have found that, through the notion of storytelling as sensemaking, participants used their life and migration stories as a way to 'set up'/explain their identities both to me and to themselves during the conversational interviews I conducted with them. Significantly, narrating their full ancestral and migratory backgrounds helped them to explain what being Eurasian meant to them. Participants varied in their historical knowledge, with some having very basic understandings of the genesis of the concept of Eurasian, while others were very interested in the 'roots and routes' (Blunt and Dowling 2006, p. 199; Mason 2007a) of their lives and actively sought information in mostly coffee table history books and through genealogical web forums on the internet. Regardless of their levels of historical knowledge, through the process of narrating their life experiences they were making sense of what it is to be Eurasian.

Owing to Bakhtin's notion of the 'unfinalizability' of narratives (2001), my participants' understandings of being Eurasian were sometimes contradictory and often shifted during the interview process, and arguably their understandings will continue to shift and change throughout their lives to various degrees. What becomes evident through

the range of these short narratives is that not every member of a particular family will identify the same way or even understand various ethnic identities in the same way. In exploring the different ways that being 'Eurasian' is understood by a diverse group of participants, it is clear that these understandings vary amongst members of a nuclear family with wives and husbands, mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, sisters and brothers thinking and understanding differently.

Arguably, the migration process challenged my participants' senses of self, provoking them in various degrees to question and come to terms with their personal identities and how they have changed as a result of moving to a different country. Within the group of participants, those who were members of the 1.5 generation found that the migration process confused (or further confused) their concept of being Eurasian but also caused them to consider the concepts of identity and being Eurasian more than the adult migrants in this group. Perhaps this is because the 1.5ers occupied a further interstitial space between their first generation migrant parents and any second generation migrant children, not belonging to either group. Arguably they had a heightened sense of divided loyalties between the old and new places of their childhoods.

Aside from generational differences, the experience of migrating to Australia was also dependent on spatial and temporal contexts. Certainly, country of origin and the year of migration shaped my participants' experiences, which were contingent upon Australia's immigration policies at the time. For example, those participants who migrated under the 'White Australia' policy had to offer proof of European 'blood', making them more aware of their ancestries. The migration process was a gendered experience too, with class dynamics also affecting the settling in process. It was a common experience amongst my participants to feel a sense of loss in relation to home life and living standards as a result of migration to Australia. Occupying the interstitial social spaces in former homelands often meant a relatively high degree of economic and social status in relation to indigenous populations. This meant that many of the older participants in my study either had, or grew up in, homes with servants. A lack of affordable access to domestic help in Australia made the settling-in process more difficult, particularly for the women in my study who took over all domestic duties after migration, and often had to learn to cook for the first time. These factors all impacted on participants' senses of belonging in Australia, which in turn has affected their ties with former homelands and how closely they identify as 'Eurasian.'

CHAPTER 2

'I always felt like I was in-between'[15]: 'Eurasian' understandings of being 'mixed.'

> If they've asked me, I've always said I'm Eurasian. So I've never said I'm mixed race, unless they really don't understand. Then I'll have to explain it, where we're mixed.
>
> Liz

> The term 'mixed race' goes down well with me. I think it's a very easy way to describe someone of mixed origins. So it doesn't offend.
>
> Burt

'I'm mixed! Like a fruit salad!'[16]

Dianne, like several other participants in my research, thinks of herself as 'mixed race' and often uses the term in her self-definition. She recognises for example that she uses her mixed heritage 'to [her] advantage in profiling [herself] as a singer.' 'Sometimes I do feel that, like it's inside me … I've got the structure of a very sort of oriental person, and yet I've got the rhythm and the soul, and sometimes I think "where's that coming from?"' As a dancer and musician, Dianne believes her particular 'blend' of Eurasianness is embodied in her artistic style. She draws on a rich *Kristang*[17] Eurasian heritage that finds expression in vibrant forms of song and dance such as the *branyo*, a flirtatious dance brought to colonial Malaya by the Portuguese (Sarkissian 2002, p. 221). In saying, 'I really associate with Latin rhythms and Latin culture and everything Latin' she attributes the particularities of her artistic expression to what she sees as the passionate Portuguese influences of her Malaccan upbringing.

For Dianne, being Eurasian means being a Malaccan Eurasian, an ethnic category that she understands as an 'ethnic group in itself, in its own right' with a 'unique ... distinct culture.' This understanding of a 'distinct', localised Eurasian identity however is made more complex when we recognise that even in the small world of Malacca, being Eurasian can incorporate the histories of many ethnic groups. Like Dianne, Angela still derives her Eurasian identity from Malacca, yet acknowledges a mixed ancestry that includes Dutch, Portuguese, English and possible Armenian roots: 'I found that coming

[15] *Liz*
[16] *Dianne*
[17] Derived from the Portuguese *Christao* meaning Christian.

from Malacca people were always fascinated that we had such a mixed race, you know, mixture of blood line'. 'I mean the Portuguese were there for 500 years … the Eurasians were there from 1511.' Significantly, Angela makes a claim to a singular Eurasian lineage tied to Malacca's Portuguese background, yet she also speaks of the 'racially mixed' nature of being Eurasian.

In this chapter, I examine my participants' understandings of 'being mixed', drawing particularly on Maria P.P. Root's (1996) interpretations of racial border crossing in order to unpack the varied ways in which my participants experience 'being mixed'. I underpin this discussion with Homi Bhabha's (1994, 1997) concepts of hybridity and splitting to understand how Eurasianness is understood in racial and ethnic terms, and with the concept of strategic hybridity which seeks to explain the multiple and ambivalent subject positions that my participants take. Indeed, strategic hybridity offers a larger frame, within which border crossing and splitting exist as identiary strategies for different purposes and in different contexts. I argue that the fluidity of the concept of 'Eurasian' and the problematic and related notions of race and mixed race, greatly influence my participants' understandings, so that, as strategic hybridity allows us to see, self-identification is situational and contextual, with implications for senses of belonging to an ethnic group.

Naomi Zack (1993, p. 167) has argued that racial designations are of themselves racist, cruel, and devaluing because, regardless of whether or not they use these designations themselves, they limit individuals in their subjectivities. While this might well have been a legitimate and perceptive reading in the United States of the early 1990s, a more complex situation exists in contemporary Australia, a situation which is not derived from a long history of slavery but rather from a colonial and post-colonial history which brings quite different elements to bear. Far from being limited in their subjectivities, the participants in my research, without exception, display an ability to live with and successfully negotiate multiple identities through the events of daily life, and through the varied interactions and relationships with others who are similarly negotiating complex suites of identities. Some, like Liz and Anthony, simultaneously identify as Eurasian, Burgher, Australian and mixed race; others such as Ada and Estelle identify variously as Eurasian or British at different times. When it comes to 'race', Dianne describes herself more as 'a descendant of intermarriages' and 'a product of multiculturalism' than being 'half this and half that.' In placing her distinct Malaccan Eurasian ethnic group within 'the wider group of multicultural mixed race people', she

can simultaneously use the term 'mixed race' yet also understand herself as having a single ethnic heritage.

Bhabha's notion of 'splitting' so that 'two contradictory and independent attitudes inhabit the *same place*... [that] results in the production of multiple and contradictory belief' (1994, p. 132) speaks eloquently to this. 'I feel mixed,' notes fifty-seven year old Patricia, 'but it doesn't … I don't even think about it.' In acknowledging the mixed nature of her identity, defining Eurasian as 'being half Asian and half European' and describing herself as 'in the middle', Patricia nonetheless does not accept that this 'mixedness' plays a role in her life. Her understanding of her Eurasian identity carries a characteristic which I read across all my participants: it is marked by ambivalence - a common characteristic (Anzaldua 1987, p. 79) of those with mixed 'racial' backgrounds and a characteristic which has been hypothesised to provoke uncertainty, anxiety and identity discomfort (see for example Stonequist 1937). Yet despite this, they continue to live comfortably with the contradictions and complexities of their identities, accepting ambivalence as an integral part of being Eurasian: they 'live and function across this problematic process of identification' as Bhabha suggests (quoted in Mitchell 1995, p. 82). As he argues 'the enunciatory moment of multiple belief is both a defence against the anxiety of difference, and itself *productive* of differentiations' (Bhabha 1994, p. 132). Self evidently, both Angela and Dianne successfully negotiate the incorporation of contradictory notions of being mixed and being part of a distinct ethnic group from Malacca into their conceptions of Eurasianness. It is then the complexities of being Eurasian and the confusions surrounding its definition that in themselves become important and defining characteristics of this mixed race identity.

Drawing on Stuart Hall (1996), Greg Noble, Scott Poynting and Paul Tabar remind us that identities are strategic and positional in that they involve practices of accommodation, negotiation and resistance (1999, p. 31). In their study of the mapping of ethnic identities amongst Lebanese youth in Sydney, they found that this group in Australia engage in a complex process of negotiation between self and other both within and between cultures, so that in effect they move between concepts of essentialism and hybridity at different times and in different contexts. This use of both a strategic essentialism and a strategic hybridity allows them to make sense of and draw upon their multiple positionings in relation to ethnicity and other aspects of identity. This also shows that the youth in their study can actively construct their identities, whilst at the same time rely on notions of primordialism when it might be

useful to do so. This shifting back and forth reveals a complex relationship to ethnicity and 'the different weightings' it receives in different contexts, so that their understandings can be both rigid and fluid at different times (1999, p. 35).

The notion of a strategic essentialism was also evident within my participant group as the complexities of being 'Eurasian', which whilst cannot be underplayed, can still fall away before a deeply-held conviction and particular understanding, held from childhood, of being Eurasian as a specific and particular category in itself. As Burt told me:

> I was born in Singapore of Eurasian parentage. Both my grandparents were Eurasians although my great grandfather … [was] of German origin ... My mother's side ... I believe actually originated from either Goa or some part of India ... The Portuguese connection down there too ... So it's a funny mixture, mixed race. But as far as I'm concerned I was born a Eurasian, brought up as a Eurasian in Singapore, and lived all of my life in that sort of environment.

Certainly, Sharrad (2007) advocates for the need of a strategic hybridity that serves the needs of its different users according to their various socio-political contexts (p. 106) as he argues there will always be 'tactical moves amongst different aspects of hybridity and essentialism according to the needs of the situation and the people involved' (p. 118). This offers 'a broad continuum of possibilities' (Marafiote & Plec 2006, p. 70) from which participants can understand the complexities of their identity.

For Dianne, official definitions have added another level of complexity: 'On my birth certificate it says Chinese, but I've got no association with the cultural aspects'. Bureaucratic confusions surrounding a Eurasian identity have been dealt with in various ways across countries and cultures. Malaysia's rule of patrilineal descent dictated that because Dianne's paternal grandfather was Chinese, both she and her father are also considered Chinese despite intermarriage with *Kristang* Eurasians. However, when her brother was born 'he was so fair ... he was all pink, and you know, different', and so the hospital staff chose to list him as Eurasian on his birth certificate. 'So I'm Chinese and my brother's Eurasian!' Dianne laughs a lot when she tells me this, clearly amused by her family story, which so vividly demonstrates the contingent nature of a Eurasian identification. Skin colour, culture and genealogies all vie for prominence as defining characteristics. Importantly, her experience of being Eurasian

is fluid so that for her it exists as both a single identity, as well as a racial designation that denotes mixture.

In this regard, as a tactic of strategic hybridity, the ambivalence of being mixed is actively deployed by participants in order to protect themselves from feelings of confusion and ambiguity, and terms such as 'mixed race', 'hybridity' and 'Eurasian' are used to further reduce ambiguity and to understand being Eurasian. 'My definition of being Eurasian', says Anthony 'is being of mixed race, particularly of European Asian racial background.' He understands mixed race as a separate 'category in itself', but one where the various configurations need to be specified and, as well as mixed race he specifically identifies as both Eurasian and Burgher. Rather than feeling torn by this complexity of labels, he declares that this process helps 'me feel like I belong.' To be able to think of himself as mixed race is a positive that gives Anthony a category on which to draw when he needs to. However, this is not the situation for everyone.

The concept of mixed race is contingent on the contemporary politics of race, and has therefore varied across time and place, culture and polity. I write from the perspective that race exists as social construct and not as biological fact, recognising that for as long as there has been human migration and contact between people of different cultures and physical characteristics, there has been mixing and 'hybridisation.' Indeed, as Parker and Song (2001, p. 1) point out, racial mixture 'has been the history of the world.' Despite this and because of the social and political construction of race as a human category, racial mixing has often been cast as a social and political problem (Shapiro 1953, p. 7). By crossing arbitrary boundaries of differentiation, mixed race people have been positioned in the problematic space between the traditionally recognised (yet arbitrary) race groups, and as a result have had a variety of mixed race experiences over space and time (Sundstrom 2001, pp. 285-294).

Furthermore, the shifting identity of mixed race has seen it move through academic and political discourse from being 'a menace to a sorrowful problem, to now being a symbol of multiculturalism and a focus of celebration' (Cowlishaw 2003, p. 293). Yet, as I indicated above in the example of the particularist embedding of racial categorisations in much of the discourse in the United States, the homogenisation of academic and political understandings across cultures, even contemporaneous cultures, does not serve us well. Perth represents a specific, complex multicultural culture, produced by and subject to a specific blend of histories and circumstances, often arbitrary or

accidental, the result of migration decisions, often made for the narrowest and flimsiest of reasons. In Perth, as a city of migrants, the term mixed race possesses a multitude of definitions, produced and received by former residents of almost every country on earth. In the most recent Australian Census, 15.1% of the Perth population reported having one parent born overseas, and those with both parents born overseas amounted to a substantial 46.4% of Perth residents (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

The participants in my study indicated understandings in various ways that mixed race has had negative connotations historically, however not all hold to those old associations. Rob, who describes being Burgher as being a descendant of 'those of mixed Sinhalese, Portuguese, Dutch and British ancestry', is worried by the notion of mixed race, 'especially in terms of that assumption that race is something formal and set in stone.' He sees mixed race as originally 'a colonial term, with a very shaky kind of conceptual basis' but acknowledges that 'it's a term that makes sense in Western modern society' so has therefore used it to describe himself in the past: 'I probably have, yeah. I think so. I mean I wouldn't object to being described as that.'

Dianne acknowledges that even today 'mixed race' does have negative connotations for some, so that 'if you're mixed, then you're mixed up, and all that kind of stuff.' However, she has come to the conclusion that 'labels are just labels.' 'I see it in a positive light, not in a negative light' she says, and acknowledges to also sometimes referring to herself as 'a hybrid.' She emphasises this by laughingly calling herself 'mixed! Like a fruit salad!' Others, such as Melanie, 'do know that [the term] has a history of negative connotations' yet will still use it because 'people seem to understand that more than any other thing.' At thirty-one, she believes that it is because of her relatively young age that her own perception of the term is not negative. However, age does not seem to be a factor in perceptions. 'The term "mixed race" goes down well with me … It doesn't offend'. Sixty-seven year old Burt also thinks of the term as 'a very easy way to describe someone of mixed origins.'

Overall, participants' use of 'mixed race' varied across age and gender, with perceptions ranging from positive to negative: 'I don't mind it. I always tell them I'm mixed' (*Angela, aged 56*); 'It sounds almost derogatory' (*Lorraine, aged 62*); 'I don't really like it ... because I think it's a bit demeaning' (*Liz, aged 53*); 'I think it's negative you know' (*Ada, aged 80*). Some, for example Patricia, were ambivalent, and others were neutral, perceiving the term to be redundant or largely irrelevant. 'I don't care what you call me,

don't call me late for dinner' *(Marie, aged 79)*. Stan is seventy-two and has never used the term or thought of himself as being of mixed race and Hayley, the youngest participant (at eighteen), does not call herself mixed race or Eurasian, but will explain that her parents have different backgrounds to her friends or anyone else who may ask.

Mongrels, hybrids and flying fish

In telling others that she is of mixed race, Angela acknowledges that many of her generation do not, because 'in the old days they used to refer to them as mongrels if you were mixed race ... terrible stigma attached to it.' She believes that 'as the world gets smaller, and there's more and more mixed races' negative connotations will disappear. However, she recognises that old stigmas and attitudes surrounding mixed race do still exist in the present day.

A slightly different approach has been adopted by Brooke: 'Some have even called me a mongrel, but I respond back with "no, a hybrid", which has good connotations. I find that a lot of Australians don't get the whole "mixed" thing'. Switching terms, shifting the rhetoric, enables Brooke to reshape how others see and define her, highlighting the significance of both perception and context. Amongst other strategies, Brooke draws on the notion of hybridity when faced with what she sees as negativity or misunderstanding toward being Eurasian. In finding a greater level of understanding in the multiethnic less assimilationist setting of Dubai, she has been able to develop a sense of comfort and belonging that was missing from her life in Australia.

Belonging is clearly an important aspect of Brooke's understanding of being Eurasian. When she feels subject to racial discrimination, she identifies with 'the other "half" of [herself] ... to avoid this negative stereotyping'. Maria P. P. Root's (1996) articulation of cultural and racial crossings at what she calls the 'significant frontier' still provides a relevant framework for understanding Brooke's negotiation of her racial identity, and is arguable a strategy within the larger frame of strategic hybridity. Root drew on the work of border studies theorists such as Gloria Anzaldua (1987) to identify four ways of interpreting borders in 'co-constructed dualities.'[18]

Root offers us the following possibilities: (1) an individual bridges the border 'by having *both* feet in *both* groups'; (2) an individual shifts foreground and background by

[18] Aside from 'mixed race', Root suggests that her framework can also apply to other co-constructed dualities such as masculine/feminine and heterosexual/homosexual identities. (1996: xxi).

'cross[ing] between and among social contexts defined by race and ethnicity', but this is not to be regarded as 'switching loyalties' or being a 'race traitor'; (3) an individual 'decisively sits on the border, experiencing it as the central reference point' (Root 1996, pp. xxi-xxiii), what Anzaldua (1987) refers to as the 'mestiza consciousness'; and (4) an individual 'creates home in one 'camp' for an extended period of time and makes forays into other camps from time to time.' (Root 1996, pp. xxi-xxiii) The significance of Root's interpretations of border crossings is that they allow for multiple subjectivities. This was missing in previous conceptions of mixed race, which positioned the mixed race person at a point of crisis that fractionalised their existence. For example, Root's first interpretation above negates the previous conception that mixed race people straddle the border of two worlds 'in a one-foot-in, one-foot-out metaphor' (1996, p. xxi) and is more in line with the much used quote (and one that I often heard growing up) that an individual is 'inheriting the best of both worlds' (Crabb 1960, 39). In line with strategic hybridity, her interpretations, allow for situational identities and a multiplicity of experiences, so that mixed race people are not confined to/by their choices, nor divided - although some, such as Brooke, Melanie and Dianne, at times may feel as though they are: interestingly all three are 1.5 generation migrants in their late twenties to mid-thirties.

> Brooke: As I don't know much about the Scottish, Dutch or Portuguese cultures or the Sri Lankan culture and have never lived in any of those places, sometimes I identify more with Malaysia, although I'm not Malaysian. Most of the time, I feel Australian or British but never completely the way I would imagine some people can. So yes, in a way I am torn but I'm not sure between what sometimes.

In her discussion of French Vietnamese writer Kim Lefevre's novel/'autobiography' *Métisse Blanche*, Isabelle Thuy Pelaud (2002, p. 123) argues that the ambivalence associated with being 'mixed' should not be framed solely as a crisis, nor as a resolution: the ambivalence itself can only be read ambivalently. What is clear though is that we must acknowledge identity as a process rather than as a definitive, bounded and complete entity. 'I call myself Australian until someone wants me to be specific, then I'll say Eurasian. For a while there I was calling myself Burgher … It sort of mixes up a bit as I go through life' (*Melanie*). Certainly, Root points out, people may change the way they self-identify over their lifetimes. Melanie 'hid' behind her European side when in primary school so that she could fit in to a specific environment. She started to change her identification in high school, becoming prouder of her Asian side. Today 'I

try and move more towards my Asian side, but at the same time I don't want to forget about my European side.' Despite this, 'I still think about it and change my mind … I'm more relaxed about it now than I was when I was younger.' Root's (1996, p. xxii) perspective is grounded in her background in psychology so she brings a particular lens to her interpretation which allows her to define the contingent and shifting negotiation of mixed race as a necessary strategy for individuals to draw upon for their psychological, emotional, social and political needs.

> Brooke: Sometimes I can't be bothered explaining so I just say I'm Australian because I know the person won't understand. Other times when I am talking to someone who is similar to me, also mixed or someone who has travelled widely, then I enjoy telling them.

Brooke's negotiation of her identity aligns itself with Root's second interpretation, consciously crossing borders and contexts, and demonstrating both her need and her capacity to shift back and forth in order to manage her well-being amongst others. It is clear to see that she 'crosses between and among social contexts' (Root 1996, p. xxi) depending on the situation. At times she does this to avoid negative stereotyping, but she also does this to connect with others, and specifically along ethnic lines: '[I]f you are with Asians then you will want to feel a part of them, identify with them. And if you are with Europeans then you will want to identify more with them.'

Despite this, she also identifies 'more with the Asian than with the European side' because she was born in Malaysia and grew up around her Eurasian relatives in an Asian setting. Root argues that these border crossings are not about hiding or denigrating anyone's racial identities, rather they are involved in 'the process of connecting to ourselves and to others' (1996, p. xxii). For Brooke, this is a pragmatic process since ultimately 'it's all about belonging because really we don't belong to either. Flying fish.' Brooke's contingent identification shifts back and forth between identifying more with her Asian side, to changing the way she identifies depending on the situation and company. She does this not only to reduce ambiguity for others or to avoid discrimination, but also to find connection. Her negotiation is marked by ambivalence and a lack of a sense of belonging which she yearns for (and has found in Dubai). She summed this up for me, and for herself, in her shorthand use of the flying fish metaphor.

The term 'flying fish' was first used in reference to Eurasians in John Conway's 1939 Hollywood film *Lady of the Tropics*. In one scene, a white character in Indo-China (present day Vietnam) comments on a mixed race child, saying that he adored 'half-castes' because 'they're so vicious and fascinating'. The character of Father Antoine responds by saying that they are not vicious, rather they remind him of flying fish: 'Very harmless. Born to the water, they spend half their lives trying to soar above it, only to fall back again into the sea and die there' (quoted in Marchetti 1993, p. 72). Mixed race is portrayed as a tragic consequence of colonialism, with Eurasians desperately trying to inhabit a world that is not their own and in the process not really belonging anywhere - a sentiment that seems to have resonance for Brooke.

The film has further relevance to Brooke's experience of Eurasianness. Hedy Lamarr's mixed race (French-Asian) character, Manon de Vargnes, embodies a threat to racial purity and sexual morality. She epitomises the stereotypes of the East, such as material opulence, loose morals, exotic beauty and sensuality (Marchetti 1993, pp. 67-71). 'Sometimes it feels good to be different and born elsewhere in a place which is also a bit exotic.' Significantly, the exotic connotation of the Orient is something that has particular value to Brooke's conception of herself, and to that held by several other participants: 'I used to think oh, I'm so unique … this is so special' (*Dianne*); 'It makes me feel unique; I'm different' (*Angela*). Being 'exotic', 'unique' and 'different' has meant at times that being Eurasian has been a welcome point of difference, particularly for the women among my participants. Liz, for example, found that despite feeling as though she was not socially accepted by the older Europeans around her when she was growing up, she did find that she was often appreciated by younger European or Anglo-Celtic men in both Brunei and Australia, due to 'the way I looked I guess ... because I was different. I looked different.' It would certainly be possible to ask further questions here about how ideas of the 'exotic' are gendered and sexualised, particularly around women's appearances, and this is something worthy of further research.

In Manon's time however, her difference and her exotic 'mixedness' cast her as a tragic symbol of colonial aggression and domination and an unwelcome reminder that 'race is fluid and that taboos against miscegenation have been transgressed' (Sundstrom 2001, pp. 285-290). Miscegenation was seen as a sign of sexual taboo, impurity, and cultural dilution in varying degrees throughout the colonial era and in different colonial locales. (p. 290)

> John: In Sri Lanka we used to call them Eurasian. And a lot of the planters, particularly young guys who came from England, they had no women except the women there that they worked with. Very many of them [had] families with them and they looked after them, and they used to go back to England and get married and come back with an English wife. But there were lots of these children, who've all done well ... they all got a good education so they never neglected the children that they fathered.

John refers to Eurasians as 'them' to make the distinction between Eurasians and his own Burgher background. Implicit in his separation of the two categories lies a moral distinction about their origins, a distinction which is blurred or ignored by other participants.

> Angela: Eurasian is mixed race of part European and part Asian. It doesn't matter what Asian side it is, whether you're Chinese, Malay or Indian. If you have a European, one European parent and an Asian parent, you're Eurasian, that's it.

Aside from Dianne who sees Eurasians as the 'descendant[s] of intermarriages', all of my participants defined Eurasian as being a mix of European and Asian. 'You must have Europe and Asia' (*Estelle*); 'Half Asian and half European' (*Patricia*); 'A person who is a mix between Asian and European races' (*Brooke*); 'A mixture of Europe and Asia' (*Pam*); 'Essentially it is a bringing together of European and Asian races to make up Eurasians' (*Burt*); and so on. Whether for the sake of simplicity or to help others understand, they used this simple binary of Asian and European as a default definition when I asked them to define Eurasian. This would be the simple definition given to others if they were asked about their ancestries or asked by someone else to define Eurasian. 'When I haven't got time to describe myself, I say oh yeah, I'm mixed race.' (*Dianne*) 'Sometimes I use the term mixed race, however only when describing my racial background to people who don't know what a Eurasian is' (*Brooke*). Arguably, to use 'mixed race', far from being a negative concept, is rather a pragmatic and direct means of helping to reduce the ambiguity associated with an identity that is difficult to pin down.

> Liz: It's mixed, like European and Asian ... but my definition is where there are different types of Eurasian. That's the way I look at it. Because there is the Burghers, then there's the Anglo-Indians, and then I don't know what you call

> Chinese and … I don't know. There're funny terms now in Malaysia that I'm not aware of.

However, in our discussions, they also understood Eurasian as being plural, diverse, and more complex than simply the mixing of Europe and Asia, so that there are 'different types of Eurasian' (*Liz*) that need to be 'identified in specific detail' (*Anthony*) and these are contingent on geography and history. As both John and Lionel noted above, in Sri Lanka, the Burghers and Eurasians are understood as separate ethnic groups. 'Among the Burgher crowd, if you call yourself Eurasian, then you're either a bastard or a whatever, you know? ... And among the hhm-hhm Burghers, they never … don't call them a Eurasian. Nooo, you know. It's very sinful' (*Marie*). Arguably, this distinction is made to protect the boundaries of the Burgher identity. It casts the Eurasian as a mixed race identity, and places the Burgher beyond the notion of mixed race. This is primarily because its genesis as an official 'racial' or ethnic category occurred generations after the first colonial contacts between Europeans and Asians in Ceylon.

The colonial hybrid

Portuguese colonial expansion reached Ceylon in the 16th century and as in other parts of its empire, there were widespread sexual relationships between Portuguese men and local women with the creation of a subsequent 'mixed blood' (*mestico)* population (McGilvray 1982, p. 239). More intermixing occurred with the arrival of the Dutch in the next century. While initially encouraging miscegenation in order to boost the Dutch population, with the complication of further racial mixing it soon became a taboo subject. As with the Portuguese there were virtually no European women amongst the Dutch (Boxer 1963). The male colonists were either employed by the VOC[19] or were former employees who became known as 'free burghers' (*vrijburgers*). The majority of *vrijburgers* settled in Ceylon and intermarried or cohabited with the existing population of mixed Portuguese women rather than with the local Sinhalese or Tamils. The children of these unions were also expected to marry within this group to prevent racial degradation (McGilvray 1982, pp. 237-39).

The term 'Burgher' did not come into use until the British took Ceylon from the Dutch in 1796 (Hoerder 2002, p. 184). The term meaning 'a citizen or inhabitant of a berg, borough or town' was derived by the British from the Dutch or German word *burger*. As

[19] *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or the United [Dutch] East India Company.

Ferdinands points out, it was not used to denote a race or ethnicity, rather it was a mark of civic status (Ferdinands 1995, p. 1). In the latter part of the Dutch era, the definition of *burger* began to expand and eventually, when the British arrived, the mixed-Dutch population who remained in Ceylon became known as burgers (or citizens) as they no longer fell under the category of Dutch nationals (Ferdinands 1995, p. 2). The British eventually came to refer to all mixed-Europeans in Ceylon as Burghers (McGilvray 1982, p. 242). The children of casual liaisons between the British men and Sinhalese or Tamil women were referred to as Eurasian and this group was kept distinct from the Portuguese and Dutch Burghers (Ferdinands 1995, p. 3). Initially, the British maintained this boundary by implementing a test for the determination of Burgher as an abiding and permanent category.

Named after Sir Richard Ottley, the Chief Justice of Ceylon and an eminent Burgher himself (McGilvray 1982, p. 247), the *Ottley Test* (1830) imposed a legalised identity onto those who were the native born patrilineal descendants of the Dutch, Portuguese and other Europeans, excluding the British. In evidence given during a Commission for the establishment of a Legislative Council in Ceylon in 1883, Ottley announced that:

> *The name Burgher belongs to the descendants of the Dutch, Portuguese and other Europeans born in Ceylon … whatever number of generations through which the family has passed in this Island if the male ancestors were Dutch, Portuguese, or other Europeans, whoever may have been the female parents but only if the parents were married* (quoted in Ferdinands 1995, pp. 2-3).

Administrative law thus removed the identiary ambiguity surrounding the Burghers, rearranging racial space to create a new and distinct group identity that operated as a legal category (Kumari Campbell 2005, p. 92). Whereas the fluid and hybrid nature of the Burgher identity had previously allowed for shifting loyalties that were situationally dependent and often politically contingent, the legal regulation of 'Burgherness' imposed a racial classification on this group that has continued to affect the ongoing construction and reconstruction of Burgher identity. For the new British rulers, the colonial structure had been restored by a simple definition/boundary imposed on what had been an 'out of place', anomalous, and 'impure' threat to the order of colonial control (Lugones 1994, p. 468).

Further boundaries were drawn by and between the Burghers themselves. The creation of a social hierarchy based on distinctions of whiteness and European descent resulted in a schism between Burghers of Dutch origin and those of Portuguese origin, whom they saw as their lesser counterparts (Caplan 1995, p. 746). 'They frown upon the Portuguese Burghers, which they call "Batticoloa Burghers", sort of second class Burghers. Then come the Dutch Burghers, who they classify as sort of minor gods' (*Lionel*). During British rule, the Dutch Burghers rose to become a visibly successful middle-class in Sri Lanka, occupying positions in the clerical, transportation, and communication services. On the other hand the mixed Portuguese population remained in the areas of trades and crafts such as carpentry, tailoring and shoemaking. Stan's understanding was that:

> The Dutch Burghers considered themselves closer to like the European or the English who had higher positions. And they did get the higher positions strangely enough ... But the Portuguese Burghers, I think they were classed maybe you know, slightly lower in esteem. Yes, that's the impression I got.

In recognition of their lesser status in society the Dutch began to call the Portuguese *ambachtslieden*, meaning handicraftsmen. This was translated by the British as 'mechanics', a label that remained with the Portuguese and was often used derogatorily by the Dutch (McGilvray 1982, p. 243). By replacing the word Burgher with that of mechanic, the Dutch in effect delegitimised the Portuguese claim to Burgherness and in the process widened the social division between the two groups.

British colonial literature also seemed to strip the Portuguese 'mechanics' of their European origins by focusing instead on skin colour and moral conduct. Writing in the 1840s, Major Jonathan Forbes expressed the widely held observation that those of Portuguese origins were visibly mixed and of a darker complexion to the Dutch:

> *They are seen of every shade, from deadly white to burnished black; those who are of Cingalese blood, free from exotic mixture, have the most pleasing colour; while the slightest mixture of native blood with European can never be eradicated and in some cases seems to go on darkening in each succeeding generation, until, as in many of the Portuguese descendants, we find European features with jet-black complexions. The Dutch descendants, with native blood, are now undergoing the blackening process, although in*

> *general they have only reached as far as a dark and dingy yellow* (quoted in McGilvray 1982, p. 245).

Forbes' comments not only reveal a colonial belief in the superiority of Europeaness; he also displays a disdain for miscegenation and 'exotic' mixture so that for him the pure Cingalese have the most pleasing skin colour. Certainly, the darker skin of the mixed Portuguese population prevented their Burgher membership in the minds of the Dutch as it was a visible lack of Europeaness that was equated with a lower standard of living.

A similar *mestico* population had also formed in Malacca, Malaya when it was conquered by the Portuguese in 1511. As Laurence Noonan (1968, p. 53) tells us, 'Albuquerque's dream was not merely of a chain of Portuguese forts, but of an infusion of Portuguese blood in each of the colonies' that would create 'a generation loyal to the Mother Country and proud of its glory, but bound by bonds of kinship and affection to their land of adoption.' The deliberate creation of Eurasian communities in Portuguese colonies was not limited to intermarriage between Portuguese soldiers and administrators and local Malay women (Barth 1995, p. 2). Intermarriage and cohabitation also occurred between civilian Portuguese immigrants who followed in the wake of the conquerors and the many other non-Malay ethnic groups residing in Malacca at the time such as merchants from the Middle East, China and India (*Ibid.*; Kraal 2005, p. 11).

The formal and informal narratives of these changes and their consequences are varied. For example, in Angela's vivid version:

> The Portuguese, when they came to Malacca, they already had Goa and Sri Lanka ... And when they colonised Malacca, a lot of the natives from Sri Lanka and Goa came with them … they had also on the ships, brought with them slaves from Africa. So when you see the Malacca Eurasians, you know they will have … you couldn't tell you know, some of them were fair with blue eyes and ginger hair and some of them were really dark with the kinky big afro look and you wondered you know, where did all these people come from? But if you look back and you'll find, that it could've been those slaves that came with them and when they were freed, the slaves, they just took on their master's names.

However, the popular perception holds that the Eurasian community was created through the liaisons between European men and Asian women and this is certainly the basis for many official definitions of Eurasian such as that of the Eurasian Association in Singapore, which had until 1994 favoured patrilineal descent. Bernard Sta Maria (1982, pp. 34-35) points out that young Portuguese women known as 'Orphans of the Queen' were also encouraged to sail to the colonies for marriage. From 1545 these women were 'prepared in special colleges in Lisbon and Oporta' and sent by King John III to India and other colonies 'to be betrothed to local men.' The 'mixed' offspring of these unions were referred to by the Portuguese as *mestico,*[20] a term which later came to be used derogatorily, although this was not the intention at the time (Sta Maria 1982, p. 23). This *mestico* population was the basis of the *Kristang* Eurasian ethnic group in Malacca - a community that has held strongly to its Portuguese roots despite subsequent possessions of Malacca by Dutch and British imperial forces. As I indicated in Chapter One, Malaccan Eurasians were granted *bumiputra* status in Malaysia. Literally translating to 'son of the soil' this means that they are recognised to be an indigenous ethnic group: 'We had a good Eurasian senator that time who fought for it. I mean we can't be classified as "others". We've been there as long as the Malays have been there' (*Angela*).

Dianne and Angela both proudly hold on to, and are interested in, their Portuguese-based *Kristang* heritages from Malacca. 'I have looked into it. I have spoken to people, I have read up' (*Angela*). Dianne was born in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, but her family's history is very much centred in Malacca. As a child she 'grew up between' the *Kristang* Eurasian settlements of Praya Lane, where her maternal grandparents lived, and her paternal grandmother's settlement: 'Running around, bare feet, around the village by the sea side … a lot of the growing up was about the sea side, about Saint Pedro's boats and all saints and candles and church, and that kind of upbringing.' Similarly, Angela as a child 'would just run around the canals picking up tadpoles and little guppies from the drains, because the sea … it was all by the sea.'

> Angela: The fisher folk were termed Eurasians … They were lower class, nobody wanted to be known as Eurasian. So when I was growing up in Malacca, it was like 'I'm Dutch Eurasian because I have a Dutch surname, I'm Dutch Eurasian.' So

[20] The Portuguese made the distinction between *mesticos* who were the offspring of a European father and an Asian mother, and *casticos* who were the offspring of a European father and a Eurasian mother (McGilvray 1982, 238).

