CHAPTER 30

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"BUY WHITE — STAY FAIR"

Racist Political Consumerism in Australian History

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On a rainy November afternoon in 1925, a train left a depot in Sydney. With thousands of people watching, cheering, and waving handkerchiefs, while the band played the unofficial anthem of Australia, "Advance Australia Fair," it departed on a marketing journey that had never been seen before. The train's length of more than one thousand feet alone was bound to be impressive, but even more striking was its radiant white coating. The name "Great White Train" was to be taken literally, not only regarding its outward appearance but also, above all, due to its ideological agenda. It was the acme of a large-scale consumer-oriented campaign, devised to spread the message of consumption as the individual's service to White Australia in the mid-1920s. At the time, this label was a commonly known designation for a policy that claimed the country for the "white race." Along the same line, when the "fair" advancement of the country was demanded in this context, the addressees were fully aware of the semantic ambivalence of said term—that is, it meant not only just and beautiful but also white. The Buy Australian-Made campaign was associated with the restrictive immigration and population directives of the White Australia policy, and in breaking down national affairs to the individual day-to-day level it also inherited its consumer-focussed reasoning from an earlier nationwide campaign to consume "white" sugar for the greater cause of a racially homogeneous society. Both campaigns shed light on a peculiar form of politicized consumption in early-twentieth-century Australia, which diverged from its common shape by emphasizing the exclusion, rather than the exploitation, of "coloured labour" and interlinking economical, racist, and eugenic deliberations.

Calling it a "poiēsis" or "another production," Michel de Certeau (1988, p. xii) defines consumption as an inherently creative process. To decipher the "enigma of the consumer-sphinx," consumers should be regarded as producers. People consuming commodities were not passively receiving products but actively constructing their social, political, and cultural surroundings. In seeking an understanding of consumption as a means to create difference in the context of overpowering structures and interest

groups, de Certeau included subversive consumption by indigenous populations. But this is only one side of his presentation of the problem. A further specification of his question applied to a historical process of consumerism: What did Australians produce when they consumed Australian products, especially white sugar? This historical chapter investigates how political consumerism merged with processes of exclusion, othering, and racist discrimination in order to provide consumers with an additional benefit, that is, an ideological yet identity-shaping surplus value. For this, firstly, the chapter introduces the *dialectics of political consumerism* from a historical perspective. Emerging at the point of intersection between an intensifying discourse on races and the developing consumer society in the late nineteenth century, habits of consumption were more than a matter of survival, and this activity was also charged with ideological value. *Commodity spectacle and commodity racism* were expressions of a Western sense of mission and underlined the popularization and distribution of racist theories. The entanglement of consumption and racism commenced with the first of the grand expositions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries where consumerism and racist perspectives were closely intertwined. investigates how commodity racism underwent a local reshaping in the southern hemisphere and the manner in which it interacted with the country's nation-building. In the consumption of white sugar, eugenic policies, matters of national defence, and racist chauvinism were conflated as an issue pertaining to Australians on an individual level and whose practical implementation was racist political consumerism. Lastly, the chapter discusses how the *Buy Australian-Made campaign and the Great White Train* follow the framing of racist political consumerism, which took the ideology of the White Australia policy and transferred its exclusionist reasoning to the consumer market.

The White Sugar campaign involved the exclusive consumption of cane sugar produced by European labour in northern Australia, and the Buy Australian-Made campaign spawned its most sensational advertisement stunt, the Great White Train. These campaigns functioned as consumption strategies, expressed as lifestyle consumerism that operated at the theoretical intersection of buycotts and discursive political consumerism. In the two Australian cases, this political consumerism made use of the mainstream society's discursive strategies. It encouraged consumers to produce political messages by consuming White Australian goods. With their incorporations of nationalist and racist processes in the making of a racially homogeneous society, these strategies were fostered by the government and supported by local industries.

The Dialectics of Political Consumerism

Political consumerism is commonly defined as a contemporary phenomenon of "political involvement and global responsibility-taking," representing "actions by people who

make choices among producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional and market practices" that are "based on attitudes and values regarding issues of justice, fairness, or noneconomic issues that concern family well-being and ethical or political assessment of favorable and unfavorable business and government practice" (Micheletti, 2003, p. 2). It is understood as a "translation of political objectives into consumption choices" (Holzer, 2006, p. 407). Individuals are thus united in a "collective action, formally defined as consumers' use of the market as an arena for politics in order to change institutional or market practices found to be ethically, environmentally, or politically objectionable" (Micheletti & Stolle, 2015, p. 479). Consumers engage "in boycotting and 'buycotting' (i.e. positively choosing) products and producers for ethical and political reasons" (Boström et al., 2005, p. 9). From this perspective, political consumerism is a social movement—with liberal and humanist tendencies—that expresses itself through consumption or the rejection thereof.

From a historical perspective, political consumerism is not just a phenomenon of the contemporary world nor even of industrial capitalism. Rather, it has already been deployed relatively early on in the context of an unfolding commodities management, where colonial relationships had a special significance. During the eighteenth century, while "capitalist companies were invading whole continents" (Polanyi, 2001, p. 222) and thus buttressed the connection between conquest and commerce, social relationships in the respective countries of origin underwent a considerable restructuration.

