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Australia as other in Singapore's media

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Australia as Other in Singapore's media

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Abstract

Since the late eighteenth century, the Western observation of the East has been based on shared ontological and epistemological assumptions made by the West of the East as different and as the "Other". Said's concept of *Orientalism* revolutionized Western understanding of non-Western cultures by showing how Western projected images shaped the Occidental view of the Orient. Although much has been written about the West's perception of the East as "Other" (e.g. Said and Schirato), to date, little has been written dealing with the West from the "Eastern" viewpoint. This thesis will examine the concepts of Orientalism (the perception of the Orient as Other) and Occidentalism, which Yao views as Orientalism in reverse, and apply it to the study of Australian / Singapore relations. It will specifically look at the way in which Australia is reported in Singapore's main English newspaper, *The Straits Times*. Australian events are perceived to be of importance not only to the Singaporean reader but to Australian/Singapore relations.

Although the notion of the "Other" can mean different things to different people, I have chosen, for the purpose of this thesis to use Said's definition, which has to do with Western perception of the East as Other.

The principle question that arises from the situation of Othering is, quite simply, why does *The Straits Times*, and by implication the Singapore government, choose to "Other" Australia in a remarkably consistent manner? I have attempted to answer this complex question by looking at past events in the history of Australian/Singapore relations which have affected this relationship in a number of identifiable areas which

include economics, cultural exchanges, education, tourism and politics and which have been reported in a number of specific articles dealing with Australia in the Singapore press.

In respect to Australia and Singapore, there is, as yet, no full length work detailing the current discourses which arise out of the "Othering" of Australia by the Singapore media. Relations between Singapore and Australia are of strategic importance in a number of areas including the economy, defence and regional relations. The reports of Australia that I will analyse present Australia in very specific ways which, I will argue, amounts to a form of "Othering". Moreover, this analysis clearly shows the need for further research into such complex relationships.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature.

Date...20/8/97..........

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines the ways in which *The Straits Times*, Singapore's major English language newspaper, has reported Australia over a period of time. The main reason for focusing on this newspaper rather than other media is because *The Straits Times* is perceived to articulate government policy on virtually all issues (Birch, 1993, p. 18). The holding company Singapore Press Holdings that owns and manages the paper is controlled by the Singaporean government. Therefore we can assume that what is said in the newspaper approximates closely Singapore government sentiments. With regard to Australia this will be demonstrated to be the case.

Relations between Singapore and Australia are of strategic importance in a number of areas including the economy, defence and regional relations. Consequently we could anticipate Australia being reported either favourably, or at the very least, objectively. However, as I will demonstrate this is not the case. The reports on Australia I will analyse present Australia in very specific ways which, I will argue, amounts to a form of "Othering". The principle question that arises from this situation is quite simply, why does *The Straits Times*, and by implication the Singapore government, choose to "Other" Australia in a remarkably consistent manner?

Since the late eighteenth century, the Western observation of the East has been based on shared ontological and epistemological assumptions made by the West of the East as different and as the "Other" (Said, 1978, p. 2). Although the notion of the "Other" can mean different things to different people, I have chosen, for the purpose of this thesis, to use Said's (1978) definition. In the Western tradition of Othering, the "Other" encompasses all which 'is not male, white and liberal' (Minh-Ha, 1989). This means that women, culture and people of all races may be considered different and therefore the "Other" by Europeans. This process is extremely complex and takes

many forms. One significant type of Othering is analysed at great length by Edward Said in his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978). As Said argues, "Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into western consciousness" (1978, p. 6). The notion of Othering is based on what sets people apart from what is considered the norm; in short, it is based in a sense of difference at many levels, including culture and race. This thesis is about the Othering of Australia in the Singaporean press. The concepts employed in this thesis are based on the work of Said (1978), Yao (1994), Schirato (1994) and applied to the textual analysis of the Singaporean press reports of Australia, looking at three specific topics/areas, namely:

- Values, Race and Morality: Comparing Australia in Asia;
- The Economics of Othering in a regional context;
- Events and matters surrounding / concerning the race debate and Pauline Hanson and the influence they have had in contemporary issues of Othering.

This study will examine the portrayal of Australia in the Singapore press in regard to these issues. It will highlight specific examples in the press reports of *The Straits Times*, Singapore's main English daily newspaper. The news reports chosen for analysis were selected based on criteria that the reports were topical, relevent, timely and well-written. The analysis will show quite clearly that Australia has been constructed as "Other" in the Singapore media. The question, however, is why has this happened? Clearly there is no simple or singular answer to such a complex question. However, I shall attempt an answer by looking at past events in history of Australian/Singapore relations which have affected this relationship in a number of identifiable areas including economics, cultural exchanges and political issues which have been reported in a number of specific articles dealing with Australia in the Singapore press, from 1988-1996. These articles deal specifically with Australian events that are perceived to be of importance to both the Singapore reader at one

level, and Australian/Singapore relations at another. Over 273 issues of *The Straits Times* have been surveyed and a number of articles have been identified as relating to the issue of the Othering of Australia, and have been categorized thus into the following groups (NB: *The Straits Times* articles analysed in this thesis are listed in chronological order in Appendix 1):

Topic	Number	Dates Analysed
regional relations	92	May 20, 1988; May 14, 1993; June 24, 1993; June 26, 1993; March 2, 1994; April 1, 1994; March 22, 1994; September 18, 1996.
Australian affairs	80	June 19, 1993; August 21, 1993; November 3, 1993; December 7, 1993; January 24, 1994; January 25, 1994; September 23, 1996; September 25, 1996; October 5, 1996; October 8, 1996; October 9, 1996; October 12, 1996; October 14, 1996; October 15, 1996; October 25, 1996; October 31, 1996; November 1, 1996; November 5, 1996; November 11, 1996; November 14, 1996; November 15, 1996.
moral and cultural values (of Australians)	7	May 28, 1988.
sexuality	9	May 28, 1988.
racism	14	July 20, 1989;

racism (cont.)		July 24, 1989; July 28, 1989; June 1, 1993.
tourism	8	July 14, 1989; August 3, 1993.
immigration	17	August 9, 1993; July 13, 1993.
media	3	--
exoticism	7	--
science and technology	10	December 1, 1993.
(Australia's) interference in domestic affairs	13	--
international relations	21	--
economic relations	27	July 25, 1989; July 1, 1993; December 16, 1993; February 6, 1995; October 31, 1996; October 24, 1996; October 25, 1996; October 26, 1996.
accidents and disasters	5	--

To place the analysis of this data in a context it is necessary to outline the structure and role of the media in Singapore and draw out the major links between the media and the state as the Singapore government has strong control over its media through regulation and ownership. Moreover, the Singapore government has a long proactive tradition of using the national media for nation-building purposes, having designed and implemented policies and strategies which see the media mobilised to achieve government decreed ends such as family planning, language education and so on.

Social and Political Context

Over the last two decades, Singapore has made a name through its "honest government, remarkably steady leadership, relatively successful attempts at nation-building and its obviously free economy" (Clad, 1989, p.125). Yet, it is important to understand that underlying this achievement is, on the part of the Singapore establishment, a perceived vulnerability to Western 'cultural pollution' which arises from the widespread consumption of Western media products by Singaporean citizens. As Yao (1994) suggests, this perceived vulnerability of Singapore (and other nations in the Southeast Asian region experiencing similar economic growth patterns to those of Singapore) articulates the region's ambivalence towards the experience of modernity (p. 33).

In the Singaporean context modernity is taken to refer to the process of change associated with the rapid expansion of the economy and the underlying industrialisation and subsequent changes to society. Giddens (1991) suggests two attributes of "modernity" that have bearing on contemporary Singapore: industrialism and capitalism (p.15). Modernity in the first sense can be understood as roughly equivalent to "the industrialised world", whereby industrialism refers to the "social relations implied in the widespread use of material power and machinery in production processes" (p. 15). Capitalism offers the second dimension of modernity, whereby capitalism refers to a "system of commodity production involving both competitive product markets and the commodification of labour power" (p. 15). The desire of Southeast Asian nations such as Singapore to be modern calls for the West to supply capital, technology and expertise to the region, but on their own terms (Yao, 1994, p. 35). However, the inflow of capital and expertise also allows for the inflow of Western values. In order to avoid this aspect of the process of exchange of capital and expertise the national governments of Southeast Asia (including Singapore) have adopted strategies to lessen the possibility of 'cultural pollution' (Yao, 1994, p. 44).

Crucial to this process is the construction of the West as Other (or reverse Orientalism) so as to avoid the values inherent in "the route to modernization" (Yao, 1994, p. 33-34). According to Yao, Singapore's perceived vulnerability arises out of a fear that Western media in particular would bring along with it the moral and cultural values of the West which Singapore sees as undesirable and damaging to Singapore's Asian values, and future economic and social progress. It is necessary to question why a nation as economically successful as Singapore would see itself as vulnerable to Western cultural production. Clearly there is a strong political edge to this, stemming from a desire on the part of the government to exert control over all aspects of production and consumption within the sovereign boundaries of the nation state. At the same time, given Singapore's geopolitical and strategic position there is some foundation for this sense of vulnerability. The displacement of the geographical onto the ideological is crucial to our understanding of Singapore and its relations with its neighbours, including Australia.

The degree of governmental control and political ideology over mass communication in Singapore is well documented (Birch, 1993, pp. 17-18; Rodan, 1993, pp. 74-75) As Birch (1993) argues, media regulations, repressive or permissive, are merely reflections of the society's political philosophies and goals. In the case of Singapore it is clear that the government desire to exercise firm control over all dimensions of ideological work in the state. Governmental control over Singapore's press comes in the form of licences which media owners may renew annually on the condition that they agree not to run "any article which is likely to cause ill-will or misunderstanding between the government and people of Singapore and the government and people of Malaysia; or which is likely to excite communal or racial emotions, or which glorifies or justifies the use of violence in politics" (Lim, 1985, p. 118). Similarly, the Singapore Broadcasting Authority Act (1979) and the Broadcasting and Television Act (1963) allows the government not only to take over the functions and powers of broadcasting in emergencies but also allows it to set the

policies for broadcasting in Singapore (Birch, 1993, p. 18). Of particular note in this account have been the recent developments in respect to the new communications technologies.

Singapore has developed one of the most advanced telecommunications infrastructures in Asia. In 1990, telephone penetration reached 378 per 1,000 population with sales of new cordless phones and zonephones reaching record levels. The introduction of new fibre optics technology is also currently paving the way for a more cost-effective and extensive telecommunications system (Kuo, 1993, pp. 243-244). In short Singapore has set itself up as the communication hub of the region (Goonasekera & Holaday, 1993). Paradoxically the claims made for these new technologies in the West all emphasize the democratic nature inherent in their use and attempts to control them have been vigorously opposed. However, in Singapore the government has sought to apply the same level of control to the new media that it has exercised in respect to the old media (Latif, 1996, p. 335).

People in Singapore are active media users. Eight daily newspapers share a total circulation of 777 000 per day. Its circulation rate of 289 per 1 000 population ranks amongst the highest in Asia (Kuo, 1993, p. 243). The penetration of radios and televisions into Singapore's households is practically universal. Most households own several radio receivers, and a second television set is being added by many middle-class families for more "personalized" viewing (Kuo, 1993, p. 243). With the increase in the standard of living, the computer, now widely recognized by Singaporeans as a potent instrument of media and less of a luxury item, is also finding its way into Singaporean homes (Kuo, 1993, p. 243). Further, there is evidence to suggest that the Internet has been enthusiastically embraced by Singaporeans (Latif, 1996, p. 334).

It has been claimed that much of Singapore's political and economic success can be attributed to the government's active policies in regard to nation-building (Rodan, 1993, pp. xi-xii). National campaigns such as the "Speak Mandarin" Campaign (1980), which enforced the notion of a unified nation striving towards the same goals through a comprehensive language policy is a case in point. Campaigns are used to aid in Singapore's nation-building process and provide the government with a rhetorical tool which can be used to communicate with the population, persuade them to change their attitudes and behaviour (Quah, 1984, p. 116). They may also be used as a means for checking the spread of certain "undesirable" practices, habits, or values among the local population (Quah, 1984, p. 303).

The first "Speak Mandarin" campaign was initiated in 1980, with the slogan "Speak More Mandarin, Less Dialect". It was constructed by the government as a unifying discourse to bring together disparate Chinese communities and provide a lingua franca amongst the Chinese population (Siddique, 1989, p. 568). In 1980, the Chinese community in Singapore (then 76 per cent of the population) consisted of 43.1 per cent Hokkien, 22.0 per cent Teochew, 16.5 per cent Cantonese, 7.4 per cent Hakka, 7.1 per cent Hainanese, 1.7 per cent Foochow, 0.7 per cent Henghua, 0.8 per cent "Shanghai-ese" and Others taking up the remaining 0.7 per cent (Siddique, 1989, p. 567). The 1985 campaign slogan "Mandarin is Chinese", illustrates further the perceived need to promote Mandarin over the other Chinese dialects. This second campaign (p.9.5) initiated and administrated by the government can be read in two ways. Either the first (1980) campaign was a failure and needed de-iterating or, conversely, that it was so successful that the government realised that structured and coherent ideological campaigns serves the government's arm and should therefore be pursued vigorously and consistently. According to Birch (1993), the bringing together of these Chinese communities under the "one umbrella" of Mandarin functioned effectively as a means of keeping the issue of a Singapore identity constantly in focus. Birch claims, however, that it has little to do with cultural roots

and Chinese traditions but everything to do with the "larger, politically constructed, crisis of how to protect the reified myth of the vulnerability of Singapore" (p. 71).

The early nation building campaigns are indelibly linked to the stewardship of Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first Prime Minister, and subsequently Senior Minister in the new government. The new Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong has continued the practice of mobilising the citizens of Singapore through media campaigns to support the Lee government's policies. A recent campaign has sought to instill the notion of an Asian identity in the Singaporean people. Goh's three main goals for the future success of Singapore are :

- To get Singaporeans to feel more deeply for Singapore so that they will not emigrate.

- To practice a more constructive, participatory-style democracy.

- To enhance Singapore's dynamism and fighting spirit to face challenges from "unsettling changes" to come in the world and in the region.

(Birch, 1993, p. 5)

Goh's future plans for Singapore highlight the intention of the Singapore government to establish a strong national identity for economic and political reasons. Aside from the three main goals, Goh also hopes to secure a better future for Singapore by

- sustaining its economic growth,

- seeking new challenges,

- being more creative, and

- for Singaporeans to "work closely and effectively amongst themselves and with their neighbours".

(Birch, 1993, pp. 5-6)

Clearly Goh feels it necessary to continue the agenda first articulated by Lee, who is the crucial figure in modern Singapore history.

Lee Kuan Yew was appointed Prime Minister when the People's Action Party (PAP) first took offices in 1959, and was responsible for implementing the tough regimes which shaped Singapore into the successful city state it is today. Although he stepped down as Prime Minister in November 1990, he has continued to be an important figurehead in Singapore, and is generally recognized as an international statesman, for some the "voice" of Asia. Lee's views, though regularly criticized in the West from the left are also seen by the right to often hold elements of truth and logic that should be applied to Australia. A reporter for *The Australian Financial Review*, writing in response to Lee's (April 18, 1994) lecture to Australians puts it thus, "uncomfortable and predictable as his lecturing may have been, the correctness of his general analysis is unquestioned" (April 20, 1994, p.16).

During Lee's visit to Australia in 1994, he advised Australians that in order for Australia to achieve similar economic success to that experienced by Singapore and that of other newly industrialised economies, they had to hasten economic restructuring (*The Australian*, April 19, 1994, p. 13).