> I grew up with that for a while and then came to realise you know, what's the big deal about being Dutch Eurasian? My grandmother's Portuguese. My parents speak Portuguese at home, they don't speak Dutch. They speak English.

Angela's happy childhood memories are marked by an awareness of the class and 'race' based divisions within the Malaccan Eurasian community in the 1950s, so that it mattered 'which side of Malacca you came from'. Those with 'even an inkling of Dutch blood' often sought to distance themselves from the mostly uneducated, Portuguese Eurasians from fishing settlements who spoke *Kristang*, a creolised version of Portuguese. Some of her aunties 'didn't want to know the settlement people at all', yet Angela had one aunt and four cousins who lived in a Portuguese settlement. She and her brother would visit occasionally, playing and swimming with the local children: 'The family was horrified that my dad would allow us to go and run around in the *kampong* and in the village with the fisher folk. But it was the best holidays of my life, you know!'

'I'm very much a mixed grill'[21]

In email correspondence before we met, John, a Burgher from Sri Lanka, described himself as mixed and repeated this at the beginning of my conversation with him and his wife Corinne, by saying, 'I'm very much a mixed grill.' He also described his family ancestry as 'much more mixed', yet later rejected the whole notion of being mixed race.

> Michelle: What do you think of the label 'mixed race' as a category of identity? Do you ever use it?
> Corinne: No, we've never had to.
> John: Not for Burghers.
> Both: Never had to.
> Michelle: You don't consider Burghers as being 'mixed'?
> Corinne: Well they are. You just said you were!

Corinne pointed to her husband and laughed at this contradiction. They both argued light-heartedly about their understandings of Burgherness, recognising that the topic of mixed race was worth pursuing to understand its significance in relation to their ethnic identities. John clarified that the admixture in his family tree was due to 'who [his] father married': his mother belonged to another Sri Lankan ethnic group known as the

[21] *John*

Colombo Chetties. He told Corinne that she came from 'a purer line of Burghers' and was therefore 'less mixed' than him. However, he stressed that his father's family tree has five hundred years of unbroken Dutch Burgher ancestry that he evidently draws upon as his primary ethnicity: 'We always said we had an identity. A strong identity.' For Corinne, mixed race is redundant in her conception of Burgherness: 'It hasn't come up in anything. But you know, if they categorise us as "mixed" ... that's fine. If you are mixed, you're mixed. That's fine.'

Corinne then specifically understands that Burghers could be viewed by others in terms of mixed race, and despite it being a redundant concept for her, she has no negative feelings towards the term mixed race. John's retraction of being mixed when I asked him a direct question during our conversation was revealing. He seems to acknowledge the 'mixed' ancestry of Burghers, yet still sees himself as having a single heritage, rejecting the notion of being mixed or hybridised.

Michelle: What about the word 'hybrid.' Have you ever used that?
John: Well that is [for] plants. Somebody's got it very wrong! (laughs)

The notion of hybridity is a particularly relevant lens for examining mixed race because the limits of both hybridity and mixed race are the same. Both simultaneously deconstruct and reinforce ideas of purity and fixed, stable identities. Furthermore, binary thinking is central to both, so that Europe and Asia are perceived of as polar opposites with no identiary middle ground (de Pina-Cabral 2002, p. 165). From this ambiguous middle ground, what Bhabha (1994) calls the 'third space', emerges a new category with its own boundaries and notions of purity. John's perception is then based around the notion of a pure and stable 'new' Burgher category, and for him hybridity is therefore irrelevant as a human concept.

John's objections are shared by scholars such as John Hutnyk (2005, p. 82), who rejects the idea of adapting a horticultural/zoological term to discussions of human groups as races, as distinct species. A major point of concern amongst scholars engaging with 'cultural' hybridity has been the reappropriation of the term with no recognition of its problematic origins in nineteenth century racial thinking (Ifekwunigwe 1999, p. 9). Writing in 1999, Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe pointed out that hybridity discourses had simply shifted over time. The previous focus on 'homogeneous pseudoscientific grafting of "races"' had been replaced with a focus on the 'fragmented heterogeneous

multivalent fusion of cultures' (*Ibid.*). Its shifting nature means that any analysis that uses the concept of hybridity would be incomplete without a prior understanding of the term as it emerged and developed alongside racial thinking and into the terrain of culture and ethnicity.

Hybridity in context: the theory, its limits and its uses

Over the last two decades hybridity has emerged as a core concept within postcolonial discourse, integral to a critique of cultural imperialism that offers a model for cultural and racial contacts that goes beyond the old binaries of coloniser and colonised, and East and West (Yee 2003, p. 411). Arguably, Bhabha is the most widely cited theorist of this concept, having first adopted the term hybridity in the postcolonial context. He identified that 'third space' that opened up between cultures during colonial contact and marked the recognition of cultural difference (1994, p. 38). This space 'in-between' created an ambivalence that he suggested had the power to subvert colonial authority. Although concerned primarily with cultural imperialism, and although he skirts around the issue of race, Bhabha's notion of hybridity has been used widely in a number of disciplines to denote the liminal space that exists in between fixed identities and binary oppositions.

Bhabha (1994, p. 112) stresses that a change of perspective is needed in order to be able to see that the effect of colonial power was not a 'noisy command' of authority or 'silent repression of native traditions', but was actually the production of hybridisation. He describes hybridity as 'camouflage, as a contesting, antagonistic agency functioning in the time lag of sign/symbol, which is a space in-between the rules of engagement' (p. 193). He is referring to the colonial encounter when the first contact was made between the coloniser and colonised. The time lag or temporal space that opened up between this event and the effect (hybridisation) is Bhabha's 'third space' in which the recognition of difference occurs. Rather than being detrimental culturally or even politically, he sees this ambiguous third space with its subsequent articulation of the colonial hybrid as having had the power to subvert colonial authority.

The question of agency is a central theme of Bhabha's work. Colonial authority with its power relations involving hierarchy, normalisation, and marginalisation, relied on the disavowal of chaos in the form of surveillance - a collective gaze over all subjects in what Foucault calls 'power through transparency' (Foucault 1977[1980], p. 154). The colonised become complicit in their own subjection because they begin to internalise

the gaze. Internalised surveillance, the feeling of always being observed and judged even when not being physically watched, causes individuals to self-regulate their behaviour and thoughts. Bhabha (1994, p. 112) suggests that a 'negative transparency' occurs when hybridity is produced. The ambivalence of the colonial encounter negated a reconciliation of difference that in turn produced a hybrid subject. When faced with these hybrid subjects, colonial authority lacked the language to articulate a clear recognition of them. Bhabha cites the example of colonial discourse that contemplated its discriminated subjects using ambiguous descriptions: 'the *inscrutability* of the Chinese, the *unspeakable* rites of the Indians, the *indescribable* habits of the Hottentots' (p. 112). The 'negative transparency' of this situation in which the 'rules of recognition' were challenged, in effect offered the colonised a sense of resisting authority. In effect the performance of difference allowed colonial subjects, already facing marginalisation, to exist in-between rigid colonial categories and beyond definition. Bhabha argues that this disturbed the visibility of the colonial presence and therefore rendered the recognition of its authority problematic (p. 111).

Although championing hybridity as a concept that challenges rigid racial thinking, Robert J.C. Young (1995) also stresses the danger of reifying and homogenising colonial discursive practices. He traces the term hybridity through nineteenth century racial discourse back to its biological roots. In 1828 Webster's dictionary defined the word hybrid as a 'mongrel or mule; an animal or plant, produced from the mixture of two species' (Webster quoted in Young 1995, p. 6). The term was used as early as 1813 in the context of human fertility to refer to the intermediate races, but it was not until Josiah Clark Nott's usage of the word in an 1843 essay titled *The Mulatto: A Hybrid*, that the belief in the human hybrid rapidly rose in prominence. The word hybrid in relation to humans, made its official recorded appearance in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1861 to denote the crossing of people of different races. Hybridity and human fertility became subjects of much debate particularly as they brought to light the question of whether humans were of one species (monogenesis) or separate species (polygenesis) (Young 1995, pp. 6-7; Ifekwunigwe 1999, p. 3).

If human 'races' were all of separate species, then scientific reasoning based within biological knowledge would hold that human hybrids should by definition be as infertile as a hybrid animal such as a mule (the offspring of the separate species of horse and donkey). This idea of polygenesis conflicted with Biblical knowledge and therefore humans were deemed to be one species, however scientific racism based on

the eighteenth century *Great Chain of Being* with its hierarchy of animals and the human races, gave credence to a developing nineteenth century belief in the possibility of human hybridity (Young 1995, pp. 6-7). While racially mixed offspring were actually found to be fertile, dissenters of monogenesis such as Jamaican slave owner Edward Long popularised the belief in diminishing fertility of hybrids over the generations, and the cultural term *mulatto* was introduced to designate those with the characteristics of the infertile mule (p. 8).

This racial thinking that presumes a weakening of mixed race fertility has a negative legacy within current theories of hybridity. Using a theory that was once applied to plant and animal species which are biologically distinct from each other and therefore 'pure', implies a belief in, or a spurious chain of reasoning about, the distinction and purity of separate human races. Present day hybridity discourses may have replaced race with culture and identity, yet the idea of borrowing or mixing continues often to imply a weakening/diluting of cultural identity. Brooke, for example, believes that some of her Eurasian mother's older relatives viewed her as 'diluted' by her British father and therefore assumed that she would know little about her Eurasian identity or nothing about Asian culture. John extends the concept of dilution further with his prediction that Burghers will cease to exist as an ethnic group due to marrying-out practices and the cultural politics of Sri Lanka, which emphasise identifying in terms of citizenship rather than ethnicity. 'I tell my children that those who were called Burghers, that generation is finished. No one who can say "I'm a Burgher." It is the last of the race' (*John*).

Writing in 1960, C.H. Crabb was concerned about the notion of dilution through mixing, and of the possibility of breeding out the Asian 'blood' in his own Eurasian lineage. He outlined the various 'types' or configurations of Eurasians that could occur, using a series of charts or diagrams and relying on pseudo-scientific terms in his opinion piece on Malaya's Eurasians (1960, pp. 6-8). His diagrams of male and female figures were rendered as outlines to signify white or European people, and as solid figures, presumably to represent darker skinned Asian people. Their Eurasian offspring were represented by cross-hatched, grey figures - the colour grey being a result of mixing black and white, therefore rendering these diagrams simplistic and reductive representations of a more complex situation. Crabb's diagrams went on to illustrate the possible combinations of mixture between white men and Asian women, Asian men and white women, and then the results of intermixing between their Eurasian offspring

and either white, Asian or Eurasian partners. He assigned percentages of whiteness to each generation and expressed these using fractions such as '¼-white Eurasian' and '7/8-white Eurasian' (Crabb 1960, pp. 6-8). While lacking scientific veracity, these notions of blood and percentages of race continue to resonate to a very marked degree today. We can see this in my participants' general descriptions of Eurasians as being half European and half Asian but also in more specific descriptions in which percentages or the notion of blood quantum are used to understand Eurasian identities. When Melanie was younger, for example, she thought of herself as a quarter Asian because only her mother is Eurasian, and Anthony describes himself as being 'more white than any other colour' estimating himself to be 'over 90% more European, than Asian.'

Since Bhabha, and in response to a climate of increasing multi-cultural awareness in some countries and cultures, theorists such as Stuart Hall (1997), Paul Gilroy (1987, 1994, 2000), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999) have tended to focus specifically on the effects of hybridity on identity and culture. In arguments premised on multiplicity, ambiguity and fluidity, these scholars have suggested hybridity as a new approach to subjectivity because of its challenge to the idea of a stable and unified subject (Beltrán 2004, p. 596). Given the liminality of Bhabha's third space it is understandable that many scholars have found hybridity useful to articulate any form of cultural mixing or the formation of identities in divergent fields. From the wo-man/machine interface of Donna Haraway's Cyborg to the negotiation of diasporic identities in the host culture, hybridity has offered theorists a term that encapsulates mixing and combination and blurs boundaries (Hutnyk 2005, p. 81). Particularly within ethnicity and migration studies, hybridity has become useful for describing cultural mixing at 'the edge' or contact point of diaspora (p. 79). Within critical race studies the concept of hybridity allows for an understanding of the ambiguous in-betweenness of mixed race individuals, and as a result has entered popular academic usage as a celebrated term that embraces cultural pluralism and negates essentialism. However, the hype surrounding academic 'hybridity talk' has instigated a considerable amount of scholarly debate as to its definition, usage and its limits as a theory.

Arguably, the most problematic issue associated with hybridity is its anti-essentialist stance, which in itself presupposes essentialism during the process of creating a 'hybrid'. When Bhabha was expressing his ideas about hybridity, Gilroy (1994) was already pointing out that the idea of hybridity relies on the existence of two anterior

purities – in other words, my participants' conceptions of 'European' and 'Asian' as irreconcilable, distinct identities. Essentially, purity does not exist in relation to humans and Gilroy (2000, pp. 250-251) urges that we must give up the illusion that cultural and ethnic purity has ever existed. He was resistant to using the word 'hybrid' as he argued 'cultural production is not like mixing cocktails' (pp. 54-55). A decade later, Hutnyk (2005, p. 81) expressed similar concerns: 'to what degree does the assertion of hybridity rely on the positing of an anterior 'pure' that precedes mixture?' The problem of purity within hybridity theory prevents the adequate theorising of intermixture without also suggesting the existence of separate, distinct and uncontaminated entities before mixture.

Arguing against Bhabha's ideas of a liminal hybridity, Cristina Beltrán posits that hybrid or bordered identities are not inherently transgressive, rather they are often essentialist in themselves. Hybridity becomes 'a kind of foundational or "fixed" identity that forecloses more creative and productively defiant approaches to identity and subjectivity' (Beltrán 2004, p. 596). What often emerges as a hybrid identity, coalesces into a new purity with new borders. So, John and Angela perceive their respective Burgher and Eurasian identities as 'pure' and stable, each with five hundred years since colonial contact to draw upon. Others though fall back on official definitions of Eurasian and Burgher to reduce ambiguity, such as Lionel with his understandings of the difference between Portuguese and Dutch Burghers in Sri Lanka; and Pam who draws on the Singaporean Eurasian community's understandings for her own identification. Interestingly, when I asked her what she thought of the label 'mixed race' she responded with: 'I think they're beautiful people … when you see a person who is of mixed race they're usually very attractive and really nice people.' She clearly does not understand herself as mixed race through her use of the third person pronoun, despite telling me that her ancestry is 'quite mixed … with English, Dutch, Chinese, Portuguese.'

With the negation of purity, hybridity both does and does not exist, and by extension mixed race both does and does not exist. From the perspective that purity has never existed, we as humans are all hybrids. 'Most people in the world today are mixed, but they just don't know it' (*Brooke*); 'At the end of the day everyone's going to be of mixed race. We're heading down that track already' (*Burt*). By the same token if there were no 'pures' then there could never be any 'mixing' and therefore no need to express hybridity. This confusing and contradictory thinking has plagued theorists arguing for and against hybridity. Rather than simply pointing out the problem that hybridity

cannot exist without the assumption of anterior purities, or that hybridity becomes the new purity, it is more productive to note how and when these questions occur.

As Werbner (1997, p. 22) argues, we need to see what hybridity actually does in particular contexts. In 1997 she stressed the need for a processual theory of hybridity that 'goes beyond the recognition of monological discourses' (p. 21). Noble, Poynting and Tabar's (1999) strategic hybridity seems to offer us this. As I discussed above, they found that individuals shift between notions of essentialism and hybridity in a positional and contextual attempt to understand their identities. This then allows us to accept hybridity's inability to let go of the role of essentialism in its own workings. Similarly, Tracy Marafiote and Emily Plec (2006, p. 71) advocate hybridity's ability to 'account for the complexity of many forms of discourse and helps us to move beyond the limitations of monologic views'. It seems then that hybridity, along with its limitations, remains a useful tool for understanding the multiplicity and complexity of self-identification and its contradictions. Certainly, the assertion of hybridity, or a deployment of strategic hybridity, can reveal much about what is considered to be a pure category, when mixing can occur and how new purities emerge from these mixtures. And regardless of the debate it is clear that hybridity is a complex concept that relies on beliefs that exist and are dependent on spatial and temporal context.

Indeed, in practice, situation and context influence, perhaps even dictate, perceptions and understandings. Ada and Estelle are first generation Eurasians with British fathers, while Anthony, Melanie and Brooke exist within a blurry borderzone within this category: they have European fathers and 'Eurasian' mothers, so some would see them as first generation Eurasians while others may categorise them according to either parent. As a result, these three are more fluid in their conceptions of Eurasianness: 'I've changed the way I've identified in the Census so many times I can't really remember what I did last time', Melanie said to me; while Ada and Estelle conceive of their Eurasian identities in terms of older, social conceptions and legal categories. 'You go according to your father ... Usually you follow your dad actually' Estelle tells me, before asking a little uncertainly, 'Usually that's what they say isn't it?' Both Estelle and Ada were interned in Changi prison camp on Singapore Island during the World War Two Japanese occupation of Malaya and the Straits Settlements. Both were in their early teens and both were interned for having British fathers. Significantly, this traumatic event forced them to contemplate their mixedness and to privilege their British ancestries.

Today, Estelle alludes to being British, while Ada explicitly identifies as English in the Australian Census. She only did this recently after genealogical research was conducted by her family members in order to make Ada's application for Britain's ex-gratia payment scheme for Far East Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees (FEPOW) in the early years of this century. Her family found that both Ada's paternal grandparents were British: 'We didn't realise that we are really Poms ... we came to know only that we're Poms when we were entitled to compensation. Because of the war and the times that we've been through ... And I didn't realise until few years ago that my grandparents were born in Chelsea.' In Singapore, Ada identified as Eurasian and had to prove 50% English blood to immigrate to Australia yet she no longer sees herself as Asian: 'Now they say it's 100%, it's English, all English. And of course my Mum was Dutch.' Both Ada and Estelle fall into Root's fourth category of 'racial' border crossings: they have both identified as Eurasian for extended periods of time, and identify as English or British from time to time. Estelle remains ambivalent as to whether she should be identifying according to her father's ethnicity, however Ada has switched 'camps' entirely, with the idea that she could because she had a purely English father and purely English grandparents.

The notion of two anterior 'pures' with a corresponding space in-between is evidently present in my participants' understandings, and it is often vertically reconfigured as an internalised hierarchy that mirrors the socio-political realities in which Eurasians and Burghers found themselves. 'The Eurasians very often accepted the fact that they would never become anything better than a chief clerk. But the Burghers always went out into business, private business and they achieved as good if not better than some of the Europeans' (*Lionel*). Growing up within this reality in Brunei, Liz admits internalising this hierarchy: 'I am sorry to say this but I must admit I always felt superior to every other Asian … yet I was also very insecure … I always felt I was superior to the Asians but I felt not good enough to be European. So I always felt that in-between thing.'

As one of the most vocal of hybridity's critics, Hutnyk is vigorous in pointing out its limitations. This is not to say that he does not see any value in hybridity as a concept, rather he urges scholars to interrogate the term and engage with its political and social aspects so that it does not simply become a popular catchphrase. He sees hybridity and similar terms such as syncretism as 'academic conceptual tools providing an alibi for lack of attention to politics, in a project designed to manage the cultural consequences

of colonisation and globalization' (2005, p. 92). He charges hybridity with the flattening of differences which serves to erase questions of politics and histories of inequality. This excludes the viewpoint of the colonised from understandings of colonialism, and this, he argues, is where it becomes possible to ignore experiences of poverty and dependence (p. 96).

Despite the limitations of Bhabha's hybridity, and the dangers of an 'over-exuberant deployment' (Parker and Song 2001, p. 9) of the notion of hybridity, which may lead to claims, such as those made by Ziv (2006), of the biological superiority of 'mixed race', it remains a valuable tool for analysis, as the concept of strategic hybridity shows us. Hybridity's ambiguous and problematic nature mirrors that of mixed race and therefore the two concepts demand to be discussed together. Cultural exchange and mixture then becomes ways to counter the perceived negative aspects of assimilation and integration in a globalising world. As Ien Ang (2003, p. 141) argues, claiming a hybrid diasporic identity can be a symbolic liberation from oppression and ethnic marginalisation. She takes a positive stance on hybridity, focussing on the cultural arena of the diaspora where boundary maintenance is essential for maintaining stable identities. However, she encourages the wearing down of those boundaries as she seeks to reduce the negative aspects of migration and multiculturalism, such as marginalisation, ghettoisation, and racism (*Ibid.*).

Writing of the Chinese diaspora in Australia, Ang points out that centuries of global migrations have resulted in a blurring of the limits of 'the Chinese.' Artificially maintaining a boundary between Chinese and non-Chinese she argues, would amount to discursive reductionism (p. 147). While accepting that 'diaspora' can be symbolic capital used as a strategy by those seeking liberation from the oppressive position of 'ethnic minority', she also recognises the absolutising tendency of diaspora when boundaries are constructed around sameness, and difference is therefore negated. In reality she sees the exchange of cultural practices across the porous boundary between Chinese and non-Chinese as creating a hybridised and complex Chinese/Australian culture. For her, hybridity is an important concept that foregrounds 'complicated entanglement rather than identity' and offers a sense of what she describes as 'together-in-difference rather than separateness' (p. 141). Once new purities spring up, as Ang would have it, hybridity is there to challenge them.

Conclusion

As I have argued in this chapter, the concept of 'mixed race' is contingent on the contemporary politics of race, and has therefore varied across time and place, culture and polity. As a 'mixed race' identity, the definition of 'Eurasian' too is dynamic, shifting and changing over time and geographical space. In the minds of some of my participants it is a fixed and finite definition, while others acknowledge its complexity and liminality. Despite this, all my participants conceded to a broad understanding of 'Eurasian' during the interviews and many shifted back and forth between allowing for definitional fluidity and trying to fix the concept within a specific geographic and cultural location. This makes sense if we reject binary thinking in favour of a continuum when it comes to identity: the participants in my study shifted back and forth along this continuum during the interviews so that there exists multiple potential articulations of personal identity that both challenge and are shaped by the larger dominant cultural narratives, which are based on socio-political circumstances and historical understandings. For example, those who remember discrimination against 'mixed race' in their former homelands tended to reject this as a term to describe themselves, although some, like Angela, were proud to use the term despite knowing of its negative connotations.

Using Maria P. P. Root's understandings of racial boundary crossing and Homi Bhabha's hybridity theory (along with its limitations), has been a useful lens from which to examine my participants' understandings of 'Eurasian' as a mixed race identity. Arguably, both of these approaches exist within the larger frame of a strategic hybridity (Noble, Poynting & Tabar 1999), which helps us to account for the multiple understandings and identity positionings of my participants. As I have shown in this chapter, hybridity as a concept challenges, yet also reinforces the idea of essential and pure categories of identity, and this is where the concept of strategic hybridity becomes useful. The limitations of hybridity reflect the complexity of 'Eurasian' identities and explains the contradictions of many of my participants when it comes to identifying as mixed race or hybrid. As in hybridity theory, the hybrid subject often becomes the new 'pure', which has led to the idea of fixed and stable categories like Eurasian and Burgher, and the rejection of mixed race as a label by some of my participants. This was particularly the case for those who came from Sri Lanka where Burgher exists as a legal category and those who came specifically from Malacca in Malaysia where Eurasians there have achieved *bumiputera* status. For others, and even participants from these two categories of 'Eurasian', the fluidity associated with hybridity allows for multiple

subject positions, however this can also lead to ambiguity and a sense of not belonging. Therefore participants engaged in a deployment of strategic hybridity so that some shifted from embracing the notion of hybridity at certain times, to reverting to the official categories of ethnicity from their former homelands, arguably to reduce ambiguity, and also for ease of explaining their identities to others.

Certainly, participants' understandings have not been stable. Strategic hybridity allows for 'the possibility of multiple discursive identifications' (Marafiote & Plec 2006, p. 70) within the group so that contradictory understandings that allow for and reject hybridity at the same time rely on various strategies such as Bhabha's notion of 'splitting' and Maria P.P. Root's categories of border crossings amongst mixed race subjects. Both of these strategies, within the larger frame of strategic hybridity, highlight multiplicity and ambivalence as central features of being Eurasian. In particular, rather than being cast as a negative problem, many of my participants use ambivalence as a point of distinction about themselves in Australia, regardless of their feelings towards mixed race.

CHAPTER 3

'We were like … white people that didn't have white skin, in a way'[22]: understandings of whiteness.

> Well this is the strange thing, until I look in the mirror, I don't realise that I'm coloured.
>
> Lionel

> I remember things my parents saying when I was younger, that made me wonder … You know things like 'stop, don't spend all day in the sun, you're black enough as you are.'
>
> Rob

'My mother had a lot of trouble with the in-laws … I think part of it was because she was too white for them'[23]

Angela, a Malaccan Eurasian, remembers 'trouble in the family' between her mother and her sisters-in-law due to her mother's fairer skin colour and because she came from Singapore: 'They resented the fact that she didn't quite fit in the norm with them, you know what I mean?' Her mother and her sisters-in-law were actually second cousins, however Angela felt that they 'didn't feel comfortable with her' because her mother's father 'was very white, very blue eyes and light hair' in turn making her whiteness stand out in the Malaccan community. '[T]hey really thought she was above them. And it was purely because she looked different … Wasn't the right colour.' As Alfred J. Lopez (2005, p. 1) tells us, 'whiteness is not, yet we continue for many reasons to act as though it is.' The sisters-in-law play this out, placing Angela's mother's whiteness at the top of a hierarchy of skin colour and resenting the perceived power that this imbues her with, acting 'as though it is.'

The central imperative within whiteness studies is to critique and thereby reduce the privilege and power associated with whiteness, exposing it for examination, and rendering it visible as one racial category amongst others (Lopez 2005, p. 2). The assumption is that the normative and invisible nature of whiteness has allowed it, throughout history, to escape racialisation, ensuring it a position of privilege and power complicit in the racialisation of others. This assumption of invisibility comes from the

[22] *Liz*
[23] *Angela*

perspective of whiteness, a position of power in itself: from the subalterns' perspective of course, whiteness has always been highly visible; however, undercurrents of power have often been less so. Angela's mother's fair skin was evidently visible within the Malaccan Eurasian community, which not only marked her as 'other' but, from the perspective of the sisters-in-law, imbued her with power so that they, as Angela told me, 'felt inferior to her.' So despite its visibility, in this example its power remained. That the sisters-in-law placed white skin at the top of a perceived hierarchy demonstrates an awareness of the complex relationships between skin colour, ethnicity and power, all of which are connected through the underlying narrative persistence of whiteness.

At a conference on the border-politics of whiteness in Melbourne in 2008, Matt Wray spoke of the need within the field of border studies to focus on those who exist within border zones. He argued that those who straddle the border between whiteness and non-whiteness can give important insights into how whiteness is constructed. Some years earlier, Joseph Pugliese (2002, p. 150) had called for the placement of whiteness in historical spatio-temporal context, arguing that there are critical differences of geography and history that are often overlooked or ignored within whiteness studies. Erica Lewin (2005, pp. 636-637) points out in her study of Anglo-Indian women in Western Australia that the status of 'mixed race' people within whiteness studies is inconclusive and similarly the existence of 'mixed race' people within Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) seminal study on white women was not clarified. To approach whiteness studies from a 'mixed race' perspective would seem to be vital for the interrogation of its normative power, as, Lewin argues, the Anglo-Indians experience life at the boundaries of whiteness. This supports Richard Dyer's (1997, p. 19) argument that throughout history people of 'mixed race' have at times been excluded from the category of whiteness, sometimes assimilated, and at other times used as a buffer between the less ambiguous categories such as white and black.

Following on from this thinking, and with Bhabha's concept of an 'in-between' space (1994, p. 38) in mind, I argue that Eurasians too experience life at the boundaries of whiteness, in the liminal space between the dominant categories of 'white' and 'Asian', and, as another example of strategic hybridity, that they often shift from one side of this often internalised boundary to the other when it is politically or socially expedient to do so. My 'Eurasian' participants speak from the border zones, with their understandings of whiteness spanning their life experiences, so that some see

themselves as having a claim to whiteness while others do not. This gives important insights into the cultural construction of whiteness with its related notions of skin colour, cultural and ethnic categorisation, and the resulting concepts of racism, power and privilege.

Although notions of whiteness run through my entire thesis, this chapter specifically examines the ways in which whiteness is understood and experienced by my participants who acknowledge a mixed European and Asian heritage. In asking questions about skin colour and whiteness with its relation to class and status, I was often met with an initial pause before answering, sometimes decisively, sometimes vaguely, but mostly with a noticeable degree of discomfort. Certainly, of all the questions I ask about race and ethnic identity, my whiteness questions seem to have caused the most confusion. This is significant because it reveals that whiteness is understood in relation to race. Damien Riggs (2004) calls for scholarship that examines exactly this relationship, to ensure that whiteness studies remains answerable to ongoing racial discourse because this is where it can be challenged. He suggests that whiteness 'achieves its semblance of normality and universality precisely because of its ability to absorb difference, or to adapt itself so as to appear to always be the same' (Riggs 2004, p. 2). It is therefore important, he argues, to examine the politics and problems of researching whiteness so that it does not retain its hegemony. As such, it is important to remain aware of my own position within my study and how my presence as interviewer affects the responses of my participants.

The white-skinned researcher

Ruth Behar (1996, p. 167) rejects the role of the transcendental observer, instead emphasising the key role that the position of the observer plays in social analysis; one that emphasises the personal experience and emotion of a 'vulnerable' observer. Reflexivity about my own intellectual process is particularly necessary because not only am I studying my own family heritage with an emotional investment in my project, my own position and identity is also constantly being negotiated and renegotiated. This is not just because I identify as an Australian Eurasian, but also because I look white, something of which I am not always fully conscious. In their work on the racial experience of whiteness in Australia, Haggis, Schech, and Fitzgerald (1999, p. 172) find that interrogating their own autobiographies alongside their informants' life stories played a crucial role in destabilising their own categories of analysis. During the interview process, my understandings of my own whiteness were being shaped as I

listened to my participants' stories, but I recognise too that the very presence of my white skin shaped the stories they told me.

I became very conscious of my white skin during my fieldwork, as it became clear that my participants had inevitably noticed my whiteness. A few referred to my skin tone to illustrate a story: 'Although he was Eurasian he was like you, very, very fair', Lionel told me. 'I've got a sister ... she's fairer than you', said Marie, and John spoke of a woman he knows who 'wears Kandyan *sari*, though she's whiter than you.' At those times I was acutely aware that I was being analysed and categorised, with measures of legitimacy and authenticity placed on my choice of identification. I often sensed from my participants' responses that power relations between them and I, were being gauged, further shaping our interactions and their responses.[24]

I therefore write this chapter from the position of a person who identifies as Eurasian but also as someone who has lived life as a 'white' person and therefore has received many of the privileges that come with being 'white' (see Peggy McIntosh 1990). I am perceived as white by almost everyone because I have inherited my father's pale skin colouring and also the Scottish tendency for freckles and a slightly red tinge to my brown hair. I am not a 'typical' Eurasian. The pertinent questions then are, how does my identifying as Eurasian affect the concept of whiteness and how does being white affect the concept of 'Eurasian'? When presenting at a 2009 conference, Cinnamon van Reyk spoke of being 'invisibly different'; her Burgherness is masked by her white skin so that no one knows that she is anything other than a white Anglo-Celtic Australian. This is familiar to me: unless I declare being Eurasian, no one will know. My own whiteness has excluded me from the bounds of Eurasianness so that I have been told on quite a few occasions that I should not be identifying in that way and should simply follow my Scottish father's ancestry. Through my own experience, I come to understand how Eurasians with fair skin problematise the ideas of both Eurasianness and whiteness, and how much of this rests on individual, but socially situated, understandings of whiteness.

Understandings of whiteness

During my interviews, I posed the question 'Do you think of 'white' as a race?', which elicited a number of varied responses. Interestingly, the majority of my participants (9)

[24] Admittedly, this could also be an effect of the interviewer/interviewee relationship and my relatively young age in comparison to many of my participants.

said that yes, 'white' is a race, although Marie was quick to tell me that she thinks of 'white' as *a* race but 'not as a *supreme* race', and although Rob said yes, he believed that 'white' is not considered to be a race in Australia. He sees this as a negative aspect of Australian society: 'I feel really strongly about that, that multicultural society in Australia often erases English ethnicity in terms of whiteness so that English groups generally don't participate in multicultural ceremonies.' Rob put whiteness in context by localising it in Australia to its English roots. The responses of these nine participants suggest that whiteness is indeed visible and does not entirely escape from the racialisation that Critical Whiteness Studies would argue occurs. Marie and Rob's responses in particular reveal that they understand its power and wish against it. Dianne laughingly called 'white' both a race and a species, although clarified this by telling me that within the category of 'white' 'there's so many different cultural groups.'

Five of my participants said no, 'white' was not a race, but their reasons for this revealed much of the confusion that surrounds the idea of 'race' in general. Brooke for example said: 'white is not a race to me as many races are white.' She illustrated her understanding, which was likely to be a conflation of whiteness with ethnicity, by telling me that she has 'an Arab friend who is white but is not "white" in his culture.' Here she was alluding to the socio-cultural construction of whiteness that includes some and excludes others from its reach, despite fair skin tones. Similarly, Lionel told me that 'white' was not really a race because:

> You've got white Americans, you've got white Europeans, you've got white Englishmen, you've got white Slovaks ... then you've got the Indian races where there are some very white people in Kashmir and places like that. In fact some of them are fairer than the Europeans themselves.

Lionel's response equates whiteness with nationality and cultural groupings. Interestingly, both Lionel and Brooke understand whiteness to have sub-categories in line with Dianne's understanding, however they differ on their categorisation of 'white' as a race.

These understandings of whiteness offer us more locally specific perspectives that have been missing in many previous scholarly works on whiteness that have instead dealt with larger power relations (Pugliese 2002, p. 150; Twine and Gallagher 2008, p. 5). The specificities of how whiteness as a form of power is actually deployed are evident

here in my participants' understandings so that they have much to add to the current 'third wave' of Critical Whiteness Studies (see more below). Importantly, this third wave places non-white voices at the centre of scholarship so that we can hear the complex understandings of those who are affected by the power of whiteness in some way. The complexities are amplified when those people have some claim to whiteness themselves, and therefore 'Eurasians' offer much insight into how the power of whiteness is understood and deployed.

The remaining five participants could either not definitively say, or were vague in their responses to my question of whether 'white' was a 'race'. Perhaps because she was confused, Ada answered my question by telling me a story in which she reassured herself about once being mistaken for an Indian woman: 'I think it was an Indian lady, sat next to me ... she was very rude though. She turned, says "oh, you're Indian" ... so, it was just take no notice. I said don't worry, it doesn't worry me whether I've got blue eyes or black eyes, it doesn't worry me.' Ada was clearly upset, quickly telling me that she had also been asked a number of times if she was Scottish, suggesting that she prefers to be associated with whiteness. Similarly, Estelle responded vaguely by saying 'I don't know ... to me they all are ... equally ...', before trailing off uncertainly. She went on to say, 'of course, those days we had the whites, [they] were given more in the colonial times. But after that it's equal.' Her response evoked the uneven power relations between white colonials and their non-white subjects, and it seemed that she was grappling with her awareness of this from her past, while not wanting it to be a reality of the present. Her denial of white power is interesting in that she tentatively chooses to align herself with her British father to the exclusion of her Sri Lankan Tamil mother, seemingly desirous of some claim on whiteness.

Rather than answering directly, Corinne and John discuss the idea of 'white' as a race with each other, hinting at its complexity:

> Corinne: I don't know.
> John: As much as you try to say no, in anybody's mind there is a difference between ...
> Corinne: White is European I suppose.
> John: Black and white.
> Corinne: White is European.
> John: Yes, fine.

Corinne: Is that what you mean?

John: … There is no real answer.

Corinne, as with a number of other participants, equated whiteness with being European, suggesting that whiteness is a residue of empire, but also that it is equated with a particular, fair skin tone. And indeed, John spoke of skin tone when he referred to the black/white dichotomy prevalent in racial thinking.