One of the first occurrences of politicized consumer behaviour took place on the eve of American independence in the light of British taxation. The British American consumer experience took a drastic change in the mid-eighteenth century when the heightened imports of manufactured goods from the mother country well-nigh sparked a "consumer revolution" (McWilliams, 2005, p. 215). As a result, first steps were taken for a process that enabled a socially divided population to bridge their differences by developing "radically inclusive structures of resistance" (Breen, 2004, p. xiii). The particular colonial situation in America brought forth the "first large-scale political movement ... to organize itself around the relation of ordinary people to manufactured consumer goods" (McWilliams, 2004, p. xviii). While this political action was a boycott avant la lettre—the name-giving incident did not take place until the late nineteenth century (Kuehn, 2015; Micheletti, 2003, p. 38)—American colonists were united in their identity as consumers. Their stigmatization and rejection of imported British goods communicated their suppression and eventually resulted in changes to the tax system (Breen, 2004, pp. 235–242).

This, however, is only one side of political consumerism. Rightfully remarked, "there is no guarantee that all citizen involvement always promotes democracy, public and private virtues, equality and justice" (Micheletti, 2003, p. 69). The assessment that consumers' choices are "outcomes of moral negotiations between different everyday considerations" (Jacobsen & Dulsrud, 2007, p. 477) begs the question what kind of processes unfold in the case of the individual's morality being affected by a racist atmosphere prevailing in the mainstream society, that is, the systemic analysis of what happens when a "racial state" becomes a "racist state" (Lentin, 2006), that is, when a nation that

identifies itself based on race deploys regulations of population politics and immigration restrictions to foster racial homogeneity.

Admittedly, consumers can "support nationalism, intolerance, exclusiveness, and discrimination" (Micheletti & Stolle, 2015, p. 479); often these consumer actions were crowned with success, for "[h]atred has great potential for mobilizing effective action" (Greenberg, 2004, p. 79). Commonly provided examples are the Don't Buy Where You Can't Work campaigns commencing in Harlem in the 1930s—where picketing and boycott actions in an originally integrationist movement, aimed at defying racism against African Americans, also employed antisemitic, that is, racist rhetoric to further the cause—or illicit agreements by American homeowners to refuse selling or renting to people with a non-Western cultural background in the 1940s and 1950s (Greenberg, 2004; Hinrichs & Allen, 2008, pp. 340–341).

Taking into account both morality and hatred as motivations means looking at political consumerism as dialectical, that is, as having progressive and racist elements. While progressive political consumerism aims at societal change and moral improvement of market participants, racist political consumerism is an often brutal strategy of identity formation, in particular in the form of racist demarcation against "others." The understudied part of this dialectic is examined in this chapter: political consumerism supported—often influenced or regulated by the government—processes of exclusion of those deemed racial others from society, that is, negative societalization (Hund, 2014) in the metropolis at the expense of the colonies.

Looking at the history of consumption, it becomes evident that the "emergence of consumer culture relied on the concept of race and the persistence of white-supremacist thinking" (Davis, 2007, p. 3) because colonial goods played a distinctive role. Sugar suggests itself as an excellent example for investigating the dialectic of early political consumerism, that is, the interaction between social or political improvement and racist demarcation—in particular as cane sugar acted as a societal leveller and means of social cohesion but did so based on the degradation of ostracized people. Even before the notorious symbolical act of the pre-phase of the American Revolution, the Boston Tea Party of December 1773 (Volo, 2012), sugar had already been ideologically and politically charged. Roughly a decade before, the Sugar Act sparked protest in North America and induced the evasion of sugar taxation by conducting clandestine nocturnal discharging of shipments by local colonists (Morgan & Morgan, 1995, pp. 45–48). In the mother country in the early 1790s, British consumers and merchants boycotted cane sugar from the West Indies to protest against the slave trade. So-called abolition china was imprinted with abolitionist messages, grocers announced in the newspapers that they would only stock sugar unpolluted by suspicions of slave labour, and even the sugar refiners aimed at breaking up the West Indian sugar monopoly (Abbott, 2008, p. 241; Affeldt, 2014, pp. 89–90; Oldfield, 1998). Sugar, however, was not always used to foster humanism and support morality. Together with rum, sugar became an engine of colonialism and economic imperialism as these goods were an indispensable element of the two trade triangles that linked Europe to Africa and the Americas. The first consisted of

the provision of produced goods to Africa, the sale of Africans to the Americas, and the transportation of sugar and other colonial commodities to Europe; the second saw New England rum transported to Africa, African slaves to the West Indies, and molasses for rum production back to New England (Mintz, 1986, p. 43).