Lee has never hesitated to speak his mind and offer advice. This, along with his methods of government, has over the years, drawn a fair amount of criticisms from the US and from other Western nations (Latif, 1996, pp. 321-322). Central to Lee's style has been a willingness to use the media for his party's political ends, which has involved not only the control of production but also the control of media consumption. According to Birch (1993), the relationship between media and society is often reciprocal: the media system created by a nation often shapes that society. Although this theory appears reductionist, it holds an element of truth in the case of Singapore. The media in Singapore is influenced by a "totalitarian-style

government." (p. 7). "The ability of the local press to do a better job depends on the environment the government allows or encourages in Singapore" (*The Straits Times*, 21 July, 1985 (cited in Birch, 1993, p. 7)). Other voices "tend to be positioned as anomalies to the dominant, government driven discourse, and so attention is still focused, through the anomalies, upon that dominant discourse" (Birch, 1993, p. 7). These policies have been extended to include media produced beyond the actual boundaries of Singapore. A number of cases where non-Singaporean media have been challenged by the Singapore government through legal and extra-legal means are now well documented. The most notable is the case of Christopher Lingle, the American academic who criticised the Singaporean judiciary obliquely in the *International Herald Tribunal* leading to a court case where he and four other parties were fined by the Singaporean courts (Latif, 1996, p. 326). Thus the strategy has been to control not only the production and consumption of local news but also international news flows as well (Clad, 1989). Singapore's stringent censorship laws have resulted in restricted distribution of foreign publications (Clad, 1989, p. 135).

By contrast there is a perception that the media in Australia differ greatly from that of Singapore. Underpinning the Australian media is a belief in the "freedom" of speech and the press. These absolutes are frequently breached in practice but nevertheless the Singapore government views them as constituting a Western liberalist position at odds with the function of the media which, in the Singaporean context, are viewed as necessary tools in the enunciation of government policy. According to Lee Hsien Loong, Trade and Industry Minister of Singapore, the role of the mass media "is to inform the people of government policies" (Birch, 1993, p. 21). Such views lead to tight and heavy control over the media in Singapore that stem, in part, from the fear of political reforms that could pressurize the PAP into subscribing to the West's form of democratic government.

Whether democracy is a "Western" concept or whether an 'Asian' democracy exists forms part of a debate about the 'Asian way'. The 'Asian way' and Asian values are based on the teachings of Confucius, emphasising the central role of the family unit, respect for parents and elders and the good of the collective over that of the individual (*The Straits Times*, November 16, 1996, p. 38). The Singaporean government has adopted and modified these precepts to suit the modern nation state and rejects many of the Western liberal democratic ideas, believing, instead, that freedom of expression is undesirable, that the rights of the individual must be respected insofar as they do not impinge on the greater rights of the community as a whole, and that decisions are reached by consensus, not confrontation (*The Age*, 21 April, 1994, p. 14).

The idea of Asian societies having a different set of values from those of Western societies is not a new one. The notion of an Asian cultural identity and Asian values is instilled by the Singapore government in Singaporeans in accordance with the government's ideologies. It may be seen as a political ploy employed by the Singapore government to aid in nation-building through the establishing of a recognisable national identity. Singapore identity is constructed around the idea of a united nation created from racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences aiming for the same goals determined by the government. This is clearly seen in the words of Singapore's National Anthem:

> Onward Singapore
> We, the people of Singapore
> Together march towards happiness
> Our noble aspiration
> To make Singapore a success
> Let us all unite
> In a new spirit
> Together we proclaim
> Onward Singapore
> Onward Singapore

The notion of a constructed identity signaling the idea of belonging (Birch, 1993, p. 2) is also emphasised in Singapore's Pledge:

> We, the citizens of Singapore, pledge
> ourselves as one united people,
> regardless of race, language or religion,
> to build a democratic society based on
> justice and equality, so as to achieve
> happiness, prosperity and progress for
> our nation

Much has been written about the West's perception of the East as "Other" (e.g. Said (1978) Schirato (1994)), but to date, little is written dealing with the West from the "Eastern" viewpoint. In respect to Australia and Singapore there is, as yet, no full length work detailing the current discourses which arise out of the "Othering" of Australia by the Singapore media. To some extent, the view that Singapore has of Australia will be shaped by Australia's racist past. It will also be shaped, as Yao (1994) says, by an ambivalence towards the experience of modernity (p. 33), which, in this context, refers to Singapore's uncertainty about the effects of the economic, cultural and political changes it has undergone in the past two decades. It is also shaped by the discourse in Australia; about how "racist" Australia is today. Singaporean Occidentalism doesn't just emerge from a vacuum, it is the result of a number of intersecting cultural, historical and social forces within Singapore and within Australia, and within the world at large.

The Singapore government sees itself as having an active role in the local, national, regional and global fields (Latif, 1996, p. 334-335). It has attempted to construct a Singaporean identity that reflects its perception of this role. However, in order to construct this identity it has formulated strict policies of control that take

many forms (Birch, 1993, p. 40). The "technology of power", according to Birch, is used simply in different ways "to produce those already well-established hegemonic domains of objects and rituals of truth" (1993, p.40). Privatisation, for example, is viewed by the Singapore government as simply a greater acknowledgment of commercial possibilities while still retaining government control (Birch, 1993, p. 40).

The Singapore government never loses sight of the fact that it is a small state in a populous region, where Chinese are ethnically alien. Consequently Singapore has adopted a foreign policy of neutrality and non-alignment within the region, believing that the dominance of one major power is not in the best interests of the region (Chew, 1991, p. 357). Although claiming to be non-aligned and neutral, Singapore participates in military arrangements with Australia, New Zealand, Britain and Malaysia. The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) has been training in Australia since 1975. In addition, both countries (Australia and Singapore) have signed a Defence Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement, and a Memorandum of Understanding at the Shoalwater Bay training area in Australia to strengthen bilateral cooperation and enhance regional links, suggesting a desire on both Singapore and Australia's part to establish good relations (The Straits Times, March 22, 1994, p. 3). These agreements to some extent undermine Singapore's claim of non-alignment thus emphasising the pragmatic nature of the PAP's agenda. I would argue that the desire to control Singapore's destiny extends beyond internal matters, hence the defence agreement with Australia, which, paradoxically makes Australia crucial to the continuance of Singapore's prosperity.

Although the PAP government of Singapore often expresses gratitude towards Australia in military matters (The Straits Times, October 22, 1996), Lee Kuan Yew's continuous attacks on Australian society suggest that this gratitude masks an uneasy relationship between the two nations which is emblematic of East/West relations in general. At the heart of this unease is the 'problem of modernity' identified by Yao.

The need for economic development calls for, what Yao (1994) terms, the "courting of the benefits of modernity", which are, Western education, technology, foreign capital, and the ideologies of nationalism and liberal democracy (p. 44), the governments of Southeast Asian nations nonetheless put up a selective enclosure in the attempt to seal off what they perceive as "undesirable imports from the West" (Yao, 1994, p. 44). However, globalization, with its "rapid flow of goods, capital, people, information, ideas, and cultures across nations and societies", has made this a difficult task (Yao, 1994, p. 44).

Asian governments such as Singapore view the moral attitudes and qualities of the West as totally opposite from those desired by Asian societies (Yao, 1994, p. 33-34). That is why attempts have been made (in Singapore's case, by the Television Corporation of Singapore) to produce programmes encouraging local values and culture. From an Asian perspective Australia is prosperous, with a high standard of living, great potential, and room for expansion. However, its views in such topics as welfare, sexuality and family matters like those originating from other nations in the West, are perceived as damaging to the more traditional "Asian values". Similarly, problems associated with the mass media, such as its alleged negative moral impact and its use and abuse of power, are seen as emerging from the West. The West becomes a space of that which Asia is *not*, both morally and culturally (Yao, 1994, p. 39). Yao argues persuasively that the discourse of "cultural pollution" really has to do with the feelings of Asian societies towards the experience of modernity,

> for all the talk about cultural pollution and invasion of Western media really articulates a profound unease about the experience of modernity. The social construction of mass media is arguably a response which attempts to manage and deflect such an experience. It is a construction that draws on and feeds into the new posture of South-East Asia in the post colonial world, and actively creates the West as the morally ambiguous Other.
>
> (1994, p. 34).

Attempts by the Singapore government to control the flow of foreign media into Singapore stems from the fear that the media originating from the West encompasses all the perceived undesirable qualities of the West and the power to intrude upon, and threaten, Asian societies and their traditional values. This is the reason for the implementation of media regulations by the Singapore government to restrict the flow of the media from the West, despite Singapore's desire to encompass the benefits of modernity.

Singapore's Newspaper and Printing Presses (Amendment) Act was passed on September 1, 1986 to allow the Minister for Communications and Information to restrict the sales or distribution of foreign publications which have been declared to intrude in the domestic politics of Singapore by the Government of Singapore. The regulations on this are quite explicit. Any media deemed to be:

- publishing material intended for Singapore readers to generate political, ethnic and religious conflict and unrest,
- indulging in slanted, distorted or partisan reporting,
- persistently refusing to publish the Government's replies to refute misreporting and baseless allegations.

(Information Division, 1988, p. 16)

may be proscribed. Of course the problem is, who judges whether an article forments ethnic unrest or presents a slanted view of Singapore? The answer is equally simple: the Singapore bureaucracy. In this simple but effective way the circulation and consumption of international information is controlled and the possibility of 'cultural pollution' kept at bay. While the term "gatekeeper" was originally used in American social psychological and sociological traditions "to describe those personnel, such as editors, who occupy strategic decision-making positions within news media organizations" (O'Sullivan et al., 1991, p.97), Singapore's ultimate gatekeeper is the Government. The strategies for high censorship are devised through Government instrumentalities like the censorship board, which limits public consumption of news through self-censorship in journalism and banning of foreign newspapers. The late

1980s saw the imposed restriction of distribution for *Time, Asiaweek, The Asian Wall Street Journal* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in Singapore due to the Singaporean authorities' claim that the publications were "engaging in the domestic policies of Singapore" (Clad, 1989, p.135). The desire to control the circulation of all information, both domestic and foreign, suggests a contradiction is at work within the Singaporean political formation which revolves around the issue of identity.

Notions of identity are often constructed in terms of a set of binaries which are hierarchical:

Strong	Weak
Good	Bad
Civilized	Barbaric

(Schirato, 1994, p.47).

According to Said (1978, p. 3), European (Western) culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self. As a term of discourse, "Othering" implicates the self/other binary in Lacan (1968) in which signifier-signified relations are replaced by signifier-signifier ones. In line with Anderson's (1991) idea of a nation as an "imagined" community (see Chapter 2), Lacan's register of the "imaginary" is critical to the existence of the Other. The 'Oriental' is always produced as an 'Other', which helps to provide and guarantee the identity of the Western subject (Schirato, 1994, p.44). The Oriental, often portrayed by Western discourse as lazy, untrustworthy, sexually depraved, lacking spirituality and barbaric, becomes a guarantee, not only of Western identity, but of the superior "value" of that identity (Schirato, 1994, p.46). Not only is the Western subject differentiated by his/her skin colour, terms of culture (i.e.,

political organization or systems of government, region, clothes), also come into play (Schirato, 1994, p.46).

Schirato's argument can be used to aid in the understanding of how Australia is Othered in the Singapore media. By setting itself against Australia, Singapore not only establishes its own identity but the often negative view of Australia employed by its press helps to guarantee its "superior" set of values. For example, in the article "Cut migrant intake, urges Aussie opposition leader" (*The Straits Times*, August 9, 1993, p. 7), Mr. Tim Fischer (Deputy Prime Minister and leader of Australia's conservative National Party) argued when he was in opposition, that Australia's immigration policy was the cause of economic recession. He also questioned the national policy on multiculturalism, calling for a review and stating that he had a problem with "aggressive funding of every ethnic organisation which puts its hand up to pursue a form of promotion of things" not central to mainstream Australia. This view of multiculturalism contrasts sharply with the view taken of this concept by the Singaporean government. Singapore's policy has always been to promote a multicultural society, encouraging equal opportunity for all citizens irrespective of race or gender. Multiculturalism in Singapore is perceived as a crucial dimension of rule because it avoids the potential for ethnic and racial disharmony which would undermine economic stability. This article implies, through the difference of opinion, that Singapore is superior. The tone of the article, like many others I will analyse in the course of the thesis, especially those having to do with the moral and cultural values of Australians, implies that Singapore is superior to Australia in the matter of race relations. This implied superiority, which is signified more by the tone of the language than actual statements, is important to the perceived process of 'Othering' that I think the Singapore press indulges in respect to Australia.

The concept of the "Other" is a complex one and it is not enough merely to state the implications of the self/other binary in relation to the government and the

media. Rather, it is equally important and significant to understand how the government uses the media to support the dominant ideologies in Singapore as well as how Australia is becoming the Western "Other". According to Iwabuchi (1994), Orientalist discourse distinguishes between the West and the East, "us" and "them", whereby "'their' Otherness is always spoken about in terms of the difference from 'us'; 'our' superiority is unmarked by marking 'their' inferiority" (p. 49).

Central to my argument is the perception that there is a contradiction in the policies of the Singapore government in respect to modernisation. On the one hand they desire all of the benefits of this process, including economic prosperity, scientific development and Western style education. On the other hand they do not desire the cultural baggage that comes with this process; the social atomisation including the breakdown of the family that they claim to have witnessed in the West. This contradiction is encompassed in what Yao calls the 'problem of modernity' which I would argue is a clash between the economic factors and culture. In order to resolve the contradiction the Singapore government, like its counterparts in Malaysia and Indonesia, have deliberately constructed a set of 'Asian values' embodied in the pledge and national anthem as well as the five core values as an antidote to the fear of 'cultural pollution'. In addition to the carefully enunciated polices the press have been mobilised to augment the ideological thrust of government. Part of this process is the implicit 'Othering' of Australia in *The Straits Times'* reports of Australian affairs.

Chapter two of this thesis consists of a literature review. It looks at the discourses of Orientalism and Occidentalism as well as the media roles and nation-building policies of Singapore. This chapter draws upon Said's (1978) *Orientalism* as well as his later work "Orientalism Reconsidered" (1985) as a starting point and applies it to the study of the Singapore media. Said's work on how the West had created the Orient out of its own power and cultural hegemony allows for an

understanding of how the "East" can similarly construct the West from its own perspective. This chapter will also examine in greater detail Yao's (1994) notion of the reverse form of Orientalism, i.e. Occidentalism and will apply this to the study of Australia as the Other in the press of Singapore. This chapter also looks at the accounts of nation-building as well as the media policies implemented by the Singapore government in accordance to the dominant ideologies of Singapore.

Chapter three looks at significant instances of Othering of Australia in *The Straits Times*. It looks at the moral and cultural values of Australians and contrasts them with those of Singaporeans in the attempt to illustrate the process of Othering. It examines the surrounding discourses, as well as the language used in each article. Several specific examples will be given to illustrate how Australia is Othered in the Singapore media.

Chapter four examines the economics of Othering. It looks at the process of Othering as a tool employed by individuals and society to gain control of, or maintain the means of production and reproduction. The economic aspect is intrinsic to the understanding of Othering, whether this refers to the Othering of individuals or societies due to race, culture, or even gender, suggesting the process is a result of ways of thinking, in order to control these economic means. This chapter will use several specific examples relating to economic relations to show how Singapore "Others" Australia.