Skin colour, which forms part of a person's phenotype (the outward appearance of their genetic make-up), has been and continues to lie at the centre of understandings of whiteness and to be profoundly implicated in the racist practice of othering. Historical and contemporary understandings about skin colour are often expressed in a binary of black and white (Benthien 2002, p. 148). From European colonial hierarchies, which placed whiteness at the top and blackness at the bottom (see de Gobineau 1915, p. 205, for his conception of a racial 'ladder'), to present day identity politics in the United States, the black/white binary repeatedly surfaces (see for example Zack 1993; Sollors 2000; Montgomery 2012). It was again evident amongst my participants' responses. Hayley who was born in Australia and who almost sheepishly identified as white, told me that she was glad to be white because 'black people get it harder' and Anthony believes that whiteness is 'being part of a visual identity' which he differentiates from 'being black, for example.' In essence the black/white dichotomy is the simplest and most superficial juxtaposing of what is in reality a continuum of various shades in-between. As Dyer (1997, p. 42) points out, 'white people are neither literally nor symbolically white.' Yet throughout European colonial history and beyond to present day Australia, whiteness as a concept has been politically and culturally assigned to denote an ambiguous social categorisation based on ideas of 'race', ethnicity and ancestry (Young 1990; Dyer 1997). The relationship between skin and whiteness however, is an arbitrary one: my participants' understandings demonstrate this, as does my own white Eurasianness.

Claiming whiteness

As I noted in the previous chapter, Anthony estimated that he is 'more white than any other colour' because he is 'probably over 90% more European than Asian.' He is a distant member of my extended family and I had given him a copy of our family tree a few months before I interviewed him, which presumably shaped his knowledge about his roots and led to his calculations. He has an Italian father and a Dutch Burgher

mother from Malaysia who has ancestries spanning Europe from Portugal to the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland. Through his 'strong ties to Italy', and his high calculation of his own whiteness, he clearly aligns himself with his European heritage, despite also identifying as Eurasian and Burgher. Arguably, his alignment is more easily made because he has an Italian surname. Similarly, Hayley has a Scottish surname, which arguably allows her to feel more grounded in whiteness. Yet, aside from her apprehension about telling me that she sees herself only as white, Hayley also felt a sense of guilt about thinking of 'white' as a race: 'That sounds bad. "White." But yeah, I suppose it is. But it's not like we're different people, it's just the colour.' Both Anthony and Hayley again refer to skin colour, but it is also clear that they both see themselves as having strong claims to whiteness. They both have white skin, so others will likely support their claims.

Lionel, however has dark skin, and as he told me, others have often thought he was 'a black fellow.' Yet he laughingly described himself during the interview as 'a white fellow trying to get out of a black skin.' He feels white and has internalised whiteness to the point that, 'until I look in the mirror, I don't realise that I'm coloured.' His wife Marie, who like her husband, is also a Burgher from Malaya, does not claim whiteness as part of her own identity, and resents those Burghers who think of themselves as, and act like Europeans. She explains that they do this 'because they are white', and follows this up with: 'I'm telling you, because I am brown!' Thinking back to her previous homeland she told me emphatically: 'You either had to be white or to have money [to be] recognised in Malaya. I'm sorry, that's it! My father didn't have money and we were black, too bad!' Marie spoke of both black and brown in reference to herself, clearly feeling excluded from whiteness.

Rob, who was born in Australia to Burgher parents from Sri Lanka, also understands this exclusion from the bounds of whiteness, so that in Australia he has felt othered and marginalised since childhood (see Chapter 1):

> As a kid, just late sixties, early seventies, I remember being called Aboriginal, I remember being called *Paki*, and you know lots of the terms. And even sometimes if people were inquiring, I knew that there was a bad ... that it was bad to be that. But I also felt that I was stuck with that too.

Rob felt that, due to his skin, he could not escape being classified by others as non-white. He is aware also of the value judgements placed on the non-white groups that he was associated with, and about his parents' own preference for lighter skin when they told him as a child to stop spending all day in the sun, because he was 'black enough.' Both Rob and Marie's sense of exclusion from whiteness rested on their slightly darker skin colour which marked them as black, brown, Asian, anything but white. In the case of 'Eurasian' identities, this strengthens the normative power of whiteness so that it acts as a base that can be painted over with the very visible 'Asian'. Certainly, Western colonial discourse understood white skin as a blank canvas or tabula rasa, with dark or 'coloured' skin as its 'written-on counterpart', a skin that 'departs from the neutral norm' (Benthien 2002, p. 148).[25] This speaks to a narrative persistence that underpinned almost all of my participants' understandings of whiteness, so that white is 'normal' and anything else is other. The normativity of whiteness reveals itself through Hayley's understandings of being white as easier than being black, and in her statement: 'I don't want to be *not* normal.'

Melanie told me that she felt 'very lucky to have been paler skinned' as it allows her access to many of the privileges of whiteness, one of which being that she can 'hide the fact that I'm Eurasian if I ever need to, if I ever feel threatened.' Similarly Brooke told me: 'I am happy that I have fairer skin as it has made life easier for me and I feel that I can blend in to the Australian way of life better, without anyone thinking I'm so different.' Both Melanie and Brooke can 'hide' behind their fair skin, but this also means that they have to assert their Eurasianness from time to time. 'I know that people don't consider me to be Eurasian ... So it makes me have to be more assertive … I have to explain myself a bit more' (*Melanie*). Brooke's conception of 'Eurasian' is more Asian in orientation, so she feels excluded from her Eurasianness when others do not see her as Asian. As I noted in the previous chapter, some of her older relatives presumed she would not 'know as much' about her Asian heritage as she was 'diluted' by her father's ancestry. To assert her Asian/Eurasianness, Brooke studied Indonesian as part of an Asian studies degree at university, 'because of my roots.' She told me that she knows little of her Portuguese, Dutch and Scottish ancestries and therefore finds them 'intriguing' and wants to know more about her European roots. Brooke has an interest in both 'sides' of her ancestry and her relationship with both is complex. She sees

[25] Note that whiteness manifests as a more complex phenomenon within imperial hierarchies. For example, see Anne McClintock's (1995) discussion on the British imperial representation of the Irish as non-white. This exclusionary strategy employed by the British, denied the Irish access to membership and the associated privileges of the British Empire pointing to the mutability of whiteness as a concept.

herself as Asian but also is aware of the status that whiteness bestows upon her. She, like many of my other participants, had a layered awareness of the normativity of whiteness as well as its power throughout history: 'If I didn't have good status because of the colour of my skin it would not be nice.'

For those of my participants who claim any degree of whiteness, this has meant that they have had to negotiate their feelings toward their European ancestries, because, as demonstrated by Corinne's assertion above, whiteness is very often conflated with being European. 'I would think of [white people] as European' (*Liz*). Importantly, the feelings that my participants have towards the European 'side' of their ancestries, shape the way they identify as 'Eurasian.' Melanie admitted to feeling slightly guilty about the uneven power relations in her ancestry: 'You know, with the history of colonisation and things like that, Europeans haven't treated Asian people well.' Rob's European ancestry has never played a significant role in his life and he told me that he aligns himself as Asian due to his sense of exclusion from Australia and whiteness. When I asked him how he felt about his European ancestry, he responded with:

> I don't feel I carry a burden about it but I'm not ... maybe it's through my education or whatever, I'm cynical towards you know colonial administrators and the reasons behind actions and strategies they undertook … I'm sure ancestors of mine were involved in that. Probably some suffered the consequences, some were involved in it.

Rob is aware of the whiteness and its effects in his ancestry, describing himself as cynical rather than burdened.

I understand both his and Melanie's feelings towards the whiteness within their ancestries. Early in my genealogy there are several VOC employees, listed in the Dutch Burgher Union (DBU) journals mostly as bookkeepers or assistants. One though, Johannes Ferdinandus from the mid-18th century, is listed as 'warrior' for the VOC. This is a stark reminder of the conquest and bloodshed involved in the expansion of empires. As a teenager, trying to understand my ethnicity, but knowing little of the actual history of my family or the workings of colonial conquest, I assumed that the 'mixture' of European and Asian in my bloodline was a result only of pillage and rape. I remember feeling a sense of undirected anger over this assumption, and was glad to discover that the intimate reaches of Empire very often involved consensual

relationships and marriage (although the power relations within those marriages are unknown and unreachable). I now find that I carry a certain sense of guilt regarding my British grandfather's occupation which was deeply embedded within the colonial establishment of Malaya, despite my father assuring me that he was a good man who was well liked by everyone. Memmi's (1957) coloniser/colonised dialectic is intertwined within Eurasian histories and this leaves me with an uneasy feeling, similar to Rob's cynicism and alluded to by Melanie when she said of this dialectic within her ancestry that 'it feels weird knowing *that*' (orig. emphasis).

Indeed, many of my participants were ambivalent towards their European ancestries, possibly because some had little knowledge of their European roots. 'I'm a little disappointed that I don't know more about my European heritage' Burt said, 'And I haven't been able to find out more.' When I asked participants how they felt about their European ancestry, Patricia responded with 'I'm fine with that', and Lionel chuckled and said: 'Nothing I can do about it', before telling me that he has 'very neutral' feelings about it. Interestingly, he had been conducting genealogical research only into his various European ancestries and not his Asian 'side.' Angela trailed off as she said: 'I guess it's good that it's there, I mean I can't get … you know.' However, she was quick to tell me that she is not ashamed of her European ancestry 'because it's made us very different. Yeah, unique and different.' For Stan, who positions himself firmly within the category of Sri Lankan Burgher, his European ancestry is not a factor in his life at all. He is, however, 'aware of it': 'Keep that there, you know, where my roots are … were, *were'* (orig. emphasis). Similarly, Marie, Pam, John, Corinne and Ada (who now identifies as English) all insisted that their European ancestries have not played a role in their lives at all, while Estelle, with her darker skin, and Dianne who looks visibly Chinese, both told me that they were 'proud' of their European ancestries. Lorraine too, sees her European 'side' in a 'very positive' light: 'I feel very good about it because that's what gave me what I have to present whilst living in a white society, isn't it?' She quickly followed this up with: 'I love my Asian side too.'

Interestingly, and as I discussed in the previous chapter, Estelle and Ada, who had either positive or neutral feelings towards their European ancestries, were both interned in *Changi* prison camp, Singapore, during World War Two. They were interned precisely because of their direct European ancestries. Estelle told me: 'They know my dad is English ... and you know, there are people who tell.' Estelle had tried to hide her European ancestry behind her darker skin, but had been 'dobbed in' and subsequently

interned. Ada had an English father as well, however she also had white skin so could not hide her European ancestry. She told me: 'As long as they see you're a white skin, they put you behind the bars.'

The war time occupation and internment experience foregrounded existing racial and class-based tensions and divisions within Eurasian communities throughout British Asia, and these tensions often centred on skin colour, with lighter skinned Eurasians using their 'whiteness' as a sign of superiority over their darker skinned counterparts (Lee 2004, pp. 126-127; Yap 2011, p. 488). When Singapore fell to Japanese forces on the 15th of February 1942, it was precisely this whiteness that marked Eurasians for internment and was therefore, as Kirsty Walker (2007, pers. comm., 12 September) points out, literally a matter of life and death.

Despite being interned for being British nationals by the Japanese, the British did not see Eurasians as British, and this was highlighted in the evacuation procedures throughout the colonies. On the eve of the war, only 'pure' British women and children were evacuated first, leaving Eurasian women and children to either remain and be interned, or to scramble for their lives on the later evacuation ships that were subsequently bombed on departure. My English great-grandfather, Charles, was killed while trying to evacuate on board the *Giang Bee*, one of the last ships to leave, just two days before Singapore finally fell to the Japanese. The *Giang Bee* and the other last few ships that were bombed were reported to have had 'a very large proportion of Eurasians amongst their civilian passengers' (Kenneison & Pether 2011). Therefore, the many Eurasians who identified as British nationals at the time, found themselves abruptly excluded from the notion of being British, so that, as Bhabha (1994, p. 89) would put it, they were 'almost the same but not quite … almost the same but not white.'

Growing up in Brunei in the 1960s, Liz remembered this same sense of exclusion that she felt from the British expatriates around her:

> You know, they're looking down on me, like they think I'm Asian … There'll be all these older white people, sitting there with their cocktails getting ready to watch the movies and all that. And I never felt comfortable among[st] them … I always felt different … I always felt like they didn't look at me with acceptance … Isn't it

> funny? It's like I want so much to be accepted by them, maybe. I think it's that. So that's why I always had that anger inside of me.

Liz's desire to be accepted by the British in Brunei, turned to anger when she felt excluded from a claim to whiteness or her own Europeanness, and when she was thought to be simply Asian. Her feelings reveal an underlying narrative persistence of the desirability of whiteness, with its perceived power and privilege.

Within Liz's family there were varying skin tones and she said to me: 'I'd like to be fairer ... like my sister, she's fairer.' When Liz was younger she equated whiteness with beauty and therefore wanted lighter skin: 'I mean I didn't have an obsessive thing about being paler, I just wanted to be more pretty. That was more important to me.' It is not just beauty however, that whiteness confers upon her, but also status: 'It sounds nice that I've got white, you know, whatever ... it makes me feel more superior in a way, over Asians, because I feel like I've got *this*' (orig. emphasis). Liz sees her whiteness as something special that lifts her above being purely Asian. In her mind whiteness is something to be valued and confers a higher status upon anyone who has a claim to it. Whiteness exists above being Asian within her internalised hierarchy, so that the Europeans who did not accept her and saw her as Asian, were excluding her from her own claim to whiteness and social upliftment. Lopez (2005, p. 2) points out that whiteness continues to retain its status, desirability and power despite attempts to challenge this. Certainly, as with Liz, the responses of my participants reveal that whether through rejection or exaltation a narrative persistence seems to ensure whiteness its position of superiority in a postcolonial context.

The persistence of whiteness

In present day Sri Lanka, Lorraine told me, 'you still get people who think, oh because they're white, they're better.' This hierarchy exists in Malacca as well, so that 'a lot of times you find that it's just because they're white, and they have this big thing, you know "because you're white you think you're better than us" kind of attitude' (*Angela*). When Angela lived in Singapore for three years at the start of this century, she found that she was often mistaken for European and as a result was treated differently: 'If I wanted stuff, you know quick, or done, or seen to, I would just pretend that I was European, and my God … the doors were flung open ... if you want anything done [t]here, you be European, be white, no problem.' 'It's still white power there', Angela said, 'No matter what they say, that they don't, I mean I see it. They are always at the

top.' Marie spoke of the Burghers from Malaysia who all had good jobs and were hard working, however she told me 'those that were very fair loved to consider themselves British … More than a Burgher, "I'm British!" They'd rather be British than be Burgher, you know, because now they are white.' She spoke of some families that she knew having members who had 'blue eyes, reddish hair ... they were born in Malaysia like me, but their parents were both fair. So they are very fair in colour, so they think they are "hmmph!"' She raised her nose in the air to denote snobbery. Despite having told me that she grew up in a very British-oriented household, Marie seemed to resent the Sri Lankan Burghers who still align themselves with the British today in Australia. She raised her nose again, saying: 'Some of them ... "We are this, and we are that" and you know. "We are, we were brought up British!"'

For Pugliese (2002, p. 150), Dyer's focus on mapping the visual representation of whiteness in the Western world, ignored the 'specificities of ethnicity and geo-politically situated subjects.' Third Wave White critique aims to redress this by examining 'the locally specific ways in which whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented' (Twine and Gallagher 2008, p. 5). As such, the Third Wave builds on the existing scholarship of the first two waves of Critical Whiteness Studies, focusing on *how* whiteness is deployed and the various strategies used to maintain privilege and destabilise white identity over time and space. If the first wave could be characterised as recognising and exposing whiteness to critique, and the second wave as whiteness reckoning with its history and complicities through the examination of institutions, then according to Twine and Gallagher (2008), Third Wave Whiteness focuses on the reinvention and continued hegemony of whiteness in specific temporal and spatial contexts. This then sees examinations of whiteness emanating from within areas such as education (Haviland 2008), migration (Lundstrom 2014), sexuality (Carter 2007), and transnational labour (Leonard 2008) for example.

Significantly, third wave scholarship comes full circle back to DuBois' (1903) understanding that whiteness is not and never has been a static or uniform category, thus aiming to prevent whiteness studies from contributing to the idea of racial essentialism. Instead, Third Wave Whiteness treats race as just one of the many social forces on identity, understanding that whiteness can have a multitude of identities that are 'historically grounded, class specific, politically manipulated and gendered socially' in regard to locations that are in themselves shaped by local and national forces within an era of globalisation (Twine and Gallagher 2008, p. 5). My participants'

understandings and experiences of whiteness are based on multiple locations, however, my older participants shared a common history of growing up in British-oriented households.

In the dying days of Empire and indeed until migration to Australia, many of my participants recounted stories of childhood homes steeped in British household practices and filled with British homewares. This was underpinned by the notion of respectability which acted as a display of agency, a strategy deployed as resistance against negative stereotyping or categorisation, and also as an attempt to claim whiteness. However, my participants and their families often subscribed to an British conception of respectability so that to perform respectability became a performance of whiteness. While reflecting on her very British upbringing, Liz spoke of her Burgher/Eurasian family as being like 'white people that didn't have white skin, in a way.' In essence, her family performed whiteness through their understandings of an British respectability.

Respectability as resistance

I argue that respectability was one of the ways in which my participants, particularly those of the older generation, engaged with their inherited whiteness. Throughout my interviews it became apparent that for my participants whiteness was equated with words and terms such as 'European', 'Western', 'higher class', 'educated' and 'respectable'. Furthermore, these terms were closely associated with manners. I ended my interviews with a question that asks my participants to decide which factor(s) are important to their ethnic identity or experience of being 'Eurasian'. I gave them a list to choose from that included factors such as religion, food, choice of marriage partner, manners, and language. Whilst also asking them to think of any additional influencing factors themselves, I chose to provide this list to provide some guidance to their responses and also because I wanted to know what they thought of these specific factors. In initial discussions with some participants I found that not providing a list elicited vague responses or none at all. After looking at the list, most participants chose two or more factors but were careful to order them by level of importance. Of my 19 participants, nine responded that manners were an important factor in their ethnic identification, with six of those citing manners as either their only or number one factor that affected or reinforced their experience of being Eurasian. I found it surprising that 'manners' was mentioned the most times from the factors on the list as this challenged my assumptions that religion or food would be the most important to migrants. This

was more a reflection of my own generational ideas about migration, and indeed food and religion did follow closely with eight mentions each.

My younger participants (ranging in age between 18 and 37) did not mention manners, opting instead to choose food and language as being significant factors in their ethnic identification and adding that they often used their family connections and histories as a reference point for understanding Eurasianness. Those who did mention manners as being significant were my older participants (ranging in age between 53 and 85), plus one participant in his early forties. The value that these participants placed on manners and being respectable suggests a difference in generational values, and indeed these were the same participants who described growing up in very respectable households in their home countries. Throughout my interviews it became evident that good manners were considered to be an outward display of respectability, and these manners were instilled at a young age. However, this was not simply an exercise in raising polite children, because respectability took on extra significance when applied to often misrepresented 'mixed race' minority groups such as the Eurasians and Burghers throughout South and South East Asia during much of the 20th century.

Although to an extent it is a problematic notion, I would argue that respectability was often deployed by Eurasians and Burghers both as a subtle form of resistance against derogatory stereotypes and low expectations, and as a means for social mobility and upliftment by achieving a level of 'honorary whiteness' (see Bonilla-Silva 2003 & 2004; Young 2009). The narrative persistence in a belief in white superiority is manifest in my participants' understandings of what is and is not considered to be respectable. I argue that through this equation with Europeanness and whiteness, respectability has been utilised as a means both for resisting negative perceptions associated with 'mixed race' and for refusing otherness. Inevitably this also reveals a persistence in my participants' (often reluctant) belief in white superiority. This could be understood as a performance of whiteness to claim respectability, while at the same time deploying a certain form of respectability to claim whiteness.

Whiteness can either socially uplift or, more radically, be polluted by a single drop of non-white 'blood'. In particular, 19th century racial thinking sought to exclude 'mixed race' people from the nation using claims of moral degeneracy that often centred on the domestic space of the home. Class and ethnic concerns would see these claims of moral degeneracy extended into the 20th century (and possibly beyond). Dyer's (1997, p. 19)

hierarchies of whiteness supports the idea that whiteness is 'unclear and unstable', however as he argues this is also its strength. The idea of reaping the rewards and privileges of whiteness by ascending a hierarchy produces 'a dynamic that has enthralled people who have had any chance of participating in it' (Dyer 1997, p. 20). I argue that respectability was often deployed to counter these negative perceptions and arguably to attempt an equal status as white people. Respectability offered Eurasians a chance to challenge negative claims and to instead claim a higher social standing. Respectability was thus involved in creating distinctions and maintaining borders.

Image 4: My great-grandfather Frank having afternoon tea with friends in Malaya

Throughout my interviews, I have been told numerous stories of childhoods and early adulthoods in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Brunei that were steeped in British customs and practices. Within my own background, the families of both my grandparents ardently ran their households as British spaces and took part in British social customs. My great grandfather Frank can be seen in Image 4 (second from the right) taking part in a tropical variant of the British custom of 'taking tea' with friends in Malaya. Certainly, the various configurations of these customs had become incorporated into Eurasian everyday life during colonial rule and have undergone continued processes of adaptation to the point of being normalised and considered representative of a Eurasian identity. Angela remembered that her 'grandfather wanted to be British so badly' that he performed this through his clothing and his use of the English language despite living amongst *Kristang* speakers. Angela is a distant member of my extended family who knew my great grandmother, Charlotte, when she lived in Malacca. She recalled memories of Charlotte's very ordered domestic habits:

> All the things happen on the clock … a certain time you go there, you know it's her nap time, you go there, you know it's her tea time … and every evening at this time, she'd have her shower and she'd be all powdered up and then she'd sit on that one chair.

The vast majority of my older participants recounted stories to me of sitting at their childhood dining tables, some saying prayers before eating, everyone in their places

with the father at the head of the table and children eating in respectful silence. Dining settings mimicked those of the British, a nostalgic nod to the Victorian era in particular, so that 'even the setting of the table, everything … [was] … very Westernised' (*Estelle*), and 'the table cloths, the napkins, all that damask … everything would have to be starched' (*Liz*). The rest of the house was much the same**:** 'I think in that era it was so ... your house had to be decorated with stuff from England because it was such an *in* thing … they couldn't kind of recognise things if they weren't British … or European or something' (*Angela*). This is reminiscent of the time lag that occurs when colonials and expatriates often lovingly preserve past customs while those same customs have either died out or evolved in the 'home' country. Holding on to the past not only represents a nostalgic yearning for a particular way of life, but can also be read through the lens of class, so that these customs are upheld as markers of social difference, particularly amongst those who are actually situated at the lower end of the class hierarchy.

Liz remembers her Dutch Burgher mother collecting little porcelain figurines of white adults and children that she displayed in cabinets and on shelves. She and her siblings would buy these figurines as gifts for her mother from one local home-decorating shop that only stocked British household wares and ornaments in Malaysia. She emphasised her very 'white' upbringing:

> Education was British, the clothing, you know like *Robinsons*, *Whiteaways* [referring to shops]. Everything was British, British, British. They would even behave like as if they were *orang putehs* ['white men'] you know like wear the hats to go to church. You know, you have to wear the hats, the hat and gloves to church … very, very pro-British. Also they'd order by mail, special clothing.

Many more participants recounted that their parents or they themselves would order kitchen and household items from British mail-order catalogues, often at greater expense than local products - it was the status that these British items afforded that was important within the culture of respectability. I now have my grandmother's entire *Wood's Ware* crockery set that she specially ordered from England when she lived in Malaysia so that her family could always eat off 'respectable' plates. My grandmother was of Burgher ancestry, but she was born in Malaysia and so chose to call herself Eurasian. Yet despite this she made a point of reminding her children to remember always that they were the Ceylonese Dutch Burghers, a distinction made to denote a

higher social status than Eurasians in Malaysia, and within Sri Lanka to denote a higher status than the Portuguese Burghers.

David Goodhew's (2000, p. 241) study of working class respectability in South Africa contends that the black population of the townships adhered to a deep sense of respectability premised on a commitment to religion, education and law and order, as a means of resisting white domination. Rather than being easily co-opted by the state, township respectability was used to campaign for better living conditions. The politics of respectability have often been used as a form of resistance by non-white groups. As W.C. McDaniel (2005, p. 130) defines it, respectability acts as an 'attempt to conserve etiquette, often in deference to hierarchy.' Respectability has therefore offered Eurasians a chance to challenge negative perceptions and to claim a higher social standing. Respectability could thus be involved in the refusal to be othered or marginalised. My grandmother used her English crockery and linen tablecloths to align herself with the British and through that to challenge the old colonial perceptions of Eurasians as morally degenerate and slovenly.

This challenge to colonial perceptions can again be seen in Image 5, a photograph of my grandfather Owen 'Rex' Thomas (seated, second from left) and his family on their estate in Malaya. Evident wealth is displayed through their predominantly white clothing, and their relatively high status is performed through the very act of posing for and being photographed in the first place (see Chapter 5). Some of my family members sit or stand upright, while others such as my great grandmother Charlotte (seated third from the left) take a more relaxed (yet still respectable) stance. The photograph in its entirety and the various bodily composures within seem to say that this is a prominent, and at the very least, a respectable family.

Image 5: The Thomasz family, Timiang Estate, Malaya, c. 1930

Drawing on Frankenberg's conception of 'whiteness unfrozen', Hilary Harris (2002, p. 184) concludes that whiteness is constructed, relational, and embedded in localised socioeconomic and sociocultural relations, and therefore it is cast as a process and not as a thing. She posits that respectability is the performative trope that most forcefully embodies the essence of whiteness (p. 187). Within this performance lies the element of imitation or mimicry, which Bhabha conceives of as a process that exists within the ambivalent in-between space that opens up during the colonial encounter. He argues that this space is where difference is first recognised. The colonised (non-white) subject is the subject of difference, set apart from the universal subject (the white coloniser). Mimicry emerges from this difference as a desire that '"appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power' (Bhabha 1997, p. 153). However, Bhabha argues that mimicry repeats rather than re-presents so that identities, through repetition become different. Mimicry exists in the contact zone, the gap between the British and the Anglicised, so that despite performing or mimicking Britishness in the home and through dress (see Chapters 4 and 5), Eurasians can never become British. Judith Butler reinforces the idea that mimicry creates the idea of a respectable Eurasian identity. She contests the idea of any natural, fixed foundational identity, instead pointing to the performance of identity as the driving force in creating that identity (cited in Kirby 2006; see also Butler 1990). The performance of respectability leads to the appearance

of a natural origin for the Eurasian identity, one that draws on its Europeanness/whiteness.

Dianne remembered her grandmother's afternoon tea ritual in Malacca at which the family, and sometimes guests, would sit down at a certain time every day to drink tea from floral teacups and eat cakes and curry puffs. The addition of the non-European curry puffs to the British custom of taking tea, reminds us that Dianne's grandmother's tradition represents afternoon tea in the tropics, a hybridised version of the original custom that also provides a way to 'foster and reproduce' a cultural identity distinctive from both British and 'Asian' or Malay identities (Blunt 2005b, p. 54). This suggests a more complex experience than performing or mimicking Britishness, yet this performance was nonetheless an important daily event that involved symbolic representations of respectability: 'We used to have to have showers first, get all dressed up, like not dressed up, but like put the powder on the face and wear nice, fresh clothes and then be seated around the rectangular table with all the china.' She attributed this formality to her grandmother's European heritage: 'I think that Irish thing was coming through.' She contrasts her mother's side of the family, with its strict code of manners that called for specific language and phrases such as 'no thank you', 'yes please' and 'may I be excused from the table?', with her father's side of the family where eating at family gatherings was articulated by pointing at food and saying 'I want that one.' Each 'side' of her family performed differently, but it is her grandmother's white Irish heritage that Dianne attributes to a more respectable performance.

Through an appropriation of the Other, the mimicry of practices and customs, in this case of Britishness, whiteness and respectability has often become conflated for my participants. Certainly, throughout my interviews it has become evident that notions of respectability and whiteness are still seen as interrelated: performing one helps to construct the other, and vice versa. By aligning their 'respectability' with the 'white' side of their heritage, Eurasians could in the past, and still can resist any negative connotations associated with being 'mixed' and increase their chances of 'belonging' in Australia. However, by doing so, it becomes evident that there is still an underlying narrative persistence that seems to ensure whiteness its position of superiority in a postcolonial context, what Dyer (1997) describes as internal hierarchies of whiteness.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Eurasians experience life at the boundaries of whiteness, and they often shift from one side of this often internalised boundary to the other when based on political or social context. While it is a central tenet of critical whiteness studies that whiteness is rendered invisible due to its normative power (for example Roediger 1991; Dyer 1997; Twine and Gallagher 2008), in this chapter I have shown that this view comes from a position of whiteness itself. Whiteness is actually highly visible to those who are not invested with, or have limited claim to whiteness. Through my research I have found that my participants' life stories and narratives of identity reveal an underlying narrative persistence of whiteness, which manifests as the continued, yet often reluctant, belief in white superiority. Regardless of their skin tone and how they identify, for my participants, it is a case of simultaneously not wanting it to matter, yet believing that it does, and has done throughout history. Most of my participants insisted to me that skin colour does not matter to them, yet their experiences in former homelands and in Australia were shaped by their skin tones. This was best exemplified by those participants who migrated during the years of the 'White Australia' policy and therefore had to highlight their claims to whiteness, and also by those who tried to hide their whiteness during the Japanese occupation of Singapore in the Second World War.

Within my participants' understandings whiteness was equated with being European, and was placed at the top of an internalised hierarchy. My participants understood whiteness variously as a synonym of 'Western', 'European', 'British' and 'English', which they set in binary opposition to 'Asian' - in effect, for them 'white' and 'Asian' exist at either extremes of the continuum or spectrum on which they move back and forth. This would seem to exclude those who see themselves as entirely Asian from any claim to whiteness, however to draw on Bhabha's splitting again, my participants' ability to live with contradictions disproves this. Those who experience 'Eurasian' as an Asian identity, were still able to incorporate whiteness into their identities even if this was only an acknowledgement of ancestral whiteness.

These same participants and numbers of others recounted stories of childhoods in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei that were steeped in British customs. Their parents and grandparents nostalgically emulated the domestic practices, interiors and dress of the British, so that performing whiteness arguably became a declaration of respectability that sought to resist any external negative constructions of 'Eurasians' as

mixed race subjects. Watching and being involved with these performances has led many of my participants to either consciously or unconsciously internalise the high value of whiteness that their parents and grandparents had imbued it with, regardless of whether they desire it for themselves or not.

CHAPTER 4

'I made home wherever it was … I would bring my own pictures and books'[26]: (re)creating home and identity in Australia

> I had only one home in my childhood. I was born there and I left that home. And it's just a very lovely home … it was furnished in a Western style, so we slept on beds and we had wardrobes, and we sat at [the] table and ate with a fork and knife.
>
> Lorraine

> If a total stranger came in here, without seeing who lived here, they would automatically know that there was an Asian influence.
>
> Liz

'It's a bit difficult because in your mind, that *was* your home. Now this *is* your home'[27]

Rob spoke of his grandparents' house in Australia as his 'absolute dream house', telling me: 'If I could have one house that I could always live in, it would be that house. And when I look back now, god it was a ramshackle house that needed a lot of repairs, but I actually thought of it as a palace.' Yet, when I asked where 'home' was for him, Rob did not refer to either his grandparents' house, nor his own, but instead said that home was wherever his partner is. This subtle shift in meaning between Rob's use of 'house' and 'home' reveals, as Blunt and Dowling (2006, p. 1) remind us, that in the modern, globalised world, 'home' is a complex theoretical concept that has different meanings for different people. For some, home refers to the physical structure of present or childhood houses: 'I was born in a wooden house, upstairs, downstairs, two-storey house' (*Lionel*); 'I've lived in a few different houses' (*Dianne*); while for others it is a feeling of being 'at home': 'I love being at home … from the time I was a little child … always the happiest I am, is in my home. No matter where I am' (*Liz*); 'Home to me was very comfortable. It was a place that I could go back to and rest. [I] was like a rabbit going back into his hutch' (*Lionel*); 'This is my home, this is my castle' (*John*). And this feeling of being 'at home' is often intertwined with the physical structure of the house. 'I have a lot of affection for it', Melanie said, 'I've done a lot of significant things in this house, and I just like the way it feels.' Yet others refer to their homelands, such as

[26] *Angela*
[27] *Corinne*

Angela who tells me that home for her is Malacca; or to the importance of relationships that are involved in constructing a sense of home (Blunt & Dowling 2006, p. 1), so that, like Rob, Patricia's understanding of home is that it is wherever her family is. Similarly, Liz who loves being 'at home', refers to the relationships and the practices of everyday life (de Certeau 1984) that make up her sense of home: 'Family has always been the most important, wherever it is … Having my family … and you know cooking a meal … it's just for me, that's home.' The link between house and home is therefore evident, so that Michel de Certeau's (1984, pp. 117-123) space as a practiced place turns the space of the physical house into a place known as 'home.' In this chapter I argue that the practices of (re)making 'home' in Australia have shaped and provoked participants' to interrogate their understandings of their 'Eurasianness' so that this has either consciously or unconsciously become manifest within the material cultures of their homes.

The multivalent and complex nature of home has resulted in a multitude of academic research within various disciplines over the last decade. The rise in academic interest in the notion of home is undoubtedly associated with the unprecedented number of people moving within the contemporary, globalised world (Blunt & Dowling 2006, p. 1), cutting across countries and blurring the boundaries between nation, homeland and home (see for example Ahmed et al. 2003; Al-Ali & Koser 2002; Brah 1996; Rapport & Dawson 1998). As a result, the idea of home becomes particularly important to those who move or are displaced, whether through work, exile, or voluntary migration. Home is disrupted for such people, and attempts to create new senses of home in different places often become focussed around a sense of belonging and attachment (Blunt & Dowling 2006, p. 1).

For the migrant, whose identity can sometimes become hybridised through the process of movement, finding a sense of belonging and reimagining identity within the diaspora involves creating a space in which to feel 'at home' and this most often centres on the physical space of the house (Mason 2007b). Scholars in the social sciences (Miller 2001; Pink 2004) and particularly in cultural or human geography (Blunt 2005a; Blunt & Dowling 2006; Dibbits 2009; Tolia-Kelly 2001, 2004a, 2004b & 2006; van der Horst 2007) have become increasingly interested in the domestic spaces of home and their relationships to identity. Attfield (2000, p. 152) points out that in psychoanalysis 'the house represents the self', showing us that our houses and identities are indeed intricately linked, and Antoinette Burton (2003) opens this further by arguing that the

memory of place and recollections of the physical layout and material culture of a house reveal the connections of spatial and social relations. For her the house is a site of cultural knowledge that can be used as an archive that produces counter-histories, a productive concept for further analysis of the ways in which the acts of memory/remembrances of home spaces both past and present, by the participants in my research, offer important insights into how they have constructed such archives and how they have used them to shape their identities over time.

As Katie Walsh (2001, p. 516) reminds us, in relation to migration, these 'home spaces' do not necessarily coincide with belonging, and home should therefore be thought of as a process involving continual practices of home-making, intended to create a sense of home and belonging. Further, Victoria Mason (2007b) argues that the physicality of the house is often used in this process of home-making and the creation of a feeling of being 'at home' by migrants within the diaspora. Through the practices involved with food, music, dress, and house decoration, Mason found that the houses of the Palestinians in her study became distinctly Palestinian spaces. The sense of familiarity within these spaces drew on the memory of Palestine to create a sense of belonging and community within Australia that both countered feelings of estrangement, homesickness and isolation, and grounded identities that had become hybridised through loyalty to multiple places (Mason 2007b, p. 131).