With its increasing presence in Europe in the nineteenth century, cane sugar became the fuel of the Industrial Revolution—like coal in the furnaces of the industrial tycoons, sugar fired the stomachs of the working poor (Galloway, 1989, p. 1; Hannah & Spence, 1997, p. 22). It not only provided the energy necessary to power through tough work but also consoled its consumers for economic shortcomings and other hardships. Food is described as a means of illustrating social relations: it "encode[s] social events" and expresses "hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries" (Mennell, 1987, p. 11; Mennell et al., 1992, p. 10). By this time sugar, for centuries a luxury of the upper classes (Mintz, 1986, p. 96), had finished its trickling down through the social milieus; now even the poorest inhabitants spent great parts of their money to sweeten their tea (Young, 1771 pp. 180–181).

Since the cultivation of raw material for colonial products—like chocolate, coffee, sugar, tea, and tobacco—took place in the countries of origin, these "powerful symbols of the empire" (Bickham, 2008, p. 74) enabled a clear "race-based" demarcation at a time when the consumer society was only just emerging (Tomka, 2013, p. 251). As a social binding agent, sugar enabled the creation of an inclusive identity and allowed its users to understand themselves as members of a community based on the consumption of sugar and racistly imagined in contradistinction to its indigenous producers. Sugar's appreciable underlining of a racist discrimination between hard-labouring "black" producers and benefitting "white" consumers furthered its gender-spanning and class-bridging potential: "with the crucial exception of the slaves themselves, everyone seemed to benefit" (Brown, 2006, p. 53). Subsequent developments in commodity culture saw this consolidating potential expand from sugar to other commodities and, with the liaison between consumption and racism, further popularized the division between ostensibly advanced civilized Western cultures and allegedly retrograde, primitive non-Western cultures that had formerly been investigated by race sciences.

Commodity Spectacle and Commodity Racism

Australian racist political consumerism had its origins in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, which witnessed a celebration of commodity culture in the form of world's fairs and colonial exhibitions. These events proclaimed to the masses the virtues of consumption as a means of collective distinction. The elaborately designed spectacles—which established new conventions pertaining to advertisements, consumerism, and colonial narrations by putting on display progress, wealth, and modernity—not only

were popular in Europe but also were subsequently organized in the United States and Australia.

The first of these "pilgrimage sites of commodity fetishism" (Benjamin, 1984, p. 441) was the Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations that opened in London's Hyde Park in May 1851. This "largest display of commodities that had ever been brought together under one roof" (Richards, 1990, p. 17) propagated progress in technology, industry, and expertise to an audience consisting of people from all societal spheres. Along the lines of the print media's effect of creating "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1994), the exhibition's unifying potential breached social boundaries of class and gender and created a "discursive space that was global, while nurturing nation-states that were culturally highly specific" (Breckenridge, 1989, p. 196). Staged shortly after the great social upheavals of the 1848 revolution, the exhibition challenged "established norms about social and physical boundaries" (Auerbach, 1999, p. 158). The installation of Shilling Days and the support of working-class visitors and school classes by employers and charitable institutions further catered to this idea and emphasized the exhibitions' educational mandate (Hobhouse, 2002, p. 71; Message & Johnston, 2008, pp. 27–46).

More than collections of Western commodities, the exhibitions had a global perspective: they put on display items from all continents that were deemed representative for the various societies and added to the idea of classifying knowledge about the world and its inhabitants. The exhibitions were closely associated with nationalism and imperialism because they underscored European justifications of colonialism that propagated the necessity of religious education as well as the introduction of civilization and commerce to indigenous populations around the globe (Corbey, 1993, p. 339). Their displays mirrored and produced current understandings of class, nation, and race and, more than anything before, made colonial alterity immediately tangible.

The exhibition of colonial scenarios with plaster casts and original artefacts was, however, not the end of the story. Among other "exotic" presentations, a group of indigenous Australians from Queensland arrived at Sydenham in 1884 (Poignant, 2012, p. 289). They were introduced as "[m]ale and female Australian cannibals," members of the "strange, savage, disfigured and most brutal race ever lured from the remote interior wilds" that belonged to "the very lowest order of mankind" (Crystal Palace poster cited in Corbey, 1993, pp. 347–348). These "living displays"—and the subsequent installation of "human zoos," where indigenous actors were to perform their culture and hunting techniques (Blanchard, Boetsch, & Snoep, 2011; Parezo & Fowler, 2007, pp. 5–11)—closely welded together anthropology and entertainment. By this it further substantiated the commodification of colonial frontier experiences and rendered consumable racist distinctions between Western and non-Western societies. Though the colonial exhibitions were not necessarily places of (monetary) consumption, they provided a reference for the discursive political consumerism that took place on an everyday basis and underlined the ideal of white supremacy that informed British, and later Australian, mainstream society.

In the spirit of contrasting the civilized metropolis and the crude yet exotic colonial frontier, advertisement campaigns emerging in the latter half of the nineteenth

century drew on a "commodification of racial images" in order to promote their products (Hinrichsen, 2012, p. 61). The imperialist climate of the time fostered the charging of commodity advertisement with racism. Cartoonized and stultified racial others, depicted as subservient workers, cultivated and harvested colonial products, as obedient attendants served luxurious comestibles or provided other services or as ignorant savages gladly received the blessings of civilization. The American Aunt Jemima, the French *tirailleur sénégalais* of Banania, and the German Sarotti Mohr are only a few of the advertising figures that resulted from the amalgamation of biological and cultural perspectives with the popularization of racial stereotyping (Hinrichsen, 2011).