Chapter five looks at matters concerning the race debate sparked by Australian politician Pauline Hanson. It examines the particular ways in which her views on race, immigration are reported in *The Straits Times*. It will also look at the way the recent events in Australia attributed to her rise to prominence (such as riots, racial disputes, and so on) are reported. The discourses surrounding her statements will also

be analysed in an attempt to demonstrate that Hanson has contributed significantly to the Othering of Australia in recent media coverage of Australia in Singapore.

Conclusion

The thesis will conclude with the argument that Australian/Singapore relations are ambivalent at best due to historical and economic reasons and that this ambivalence is expressed in the way in which Australia is reported in Singapore's media. *The Straits Times* frequently Others Australia and this type of reporting constitutes a form of Occidentalism which is a recent derivative of Orientalism.

Chapter 2: Literature Search

This chapter will examine the literature relevant to my thesis. In particular it will critically examine the major works on the process of Othering and its major derivative, Orientalism; the problems of modernity; nationalism and the Singapore press. In addition to reviewing this important literature I will also take the opportunity to elaborate my methodology, which is principally an extension of the ideas of Edward Said (*Orientalism*, 1978) and his later work "Orientalism reconsidered" (*Cultural Critique*, Fall 1985, Vol. 1, pp. 89-107) applied to an analysis of press reports of *The Straits Times*.

Of particular interest to this thesis is the way in which the concept of "Orientalism" has been applied in South East Asia in general, and Singapore in particular. Said's work is of paramount importance to the understanding of how Orientalism (the perception of the Orient as Other) occurs. It is only by understanding the Orientalist discourse, applied to the reasons behind Australia's treatment and view of Singapore can a parallel analysis (Occidentalism) be drawn. I will also examine the term "Occidentalism" (reverse Orientalism), a concept developed principally by Yao (1994), paying particular attention to its application to Singapore and its "policy" of Othering Australia. Finally, I will compare and contrast the two concepts before I apply them to an analysis of Australia / Singapore relationships.

Othering.

Bhabha (1983) argues that the colonial construction of Otherness is permeated by ambivalence because the colonial representation operates in a manner analogous to the psychoanalytic fetish (p. 27), that is, it

gives access to an "identity" which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defense, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of [racial] difference and disavowal of it. This conflict of pleasure/unpleasure, mastery/defense, knowledge/disavowal, absence/presence has a fundamental significance for colonial discourse.

(1983, p. 27)

It is important to acknowledge that the discursive construction of Otherness is neither fixed nor continuous but ambivalent (Lalvani, 1995, p. 263). Bhabha's formulation is significant in that it recognizes the twin modes of differentiation, the racial and the sexual and enables the erotic recognition of the Other / threat of difference to be displaced into alternative fields of power / knowledge relations and into an economy of desire productive of power (Lalvani, 1995, p. 263).

The ambivalence that attends the construction of the Other may be identified with the fact that Orientalism intersects with the structuring themes of other cultural formations. According to Lowe (1991, p. 8), "The Orient as Other is a literary trope that may reflect a range of national issues: at one time the race for colonies, at others class conflicts and worker's revolts, changes in sexual roles during a time of rapid industrialisation".

The construction of the Other results in the formation of national stereotypes which, according to Hodge (1989, p. 443), serve to construct "unity while sustaining difference within national groups" and to "mark off those who belong to the nation from others through their possession of the secret...to read it". Singapore "Others" Australia in that it constructs its national identity as possessing different values from those of Australia (and the West).

Orientalism

Othering occurs to differentiate individuals and societies. Orientalism and Occidentalism are instances of Othering and arises out of the desire of individuals and societies to distinguish themselves and establish notions of identity. These notions of identity are not fixed but are constructions of the individual (Said, 1989). What is considered different to some may not be to others. This forms an important discourse in the notion of Othering. Orientalists "promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them") (Said, 1978, p. 43). Said introduces the complements of the Orient and Orientalism, the Occident and Occidentalism when looking at way the Orientalists compared themselves with the strangers they studied in a way that allowed them to identify and heighten distinguishing characteristics (Carrier, 1995, p. 2).

Orientalism is also "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" (Said, 1978, p.1). It can refer to what Orientalists do and have done (Said, 1978, p. 2). Orientalism may also refer to "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time)'the Occident'" (1978, p. 2). Lalvani (1995) points out (as a number of observers have indicated (Moore-Gilbert, 1986; Clifford, 1988; Lowe, 1991)) that Said contextualises Orientalism as a "monolithic discourse that uniformly constructs the Orient in opposition to the Occident" (p. 263). However, Orientalism is not a "continuous and discrete formation that constitutes a stable essentialized object, the Orient" but is a heterogeneous and contradictory discourse (Lalvani, 1995, p. 263). According to James Clifford (1988), "any writing...at any period in the history of the Occident that accepts as its starting point a basic dichotomy between East and West and that makes essentialist statements about 'the Orient, its people, customs, "mind", destiny and so on' is Orientalist (p. 259). Orientalism is also "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1978, p. 3). The Orient becomes accessible to the West

precisely because the West invests resources in acquiring knowledge (details about institutions, languages, religions, history, customs) and telling stories (novels, dramas, scientific treatises, anthropological works, business brochures) about the Oriental "object" (Schirato, 1994). As Said (1978) states "Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into western consciousness" (1978, p. 6). Western subjects, working out of their various cultural institutions, produce the knowledge and the text that explains the Orient or Oriental. These explanations allow the West access to the Orient as informed, authoritative and powerful subjects (Schirato, 1994, p. 45). Schirato succinctly sums up the central point to every Orientalist discourse and practice by stating that "The Orient can never - must never - be considered on its own terms, because to give up claims to knowledge and the right of explanation would be to give up on the possibility of western control over the Orient and Orientals" (1994, p. 46). Similarly, the East may construct the West from its own viewpoint. This discourse will be taken up later in this chapter with Yao's (1994) article on modernity.

Knowledge and power, what Said calls the Baconian themes (1978, p. 32), are the ability to survey a civilization from its origins through its prime and on to its decline. "The object of such knowledge", Said goes on to say, is "inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; this object is a "fact" which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable. To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it" (1978, p. 32). Knowledge and power are inextricably linked (Gordon, 1980, p. 234). Australia derives its perception of Singapore from preconceived notions established by the West of the East.

When discussing Singapore/Australia relations many of these concepts come into play. Australia's population consists mainly of white Anglo-Saxons, a minority in the Asian region. Australians have never viewed themselves as Asians despite the

geographical proximity it has to Asia. The view taken by Australians of Asians can be seen as similar to the one adopted by the West towards Asia and its inhabitants. Australian's concept of Asia wa. ·rongly informed by the British view of Asia as "India and the Far East". Until the second World War, Australians perceived Asia as a vast, incomprehensible and menacing mass and Asians as "Asiatics", "natives", "swarms" and "hordes". The Chinese were "Chinamen", "slant-eyed", "yellow" and "yellow Peril" and the Asian workers were "coolies" and "cheap labour" (Barwick, et al (1963); Cairns (1965); Vandenbosh (1967) and Wilkes (1961). According to Said, the contrasting image of the Orient helped to guarantee the identity of European (Western) culture (1978, pp. 1-2). Australia's adoption of the West's attitude towards Asia in the period up to the 1970s suggests that Australia perceived itself as part of the West in regard to using the Orientalist discourse outlined by Said (1978) so as to provide and establish its own identity within an imperialist environment. As this has changed so has Australia's expression of its political, economic and cultural location which has proved a problematic exercise.

Said expands the historical dimension by considering "Orientalist Structures and Restructures", where he traces the path of modern Orientalism, employing chronological description with a "set of devices common to the work of important poets, artists, and scholars" (1978, p. 25). This chapter traces the development of thought about the Orient. He begins with the European medieval and Renaissance periods, for whom Islam was the essential Orient. However, according to Said (1978, p. 116), during the eighteenth century, there were a number of new, interlocking elements that hinted at the "coming evangelical phase", as a result of European exploration of the rest of the world. The Orient was brought into sharper focus due to the "increasing influence of travel literature, imaginary utopias, moral voyages, and scientific reporting" (1978, p. 117). This was the same period in which both Australia and Singapore were "discovered", developed and incorporated into the British Empire.

Said concludes his book by looking at the period after 1870, and attempts to illustrate the "present intellectual and social realities of Orientalism in the United States" (1978, p. 25). Said provides a deeper insight into the development of Orientalism in the United States by examining the increasing problem of the term "Western civilization", claiming that due to the many different races and cultures now residing in the United States, it can no longer force cultures and peoples into separate and distinct spheres. The Orient can no longer be used to guarantee the identity of the West. It is therefore increasingly evident that countries like Australia, who also boasts of a mix of cultures, experience similar difficulties. The failure of Australia to come to terms with its cultural diversity (as reported in articles relating to racism in Australia in *The Straits Times*) helps to Other it from Singapore's perspective of a community experiencing racial harmony.

Tony Schirato's (1994) article "The Narrative of Orientalism" (*Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 22, pp. 44-52) and Michael Sprinker's (ed.) (1992) book *Edward Said: A Critical Reader* provide further insights and interpretations of Said's work. Schirato's article looks at Said's work on Orientalism and applies it to an analysis of two examples of "western" culture (the films "Gunga Din" (1939) and "Blood Oath" (1988)) which attempt to produce, represent and explain the "Orient" and "Orientals" to the West. Schirato's aim in this article is to illustrate the different ways in which "western culture's 'explanations' of the Orient remain predicated on the discursive reproduction -- in novels, travel writing, tourist guides, as well as more overtly political documents -- of certain naturalized and racially based hierarchies of power" (1994, pp. 44-45).

Said's observation in *Orientalism* of how "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (1978, pp. 1-2), aids in the understanding of how notions of identity are established. A group or community identity is always constructed in terms of a set of binaries which are

hierarchical (strong/weak, good/bad, civilized/barbaric) (Schirato, 1994, p.47).

According to Said (1978, p.3), European (Western) culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate, and even underground self (Schirato, 1994, p. 44). Western subjects (academics, scientists, journalists, novelists, bureaucrats) always produce the "Oriental" as an "Other", so as to provide and guarantee their own identity (1994, p. 45). The Oriental, often portrayed by Western discourse as lazy, untrustworthy, sexually depraved, lacking spirituality and barbaric, becomes a guarantee, not only of Western identity, but of the superior "value" of that identity (Schirato, 1994, p.46). This prejudice and racial hatred exists to the present day. Reports of acts of racial violence against minority groups (e.g. "Racial tension 'at danger level in W. Australian campuses'", *The Straits Times*, July 28, 1989, p. 8) show racial discrimination to be a current event. Not only is the Western subject differentiated by his/her skin colour, terms of culture (i.e., political organization or systems of government, region, clothes), also come into play. (Schirato, 1994, p.46). According to Said (1978), the construction of a West / Orient dichotomy is institutionalized in Western culture. "The Orient", he states, "is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" (1978, p. 2). Schirato (1994) points out that this process is responsible for the reproduction of the Orient, which is based on a West / Orient dichotomy and the positive / negative values it implies.

Michael Sprinker's (1992) book *Edward Said: A Critical Reader* is a collection of essays examining Said's career and providing insights into the man's life and influence in the shaping of contemporary debates in both the humanities and social sciences. Sprinker examines Said's discourse on Orientalism from a post-colonial perspective, concluding that its function was to "...understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is manifestly a different world..." (Said,

1978, p. 12). According to Sprinker (1992, p. 9), Orientalism reflects Western power and its imperial appetite. The type of knowledge had been "developed in step with the expansion of European colonialism",

> Thus the representation of other societies and peoples involved an act of power by which images of them were in a sense created by the Western observer who constructed them as peoples and societies to be ruled and dominated, not as objects to be understood passively, objectively or academically".
>
> (1992, p. 9)

Sprinker suggests Said (1978) offers a means of challenging colonial domination, believing that it is "imperative for the colonized to produce and create their own narratives that negate the colonial misrepresentations of their reality" (p. 9). According to Said, liberation and an end to colonial suppression and domination requires a rewriting of history (p. 9). I will demonstrate that this is precisely what significant elements in the Singaporean establishment have done but through the control of the production and consumption of communication rather than through the conscious rewriting of Singaporean history.

Occidentalism

Said's concept of *Orientalism* revolutionized Western understanding of non-Western cultures by showing how Western projected images shaped the Occidental view of the Orient (Said, 1978, p. 6). James Carrier's (1995) book *Occidentalism: Images of the West* reflects that understanding back onto Western societies. This book, which consists of a collection of essays by different authors, attempts to show how images of the West circulated within non-Western cultures shape people's conceptions of themselves. In other words subjects in Asian culture are presumed to be shaped by Western and non-Western cultural products alike. In this account Jonathan Spencer's essay on "Occidentalism in the East: The Uses of the West in the

Politics and Anthropology of South Asia" (1995, pp. 234-257), is especially
significant.

Spencer brings together the two strands of thought make Carrier's book
cohere: the uses of Occidentalism in anthropology and other academic writing, and
the Occidentalism of politicians and other non-academic members of the post-colonial
order (1995, p. 234). Spencer also reveals the political and intellectual complexity of
the different phenomena which the different contributors to the book term as
"Occidentalism". Spencer identifies two kinds of Occidentalism employed by
Dumont and Marriott respectively, positivist and romantic. In positivist
Occidentalism "all cultural differences at one level can be subsumed under general
laws operating at a more universal level" while in romantic Occidentalism, cultures
exist in parallel, equal but usually very different (1995, p.238). In short Spencer
identifies specific examples of Occidentalist discourse, such as the use of the West as
a rhetorical counter to the guarantee the identity of the non-West (1995, p. 234). His
concept of "anthropological occidentalisms" is used to good effect in his discussion
of South Asia (1995, p. 234) where he argues, that "the West", for many,

> is not primarily encountered as a discourse, an epistemology, or even
> a politics, let alone a real place with real people. The West is
> encountered in the form of things, items of consumption and objects
> of desire.

<div align="right">(1995, p. 252)</div>

When we look at Singapore, I will argue, this situation obtains. Most Singaporeans
encounter the West at the point of consumption - of goods and services and
information - and not discursively or even epistemologically. Indeed the things are
considered so attractive that the government and its ideological agents such as the
press feel compelled to counter them. One way is to Other their point of origin
thereby making them less desirable - that is, reversing the conditions of the encounter
through the process of Occidentalism thereby creating a situation of 'mastery'.

The subject of Occidentalism is also discussed by Chen (1995) where she examines this theory of counter-discourse in relation to post-Mao China. Chen looks at Chinese Occidentalism as a discourse "evoked by various and competing groups within Chinese society for a variety of different ends, largely, though not exclusively, within Chinese politics". She adds that as such, Chinese Occidentalism has been "both a discourse of oppression and a discourse of liberation" (1995, p. 5).

In the introduction to the book Chen introduces two discursive practices within the discourse of Chinese Occidentalism, "official Occidentalism"(p. 5) and "anti-official Occidentalism" (p. 8). Chen regards "official Occidentalism" as the Chinese government's use of the essentialization of the West as a means for supporting a nationalism that effects the internal suppression of its own people. In this process, the Western Other is construed by a Chinese imagination, not for the purpose of dominating the West, but in order to discipline, and ultimately to dominate, the Chinese self at home. This concept can also be applied to Singapore and relates specifically to the issue of modernity.

Modernity

According to Giddens (1991), modern institutions differ from all preceding forms of social order in respect of their dynamism, the degree to which they undercut traditional habits and customs, and their global impact (p.1). However, he agues that these are not only extensional transformations, but that modernity radically alters the nature of day-to-day social life and affects the most personal aspects of our experience.