Despite the move in recent years towards multi-sited ethnographies to reflect the interconnectedness of people and multiple places, Ruben Gielis (2011, p. 258) advocates the use of single-sited ethnography in order to better understand the transnational experience of migrants. He argues that the migrant house, although not a 'socially stable and spatially fixed' location, is nonetheless an important site, an 'emotional place' from which to study the lived experience of transnationalism, and it is precisely its instability that gives us insight (*Ibid.*). Here therefore I use house and home not only as a central site of social identity, but also as an archive of the cultural forms through which my participants experience family life, and racial and national belonging, what Judy Attfield (2000, p. 156) describes as the transformation of the house into a cultural entity. This is particularly relevant because my fieldwork was situated within my participants' houses: interviews were conducted most often in their lounge rooms, family rooms, dining rooms or under pergolas in their gardens. I often walked with them as they showed me through the rooms of their houses and told me stories of their lives that were linked to the domestic objects and ornaments in each

room. In many of their houses, these objects and ornaments invoked in me a sense of familiarity, particularly the many blue and white Chinese porcelain pieces that I saw and that were so similar to my mother's pieces. It became evident that domestic objects were central to many of the processes of (re)making home in Australia embarked on by my participants.

When talking about her house in Perth, Pam, a Singaporean Eurasian, said: 'I think we have more Chinese things [now] than when I was growing up ... the houses tended to be very colonial in our growing up days.' As I showed in the previous chapter, my older participants grew up in British-oriented households. Through domestic performances of whiteness and a 'British' respectability, their Eurasian or Burgher parents and grandparents resisted being negatively stereotyped for their mixed and Asian identities, and displayed a nostalgic longing for a class status that was out of their reach. In this chapter, however, I unpack the ways in which in Australia, for the majority of these older participants, their dominant migrant experience has been of a generational shift towards more hybrid dwellings, which while remaining mostly 'Western' in practice, have noticeably strong Asian influences, primarily through the use of domestic objects, ornaments and decoration.[28] 'I tend to lean slightly towards the Oriental look, as you may have noticed', Corinne said, while Liz told me that she is 'very much into Asian stuff, there's no doubt about it.' Significantly, the ways that 'Eurasian' identities are represented in domestic spaces allows us to see how those identities have been reinterpreted over time, to chart understandings of the distinctions between 'house' and 'home' and the cultural practices those distinctions have engendered.

The complex and nuanced understandings of 'home' are the material with which I work in this chapter to unpack more of the texture of 'being Eurasian' and, in particular, of 'being Eurasian' in the particularly diverse immigrant society of Australia. I focus on my participant narratives of 'home' as well as the role that domestic objects and ornaments play in (re)creating identity and a sense of 'home' as distinct simply from a place, a building, where a participant lives. I am specifically interested in what Attfield (2000, p. 153) terms the 'seemingly inconsequential', 'small personal effects collectively termed ornaments' and their roles in 'defining, performing, rehearsing and mediating aspects

[28] It should be noted here that of my 19 participants, 3 were not married at the time of their interview, and 6 are married to non-'Eurasians', ranging in age from 28 to 62. Within the limited scope of my research, it was not possible to infer a direct relationship between marriage partner and home decoration, although it was noticeable that the women in my participant group were the ones who largely drove the process of home decoration and who were most interested in home objects. This is certainly then an area for further research.

of subjectivity' (*Ibid.*). My focus on the visual and material cultures of my participants' houses is premised on the argument that objects can be read as artefacts that through the deployment of memory and nostalgia are involved in the creation of home and identity within the diaspora (see for example Dibbits 2009; Miller 2001; Tolia-Kelly 2004; Turan 2010). The stories my participants tell me of their domestic spaces and the personal objects within them, reveal the material roles that the bordered, private space of the home and its 'things' play in the construction and reconstruction of Eurasian self-identities (Attfield 2000, p. 156; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1981, p. 17).

Home and homelands

As Rapport and Dawson (1998, p. 9) suggest, 'home' is 'where one best knows oneself.' They argue that, as an 'ambiguous and fluid but yet ubiquitous notion', home can be used to chart 'the ambiguities and fluidities, the migrancies and paradoxes, of identity in the world today' (*Ibid.*). If we accept this indeterminable concept of home, it then lends itself to understanding the mutability of 'Eurasian' identities, identities which bind themselves in complex relationships with former homelands and current homes. 'I love Malaysia. I still love it and if I had lots of money I would probably have a holiday home there', Dianne told me, vividly expressing her continued attachment to her former homeland, while Corinne, who has visited Sri Lanka a number of times since migration to Australia, recognises her own ambivalence about where exactly she feels is her home: 'It's a bit difficult because in your mind, that *was* your home. Now this *is* your home ... when you go back, you obviously feel *this* is your home' (orig. emphasis). Her husband John though has developed a different explanation for himself: Australia is his home and Sri Lanka is his 'homeland.' He unpacked his understanding of the complexities and multiplicities of his identity in relation to home and homeland by telling me:

> I'm an Australian national ... but I'm a Sri Lankan first. I cannot change that … But I support Australia when they beat Sri Lanka in cricket and I was the only one who did (laughs) … So it's a funny thing, you'll find different people thinking differently.

John's reflection hints at the notion of transnational identification. Certainly, Alison Blunt (2002, p. 52) suggests that 'complex mappings of home often reveal a sense of identity and belonging as simultaneously personal and transnational.' Amongst the participants in my study this has played out to the degree that only three of the

nineteen participants have not revisited their former homelands. Of those who have done so, five return regularly, some annually, and Rob and Hayley, who were both born in Australia, had each visited their respective parents' homelands once. Looking more deeply into Eurasian return journeys would be useful here and certainly something I will pursue in further research. Participants' relationships with former homelands or the homelands of parents without doubt have shaped their understandings of their identities, and extended their senses of belonging so that they do indeed experience these at both the personal and transnational levels. Within this, however, the notion of 'homeland' needs to be problematised.

As Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe (1999) has shown us, for those with mixed race identities, 'homeland' can be a difficult concept to pin down. For example, only those participants originally from Sri Lanka or Malacca (Malaysia) could identify a definite and geographically grounded homeland. Others were vague in their responses, referring either to countries of birth, where they spent significant amounts of time as children, or to other places to which they felt they had a strong sense of attachment. Anthony, for example, did not have a 'definite response' as to which country he considered to be his homeland, but he expresses his strong ties to Italy through his father, and to Singapore where he was born. Others such as Ada and Melanie, both of whom have lived in a number of countries, responded vaguely to my question about homeland, with Melanie saying, 'That's a hard one'; and Liz who was born in Singapore and lived in Malaysia, thought of Brunei as her homeland, because: 'I was four years old when we moved there, so my memory was always only of Brunei, not of Malaysia.' I find resonance in my participants' understandings of homeland as I too have difficulty in determining with any precision where this exists for me: as a child, my nationality through citizenship (British) did not match my country of birth (Brunei) nor my country of residence (Malaysia). The notions of home and homeland for Eurasians then are linked, yet problematical, and this complex of relationships and definitions stretches back to the colonial era.

'Home' in the empire

Through her extensive research on Anglo-Indians and the material cultures of imperial domesticity, Blunt identifies the home as a site of inclusion, exclusion, and contestation and therefore as a key location for theorising identity. She argues that writing the home and domesticity into grand narratives of theory, modernity, imperialism, and nationalism serves to destabilise these grand narratives by revealing their gendered

basis and internal contradictions (2002, p. 51). She cites the example of the Anglo-Indian home which often resisted community leaders' imaginings of the Anglo-Indian community as a national minority of India, by fashioning its domestic spaces - its 'Empires in the home' - as more European than Indian (*Ibid.*). Cultural nostalgia for the British Raj saw mixed race both manifest and erase itself within the Anglo-Indian community in India and in the wider diaspora (p. 64).

Throughout South and Southeast Asia, the domestic performances of the parents and grandparents of my older participants, which represented a nostalgic longing to be British or at least to attain equal status to the British, positioned the private spaces of 'Eurasian' domestic interiors firmly within the British Empire, that 'most public of realms' as Rosemary Marangoly George reminds us (1994, p. 99). For this generation of Burghers and Eurasians, their domestic spaces symbolically and materially shaped and reproduced 'the ideologies, everyday practices, and material cultures of both imperial power and nationalist resistance' (Blunt 2005b, p. 23).[29] While reproducing Britain within their homes, they both supported and resisted imperial power.

Writing in 1997, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler called for more attention to be paid to the links between colonial institutions and 'the intimate reaches of people's lives' (1997, p. xii). Similarly, Amy Kaplan (1998) argued that the relationship of domesticity to nationalism and imperialism is largely overlooked. Within the imperial project the process of domestication not only monitors the borders between the civilised and the savage, but also regulates the traces of the wild, impure, savage within. Yet, this alien/savage subject is needed as a marker from which to distinguish the civilised. Within the cultural work of domesticity Kaplan (1998, p. 582) suggests that 'a sense of the foreign is necessary to erect the boundaries that enclose the nation as home', an understanding which enables us to reread de Certeau's (1984, pp. 117-123) understanding of a practiced place as organised by the determination and definition of frontiers. This builds on Anne McClintock's (1995) argument that, in the colonial context as domestic space became racialised, colonial space became domesticated, and it was this 'cult of domesticity' that provided constant and scrupulous policing of hierarchies and boundaries (1995, p. 168).

[29] Religion did not complicate ideas of Britishness as, aside from some who remained Roman Catholic, the majority of 'Eurasians' had converted to Anglicanism/Church of England during the period of Reformation. Religion therefore helped many 'Eurasians' to more strongly align themselves with the British, and was only used to distinguish themselves from local populations.

Throughout the South and Southeast Asian colonies, Eurasian performances of a 'British' respectability occurred within this context, so that those who did not subscribe to this brand of respectability within their domestic spaces found themselves pushed further down the social hierarchy. For example, in colonial Ceylon, the Portuguese Burghers or 'mechanics', who had dark skin and were generally of a low socio-economic status, were portrayed by the Dutch, the British, *and* the Dutch Burghers, as slovenly drunkards who lacked the respectability and morals of the Dutch Burghers (see Chapter 2). Any indicator of actual respectability and high moral standards or ways of living amongst the Portuguese was simply overlooked: rather the Portuguese home and household practices were targeted, described and displayed as proofs of low moral status. Yet, while contrasting and distancing themselves from this and constantly emphasising their Dutchness, the reality of Dutch Burgher domestic customs reveals widespread and interesting multi-ethnic household arrangements that incorporated not only Portuguese (at least tangentially European) cultural influences but also locally-derived Sinhalese and Tamil practices and customs (McGilvray 1982, pp. 241-245).

In my project, participants' remembrances of homes from their pasts, whether as children or adults, reveal the frontiers and boundary structures that were integral to the layout and decoration of their dwellings, and to the practices within them. Scattered throughout their descriptions of houses in the tropics that 'were much more open and spread out' (*Corinne*), 'spacious ... [and] ... roomy' (*Lionel*), and 'open ... so that the air would flow through' (*Stan*), were descriptions of servants quarters - reminders of the status afforded to 'Eurasians' which enabled many to have Asian servants, while the servants themselves enabled the maintenance of such large dwellings. Burt described his childhood home in Singapore to me as 'Very colonial … there were big rooms ... high ceilings, a lot of fans. Because with the heat and the humidity.'

Generally, participants' homes in the tropics, whether in Southeast Asia or Sri Lanka, were more open with high ceilings and many windows. These were furnished with either wooden or *rattan* blinds and to a lesser extent fabric curtains (as these would be subject to the growth of mould). Floors were largely tiled or wooden with an absence of carpeting, and there were ceiling fans in most rooms. As with Burt's description above, houses were often described to me as being 'colonial' and some were on stilts, such as that of Liz and Patricia, or compound-style, such as that of Dianne. Participants' houses in Australia all fell into two styles: the standard double brick and tile houses prevalent

in Perth (all single storey in this study) and with all or at least some rooms carpeted; or, as with Melanie, Rob, and Dianne, older, brick houses with wooden floors, tin or tiled roofs, and heritage fixtures typical of many houses in Perth's older suburbs close to the city centre. Aside from Brooke who now resides in a high-rise flat in Dubai, Dianne was the only participant who lived in a flat. This was on the second storey of a small block of four flats converted from presumably one large heritage-style house in an inner-city suburb of Perth.

Participants' variously described their houses in Australia as either fairly similar to previous houses (particularly in terms of the use of rooms) or as very different. The latter applied particularly to those like Burt above who lived in large, colonial-style houses with servants' quarters and often with two kitchens. As Burt told me of his house in Singapore, it had 'large grounds around it', with bedrooms 'for the home help, the servants.' He went on to say that there was 'just the one kitchen', but then added 'although, there was a kitchen for the servants.' Similarly, speaking of her husband's family home, Marie said, 'we had this long passage and then servants' quarters and a huge kitchen, which was for the servants.' The additional kitchen certainly became a point of distinction between their previous houses and those in Australia.

Both Estelle and Lorraine had two kitchens in their homes in Malaysia and Sri Lanka respectively. Estelle explained that her 'dry' kitchen was used for 'roasting' and preparing 'English' food and her 'wet' kitchen was situated outside for her 'Malaysian' cooking which involved frying fish in deep oil. Aside from practical reasons of cleanliness, Estelle's two kitchens reinforced the notion of two separate and bounded cuisines, so that the very boundary between 'Asian' and 'Western' cuisines was manifest in the physical layout of her house. Whereas Estelle did most of her own cooking in Malaysia, with the help of a maid, the wet kitchen in Lorraine's childhood home in Sri Lanka was for the exclusive use of her family's 'domestics … where they did their work.' In this case, the wet kitchen did not simply mark out an Asian food space as it did for Estelle; rather it signified a border between the family and their servants, separating the activities of family life from domestic labour. None of the other participants in my study had a separate wet kitchen in their respective home countries. John implied that a separate kitchen was generally found in wealthier homes in Sri Lanka, yet they were 'very few and far between.' However, wet kitchens were abundant in the Malacca that Angela remembers and amongst those that she knows, it is a practice that has travelled to Perth, as she said:

> I know Asians here, that still when they build houses in Australia, have wet kitchens built … most Asians do that, and I mean I would love to if I could, but [my husband] won't hear of it so I've never had a wet kitchen … it would be nice, but I've learnt to live with just the one kitchen.

Their memories of space and its structures and allocations then were clear and precise: servants in my participants' homes were spatially and socially distanced from their employers by living and cooking in their own quarters and kitchens. In Joelle Bahloul's (1996, p. 51) multi-vocal domestic history of a shared Jewish and Muslim household in colonial Algeria, she found that the house functioned as a 'hierarchical system of relationships, exchanges, and obligations'. The spatial distribution of Jewish and Muslim families within the house reflected a socioeconomic and ethnic distinction, as the Jewish occupants sought to distance themselves physically from the slightly lower status Muslim occupants, and symbolically place themselves closer to the French culture of the Algerian European community (1996, pp. 25-27). For the Eurasians in my study, no matter what their original homeland, the large dwelling and the servants enabled them to perform status through their construction of allocated spaces and so to position themselves as participant in local hierarchies of class.

Further, Britishness was performed and displayed by Burghers and Eurasians in order to distance their domestic spaces and the practices within those spaces from those of their Asian neighbours. John gently reminded me of his Western upbringing in Sri Lanka by telling me that in Australia 'we are still living in the way we lived there ... We sit down at the table.' 'For every meal, we sat down ... always a proper sit down meal ... as long as I can remember as a child', he reiterated. 'Breakfast, lunch, dinner, every day and you were served by your staff.' 'The staff,' the presence of lower status Asian servants within the home, served as a marker through which 'Eurasians' could distinguish themselves as higher status British subjects (Kaplan 1998, p. 582). As an example, Liz's Dutch Burgher grandparents, who strongly aligned themselves with the British, reinforced this distinction by employing Asian servants: 'They had lots of servants ... they had everything, they had cooks, they had cleaners, they had gardeners, all were Tamils.' This distinction was further reinforced through Western dining practices, as John demonstrated, and through the separation of 'English'-food and Malaysian-food kitchens, as Estelle's memory showed. Of course, quite apart from employing a number of servants, throughout Asia to possess two kitchens implied a

certain level of wealth and status, so class could also be construed through the physical layouts of buildings.

Liz remembers that class structures were made particularly clear in one of her homes in Brunei. The set of Government flats where her family lived was made up of three buildings that formed a U-shape, and the more desirable block in the middle 'as usual would be the higher class.' British expatriate Government workers resided in this building, while Liz's father who was a Government employee as well, was assigned to live with his family in one of the less desirable flats. 'So they again differentiate with whoever is in level one, you know your job', Liz told me, and then repeated, 'As usual.' Her awareness of the spatial power relations of the set of flats reflects a resigned understanding of the in-between status of Eurasians in the social hierarchy in that place at that time: her father held a mid-level Government position because he was Eurasian, yet his status also meant that he could never advance above a certain level and that he could never live in one of the European Government flats.

Different boundaries existed in one of Angela's childhood houses in Malacca town. At one period she and her family lived in her grandfather's house, 'an old, double storey, *attap* house.'[30] An older aunt lived with them, a constant reminder that the house did not belong to them. As I discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter, Angela's mother felt uncomfortable around her in-laws because of the ways they sought to other her because of her fairer skin. The resulting tensions between Angela's mother and her in-laws played out in a number of ways, not least through the interior arrangements and decor of the house. Her mother 'could decorate it, but only to a point', as she told me:

> I remember big, huge portraits of my grandfather and my grandmother hanging in the lounge room. Couldn't be touched. Because if she moved it anywhere from where they were hanging, the in-laws would come crashing down on her, like you know, 'it's not your house! It's the family home, not yours.'

But her mother was given *some* licence to decorate the house. 'It was so ritual', Angela told me, 'every year the house would be painted for Christmas … and Mum had the choice of colours. So every year the walls would change colour, you know … from green

[30] *Attap* refers to thatched roofing made from the leaves of the *attap* or *nipa* palm that adorns many houses throughout South East Asia.

walls, to maybe yellow … she was allowed to do that … And a few things she could hang on the wall, but those two portraits couldn't be moved.' The portraits physically staked claims of ownership over the house, watching over Angela's mother so that she would never feel comfortable in that house.

Angela's mother tried to redress the power imbalance in the house with her own choice of ornamentation: 'I remember her having these Hawaiian ladies that you hang on the wall in the grass skirts. She had that, and she had African ladies hanging on the wall as well.' She described these ornaments as 'retro' and typical for the 1950s, although they could only be found in Malacca in 'this one particular shop that sold all these nice little things, ornaments from England … most of it was coming from England.' Ironically, these ornaments of Hawaiian and African ladies, visual reminders of Empire's Others, represented Britishness in the home, and not only in Angela's childhood family home. I have vivid memories of my own grandmothers' walls in Malaysia, on both my British and Eurasian sides, featuring the carved, wooden faces of African women. Angela's mother though chose not to have any Asian ornaments because, as Angela explained: 'I think in that era ... your house had to be decorated with stuff from England because it was such an "in" thing ... they couldn't kind of recognise things if they weren't British or you know, European or something.' She inherited some of her mother's British ornaments such as porcelain figurines of 'a lady and a man in crinoline skirts' and some horses. These were ubiquitous, she told me: 'All Eurasian homes in Malacca had porcelain horses ... I don't know why ... every other house, you would find these horses in the showcase. There would be horses sitting down, lying down ... British-style porcelain.'

The domestic objects in Angela's mother's story were involved in the construction of boundaries and social identities, and also in the larger narrative of fashioning 'Eurasian' houses into British home spaces, or at least what could be imagined in the heat and humidity of South and Southeast Asia as British. Drawing on Richard Wilk's (1990) analysis of consumption in Brazil, Daniel Miller suggests that people constructively imagine the kind of people they want to become through the use of commodities (Wilk cited in Miller 1995, 149). Certainly, the past homes in former homelands of the older participants in my study were filled with commodities that exemplified their parents' desire to become Westernised. Lorraine cannot remember her parents having any Asian ornaments in their home: 'They wanted to be seen as Western ... they really didn't want to be categorised as Asian or Sri Lankans.' This desire to be Western, or British, or

English as it was variously imagined, was reinforced through the purchase of British goods from shops such as *Robinsons* and *Whiteaways* and mail-order catalogues (as I discussed in the previous chapter). Lionel remembers that his parents 'always had good stuff ... good British stuff.' His mother ordered silverware, table cloths and linen from a mail-order catalogue from an British store named *Oxendales*: 'This bloody great big parcel would arrive and of course we'd stand around, and there was this Irish linen table cloths and Irish linen serviettes.'

Similarly, through her domestic objects, Liz's mother sought to distance herself from Asia. She told me that her mother 'had this phobia ... maybe because of the war with Japan, because her Mum was interned in *Changi* ... she always had a great hatred really, you could say almost, of anything Japanese. Anything Japanese-made.' Liz understands this to be the underlying reason as to why her mother and her 'whole family' were 'very British.' This Britishness played out in the home through her mother's insistent use of starched table cloths and fine silverware, and also through her display of 'European-looking' porcelain figurines. She also remembers that her grandparents 'had lots of lovely things in their homes, especially like brassware I remember.' Once a month her grandfather would 'call in all these extra workers to polish the brass', performing status through both the domestic objects and the ability to employ extra domestic labour for a task which would not necessarily have been universally described as essential.

It was common in many colonial countries for household effects and objects to be specially ordered from Britain, constructing and reinforcing the perception of quality and status associated with British goods. In effect, my participants' childhood homes represented a reversal of Edward Said's (1979) notion of Orientalism, whereby in the 'Eurasian' home, 'Europe' was imagined and constructed in 'the East.' This imagining of the West in the Eastern mind, known as Occidentalism, is a geographical construct that is not opposite to Orientalism, but has emerged from the latter. As Saree Makdisi points out, both Orientalism and Occidentalism operate on the same continuum so that one is an 'extension and necessary continuation of the other' (2014, p. 10). As such, similar stereotypes and imaginings are involved, but often still with the notion that there is an unequal relationship between the powerful West and the lesser East, and a relationship that must be contested. Therefore within this frame, we can also find Bhabha's (1994) argument that Western power was not absolute and could be resisted through mimicry (see Chapter 3). The hierarchical binary opposition of East and West that is central to both Orientalism and Occidentalism underpins this desire to resist through mimicry,

and offers an analysis, which explains Burgher and Eurasian leanings toward the British during colonial rule.

'Now that's got a story'[31]: objects, their stories and making home

Attfield (2000, p. 152) suggests that the place and space of the home is 'one of the few geographical areas over which individuals have some measure of control, however circumscribed'. When I asked participants how they had made their houses into 'homes', all referred to 'doing up' or decorating their homes, using their objects and ornaments often brought with them from their former countries, thereby exercising a measure of control over their domestic spaces: 'I made home wherever it was … I would bring my own pictures and books' (*Angela*); 'I've decorated it with all my ... a lot of my Sri Lankan ... I've got a lot of elephants and I've got a lot of batiks' (*Lorraine*); 'By filling it with lots of my junk' (*Liz*); 'Old stuff that we've had for year and years and years and years … Our photographs and furniture' (*John*). For these migrants in a foreign land then, these objects of material culture both evoke a past that is also geographically and culturally distant and craft a sense of the individual self in a new place. This suggests that the process of home decoration and the use of material objects and their link with memory is central to reconstructing and representing their Eurasian identities whilst 'making home'.

Within the study of material culture, much has been written about everyday objects and their links to people. As early as the 1970s, Mary Douglas (1979, p. xv) proclaimed 'goods are neutral, their uses are social.' Later, in the early 1980s as the field of material culture emerged, Jules David Prown (1982, p. 2) posited that just as we create material culture, so too are we shaped by the material culture around us, and just as we can use oral histories as a source for interpreting material culture, we can use artefacts to enhance or shape the telling and remembering of oral histories. When talking about their objects and the memories they evoke, the participants in my study invariably reveal how they view themselves and what aspects of themselves they choose to represent. Arjun Appadurai (1986, p. 3) expanded on this thinking with his argument that 'commodities, like persons, have social lives.' The field of material culture has continued to explore the social meaning of objects from various perspectives from the social sciences to consumption studies (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1982; Mehta and Belk 1991; Miller 2001; Richins 1994). Mehta and Belk (1991, p. 399) suggest that the possessions brought by immigrants to new countries of residence

[31] *Dianne*

resonate deeply with conceptions of self and therefore aid in the adaptation process. Similarly, adaptation and belonging are key themes in the writings of the cultural geographer Divya Tolia-Kelly. She argues that visual cultures in the home are central to constructions of identity and 'ensure a positioning of diasporic groups through their metaphorical effect, their metonymical value and their accretion of meaning' (2001, p. 51).

In line with Attfield's (2000, p. 121) argument that 'objects mediate emotions, relationships and identities' I further suggest that the personal attachments my participants have with their objects of home decoration can be read in terms of memory, emotion, and personal and collective identity. Of her home objects as a whole, Brooke told me that they: 'give me a sense of where I belong and where I come from.' She remembers the objects in her childhood home such as her mother's collection of Chinese snuff bottles, an opium pipe, *betel* nut cracker, some *wayang kulit* puppets, and framed pictures depicting Chinese and Indian landscapes. Brooke was not simply aware of these objects but also actively engaged with some of them:

> I remember the *betel* nut cracker kit made out of bronze, and the opium thing because we had to clean them as kids ... every Christmas holidays when we wouldn't have anything to do [Mum] would bring out all of her brass things and we would sit there polishing them and cleaning them for her (laughs).

This chapter therefore moves beyond commodity capitalism, to the emotional entanglements human beings (and in this case, migrants) have with their home objects. I say entanglement rather than attachment because we have a complex connection with our possessions, so that they vary in importance over our lifetimes. We also regularly (or not so regularly) engage with our home objects in ways that are performative and meaningful to us and our conceptions of who we are. For example, Melanie said of her domestic objects, primarily small Chinese blue and white vases and jars, and some wooden elephants, that they 'helped me settle in to a place whenever I moved house. I would arrange them and move them around and it would make me feel more settled.' Objects then play an important role in the reconstruction of immigrant identity because, as Mehta and Belk (1991) argue, they are attached to our sense of self – who we are, who we were and who we hope to become. This attachment becomes particularly relevant *during* periods of transition such as the migration process.

'I was trying to collect as many things that we could take with us. We were leaving for good'[32]: moving objects as anchors of identity

When Corinne migrated to Australia with her husband John, they 'left everything behind more or less', only bringing 'a few things' that they obviously deemed important. One of these 'things' was a 'whole suite of furniture' that her father gave her when she was fifteen: she expressed to me her unhappiness about her new master bedroom being too small to fit all of the suite's pieces. It is made from teak and includes a dressing table which is too large for her bedroom: 'So I must say I've accepted the bedroom, but I don't like it. Only because I miss having those things.'

In examining the domestic interiors of ex-Soviet immigrants in the United States along with their collections of 'diasporic souvenirs', Svetlana Boym (2001, p. 328) found that the stories these immigrants were telling about their home objects revealed 'more about making a home abroad than about reconstructing the original loss.' The display of objects in these immigrants' homes in New York and Boston, tells a story of what Boym (2001, p. 328) calls 'a survival in exile' rather than symbolising 'the abandoned mother country.' When speaking of their home objects my participants alluded to their importance during the migration process as these objects have become imbued with memory and therefore are involved in 'making home abroad.' Melanie's statement that 'I grew up around stuff like that', and Patricia's assertion that her objects are 'a part of me, really', and that it is important to have 'familiar things around you' after you have migrated, all speak of a search for continuity in their migratory lives that they have found in the embodied memory of their home objects. Similarly, Anthony's mother's Chinese furniture and ornaments are particularly strong carriers of memory for him as they migrated with him from Italy to Australia and now remind him of his family's flat in Rome.

The subtle relationships between their objects of home decoration and the deployment of memory allowed objects to serve a function during their migration journeys and to continue to do important identity work in their lives. Using a simple definition by Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock (1996, p. 115), 'identity work' constitutes 'anything people do, individually or collectively, to give meaning to themselves or others' and involves the use of signs, labels and definitions to evoke those meanings. For my participants, their identity work includes the process of home decoration to create and

[32] *Liz*

recreate meaning through their objects as they negotiate their Eurasian identities during the transition from previous homelands to Australia.

Image 6: Close-up of Liz's Dutch Indonesian lamp

Hester Dibbits (2009, p. 556) argues that migration causes a longing for familiarity through things 'that trigger the senses and evoke memories of the country of origin.' Estelle has a large, old wooden bed in her spare room that has been passed down through her husband's Burgher family: 'It's come with us from Malaysia … in fact we've taken it quite a bit, every home we had … when we came here in 1988, that came in our container.' The effort and expense of shipping a solid, heavy piece of furniture speaks directly to the importance of the bed's family connection to Estelle and her husband, and its link to 'home'. Similarly, Liz brought her much-loved wrought iron Dutch Indonesian lamp with her to Australia from Malaysia (see Images 6 and 7). She bought it almost 40 years ago and it has evidently grown in significance over the years: 'I've always loved that … For me it's very important that. We've moved with it for every house from [Malaysia] and that's years and years ago. I really love that lamp. That's one of my closest things actually.' She ritualistically hangs the lamp above the dining table every time she moves, often at great expense owing to its difficult electrical installation. Clearly, this lamp is of primary importance to Liz's sense of 'home' as it has acted as a highly visible constant in all of her homes and is part of her process of settling in and making 'home.'

As with many of the participants in my study, most of the ornaments in Liz's home were brought with her when she migrated to Australia. Her continued use of these familiar and loved objects, sheds light on Jean-Sebastien Marcoux's argument (2001, p. 71) that while a person's objects may become mobile as they physically move in relation to a place, those objects can represent stability to that person. The role played by 'mobile possessions in securing memory in motion' appears throughout research on migration, exile and diaspora (*Ibid.*). Mehta and Belk (1991: 400), for example, argue that geographic movement places a burden on individual possessions for anchoring identity and this is increased as the distance of the move increases. Prohibitive costs can restrict

the movement of objects over long distances, so that only the most important objects are taken (*Ibid.*). Liz's home possessions including her Dutch Indonesian lamp, Estelle's bed, and Corinne's dressing table were shipped to Australia at great cost, revealing their importance as anchors of identity for these participants. Marcoux (2001: 69) argues that the constitution of memory through displacements whether they involve life-threatening upheavals or the less dramatic circumstances within the same city gives us important insights into what people deem to be important to who they are. Liz in particular situates her Eurasianness in being Asian and this is very much reflected in the objects and ornaments in her home. She told me that in the months leading up to migration she actively sought out and bought as many beautiful Asian ornaments as she could find because she wanted to bring Asia with her: 'I was trying to collect as many things that we could take with us. We were leaving for good.'

Image 7: Liz's dining room in her Australian home in 2007

Others did not bring as many 'things' with them. For Stan, Dianne, Anthony, Melanie and Brooke, this was because they came to Australia as children. Lorraine, did not bring anything from Sri Lanka because she left during a 'very troubled time', although she did inherit objects from her family home such as some family portraits, a coconut scraper and a grinder for spices: reminders of her family and her childhood home, but also of Sri Lanka. These are quite distinct from the more generic 'Asian' ornaments described

above: specific aspects or attributes of former homelands, or as Divya Tolia-Kelly (2001, p. 51) puts it, 'remembered landscapes', are often visible in participants' homes in Perth. For example, Sri Lanka was specifically remembered throughout John and Corinne's home, in their framed pictures, and particularly in one painting of their life on a tea estate in Sri Lanka that is imbued with memory and visually interacted with regularly. 'We look at that picture as we enter the house', John told me, 'Those were seven very happy years of my life. The children are in it.' Every time they re-enter their physical house, the painting reminds them that this is home, by drawing on the memory of a past home and through the representation of their daughters.

Similarly, Malacca was on display in Dianne and Angela's homes, again through framed pictures as well as books, furniture and ornaments, so that as Angela told me: 'If you go to my lounge room you will find I have lots of Malacca stuff there.' She told me that she has made her Australian house into a home by 'bringing part of my Malacca culture. I have lots and lots of books and you know, photos and stuff of Malacca. And the Asian stuff I like.' These Asian 'things' and in particular, things from or about Malacca, have travelled with her from country to country and helped her to create a sense of home in each house. As she told me:

> I made home wherever it was, it would be. I would bring my own pictures and books ... Even the three years in Singapore, we tried very hard, because we didn't take anything with us there ... it's not a home if there are no pictures on the walls, and you know if there's no little books … I picked up quite a lot of books in Singapore on Asian stuff, all Asian books. And I was like a fanatic, anything that was written about Malacca, I would be out there getting stuff.

The remembered landscape of Malacca was initially not at all visible in Dianne's home. She had very few Asian objects in general. Some satin Chinese-patterned cushions that she had bought from Kuala Lumpur and Singapore were tossed amongst some faux-fur cushions. 'It's a bit modern but then you have the Asian Oriental themes coming through', she explained. I walked around her house with her as she pointed at the objects that represented her Eurasianness, such as a wooden ornament on her mantelpiece of which she laughingly said: 'See the elephant up there? Gotta have an elephant!' In her bedroom she showed me small pictures of Mother Mary and the Sacred Heart on her walls saying: 'that's the Eurasian side of me coming out'. Also in her bedroom were many pieces of heavy, dark wooden furniture, which she again

attributed to her background: 'That's why I like that, because my grandfather had a big, antique looking chest of drawers.' For Dianne, the subtle deployment of memory is how she approaches representing herself throughout her home. While deliberate in some of her object choices like the cushions and elephants, she also acknowledged being subconsciously drawn to certain objects based on memories they triggered for her, and these centred around the memory of Malacca.

On her coffee table she pointed out a cream-coloured rectangular ceramic dish that was in vogue in home decoration stores at the time. A lacy pattern ran around its edges and a white scented candle and three white scented paper blossoms sat on it. 'Like these things. These remind me of my grandma and her embroidery.' She said 'a lot of the Eurasian houses have white lacy [curtains]. I don't want to have that because it looks yucky, but I'll have other bits of it.' Dianne pointed out all the other things that replicated this lacy pattern including a black and white picture on the wall and some glass tea light holders with a black lacy pattern etched on to them: 'I really relate to these … very ornate, you know the *kebaya*[33], all the lace.' The scented paper blossoms on the ceramic dish also remind her of the flowers her grandmother and other Eurasian women wore in their hair. These objects act as metonymical symbols of both her grandmother and the larger Malaccan Eurasian culture that she grew up in (Tolia-Kelly 2001, p. 51).

The symbol of her grandmother could again be found in her kitchen cupboards. Amongst the stark, white porcelain pieces of her angular, modern crockery set, and with a degree of embarrassment, she pointed out four chintz (floral patterned) tea cups in pastel colours. She told me of how she was compelled to buy them when she saw them because they reminded her of her grandmother's tea set. As a child she would have afternoon tea and curry puffs with her grandmother in Malacca. Today, as a fairly regular ritual, Dianne sits sipping her tea from one of her chintz tea cups while eating curry puffs. Through this story she moves beyond the issue of consumption (the buying of her chintz tea cups) to include a very personal account in which she incorporates her memories of her grandmother and growing up in Malacca into her post-migration home.

Malacca is visible throughout her home, always subtly. On her kitchen wall she has a framed print of the Portuguese fort in Malacca and in her bedroom drawers she keeps a

[33] The *sarong kebaya* is a form of dress worn by women in Indonesia and Malaysia. See Chapter 5.

packet of some Portuguese coins bought as souvenirs during a trip back to Malacca: 'I'll frame it. Because I'm really proud of them, you know … because I grew up there … so to have that is like oh, a bit of a piece of my past.' Dianne's home making through her possessions exemplifies Toli-Kelly's (2006) metaphor of a cultural landscape, which re-presents the experience, memory or culture of a place/homeland in the visual textures of the home. By solidifying 'cultural memories of place in representational form and in material textures' (2006, p. 343), Dianne re-presents through a culture of landscape and through the 'performative displays and domestic rituals' (Dibbits 2009, p. 556) much of the experience, memory and culture of Malacca in her home objects.

Cultural and textural landscapes were also evident in Brooke's Australian home in which she had a picture of frangipanis on her bedroom wall. She explained: 'I like frangipanis. When I was staying in Singapore they became my favourite flower. I had frangipanis on my wedding cake and I just like the look of them because they remind me of the tropics.' Frangipanis also resonate with Lorraine who has a painting of the flowers on her dining room wall. She explained that they were painted by an Australian artist and she bought them 'because they are reflective flowers that I associate with being Sri Lankan.' It is clear then that the participants in my study use the relationship between memory and place in their imaginings of home in Australia, exemplified by Liz when she said: 'I just love all my little bits and pieces, tonnes of mementos … I always remember who gave it, and where I bought it from, or it reminds me of the parts of the world that we came from.'