Using the example of soap, Anne McClintock (1995, pp. 207–231) shows how the everyday actions of British consumers made their homes a production place of racial difference. This established consumers as beneficiaries of colonialism and, at least ideologically, supporters of nationalism and imperialism. Such class-and-gender-bridging racist societalization—provided by consumption experiences in the private sphere and by colonial exhibitions in the public sphere—was the result of a "shift from scientific racism to commodity racism" (McClintock, 1995, p. 34). At a time when the "experience of consumption had become all-compassing," and advertising was the "primary beneficiary of, and vehicle for, the commodity spectacle" (Richards, 1990, pp. 7, 5), graphic depictions of racial others in advertisements, promotional panels, and expositions of commodities and cultures promoted the popularization of narratives about varying races.

Commodity racism informed processes of racist political consumerism as it provided a means of participation in all spheres of white society with the possibility to partake in a consolidating act of consumption as whites. It drew on distinctions between indigenous labourers in the colonies and consumers in the metropolis by drawing a racial boundary. Its racist potential was unfolded by the application of discriminatory stereotyping and racialist perceptions to a global socioeconomic framework in which white consumers became accomplices in the exploitation of nonwhite workers. Irrelevant of their societal location, consumers could identify themselves as beneficiaries of colonialism and as members of a society that, compared with indigenous cultures in other parts of the world, had left behind the early primitive stages of societal development. Colonial and international exhibitions with their juxtaposition of white progress and colonial stagnation made these distinctions directly tangible and shaped this particular manifestation of lifestyle consumerism.

As Wulf D. Hund presents in detail, the commodified contrasting of Western and indigenous cultures was "a form of system promotion, merging the spatial dimensions of colonialism with the political dimensions of imperialism, the economical dimensions of capitalism, and the ideological dimensions of racism" (Hund, 2013, p. 33). He expands on Wolfgang Fritz Haug's deliberations of "commodity aesthetics" as relating to the "beauty developed in the services of the realization of exchange-value" in trade transactions and the necessity of the "use-value" as the consumer's motivation in a "commodity exchange" (Haug, 1986, pp. 8, 14). As a result, the colonialists' advertisements and displays not only promised use value. Additionally, it "had an instant ideological use value"

and thus allowed for an inclusive identification as members of a community premised on "white supremacy" (Hund, 2013, p. 36).

To understand this racistly defined membership, Anja Weiß suggests expanding Pierre Bourdieu's reflections on social distinction with the notion of "racist symbolical capital." While economic and cultural capital serve to locate the individual's societal status, racist symbolic capital accredits social validation that "translates into economic and cultural capital, but … is not identical to it"; rather it is a "collective resource which can however be emphasized and utilized by individuals as representatives of a group" (Weiß, 2010, p. 47). In the case of the colonial exhibitions, this permitted even visitors to the Shilling Days, who did not have the financial means to actively participate in the commodity culture of the Great Exhibition, to reap the identity-building virtue of colonial exhibitions and advertisements.

Regarding the Australian campaigns of racist political consumerism—White Sugar and Buy Australian-Made—the imported British consumer racism provided an initial point for a discursive political consumerism that no longer exploited but completely shunned "coloured labour" in the spirit of white supremacy and an idealized white nation.

Australia and the White Sugar Campaign

This prioritizing of the expulsion of nonwhite workers over colonial exploitation was most evident when examining the history of Australian cane sugar and its transformation into a product conveying an utmost ideological surplus.

From the start, sugar consumption played a particular, unifying role in the Antipodes. Not only did the first commanders and the military personnel receive regular sugar allowances but also, from the mid-1790s, the convicts, too, were provided sugar as part of their rations. As an additional reward, it soon became "integral to the management of convict labour" (Griggs, 1999, p. 80), and its distribution even in the lower milieus of society was much higher than in the mother country. A convict reported to his parents: "As for tea And Sugar I almost Could swim in it" (Richard Dillingham in 1836 cited in Maxwell-Stewart, 2007, p. 54). While in the early decades the sugar was brown and moist, with the establishment of the national sugar industry and local refining factories the quality of Australian sugar improved until, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, "even the working man would take nothing but purely white sugar" (Maxwell-Stewart, 2007, p. 54).

Even before the beginning of settlement, sugar cane had been explicitly considered as one of the plants to be cultivated in the new British colony; cane setts from the Cape of Good Hope arrived aboard the First Fleet in Botany Bay in 1788. Initially, those who were conceded its consumption were also supposed to produce it. These deliberations

drew on earlier associations of forced labour with the cultivation of sugar cane, a linkage rigidified on the American sugar plantations where it was consolidated as the product of black slave labour in the sixteenth century (Affeldt, 2014, pp. 61–73). Cane and unfree labour was thus an association that could not be easily eroded.

After decades of futile attempts, sugar cane could eventually be grown in commercially viable dimensions; however, the inexpensive servile work force was no longer available because convict transportation had been discontinued. In search of a new resource of workers, the planters fell back to traditional connections with "black labour": from the mid-1860s on, South Sea Islanders were introduced to help establish the industry.

When, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the labour movement's opposition to the recruitment of South Sea Islanders increased, this was first of all an ideological campaign. Their struggle for the valorisation of the British-Australian workers' whiteness was rooted in the emergence of the working class in contradistinction to nonwhite workers on the goldfields and the development of class relations that was shaped by questions of race (Affeldt, 2010).

As the central element of Australian identity around the turn of the twentieth century, whiteness was the most crucial ingredient in the transformation of the Queensland sugar industry into a "white man's industry" (Chataway, 1921, p. 140). This was brought about by a network of nationalist and unionist groups as well as the other Australian colonies' pressing for a solution of the "black labour question" in order to allow Queensland to join the nascent Commonwealth of Australia. As a consequence, one of the first pieces of legislation—the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1901—eventually made compulsory the deportation of the Islanders and effectively cut off the sugar planters' labour resources.

Thus, the enforced demographic change was only the first transformatory step. The initial reluctance of the Europeans to recruit as cane workers necessitated further engagement in terms of the ideological whitening of sugar cane: work in the cane fields continued to be associated with slavery and inferiority. The European workers' racist reasoning argued that the current working and living conditions did not meet a level suitable for white workers. Continued negotiations between the newly emerged sugar unions and sugar planters escalated in the extensive 1911 Sugar Strike—the "first major, prolonged and acrimonious industrial dispute" (Armstrong, 1983, p. 106). The labour movement's struggle incited backing by other unions but even more so by the nationwide public, which seconded the claim that "if the sugar company cannot support married men it is not an industry fit for the white men, or fit for the white man's country" (Argus, 1911, p. 7). The strike expressed the demand for the conversion of racist symbolic capital—credited to white workers based on their contradistinction to the "racial others"—into tangible "wages of whiteness" (Roediger, 2007), meaning improved working conditions and wages deemed appropriate for white workers. In particular, by claiming their racial and cultural distinction from their South Sea Islander predecessors, the European-Australian workers eventually achieved the validation of their whiteness and exacted economic compensation.

With the repatriation of the South Sea Islanders, a bounty system was established that rewarded employers who recruited white, preferably British, canecutters. A legislative amendment that required the passing of a dictation test, similar to that mandated by the Immigration Restriction Act, effectively reduced the employment of non-European workers, and the heightened wages and subsistence costs were additionally compensated by a financing model that provided for the taxing of all sugar consumed in Australia. The now white sugar industry was further shielded from undesired competition by embargoes and import duties on sugar from overseas (Affeldt, 2014, pp. 360–362).

However, this protection of white sugar did not go unchallenged, in particular because it was the Australian consumers who had to bear the burden of financing the sugar industry (Barnard, 1963, p. 532). Especially in the southern states, the support of the northern industry was considered benefitting only Queensland at the expense of all Australians—either when they bought high-priced sugar in the stores or consumed products, like jam, bakery products and desserts, that passed on the additional costs to the consumers.

Prominently, the Federal Housewives' Association questioned the justification of the increased sugar price, boycotted the sugar, and demanded to have the ban on "black-grown sugar" from overseas lifted to lower the sugar price to one "that would enable workers to live decently" (Sydney Morning Herald, 1927, p. 11).

Such challenges to the legitimation of the white sugar industry called for a continuous invocation of the racist community and the consumers' moral duty to the nation. In doing so, the proponents of White Sugar activated elements of racist political consumerism, drawing on the commodity racism specific to the Australian context.

While in the British mother country commodity racism in the form of the consumption of sugar and other colonial goods was based on the joint white exploitation of nonwhite producers, Australian White Sugar promoted white supremacy in its exclusionist acts of consumption and unified the consumers in their defence of an allegedly vulnerable White Australia.

In other cases, traditional commodity racism prevailed. It was not that all imports were scorned or even prohibited. Even though the South Sea Islanders were no longer deemed appropriate canecutters, the copra trade with them remained substantial (Coghlan, 1904, pp. 267–268). Other colonial goods—like tea, coffee, and cocoa—were also imported and were advertised in the Australian newspapers using traditional stereotypical patterns that highlighted their exoticism, juxtaposed producer and consumer, and thus promised the additional ideological use value of white supremacy.

Some of those who opposed the expensive Australian sugar and suggested opening the borders in favour of inexpensive, less ideological sugar did point out this discrepancy. If "black" tea, coffee, and chocolate could be swilled down with a comforting feeling, why should "black" sugar get stuck in the consumer's throat? Australians "drink black-labour tea every day, therefore it will do ... no harm to sweeten that tea with black-labour sugar," as an Adelaidean claimed in his letter to the editor (Craigie, 1922, p. 12).

But the proponents of White Sugar, which included politicians and nationalists nationwide, would have none of this. The reasoning was most prominently expressed by

the White Sugar newspaper campaigns launched in the 1920s and 1930s. In their (often-times full-page) announcements, the Sugar Growers of Australia appealed to the consumers' intelligence as well as to their national pride. Drawing on key elements of White Australia, they combined racial purification of the society and moral justification of nationalist consumerism with eugenic policies of land settlement. The Sugar Growers emphasized the industry's potential to foster European immigration.