Giddens (1985) also claims that totalitarianism is a permanent possibility of the modern state which he defines as involving four elements:

1. concentrating surveillance in terms of (a) information coding, documentation of activities of the population and (b) the supervision of activities and intensified policing;
2 'moral totalism': the fate of the political community is seen as embedded in the historicity of the people;
3. terror: the maximising of police power, allied to the disposal of the means of waging industrialised war and sequestration; and
4. the prominence of a leader figure: the appropriation of power by a leader depending not upon a professionalised military role but on the generation of mass support.

(Craib, 1985, p. 97)

The Government of Singapore desires Singapore to be a modern state and to reap the benefits of modernity. According to Chaney (cited in Birch, 1993), "what makes a society modern is the idea that collective beliefs, primarily religious beliefs, become less important and that associated collective celebrations of those beliefs are less widely practised or valued" (p. 73). However, this is not seen to be the case in Singapore. The PAP considers Singapore to be modern through its reliance on a set of collective "Asian values".

Occidentalism arises out of the need of Asian nations to establish a national identity. Asian nations perceive the West as possessing qualities and values unlike those of Asian nations (see Chapter 3). The desire for the experience of modernity similar to that experienced in Western nations is, however, mixed with the fear of cultural pollution on the part of the governing elites. This fear is taken up Yao (1994) who sees the mass media as being a critical element in this perception. He outlines the problematic nature of mass media in Southeast Asia, suggesting they articulate Southeast Asia's ambivalence towards the experience of modernity.

According to Yao, the social construction of the mass media of Asian nations such as Singapore is a response to the perceived cultural pollution and invasion of Western media by the governing elites, attempting to manage and deflect desire for Western culture on the part of their subjects (1994, p. 34). The West is created as the

morally ambiguous Other in the Southeast Asian media through a process of social construction, which Yao claims, "draws on and feeds into the new posture of Southeast Asia in the post colonial world" (p. 34). While Yao generalises there is also a degree of specificity in his work when we consider the Singaporean press.

The West is seen to possess what Yao terms, the "index of modernity" (1994, p. 34) — television, telephones and telecommunications in general, yet, although Singapore desires to reap the benefits modernity brings, it is fearful of what it terms 'cultural pollution' which has become associated with the experience of modernity in the rhetoric of government. The perception that Western values are damaging to the more traditional values Asian societies, such as Singapore, has led to the uneasiness experienced by Asian governments in regard to the advance of modernity. The fear of cultural pollution and the disruption of Asian values compete with the desire of Asian governments to encourage economic growth within their countries. For Singapore not to bring in the new technologies and industries from the West would mean severing Singapore from economic growth,

> By importing Western technology we have achieved economic growth rates of over 13 per cent per annum, at constant prices, for the past five years, more than doubling the GNP in five years and more than trebling it in the past decade. But the price for this material progress is the risk of eroding traditional values and culture patterns and upsetting decorous social behavior.
>
> (Josey, 1974, p. 206)

Occidentalism is partly the result of the increasing difficulty of stopping the flow of information into Singapore due to advanced telecommunication technologies (such as satellite technology), as well as the desire for Singapore to be technologically advanced. Occidentalism arises from the Singapore government's attempts to instill Asian values in Singaporeans, in the hope of deflecting the ill-effects of modernity. According to Lee,

> It is not possible to insulate Singapore from the world, though it is
> possible to inoculate and immunise the people, through their cultural
> and social values, from the contemporary maladies of the West.
> (Josey, 1974, p. 207)

Singapore portrays the West and Australia (which it views as part of the West) as Other in the hope of maintaining a semblance of control of the discourses of power.

Yao's article also examines how, despite the emerging social and political confidence nurtured by the experience of economic growth, South-East Asian nations (Singapore in particular) perceive their societies as vulnerable and easily ravaged by the West (1994, p. 34), and how this merely hides the deeper underlying unease about the experience of modernity. The perception of Asian societies as vulnerable may be seen as a rhetorical strategy employed by Asian governments to maintain their position of control in the face of the change inherent in 'modernity' (Giddens, 1985).

According to Yao, the Asian approach to Western media can be seen as a form of Occidentalism, an Orientalism in reverse (1994, p.40). He argues that Southeast Asian nations tend to perceive the West as the "totalized non-East" (1994, p. 33), with values and moral qualities opposite to those desired by Asian societies. Yao cites Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir, whose distrust of the Western media and insistence of Asia's vulnerability and moral uniqueness is shared by Singapore and its other Asian neighbours, to justify his argument (Yao, 1994, p. 33). Singapore's Minister of Information and the Arts, Brigadier-General George Yeo is also cited by Yao (1994, p. 39), who points out Yeo has insisted that Asian nations "go on the offense" through a dual process; regulating Western broadcasting and at the same time promoting Asian values and ways of life. Following Yao, I will argue that most effective way of achieving this 'offensive' is to Other the culture one fears. This may be achieved in a number of ways, including the careful mobilisation of the media,

which is certainly the case in Singapore (Birch, 1993, pp. 65-66). Dr. Mahathir's, whose criticisms of the Western media are now famous, argues the Western media is both powerful and amoral. In Dr. Mahathir's own words,

> We can watch murder as it is committed in all the gory details, but at the same time the TV can have us dancing while watching Michael Jackson during his moonwalk. Clearly, the people who decide what we should see hold terrible power. They can have us dancing in the streets or they can have us rioting with firebrands in our hands, burning, looting and killing.
>
> (1994, p. 37)

Clearly Dr. Mahathir believes that the people who have control of the media can influence a society's views. He also believes, the Western media "have not been fair and they black out anything good" about developing countries, thus destabilizing and working against "Asian interests". Mahathir claims, referring to publications like *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Asiaweek* and the *Asian Wall Street Journal*:

> There is no Asian newspaper for Asians, only Western newspapers published in the name of Asian countries. ...Their (i.e. foreign media's) main idea is how to create friction and instability, so that if we are unstable they can compete with us.
>
> (1994, p. 38)

Coupled with these strong views is the conviction that the Western media intrude upon and threaten Asian societies and their traditional values (e.g. the belief that the family is the basic unit of society and the importance of the community), expressed in the national ideologies of Malaysia and Singapore. This view of Western media posing a threat stems from a fear of cultural pollution from the West. It is based on the notion that as most media originates from the West, it comes with undesirable Western ideas and values which might corrupt Asian ideals. Although Dr. Mahathir refers explicitly to Malaysia the reason why Yao assigns so much importance to his views is because they coincide with the views held by senior politicians in Singapore.

Like the West, who have created the Orient out of its own power and cultural hegemony, the East may similarly reconstruct the West from its own standpoint. However, as Yao (1994) warns, the discursive formulation of the West requires a parallel process. The conception of local culture must be seen as morally authentic, with fundamental qualities that give sense to an unique Asian culture and identity. It is "only by seeing Asia as traditional, authentic and communal that we can perceive the West as anarchic, impure and individualistic" (1994, p. 48). Occidentalism arises out of the attempt of Asian societies to establish the West as Other so as to guarantee the Asian identity.

Nationalism

The construction of the nation-state is the most prominent product of modernity (Giddens, 1991, p. 15). Further, the sense of a nation is one of the major structures of "ideological ambivalence within the cultural representations of "modernity" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 4). Plamenatz (1976), (cited in Spivak, 1993) identifies two types of nationalism, 'western' and 'eastern'. Western nationalism is found in Western Europe while eastern nationalism emerged from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. In both, nationalism is described as "primarily a cultural phenomenon" and depends upon the acceptance of a common set of standards by which the state of development of a particular national culture is measured (Spivak, 1993, p. 1).

According to Hobsbawn and Ranger (cited in Iwabuchi, 1994, p. 50), the construction of a unified nation calls for the representation and dissemination of various ideologies, myths and 'invented traditions'.

Seton-Watson (cited in Anderson, 1991, p. 3) observed that although there was no "scientific definition" of the nation, he believed that the phenomenon had existed and still exists. Anderson (1991) proposes the idea of a nation as an 'imagined'

community, "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6).

Singapore is "imagined" in Anderson's (1991) terms insofar as the government of Singapore constructs a 'national identity' in accordance with the national and core values put in place by the PAP in their attempt to promote racial and religious harmony in Singapore. The PAP constructs what Chomsky (cited in Birch, 1993, p. 11) calls "necessary illusions" that "insist...on developing a loyalty discourse, where the answer as to whether one is a 'good' citizen or not has been 'design-ated in advance' (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 117) by the dominant discourses of those holding the power" (Birch, 1993, p. 11).

Singapore's nation building policies have been in play since its separation from Malaysia. Its success in international trade and industrialisation have to do with the Singapore government's ability to construct a national identity and establish common goals. Chen's theory of Occidentalism is useful in explaining Singapore / Australia relationships; how the Othering of Australia by the Singapore press is a way to provide the Singapore identity and uphold the dominant ideologies of the nation carefully constructed over the past two decades.

Singapore.

The Singapore government has always emphasised the importance of nation-building in Singapore. This is done in the hope of establishing a strong national identity based on the PAP's dominant ideologies. Minh-Ha's notion that representations are constructions of the individual and are not fixed aids in the understanding of how it is important in Singapore's case, where the Singapore government constructs representations in accordance to the national ideologies and to aid nation-building.

Much of Singapore's political and economic success can be attributed to the Singapore government's forceful policies in regard to nation building. Lee Kuan Yew is basically regarded by many as the driving force behind Singapore's success in transforming itself from a colonial entrepot and outpost to a postcolonial hub in finance, communications and trade. Alex Josey's biography *Lee Kuan Yew: The Struggle for Singapore* (1974) and his later work *Lee Kuan Yew* (1980) traces Singapore's development and provides valuable insight into the hopes and beliefs of the leader who transformed Singapore from a postcolonial outpost to a modern state. In addition, James Minchin's (1990) *No man is an island: a portrait of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew* provides a sound theoretical base regarding Singapore's success as a sovereign state and Lee's influence in establishing the laws and media regulations which helped to shape Singapore. Both Josey (1974) and Minchin (1990) attempt to uncover the mechanisms of nation-building established by Lee, providing a comprehensive study of the man who "dragged, bullied and cajoled" Singapore's multicultural population from a "position of subjection under British colonial power to their now prosperous independence" (Josey, 1974, back cover).

The tight control exercised over the Singapore media by the government is a way of maintaining power as well as ensure social stability and ethnic harmony. Policies are formulated in accordance to the PAP's dominant ideologies in order to shape the views of Singaporeans and provide a national identity. It is important therefore to examine the role of the media in Singapore as the media, according to Birch (1993) can shape a society's beliefs.

The Singapore government employs a variety of communication strategies to ensure that its economic, political and cultural agendas are widely understood within Singapore society in general. These strategies are formulated by PAP and implemented in accordance with their view of what should constitute the nation's dominant ideologies by the Singaporean government apparatus. There is therefore,

the need to examine the various discourses associated with each strategy in order to understand the impetus behind Singapore's success in regard to nation-building. In David Birch's (1993) book *Singapore Media: Communication Strategies and Practices*, Birch looks critically at the role of the media in the process of nation-building in Singapore. Birch's analysis leads him to conclude that the media in Singapore are controlled by the government who, by introducing strict regimes of control on both the production and consumption of information, are able to shape the views of Singaporeans and thereby enhance the nation-building agenda.

Birch identifies the political, social and cultural themes that shape the various forms of media. The Singapore government structures the media in accordance to their dominant ideologies which are supported by established national core values and nation-building policies. Birch also examines the structure of the media, looking at press, television, radio, film and advertising. The question of media control in the form of censorship and media regulations. he argues, illustrate the desire of the PAP to maintain control over its media, which may be seen as an important tools in influencing Singapore's perception of society and national identity.

Birch reinforces the idea of the mass media as an important tool for nation-building. The media in Singapore, according to Birch, help to establish notions of identity which are in line with the nation's dominant ideologies. Birch's details of the structure of the Singapore media provide helpful insights into the way in which the media structures operate and by so doing, how the Singapore government uses the media to maintain power. Birch believes that "it requires a compliant media to stage the myths, generated by government, in order to manipulate and control social consciousness" (1993, p. 74). Singapore's economic success and cultural repression does not, however, sit side by side. Birch's view of a seamless undisputed social acquiescence in Singapore is true only to the extent of the Singapore Government's

control of media practices as well as its nation-building stategies of down playing opposition.

Other books are less critical of the Singapore media and their role in constructing the social and national identity of Singapore. C.M. Turnbull's (1995) *Dateline Singapore: 150 years of The Straits Times* is about the history of *The Straits Times* is a good example. It provides useful information about the origins of Singapore's primary newspaper as well as the media regulations which governed its output for over 150 years. Another publication is I. Lim's (1985) article, "The Singapore Press and the Fourth Estate" (in Razak, Abdul (ed.) *Press Laws and Systems in ASEAN States*) which examines the place of the laws and regulations in shaping Singapore's media. Lim investigates not only the surrounding aspects of the government's control over the Singapore media but also looks at how these affect society, arguing that media laws and regulations shape the media as well as society.

Conclusion

The study of Australia's depiction (as Other) in Singapore's press calls for an understanding of the terminology of "Othering", "Orientalism" and "Occidentalism". While both Orientalism and Occidentalism are important subsets of Othering, Orientalism mainly refers to the way in which the West views the East as "Other" while Occidentalism is regarded to be "Orientalism in reverse" (Yao, 1994, p. 40). Apart from Yao there is little on Occidentalism and Singapore and this work, by applying the concept makes a significant contribution to our knowledge and understanding of Singapore. My analysis of the Othering of Australia in *The Straits Times* is based on the application of these concepts to the discourse of Australia in *The Straits Times*.

Chapter 3: Values, Race and Morality: The Ambiguous View of Australia in *The Straits Times*.

The construction of the West and its media as Other by Southeast Asian nations articulates Asia's ambivalence towards the experience of modernity (Yao, 1994). Although Singapore perceives Australia as a Western nation, I will show that it is reported differently in *The Straits Times* compared to the reports of the other Western nations in this newspaper. I will argue that Australia is Othered by *The Straits Times* for political, economic and especially cultural reasons. This chapter looks at how the Singapore media construct Australia as "Other" with reference to specific press reports in *The Straits Times* that bear directly on the problems of modernity. These problems have to do with the Singaporean perception that modernity encompasses the undesirable values associated with Western nations as well as the benefits. I will show that the construction of Australia by the Singapore media as Other is a deliberate strategy designed to lessen impact of the perceived undesirable qualities of unbridled sexuality, explicit racism and lax morality that Australia is assumed to possess and articulate as a Western nation. These aspects are perceived by the Singapore government to challenge and question their policies in regard to the moral structure of Singapore society. The ambiguous view of Australia adopted by *The Straits Times* illustrates the underlying uneasiness Yao (1994) speaks of (refer to chapter 1). This uneasiness underpins Singapore and other Southeast Asian nation's alleged vulnerability towards the West. I will argue that paradoxically 'vulnerability', as a trope of modernity in Singapore, is mobilised to Other Australia and thereby contribute to the construction of a Singaporean identity.

To make explicit the processes of the Othering of Australia in the Singapore media have been conducted I will analyse how issues relating to cultural value, race and morality have been reported in *The Straits Times* supplemented by other reports including some from Australian newspapers.