In my own negotiations with identity, home and objects, I live with fewer direct reminders of my Eurasian self. Yet I have five shards of sea pottery (some of which are blue and white) that are particularly important to me because of the sense they give me of being directly related to my Eurasian identity (see Image 6). I found them whilst walking along Leighton Beach near Fremantle on the Western Australian coast around ten years ago. Sea pottery washes up onto beaches all around the world from different times and places, but the old, worn smoothness of my shards, evoked in my mind another time when traders and conquerors sailed between interconnected nodes of Empire, creating networks of people and knowledge.[34] As Fernando Rosa Ribeiro (2007) reminds us, creolisation processes (which include miscegenation) have always occurred throughout the history of the globe, and particularly in the Indian Ocean with

[34] Shards of sea pottery, also known as sea porcelain or beach china, often are the remnants of cargoes of export china that were frequently used as ballast in colonial sailing ships.

its complex trade networks. So regardless of the actual origin of my shards of sea pottery, for me, they are evidence of these 'ancient Indian Ocean patterns' (2007, p. 33) and by extension, I have the feeling that they represent my mixed race ancestry.

Image 8: My shards of sea pottery

Rosa Ribeiro suggests that these ocean-oriented patterns of creolisation and interconnections across the globe have largely been overlooked due to the dominance of nation-centred historiographies (*Ibid.*). This, along with my sea pottery, reminds me of the centrality of ocean stories to the history of the nations that surround them, as well as to my own story. The European seafarers in my ancestry sailed across and around the edges of the Indian Ocean to their tropical colonies where they met my Asian ancestors, and where 'Eurasians' were born. Today, the Indian Ocean is what connects my home in Australia to my previous home in Malaysia and to one of my ancestral homes, Sri Lanka. Although I have only come slowly to understand this interconnectedness, even then I was happy to discover these little shards in the sand that the Indian Ocean had offered up to me on that day, imagining them to be legacies of Empire, and precious and connected to me in some way. Two of the shards have blue and white patterns on them, which pulls to my mind the blue and white china that my mother and many of my participants have in their homes: the blue and white ceramics represent the shift from British to more Asian-oriented homes that many of my participants have made in their new homeland.

Certainly, the younger participants (from 18 to 37 years) in my study recall growing up in houses in which Western and Asian cultural practices were mixed, and which leaned towards more Asian-styled decoration. Brooke, for example, prefers 'the Asian style of ornaments' because her mother had 'lots of ornaments, Asian ornaments' in her houses in both Malaysia and Australia. Similarly, Melanie said of her mother's blue and white china ornaments: 'It's just become almost symbolic of my childhood, and of my Mum and of who I am, and my Eurasian background and things like that.'

Image 9: Blue and white ceramic pieces from Liz's family room

Chinese 'blue and whites' featured prominently in the homes of eight participants, and four others had at least one or two pieces in their homes (similar to Liz's pieces in Image 9). The significance of the blue and white Chinese export ceramic ware known as *kraakporselein* or *carrack* porcelain, lies in its capacity to represent the hybrid cultural exchanges that occurred back and forth between China and Europe and beyond from the fifteenth century onwards. As Robert Finlay (1998, p. 143) points out, for over a millennium Chinese ceramic ware 'was the most universally admired and most widely imitated product in the world', influencing ceramic traditions around the world, even supplanting some local traditions and forms in Southeast Asia and coastal East Africa. The ceramic ware, named after the Portuguese cargo ships (*carracks*) which transported the pieces from Macao to Europe, had been in limited circulation from before the 15th century when it was an 'exotic, enviable rarity' (Le Corbeiller 1968, p. 269) in most of Europe. However pieces of *kraakporselein* became more accessible, and achieved new popularity after the Dutch captured the Portuguese carrack *Catharina* in 1604, taking home 100,000 pieces of the *kraakporselein* and sparking an increase in imports as well as a domestic industry of imitation in the Netherlands in order to meet European demands (*Ibid.*). Dutch artisans in Delft copied and adapted the style so that 'Chinese-style', or *chinoiserie*, designs came to satisfy the 'Western mania' for Chinese porcelain (Finlay 1998, pp. 168 & 183; Tong 2009).

As a result, the origin of the designs on the *kraakporselein* pieces is not always easy to determine. Some of my participants such as Melanie, Angela, Patricia and Liz, however, make their own decisions and definitions about the distinctions between styles by preferring to choose only the Asian-looking designs (regardless of where these were actually produced). For Liz, even if a piece was aesthetically pleasing, she would not choose it if it looked to be Dutch in design: 'Because I grew up in Asia. I feel more comfortable with the Asian side of things.' Finlay (1998, p. 183) argues that the *chinoiserie* designs on blue and white porcelain represent cultural encounters that resulted in 'a creative imagining of China', which he argues was essentially 'a way of assimilating and domesticating it'. Dutch renditions of Chinese porcelain were reductive and stereotypical so that the complexities of Chinese visual culture,

particularly in regard to figures and landscapes, were rendered 'picturesque and accessible rather than potent and enigmatic' (*Ibid.*). Arguably, in these renditions, as 'the lotus retreated from Buddhism, the peony lost its sexual charge' and 'Confucians turned into quaint mandarins, [and] Daoists became affable gentlemen' (*Ibid.*), Eastern porcelain became 'safe' for Western consumption. This takes on a particular relevance when thinking of colonial homes, in that home objects replicated the safety of Empire within their walls; a symbolic protection from the dangers of 'the tropics', which as David Pomfret (2009, p. 315) suggests, was 'a zone associated with the endangerment of white populations.' While the Orient was in high demand throughout Europe for its exoticism, that exoticism was nonetheless tamed for European sensibilities so that often only the feel or the idea remained.

In Sarah Cheang's (2008, p. 244) study of the meanings behind the use of Chinese embroideries in British domestic displays between 1860 and 1949, she found that Chinese and Japanese textiles were often used interchangeably within a nostalgic notion of the 'East' that incorporated narratives of Empire, nation, gender and class. Thus, the 'multivalent material experiences of the idea of China' could easily be manipulated to fit into British domestic spaces (Cheang 2008, p. 244). Likewise, many of my participants incorporated this notion of the 'East' within their homes, interchanging ornaments, textiles and furniture from different Asian countries regardless of whether they had any claim to ancestry from these countries. Tong (2009, p. 600) points out that because of its popularity in 18th and 19th century Britain, *chinoiserie* porcelain became troped *as* China so that the small 'c' in china became capitalised and Chinese-style porcelain became synonymous with the country regardless of its origin. Further, Clare Le Corbeiller (1968, p. 270) argued that the cross-cultural translation of the Dutch artisans emulated the 'feel' of Chinese porcelain rather than trying to be stylistically 'correct.'

Arguably then, for participants such as Melanie, Angela, Patricia and Liz, their ornaments act as metonymical symbols of 'Asia' (Tolia-Kelly 2001, p. 51; Barrett 2010, p. 111). In her studies of the use of memory within British Asian homes Divya Tolia-Kelly (2004a, p. 319) argues that the textures of an object contain 'a set of relationships between biographical and national and/or cultural identifications.' The insistence on Asian blue and white china by these participants, signifies what Tolia-Kelly (2001, p. 51) terms 'remembered landscapes', whereby the 'colour, texture or icons within visual forms can refract memories of the experience of a different continent, a journey or

simply a moment.' This is evident in Liz's desire for her home when she said 'I just want that feeling of Asia.' She later reflected on this when talking about the lamp hanging above her dining table (see Image 7):

> Isn't that funny though? ... That's a Dutch Indonesian lamp. And yet I love that … you see I've got a lot of Asian table lamps. Maybe if I could find an Asian looking hanging light I would have got it, but because this was the closest thing … because of the Indonesian influence, that's why.

'I've got a craze for things Chinese'[35]: 'Asia' enters the house

The 'feel' of 'Asia' was again evident in participants' descriptions of their home decoration as 'Oriental.' Anthony, who lives with his parents in their home, described his mother's decoration and furniture as Oriental in style; while Dianne, who was in the process of moving to a new house at the time of her interview, told me of her plans to include indoors a Buddha statue that sat outside the front door of her apartment: 'so the Oriental theme is still going to be there but it will be in the family area.' Of her home decoration Corinne told me that she tends to 'lean slightly towards the Oriental look', and Angela declared that she had 'a lot of Oriental stuff' in her lounge room: 'I kind of like the Oriental look of things … Most of my Asian ornaments came from Asia, only bought a few things from here.' She showed me a lamp from Vietnam and a Buddha from Singapore both of which were displayed on a credenza in her dining room. Next to those was a Japanese teapot, which she bought here in Perth: 'I found it here, it was one of those strange things, when I saw it in the antique shop I said "oh I love it." I love how Oriental it is.' She used to have a large teapot collection, which she eventually had to reduce in size when she moved house, however she 'managed to keep the more Oriental ones.' She pointed at one sitting atop her refrigerator in her kitchen, which was given to her by her mother's Chinese godson 'because he knew I liked Oriental stuff.'

Angela's home was full of items that she described as 'Oriental things.' There were 'Oriental baskets … you know the Chinese cake baskets?' and two 'Oriental' side tables that she made from old *mahjong*[36] tiles and which a relative had fitted with 'Oriental looking legs.' She also spoke of having Dutch Indonesian lamps which she could not hang in her current house because the ceilings are not high enough, an embroidered 'Oriental' shawl from Indonesia which she 'must find a place to hang', and a carved

[35] *Patricia*

[36] A Chinese game involving up to four players and using a set of 136 small tiles illustrated with Chinese symbols and characters.

wooden phoenix table lamp which she had no room for in her house. Patricia's home was also filled with Asian ornaments and she reflected on her relationship with these:

> With all the ornaments … it means a lot to me … I don't know, it makes me feel at home. You know, surrounded with all these things … The beauty maybe also, yeah I just love looking at everything. I'll be sitting there, and just taking everything in … being surrounded with all my things.

Patricia's appreciation of the aesthetics of her ornaments, which include a multitude of blue and white porcelain ginger jars, ceramic figures of Chinese fishermen, jade dragons, ivory statues, Chinese snuff bottles, lacquered boxes, and intricately carved rosewood nested tables, evoke a Victorian-era Orientalism with its desire for China. Interestingly, the desire for the Chinese Ming and Qing dynasty aesthetic symbiotically promoted and was promoted by the rise in popularity of tea drinking during the Victorian era as blue and white porcelain tableware beautified the experience of taking tea (Finlay 1998, p. 169; Tong 2009, p. 600). It is this beauty that Patricia values, so that even when living in Italy, her house 'was so full of Chinese things.'

Liz, who has a 'desire for the blue and whites', also has an aesthetic appreciation of 'the beauty' of her ornaments, so that within the trope of 'Asia', she loves 'anything that's sort of beautiful', 'rare' and of 'good quality.' As she walked around her house, she pointed out a rosewood chess table and a blue and white porcelain Chinese pillow, both of which she described as 'unusual' and 'unique', and adding of the chess table: 'Do you know you cannot get that? That is a very unique piece. You cannot get a rosewood chess table … I've never seen.' The beauty and rarity of Liz's ornaments reflect her desire for her home to different from the 'average Australian' home. As she told me: 'I find most Australian homes the most boring places to go in to, apart from Aussies that obviously appreciate … Asiany things or whatever.' Her love of 'rare' ornaments also reflects a desire to exoticise herself: 'I want to be different. I hate being the same.'

Certainly, the 'Oriental' styling of participants' homes is understood by them to be a point of distinction in Australia. For example, Anthony did not think his home was much different from 'average Australian' homes 'except for the use of Chinese furniture [and] ornaments.' Similarly, Angela told me that the 'few' Australian homes that she had been to were more in the 'standard British style', which is different to the Asian homes she knows: '[T]he whole atmosphere of the home … it may be the same house, but the

décor would be quite different.' Indeed, most of my participants believed their homes to be different from the 'average Australian' homes only in regard to their Asian-oriented decoration, so that Hayley said of her mother's home decoration: 'I reckon this is very unusual.' Certainly, the use of the term Oriental, with its associated Western Orientalist discourse, represents an internalised self-Orientalisation so that my participants' were essentially and often purposefully complicit in their own exoticisation (Iwabuchi 1994). As Brooke said, 'In Australia when you go out, everything's the same, so you have to bring something different into your home to reflect your differences.' This speaks to a politics of identity that both challenges and reinforces Said's Orientalism, so that arguably East and West are both constructed by 'Eurasians', yet both remain in binary opposition, evident in Dianne's declaration about her home objects: 'Anything that's like East meets West, I love that', and in Melanie's desire for her 'Asian side to be expressed here' in her house, saying: 'I don't want people to not know about it.'

Others were not so purposeful in their self-Orientalisation, yet it was still visible. Within Patricia's understanding of her preference for Chinese ornaments and furniture, she recognises her appropriation of China and finds this both amusing and inexplicable: 'I've got a craze for things Chinese! (laughs) I don't know why. Not because I came from there.'

Yan and Almeida Santos (2009, p. 297-298) argue that self-Orientalism is a reconfiguration and an extension of Said's Orientalism, so that the Other is involved in the construction, reinforcement and circulation of the Orient through an internalisation of Western Orientalist knowledge, which in itself constructs the West. In short, both East and West are complicit in each other's constructions. Rather than seeing self-Orientalisation as a wholly negative form of domination, Bhabha (1994) sees this as a form of agency for the Other. Zhang (2006) expands on this by arguing that self-Orientalism is useful for the once colonised in creating a useful and different identity. The self-Orientalisation evident in many of my participants' home objects, reveal that Eurasian identities have shifted away from England/Britain and towards Asia, but also that this reveals a confidence and lack of shame that their parents or grandparents arguably had about being 'Eurasian.'

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined how the participants in my study, most of whom have hybridised identities as a result of migration, have created a sense of 'home' in Australia, specifically within domestic spaces. By drawing on Walsh's (2001, p. 516) argument that 'home' is a process that involves continual home-making practices, I examined how participants (re)create and maintain their Eurasianness within the physical spaces of their houses. Memory, nostalgia, emotional attachments, belonging, identity, and class, all become intertwined with the architecture and textures of houses, past and present, and the practices and objects within them. In turn, this process shapes and is shaped by ideas of home and homeland so that, as Blunt (2002, p. 52) suggests, senses of identity and belonging are simultaneously personal and transnational. This was best expressed by John, for whom home is where he is 'comfortable, happy, contented', when he told me that 'life is nothing without your [home] ... this is your root really in the end. Which country where you have lived, this is your root. And your personality and everything else.'

John reminds us of the link between our houses and our identities. Indeed, a central focus of this chapter was based on the premise that identity is often expressed in domestic interiors and through the objects we choose to display within them. During my fieldwork it quickly became evident that domestic objects were central to many of the processes of (re)making home in Australia embarked on by my participants. When speaking of their home objects during the interviews, my participants alluded to their importance in the migration and home-making processes. The subtle relationships between their objects of home decoration and the deployment of memory allowed objects to serve a function during their migration journeys, as anchors of memory, and continue to do important identity work in their lives, particularly by nostalgically recalling former homelands through Tolia-Kelly's (2001, p. 51) notion of remembered landscapes. Importantly, memory and the process of home decoration allowed participants to negotiate their Eurasian identities during the transition from previous homelands to Australia, as well as the transition from childhood to adulthood which was marked by a shift from European-styled homes to more hybridised dwellings with Asian-orientated decoration.

Certainly, many of my older participants described their childhood homes in Asia as being very 'British' or 'English' in decoration and custom. These same participants find that they now show a preference for 'Asian' things as they have come to embrace their

Asianness over their lifetimes. While this places my participants at the forefront of a growing desire for 'oriental' home furnishings in Australia in the last few decades (see Thomas 2000), this goes beyond fashion trends to their underlying understandings of being Eurasian, which again are situated along a 'Western'/'Asian' continuum. It also speaks of a relaxing of the rigid class structures that many participants experienced in their childhood homelands, which were connected to whiteness and status. Arguably, where it was once a social imperative for Eurasians to align themselves as British or more specifically English, today in Australia the participants in my study are free to perform their Asianness throughout their homes as well.[37]

[37] Whilst the focus of this thesis has been on performing 'Asianness' within the home, it would be an interesting area for further research to examine performances of 'Asianness' in other contexts outside the home.

CHAPTER 5

'The older ones wore the *sarong kebaya* but the younger ones wore Western dress'[38]: constructing the sartorial boundaries of Eurasianness.

> If I found something with a batik pattern or something, then I'd try and wear that, but in the Western style.
>
> Melanie

> Very casual … Western clothes. Except for my sarong of course … to sleep … My old man used to use a sarong and I think all his brothers and my uncles and aunts used to use sarongs.
>
> Burt

'We don't have a *sari*, we don't have a *sarong*'[39]

When Liz was growing up in Brunei in the early 1970s she entered modelling competitions organised by 'the expensive boutique, the one and only European-operated boutique … *The Square Peg*,' in Brunei's capital city, Bandar Seri Begawan. Her parents were both Malayan-born Dutch Burghers and she grew up in very British-oriented households in both Brunei and Malaysia. Liz and her siblings primarily identified as Eurasian and, in addition to Eurasian, her parents' generation would occasionally identify as 'Ceylonese Dutch Burghers.' Because of the shape of her eyes and height (5 feet, 7 ½ inches) her self-perception was that she had 'a European body ... [and] ... more European [than Asian] looks' and, moreover, 'I bought all the European clothes from The Square Peg … they were happy to take willingly money from me.' Yet 'when it came time for me to model, they didn't want me to model for them' she said. The organisers of the modelling competition had categorised her quite differently from the way in which she saw herself: 'They brought in all these so-called European girls that were over on holiday time visiting their parents.'

But for Liz her appearance, her taste in clothes, and her sense of self were European: 'I was so different, you know like compared to the Asian look and whatever.' Suddenly her internalised identity was challenged in a way that she felt was stigmatising and hurtful. '[T]hey automatically said I was Asian and I had to go in to the Asian side of the

[38] *Angela*
[39] *Liz*

modelling to get all the clothes, which I hated … just not my taste.' She felt rejected by a group of which, because of her European ancestry, she believed herself to be a member, and was forced to acknowledge that her internalised understanding of her identity (through which she sees herself as having a claim to Europeanness) was incongruent with an externally imposed identity, an incongruity ironically imposed by a boutique which called itself *The Square Peg*.

The organisers of an event that was divided along racial lines dealt with her Eurasian ambiguity by defining her as 'Asian' despite her European features and her height, which at times had made her feel 'gawky', 'out of place' and highly visible: 'My sister and I would walk on the street and you know there would always be these remarks about how tall we were.' Liz remembers Malay men would 'say "*panjang*" [tall] when they walked past' in a derogatory or sexualised way. She and her sister often felt fetishized because of their European looks and height and Malay men would often try touching them on the street. In her own words she would 'tower above' the other Asian models visually marking her out as neither European, nor Asian. Further, the quality and style of the clothes at the competition sartorially marked out the boundary between the European and Asian models, and Liz was made to wear what she saw as inferior clothing: '… [I]n everyday life I wore good clothes that came from that boutique. You know what I mean? And then suddenly I had to switch ... I was automatically slotted in to the other.'

This story exemplifies the cultural significance of clothing that goes beyond function and fashion cycles. Phyllis M. Martin (1994, p. 407) argues that clothing is the most 'highly visible and easily movable' of all our material possessions. Its materiality means that 'like food, cloth can be shaped by our touch; like jewellery, it endures beyond the immediate moment of consumption' (Stallybrass 1999, p. 29). For Peter Stallybrass (1999, p. 31), clothing has much to say - the materiality of clothing is 'richly absorbent of symbolic meaning' and this is where 'memories and social relations are literally embodied.' Similarly, Herman Roodenburg draws on Joanne Entwistle (2000) to point out that dress is a situated bodily practice and can therefore be read as a text or sign (Entwistle cited in Roodenburg 2007, p. 248). Indeed, as Joanne B. Eicher (1995) points out, dress is 'a coded sensory system of non-verbal communication' that contributes to and shapes human interaction, varying over time and space. Importantly, because dress is visible, it communicates identity before actual dialogue in any social encounter (Roach-Higgins and Eicher 1992, p. 5). Rather than simply and passively conveying

gendered, political and social meanings, dress is often an active agent involved in the creation and performance of cultural identities (Roodenburg 2007, p. 248) so that wearing certain clothing tells others what and who we are, as Mary Douglas (1979) said so succinctly.

For thousands of years in every culture modes of dress have been used to indicate royalty and rank, status, class, values, gender and more recently to communicate ethnicity (Lurie 1981, p. 115; Martin 1994, p. 401; Eicher 1995). At its most basic level, dress makes the statement of 'this is who I am' (Ross 2008, p. 7), but at a deeper level clothing and modes of dress have the power to construct and maintain social boundaries. From the colonial era where clothing was used politically to provide distance between coloniser and colonised, to the present day where clothing can be deployed as a marker of ethnic difference, modes of dress have been involved in the practices of boundary creation and maintenance (Manzo 1996, p. 3). In this chapter I am concerned with dress as a coded system of exclusion and inclusion through an examination of 'the structures of meaning which are given to dress codes' (Ross 2008, p. 5) by my participants. I draw on Ross's distinctions between 'clothing' which denotes items of apparel; 'dress' as clothing as well as accessories including jewellery and shoes, and body modifications such as hair styling, tattooing and piercing; and 'costume' as dress that is worn specifically to denote a particular identity (p. 6).

The continued globalisation of fashion has seen the emergence of the term 'Western' as a category of dress, the most prolific outfit being the ubiquitous suit and tie. Western dress, which in reality denotes a range of Euro-American styles, is arguably the most successful export from the West to the rest of the world (Ross 2008, p. 3). Significantly, its ubiquity means that it is imagined as a normative category against which to describe 'traditional' or 'ethnic' clothing. Eicher (1995) argues that much of the scholarship concerning 'Western' dress was analysed from the perspective of Western civilisation with little regard given to the rest of the world, thereby creating the implication that non-Western dress (anything that falls outside the boundary of Western civilisation) has remained largely unchanged and is therefore 'traditional'. She argues that the adoption of Western dress by millions of people around the world has rendered it redundant as a category, preferring to see all dress as cosmopolitan (1995).

Despite this, the term Western persists as a meaningful category amongst my participants, and the pervasiveness of Western dress over time and space has seen it

remain as the primary descriptor of their clothing. I therefore use the term Western in this chapter so as to continue privileging the voices of my participants, while remaining aware and acknowledging that this contributes to the Western/traditional binary. Specifically, I argue that my participants use dress to denote ethnic self-identity while at the same time creating and crossing boundaries between perceptions of authentic/traditional and Western clothing. The distinctions associated with clothing were more significant for the women in my study, however, despite clothing distinctions being less influential for the men, all of the participants in my study set 'Western' clothing in binary opposition to various 'traditional' 'Asian' clothing styles, a distinction that began with colonial contact.

The politics of dress

According to Martin (1994, p. 406), colonial rulers throughout the various European empires drew 'an imaginary line in matters of dress based on their perceptions of the natural and colonial order.' Dutch and British colonials in India and Indonesia initially adopted the social mores and clothing of local populations, however as colonies became further established, pressure from the metropole required colonists to conform to European customs and dress as a way to distinguish themselves from local populations and mixed offspring (Ross 2008, p. 9; Caplan 2001). Clothing therefore was an important tool in creating 'distinctions of difference' that maintained the 'neat boundaries of colonial rule' (Stoler 1997, p. 198) and reinforcing the social positioning of colonised subjects within the colonial hierarchy (Martin 1994, p. 406). However this was not a static system, but rather a continued negotiation between the colonial order and colonised peoples. Eurasians, as people of mixed heritage, threatened those neat boundaries by their very presence (see Chapter 2), but they also did this through dress. By wearing Western clothes as a statement of alignment with the European colonisers they would distinguish themselves from Indigenous populations. It therefore represented social upliftment and increased, yet not equal, status: the use of European clothing along with skin colour visually positioned those of mixed heritage in the borderzone between Europeans and Indigenous peoples.

Writing of the sociocultural and political implications of dress amongst the Anglo-Indians in Madras (an ethnic group with a similar colonial heritage to the Burghers of Sri Lanka), Lionel Caplan (2001, p. 198) found that modes of dress were 'crucial indicators of group affiliation', used to set themselves apart from the larger Indian population. As with the Burghers of British Ceylon, Anglo-Indians during the colonial

period, rejected Indian dress such as *dhotis*[40], *sarongs*[41] and sandals in favour of 'British' clothing that constituted trousers, shirt, jacket, tie and shoes, with Western suits for more formal occasions. To be clothed in anything less than British attire was regarded by Anglo-Indians to be inappropriate and improper; importantly, British attire signified an allegiance with the British. However, despite attempts at close association, Anglo-Indians could never achieve equal status and were often ridiculed by the British for their overzealous adoption of European dress at inappropriate times and places (*Ibid.*). According to Caplan, jokes about the Anglo-Indians wearing the *topi* or pith hat in the wrong contexts was a popular way for the British to 'maintain sartorial and social distinctiveness' (p. 199) over who they saw as their lesser counterparts. This demonstrates the symbolic importance of dress in mediating and negotiating social relationships, with boundaries being both drawn and contested (Martin 1994, p. 401).

The situation was much the same in British Ceylon where the Burghers were imagined as inferior by the British. In the earliest account of Ceylonese people from the British period, Captain Percival portrayed the Dutch Burghers as having adopted the 'listless habits of the country' which included lounging around smoking in 'a loose robe and night cap' for most of the morning (Percival, quoted in Ferdinands 1995, p. 42). He was more disparaging of the Dutch Burgher women, describing their dress as 'particularly slovenly' before midday: 'I have seen many in the mornings with only a petticoat and a loose gown or jacket with their hair rolled up in a knot and without shoes or stockings and yet these women at evening parties appear dressed out in an abundance of finery' (Percival, quoted in Ferdinands 1995, p. 42). Alison Lurie (1981, p. 116) explains that by the eighteenth century to 'dress above one's station' was frowned upon as a foolish extravagance amongst Europeans themselves. Arguably, the British colonials extended this view so that any attempt by those of mixed heritage to dress in European finery was ridiculed as evidence of their passionate, excessive natures. Percival again alludes to the excesses of Dutch Burgher women who 'keep their hair constantly moist with coconut oil' in contrast to the more delicate sensibilities of European women: 'The odour of the coconut oil, joined to the perfumes of the jasmine wreaths, quite overpowers the senses of an European and renders the approach of these women disgusting' (Percival, quoted in Ferdinands 1995, p. 42).

[40] A knotted skirt-like cloth worn around the legs and waist by men throughout the countries of the sub-continent.
[41] Another skirt-like cloth wrapped around the waist and worn by men throughout Asia and some parts of Africa and the Middle East.

As discussed in previous chapters, distinctions were also made within the Burgher ethnic group (see Chapters 2 and 3). According to McGilvray (1982, p. 245) the Dutch Burghers sought to distance themselves from those with Portuguese ancestry, as the latter were subject to British prejudice associated with miscegenation. Against the Dutch Burgher respectability, the Portuguese Burghers were imagined by the British as inferior to both European and Asian 'races', displaying all the worst effects of miscegenation such as darker skin, indolence and untrustworthiness. Furthermore, cultural aspects of their Portuguese forbears were disdainfully used by the Dutch Burghers to stereotype them as proud and aggressive with high libidos, and their love of music, revelry and bright costumes were used as proof of their excessive pride and lack of a Victorian respectability.

Despite these attempts at social distancing, the adoption of European dress by those of mixed descent persisted as a way to visually express Europeanness, regardless of whether or not they gained acceptance or respect. In colonial Malaya, the Portuguese Eurasians of Malacca were described by John Cameron (1865, p. 374) as having 'so intermarried with the Malays and other native people that they would now with great difficulty be distinguished from them, if it were not that, with a strange remnant of ancestral pride, they rigidly adhere to the European style of dress.' According to Cameron, the Portuguese Eurasians persisted in wearing the black bell-topped hats of their Portuguese forefathers regardless of their 'napless and dinged' appearance (*Ibid.*). This persistence was also seen in the wearing of woollen European clothes in the tropics. Lionel showed me his family photo album with pictures of his parents and grandparents, all of whom were wearing woollen suits. 'They're used to it you see', he told me. 'Likewise the Eurasians or the Burghers or the Anglo-Indians or the Europeans of old in old Malaya, were used to wearing woollen clothing.' A similar story is found within my family history where Western dress was adhered to even in the tropical heat.

Sartorial distinctions

In 1905, my great-grandfather and his family posed for his sister Hazel's wedding portrait (Image 10 below). There is a lack of familial warmth in this photograph, and even though it was taken to commemorate a wedding day, no one is smiling. This type of performance of the significant family occasion is not uncommon in early 20th century wedding photography throughout the Western world, as members of a newly-combined family adopted suitably sombre expressions and were bound together in staged, static images that preserved an official or formal history yet left their actual

stories hidden outside the frame (Poister 2001, p. 50). Marianne Hirsch (1997, p. 8) reminds us that the photograph has the ability to tap into both a narrative and imaginary power. She argues that family photographs, which are visual texts that can be read as narratives, exist in the contradictory space between the mythologised ideal and the actual reality of family life. They therefore inform and shape the existence of a 'familial mythology, of an image to live up to', and underlying this, the desires of those within the photograph (*Ibid.* and Poister, 2001, p. 50). In my family photograph from 1905, the narrative power of both photography and clothing come together to create an image of what it was my family members desired.

Image 10: The wedding of Hazel Florence Thomasz and Victor Jurin de Zilwa, Colombo, Sri Lanka. June 22nd, 1905[42]

The bride and groom do not take centre stage; rather they sit to the side of the bride's father and stepmother/aunt, revealing the power relations in this family. Perhaps my great-great-grandfather was declaring himself as the family patriarch, or maybe he had paid for the wedding and therefore believed himself most worthy of sitting in the centre.

[42] My great grandfather Cecil Owen Jumeaux Thomasz is the second man in the top row. His father, Owen Charles Albert Thomasz is the man seated in the middle of the centre row next to his second wife Evelyn Harriet Alexandra Thomasz (nee Ebert). Evelyn was the sister of his first wife, my great great grandmother Alice Rosaline Ebert. The bride and groom Hazel and Victor are seated on the right in the middle row.

The photograph reveals a cultural anxiety to appear respectable, to appear British (see Chapter 3). Family members pose rigidly and there is a symmetrical balance to the image: the entire middle row constitutes married couples; those at the back were unmarried at the time and include the bridesmaids and groomsman, while children sit on the ground at the front on mats to protect their white clothing from dirt. They are presumably posed in front of the entrance to the Thomasz family home, which appears to be large and solid. Interestingly, the children on the bottom row seem to be arranged by skin colour, with Denzil and Adele Helsham (the children of Henry George Helsham and Leoline Gertrude Adele (Leila) Thomasz – seated on the left side of the photograph) in the middle and the darker skinned children to the edges of the photograph. Was this choice in the interests of a visual symmetry or was it that the more European-looking children were valued more highly?

Significantly, everyone is wearing Western dress, and all the women and even the majority of the men are wearing white clothing. Wedding dresses throughout Europe and America came in all colours prior to Queen Victoria's wedding in 1840 when she chose to wear white lace (Ingraham 2008, pp. 39-40). According to Chrys Ingraham (2008), Western elites, who were captivated by consumerism and romance novels, immediately appropriated white wedding dresses and the notion of a white wedding, which undoubtedly appealed to Victorian ideals of purity and cleanliness (Foster & Johnson 2003, p. 2), as well as the Victorian tendency to conflate moral character with outward appearances (Beaujot 2012, p. 1).

Although in recent times it is considered a social faux pas to upstage the bride by wearing white, it is not unusual to see my relatives all aspiring to Victorian values by wearing white to a wedding in 1905. I have however come across other family photographs in other settings in which family members are wearing almost exclusively white clothing. This reinforces the notion that my relatives used clothing, at least with the power of self-representation that photography allows, to portray a certain status about their family. My great-great-grandfather, Owen Charles Albert Thomasz, a Dutch Burgher from Ceylon, was described to me by a family member as a man who had horse stables, was status oriented, and saw himself as European. As Martin (1994, p. 403) argues in another context, my great-great-grandfather's clothing was 'an intrinsic part of the process of choosing, not only social networks but also "communities of taste."' He was marking himself as European through his European taste in clothing, and using photography to display his social position and wealth.

Ross draws on the sociologist Thorstein Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption to point out that the use of extravagant clothing – white clothing in the Victorian context – was one of the ways in which 'those who could afford to do so demonstrated that they did not need to labour' (Ross 2008, p. 8). Similarly, Lurie (1981, p. 116) explains that wearing white clothing revealed the wealth of the wearer and thereby denoted a higher social status because these clothes were 'both expensive to buy and expensive to maintain.' According to Lurie, dress codes were legally enshrined in Europe until around 1700 when weakened class barriers and access to gentility through wealth meant that social status could no longer be signified by the shape and colour of clothing. High status was then determined by 'the evident cost of a costume: rich materials, superfluous trimmings and difficult-to-care-for styles' (p. 115). The labour-intensive maintenance of clean, white clothing, particularly in the tropics, indicated the existence of a household staff and servants and therefore denoted a certain level of wealth, as well as adherence to the Victorian ideal of cleanliness which was a sign of privilege (Otnes & Pleck 2003, p. 31).

Further, Helen Bradley Foster and Donald Clay Johnson (2003, p. 1) argue that wedding attire is the most visible and communicative of dress modes, reflecting cultural traditions and making statements about wealth, prestige and status. Hazel's European-style wedding dress, an abundance of lace, frilly hats, floral hair wreaths, European suits most of which were white, as well as the bridesmaid's shepherdess's crook marks this wedding as wholly European in style and a display of evident wealth (and Christianity in relation to the shepherdess's crook). Importantly, it reveals that my relatives used clothing as a point of social differentiation, aligning themselves with and declaring themselves as British.

In Image 11, my great grandfather Cecil can again be seen wearing a white suit as he posed for a formal photograph with my great grandmother Charlotte, a Malaysian-born Portuguese Eurasian with likely ancestral links to the Macanese people (the offspring of Portuguese men and Chinese women) in Macau, China. Charlotte is wearing a pale, floor-length evening dress with white lace gloves and her pearl necklace. Angela is a distant member of my extended family who knew my great grandmother when she lived in Malacca. She recalled memories of Charlotte's impeccable British style of dressing and her very ordered domestic habits:

> Every evening in her pearls and her hair all pinned up … and always dresses with pockets so they could put the lace handkerchiefs in the pockets. And I remember her being such a neat, tidy, prim, proper person.

Arguably, Charlotte's dress and her conduct was a performance of a British-derived respectability that she used to distinguish herself from local Asian ethnic groups in Malaya.

Image 11: My great-grandparents Charlotte (née Lazaroo) and Cecil Thomasz, Malaya, c. 1950

According to Ross (2008, pp. 4 and 39), it was common practice amongst colonised people throughout the Asian colonies to adopt or appropriate aspects of European culture as a form of acculturation to gain respect (see Chapter 3). In particular, adopting the dress of their rulers was an important way in which colonial elites could perform their own respectability as an act of anti-colonial nationalism (p. 10). This speaks to the complexity of the relationship between colonial elites and their rulers, whereby elites would attempt to resist any derogatory stereotyping by the British by adopting the very clothing of those who would be scornful of them. This was both an expression of wanting to claim the same status as the British, yet remaining resentful of those who they sought to emulate. As I discussed in Chapter 3 by drawing on Bhabha's notion of mimicry (1997, p. 153), this performance of respectability by sartorially imitating the British could be construed as an attempt to claim the right to what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (1994) terms an 'honorary whiteness.'

Adriana Valdez Young (2009, p. 179) points out that honorary whiteness extends the colonial reification of white superiority by bestowing all or most of the privileges of whiteness onto the non-white subject who has managed to achieve a level of social and economic power. However she warns that this is an unstable 'state of suspended fantasy' so that access to the privileges of whiteness is tentative and conditional rather

than absolute, and subjects have to continually defend their right to honorary whiteness by excluding others as well as denying aspects of themselves (*Ibid.*). Arguably, clothing provided a way for colonial non-white elites to visually claim an honorary whiteness, whether this was actually conferred upon them or not. By drawing on British 'communities of taste' and consumption practices relating to clothes, these elites organised themselves into the social hierarchies of the time using Bourdieu's (1984) logic of social distinction.