Their evocation of the "yellow peril" was linked to other manifestations of White Australia culture, which propagated outward seclusion and inward consolidation. Their reasoning referred to scientific findings of the time, which questioned the unchallenged survival of the "white race" and urged in particular the defence of the Australian continent (Pearson, 1894). The latter's special position—culturally British, geographically in close proximity to Asia—underlined its importance as the "true bulwark of the [white] race" and last keepers of the "race-heritage" (Stoddard, 1920, p. 226). The ostensibly overpopulated Asian countries were assumed to look for new settlement space in the underpopulated areas of Australia's shores—the so-called empty north. Fears of this kind found further expression in theatrical pieces, poems, musicals, songs, flyers, statistics, newspaper reports, political debates, and a literary genre called "invasion novels" that told disquieting stories of hostile takeovers by foreign foes and the repercussions for Australia and its people (Affeldt, 2011).

The White Sugar campaign drew on these ideological narratives and underlined the role of the white canecutters as a "stronghold" against foreign powers. Furthermore, they emphasized the role of the sugar consumers as actors in the daily reconstruction of the White Australia narrative. The importance of the sugar industry and White Australia was most emphatically expressed by Prime Minister William Morris Hughes, who reasoned in 1922: "[Y]ou cannot have a White Australia in this country unless you are prepared to pay for it. One of the ways in which we can pay for a White Australia is to support the sugar industry of Queensland" (Argus, 1922, p. 29). By short-circuiting racism, nationalism, and political economy, Hughes made it absolutely clear that the support of the sugar industry was more than a political issue—it was a national concern. The survival of White Australia required the survival of the white sugar industry, and hence consuming sugar became a moral duty to the nation.

The success of the White Sugar campaign was evidenced by the never-failing sugar consumption in Australia. In fact, from the first days of settlement it was ever-increasing, and for many decades into the twentieth century Australian consumers were at the top of the per capita consumption of cane sugar (Griggs, 1999, p. 74). As the flagship of White Australia, the sugar industry prided itself with "Queensland [being] the only country in the world growing cane with well-paid white labour" (Worker, 1914, p. 8); and still, four decades later, "King Sugar" and "the only "white" sugar industry in the world" continued to be celebrated (Orlov, 1950, p. 22).

In the context of racist political consumerism, Australianness was measured according to the daily readiness to support this "truly Australian" industry. Consuming the expensive product became a symbolic act of nationalism and granted the permission to deem oneself part of the white Australian community.

The Buy Australian-Made Campaign and the Great White Train

During the same decade as the advocates of White Sugar promoted the sociopolitical importance of the Queensland sugar industry and consumption as an Australian's moral duty to the nation, the Buy Australian-Made campaign was launched by the Australian-Made Preference League.

The League was formed in April 1924, with the object of fostering "[p]atriotism that pays" (Australian-Made Preference League, 1925b, 18), that is, a buycott campaign calling for giving preference to Australian over foreign goods and committing to the goal of preserving White Australia. Shrouded in plans to "advance" its economic power, this was meant to be accomplished by strengthening the nation's own assets: "For industry is greater than politics. It is the very life-blood of a nation" (Nelson, 1926, p. 51). This body metaphor went beyond the idea of the economic cycle as a circulatory system; it actually referred to eugenic deliberations concerning the health of the Australian "racial corpus." It aggregated questions concerning the increase of Australia's population and the defence of "their" continent with the compulsion for a racially homogeneous "white," or rather British, nation. In the same vein, the League expanded on their strategies: "The manufacturing industries of a country are its greatest bulwarks. Every factory is a fort" and they are "doing more to defend the shores of the country than even its greatest ammunition plants can claim to do. For industry means progress. Progress means power. Power is security. The best lines of defence that can be built against the unfriendly aggressor is a line of factories running north and south and east and west in this fair land of Australia" (Australian-Made Preference League, 1925b, p. 4). Like the White Sugar campaign, the Australian-Made Preference League's argumentation was formed along the lines of populating the continent as a means of securing it against purportedly pending attempts of takeover by foreign foes. Consistent with the notion of an imagined racist community based on consumption, the League declared itself to be a "non-class movement," which sought to "unite all classes in an earnest desire to develop the industries of Australia" and "offer[ed] a platform on which employers and employees can stand together and work together for a common end" (Daily Examiner, 1926, p. 6). This was meant to be achieved by applying the White Australia policy to the goods market. Boycotting commodities that were manufactured abroad or by "coloured labour," purchasers should favour goods produced by local white workers. In doing so, its label of "Australian-Made"—which, like the White Sugar campaign, acknowledged the power of individuals to contribute to the greater cause in the overall structure of national policies—merged economic, nationalist, and culturalistic aspirations.

Buying locally manufactured products was a means to strengthen Australian industries and retaining the monetary power within the nation to the benefit of local white producers. The increased demand would lead to heightened production and bring about an increase in demand for labour, thus creating new jobs and reducing unemployment.