Values

The formulation and adoption of "Asian values" is a response of Asian societies against the perceived threat of Western cultural pollution. Asian governments believe that "Asian values" are superior to the values of Western societies. Singapore views Australia as having qualities like those of other Western cultures. It sees Australia and the West as the "moral opposite" of Asia (Yao, 1994, p. 33). Singapore and other Asian nations associate Western nations such as Australia as characterised by "individualism, selfishness, materialism and decadence" while their own countries possess a sense of "community, spirituality and family" (Rodan, 1993, p. 40). Singapore's adoption of Asian values is a defence mechanism authorised by the PAP and circulated by the Singapore media to contest Western cultural pollution. The "undesirable" Western values which Singapore perceives Australia to have contrast sharply with the moral and political agenda (core values) of Singapore, which are:

1.   Nation before community and society before self

2.   Family as the basic unit of society

3.   Community support and respect for the individual

4.   Consensus not conflict

5.   Racial and religious harmony.

(Birch, 1993, p. 4)

These core values were drawn up by the PAP in order to "buttress Singapore's Asian value system against over-Westernisation and deculturalisation" (*Sunday Times*, 6 January, 1991 cited in Birch, 1993, p. 4). According to Birch (1993, p. 4), this fear of over-Westernisation has to do with the distrust of the effects of international modernisation. The contrasting value systems adopted by Singapore and Australia are the basis for the process of "Othering" by Singapore. The view of Australia as possessing an inferior value system is adopted by the Singapore government and

reflected in the media of Singapore. This view has led to the construction of a public discourse of negativity about Australia which is articulated in the Singapore media and is based on emphasising matters such as family values, sexuality (especially homosexuality), work ethic, lack of communal harmony and the fragmentation of society, all of which are represented as Australian values dramatically opposed to the values perceived as important as social glue in Singapore.

Singapore is a neo-Confucian state, having aimed to create a version or school of Confucian thought adapted to modern circumstances and needs and specific to Singapore (Minchin, 1990, p. 266). This version adopts many of the tenets of Confucius, embodying the values of discipline, respect for authority and commitment to the community (Rodan, 1993, p. 24). The importance of the family as the basic unit of society is reflected in Singapore's pro-family policies (designed as incentives for families to stay together). Singapore believes that the individual exists in the context of his/her family. He/she is not pristine and separate. The family is part of the extended family, and then friends and the wider society. This Asian view of the family stems from a fundamentally different value system to that of the West and creates fundamentally different patterns of social behaviour. Lee Kuan Yew claims that unlike Australia, the Singapore government provides incentives for families to stay together (*Australian Financial Review*, April 20, 1994, p. 16). These include superannuation and medical accounts that are transferable within the family, and income tax deductions for accommodating elderly parents. By contrast, it is alleged that Australia provides incentives, such as the sole parent benefits, which cater for individuals. These benefits, states Lee Kuan Yew, can be seen as an incentive for families to break up (*Australian Financial Review*, April 20, 1994, p. 16). Lee believes that the family remains Asia's basic social unit and Singapore had made family members economically responsible for each other (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 19, 1994, p. 5). According to Lee,

> We try to keep the family alive, because we believe that it is a basic unit. We have superannuation funds and we individualise the account. You can use your account within the family so it's easily transferable. If your parents live with you, you are entitled to get income tax reductions for your father and mother. We have items like a medical account where you have to make co-payments for the medical expenses. This avoids what we call the "buffet-syndrome"-- where everything is free. That again is transferable within members of the family. Even in your old age it is important for you that you have a family, because they will top up for you, and when you die and you still have your individual (superannuation) account unexhausted that goes of course in your will to your family.
>
> (*Australian Financial Review*, April 21, 1994, p. 34)

Lee's criticism of Australia's government support for the unemployed and single mothers serves to emphasise the difference between Australia and Singapore. While Australia and other Western countries put the individual at the centre of society, with rules and regulations tailored to maximise individual freedoms, in Singapore and other Asian countries, the individual was seen as part of the family. Singapore's policies capitalise on enforced Asian values such as the importance of the family unit while Australia encourages individualism. Lee states, "We do not divorce our social and economic policies away from the family" (*Australian Financial Review*, April 21, 1994, p. 34).

Lee also believes that the Confucian discipline is a method of preventing Singapore from being "a cheap imitation of the West" (Josey, 1974, p. 82). The teachings of Confucius have led to Chinese loyalty being focused on the ruler rather than on the state (Josey, 1974, p. 100). As Dennis Bloodworth (cited by Josey) claims:

> The Chinese race-memory, is restricted to a system in which an indoctrinated elite rules the country in accordance with an authoritarian ideology, which in turn is founded on a 'universal truth'.
>
> (1974 p. 100)

Lee has exploited these deeply held views about government to such an extent that it has been claimed that the Chinese have an instinctive trust in the idea of a humanistic 'reasonable' government and to most Singaporeans, all that mattered was that Lee provided it (1974, pp. 100-101). If we accept this view, which at one level is quite extreme, then the differences between Singaporean and Australian cultures become quite clear; they are founded on fundamentally opposing cultural value systems. These differences then may be deployed to Other Australia for political purposes.

It is this fundamental opposition that leads to the conclusion that Australia is the "moral opposite" of Asia Yao (1994) and finds its clearest expression in matters pertaining to sexuality, racism and the moral values all of which are subjected to close scrutiny in Singapore's press. The view of Australia adopted by the Singapore press on these issues express at the popular level the views so vigorously articulated by Lee. According to Minchin (1990), both Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Keng Swee (First Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore), have both displayed "no qualms about mocking and berating successive Australian governments for every sin imaginable" (p. 166). With few exceptions (such as Sir Robert Menzies, who served Australia as Prime Minister from 1949 to 1966), Lee has little respect for Australia and Australians and has enjoyed pointing out the many "failings" of Australia, not least poor leadership (Minchin, 1990, p. 181). This criticism of Australia may be seen as an instance of Othering, where Australia's "failings" are used to establish the binary opposition whereby Singapore's success in the same field may be established. Other instances include criticism of the Australian troops who apparently "packed up and refused to fight" when the Japanese advanced upon Singapore in 1942 and the combination of high protectionism, low value-adding resource development and union power that makes Australians what Lee terms, the "dole bludgers of the South Pacific", who are "undeservedly prosperous now and with little prospect of relevance to the region's future" (Minchin, 1990, p. 182).

According to Josey (1974), Lee regards American and Australian cultures as "rough, unpolished, crude, and lacking in finesse and depth" (p. 108). *The Straits Times* frequently use the sentiments of Lee to promote these views. Recent examples include reports of Lee's (1994) visit to Australia where his criticism of Australian work ethic was used to express the general opinion of Australia as taken up by the Singapore press.

Racism

Here, I wish to discuss this issue of racism in Australia. It must also be understood that racism in Australia is always subject to close scrutiny in Singapore for two reasons. At a very basic level it is race which separates the two nations. It is the primary marker of difference or Otherness between the two cultures. Moreover, Australia has historically displayed racist attitudes towards Asia most notably in the White Australia Policy, which is frequently perceived, at the popular level, to still be in place despite all of the evidence to the contrary (Vandenbosch, 1967, p. 154-155). However, race is also an important domestic issue in Singapore because it is a multicultural society in which different races are encouraged to live in harmony. Indeed fears of ethnic and racial disharmony are one of the great fears of the Singapore government (Rodan, 1993, p. 20).

Despite the fact that Australia tries to adopt policies of cultural diversity, it is still seen by many Singaporeans to be exclusively a Western nation and one which exhibits a preference (whether in immigration or job prospects) for white Anglo-Saxons or Europeans generally. This view is sometimes reinforced by Australian officials and politicians. According to the then Australian Immigration Minister, Senator Nick Bolkus, the multicultural composition of Australia's population is virtually ignored by television shows, newspapers and magazines. This is noted in the Singaporean media which construes such social facts as an indication that racial discrimination still exists in Australia (*The Straits Times*, June 1, 1993, p. 9). This

perceived suppression of non-white, Anglo-Saxons in the Australian media may be seen as not only an instance of racial discrimination by the media but also as a form of internal Othering within Australia in order for the construction of the Australian identity.

Racism is an issue affecting virtually all dimensions of Singapore/Australian relations. In particular it may be seen as having a particular bearing on tourism and immigration from Asia to Australia because Australia is a popular destination for many Singaporeans as tourists, students and immigrants. Australia frequently promotes itself as a tourist destination in the Singapore media. Australia often promotes its country's exotic beauty and wildlife in advertisements placed in Singapore's newspapers, magazines and television. Australia has also helped set up "interactive" video systems to promote tourism in Singapore ("Select a video clip for that Aussie Holiday", *The Straits Times*, July 14, 1989, p. 18). These video systems consist of brief video clips on destinations, hotels and attractions throughout Australia and New Zealand and aim to help Singaporeans plan their Australian holiday.

However, in contrast to the rather idyllic views presented in these advertisements we find the Singapore press frequently reporting incidents of racism in Australia. The juxtaposition of the advertisement, which project one image of Australia, with the reports of racism in *The Straits Times* creates a contradictory view of Australia in the minds of the Singaporean reader. Of particular note here are the reports of incidents of racism on Australian university campuses in the late 1980s (e.g.: "Racial tension 'at danger level in W. Australian campuses'", *The Straits Times*, July 28, 1989, p. 8). Australia is a significant destination for young Singaporean students choosing to study overseas due to the limited number of places for students in Singapore universities. Reports such as the one identified above provide the parents of children studying in Australia with reason to fear for their children's safety. This article is about tension levels that have built up as a result of the rapid increase in

the enrolment of Asian students in Australian universities. "The problem", according to Paul Stevenage, then president of the Murdoch University Guild, "is that the rapid jump is just too much for some of our Australian students to handle, especially those who have brothers, sisters or friends whom they regard as having missed out on a place because of overseas students". This tension results in acts and signs of racism such as fighting between Asians and Australians, and slogans attacking certain Asian nationalities. Other reports in *The Straits Times* highlighting this problem include

- "W. Australia branded a racist state in govt report", *The Straits Times*, July 24, 1989, p. 7;
- "Australians 'dislike Asians the most'", *The Straits Times*, July 20, 1989, p. 11),

These reports suggest to students, tourists and immigrants that racism exists in Australia and that life may not necessarily be better in Australia than in Singapore.

The first of these reports deals with a report commissioned by the Western Australian government which *The Straits Times* interpreted as virtually branding Western Australia of being a racist state (*The Straits Times*, July 24, 1989, p. 7.). According to the report, compiled by the Western Australian Office of Multicultural Affairs for the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, life is a nightmare for many Asians and Aborigines in Australia because they live in fear of violence, sexual harassment, intimidation and even murder, on a daily basis - on the street, in shopping centres, at school and at work. This article works within an economic dimension to discourage potential Singaporean visitors to Australia as well as to illustrate the problematic area of race in Australia.

The second article "Australians 'dislike Asians the most'" (*The Straits Times*, July 20, 1989, p. 11) further serves to confirm the allegations that Australia is racist. Reported acts of racial violence included "petrol being poured in the rear of

restaurants, white Australians who refused to pay at Asian restaurants, bricks thrown through windows of Asian homes and racist graffiti sprayed on cars belonging to Asians". The attention-grabbing headlines of these three examples ("Racial tension 'at danger level in W. Australian campuses'; "W. Australia branded a racist state in govt report" and "Australians 'dislike Asians the most'", coupled with the content of the articles (e.g. "...about 80 per cent of Asians...suffer intimidation", *The Straits Times*, July 20, 1989, p. 11) help generate perceptions about Australia among Singaporean readers. However, what is left out of these articles is even more significant than what is included, "only serious cases, such as murder, sexual harassment, bombings, physical attacks or vandalism were reported to police, usually with little or no satisfaction in dealing with the problem"; "most victims of racism suffered in silence, fearing reprisal if their attackers traced complaints back to them" (*The Straits Times*, July 24, 1989, p. 7). The fact that not all cases of racism are cited encourages readers to use their imagination and this may serve to further frighten them. Reports such as these Other Australia by providing a view opposite to the ones Australia hopes to provide. By emphasising the self/other, good/bad binary (Schirato, 1994, p. 47) *The Straits Times* constructs Australia as the Other through reports of racism. The negative views taken by *The Straits Times* serves to highlight Australia's faults while suggesting to the reader, (through the use of binary oppositions) the harmonious nature of Singapore society.

The advent of Pauline Hanson in the Australian political scene has once more placed racism in Australia back on the Singaporean agenda. *The Straits Times* reports of Ms Hanson will be dealt with in detail in Chapter five but suffice it to say here that in the reports in the Singapore press one gets the impression that Hanson is seen as confirmation of the line the papers have taken all along in respect to race in Australia. Further, the matters surrounding the Mabo and Wik cases in Australia are also dealt with in *The Straits Times* through the lens of incipient racism among white

Australians. The point here is that it is through the issue of racism that Australia is most successfully Othered in Singapore.

The virtual absence of reports in *The Straits Times* dealing with Australia's indigenous people is revealing. Underpinning the process of the Othering is a sense of exoticism which offers, the first instance, Otherness as a systematically preferred option in contrast to likeness (Todorov, 1993, p.264). Like nationalism, exoticism defines a country or culture by their relation to the observer; in the literal sense, the exotic is "everything that is external to the observing subject" (Todorov, 1993, p. 322). In the case of Australia this observation is highly selective, dealing with m~´ that are familiar to Singapore and not too different. Thus it is the Anglo-Celtic Australia that is Othered and not the indigenous. This stems from a lack of real knowledge on the part of Singapore whose perception of Australia and its inhabitants have been influenced by stereotypes constructed by the media. Australia is portrayed in the media of both Australia and Singapore as offering a unique variety of flora, fauna and landscape. Even its people and culture are seen as "exotic". Just as Australia uses exoticism to promote tourism, Singapore uses it to Other Australia. Australia is seen to possess qualities different from those in Singapore.

Morality

As a neo-Confucian state Singapore borders on the puritanical in regards to moral issues and the Singapore papers tend to report matters pertaining to sexuality and homosexuality in Australian as a way of depicting Australia as "decadent"; as quite separate and different to Singapore. This is clearly seen in reports that deal with the moral and cultural values of Australians in such articles as, "Aussie gay migrant policy causes uproar" *(The Straits Times,* May 28, 1988, p. 6). To understand the depth of rejection over matters such as this it is necessary to understand both official and popular views on homosexuality. The article reports that homosexuals in Australia are being allowed to bring their gay lovers into Australia as de facto wives

under the family reunion scheme, despite the objections of other Australians. It also details other objections toward the grant of permanent resident status to foreign homosexuals having relationships with Australian men especially AIDS screening was not included in the compulsory health checks of the gay applicants. The article also goes on to report that Australia has one of the Western world's highest percentages of the AIDS virus, proportionate to its population. This additional information serves as a reminder to Singaporeans of Australia's different moral and cultural values and, I would argue, Others Australia because it portrays Australia's value systems as undesirable. The exclusion of any reference towards the countries of origin of the gay applicants suggests a possible suppression of homosexuality in Singapore.

Matters relating to sexuality in Singapore are often avoided in its media. However, by showing Australia as possessing different moral values in regard to sexuality The Straits Times clearly positions it as decadent and Other. The construction of Singapore as a puritanical society through the suppression of desire through punitive action further underlines this point. Media censorship is used as a tool to suppress desires. However, this attempt by the PAP may be seen as problematic as the process of censorship aids not only to suppress, but also to produce desires. This is most clearly seen in the controversy that surrounded the classification of films in the early 1990s (Birch, 1993, p. 47) and the discourse arising out of the attempts be the Singaporean government to control the Internet (Latif, 1996, p. 334).