As with my family, all of my participants had ancestors (parents, grandparents and beyond) who drew on their European heritage and the British clothing of colonial administrations, to shape the boundaries of being Eurasian. Liz, from the opening vignette, remembers her mother's tendency to align with British 'communities of taste.' She describes her whole family as being 'very "British". In inverted commas. Very!' She told me of her mother's use of catalogues to order household goods and clothing directly from England (see Chapter 4). She said:

> [T]hose days you always went to church[43], you had to have gloves, you had to wear hats, during my mum's time. So they would order out you know, and I used to find that really funny because I used to think hot country and they're wearing all this sort of colder climate sort of things. Like they were keeping up with the whites … persons.

Aside from the mail order catalogues, they used to only 'shop in the best sort of British type places like *Robinsons*. And I think there was *Whiteaways*. All those, you know really good stores.' Similarly, Lorraine remembers her Dutch Burgher parents wearing European clothing in Sri Lanka describing her home life there as 'very British.' She pointed at some old, framed photographs on her family room wall and said 'when you look at my mum and dad say, and they're so … they wore hats and white suits and you know, the silver cigarette lighters and they were just so Western. In fact I'm a bit more Asian than my parents were.'

Western versus 'traditional'

It was clear during the interviews with my participants that everyone was wearing 'Western' clothing in that they were not wearing anything that could be described as 'traditional' or 'ethnic.' The majority of my participants described their clothing style as

[43] Liz and her family are Anglicans, however she is now non-practicing.

Western, using phrases like 'very Western' (*Angela*; *Melanie*), 'always Western' (*John*; *Stan*), 'Western … very British' (*Pam*) and Brooke's 'modern, sometimes classic, definitely Western' where she equates the three terms with each other. Liz described her clothing as 'European' and others such as Estelle and Lionel used the words 'respectable' and 'conservative' respectively. Patricia described her clothing as 'modern' and Hayley wears whatever is in fashion. Arguably, Hayley's age and that she was born in Australia allows her to use clothing more to fit in with fashion trends popular amongst her peers, than to express an identity based on her background.

Only Lorraine described her clothing choice as 'a mixture' as she often wears Indian *saris* and the *salwar kameez*[44] on her frequent visits back to Sri Lanka. Interestingly, she says: 'I didn't wear any Asian clothes when I lived in Sri Lanka … but now that we are more modern, when I go back, I buy … I wear a lot of Asian clothes now.' The modernity Lorraine speaks of is more a freedom to now wear what she likes in Sri Lanka, as she grew up in a very British-oriented household that required her to wear Western dress amidst the increasing anti-colonial climate as Ceylon moved towards independence. Lorraine also wears a mix of clothing here in Australia where she makes a sartorial distinction between family and friends: 'It's funny, I wear more Asian clothes with my friends than with my family. Like my son likes to see me in an evening dress, whereas J. [her Anglo-Celtic Australian partner] would like to see me in a *sari*.' She smiles and says, 'It's very interesting.'

Lorraine draws a categorical distinction between Western and Asian clothing yet also shifts back and forth across this sartorial boundary. She finds this easy to do and with few social or political implications here in Australia, however it was a different story when she was growing up in Sri Lanka in the 1960s. At that time, Western dress still marked the sociocultural and economic division between the Burghers and the Tamils and Sinhalese, or was at least still used as a point of difference by many Burghers. Lorraine transgressed this border as a teenager when she had her nose pierced, arguably as a subversive act of youthful rebellion. Her parents 'really didn't want to be categorised as Asian or Sri Lankans' and chose Western dress at all times. Nose rings, which were common amongst Tamil and Sinhalese women, had no place within Burgher dress, however she says she chose to do it because she 'just liked it … I just want to be different.' When I asked her about her parents' reaction she smiled and said

[44] A trouser and tunic costume worn by both men and women throughout South and Central Asia.

'well my family thinks I'm mad. No, no the Burghers wouldn't approve of this nose ring, because it is very … it is a traditional thing more by the villagers.'

Ross (2008, pp. 7 and 10) explains that clothing 'has a grammar, usually constructed out of a set of oppositions' and therefore rejecting 'modern' European clothing in preference of 'traditional' local styles of dress within the colonies often signified powerful acts of nationalist resistance (see Chapter 3). Lorraine's 'traditional' nose ring signified a break from her parents' community of taste when it came to dress. Although she easily incorporates it into her identity here in Australia, where it gives her a certain Asian exoticism amongst her Australian friends, it would have stood out within the Burgher community in Sri Lanka acting as a visible rejection of the Burgher mode of dress that crossed both clothing and class boundaries. Lorraine's choice to straddle the divide between modes of dress would have both strengthened and problematised the common conflation of Asian/ethnic clothing with being traditional, that is then imagined in binary opposition to being 'Westernised'/modern.

Colonialism certainly saw 'the first expansion of the European sartorial regime' (Ross 2008, p. 9) outside Europe, however as Ross argues, European-style or Western clothing also became standard in nations that were not formally colonised but sought to be progressive, as European dress carried with it connotations of modernity, prestige and power (p. 10). Conversely, non-Western dress was, and still is equated with terms like 'traditional' and 'mysterious', in opposition to 'modern', as Mandy Thomas has found (2000, p. 209). Today Liz, who has always dressed in the 'European style', still associates Western dress with modernity and 'Eurasian' dress with being backward: 'If you're of the older generation then for me you dress old-fashioned. That's the way I look at it. Like a modern person if you are Eurasian, you wouldn't dress to say I'm Eurasian, you know what I mean? You'd dress in the modern way.' In Malaysia, Liz's mother, who used to always wear British style clothing, began having her European-style dresses made up in *batik* fabric 'which I would never be seen dead in. I've never wanted to do that.' She conceded that she does wear loose *batik* kaftans but these are only for 'use in the house … I would never use it going out … it would be so daggy.'

Liz explained her view of the difference in styles: 'Asian's don't want to spend money … they have different tastes. We have European tastes ... because we were brought up that way.' As I discussed at the start of this chapter, clothing is an exclusionary point of distinction for Liz - that she herself uses to set herself against Asian people, and that

was used against her by the European organisers of the modelling competition who dressed her in Asian clothing. Thomas (2000, p. 207-208) also found through her research that while fashion designers incorporated 'noticeably Asian design elements' into their clothing ranges, they still viewed 'Asian' fashion in general with disdain, most often because it was associated with cheap fabrics. An undervaluing of fashions emanating from Asia arguably widens the perceived gap between 'Asian' and 'modern.' While some of my participants do not value Asian clothing highly, others do, and many incorporate Asian elements into their dress. This, like their home decoration practices (see Chapter 4), has seen a shift from entirely Western dress in their former homelands to a more relaxed approach to dress that mixes mostly Western clothing with 'Asian' dress at specific times and in specific places, as an expression of being Eurasian. In other words, the logic of distinction has been flipped in Australia.

The Anglo-Indians and Burghers continued to use British dress after independence, and in both India and Sri Lanka, Western dress was appropriated by most of the middle sections of society so that distinctions can no longer be made by clothing alone (Caplan 2001, p. 198). Relaxing dress standards and the prevalence of Western dress in the post-colonial era means that it no longer signifies a higher social positioning, and 'traditional' items of clothing have been increasingly incorporated over the years amongst the Anglo-Indians and Burghers without the fear of appearing improper or losing status (Caplan 2001, p. 200). Indeed, the normalisation of Western or Euro-American dress has become so normalised across the globe that it is now the wearing of non-Western dress, in various degrees, that is used as a mode of distinction by some of my participants. Despite rejecting the 'traditional' nature of 'Asian' clothing, Liz still incorporates 'ethnic' bangles into her Western dress as a way to include her Asian side, and saw it as important to buy her daughters jade pendants to remind them of their Asian ancestry.

Likewise, Dianne rejects wearing anything overtly Eurasian such as the *sarong kebaya*, but will wear something with an Asian print on it: 'There's one dress that I wear that's got the batik print on it, and I like that.' She bought the modern tube dress from an Australian chain fashion store and as with her home objects (see Chapter 4), when it comes to dress styles, her approach is to 'blend it.' In this case, she blends Asian patterns with modern designs so that her clothing can still make a statement about her identity without placing herself too far from the bounds of fashion styles popular amongst women her age. Dianne markets herself in Australia as a Eurasian jazz singer

with latin rhythms and influences, which she credits to her Portuguese background. She was wearing this *batik* inspired dress when I first saw her sing at a Eurasian community gathering - in this social context Dianne's personal choice in clothing was a conscious and selective announcement of group affiliation (Roach-Higgins and Eicher 1992, p. 5).

As with Liz and Dianne, Melanie 'will try and incorporate a little bit of Asian things' in to her predominantly Western dress, by wearing accessories such as various Indian-style bangles and a jade necklace that reminds her of the Chinese culture she grew up alongside in Malaysia. She said that this is something she never would have done when she was younger and trying to hide her 'Asian side' from school friends in Australia. Brooke places the most importance on her dress being modern but does occasionally wear some gold earrings that she bought while on an overseas holiday: 'I did that because when I was growing up my mum had Chinese characters, gold Chinese characters on the wall in her house … and one of them meant double happiness … I got double happiness when I was in Hong Kong.' In this case, it was the memory associated with her childhood and her mother's home objects that influenced Brooke to buy and wear the earrings. She was also given a *sari* by a family friend in Malaysia. She never wears it but seems proud to own it. For both Melanie and Brooke, wearing generalised 'Asian' accessories serve as markers of identity that are used in the negotiation of their Eurasianness: declarations of their Asian heritage can be made by wearing these accessories at specific times and places, and in different contexts. Through the deployment of memory and even by owning and not always wearing these items, such as Brooke's *sari*, these items of dress are involved in the construction of their internalised identities.

Claims of a heritage of Eurasian dress

Three of the women in my group, periodically or occasionally wear items of clothing such as *saris*, the *salwar kameez* or *sarong kebaya* or to make a generalised claim to an 'Asian' ethnicity while simultaneously claiming a Westernised orientation through the use of Western clothing for the majority of time. As mentioned above, Lorraine wears *saris* and the *salwar kameez* while on her frequent visits back to Sri Lanka and when socialising with friends in Australia. Corinne, who is also a Dutch Burgher from Sri Lanka, often wears the *salwar kameez* in Australia 'for any occasion' but mostly in summer. She only wore this costume occasionally in Sri Lanka because it was not readily available to buy: 'At the time I lived there, I couldn't get too many of them. I had

them made so I didn't wear them regularly. But now they all wear them there because it's easily available, for many years.' Corinne has many *salwar kameez* outfits in different colours and loves to wear them because 'apart from being comfortable, it's also a very beautiful outfit. Some of the stuff is just gorgeous ... it's all in the fabric mostly. The fabrics are gorgeous and they combine different designs, which you would normally not do, but it's made specially like that.'

Corinne buys these costumes on her trips back home to Sri Lanka and on her travels to India and Singapore, but is happy to note that they are now available to buy in Australia so 'there's plenty available now if you need to get it.' Aside from being comfortable and beautiful, she loves the outfit because it is 'a thing that never dates.' She has some that are 'years and years old, but there's no particular style that could date.' By the way she speaks of the *salwar kameez*, it is evident that it is important to Corinne's identity. As with Lorraine, she can now freely wear the outfit here in Australia and on her several trips back to Sri Lanka. Despite calling it an 'Indian' outfit, Corinne has appropriated the *salwar kameez* as a symbol of being Sri Lankan rather than being Burgher, which is a distinction she does not make unless to be specific. Contrary to Corinne's identification at a national level, Angela identifies specifically as a Portuguese or *Kristang* Eurasian from Malacca, and displays this by sometimes wearing the *sarong kebaya* on special occasions. She also wears *saris* 'every now and then', but finds that they take too long to tie up has 'given up on those.' Ultimately it is the *sarong kebaya* that she sees as a Eurasian costume.

Indeed, there is no traditional Eurasian costume that is exclusive to the group as a whole, however *Kristang* Eurasians, who have a more distinct, localised, Portuguese-oriented identity, have appropriated the *sarong kebaya*, itself a fusion of styles, as a form of Eurasian dress. Eicher (1995) argues that the desire to preserve a connection to a meaningful heritage that underpins the notion of an ethnic identity belies the fluid nature of that ethnicity, which in reality varies across time and space and from individual to individual. This tendency fixes forms of dress in time and leads to notions of authenticity that in this context can be read as 'traditional.' Mandy Thomas (2000, p. 210) tells us that certain objects (including clothing) which signify 'traditional culture', are invested with a power and appeal through a nostalgia for the past. Wearing the *sarong kebaya* arguably then signals Angela's longing for her past homeland.

The costume, which in itself is a hybrid of styles appropriated during cultural contact, is a type of blouse worn with a particular style of *sarong* and three *kerosang* (elaborate brooches connected by a gold chain). In her study of the aesthetic form, function and cultural meanings of the *kebaya* as it relates to identity and constructions of femininity in Indonesia, Victoria Cattoni (2004, p. 3) traces the origins of the garment back to a blouse worn in Indonesia in the 15th and 16th centuries. According to Cattoni, Portuguese women were wearing similar long and fitted, flared blouses on the south-western coast of Malaysia in the 16th century, and it is thought that the *kebaya* had already come to the region from China. She cites the Chinese influence on clothing in the 16th century whereby similarities in the design of the *kebaya* can be found in 'an open-fronted long-sleeved tunic worn by women of the Ming Dynasty' (*Ibid.*). The general consensus in the many online sources about the *kebaya* and dress in South East Asia argue that the blouse originated in China before spreading to Malaysia and Indonesia where it has, with variations, grown to become part of the traditional dress for many cultural groups such as the *Peranakans* and *Kristang* Eurasians. The flow of clothing and textiles through sea trade is matched by a cultural flow of clothing design and ways of dressing so that the exact origin of a particular garment is hard to pin down, yet notions of authenticity are still attached.

Angela sees the *sarong kebaya* as an authentic or traditional 'Portuguese Eurasian' costume which 'the old Portuguese ladies used to wear' including her grandmother and her grandmother's siblings: 'Whether they adapted it from the Malays it's possible ... I think some Sri Lankan photographs you will see the women they are wearing similar styles. *Sarong* with this long blouse that they call the *kebaya*. But it's made differently to what the Malays would wear.' Despite acknowledging cross cultural influences, Angela still draws a point of distinction between the Malay and Sri Lankan *kebayas* noting that they are made 'differently.' She also draws a boundary between wearing the *kebaya* in Malacca and being Westernised. Amongst her grandmother's siblings 'the older ones wore the *sarong kebaya* but the younger ones wore Western dress. So I had grand aunties that were here and there … more Westernised I think. They were starting to get more Westernised.'

Hester Dibbits (2007, p. 13) argues that appropriation can lead to new 'authenticities', forming new clothing style groups that are then authenticated by members of the group. This is done by attributing new meanings to certain garments, in this case the *sarong kebaya* as a Eurasian dress, to signify an 'Asian' identity or aspect of identity.

Angela has appropriated the costume as not only Malaysian, but also as 'Eurasian', which is specifically localised to Malacca. Despite some of her grandmother's siblings rejecting the *sarong kebaya* in favour of Western dress, Angela uses hers as a point of distinction here in Australia, clearly marking herself as a *Kristang* or Portuguese-origin Eurasian by wearing the costume occasionally as formal wear.

The appropriation of non-Western 'traditional' dress was certainly not exclusive to the women in my group. John and Burt, a Sri Lankan Burgher and a Singaporean Eurasian respectively, both describe their clothing as Western, yet still wear *sarongs* daily. Burt describes his clothing as casual and Western, 'except for my sarong of course … to sleep … My old man used to use a sarong and I think all his brothers and my uncles and aunts used to use sarongs.' Interestingly, John only started to sleep in a sarong in Sri Lanka in the early 1960s. He also describes his clothing as Western, but says 'I would only wear a sarong to sleep. I've done it for about fifty years … I used to wear pyjamas earlier … and around the house I wear them as well. But otherwise, I wear shorts or slacks.' Rob was the only other man in my group to have occasionally worn a *sarong* in the past, while at home, after buying some as souvenirs from his trip to Sri Lanka and Malaysia with his family when he was younger.

Conclusion

The Western/Asian dichotomy manifested itself in this chapter in the distinctions my participants made between styles of clothing, which was also configured as a modern/traditional dichotomy. All participants primarily have and still do wear what they describe as Western clothing, although some, mostly women, will use some 'Asian' or Asian-inspired clothing or accessories. As noted in this chapter, Western dress is now normative in much of the world and has been widely adopted in the ex-European colonies, particularly by men in the middle and upper classes. Regardless, the politics of dress remains as an important and gendered, social boundary marker. During the colonial period in both Ceylon and Malaya, Western dress was a critical point of distinction for those of mixed heritage. As a visible statement of allegiance with European colonisers, the wearing of Western clothing allowed for a certain level of social upliftment that was subsequently detrimental to the status of Burghers and Eurasians during the period of de-colonisation and independence. For those who sought migration within the Commonwealth, Western dress undoubtedly eased them through the process.

Today, in both Australia and former homelands, wearing Western clothing is normative for all of my participants and therefore the politics of dress is limited in comparison to other countries such as India where the *sari* has become a symbol of allegiance to India for women. Wearing 'Asian' dress is now a point of distinction for my participants in Australia. It is used for special occasions, to wear around the house or sleep in, or simply to own, a memory object to cherish. This, of all my chapters, is where gender most comes in to play: all the men in my group wore Western all of the time, with only two wearing sarongs to sleep, and one acknowledging that he might have worn a sarong a couple of times in the past. Three women in my group wear non-Western clothing such as the *sarong kebaya*, *saris* and the *shalwar kameez*, at different times for different reasons and the remaining majority of women incorporate non-Western accessories or elements into a Western outfit to visibly mark or remind themselves of their heritage. As with their home decoration, these accessories are often more symbolic in that they represent a loosely defined sense of 'Asia.'

Significantly, the bounded notions of Western and Asian cannot be reconciled within the minds of my participants, so combining both clothing styles becomes a characteristic of being 'Eurasian' for some. Others rely on the idea of a heritage of Eurasian dress, such as those from Malacca who claim the sarong kebaya as an authentic Eurasian costume despite its use by other cultural groups within Southeast Asia.

CHAPTER 6

'We had Asian food for lunch and English for dinner'[45]: culinary narratives of identity

> Beautiful curries and rice and vegetables and God alone knows what they can cook, these Eurasians. They can cook you know.
>
> Ada

> Growing up, because you had servants, you had cooked breakfasts just about every day. But here in Australia you have cereal.
>
> Pam

Food and identity

When Angela lived with her husband for a short period in New Zealand in the mid-1970s, she could not find fish ball soup anywhere nearby. Both she and her husband 'were so wanting Asian food' that she attempted to make the soup, despite having very few cooking utensils in the motel they were staying in at the time. Finally she resorted to using a glass bottle full of milk to pound the fish into a paste. With much laughter she told me:

> When [my husband] came home in the night, I had this beautiful fish ball soup boiling away. And I told him 'oh guess what, you can have fish ball soup because I made my own fish balls.' And he went to make himself a cup of tea or coffee after dinner and broke the cream because I had shaken … I had turned the milk into cream!

So strong was Angela's desire for the 'Asian food' she had grown up with in Malacca that she used the few resources around her to try to fill this need for familiarity when she was far from 'home.' As is common in any transnational experience, food, with its nostalgic power to invoke imagined returnings to 'homelands' (Katrak 1997, p. 270), was an emotional anchor for Angela during this period of displacement in her life (Mannur 2010, p. 27).

[45] *Lorraine*

She ended her story by saying: 'I didn't know I could do that, make cream out of milk. Because we're not used to milk. Our milk in Malaysia was from a can, evaporated milk, or condensed milk. There was never fresh milk.' Migration demanded of Angela that she learn about new ingredients and different forms of old ingredients that were available to her in different locales: her experience of milk in the tropics and in New Zealand was vastly different. Her story then is also a reminder that migrants and others who move often feel a significant sense of loss of the familiar in relation to dishes and ingredients, and this can have a strong impact on their processes of place-making and belonging (Duruz 2006, p. 102). As Pierre Bourdieu reminds us, the nostalgia associated with tastes in food stretches back to childhood (1984, p. 79) and is therefore most often associated with the idea of 'home.' It is a trope which reverberates through the migration experiences of the participants in my study: in a similar vein to Angela's desire for familiar foods from Malacca, when Lorraine married and moved from her homeland in Sri Lanka to Hong Kong for a few years, she took with her a nanny who continued to cook Sri Lankan food for her young family. 'My tastebuds were used to it', she said, 'Oh, I'd miss it if I didn't have it.'

This search for familiar tastes from 'home' in a 'location "elsewhere"' (Duruz 2006, p. 104) was evident during my fieldwork in the many stories I heard of participants searching for but being unable to find specific spices or ingredients when they first migrated to Australia: 'When we first came, whoever was going to Malaysia or something, we'd say oh bring us back a bit of curry powder' (*Angela*); 'We used to get friends bringing [spices] in from Singapore' (*Burt*); 'We used to get all our curry powders from Sri Lanka. You know, people used to bring it along' (*Lorraine*). The need for the recuperative property of familiar foods (Thomas 2004, p. 54) was also manifest in the gardens of many of the participants who grew their own Asian herbs and spices such as lemongrass, coriander, chillies, and curry leaf trees. As Angela told me, in every home she has lived in since Malacca, 'even in Melbourne', she has planted 'the basics': 'I have my lemongrass bush, the curry leaf tree. Very important, two things, must have.'

Being able to cook familiar foods was an important point of emotional continuity and a central feature of making 'home' in Australia for all of the participants in my study, highlighting the social importance of food. The field of food semiotics began with Claude Lévi-Strauss's (1964) core argument that through cookery we transform nature (the 'raw') into culture (the 'cooked'); and with Mary Douglas (1971, 1982) who examined food as a system of communication. Drawing on these ideas, Leslie Howsam

(1998, p. i) points out that while we all eat, what, where, how and with whom we eat, become matters of culture. Through our food choices and habits, we display our cultural, ethnic and regional identities so that, as Lucy M. Long puts it, food speaks (2004, p. 119). Annie Hauck-Lawson (1998, p. 21) highlights the communicative value of food through her notion of the 'food voice' in which food acts as a 'powerful channel for the expression of meaning.' The food voice speaks of memories and life histories, relationships and personalities, value systems and aspirations, and how we see ourselves personally and as cultural beings (Long 2004, p. 119). Moreover, meal preparation, distribution and consumption are often group events, so food finds itself at the centre of our sociality (Fox n.d., p. 1; Howsam 1998, p. i), and at the centre of family social life (Douglas 1982). Through our interactions, negotiations and interpretations, people imbue food with social meaning (Hauck-Lawson 1998, p. 21), and therefore food and its associated practices become important lenses through which to examine migrant communities (see for example Marte 2008; Mintz 2008).

When speaking about his transnational identity and sense of belonging in Australia, Burt said he did not feel torn between past and present 'homes' because he felt there is an increasing 'Asian cultural experience in Perth that's being accepted more and more. And I can refer to our favourite pastime: food! [laughs]. If you're looking for a good meal to go to, there's a tendency to go down to the Chinese restaurants or the hawker centres.' For Burt, leaving Singapore for Australia has been aided by the ever-increasing 'Asianisation' of Australian food that is central to Australia's form of 'boutique multiculturalism' (Fish 1997, p. 378; Duruz 2007, p. 192). Indeed, the cultural exchanges involved with food have been the most successful element of Australia's 'multi-culturalism' as many 'ethnic' or 'exotic' foods have become accepted into 'mainstream' Australian culinary traditions so that, at first glance, 'Eurasian' foodways seem no different to contemporary suburban foodways in Perth (Duruz 2006, p. 106-107). Yet this is deceptive since 'Eurasian' foodways have a much longer history of cultural fusion that has resulted in a complex system that simultaneously acknowledges its vibrant 'East-meets-West' hybridity as a legacy of empire (Kraal 2003), while asserting authenticities specific to sub-categories of 'Eurasian.' This complexity of understanding in relation to food reflects the larger understandings of being 'Eurasian' amongst my participants, making it all the more important to listen to their food voices.

Certainly, the two strongest themes to emerge from their 'Eurasian' food voices were the interconnected notions of authenticity and boundaries. In this chapter about food,

the East/West imaginary that has been so evident throughout this thesis is again reconfigured in terms of an Asian/Western dichotomy so that foods like curry and rice become emblematic of 'Asian' food and are distinguished from 'Western' food such as 'English' roasts. Despite this bordered view of food though, it is through food choices that the participants in my study experience the most frequent and intense cultural crossovers between 'East' and 'West', and where the porousness of identities is most evident. Ien Ang (2001, p. 200) points out that as part of this porosity identities 'evolve and take shape through multiple interrelationships with myriad, differently positioned others.' The family and community interactions surrounding food and its preparation and consumption are integral to this process and can therefore tell us much about understandings of 'Eurasian' identities and how they are shaped. However, while domestic culinary practices have the power to enable the imagining and affirming of a sense of community amongst peoples who claim a shared identity, they can also undermine this sense of connectedness (Ray 2004, p. 8). For example, food and its associated practices can be used in identity processes as a boundary marker, and claims of 'authentic' ethnic cuisines can be made to distinguish one group from another. I argue that, amongst my participants, certain dishes and recipes have been used to draw boundaries between Asians and non-Asians, Burghers and Eurasians, and between those Eurasians from Malaysia and those from Singapore, so that the tensions surrounding the question of who can identify as Eurasian come to the surface.

In this chapter as I examine identity negotiations and boundary assertions through food, I use participants' culinary narratives and 'gastronomic memories' as forms of meaning-making (Duruz 2006, 2007, p. 184). As Jean Duruz (2007, p. 184) reminds us, the 'making' of food runs parallel to the making of 'self' and 'place' in everyday life. I therefore use food as a multilayered trope and strategy in ethnic identification and border construction. Within this, food mediates memory in the careful drawing up of these boundaries and borders based on a perceived and constructed authenticity. Memory manifests itself in this chapter through the form of kitchen legacies and heirloom recipes, remembered breakfasts and Christmas feasts, and childhood stories of being allowed to lick the bowl whilst making cakes with mothers in hybridised tropical kitchens.

Remembered meals

Class, ethnicity, food and memory come together in the tensions and negotiations associated with 'Eurasian' identities (Duruz 2006, p. 106).[46] A case for examination is the nostalgia surrounding the remembered breakfasts in former 'homelands.' The steady Asianisation of Australian cuisine has not at this point entered mainstream Australia's conception of breakfast which remains situated between American cereals and British cooked breakfasts or jam/marmalade on toast. For the vast majority of participants in my study there were no significant differences between breakfast in 'Asia' and in Australia because they were already eating what they describe as British or Western breakfasts in their former homelands. For example, growing up as Eurasian in Malaysia, Estelle always had coffee with eggs, toast and jam, cereal or porridge for breakfast, and Lionel, a Burgher from Malaysia, has always eaten 'eggs on toast, or jam and toast.' However, the difference between Malaysian and Australian breakfasts was marked for Angela and Dianne from Malacca where street foods were available at any time of day. In Australia, Angela 'had to settle for toast and vegemite' for breakfast. She contrasts this with emphatic stories of the breakfasts she had growing up in the place that she still calls 'home':

> Oh Malacca! Wonderful breakfasts. Every day was a treat … [My father] would bring home stuff for us to eat before we went to school … Chinese porridge. Or he'd bring back *nonya* cakes, the … how to describe them? You know the layers, the pink and white layer?[47] ... because you could go to the market and pick them up … in the morning ... or Indian rotis ... For breakfast, yeah. Indian rotis … *Nasi Lemak*, yah!

Angela's nostalgic remembrances of past breakfasts emphasise the wide variety of available foods in Malacca, which meant that breakfasts were not limited to a small range of specific foods as she has found in Australia. Further, as she spoke about the food in Malacca she was recalling and reliving the idea of a shared food community (Sutton 2001, p. 110), one that was premised on communal eating, often while standing

[46] There is also a gendered dimension to 'Eurasian' foodways. For example, I found that the women in this study had the most to say about food during their interviews, most likely because they were the ones primarily responsible for food preparation within their families and in community gatherings. As with the relationship between gender and clothing (from my previous chapter), the gendered relationship with food would certainly be another area for further in-depth research.

[47] *Kueh Lapis*, meaning 'layered cake', is a type of glutinous cake that is popular throughout Southeast Asia. It has different coloured layers, most commonly green, pink and white, and is flavoured with *pandan*, an extract from the tropical *pandanus* plant.

or walking to school past street food vendors, something that she valued highly and that she clearly misses in Australia.

Dianne's remembrances of breakfasts in Malacca also speak of this shared food community, which would extend throughout the whole day:

> Sometimes you have toast … like scrambled eggs toast, and sometimes it was *nasi lemak*[48] for breakfast. Or like fried *kuey tiao*[49] for breakfast. And then you just eat the whole time … whichever hawker comes by your way, just something, whatever, you eat!

Like Angela, Dianne's eating habits have also changed in Australia. She generally skips breakfast unless she goes out with friends to a café on weekend mornings, a practice that suggests that the communal and social aspects of breakfast are still what she values. Through happy childhood memories the foodways of Malacca have become meaningful to both Angela and Dianne, and have become incorporated, as memories of food do, into their multi-faceted identities (Long 2004, p. 120-121), strengthening and locating their 'Eurasianness' firmly in Malacca.

In another locale, the participants from Sri Lanka knew of but did not practice the local habit of eating hoppers[50] or string hoppers[51] for breakfast, preferring to eat them at other times of the day or on special occasions instead. Even Rob, who was born in Australia to Sri Lankan Burgher parents, expressed awareness of this difference when he told me that his family 'generally have them for lunch.' Similarly, Stan told me that string hoppers constituted 'the authentic breakfast that they have in Sri Lanka … because they had people to make it you see … a lot of people, their servants used to make [them].' Rather than having them for breakfast, his family had string hoppers mostly for special occasions or if they had 'folk for dinner.' He told me this was because during his school years his mother used to cook 'more English breakfast[s]' for him. 'The thought of eating curry and things like the accompaniments for breakfast was too much', he laughed. This distinction of what to eat for breakfast takes in local, socially-

[48] A Malaysian national dish consisting mostly of fragrant rice served with a number of side dishes such as various meats, cucumber, peanuts, anchovies (*ikan bilis*), hard-boiled egg and hot sauce (*sambol)*.
[49] A Chinese origin flat rice noodle dish popular in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Also spelt *kway teow*.
[50] A Sri Lankan rice flour pancake made on a special hopper pan and shaped into a bowl so that fillings can be added such as a fried egg or curry. Hoppers are known as *appam* in Malaysia and India.
[51] A Sri Lankan dish made from wheat flour or rice flour dough which is steamed and then pressed through a special string hopper mould onto a mat. The spiral of strings is then steamed again and served most often with curry.

shaped knowledge, yet tailors it for the purposes of each individual family. The 'English' breakfasts of Stan's early years in Sri Lanka served also to distinguish his family as Burghers and speak of a class difference between Burghers and local Sinhalese and Tamil Sri Lankans.

Indeed, while the foods often remained the same for the majority of participants in my study, class distinctions marked the difference in breakfasts between former homelands and Australia. For example, when Pam was growing up in Singapore, she told me: 'Because you had servants, you had cooked breakfasts just about every day. But here in Australia you have cereal.' Similarly, John and Corinne remember sitting down at the table 'for every meal' in Sri Lanka and being served by domestic staff (see Chapter 4). Of the nineteen participants in this study, seven had domestic staff in their former homelands who did all of the cooking and serving of food at the table so that, as Lorraine told me, they had 'big breakfasts' in Sri Lanka where they could easily 'eat all the time.' Moving to Australia and losing access to their domestic staff necessitated a shift towards doing all of the domestic work themselves, and in my study this was primarily the domain of the women. In Australia, all of these women, with the exception of Patricia and Estelle, also have worked (or still do so) outside the home, and as a result the significance of breakfast has been reduced. As an example, the morning meal for Marie, has now become a 'little breakfast', which constitutes 'just a piece of toast here and there.' Similarly, breakfast is 'not a big deal' for Liz, Hayley 'usually [doesn't] eat anything for breakfast', and the vast majority of participants have cereal or toast, and tea or coffee for breakfast.

Overall, differences in lifestyle and the lowering of social status underlie the variation between all of my participants' daily meals in Australia compared to their former homelands. In the home, lunches and dinners have all largely become simplified with more time taken for food preparation only for special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas and Easter.[52] Mary Douglas (1971, 1982) showed us that the significance of the 'meal-as-event' cannot be examined in isolation, but must always be regarded as part of the 'grand pattern' of a meal system (1982, p. 116). The temporal rhythms within these meal systems are evident in the weekly pattern to participants' menu planning: because she has more spare time to cook, Lorraine eats 'much more elaborately on weekends', and Patricia, who has soups and pastas during the week, has

[52] Outside the home, Burgher and Eurasian community groups hold monthly Sunday lunches, where a variety of foods from former homelands are served often buffet-style.

more time on the weekends to make meat dishes like roasts and marinated, barbecued *char siew* pork.[53] Angela also tends to leave roasts until the weekends although she does not cook these or 'European dishes' very often because her husband does not like them as much.[54] 'It's mostly Asian … from Monday to Friday I would say it would be more Asian', she told me, and added that 'even on the weekends if it's lunch we usually have like, you know *char kuey tiao*[55], or fried noodles or some *laksa* or something like that.' Interestingly, Angela herself makes the distinction between European and Asian dishes in her food negotiations.

'Half of it would be Asian oriented like a curry or a stir-fry'[56]

John, a Burgher from Sri Lanka, told me that he needs a rice and curry every day for his lunch. He followed this up by saying quickly that he and his wife Corinne also love 'Western food', which he described as 'pastas and other food too.' But ultimately, he said, 'if I've got one more meal before I die, I'll have a string hopper meal with prawn curry and egg *rulang*.[57] And a good *seeni sambol*.'[58] In saying this, John stressed his attachment to the Sri Lankan food from his former homeland, while also setting it in binary opposition to 'Western' foods. Indeed, although it varied from family to family, the negotiated food choices amongst my participants expressed to me an underlying divide between what they perceived to be 'Asian' and 'Western' food (which was also sometimes referred to as 'English' or 'European'). Born and raised in Perth, Rob has 'generally [grown up with] Western food', but 'always [had] a curry' for Sunday lunch, and Lionel's meals in Australia are 'mostly Western' like a 'steak or a chop.'

Moreover, varying from family to family, there was a daily rhythm to these negotiations of the Asian/Western divide. Back in Malaysia Lionel remembers having 'rice and curry for lunch', and 'Western for dinner.' Similarly, Estelle has rice and curries for lunch in Australia and 'Western' steaks, chops or sandwiches for dinner. In Sri Lanka, Lorraine too remembers always having 'rice for lunch … Asian food for lunch and English for dinner.' Today in Australia dinner for Lorraine is always 'fish or chicken or beef. And

[53] A Chinese origin pork dish that is marinated in honey, soy and hoisin sauces, rice wine and spices. Today, it is popular all over the world.
[54] To reiterate, of my19 participants, 3 were not married at the time of their interview, and 6 are married to non-Eurasians, ranging in age from 28 to 62. Within the limited scope of my research, there seems to be no strong correlation between marriage partner and the cooking or eating of 'Eurasian' food. Again, this is an interesting point for consideration though and one that could be taken up as another area for further research.
[55] Flat rice noodles.
[56] *Lorraine*
[57] A lightly scrambled Sri Lankan egg dish seasoned with tomato, coriander and spices and often eaten with string hoppers.
[58] A sweet and spicy onion relish used as an accompaniment.

probably half of it would be Asian oriented like a curry or a stir-fry.' Lunch, she said, is 'always a Western … a sandwich or whatever', adding 'it's very Australian isn't it?' In another meal rhythm, Ada's family in Singapore 'used to have English dishes during the week. The weekend we used to have a curry and rice and things like that.' 'I try to do the same thing here', she told me. In yet another variation, Marie cooks steaks, chops, roasts or lamb shanks for dinner in Australia, but once a week she prepares 'a rice and curry and vegetable, that sort of thing you know, [a] real Sri Lankan sort of meal.' And Anthony has 'Asian takeaways' for lunch on Saturdays and pasta for his lunch on Sundays. Others were more fluid in their food choices and did not explicitly articulate the Asian/Western divide, such as Burt who described a typical dinner in his household as 'rice, curries, stews. Roasts every now and again'; and Liz who said of her typical dinner menu, 'It's never you know, like only European, or whatever. I like a mixture.'