Furthermore, it would be an incitement for European immigration, hence serving the populating of Australia's "empty" parts.

Purchasing Australian products equalled expressing one's commitment to a common national identity. The League not only sought ways to bring the rural population into contact with urban tastes, but by characterizing country and city people based on their purchasing activities this form of political consumerism created a shared identity of "the Australian consumer."

"Made in Australia" was a testimony to the nation's technological progress and likewise proof of the competitiveness, and even superiority, of Australian products. The industries were considered able to keep apace with other modern civilizations; and there was no longer a need to rely on imported—even less so Asian—commodities.

The most extensive promotional event conducted by the Australian-Made Preference League has so far largely escaped critical analysis (Affeldt, 2014, pp. 472–498; Evans, 2015, pp. 268–269). The Great White Train toured New South Wales twice in the late 1920s and spread its buycottist message of preference of homemade products to the rural parts of the state. This large-scale commercial stunt even attracted attention in the other Australian states—either due to the "phenomenal" interest "it created by its travel throughout the mother State," as a Perth newspaper reported (Sunday Times, 1926, p. 4), or because states like Tasmania considered it to advertise their own industries (Burnie Advocate, 1926, p. 2). The exhibitions and the journeys were largely financed by renting out exhibition space to over thirty firms and businesses; the government supported the campaign by providing a "generous subsidy of £5,000" (Bagnall, 1926, p. 54).

The Great White Train was white in both its appearance and its agenda. It was coated in white enamel; along the side of the train the slogan "Buy Australian-Made" and the name "'Australian-Made' Preference League" were written in great red letters (Daily Examiner, 1926, p. 6). The arrival of the train, "a long line of white cars brilliantly illuminated by electric light," was signalized by searchlights sending beams of light into the night sky that were "visible for 40 miles" (Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate, 1926, p. 6; Singleton Argus, 1925, p. 5). The exhibition was set up in fifteen semilouvred vans that created an almost 700-foot-long promenade. Only introduced to Australia two years prior, wireless broadcasting had its own place aboard the train (Harte, 2002, p. 138). Running on a special wavelength with a reception radius of 950 miles, this mobile radio station broadcasted the "good news" of consuming "whiteness" in the form of speeches and general information to the public as far away as Victoria, and Australian children tuned in "each night" to hear their "bed-time stories" (Corowa Chronicle, 1925, p. 4).

The locomotive bore the Australian coat of arms with a kangaroo, an emu, and the Southern Cross and was inscribed with the motto "Advance Australia." The latter was meant to be understood in multifarious ways. Traditionally, the railroad was seen as symbolizing technology and progress, connecting the advanced urban realms with newly opened swaths at the colonial frontier—likewise, despite its restricted physical range, the Great White Train widely disseminated the promise of prosperity for the whole of white society.

Moreover, it was not by chance that the train's arrival and departure were accompanied by the tune of "Advance Australia Fair." Roughly half a century after its creation and another half a century before its becoming the national anthem, the song was an audience favourite. It was but one of the white Australian cultural outpourings that, by infiltrating everyday activities, helped to substantiate and commodify narratives of White Australia and allowed for the replenishing of the racist symbolic capital. The anthem's classified, gendered, and racialized lyrics tell about "white" male Australians being "rightful" heirs to the allegedly dwindling original population; their predestined, fruitful appropriation of the continent; and their duty to forever keep it safe from "land-grabbing" external enemies (Affeldt, 2014, pp. 311–319). It thus excellently captured the imperative of the day of populating the country with "suitable" settlers and defending it against possible encroachments by Asian powers. The audience of the time was fully aware of the ambiguous reading of "fairness," with "fair" embracing three meanings: "just, beautiful, white" (Kelen, 2005, p. 218). This made for a fitting "triple entendre," summing up the campaign's—as nationalist as racist—message of giving "just preference to the beautiful local products in defence of White Australia."

Against this backdrop, the commonly chosen toast "Advance Australia" and the lecturers teaching the eager listeners "how they can assist to 'advance Australia fair'" (Queanbeyan-Canberra Advocate, 1926, p. 3) were not only reminders of the indoctrination of industrial progress but were interwoven with the racism that was at the core of society. The League argued: "The public of the present day demand the rigid enforcement of a White Australia policy as applied to humans to prevent the country being over-run with colored foreign races. The SAME POLICY SHOULD APPLY TO FOREIGN MANUFACTURES" (Australian-Made Preference League, 1925a, p. 4).

The newspaper reporting further disseminated this call for racist political consumerism by announcing that the Great White Train "is here for the purpose of demonstrating the fact that a great inherent principle underlies the creation of a Great White Australia" (Tweed Daily, 1926, 4) and to circulate "its great 'White Australia' lesson of 'Buy Australian-Made'" (Forbes Advocate, 1926, p. 2).

The connection of economic aspects with racist perspectives and eugenic programmes distinguished the Buy Australian-Made campaign from the 1930s Buy British campaign. While the former was based on principles of white supremacy and the securing of the Australian continent for the white race, the latter campaign—initiated by the Empire Marketing Board—focussed on the promotion of a prospering British Empire and did not hesitate to advertise products from its colonies (Constantine, 1986).