Media control in Singapore comes in a number of forms. For instance, under the New Printing Presses Rules of 1972, press licences may only be renewed on the condition that the media owners agree not to run "any article which is likely to cause ill-will or misunderstanding between the government and people of Singapore and the government and the people of Malaysia; or which is likely to excite communal or racial emotions, or which glorifies or justifies the use of violence in politics" (Lim,

1985, p. 118). Singapore's censorship laws in regard to literature and film dealing with such matters as sexuality (all published material, films and scripts for theatres had to be submitted for clearance by government departments before they could be published or screened) is an example of the government's desire for Singaporeans to conform to the nation's dominant ideologies by putting nation before self. As the identity of a group or community is always constructed, to some degree, in terms of what it is opposed to, Australia is often portrayed as having opposing moral and cultural values in order to provide and guarantee the identity of the Asian subject. Homosexuality is accepted and occasionally celebrated in Australia while in contrast, it is suppressed and discouraged in Singapore.

Lee Kuan Yew supports policies designed to capitalise on Singapore's cultural differences, especially those pertaining to its traditions of strict discipline and reliance on the family ("Lessons from Singapore", *Australian Financial Review*, April 19, 1994, p. 16). Lee views the values and morality of Australia as different to those of Singapore and other Asian nations. He also sees this difference as relating directly to economic growth, something I will take up in greater detail in chapter 4. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise here that Othering occurs out of the desire of individuals and of society to gain control of, or maintain, the means of production and reproduction. Lee credits the Asian value system for Singapore's economic success and sees the debate between the Western values adopted by Australia and the Asian values adopted by Singapore as ending with Asia's economic transformation, which will bring with it, a "reaffirmation of Asian culture, tradition and values" (*The Straits Times*, February 6, 1995, p. 1). Lee believes that in order for Australia to achieve similar economic success, it must adopt an Asian work ethic, thereby making a direct connection between moral values and economic performance. He also thinks that Australia has developed a "resource-rich mentality", which has created a society of relaxed uncompetitive consumers with high debts and low savings rates. Lee thinks that it will only be when Australia can abandon this preconception that it will achieve

economic integration with Asia (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 19, 1994, p. 5).

His advice shows that he clearly perceives the Asian work ethic, which Singapore has adopted, to be superior to the Western one adopted by Australia. Lee perceives the break-down of the Western work ethic as a result of "material abundance and over-ample welfare cushions for unemployment" something he believes would never happen to Singapore (Josey, 1974, p. 206). Lee's conviction that the Asian work ethic is superior to that of Western nations may be regarded as an instance of Othering, through its valorisation of neo-Confucian ideology which in Singapore has been designed to inculcate "Asian values" in Singaporeans guarding Singaporeans against the "divisive and disruptive effects of Western individualism" (Rodan, 1993, p. 24). The promotion of Confucian values (1978) and the Mandarin language (1982) through campaigns implemented by the PAP targeting the Chinese population serve as tools which aid in the nation-building process of Singapore. This is done through the creation of a sense of "Chineseness" which, due to the numerical and socioeconomic dominance of the group, provides the corner stone of the building of a consensual national culture (Rodan, 1993, p. 24).

The different cultural values between Australia and Singapore are reflected in each country's social programs. These contribute to the difference between failure and success. According to Lee,

> Chinese respect for families made for a society that saves, works hard and retains order, while Western pursuit of individual freedoms leads today to guns in school, urban decay, State-dependency -- and further down the slippery slope, to structural unemployment, chronic trade deficits with Asia and to a misguided US crusade to impose individualist "human rights" on China"
>
> (*Financial Review*, April 20, 1994, p. 16).

Lee adopts a position of power and knowledge in that he speaks with authority regarding Australia's problems. By advising on and by providing for Australia, a "standard" to which he thinks they should aspire, Lee adopts an Occidentalist

approach. His perception that Australian society is not only economically but also morally different to Singapore is significant. His argument seems to be that it is only through the maintenance of these differences that Singaporean identity may be guaranteed. Lee's comparisons of Asian and Western societies can be seen as instances of Othering whereby differences between the two countries are contrasted so as to provide the Singaporean identity. He is reported as saying

> East Asians were highly competitive people training themselves for "life's marathon". If Australians wanted to compete in the same race, they would have to go through the painful process of being weaned off welfare dependency.
> (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 19, 1994, p. 5).

His subsequent claims that Australia suffers from a "lucky country" mentality and "resource-rich syndrome" (*The Australian*, April 19, 1994, p. 1) also puts Australia in a negative light further enriching the Occidentalist strain of thought prevalent in so much of his political rhetoric. It is this articulation of Occidentalism that so powerfully Others Australia and leads him to predict that Australia could easily return to "economic vulnerability" through its lack of competitiveness.

A number of other articles in *The Straits Times* dealing with Australian affairs further emphasise the moral differences between Australia and Singapore. Several examples are as follows:

- "Aussie among three hanged for murder and drug offences" (June 19, 1993, p. 27);
- "More NSW boys using cannabis" (November 3, 1993, p. 9);
- "Jail for Aussie priest who stole $1.9 m charity funds" (August 21, 1993, p. 6);
- "Aids-virus man who gave blood jailed 16 months" (December 7, 1993, p.10);
- "Sandwich shop scandal: Aussie minister who resigned accused of using govt, party funds for business" (January 24, 1994, p. 4);
- "Another Aussie Cabinet reshuffle" (January 25, 1994, p. 13).

All of these articles look at internal Australian affairs and emphasise negative views of its culture and society. Moreover, they are presented within a discourse of morality. The strong focus on drug use, sexual misconduct and political scandals in Australia reported in *The Straits Times* provide a striking contrast to the lack of such reports of similar incidences occurring in Singapore.

The first example ("Aussie among three hanged for murder and drug offences" *The Straits Times*, June 19, 1993, p.27) is about the sentencing and death of three people (two Malaysians and one Australian) in Malaysia. What is significant is that the article focuses mainly on the one Australian drug offender. One Malaysian was sentenced to death for committing murder while the other Malaysian was sentenced, like the Australian, for possessing drugs. The reason for the emphasis placed on the Australian has to do with the nationality of the offender rather than the severity of the crimes committed. The construction of the West as encompassing values of a different (and often negative) nature to Asian countries as implied by this article is in line with Yao's (1994) claims about the construction of the West articulating Southeast Asia's ambivalence towards the experience of modernity (p. 33). The emphasis placed on the Australian caught for drug trafficking is in line with the Asian approach to mass media, whereby the West (in this case, Australia) needs to be constructed as the "Other" in order for the construction of an Asian identity.

The Singapore government has always adopted a serious view regarding drug possession and use. Lee associates the introduction of Western industries into Singapore with the introduction of drugs and other undesirable influences (Josey, 1974),

> With Western industries ... came Western technologists and executives, their wives, children, and their life-styles. Some of them ... gave visible demonstration of the new 'hedonist cult'. Already there were the beginnings of drug-taking among some students in Singapore, together with the pop songs and

> psychedelic music. 'And the strange dress styles and imitative
> behaviour of some of our Western educated youth are causing
> concern to parents and the government.'

<div align="right">(p. 206)</div>

The article "More NSW boys using cannabis" (*The Straits Times*, November 3, 1993, p. 9) has to do with a sharp increase in drug use of male and female students from grades seven to eleven collated by the New South Wales Drug and Alcohol Directorate. The statistical evidence provided in this article can be seen to Other Australia as well as serve an economic purpose. By promoting awareness for Singaporeans toward the high drug use of Australian students ("Forty-seven per cent of boys aged 16 had tried cannabis compared with 39 per cent of girls"), this article may be seen as trying to discourage tourists, students (and especially parents of students) and potential immigrants from going to Australia due either to fear of associating with drug users or getting into trouble because of them. This benefits the Singapore economy. The Singapore government is renowned for its anti-drug laws and has never failed to harp on the effects of trafficking (death penalty) and possible side effects of use (e.g. AIDS, addiction which may lead to violence, etc.). The PAP associates drug use and abuse with the West (Josey, 1974, p. 206) and its stance on this issue emphasises the differentiated nature of the West. This detailed article, coupled with the fact that the Singapore media seldom, if ever reports any drug use of Singaporeans emphasises the difference between the two countries and puts Australia in an unfavourable position.

The article "Aids-virus man who gave blood jailed 16 months" (*The Straits Times*, December 7, 1993, p.10) also features drugs. The man's lawyer claimed that he had been under the influence of heroin at that time and so did not know what he was doing. The focus on the use and side effects of drugs and the possibility of contracting the AIDS virus further emphasises the differences between the two countries in their attitudes towards morality. The penalty in Singapore of making a

false statement, such as that reported above, is severe enough to discourage any likely candidate and underpins the degree to which Singapore is a controlled society in contrast with Australia. The point here is that by featuring the negative consequences of an open society such as Australia serves to confirm the importance of control in the Singapore context. There is an implicit assumption that it is only through control that stability and order can be maintained and it is to this end that the press is complicit in the process of Othering Australia.

Similarly, the article "Jail for Aussie priest who stole $1.9 m charity funds" (*The Straits Times*, August 21, 1993, p.6) emphasises the problematic nature of Australian society. This article about an Australian Catholic priest who used funds from a charitable trust department of the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group to finance his extravagant lifestyle portrays an example of an absence of moral values by an Australian in a trusted position, thus emphasising again the different moral realms and thus cultures of both Australia and Singapore. By showing how this money was used "to buy a mansion, fly around the world and host lavish parties" instead of easing the sufferings of people in need confirms what seems to be a policy of constructing Australia negatively within the pages of *The Straits Times*.

Implicit in the last two articles cited is the notion that the lack of social order that permits open homosexual relationships, rampant drug use and corrupt priests to function has permeated the political arena. In discussing the financial problems of an ex-Minister of the Crown *The Straits Times* suggests that the 'decadence' it reports so avidly has reached as far the government. By contrast the probity of the Singaporean government is well known.

Conclusion

The selection of articles I have chosen to analyse in this chapter are, I would argue emblematic of a more extensive process. *The Straits Times* Other Australia for

strategic reasons. The negative view of Australia adopted in Singapore's press reflects the conviction of PAP that Western values are decadent and if allowed free access to Singaporean society would have a detrimental effect. Although Australia may be ahead of Singapore in certain fields, such as science and technology, the reports in *The Straits Times* more often than not provide negative views such as medical blunders rather than successes. The report "Aussie clinic sued for not diagnosing pregnancy" (*The Straits Times*, December 1, 1993, p. 4) illustrates this view. By juxtaposing reports of Singapore's achievements with Australian failures the press clearly articulates the belief that the Singapore government through its restrictive polices has mastered the modern.

Chapter 4: The Economics of Othering

There are significant economic differences between Singapore and Australia. In many respects it could be argued that the economic stability of the two has altered in the past three decades with Singapore achieving much greater economic growth than Australia. When Singapore gained its independence its economy was precarious, subject to the fact that the island had no natural resources and had a serious unemployment problem. There were also doubts (both inside and outside Singapore) about its viability as a separate nation (Rodan, 1993, p. xi). By contrast Australia was a resource rich economy with a high degree of economic growth. Singapore is now at the stage of economic development where returns on investment are high and growth rates dramatic. Unlike Australia, Singapore has had to rely on its people for economic growth. Rodan (1993) cites the present Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong as proclaiming the importance of this resource to Singapore,

> Our most precious asset will always be our people. We must look after one another and build up our national spirit. Our security depends on our own efforts. Provided we are united and we anticipate out problems with ready solutions, whatever the future brings, we will be ready.
>
> (p.74)

The early stage of economic development can help explain the state of Singapore's political development. Singapore shares many important features with the more economically regulated "developmental states" of Asia. These countries depend on economic strategies where their people's hard work, thrift, high savings, low consumption and high investments contribute to economic progress. Moreover there are clear national goals of social stability linked to rapid economic growth in Singapore and other East Asia states Countries like Australia, by contrast have developed different strategies dependent upon resource extraction, high debt levels and so on. The immense wealth created a resource-rich mentality which has resulted in "high consumption, low savings, low competitiveness, high current account deficit

and high debt" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 19, 1994, p. 5). The differences in economic policy development and implementation between the two countries are mirrored in their political and cultural relations. While the government of Singapore acknowledges the importance of forging good economic relations with Australia the frequent depiction of Australia as Other in *The Straits Times* suggests that their are contradictory positions held in respect to Australia within the Singapore establishment.

By juxtaposing Australia and Singapore in the articles relating to regional and economic relations, it can be clearly seen that Australia is Othered. The structure of the language used in the title of the newspaper article "Lessons from Singapore" clearly implies that Australia can learn from Singapore, thus suggesting that Singapore has the economic advantage over Australia. Lee Kuan Yew is renowned for speaking his mind on the shortcomings of Australia, be it matters concerning union power, high tariffs, welfare dependency, resource-rich complacency, income tax structure or the level of unemployment benefits. On his 1994 visit to Australia, Lee spoke about not only Australia's failings but also on the successes of Singapore and Asia at large.

The desire of individuals and of society to gain control of, or maintain, the means of production and reproduction may also be seen as contributing to the process of Othering in significant ways. Whether this refers to the Othering of individuals or societies due to race, culture, or even gender, it results of ways of thinking, in order to control these means. As I have argued, Singapore Others Australia as a means of maintaining power and enhancing its stronger economic position. Part of this mastery is the reversal of investment patterns between the two countries since the 1960s. Singapore now contributes to the Australian economy in several significant ways. In 1995 Singapore was Australia's:

third largest investor, the sixth largest offshore investment site for Australian investors, seventh largest trade trading partner, fifth largest visitor market to Australia and the fourth largest group of foreign students.

(*The Straits Times*, October 31, 1996, p. 1)

The link between economics and cultural production is a problematic area. However, I will argue that the Othering of Australia is one of the strategies the Singapore government employs in order to put itself and Singapore in a better economic position in relation to Australia. This strategy will be examined in this chapter by looking at the reasons behind Singapore's perception of vulnerability (Yao, 1994) and susceptibility to Western 'cultural pollution' despite its economic growth and success in international trade and the process of industrialization.

According to Rodan (1993), the Singapore government is no different from the other dominant elites of other nations in that they seek to control and manipulate various social, cultural, political and financial economies to establish power bases (p. 76). Singapore's economy is based on trade, shipping and tourism with a growing program of light industrialisation. Singapore also produces much of the petroleum for the Southeast Asian region (Finlay and Turner, 1994, p. 402). As well as having a large current account surplus, it is also a net creditor. Inflation is low in Singapore and unemployment is virtually non-existent. Being devoid of natural resources, the Singapore government seeks to build its economy as an international trading point, encouraging foreign business while the Australian government by contrast imposes trade barriers to protect local business interests.

Singapore's economic policies contest with its cultural policies. To many Western countries experiencing mounting foreign debt, declining exports and increasing imports, Singapore is seen as a model free-market economy. However, as Finlay and Turner (1994) argued, Singapore's approach is definitely not free-market but is managed by the Singapore government that either provides direction by

targeting industries for development and by offering tax incentives or simply by "ordering [these industries on] what to do" (p. 402). The Singapore government also controls unions and the labour market and have implemented tough legislation against strikes. Although the Singapore government promotes free trade, it always reserves the right to intervene, as was the case in 1985 when the stock exchange was closed for three days after Pan Electric Industries, a major Singaporean company, went into receivership (Finlay and Turner, 1994, p. 402).

The links between economic and cultural policy are best examined on a regional basis in this instance because of Singapore's status as a regional economic and communication hub and its significant role in ASEAN. In many cases the interests of Singapore are perceived as being identical to those of its neighbours, especially Malaysia despite the occasional disagreement. Moreover, when *The Straits Times* speaks of Malaysia in this sort of context the implication is clear; the conditions also apply to Singapore.

In the following reports from *The Straits Times* this becomes transparent.