Using Douglas's (1971, 1982) structural approach to food and eating, the above examples show that no single meal represents 'Eurasian' cuisine, just as there is no single way to be 'Eurasian.' Rather, 'Eurasian' foodways are better thought of in terms of Douglas's meal system; one that incorporates the diverse culinary streams from either side of the imagined Asian/Western divide, so this divide becomes porous and is itself the central characteristic of 'Eurasian' foodways. To construct and then straddle this Asian/Western divide seemed to be a claim that most of the participants in my study made in relation to food, and was exemplified in Pam's description of family barbecues in Australia (where, through her language, she seems to take ownership of the Asian side of the divide): 'It's a mixture because we'll have the Asian dishes and you'll have the roasts and you know, chops.' Significantly, the choices that this positioning opens up to participants are most evident in the culinary fluidity of the Christmas feast on 'Eurasian' tables both in Australia and in former homelands. As Brooke told me of her family's tradition in Australia:

> Christmas lunch would be curry. It wouldn't be turkey or anything … but mum started doing turkey and ham later … also Asian foods would be there … Love cake[59], yeah the special fruit cake as well. Even things like *kueh lapis* and stuff would occasionally come into the mix.

[59] A cashew nut and semolina-based cake, the Sri Lankan Love cake is believed to have Portuguese origins. It is often baked at Christmas time or for birthdays and weddings in Sri Lanka. See below.

Amongst the other participants, recollections of past and current Christmas feasts included turkey, ham, roast beef, chicken or goose, and *biryani*[60], coconut rice, mulligatawny soup[61], curries (in Malacca, 'Devil curry[62] is a must', Angela insisted), the Portuguese-origin dish *feng*[63], pineapple tarts[64], coconut ice[65], the Sri Lankan Love and Rich[66] cakes and the Eurasian *Sugee* cake.[67] Arguably, the mix of foods associated with Christmas, a special date on the Christian calendar, epitomises 'Eurasian' foodways, with just one day's meal representing the hybridity of the whole pattern of meals.

The Asian/Western divide was again evident in other examples of entertaining guests in the home. If Liz was having 'Asian' friends or family over, she 'would want to make them feel more comfortable' and so would make sure that she included 'some Asianey things there.' In her efforts to be hospitable, Liz sees providing familiar foods with their associated memories, as providing 'comfort' to her guests (Duruz 2006, p. 105). Marie takes a different approach, by offering the foods of the 'other' to her guests, so that if she has invited 'Australians' to her home, she serves them 'rice and curry. They won't come otherwise', and for guests with an Asian background, she told me:

> I never give them rice and curry. I give them an English meal. They can cook their own rice and curry … if a Malaysian comes here, why give him a *kuey tiao*? Probably he'll eat the damn thing, but he'll think God I get better *kuey tiao* in Malaya, you know what I mean? Why should I give him a *kuey tiao*, I'll give him a lovely roast.

When Lorraine entertains 'Australians' in her home, she 'tend[s] to cook Sri Lankan food, because that's what they expect.' She laughs and continues: 'They'd be disappointed if they came here and got a steak. But if I, when I have my family over, I

[60] *Biryani* is a spiced, yellow rice dish of Indian origin, which can have meats like chicken or lamb added to it. It is popular across Asia and the Middle East and well known in Australia today.
[61] Mulligatawny, a spicy soup popular in Sri Lanka, is ultimately from India. According to Rosemary Brissenden (2011, p. 272), mulligatawny is an Anglicised version of the Tamil dish *rasam* and was consumed by the Europeans and Anglo-Indians during the colonial period.
[62] Also known as Curry *Debal*, this dish is a very spicy Portuguese-origin curry specific to *Kristang* Eurasian cuisine. In Malacca and Singapore it is often served on special occasions such as Christmas.
[63] Feng is a vinegared, spicy *Kristang* stew or curry cooked at Christmas time. It traditionally used pig offal but is now often made with different meats.
[64] The bite-sized pineapple jam tarts are popular across all cultures throughout Southeast Asia and often feature at cultural celebrations in Malaysia and Singapore.
[65] Coconut ice originated in Victorian England and enjoyed a post-war resurgence after sugar restrictions were lifted. It became a popular treat throughout all of Britain's former colonies.
[66] As its name suggests, this is a rich, spiced, fruit-dense cake similar to British fruit cakes and is mostly baked at Christmas time in Sri Lanka.
[67] The Eurasian *Sugee* cake is similar to the Sri Lankan Love cake except it uses crushed almonds instead of crushed cashews. It is also used variously as a wedding or birthday cake in Malaysia and Singapore.

would try something different for them, like Italian or Thai or maybe steaks and a soup.' Similarly, Corinne serves curry to her 'Australian' friends, telling me that 'we do it nicely. Candles at the table and all.' Evidently, each participant takes a different approach to negotiating the Asian/Western divide when it comes to entertaining friends, and this exemplifies my participants' ability to move back and forth across this perceived boundary.[68] Making decisions about what to serve guests also shows that thinking about food provokes them to think about identity. As John told me, when speaking of the food practices in his home, both he and his wife are 'primarily Asians.' He said that they do also host dinners where they will serve soup with rolls, a steak or chicken, but follows this up by saying 'most of our entertaining would be Asian.' This includes hiring 'a guy who comes and makes egg hoppers' and cooks them in front of guests in the garden.

Culinary borders

Despite the acknowledgement of the fluidity of 'Eurasian' foodways, my participants nonetheless linked food choices to identity, constructing and patrolling borders around and within 'Eurasian' groups so that, despite cooking certain dishes, they were aware of and expressed the various origins of the dishes. For example, Marie spoke of making some 'Ceylon' dishes in Malaysia, and Angela, a Malaccan Eurasian, cooks Burgher dishes for her husband. She told me that as a result, her cooking has slowly changed over the years so that now her food 'tastes different' to that of her sisters: 'We make the same dish but mine will not taste like theirs.' In her understanding, she has crossed over this perceived border, and can remember doing this even as a child when her family consumed mulligatawny soup on Easter Sunday in Malacca. 'Well mulligatawny is a Sri Lankan thing isn't it?', she acknowledged.

Similarly, Liz described the dishes that she learnt to cook from cookbooks and family recipes as being Malaysian 'with a twist of Burgher food, or what? I don't know what it is.' She also cooks Italian dishes and what she described as English foods such as roasts and meat with vegetables and mashed potatoes, yet, she links her identity to the 'Asian' foods that she cooks and consumes. This was most evident when she distinguished herself from those in the Eurasian community who continue to align themselves as British/European in Australia today. She told me:

[68] The importance of traditions of hospitality within 'Eurasian' communities is yet another interesting area for future research.

> It's something that I can't deny … it feels 'right' … I want to eat Asian, you know like *chappatis* or *roti*[69] and whatever, curry and *dahl*.[70] It's something that I'm not fighting, you know like some so-called Eurasians want to always be seen as European. 'We'll have bacon and eggs.' You know, they do. They really do. Have to have bacon and eggs … I'm not like that.

Through the cultural boundaries associated with food, Liz situated her 'Eurasianness' within Asia, something that she 'can't deny' and which 'feels "right"', and sees the breakfast choice of bacon and eggs as a purely 'European' choice of foods.

Simon Harrison (1999, p. 10) defines 'cultural boundaries' as the differences that are perceived and asserted by groups using practices and symbols that include language, dress, music, religion, ritual and food to distinguish themselves from other groups. In other words, groups will seek out ways to define themselves against any available 'Others.' By positioning herself as 'Asian' through her food choices, Liz distinguishes herself from those 'Eurasians' whom she believes align themselves as European. Harrison (1999, p. 10) goes on to point out that movements of cultural practices and meanings accompany the movements and interactions of people around the globe, which give life to hybrid forms that challenge essentialism. However, this challenge acts as a perceived threat to the belief in essential qualities and distinctive ways of a group, resulting in the representation of endangered cultural boundaries. These are then reinforced and constructed to create a distinction between insiders and outsiders (*Ibid.*). Arguably, Liz abandoned the idea of a hybrid fluidity of choice in regard to food and places the European-oriented 'so-called Eurasians' outside the bounds of being Eurasian, strengthening her position that to be Eurasian, it is essential to orient oneself with 'Asia' and at the very least eat some 'Asian' foods to demonstrate this.

These social distinctions were evident throughout the stories I heard about how food was served and consumed in former homelands. For example, Lionel remembers the class differences between the Portuguese Eurasians and his Dutch Burgher household in Malaysia being played out through the practices associated with food and dining. He told me:

[69] Types of Indian flatbreads.
[70] A spiced, Indian lentil dish.

> In the Portuguese houses they used to put it on the dining tables, put the food so if anybody comes, they used to invite them to come and eat. In our house, it used to be kept on the sideboard and served by the servants you know … when you're sitting down, get a cup of tea or a wine.

In other homes and in less structured entertaining situations, participants described bowls of food such as rice and curry being placed along the centre of dining tables so that guests could serve themselves: 'Put all the food out ... help yourself and go and sit anywhere" (*Burt*); and 'In Malaysia you just invite as many as you can invite and everyone has a buffet and they just find a place [to sit]" (*Dianne*).

The use of cutlery too was involved in making and enacting distinctions. Of his parent's upbringings as Burghers in Sri Lanka, Rob said: 'Definitely they ate with cutlery and crockery. Dad's quite happy to eat with his hands if he goes somewhere where people are. Mum won't. She doesn't like it.' Rob's mother's aversion to eating with her hands is arguably a legacy of being brought up in a high status Burgher family. Similarly, John comes from a relatively high social position in Sri Lanka and so always used cutlery, although he concedes to always having enjoyed string hoppers with his fingers. 'I mean you can use a spoon and fork', he said to me, 'but some of us we like it and we might use our fingers ... it's an art.' He added that he would never use his fingers to eat rice, a practice that is common amongst many throughout Sri Lanka and India. These seemingly innocuous choices of how to serve and consume food represent what Mannur (2010, p. 29) calls 'culinary citizenship': claims of particular identities in relation to food and it's practices. 'Eurasian' culinary citizenship is reiterated every time my participants (with the exception of Hayley and Anthony) shop in Asian grocers, where they buy produce ranging from herbs and spices, curry pastes and *sambols*, Asian vegetables, egg noodles, *char siew paus*[71], curry puffs, ingredients for the Love cake or *Sugee* cake such as cashews and rose water, and ten kilogram sacks of rice. And this 'Eurasian' culinary citizenship was most evident in my participants' relationship with curry.

'Rice and curry, faithful diet'[72]: curry as symbol

The participants in my study often specifically set 'Western' foods in binary opposition to the dish of rice and curry, which seems to have become a metonymic signifier for a

[71] Steamed pork buns.
[72] *Burt*

loosely defined 'Asia.' Melanie, for example, used this binary when she expressed her change in tastes since childhood. She told me she 'didn't really like curry' when she was younger, instead preferring 'more Western foods like, you know sausages and mashed potatoes.' She slowly came to appreciate 'more the Asian food and especially curries' as an adult. Curry as symbol was again evident when Angela said to me: 'I have friends that are so Australianised that there are hardly any curries that they cook in their house.' For her, the act of making and consuming curry is an aspect exclusive to her Eurasian identity which is distinct from her identity as an Australian citizen. This is evident in the way she identifies: 'I'm Eurasian first, Australian second.'

Despite her mother's best efforts to try to make her eat and enjoy curries when she was a child, Hayley, the youngest in the group of participants and who was born in Australia, has never taken to her Eurasian mother's 'Asian' cooking. She concedes that she will eat at Chinese restaurants but 'wouldn't go to an Indian restaurant.' All other participants continue to incorporate curry into their diets and it has come to symbolise their Asianness but also acts as a reminder of former homelands. The mix of Asian and 'English' meals she had growing up in Malaysia meant that Marie found it relatively easy to integrate into Australian culture (see Chapter 1), yet she still missed some foods from her former homeland when she first migrated, and so asked friends to bring back 'a bit of curry powder' for her when they visited Malaysia.

Long (2004, p. 121) argues that foods mean different things in different contexts and with different people. Mannur (2010, pp. 28-29) points out that food takes on a nostalgic significance after the spatial and temporal displacement of migration and this has meant that curry, which was such a commonplace dish in Malaysia, has grown in significance for those participants who migrated. To cook and consume curry in Australia, which for Marie was not easy in the Australian culinary landscape of 1967, was a way to invoke 'home' through its tastes and textures; what Alison Blunt (2003, p. 722) terms a 'productive nostalgia' whereby this longing for home is enacted through practice rather than narrative or imagination. Mannur (2010, p. 29) argues that because of the extra significance assigned to food by migrants, it often features in 'nostalgic narratives of dislocation', and sometimes these narratives include a longing for 'home' that goes unsatisfied. Brooke told me that she 'used to eat a lot more curry when growing up', and less now that she has moved out of her parents' house. 'I still like curry though but don't know how to make it!': she laughs. Now in Dubai she is often asked about curry once someone finds out about her 'Eurasian' background: 'One of the

first things they ask me is "Oh, so do you know how to make curries?" And I always say "No … [but] my mum does!" (laughs) … that's why I wanted her to teach me.' Others, like Burt and Melanie, use curry pastes in jars to recreate the taste of 'home.' As Burt told me, the wide availability of curry pastes in Australian supermarkets has made making curry at home 'so easy … you don't have to do it yourself.' Melanie also makes her curries 'out of a jar' so that she does not 'really know what specific curries [she is] cooking.' Mostly however, she eats curry when she goes out to restaurants, suggesting that it is more the act of consuming curry that is important to her.

Paul Grainge (1999, p. 631) defines nostalgia as a 'yearning for the past in response to a loss, absence or discontinuity felt in the present.' Through Blunt's (2003) productive nostalgia and Joan Wardrop's (2012, p. 230) conception of nostalgia as process, I am led to see that my participants' memories of the past are often recovered through the cooking, consumption and talking about particular foods, processes which have helped to ease the sense of loss and disruption associated with migration. And certainly, as Mannur (2010, p. 29) reminds us, culinary discourse is 'an always available script for negotiating the pangs of migratory displacement.' Community groups, whose gatherings centre around food, have greatly aided this sense of recovery after loss and disruption for a number of the older participants in my study. For example, Burt and his wife Pam are members of a Eurasian community group, which Burt tells me, they joined 'mainly for the food.' He laughed saying, 'That's not fair', but Pam followed up quickly with 'But it *is* true.' Stan too also enjoys the food aspect of his Burgher community group where he and his wife have 'a rice and curry meal' at the group's monthly gathering.[73] He told me of 'older folk … mainly the men' who 'haven't got out of the habit' of having a big lunch of rice and curry so therefore look forward to these gatherings. Coming together and eating foods from former homelands enacts a sense of home and familiarity, so that these community gatherings offer important points of continuity and strengthen and shape understandings of ethnicity in relation to food. The community gatherings also firmly strengthen the symbolic status of curry amongst all 'Eurasians' so that many participants seemed to speak of an almost personal relationship with curry.

[73] Of the nineteen participants in my study, nine are not members of an ethnically-based community group. Four participants are active members in the Eurasian Association of Western Australia and the remaining six are, or have been, members of the Burgher Welfare League. Getting together to make and eat dishes from former homelands is one of the central activities of these community groups.

Certainly curry was spoken about frequently throughout my fieldwork, often emphatically, such as in John's 'need' for a rice and curry for his lunch every day, and Dianne's exclamation of 'I love curries, I can eat curry every day.' When I asked what her favourite foods were, Angela responded by telling me about the favourite curries in her family: 'I like dry mutton curry. That's my favourite. My one daughter likes Devil curry, my grandson is a Devil curry eater, and he will swear that I make the best Devil curry.' Using Herbert Gans's (1979: 9) notion of symbolic ethnicity, subsequent generations in Angela's family arguably show their 'nostalgic allegiance' to Malacca and her Asian background by eating curry, representing what Gans describes as having 'a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour.' Ada too, told me of her Australian-born granddaughters' love for the curry puffs she often makes: 'Oh, they love the curry puffs, gee. They say I'm not coming to see you Nan until you make the curry puffs.' Entwined in this love of curry then are tastes of 'home' and childhood and nostalgic allegiances for former or ancestral homelands and ultimately 'Asia.' Ada's story of her granddaughters' love of curry puffs also speaks of a passing down of nostalgia, a transmission of particular knowledges about cultural identity (Wardrop 2012, p. 231) so that curry becomes a part of the next generation's understandings of being 'Eurasian.'

One understanding that has been passed down amongst some participants is the notion that the spicy heat of a curry is a measure for 'Asianness' even though this spiciness is attributed to chilli, the New World crop that was introduced to Asia by the Portuguese. Despite knowing it is something that many Sri Lankans 'can't live without', Stan told me that he and his wife eat 'very little rice and curry.' 'You'd be surprised to know', he said, adding that he can only manage to eat very mild curries: 'Unfortunately I can't handle … those things are too spicy for me, not a very good Sri Lankan.' Eating curries, and particularly hot curries, for Stan, is a measure of being a 'good' member of the larger Sri Lankan community. Likewise, for Angela, eating curry is not only a prerequisite to being Eurasian; it is a rite of passage that all generations of her family have now gone through:

> It was like baptism of fire when they learned to eat the curries, it was hot! There was no mild curry, it was just that's the way the curry was cooked and you start. Jug of water in front of you and some ice cream at the end to cool your mouth down but yeah, that's how they learned ... They were about six or seven ... my grandson he grew up with it. He started eating curry puffs from a very young age.

By way of a sort of initiation, members of Angela's family enact being Asian by consuming spicy curries and building up a tolerance for chilli heat from a young age. John's tolerance for chilli is so strong that he has found that his 'tastebuds' have adapted so that, as he said, 'I need my food hotter now.' Similarly Dianne, who sees consuming chilli as an aspect of the 'feisty' Latin influence of her Portuguese side, also needs to add chilli to every meal. She said to me:

> I go and eat a steak and I still, like if I have sauce with it, I'll put chilli powder in the sauce. If I go anywhere I ask for *Tabasco* sauce … as long as it's got chilli I'll eat it … When I get into my own house I'll be growing chillies, definitely.

However, there is an awareness that not everyone can handle the heat of strong curries, so that Angela told me: 'When Eurasians put on a meal they kind of try to, at least I do in my household, to cater for the non-spicy eaters ... and I found that when my girls were growing up, we always had a non-spicy dish for them to eat.' Similarly, Corinne said that when it comes to hot curries 'it's not fair, especially people who aren't used to it and if Australians are eating it for the first or second time. I feel you must never make it too hot.' Again, there is an assumption that curries and 'Australians' are irreconcilable. Curry thus becomes a metonymic symbol of 'Asia' and its fiery heat acts as a measure of that 'Asianness.'

Ironically, the loosely defined dish 'curry' was an invention of the Victorian imperialists. Through both their symbolic and practical roles of domesticating imperialism, British *memsahibs* naturalised 'foreign' dishes in their kitchens in England, converting curry from the exotic into the familiar through home cooking for the family (Zlotnick 1996, p. 52). As Susan Zlotnick tells us, curry, as 'an English fabrication of Indian food' was then 'given back to India' as a 'gift of its "civilizer"' in the second half of the nineteenth century (1996, p. 53). Its hybrid and shifting nature is a part of its history. Lizzie Collingham (2006) traces the generic term 'curry' back to the Portuguese. Their cuisine already contained many different cultural legacies before migrating to India. Rice, almonds, pomegranates, citrus fruits, and sugar were introduced from the Middle East by the Jewish and Moorish rulers. Tomatoes, potatoes, maize, cashew nuts, and turkeys were brought to both Spain and Portugal after Columbus's voyage to the Americas in 1492. In addition, the European spice trade

brought with it much coveted ingredients such as pepper, cloves and cinnamon (Collingham 2006, p. 59).

This diverse range of new foods came together to form a 'stew of chicken simmered with cloves, cinnamon, black pepper, saffron, and a little vinegar and thickened with ground almonds', which was already a standard of Portuguese cuisine during the sixteenth century (*Ibid.*). In south India, the staple of rice and the use of sauces, which were thick with spices, coconut milk, and tamarind paste introduced from Africa by Arab traders, married easily with the already diverse Portuguese cuisine to create what we know today as Goan cuisine (Collingham 2006, p. 59-60). Added to this, was the introduction and appropriation by Portuguese cooks in India of the New World chilli pepper which gave Goan cuisine its notable fiery heat and thereby united the 'culinary histories of three continents: Europe, Asia, and the Americas' (p. 70). According to Collingham, Goan cuisine's most well-known dish, the *vindaloo*, is an adaptation of the Portuguese dish *carne de vinho e alhos* (meat cooked in wine vinegar and garlic). *Vindaloo* was 'discovered' by the British administrators of colonial India and taken back to England where it has risen to national popularity today, so that, as she tells us, vindaloo was included in the chant of British 1998 World Cup football fans 'alongside cups of tea, knitting, and cheddar, as a symbol of Englishness' (pp. 67-68).

The example of Goan cuisine in general and the varied historical roots of the *vindaloo*, perfectly demonstrates the myth of authenticity. Fusion cuisine is not a new concept or a product of an increasingly globalising world, rather all cuisines have always been fusions and culinary interchange has always occurred. Paul Levy (2005, p. 1) reminds us that there are never two identical versions of a canonical dish or recipe, and this negates the notion of authenticity. Hilde Heynen (2006, p. 289) argues that, despite seeming ubiquitous, authenticity is a concept with no clearly fixed meaning. Rather than being an essential quality, authenticity is a subjective, constructed notion so that it exists instead as a perception. This perception of authenticity has led it to become an important category in cultural debates involving objects and practices, ranging from music, dress, traditions and food. In particular, when it comes to cuisines, which like cultures, are not closed, fixed and static systems (Lu & Fine 1995, p. 538) authenticity is an illusion and therefore, as Brian Spooner (1986, p. 223) asserts, 'authenticity is our cultural choice.'

Authenticity in real life

Certainly, despite recipes being fusions of other recipes, ideas of authentic and bounded cuisines still prevailed amongst the participants in my study, and this was particularly evident in talking about curry. For example, Angela told me of the subtle differences in spice blends when it comes to curry. When she first migrated to Australia, she 'used to eat mostly curry powder style of curries ... because we couldn't get the fresh ingredients to make the more Malay style, more Eurasian style curries.' She told me her curries were more Indian in style as a result, however she now finds that 'with more stuff coming in from all over Asia, you can get Sri Lankan mixes as well as North Indian, South Indian, Malaysian, you know Singaporean.' Angela had carefully assigned curry powder blends to various regions. Underpinning these constructed cultural boundaries that are based on Angela's perception of authentic cuisines is again the process of nostalgia that works against any perceived threats to the belief in the distinctions between cultural groups (Harrison 1999, p. 10).

According to Floyd and Forster (2003, p. 1), recipes are repeatedly drawn into cultural debates surrounding authenticity and identity. It is through arguments over the authenticity of a cultural group's food, that clear lines of demarcation are drawn and boundaries are constructed on the premise of an essential authenticity. In a paper elsewhere (Burns 2008), I found that the subtle differences in ingredients in the Love and *Sugee* cakes[74] was often used by my participants as a culinary boundary between Burghers from Sri Lanka and Eurasians from Malaysia and Singapore. In turn, specific cultural boundaries within both broader categories were reinforced through arguments over the authenticity of recipes. In practice however, these boundaries have often been transgressed. In Malaysia, Estelle, for example, used to make *Watalappan*: 'That's the real custard but we use *gula melaka*[75] instead of sugar. And you use coconut milk instead of evaporated milk … I think it's from Sri Lanka.' *Watalappan* which she calls *Moorish Custard* is a spiced, coconut custard especially popular amongst the Muslims of Sri Lanka and with its Portuguese influences it is believed to have originated in Malaya. Similarly, Angela, a Malaccan Eurasian, used to make the Sri Lankan Burgher *Breudher*[76]: 'There's like the Sri Lankan recipe, they used yeast, right. The Malacca one you used toddy … Toddy is the coconut palm, the sap from the coconut

[74] The primary difference between these two semolina cakes is that the Love cake uses cashews and the *Sugee* cake uses almonds.
[75] *Gula Melaka,* or palm sugar, is made from the sap of certain palm trees and used in desserts throughout Southeast Asia.
[76] *Breudher* is a buttery, bread-like cake baked in a fluted, Bundt pan. It is eaten around the Christmas and New Year period in Sri Lanka and is served either with butter and jam, or cheese.

tree. If we didn't have toddy we would make do.' Yet, although adapting this recipe using more readily available ingredients is clearly not a threat to her sense of cultural identity, Angela still subscribes to the notion of authentic culinary traditions. She told me of the differences in foods outside Malacca and particularly the food in Singapore, which she perceives to be 'adapted ... so much' that she longer enjoys eating it:

> I think Singaporeans have this, I don't know what it is in their brain, that they have to make things different, you know ... Change it ... And they destroy the foods because I mean we never put peanuts in our *popias*[77] and stuff like that.

Indeed, any differences or adaptations of remembered foods were often spoken of emotively by my participants, such as Liz who lamented that the Asian foods in Australia are 'not the same' as the foods she remembers from Malaysia and Singapore. Kathleen Stewart (1992, p. 252) has found that the importance of nostalgia as a cultural practice increases as culture becomes more diffuse and boundaries more blurred, which strengthens the argument that the insistence upon culinary authenticity is a reaction to the ambiguity associated with being 'Eurasian.'

Nostalgia and authenticity are entwined and deeply embedded in our sense of self and our cultural identities so that assigning foods to specific cuisines and family arguments over how to cook certain dishes is an emotive response to the sense of loss and disruption within migrant groups (Mannur 2010). Sri Lankan Canadian Shyam Selvadurai (2008, p. 2) sees the debates over authenticity of Sri Lankan dishes like *lamprais* as an expression of homesickness because within the Dutch Burgher diaspora, being Sri Lankan was fixed in the particular moment of leaving the country. He says, 'we could not bear to think of Sri Lanka changing. We wanted it, like our *lamprais*, fixed in a moment, authentic and not, as a culture is, eternally fluid' (*Ibid.*). Culinary nostalgia underpins much of the search for authenticity in relation to food, revealing a close link between food and former homelands. 'I mean I go back to Malacca quite frequently', Angela told me. 'Even I find that outside Malacca the foods have changed a lot. And only in Malacca you'll get pretty much authentic stuff that you used to eat years ago, they still cook it the same way.' Lorraine too misses Sri Lanka: 'I miss it more as I get older. I just love the lifestyle there and the food … but I think it's an appreciation because we've been away for a long time.'

[77] *Popia* is a Chinese soft spring roll with various fillings such as carrots and bean sprouts. It is popular in Malaysia and Singapore.

The nostalgic significance of food from former homelands is also the motivation behind Lorraine's reminder to her grown son to learn to make his favourite Sri Lankan foods. 'When we're gone, there's no one to make hoppers [laughs] ... he loves them,' she told me. It is again evident in the stories participants told me of guarding the cultural knowledge of family heirloom recipes, of Rob's attempt to cook egg curry for his family at Easter using his grandmother's recipe, and Angela's insistence that it is important to keep cooking Eurasian dishes and to pass them on to her children. She said:

> I'm actually putting the recipes down in a book ... family recipes with little family stories ... because we are so mixed up, you know we've got the Dutch, we've got the Portuguese, we've got a bit of Malay stuff coming in, some Chinese foods that we cooked, and then you know, a bit of [my husband's] Burgher things coming in as well.

Rob too, would pass recipes on to any children he may have as he 'would hate to deny them that opportunity', and Dianne felt the same way: 'Pass on the heritage. Definitely. Like the Christmas pie, Devil Curry, things that I would consider authentically Eurasian food.' It was evident then that culinary nostalgia and identity are closely linked, so that despite Melanie not knowing how to actually cook many of the 'Asian' dishes she regularly consumes in restaurants, she would pass various recipes down to her children in the future just so they have them: 'Not every single recipe but certain recipes … I think it's important to just at least give, pass them on whether your children make them or not.'

The nostalgia surrounding food is again reflected in the seeking out of cookbooks from the region, such as Ada who told me: 'I've got a lot of recipe books. Each time I go to Singapore I get a recipe book.' These books have helped her to cook a variety of Chinese, Indian and Malay dishes in Australia, linking her to the culinary landscape of Singapore and helping her to settle into her life in Australia. Significantly, these cookbooks reinforce notions of fixed and bounded cuisines.

Cookbooks and recipes

Cookbooks, with their ability to 'tell unusual cultural tales' (Appadurai 1988, p. 3), play a significant role within culinary boundary processes amongst the participants in my study. Of those who used cookbooks, the participants from Sri Lanka preferred Hilda

Deutrom's *Ceylon Daily News Cookery Book* (1929, Colombo) above all others, with Lorraine declaring 'It's my Bible.' Corinne also mentioned using some of Charmaine Solomon's cookbooks, but again it was the *Ceylon Daily News Cookery Book* that was the most useful to her. The cookbook was edited by Deutrom and has subsequently been revised since her death by others such as Charmaine Solomon locating it firmly as a Sri Lankan culinary text. It was first published in 1929 and remains 'the single most cited cookery book by Dutch Burghers' (van Reyk 2006, p. 5). Popular amongst the Eurasian participants from Singapore and Malaysia, was Ellice Handy's *My Favourite Recipes* (1952, Singapore). This book was also owned by both Liz and Brooke who are of Burgher origin but grew up in Malaysia as Eurasians. The preference for a particular cookbook then appears to be regional rather than cultural, but it also suggests that Liz and Brooke are more fluid in their understandings of Eurasianness. Brooke had actually received her copy of *My Favourite Recipes* from her grandmother when she first moved out of her family home, along with some other cookbooks all of which 'had something to do with curry and Indian food, Malaysian food.' *My Favourite Recipes* with its emphasis on '*briyanis* and all sorts of Asian kinds of food' was Brooke's grandmother's way to initiate her into an Asian culinary tradition. 'She thought I needed to learn how to cook', Brooke told me of her grandmother, but added 'I haven't used them, haven't used any of them!'

In my own family, my mother (a Eurasian of Burgher origin in Malaysia) owned a copy of *My Favourite Recipes* which she recently gave to me as well as my grandmother's older second edition copy of the *Ceylon Daily News Cookery Book* (1934, Colombo). However, according to my mother, my grandmother never used this book when cooking, which raises questions about how and why she had acquired a copy. Whether she had chosen to buy the book herself, or if someone had given it as a gift, my grandmother's cookbook tells us much about the construction of the Burgher identity as distinct from simply being 'Eurasian.' If she had bought the book herself, and then not used it at all (her Love cake recipe was an heirloom recipe handed down by the women on her mother's side of the family, and was different to Hilda Deutron's recipe), then was it just that it was an important Burgher cultural text that gave shape to her Burgher identity simply through the defining act of ownership of the book? And if someone else had bought it for her, was that person externally identifying her as a Burgher or perhaps responding to her assertions of Burgherness within the Malaysian Eurasian community? Either way, owning the cookbook was for my grandmother, a subtle way to enact the boundaries of her identity.

Particularly for the women in my study,[78] these cookbooks seem to also have acted as a lifeline to past homes and culinary cultures, so that the new and daunting task of having to cook for the family in Australia was aided by these books. Pam laughed when she told me that she had cookbooks when living in Singapore but had never used any of them. She did however, use them when she migrated to Perth, and particularly found *My Favourite Recipes* (1970, Singapore) to be useful: 'I'm not sure if she's Eurasian, but … I found her cookbooks very easy to follow.' She added that she has 'a lot of Western cookery books as well ... a lot of the *Women's Weekly*', which she bought so that she could learn how to make Beef Wellingtons. Pam's story speaks of a class based and gendered experience in which the women were expected to upkeep familiar culinary traditions in their Australian home-making, despite some never having been involved in home-making practices in their former homelands (see Chapters 3 and 4). 'My mother never cooked and my mother never cleaned' Pam said, and so she therefore learnt to cook using 'cookery books … and recipes from friends.' Ironically, she learnt Asian cookery from an Irish work colleague (who had an Anglo-Indian husband) whom she met at her first job in Perth, and who would give her 'Asian' recipes: 'I really have to thank her for a lot. Because I had no idea. I mean yes, my mum used to roast. The roasting was no problem. But any Asian cooking, I actually learnt here.'

Similarly, neither Corinne nor her mother had had to cook in Sri Lanka, so in Australia she learnt to cook through 'disasters, and friends telling you what to do.' She only used cookbooks for her Christmas cake and bread pudding which had to be exact with ingredients and also if she was 'trying out something new and something Western.' Lorraine also grew up with servants in Sri Lanka and so learnt to cook in Australia using cookbooks: 'Because we never ever thought that we would leave our country … I didn't even know how to turn on the stove.' Rob too remembers his mother being taught to cook by her mother-in-law, because his mother came from a big family with servants: '[T]here was a cook and other people helping. So she didn't have to ... oh, she was still involved ... if you were a girl ... you were expected [to learn] ... some of the things.' Estelle's Tamil Sri Lankan mother taught her to cook and she also learnt from a relative's old 'Ceylon book, which I have. And there's a lot of Ceylon recipes … I used to follow that, then sometimes ask my mother.' Similarly, Dianne who had always watched

[78] Aside from Rob's use of his grandmother's egg curry recipe, Stan was the only man within my participant group to use cookbooks. Using the *Daily News Cookery book*, he makes jellies and jams from the fruit in his garden such as guavas, and he also makes Sri Lankan hoppers, *watalappan* and some Sri Lankan sweets.

her grandparents preparing food in their Malaccan kitchen, wanted to learn how to cook when she was sixteen. She was not allowed to do anything in the kitchen so she instead turned to cookbooks as well as the recipes that her grandparents had collected or written down in a big book. These stories show that, at least for the women within my participant group, cookbooks were significant texts of cultural identity, and handwritten recipe books or cookbooks that have been handed down from parents and grandparents, hold extra nostalgic and family significance.

Paul van Reyk (2006, p. 3) draws on the handwritten cookbook of his Burgher grandmother, Ada de la Harpe, to 'recapture and reproduce' the foods of his formative years in Sri Lanka. He says of the cookbook that 'somewhere along the way it became a significant text of another kind. It became a way to interrogating the identity I was developing as a Dutch Burgher' (2006, p. 3). For myself, I do not have a legacy of Dutch Burgher dishes from my childhood other than my grandmother's Love cake and the Rich cake, a Sri Lankan fruit cake made at Christmas. However, I recognise a similar feeling to van Reyk's, that my grandmother's cake recipes typed onto sheets of yellowing paper and her copy of the *Ceylon Daily News Cookery Book* are significant and important texts which I will keep close and hand down to my children. They are a way for me to understand my own family history through culinary memories.

Mannur (2010, p. 29) stresses that the desire to remember home through culinary memories is not simply a nostalgic gesture; rather, these memories link food and culinary practices with both the desire for a homeland and national identity, and this in turn can lead to a distorted view that imagines cuisines as 'discrete, immutable and coherent expressions of unfaltering national essences. Through their relationship with family memory, nostalgia and authenticity, cookbooks and recipes can strengthen this idea of separate and bounded cuisines, despite the reality of the cultural borders of 'Eurasian' kitchens as porous (Seitz 2006, p. 167). Certainly, while both the Eurasians and the Burghers see themselves as distinct groups, they share many cultural cross-overs, particularly when it comes to food: their shared legacy of European colonial expansion throughout South and Southeast Asia has resulted in similar culinary traditions with roots in Portuguese and Dutch cuisine. With the advent of British colonial rule, culinary influences travelled back and forth between Ceylon and Malaya as Burghers and the Asian-domiciled British migrated within the realms of empire during the 19th century. In particular, many Burghers and their culinary traditions were absorbed into the existing Eurasian communities in Malaysia. The recipe of the Sri

Lankan Love cake is evidence of this absorption, but also sums up the nostalgic significance of food and its associated practices.