The nation-focussed consumption of Australian-Made products was practiced right away. The exhibition on board the train educated visitors about industries using Australian workers. This was supplemented by a couple of public talks given during the stay of the train. In them the lecturer called upon the visitors' contribution: "[m]any bought goods made by the yellow or black people, yet they [the consumers] were in favour of a White Australia," now that they were giving "a fair idea of the quality of the goods manufactured in Australia ... all of them would buy goods made in their own country" (Monaro Mercury and Cooma and Bombala Advertiser, 1926, p. 2).

Additionally, "Australian-Made Preference Shopping Weeks" were organized and awards were handed out for the best "Australian-Made window display." "The colour scheme was white, in keeping with the Great White Train, White Australia, etc.," reported an article on a "winning window" (Illawarra, 1926, p. 7). The visits by the train and its self-declared class-spanning mission of praising local products were used to recruit associate members from the working-class audience who followed the call to "Be a Good Australian" and "pledge to give preference at all times to 'Australian-Made' goods and products ... and never to make a purchase without stating 'Australian-made' preferred" (Australian-Made Preference League, 1925b, p. 8). The message was well-received by the audiences, as evidenced by a letter to the editor taking up the connection of "Preference to Australian-made Goods and the White Australia policy" and calling on consumers to "boycott those who are so un-Australian as to employ foreigners in preference to Australians" (Pool, 1926, p. 4).

More importantly, the Australian-Made Preference League targeted even the youngest members of the society. The Great White Train organized events to educate schoolchildren about the imperative and amenities to resort to nationalist consumption. School classes were led through the exhibitions, and official lecturers of the Australian-Made Preference League visited schools. The call for essays, to be judged and priced by a jury, accomplished two things. Firstly, by paraphrasing the League's slogans, the young authors were impregnated with notions of nationalist consumerism and the notion that not only could everyone contribute to the preservation of White Australia but also that they could identify as a member of an extensive community on a more tangible and accessible level than exertion of their electoral rights and regardless of their social position. Secondly, the prized essays were published in the newspapers and served as an elongation of the Buy Australian-Made campaign. Written in the voice of a pupil, and hence providing a simplified access to the ideology of racist political consumerism, it was especially these essays that most pronouncedly forged links between the white nation and the buycott of Australian-made goods. In this spirit, one of the junior authors flawlessly connected the efforts of retaining a racially homogeneous society to consumption habits by asking: "Why preserve a 'White Australia Policy' and encourage the buying of foreign made goods?" (Queanbeyan Age, 1926, p. 3).

A repeatedly published essay by a female pupil echoes the long-term construction of White Australia since the 1880s and neatly summarizes the racist message at the core of the campaign: "Japan, Java and the islands to the north of Australia are teeming with people, and although we have a law which says that no foreigner can come into Australia, because we want Australia to be a 'White Australia,' they may emigrate into our land in spite of our laws, unless we do something to prevent it. The uninhabited parts of Australia are inviting these people to come and live here, and unless we increase our population and buy our own manufactured articles they will come and destroy our 'White Australia' policy. ... Our nation depends upon us to buy Australian-made goods, and to impress us more deeply than before, she has sent a messenger in the form of the Great White Train" (Rankin, 1926, p. 7).

Conclusion

Examining political consumerism's many facets includes analysing its dialectics as both progressive and exclusionary, that is, as having at the same time elements fostering political change and societal improvement and racist processes that provide for means of unification based on the degradation, or exclusion, of "othered" groups. Racist political consumerism in Australia was expressed as a boycott of overseas products that were deemed irreconcilable with the ideology of White Australia and also as a buycott of products that promoted ideas of white supremacy in general as well as the preservation of a self-supporting, racially homogeneous Australia in particular. All in all, the political consumerism put into practice in the form of White Sugar and Buy Australian Made bore characteristics of lifestyle consumerism that incorporated the broader societal atmosphere of the time and drew on nationalist narratives that cautioned against its endangered position while at the same time praising Australia's singular responsibility in the purportedly pending "race war." In particular the White Sugar campaign reflected the omnipresence of "whiteness" as a crucial element of true Australianness. As a discursive political consumerism, it drew on community-unifying commodity racism. The latter was imported from the British mother country but was then shaped locally by appropriating the ideal of a White Australian society and securing white supremacy by the ostracizing of "coloured labour" in preference of "white" goods. In particular in the politicizing of sugar consumption, an everyday action was made a symbolic act of national loyalty: the utilization of sugar was declared a constituent of the validation and (re)construction of "Australian whiteness."

Examining these historical Australian cases also illustrates how closely interwoven racism and everyday culture are and how, as a social relation and as one "motive" of political consumerism, racism manages to bridge social gaps and overwrite gender and class differences in favour of an imagined racist community. Against the backdrop of recent statements proclaiming policies of "America First" and "Buy American and Hire American" (Trump, 2017), deliberations about the implications of (historical) racist political consumerism could prospectively provide explanations for contemporary developments.

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