- "Don't meddle in Asean affairs, KL pressure groups warn Canberra" (*The Straits Times*, May 14, 1993, p. 19).
- "Hands off, Mahathir warns Australia" (*The Straits Times*, May 20, 1988, p. 1).
- "Canberra wants to move closer to Singapore and the region" (*The Straits Times*, March 22, 1994, p. 3).

The attitude adopted by Asian governments such as Malaysia to Australia is reflected in the first example, "Don't meddle in Asean affairs, KL pressure groups warn Canberra" (*The Straits Times*, May 14, 1993, p. 19). Australia is criticised by The Malaysian Action Front, an association of pressure groups from Kuala Lumpur, for her links with Israel. The structure and content of this article emphasise the fact that Australia has been interfering in ASEAN affairs and that Malaysia has been

critical of this. The article side steps giving an opinion on the issue of genuine concern to the KL pressure groups, that is, Israel's strained relations with Islamic Asia. The Singapore government has been seen on many occasions to echo the views of the Malaysian government, whose statements "arguably constitute the central position of an Asian approach to mass media" (Yao, 1994, p. 36). By telling Australia "not to meddle in ASEAN affairs both the Malaysian government and *The Straits Times* are clearly positioning it as outside of Asia. It Others Australia by separating it from the Asian sphere.

Similarly, "Hands off, Mahathir warns Australia" (*The Straits Times*, May 20, 1988, p. 1) is another instance where Australia is positioned as outside of Asian affairs. In the article, Australia is warned to "stop interfering in Malaysia's domestic affairs" referring to detentions under Malaysia's Internal Security Act. Within this statement there is an implication that Australia has previously meddled in Malaysian affairs although how is not specified. The desire of Malaysia to assert itself in respect to Australia probably stems from the imperial legacy. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir's criticism of Australia encompasses his disdain of Australia's treatment of Aborigines:

> Australians give themselves too much airs and think they should advise all the governments in South-east Asia (on) how to run their countries.
> When Australia was at the stage of Malaysia's present development, you solved your aborigines problem by simply shooting them. You made sure of your present white supremacy by your White Australia policy. Even now there is discrimination against coloured people.

> (*The Straits Times*, May 20, 1988, p. 1).

The third article "Canberra wants to move closer to Singapore and the region" (*The Straits Times*, March 22, 1994, p. 3) expresses an opposite position. Malaysia, and by extension Singapore, is seeking to keep Australia at arms length while Australian politicians keep expressing the desire to have closer links with Singapore

and the region. In this case the topic is defence which invariably elicits different responses to economic or cultural matters from the respective governments. In the report Australia acknowledges that its security and economic future "lies in and with the region (Southeast Asia)" (p. 3) but *The Straits Times* is sceptical:

> One unique aspect of the document, Australia's first comprehensive review of strategic policy since the end of the Cold War, was that Canberra consulted regional governments -- the Asean nations, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea --while it was being drafted.
> (*The Straits Times*, March 22, 1994, p. 3)

This was the first time that it had undertaken prior consultations with regional countries on an Australian strategic planning document.

Having established that there is a general relationship between Australia and the Southeast Asian region and that this relationship is always subjected to close scrutiny in *The Straits Times*, I will now move onto some specificities. As pointed out above, Singapore is a major economic partner to Australia. I want to discuss this relationship in respect to the areas identified as the major areas of Singapore investment in Australia, namely:

- Trade and Investment,
- Tourism,
- Immigration,
- Education.

However, before I do this I will sketch in what I believe to be the major features of Singapore economic development since independence. One of the most significant developments after Singapore's separation from Malaysia was that it embarked on a changed economic strategy of a "more open economy, leading towards closer integration with the international economy" as well as "a more active

development role for the state in promoting industralisation" (Cheah, 1993, p. 103). Fiscal concessions along with other incentives were introduced with the aim of encouraging investments (especially industrial investments by foreign companies). Manufacturing was also initiated by the Singapore government. The economic benefits resulting from Singapore's efforts included rapid economic growth, economic diversification and rising general living standards (Cheah, 1993, p. 103).

Trade and Investment

Australia accepts that Asia now makes a significant contribution towards its economy. The Asia Education Foundation (AEF) (cited in Frost, 1994, p. 35) acknowledges this fact. Frost quotes several key phrases from the AEF brochure to drive home the point; "half our trade is with Asia"; "last February Singapore passed Australia in terms of income per head"; "more than 60% of Australia's merchandise exports go to Asia"; "in 1991, the ASEAN countries became our second largest export market", "of Australia's top 1,000 companies, subsidiaries of Australian companies earned more profits in Asia in 1991 than any other region"; "exports to Korea have grown by 14.7%" (p. 35). The examples illustrate the centrality and increasing significance of Asia for Australia's economic development. "Australia *needs* Asia" states Frost (1994), and in order for Australia "to take advantage of the dynamic economic growth in the region we [Australians] need to be able to understand the peoples who populate it" (p. 35). Various Australian business organisations and the government recognise the significance of the relationship and have implemented policies accordingly. However, despite the rational economic arguments for improved relations between Australia and the region, cultural matters seem to impede their seamless introduction. Australian/Singapore and Australian/regional relations remain fraught with misunderstandings that invariably arise from cultural misreadings. *The Straits Times* and Dr Mahathir imply that Australia is responsible for much of this misunderstanding for strategic reasons. In short Occidentalism has a

clear economic dimension which I will map with reference to five articles selected from *The Straits Times* between 24 June 1993 and September 18, 1996:

- "We don't seek to be Asia's moral voice: Howard", *The Straits Times*, September 18, 1996, p. 17.

- "Keating in China to boost economic ties", *The Straits Times*, June 24, 1993, p. 8;

- "Keating upbeat about relations with China", *The Straits Times*, June 26, 1993, p. 10;

- "Aussie state seeks S'pore help on going regional", *The Straits Times*, March 2, 1994, p. 11;

- "Australia ponders how truly Asian it can be" *The Straits Times*, April 1, 1994, p.16).

All five examples illustrate Australia's desire to forge closer relations with Asian nations. This desire has economic underpinnings. Australia wants to establish better economic relations so that the Australian economy will progress more efficiently. The first example ("We don't seek to be Asia's moral voice: Howard", *The Straits Times*, September 18, 1996, p. 17), illustrates Australian Prime Minister John Howard intent for Australia "to broaden economic ties" with Asian nations. Howard pledges non-interference in any other country's domestic politics, claiming that Australia's main interest is economic relations. This article clearly suggests that economics are of vital importance to regional relations overriding virtually all other considerations such as human rights and so on. Both Howard and Australia's previous Prime Minister Paul Keating have made attempts to establish good economic relations with Australia's neighbouring countries. With Singapore, Australia has made several defence agreements as well as broached the idea of joint industry co-operation in the hope of improving economic relations. Despite Australia's attempts to forge good relations with Singapore, *The Straits Times* still tends to portray Australia in a negative light. In the article under analysis, Mr. Howard states,

We come to the relationship as a group of people not seeking to play the role of the world moraliser, not seeking to impose our will, or our custom or our way of doing things on people who choose to do things differently. What we seek to do is find meaning to common interest.

Howard's claims, coupled with the very title of the article "We don't seek to be Asia's moral voice" implies that there had been an existent (mis)conception about Australia stemming from previous relationships and experience which needed to be explained and justified.

Similarly, the other four examples illustrate Australia's desire to be a part of the Asian economic region. The articles serve to emphasise not only Australia's geographical proximity to Asia but also its desire to be part of the Asian sphere. The ambiguous view of Australia often taken in these articles imply that Australia is less organised than Singapore and that it possesses a different set of values. While two examples deal with China ("Keating in China to boost economic ties" and "Keating upbeat about relations with China") and the next two have to do with Australia's desire to enter the Asian sphere for economic reasons, all have to do with Australia's desire to boost bilateral trade and investment and to promote its economic dimension.

The article "Aussie state seeks S'pore help on going regional", (*The Straits Times*, March 2, 1994) reflects ambiguity in the sense that on one hand, the article shows Australia to possess particular skills lacking in Singaporean companies, "expertise in...areas [such as] mining, environmental controls, civil-engineering skills and sewerage systems", all of which are exportable skills which would be beneficial to Singapore companies in need of these skills. However, on the other hand, the article shows how Australia's willingness to joint venture with Singapore companies is a "strategic alliance to assist our [Australia's] industry to break into those [regional] markets" (p. 11). The article also serves to reinforce Singapore's view of Australia as Other by positing Australia's move to Asia as self-serving, implying that Australia's

desire to be Asian is governed by economic factors rather than cultural ones. As the Singapore government's strategy has been to emphasise the cultural, in the form of a set of recognisable Asian values, this ambiguity towards Australia may be seen as an instance of Othering. This is done through language and structure. Australia's desire to expand economically into the regional markets with the help of Singapore is referred to as Australia's wish to "piggy-back on Singapore's regionalisation drive". Also, Singapore's ability to establish itself in the regional markets was what Australia "hoped to take advantage of" (p. 11). According to Western Australia Premier Richard Court on getting the first "foothold",

> "It's just a huge marketplace and for many small business people it tends to be overwhelming as to how you get that foothold. The Singapore Government set a very good example in how you just get that little foothold and then build from there.
>
> (p. 11)

Tourism

Although tourism can frequently shape people's views, the Singaporean press and its practices often use fears of racism to shape Singaporeans perceptions of Australia. By portraying Australia as "unsafe", it also helps in establishing the identity of a "safe" Singapore.

The tourist industry of Australia derives a large portion of its income from Singapore which is why threats to the tou. .t industry are viewed seriously by both Australians and Singaporeans. One case, ("Upsurge of malaria in north Queensland a threat to tourism" *The Straits Times*, August 3, 1993, p.12) illustrates the serious view of tourism adopted in both countries. *The Straits Times* report concerns an alleged upsurge in reported cases of malaria in North Queensland, a premier tourist destination for Singaporeans. The Singapore press reported that incidences of the disease were increasing which Queensland's Director of Public Health Gerry Murphy denied. This denial suggests to the author of *The Straits Times* a cover-up of a

problem. The report recognises that a serious outbreak of disease would be disastrous for the Queensland tourism if it is proven correct but implies that the Queensland government, fearing financial loss for the Queensland tourist industry has not been transparent in its handling of the issue. Indeed the structuring of the article implies scepticism: the reports of malaria in Queensland, along with the knowledge that the Queensland tourist industry would be badly affected (if the reports were proven) and Murphy's denial of any widespread malaria outbreak questions not only the reality of the situation in Queensland but also the moral fibre of Australians.

Immigration

The relation between immigration and ethnic and racial diversity has been well documented (McAllister and Moore, 1991, p.127). Immigrant societies such as Australia, where massive immigration during the twentieth century resulted in a ethnic and racial mix of people, has also resulted in feelings of prejudice and social distance (McAllister and Moore, 1991, p.127).

Migration is an issue for Singaporeans as it affects the economic growth of the nation. The Singapore press through its journalistic practices provides ambiguous messages about Australia, which is a popular destination for many Singaporean immigrants. Two examples that cast some light on this view are as follows:

- "Cut migrant intake, urges Aussie opposition leader" (*The Straits Times*, August 9, 1993, p. 7)

- "Immigration numbers at 17-year low as Aussie economy slumps" (*The Straits Times*, July 13, 1993, p. 9)

The view employed by the Singapore government to migration is reflected in both examples and serves to remind Singaporeans that Australia may not be the ideal place to migrate to. Underpinning these examples, which may have racist undertones

is a view that Singaporeans should be discouraged from looking to Australia in the hope of improving their lifestyles.

The economic dimension of migration is reflected in both examples, the first illustrating the relation between immigrants and Australia's economic recession (as claimed by the leader of Australia's conservative National Party Tim Fischer), who attributes the depth of Australia's 1993 economic depression to immigration intake. The article implies that Fischer's view is adopted by all Australians and therefore similarly implies an underlying racial problem.

Immigration affects the economic stability of a country. The second article, "Immigrant numbers at 17-year low as Aussie economy slumps" (*The Straits Times*, July 13, 1993, p. 9) illustrates this relation. The reporting that Australia's sluggish economy has pushed immigrant numbers to a 17-year low and that "a lot of people, particularly in the professional fields, are not choosing Australia because they've heard how bad the economic situation is" implies a better economic situation in Singapore and encourages continued economic stability.

Foreign students

One important economic benefit accruing to Australia is the revenue gained from Singaporean students studying in Australia. According to Austrade, about 63,000 international students were studying in Australia by 1994, generating about $A1.4 billion a year, with Singaporeans forming the third largest group of international students, after Hong Kong and Malaysia (*Australian Financial Review*, April 21, 1994, p.38). The reports in *The Straits Times* on this topic suggest that students are frequently at the forefront of racist attacks in Australia and the news reports alert Singaporeans to this aspect of Australian society. At the same time the racist attacks directed at Singaporean students in Australia fuel the agenda of Othering in the Singapore press. This is a double edged issue. On the one hand the reports

suggest that Australia fears becoming "Asianised", by allowing too many Asians into the country. Similarly, it can be said that Singapore fears "Westernisation" through the student's experience of education in a Western society where they live free of the constraints placed on their socialisation by the social engineering policies of the Singapore government.

Economics and the Region

As argued earlier in the introduction, Singapore sees itself as a hub of Southeast Asia. The importance of economic relations to both Australia and Singapore is illustrated by their attempts to promote economic stability within their countries as well as forge ties with neighbouring countries. The following examples emphasize the desire of Australia to promote economic relations with the neighbouring Southeast Asian nations.

- "Economics will be main issue at Indonesia-Australia forum" (*The Straits Times*, October 24, 1996, p.24)

- "Australia sends record contingent to Jakarta forum" (*The Straits Times*, October 25, 1996, p. 29)

- "Indonesia, Australia to develop growth area" (*The Straits Times*, October 26, 1996, p. 2)

These articles outline the importance Australia places on the establishment of better relations with her neighbours as well as the importance of economics. The first example, "Economics will be main issue at Indonesia-Australia forum" (*The Straits Times*, October 24, 1996, p.24), illustrates Australia's desire to forge good economic relations with Indonesia. This article has to do with a two-day ministerial forum taking place in Jakata in which Australian ministers will sign or witness the signing of a number of government and private sector co-operation agreements in the sectors of trade, foreign affairs, education, industry, health, transport and environment. This article may be used to illustrate an instance of Othering. Australia is portrayed in a

negative light through the article's use of language. For example, Australia's desire to establish good economic relations with Indonesia is seen to be an "opportunity (for the new conservative government in Canberra) to establish its credentials with its northern neighbour". The language used here hints at the need for Australia to prove its worth to Indonesia. Also, the article goes on to add that "Australia's conservative government has been attacked by its opponents who say Canberra has focused on ties with traditional Western allies at the expense of Asian neighbours" (*The Straits Times*, October 24, 1996, p. 24).

Similarly, the article "Australia sends record contingent to Jakarta forum" (*The Straits Times*, October 25, 1996, p. 29) illustrates Australia's desire to forge good economic relations with its neighbours. In this case, Australia is reported to have sent a record six ministers (almost half of the Australian cabinet) to Jakarta for its third biennial forum. According to Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, this massive show of interest underlined the Australian government's commitment to improving economic ties with Indonesia. This article illustrates Australia's "all-out effort to boost economic relations" and Mr. Fischer's statement, "I don't care for the Guinness Book of Records, but what I do care for is increasing investment, trade and tourism" (*The Straits Times*, October 25, 1996, p. 29) drives home the importance of economics to Australia.