The Love Cake, in its current form, originated in colonial Ceylon but takes its influences from around the globe.[79] Like the concept of 'Eurasian', the recipe is a product of the vibrant cultural exchanges that occurred at the intersection of East and West. Although no one knows its exact origin (some say Dutch, most say Portuguese) similar cake recipes can be found in both European and Asian culinary traditions. The cake incorporates a mix of ingredients such as semolina from other Portuguese cakes, alongside local Sri Lankan spices such as nutmeg, cinnamon and cardamom. Added to these is the Arabic influence of rosewater that is found in many cakes from Portugal and Spain dating from the Moorish occupation of the Iberian Peninsula. It is highly likely that the Love Cake and the similar Eurasian *Sugee* Cake are closely related (the former contains cashew nuts and the latter almonds), one being adapted from the other, using more readily available ingredients depending on location. Interestingly, all of my participants, Burgher and Eurasian, knew of and have eaten the cake at family gatherings. Eurasian participants from Malaysia and Singapore have also made the cake or continue to do so suggesting that this recipe has extended beyond the boundaries of Sri Lankan cuisine.

Aside from the role that Love cake has played as an object of cultural comparison, my participants' stories articulated the layered meanings of this particular cake. The food voice, according to Long (2004, p. 120-121), is often emotional and evocative of relationships and memories. Patricia, who is of Burgher origin from Malaysia, has a strong sense of tradition so that making the Sri Lankan Love cake for Christmas is, for her, 'very important, every year.' Cherished family memories are associated with making and eating the cake. She and her sister Liz would watch their mother make both the Love cake and Rich cake every year at Christmas, and would help chop up all the fruit and lick the bowls at the end with her brothers. Their father would help to pound the cashews using the mortar and pestle so that the whole family was involved. Many cakes would be made and distributed amongst family and friends as part of their Christmas ritual. Today the cakes are a strong reminder of Christmas and their now deceased parents. Liz said, 'I've always eaten Love Cake, from the time we were little. My memories were of Christmas. It was always done at Christmas time ... always Love

[79] I draw here from my conference paper on issues of authenticity and boundaries surrounding the Love cake (Burns 2008).

Cake and Rich Cake.' Her mother used to make both cakes in Malaysia as well as here in Australia, and she still eats the Love cake every Christmas so that she has come to associate it with her mother's memory: 'Now I miss it. I think I miss it a lot. I don't make it, my sister does, and yeah, I miss [Mum] because of that I think.' The subtle shift in wording shows that when Liz said she misses the Love cake (which she still actually eats at Christmas as she has always done) it is actually her mother that she is missing. It is her mother's voice that speaks through the cake's recipe and her mother's presence that Liz feels at Christmas time.

In Pauline Seitz's (2006, p. 167) lovely account of knowing her grandmother only through a walnut cake recipe, she spoke of renewing the presence of her grandmother every time she bakes the cake. Yet, she points out, by maintaining this kitchen legacy she is still baking a different history to that of her grandmother. In my previous experiences of eating the Love cake at Christmas, it has been primarily the cake's connection to memories of family Christmases and its power to renew my grandmother's presence that I found important. However, the cake had a different importance for my grandmother who identified as Eurasian in Malaysia. Making the Love cake each year was her way of belonging to the Eurasian community, but also, importantly, to position her family specifically as Dutch Burghers within this community. According to my mother, my grandmother was taught to make both the Love and Rich Cakes by her Sri Lankan-born mother so that she would always know that she was specifically of Dutch Burgher origin. I now add my grandmother's understandings of her identity as another layer to the Love cake's meaning for me: it has become the only legacy of my family's Burgher ancestry, and therefore I have chosen to continue this tradition by baking my own Love cake every Christmas so that it becomes a common thread in my young daughter's life too, and so will undoubtedly shape her understandings of her own identity when she is older. The option to at least know about the 'roots' and 'routes' of her background will be there in the cake every Christmas.

Conclusion

Using Hauck-Lawson's notion of the 'food voice', in this chapter I have examined the underlying messages behind my participants' food choices, memories and stories. Throughout my fieldwork discussions of food often provided a 'safe' platform for discussions about cultural identity. It is over arguments about specific recipes and foods that understandings about being Eurasian are articulated and negotiated with. It

became clear that food is used by participants in identity processes as a boundary marker through claims of 'authentic' ethnic cuisines which ran parallel to the perception of authentic Eurasian or Burgher identities. This was particularly the case for those who have geographically bounded identities such as Angela and Dianne who constantly draw on their links with Malacca to legitimate their cookery as 'authentically' Eurasian (Wardrop 2012, p. 233).

In reality Eurasian cuisine reflects the historical and cultural flows throughout the South and Southeast Asian region, incorporating dishes, ingredients and cooking styles from Indian, Malay, Chinese, Dutch and Portuguese cuisines (Brissenden 2011, p. 313). Certainly, my participants experienced the most cultural crossover when it came to food and yet, while they acknowledge this culinary fusion, the idea of authentic and bounded cuisines remains alongside this and is again manifested in the 'Western'/'Asian' dichotomy. An example of this is curry, which for my participants has become a trope for 'Asia' and is set in binary opposition to 'Western' (and sometimes 'English') food, which is often described either as pastas, or roasts and lamb chops. While some participants made distinctions between regional differences within the loosely defined category of 'curry', the dish and its spicy heat have become a measure for 'Asianness' and a rite of passage to acculturate children into being Eurasian.

Aside from the division between 'rice and curry' and 'Western'/'English' foods, further boundary lines were drawn between various recipes such as those for the Love and *Sugee* cakes, and canonical cookbooks, to denote the distinctions within the broader 'Eurasian' category. Certainly, the resulting central feature of Eurasian' foodways is that it simultaneously asserts authenticities specific to these sub-categories of 'Eurasian' while simultaneously acknowledging its vibrant 'East-meets-West' hybridity. It is precisely the 'mixedness' of their cuisine that my participants have found unique despite their retaining a commitment to believing in a specific and recognisable 'Eurasian' cuisine.

CONCLUSIONS

> At the end of the day everyone's going to be of mixed race. We're heading down that track already.
>
> Burt

> The way I see myself is more of a descendant of intermarriages. So I'm not half this and half that. I'm just a product of multiculturalism.
>
> Dianne

'Most people in the world today are mixed, but they just don't know it'[80]

When I asked Brooke to choose from a list of factors that have shaped her experience of 'being Eurasian' she told me that none did, as she experienced these factors from what she saw as a normative perspective, what she called 'the "Australian" way.' She explained this by saying: 'I don't go to church, I eat international cuisine, I married an Australian, I wear modern, western clothes, my manners are average, I don't belong to any ethnic groups and I speak English.' By contrast, her account of how she experiences being Eurasian came from a longer response at the end of her interview with me, a response that spoke of family connection, visual appearance, home objects, food, and memory:

> I'm reminded of it at any family gathering. So any Christmas, any birthdays. Only on my mum's side, because most of my dad's side is overseas … when I was growing up it would be [the grandparents], the ones that were in Australia, and they were the Eurasian ones … so whenever I come home … seeing the ornaments that mum has as well. And also seeing her (laughs) … She looks Eurasian, so … and whenever we sit down and reminisce about previous life in Malaysia, and photographs, when we look at photographs.

Clearly then, Brooke's mother is her reference point and it is through family traditions, everyday practices, and the storytelling and memory associated with looking at photographs that Brooke is reminded that she is Eurasian. This in turn reminds me of the communal ways in which identities are formed, shaped and performed, so that our

[80] *Brooke*

narrations of ourselves are shaped by others and formed in what Seyla Benhabib (1999, p. 348) calls a 'web of stories.' Certainly, throughout the interviews I conducted during my fieldwork I found that my participants' senses of themselves are intimately shaped by familial, local, national and global processes. For example, Rob, who was born in Perth to Sri Lankan Burgher parents, has sought to understand his heritage through his relationship with his parents and their Sri Lankan community group, which includes a high proportion of Burghers from Sri Lanka but also from Malaysia and Singapore. He spoke of feeling a sense of connection to a group identity at a number of community functions several years ago that his parents were involved in: 'I did look around and think god, everybody looks alike. I must look like that too … I did have that sense of a kind of homogenousness, as *this is one group*' (orig. emphasis).

Rob's understandings about his Burgher identity, within his self-identification as a 'Sri Lankan Australian', have been shaped first by his parents who migrated to Perth in the 1950s with their own experiences of the social milieu and politically defined ethno-cultural categories in Sri Lanka fresh in their minds. While growing up, his interactions with a Perth-based Sri Lankan community, many of whom had experience the often-restrictive processes of migrating to Australia, have also influenced his sense of Burgherness. And as an adult today, he has shaped his understandings further through academic study so, as I discussed at the beginning of this thesis, Rob has come to understand his Burgher identity as being eurasian 'with a small "e".' He uses the term in relation to himself only as a way 'to describe what being a Burgher means', noting that while it does indeed fit within his definition of 'Eurasian' ('Off the top of my head I would say just people of mixed European and Asian ancestry'), 'there are more specific meanings' for the term in other places such as Malaysia.

In this thesis I have examined the ways in which self-identity is negotiated (created, adopted, practiced) by and within the group of 'Eurasian' people and how their understandings contribute to thinking about 'race' and 'mixed race' in Perth, Western Australia. The examples of both Brook and Rob reveal very individual ways of understanding their own identities, but also how these are shaped by broader processes, in a 'web of stories.' Individual understandings about Eurasianness exist within a network of families and larger 'Eurasian' communities that are shaped by historical and political understandings in each locale so that as Ien Ang (2001, p. 200) points out, identities are porous and evolve through the 'multiple interrelationships with myriad, differently positioned others.' Through my research for this thesis, I have

indeed found that my participants' understandings about being 'Eurasian' are porous and have often evolved throughout their lifetimes based on their relationships and life experiences. As a result, many have expressed contradictory and fluid understandings about being 'Eurasian', despite also imagining themselves to belong to one specific identiary group. This imagined group is based on the simple definition of having a mix of Asian and European ancestries, which was treated more as a reference point from which to derive meaning. Yet, participants simultaneously acknowledged the complexities of a Eurasian identity so that the simple definition was almost a fall-back definition that helps to reduce the ambiguity and confusion surrounding the definition of 'Eurasian.' Strategic hybridity (Noble, Poynting & Tabar 1999) has then become a useful theoretical frame from which to examine the complexities and contradictory understandings of my participants. It is particularly useful in relation to this ambiguous identity in that it helps us to account for the multiplicity of possibilities that surround the notion of being 'Eurasian' and acknowledges the contextual shifts in self-identification.

Returning to Christine Choo *et al* (2004, p. 71), 'Eurasian' as a term is ambiguous and difficult to define. This leads to a variety of meanings for different people in different contexts and varies between and within families. As Kirsty Walker (2012, p. 303) points out, Eurasian families have built their 'archive[s] of memory' around 'the narratives of inter-ethnic marriage and migration within, between, and beyond the empires of Southeast Asia.' Therefore there can be no single 'truth' to being Eurasian, nor a single satisfying definition. As a result, and as I stated in the Introduction, my thesis can neither be a definitive historical or contemporary account of Eurasians throughout the world, nor a definitive account of people who identify as Eurasian in Perth, Western Australia. I instead offer this thesis as a contribution to a social history of Eurasians in South and Southeast Asia, and as a contribution from an Australian perspective to the varied literature on mixed race. My thesis could only ever be an in-depth examination of the understandings and accounts of a small, yet diverse group of people in a specific locale, yet, I suggest that it carries important implications for issues specific to Australia's contested brand of multiculturalism and senses of belonging amongst those citizens who find themselves located outside the Australian national imaginary. As Rob said to me, 'I'm always asked where I come from': despite being born in Australia, he has always felt as though he 'exist[s] on the margins.' It was then through my participants' own understandings, their voices and stories, that I have examined being 'Eurasian.'

Findings

I began with the notion of narrative in Chapter 1 to examine my participants' stories about their migration experiences, personal narratives which have significantly shaped their understandings and constructions of their 'Eurasian' identities. Using Shelley Bird's (2007, p. 317) suggestion that storytelling is a sensemaking device, I found that participants used their life and migration stories during the interviews as a way to first understand their own identities and then to express this to me. Regardless of how much actual historical knowledge each participant possessed or retained about colonial histories in their former homelands, the act of narrating their lives before, during and after migration helped them to understand and explain what being Eurasian means to them. However, this was not a static experience. Because life stories are open ended, participants' understandings of being Eurasian were sometimes contradictory, often shifting during the interview process and varying between and within families.

All of the participants in this study broadly defined 'Eurasian' in the same way: someone who has mixed European and Asian ancestry. However, speaking to the complexity of ethnic identification, and drawing on strategic hybridity, they simultaneously contradicted this definition when speaking more deeply about what it is to be Eurasian. I argued that the disruption of the migration process challenged my participants' senses of self and provoked them in various degrees to question and come to terms with their personal identities. This was particularly salient for those participants who migrated as children, termed 'the 1.5 generation' by Reuben G. Rumbaut and Kenji Ima (1988). This sub-group of participants found that their concepts of self were further confused by the migration process, more so than those who migrated as adults, arguably because they had a heightened sense of divided loyalties between the old and new places of their childhoods. They also occupied a further interstitial space between their first generation migrant parents and any second-generation migrant children, which seems to have contributed to their feelings of confusion and senses of belonging.

Aside from generational differences, my participants' experiences have been shaped by their countries of origin and years of migration. For example, those participants who migrated under the 'White Australia' policy were required to provide proof of European 'blood', a demand that increased their awareness of their ancestries. The migration process was also shaped by gender and class dynamics so that it was a

common experience amongst my participants to feel a sense of loss in relation to home life and the relatively high living standards that they had been used to in the past were often lowered after migrating to Australia. In their former homelands many participants enjoyed a relatively high degree of economic and social status in relation to indigenous populations so that, for example, they grew up in large homes with servants. Having to take on all of the domestic work in their Australian homes, which has primarily been the role of the women in my study, has made the settling-in process more difficult. These factors all impacted on participants' senses of belonging in Australia, which in turn has affected their ties with former homelands and how closely they now identify as 'Eurasian.'

As with the concept of 'mixed race', 'Eurasian' as a 'mixed' identity is dynamic and contingent on the contemporary politics of race, shifting and changing over time and geographical space. Bhabha's theory of hybridity becomes an important lens here because it challenges, yet also reinforces the idea of essential and pure categories of identity. This limitation of hybridity reflects the complexity of 'Eurasian' identities and explains the contradictions of many of my participants when it comes to identifying as 'mixed race' or hybrid. As in hybridity theory, the hybrid subject often becomes the new 'pure', which has led to the idea of fixed and stable categories like Eurasian and Burgher. As a result, hybridity was rejected particularly by those who came from Sri Lanka where Burgher exists as a legal category and those who came specifically from Malacca in Malaysia where Eurasians there have achieved *bumiputera* status. Despite this, all my participants conceded to a broad understanding of 'Eurasian' during the interviews and many shifted back and forth between allowing for definitional fluidity and trying to fix the concept within a specific geographic and cultural location. This again speaks to the notion of a strategic hybridity where participants shifted between deploying hybridity and essentialism at different times and in different contexts.

Certainly, the limitations of the dominant frameworks of hybridity theory and mixed race studies do not accurately represent the lived experience of 'Eurasianness', and this is where strategic hybridity comes to play, to build on these concepts and help us to understand the multiple subject positionings that 'Eurasians' can take. Within this larger framework, I argue that we need to conceive of identity as existing along a continuum (Drummond 1980; Caplan 2005). Certainly, throughout my research, and as Noble, Poynting and Tabar (1999) have also found, it has become clear that configurations of identity fall along a cultural continuum between ideas of essentialism

and an embracing of hybridity. However, this was more complex than participants having fixed positionings at only one point along the continuum. Rather, as I found in Chapter 2, many of the participants in my study seemed to simultaneously adopt (and I could here also use the word believe) in an essential and particular 'Eurasian' identity while at the same time embracing hybridity and a certain fluidity, what Bhabha terms 'splitting.'

This demonstrated that at times hybridity had indeed become the new purity, yet it also suggests that when it comes to identity my participants would move back and forth along the continuum as they sought to understand and negotiate their identities in the contexts of migration and everyday life in the new homeland. These concepts find themselves under the larger frame of strategic hybridity, which, as Marafiote and Plec define as 'a purposeful, calculated implementation of hybridity as a rhetorical strategy … [that pursues] the possibility of multiple discursive identifications' (2006, p. 70). Strategic hybridity rejects binary logic and instead embraces multiplicity so that contradictions can exist comfortably within individuals' understandings. Certainly, rather than holding to fixed and stable identities, my participants have a multiplicity of subject positions available to them, and so ambivalence becomes a central feature of being Eurasian. Despite their perceptions of authenticity and boundedness, my participants shifted, crossed, imposed and challenged the borders that they themselves or others have constructed. Here it is Maria P.P. Root's (1996) understandings of racial boundary crossings, another manifestation of strategic hybridity, that remain highly relevant and supportive of my position that there is no one way to being Eurasian.

Strategic hybridity's continuum appears within the work of Vicky Lee (2004, p. 257) for example, in her study of the Hong Kong Eurasian experience. She found that what emerged through the memoirs of the three women in her study, was 'a wavering continuum of their varying self-definitions of their Hong Kong Eurasian heritage.' While one of Lee's participants identifies primarily as British, another understands her Eurasianness from the perspective of being Chinese, while the third woman in her study remains somewhere in the middle, embracing 'indeterminacy and undecidability' as her defining characteristic of being Eurasian (*Ibid.*). Lee concludes that while all people can at times and to varying degrees 'fashion themselves at their own wilful choice', this is a particularly poignant experience for Eurasians who are subject to a 'constant jostling of choices' (*Ibid.*). And she reminds us that for the women in her

study, these choices along the continuum were shaped by the socio-cultural milieu of Hong Kong which was jostling with its own identity choices in the twentieth century.

Multiracial subjectivities, as Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe (1999, p. 21) has found, are indeed shaped and delimited by particular and continually shifting geopolitical and socio-historical contexts. She argues against binary thinking, and despite also finding Bhabha's liminal 'third space' to be similar in ways to her conception of mixed race (or métissage as she prefers to call it), she still sees it as limiting multiracial subjectivities to a specific interstitial space. Instead she returns to Gloria Anzaldua's (1987, p. 76) assertion that 'I, as a mestiza, continually walk out of one culture and into another, because I am in all cultures at the same time', to demonstrate that the narratives of mixed race people negotiate, challenge and subvert all subject positions (Ifekwunigwe 1999, p. 21). Their narratives remain fluid, shifting back and forth along the continuum.

However, the ability of participants' to shift along the continuum, is contingent upon their skin. This further strengthens the argument that strategic hybridity best exemplifies the very contingent lived experience of multiracial individuals. Certainly, varied skin tones have shaped their experiences both in former homelands and in Australia today, not least for those participants who migrated during the years of the 'White Australia' policy and so had to prove a certain level of 'whiteness.' Their relationships with and understandings of whiteness have therefore been a relevant and often significant factor in their understandings of being Eurasian. My participants understood whiteness variously as a synonym of 'Western', 'European', 'British' and 'English', which they set in binary opposition to 'Asian' - in effect, for them 'white' and 'Asian' exist at either extremes of the continuum or spectrum of skin tones on which they move back and forth, so that some would even claim whiteness despite not having white skin.

These same participants and numbers of others recounted stories of childhoods in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei that were steeped in British customs. Their parents and grandparents nostalgically emulated the domestic practices, interiors and dress of the British, in effect performing whiteness arguably as a declaration of respectability that resisted any external negative constructions of 'Eurasians' as mixed race subjects. In Chapter 3 I used this notion of 'respectability as resistance' to frame my analysis of the narrative persistence of whiteness that underpinned many of my participants' identifications. I argued that despite deploying respectability, my older

participants, particularly in the postcolonial climates of their homelands, displayed a persistence in the belief of 'Eurasians' being a little 'less' and this was (often unconsciously) attributed to their 'Asianness.' Overcoming any feelings of inferiority was a process seemingly dealt with by drawing upon and identifying more closely with European ancestries, another mechanism of strategic hybridity and one that is contingent upon context. As a result many of these participants had internalised hierarchies in which 'European' was positioned at the top and 'Asian' at the bottom, with Eurasians located somewhat uneasily in the middle.

The accounts of domestic performances of a 'British' respectability in childhood homes that valued whiteness and status, have now experienced a generational shift so that without irony these same participants now primarily perform their 'Asianness' throughout their homes in Australia. In Chapter 4 I examined how participants (re)create and maintain their Eurasianness within the physical spaces of their houses, and how they have created a sense of 'home' after migration, particularly through the use of objects which had metonymic value. I found that through their relationships with their objects of home decoration, which often nostalgically recalled former homelands through Tolia-Kelly's (2001, p. 51) notion of remembered landscapes, participants have negotiated their Eurasian identities during the transition from previous homelands to Australia. They have shifted from European-styled homes to more hybridised dwellings with Asian-orientated decoration, revealing a relaxation of past anxieties relating to whiteness and a willingness to adopt a more open alignment with Asia. Indeed, 'Asian' ornaments have often come to be deemed representative of their 'Eurasianness.' Within this thinking nested the notion of the cultural continuum, this time configured as a Western/Asian dichotomy, and this was again evident in the distinctions my participants made in regard to clothing styles.

As I found in Chapter 5 participants made distinctions between Western and Asian styles of clothing, which was also configured as a modern/traditional dichotomy. All participants primarily own and still do wear what they describe as Western clothing, with some of the women choosing to wear some 'Asian' or Asian-inspired clothing or accessories on occasion, and a couple of men wearing sarongs to sleep. During the colonial period in both Ceylon and Malaya, Western dress was a critical point of distinction for those of mixed heritage as it was a highly visible statement of allegiance with European colonisers. This meant a level of social upliftment for Burghers and Eurasians during the colonial era, but also marked them out during the period of de-

colonisation and independence. In Australia, wearing 'Asian' dress for special occasions has now become a point of distinction for my participants, particularly for the few who choose to wear specific dress such as the *sarong kebaya*, *saris* and the *shalwar kameez*, at different times for different reasons. As with their home decoration, these accessories often contain a deliberately symbolic edge in that they represent a loosely defined sense of 'Asia.'

What remains is the essence, what Herbert Gans (1979) terms 'symbolic ethnicity': a selective use of certain aspects or elements from cultural traditions that are often thought of as old-fashioned in former homelands, and a reconfiguration of them in the new home country so that these elements become highly symbolic within the diaspora. Within this notion, elements of other cultures in other countries can also be included if there is a perceived value to the individual, such as the use of Chinese blue and white ceramics in their homes as a trope for 'Asia' and by extension their 'Eurasianness' by some participants, or the use of the *sarong kebaya*, which has a strong connection with Indonesia to represent a perceived heritage of 'Eurasian' dress. And as I found in my research, symbolic ethnicity plays itself out in my participants' food choices so that consuming curry, which in itself is a hybrid dish born of the relationship between colonial Britain and India, has become a trope for Asia and a measure of 'Eurasianness.'

By drawing on Jean Duruz's (2007, p. 184) assertion that 'making' food runs parallel to the making of 'self' and 'place' in everyday life, I discussed the use of food as a multilayered trope and strategy in ethnic identification and border construction in Chapter 6. Food as metaphor mediates memory in my participants' careful drawing up of boundaries and borders based on their perceptions of a constructed authenticity. Statements that revolve around the idea that 'you are Burgher, you make the Love cake, we Eurasians make the *Sugee* cake' (Burns 2008), reveal a great deal about the way that these borders and boundaries are conceived of and carried through. The 'Eurasian' 'food voice' (Hauck-Lawson 1998, p. 21) spoke again of a contradiction between the notions of authenticity and culinary fusion. In reality Eurasian cuisine reflects the historical and cultural flows throughout the South and Southeast Asian region, incorporating dishes, ingredients and cooking styles from Indian, Malay, Chinese, Dutch and Portuguese cuisines (Brissenden 2011, p. 313). However, while acknowledging this culinary fusion, my participants retained the idea of authentic and bounded cuisines which was again imagined within a 'Western'/'Asian' dichotomy: curry for example was

often set in binary opposition to 'Western' (and sometimes 'English') food, which participants described varyingly as pastas, or roasts and lamb chops.

Further distinctions were made within the broader category of 'Eurasian' by drawing boundaries between various cookbooks and recipes such as those for the Love and *Sugee* cakes as I have found in a paper elsewhere (Burns 2008). The simultaneous perception of separate and bounded 'authentic' cuisines and the acknowledgement of a vibrant 'East-meets-West' fusion emerged as the central characteristic of Eurasian cuisine. This last point seems to exemplify my findings from my entire thesis, representing the multiple and often contradictory subject positions of my participants throughout their everyday lives and demonstrating the multiplicity of possibilities afforded to them through the deployment of strategic hybridity.

Further research

From this thesis, there are many avenues from which to take and expand upon in subsequent publications, and many more questions to be answered. As I have indicated throughout this thesis (and within my footnotes), there are many areas for possible further research. For example, I would like to look at the phenomenon of return visits amongst my participants to gain a more in-depth understanding of their relationships with previous homelands. Likewise, a more thorough examination of how both religion and gender have shaped participants' understandings would add more depth to our knowledge about 'Eurasianness' and how these dimensions affect choices in relation to clothing, food, and home objects, as well as marriage partner. Moreover, for those in marriages to non-Eurasians, it would be interesting to more fully examine how this affects and shapes understandings and choices in relation to performing 'Eurasianness' within the home. Other areas for future research would be to investigate traditions of hospitality amongst these groups of 'Eurasians' as this is an area of great importance for Anglo-Indians (A Blunt 2013, pers. comm., 2 September), and to investigate how 'Asianness' is performed beyond the home.

I would also like to further examine my argument around the notion of 'respectability as resistance' as this was more of an implicit phenomenon within my research and there was a definite need to unpack this further. Tied in with this was the notion of performing Whiteness/Britishness and I would like to conduct further research into the relationship between these performances and photography. Looking through my Eurasian grandmother's photograph albums has inspired this. She has cut and pasted

old black and white magazine images of members of the British royal family at the beginning of the album, but even more interestingly, on the last page of the album, after photographs of family members, there are more magazine cut-outs, but this time they are of smiling, fair-haired, white-skinned babies. No-one in the family knows exactly why she has included these pictures (just that she liked them), but the contrast between these babies (who seem to be from old magazine advertisements) and photographs of her own dark-haired, brown-skinned children is striking and leaves me with many questions about my grandmother's desires for whiteness.

In relation to deeper issues of identity, it would be interesting to compare the experience and understandings of 'Eurasians' with that of people of part-Aboriginal descent to more fully examine the ways in which 'mixed race' is understood in the Australian context, but also the socio-political aspects of identifying as mixed. Another area of interest would be to interrogate the exoticisation of 'Eurasian' women to determine how ideas about the 'exotic' are gendered and sexualised, particularly around the physical appearances of women in all areas of life.

Further, extending the scope of this thesis for future research would be vital in understanding contemporary tensions throughout the world in relation to identity and ethnicity, and in understanding the contentious issue of multiculturalism particularly in the Australian context. A recent trend emanating from Malaysia is to define Eurasians as the legacy or children of the VOC (De Witt 2006). Importantly, this traces the genesis of the Eurasian identity to the point of contact that marked the beginning of the colonial period in South and South East Asia. However, it excludes those who have become recently 'mixed' through the increasing numbers of interethnic marriages both in Australia and around the world. This is certainly an important area for further research. The ever-increasing younger generation of 'Eurasians', those born in Australia to a parent of Asian heritage and a parent of Anglo or European heritage, will help define the Australian socio-cultural landscape of the future. It is therefore important to know how they identify at a personal level and to know if members of this broad grouping have a sense of a shared identity. Does 'race' even play a part in their lives or is it fast becoming a redundant category of identification for this generation? What I recognise as a common thread within these questions is that there remains the need to approach this area of research with a fluid perspective, and to again draw upon the concept of strategic hybridity, to allow for a multiplicity of identity positionings.

With this sense of fluidity in mind, at the end of my thesis I come back to the question about whether my white skinned, blue eyed, blonde haired daughter Zoe is Eurasian? After this journey through my doctoral research and given her ancestry, my answer is: Yes, Zoe *is* Eurasian, if and until she chooses not to be.

Appendix 1: List of participants ascending by age

Pseudonym	Age	Interview Date	Country of Origin	Arrival in Perth
Hayley	18	February 2009	Australia	N/A
Brooke	28	December 2007	Malaysia	1984
Melanie	31	October 2007	Malaysia	1984
Anthony	35	August 2007	Brunei (born in Singapore, emigrated from Italy)	1986
Dianne	36	October 2007	Malaysia	1986
Rob	44	April 2008	Perth	N/A
Liz	53	July 2007	Brunei (born in Singapore, emigrated from Malaysia)	1984
Angela	56	August 2007	Malaysia (emigrated from Indonesia)	1985 (Melbourne, Aust. 1981)
Patricia	57	October 2007	Brunei (born in Malaysia, emigrated from Italy)	1986
Lorraine	62	April 2008	Sri Lanka (emigrated from Hong Kong)	1974
Corinne	63	March 2008	Sri Lanka	1973
Burt	67	January 2008	Singapore	1974
Pam	67	January 2008	Singapore (born in Malaysia)	1974
John	69	March 2008	Sri Lanka	1973
Stan	72	March 2008	Sri Lanka (emigrated from India)	1952
Estelle	79	September 2007	Malaysia	1988
Marie	79	April 2008	Malaysia	1967
Ada	80	April 2008	Singapore (born in Malaysia)	1968
Lionel	85	March 2008	Malaysia	1967

Appendix 2: List of images appearing in the thesis

Appendix 3: List of interview prompts

Section 1: Race and Identity

Can you tell me a bit about your background? (ie. where you were born, grew up, other places you have lived, etc.) Which country do you consider your country of origin?

When did you migrate to Australia? Do you have Australian citizenship? Do you have citizenship of another country?

What language(s) do you speak at home, and when?

How do you choose to identify racially, for example in the census?

Do you identify as Eurasian? What is your definition of Eurasian?

Do you identify as Burgher? Have you ever considered your heritage as a dual heritage? Who do you feel can identify as Burgher?

What do you think of the label 'mixed race' as another category of identity? Do you use it, or have you ever used it to describe yourself? Have you ever had to explain what your race or ethnicity is to someone who doesn't understand? How did it make you feel?

Are there instances or situations when you don't tell someone that you are 'mixed' or when you emphasise it more? Why did you do this?

Have you ever changed the way you identify yourself racially throughout your life? Why did you do this? Was it a conscious decision or did you feel compelled to change by any outside factors? How did migration affect the way you identify?

Do you ever identify differently in different situations? Which situations and why do they make you change the way you identify?

Does skin colour matter to you? Does it affect the way you identify? Have you experienced any racism because of it?

Do you think of "white" as a race? How do you feel about your white/European heritage? Do you think that whiteness is attached to class and status? Are class and status important to you?

Do you call yourself Australian first and foremost? Or at all? Has anyone ever made you feel less Australian? How?

Have you ever had trouble classifying or categorising yourself? In what situation and how did you end up identifying?

Do you ever feel torn between two cultures? If so, how do you deal with this?

Section 2: Everyday Life

Where is "home" for you?

What suburb do you live in and why did you choose it?

Your House:
Why did you choose this/your house? What was it about the layout of this house that you liked?

Are you happy with the layout of the kitchen? Did you design your kitchen layout? (or Did you choose to rent this house based on the layout of the kitchen?) What makes a good kitchen?

Home Decoration:
How have you made your house feel like a home?

Can you please describe the rooms in your home and what you use each for?

Have you tried to create a certain style or atmosphere in each/any room in your house?

What room(s) in the house do you spend the most time in? For what reason?

What rooms are you favourites? For what reason?

Are there any rooms in your home where family or guests tend to congregate?

What feelings do you have for your home? Do you feel at "home" in your house? Throughout the whole house, or just in certain rooms?

Do you feel as though your home is very different from the average Australian home? If so, does this please you? Do you want your home to be different?

Can you describe your childhood home(s)?

Do you feel that your home reflects your identity? What do you want your home to say about you?

Did you purposefully decorate it to reflect your identity? Does your ethnic/cultural identity affect the way you decorate it? What particular objects or ornaments in your home reflect this?

Have you decorated any rooms differently from the rest of your house? For what reasons?

Do certain objects or ornaments in your home bring back special memories for you? Which ones, and where are they in your home? Do they make you feel more "at home"?

Do you have any objects/material possessions that have grown over time to become special to you that hadn't been previously? Any that used to be special to you but are not anymore?

Do you have any pieces of art in your home? (ie. paintings, sculpture, drawings, textiles) How did you acquire them/it? What do they mean to you? Do they bring back any specific memories for you/what do you associate them with?

Do you have any special objects (furniture, heirlooms, artworks, textiles, photos, bibles or any other memorabilia) that have been passed down to you by your parents, grandparents, or other relatives or friends? Are any of these things related to your ethnic/cultural background? What feelings or memories do these objects evoke for you?

If you had a fire in your home, what objects would you save?

Are there any objects that have been special in your life, but that you no longer possess?

What do you think are/were your parent's most special objects? Your children's? What objects are special for you to pass on to your children (if any)? Why?

What do all of your possessions/special objects as a whole, mean to you? Do they represent you? What aspects of your self do they represent?

Were there any special objects in your childhood home that you remember?

Cleaning:
Have any of your household practices changed since you migrated to Australia? Did you consciously change them?

Do you use the same household practices as your mother? Did she teach you these directly or did you observe them yourself? How do your practices differ from hers?

Grocery Shopping and Cooking:
Who does the grocery shopping for your household? Where do they/you do the grocery shopping? Do they/you ever shop at specialist shops such as Asian grocers? If so, what kind of things do you purchase there?

Who does the cooking in your house?

Roughly how many hours a day do you spend doing grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning?

Do you work outside the home as well?

What is a typical weekly dinner menu in your house? Breakfast and lunch?

Do you eat differently on weekends than you do during the week? In what way?

Are the meals/foods you eat in Australia different to the foods you used to eat in your previous country? In what way have your eating habits changed?

Do you use many spices? Why do you use these spices? Where do you buy them from? Have you ever found it hard to find them (or other ingredients) in Australia? Do you prefer certain brands?

Do you grow herbs, spices or vegetables yourself?

Do you miss any foods from you previous country that you can't find here?

What are your favourite foods/dishes? Do you enjoy foods from other parts of the world? Do you cook these dishes yourself? Any that you know to be national dishes of a particular country? Where did you get the recipes?

Do you experiment with recipes/ingredients? Do you mix up dishes to create new ones? Do you adapt recipes? Do you share/swap recipes with anyone?

Is it important for you to make traditional dishes from your previous country/ies? Do you feel that they must be authentic or do you allow for a fusion of styles and recipes?

Are there any dishes that you prepare that are specifically of Burgher origin?

Did your mother or any other family member pass on recipes to you? Examples? Have you passed on these recipes to your children (would you if any)? Do you think it's important to pass on recipes?

Does your cooking differ from your mother's? Did she teach you to cook?

Would you describe your cooking and/or other household pratices as very different to your friends? In what ways?

Are there any special dishes or desserts that you make?

Dining and Eating Out:
Do you sit down with your family to eat? Are there any special rules for eating together? Do you say a blessing before eating?

As a child did you all eat together as a family? Who did the cooking? What were your favourite foods? (specify country)

Do you entertain guests at home? What do you do and who do you invite? What foods do you serve and how do you serve it?

Do you drink alcohol? If not, why? Do you serve alcohol to guests in your home?

How often do you eat out? What sort of restaurants do you like to go to? Who do you dine with? When do you go out for food? (ie. time of day, for what reason, etc.)

Do you eat food from other cultures when you dine out?

Are there any foods you don't eat? For what reason?

What beverages do you drink regularly? Do you prefer a certain type or brand?

Clothing:
How would you describe the way you dress? What aspects of yourself do you aim to represent through your clothing? (or What do you think your clothes say about you?)

Do you choose to wear any pieces of clothing, jewellery, or accessories that you believe represents your ethnic/cultural identity? (or Do you include any elements from you heritage or ethnicity in your clothing, jewellery, or accessories?)

Do you dress very differently in Australia than in your previous country? (or Have you changed the way you dress since migrating to Australia?)

Final question:
Which of the following factors are important to your ethnic/cultural identity:

- religion
- food
- choice of marriage partner
- clothing
- manners
- membership in an ethnic community group or organisation
- language

In your opinion, which is the most important? Can you think of any other factors that affect your ethnic identity?

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