The final example, "Indonesia, Australia to develop growth area" (*The Straits Times*, October 26, 1996, p. 2) deals, once again, with Australia and Indonesia, and the move to boost bilateral economic co-operation between the two nations. This article is about the two countries' agreement to develop a growth area to intensify economic co-operation between the two countries.

All three articles ("Economics will be main issue at Indonesia-Australia forum" (*The Straits Times*, October 24, 1996, p.24), "Australia sends record

contingent to Jakarta forum" (*The Straits Times*, October 25, 1996, p. 29) and "Indonesia, Australia to develop growth area" (*The Straits Times*, October 26, 1996, p. 2) illustrate the importance of economics and the establishment of good economic relations.

Australia's Economy.

The reporting of the economic situation in Australia by *The Straits Times* may be seen as serving to Other Australia. By illustrating that Australia's economy is weaker than that of Singapore's, the Singapore government encourages Singaporeans to continue contributing to Singapore's economy. Some specific examples found in *The Straits Times* are as follows:

- "500,000 Aussies may lose their homes" (July 25, 1989, p.7).
- "Australians face a decade of high unemployment" (July 1, 1993, p.4).
- "Experts urge Keating to raise new taxes for job-creation drive" (December 16, 1993, p. 4).

These examples imply that Australia's economic conditions could be improved. In doing so, they also imply that in comparison, Singapore's economy is stronger, more dynamic and more future directed. It implies that as Australia has a bad economic future, Singapore has a better one (emphasising once the self/other, good/bad binaries of Othering).

The language used in the first example "500,000 Aussies may lose their homes" (July 25, 1989, p. 7) puts Australia in an unfavourable light. This article deals with the problem (described as a "crisis" in the article) faced by many Australians of housing repayments due to a rise in home interest rates. Mortgage rates are described as "soaring" and "crippling" and the consequences as "disastrous". This article clearly illustrates an instance of Othering. Australia's economic position

is portrayed as unstable ("500,000 Aussies may lose their homes", and "half a million Australians, or 3 per cent of the population, could lose their homes...") in order to imply that Singapore has a more stable and strong economic position.

Likewise, the second example "Australians face a decade of high unemployment" (July 1, 1993, p.4) illustrates another instance of Othering Australia in order to benefit Singapore economically. In this case, the article deals with the likelihood of Australia continuing to experience high unemployment for the next 10 years. Like the first example "500,000 Aussies may lose their homes" (July 25, 1989, p.7), the language used serves to Other Australia by putting it in a negative light and in so doing, imply that Singapore in contrast, is more secure economically. Australia's Employment Minister Kim Beazley was quoted to have said that "anything like full employment, however defined, will be desperately difficult to recapture in this country" (*The Straits Times*, July 1, 1993, p.4). Also, the statement of Australians facing the "stark prospect of a decade of high unemployment...as the government admitted that it had little chance of cutting record dole queues deeply" serves to portray Australia as having a poor economic future.

The article "Experts urge Keating to raise new taxes for job-creation drive" (*The Straits Times*, December 16, 1993, p.4) is about a government report urging then Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating to raise new taxes for a job-creation drive to "tackle one of the industrialised world's worst unemployment rates". Like the first two examples, this article also blatantly portrays Australia as Other by emphasising its poor economic position; "Australia has one of the worst unemployment rates in the industrialised world, standing at 11.1 per cent last month and near last year's record high of 11.3 per cent" (*The Straits Times*, December 16, 1993, p. 4). This also serves to discourage Singaporeans from migrating to Australia, thus maintaining economic stability in Singapore.

Conclusion

The economic and cultural dimensions of Othering have been seen to be linked in that Singapore Others Australia culturally to give it an economic edge over Australia. The press reports in *The Straits Times* frequently portray Australia as economically unstable so as to encourage economic growth in Singapore.

Chapter 5: The Hanson Phenomenon

In this chapter I will argue that the advent of Pauline Hanson in Australian politics is of crucial importance to future Singapore/Australian relations. The Hanson phenomenon is of such recent provenance that my study is necessarily incomplete. Nevertheless I want to argue that Pauline Hanson, her statements and the events surrounding her activities in Australia are subject to intense scrutiny in Singapore. *The Straits Times* has reported her activities and statements extensively since her election to the Australian parliament in March, 1996. There is evidence to suggest that the Singapore government is also monitoring her activities (*The Straits Times*, November 1, 1996, p. 1) and her presence is now lodged in public discourse via the Singapore media; ordinary Singaporeans know about her. The question is, what does the Hanson phenomenon mean to Singapore given the ambivalence with which Australia is reported in the media? At one level this phenomenon confirms the Singaporean view that Australia remains a racist country despite the introduction of policies relating to multiculturalism and the rhetoric of the various Australian governments, thereby affirming the process of Othering in *The Straits Times* I have identified. At another level, Pauline Hanson is recognised as an embarrassment for Australia; consequently the reports about her are not as harsh as we could have anticipated. What Hanson presents is one version of race. There are, of course, others, not least of which is an anti-racist discourse which would dispute endlessly and deeply anything Hanson has to say. However, what the media does is seem to reduce and colapse the discourse so that it becomes sensational and manageable in terms of its news production. In this chapter I will explore the discourse of Hanson in *The Straits Times*, suggesting that her presence has brought into sharp focus the problematic nature of Australian/Singapore relations as they are presented in the press.

Reports and commentary in *The Straits Times* regarding the race debate generated by Pauline Hanson reflect widely held views on Australia within Singapore from an Asian perspective. That is, there is a deeply held view that despite the advent of multiculturalism and specific Australian policies designed to discourage racial hatred, Australia remains essentially a racist country, shaped by its history as a European enclave in the Asian region. The commentary and reporting of *The Straits Times* constitutes a discursive form shaped by local journalistic conventions coupled with a rigorous system of censorship allied to extensive self-censorship on the part of journalists (Birch, 1993, p. 46).

Due to the current nature of the situation, I will only attempt to analyse events leading up to the March 1996 Australian federal election and the immediate responses to Hanson's maiden address in parliament in *The Straits Times*. I will also show that the view of Pauline Hanson expressed in these reports articulates a popularist conception of Hanson, constructed within a world view dominated by PAP and its policies, which continues to portray Australia in a negative light. In short, the reporting of Hanson continues the process of Othering Australia in the Singapore press.

Context

Pauline Hanson was originally endorsed by the Australian Liberal Party for the Queensland seat of Oxley which was a held Labor seat. She was subsequently disendorsed by the Liberal Party in February of 1996 following her comments to a Brisbane newspaper that Aborigines got preferential treatment for jobs and housing and that racism was a result of the Government "looking after Aborigines too much". It was later revealed that Hanson was warned on two separate occasions for her public comments on Aboriginal issues but her refusal to apologise led to her disendorsement (*The Australian*, February 16, 1996). Her election to the Federal seat of Oxley, in March, 1996 as an independent surprised all Australian commentators and analysts.

Her views on issues such as race and immigration have triggered a wave of media interest in both Australia and Asia, including Singapore. In her maiden address to the Australian Federal Parliament on September 10, 1996, she criticised the Australian government over the number of Asians in the country, warned of an Asian invasion threat, and that the preferential treatment of Aborigines by the Australian Government was the cause of racism in Australia (*The Straits Times*, September 25, 1996, p. 5). Hanson also claimed that Australia would face a "Bosnia-style civil war" should migrants and Aborigines continue to receive special treatment (*The Straits Times*, October 25, 1996, p. 58).

Such views are of great interest in Singapore especially as she has continued to articulate them with great force to an apparently receptive audience. Consequently *The Straits Times* has reported her speeches in detail, especially as her views seemed to have struck a chord with large sections of the Australian electorate.

The Singapore government subjects any hint of racism in Australia to intense scrutiny providing the lead for *The Straits Times* to follow. The seriousness with which Hanson's statements on anti-Asian migration are taken is reproduced in a table published in *The Straits Times* which purports to show a drastic increase in anti-Asian behaviour in Australia

	Before Hanson	After Hanson
No. of reported cases:	345	764
Spat on:	25	79
Verbal abuse:	299	670
Physical abuse:	40	95
Written abuse:	23	47

(*The Straits Times*, November 14, 1996, p. 6)

Clearly the view is that Hanson's statements have produced serious xenophobic outbursts in Australia, manifested in the cause of a sharp increase in racial abuse against Chinese Australians (*The Straits Times*, November 14, 1996, p. 6). This is taken as sufficient cause for major concern in Singapore. However, it should also be pointed out that Hanson's comments have also given rise to concern among Australian politicians, farming and church leaders, as well as many Australian Asians, who see Hanson as causing the rise in incidents of racial abuse and a sharp increase in official racism complaints to the Human-Rights Commission in Australia.

Hanson's maiden address to the Australian parliament was reported extensively in *The Straits Times*. Interestingly the critique moved away from the cultural to the economic; the argument being that her activities would have widespread implications for the Australian economy. Her views are seen to affect Australia's economic interests, as well as immigration, tourism, and the inflow of foreign fee-paying students. This chapter will look at how reports, editorials and features in *The Straits Times* construct Hanson and how they govern the ways in which Australia is consumed in Singapore. Concerns of *The Straits Times* are reflected in the reports of Hanson's statements about immigration and Aboriginal welfare policies. The implication that Hanson is racist, for example, articulates the PAP view about racism in Australia still being a current concern:

> "I am not a racist, I know in my heart I am not racist." she [Hanson] said, but adding that she believed multiculturalism , both for migrants and Aborigines, had gone too far.
> (*The Straits Times*, October 14, 1996, p. 3)

For the purpose of this analysis, I will now examine four areas which *The Straits Times* perceives the race debate pursued by Hanson most affects Australia's interests in Southeast Asia: economics, immigration, tourism and education.

Economic

The reporting of Hanson's views in *The Straits Times* on Australia's economic future in Asia emphasise Australia's reliance on her Asian neighbours for economic success. In 1995/96, Australia's two-way trade with Asia totalled A$73 billion (*The Straits Times*, November 7, 1996, p. 4). Any threat to this investment climate is portrayed as damaging to both Australia's and Singapore's interests although in the final analysis Australia will be penalised more. One small example illustrates this point. A projected multi-million-dollar investments in the Western Australian ostrich industry was allegedly threatened by the changing social climate of Australia attributed to Hanson's maiden speech in March, 1996 .("Investments pulled out of ostrich venture", *The Straits Times*, October 15, 1996, p. 4). Apparently, two Singaporean investors delayed investing in the ostrich business after becoming alarmed over reports of anti-Asian sentiments in Australia reported in overseas news media. Reports such as this filter back to Australia and contribute to the concerns political leaders and businessmen have about Hanson's views on race and immigration affecting Australia's economic performance. What the arrival of Hanson to the Australian political scene has done, paradoxically, is to throw greater emphasis on economic relations between Australia and Asia,

> Apart from social instability, investments will dry up and further aggravate the unemployment situation. Japan and the ASEAN countries are major investors in Australia. Also, tourism, a mainstay of the Australian economy, will be hit badly as Asians form the bulk of tourists coming to the country.
> (*The Straits Times*, October 25, 1996, p. 58).

It is evident that Hanson's remarks have widespread implications for Asia, a region to which the Australian Government professes to be committed, and to which Australia's future security and prosperity is inextricably bound, given Australia's geographical position. Reports in *The Straits Times* about Australia's desire to establish closer ties with the Asian region illustrates Australia's concern that the race

debate sparked off by Hanson would tarnish the country's regional reputation (*The Straits Times*, November 7, 1996, p. 4). Howard's failure to take a stand against Hanson's views have been predicted, by Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, as likely to tarnish Australia's image in the Asian region. Some Australians claim that Hanson's comments damaged Australia's image and trade prospects in the region (*The Straits Times*, November 15, 1996, p. 16) Other Australian government officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, have warned that Hanson's views and comments could damage trade with Australia's neighbours (*The Straits Times*, October 31, 1996, p. 8). Farming leaders in Australia have also put pressure on Howard to repudiate Hanson's speech, saying that Australia's markets in Asia are under threat because of it (*The Straits Times*, October 5, 1996, p. 4). According to farm industry spokesman Ian Macfarlane, the president of the Queensland Grain Growers Association,

> Her comments regarding Asian immigration, and the basic racist undertones associated with them, are causing a great deal of offence, alarm and instability among our Asian business trading partners. We don't want to see the markets in those regions put at risk by the failure of the Prime Minister and other senior government officials to challenge and dissociate us from some of the comments that have been made.
> (*The Straits Times*, October 5, 1996, p. 4)

Opposition Labor leader Kim Beazley warned Hanson that her remarks would hurt many Australians as well as damage Australia's standing with important Asian trading partners (*The Straits Times*, October 9, 1996, p. 4). The near unanimity of expression among Australia's political and business elites on the Hanson phenomenon demonstrates two things. Firstly, it is indisputable that Australia's economic future is linked to Asia , and following from this, political and business elites are mindful of any event or behaviour that could interrupt the economic activity. Secondly, Hanson is not only consumed by the Australian domestic media as a sign of a deep social unrest but she has also been taken up by the Asian media, providing them with a

metonym for all of the negative Australian attributes they have reported in the past. In short, in the Singapore media Hanson becomes a vehicle whereby Australia may be further Othered.

The Asian media have given prominent coverage to the race debate. However, while most media have dismissed Ms Hanson as a fringe extremist, there has been almost universal condemnation of Australian Prime Minister John Howard for weak leadership and for being seen to condone a perceived resurgence of racism in Australia. Howard was accused of being racist by John Della Bosca, the secretary of the New South Wales Labor Party, who claimed that "people who profit from racism are racists" (*The Straits Times*, October 8, 1996, p. 8). According to Australia's first Chinese Member of Parliament, Helen Sham-Ho of the New South Wales state Liberal opposition, Howard's refusal to repudiate Hanson could fuel suspicions that he was afraid of upsetting people who held similar views (*The Straits Times*, October 9, 1996, p. 4). His conservative Liberal-National government, while condemning racism, has defended Ms Hanson's right to speak out and has blamed the racism controversy on the media. Howard believes that Hanson's willingness to air her views has resulted in people being able to speak more freely about "politically incorrect issues" (*The Straits Times*, September 23, 1996, p.6). Howard's stance on this matter is perceived to be detrimental to Australia/Singapore economic relations.

Immigration

Hanson's call for an immediate halt to all immigration to Australia in her maiden address has proved particularly offensive to Asian Australians. While Hanson seeks to be inclusive in her demands it is clear to this significant section of the new Australian community that she is in fact being exclusive. She links Asian immigration to Australia's policy of "multiculturalism", introduced in the 1970s after decades of whites-only immigration, and argues that both should be discarded (*The Straits Times*, October 5, 1996, p. 4). Hanson apparently believes that Australia is in

danger of being "swamped by Asians" who have their own culture and religion, form urban ghettos and do not assimilate into the singular Australia she proposes (*The Straits Times*, October 25, 1996, p. 4). Hanson also claimed that Asian migrants brought with them crimes such as home invasions and singled out the Sydney suburb of Cabramatta, which is populated largely by Vietnamese migrants as an example. All of this is reported in detail in *The Straits Times* and one can only assume that it is also read with close attention by Singaporeans, especially those with close connections with Australia.

Immigration affects both Australia and Singapore's economic environment. Australia is a popular destination for many migrants from Asia (including Singapore). Migration (and especially business migration) is a factor contributing directly on Australia's economic growth (*The Straits Times*, November 15, 1996, p. 16). Similarly, the Singapore government recognises the significance of immigration to Singaporean society. As previously established, Singapore's population consists of a majority of migrants arriving in the 1900s. The PAP considers the people of Singapore to be a primary resource and have thus formulated policies to discourage Singaporeans from migrating overseas.

Hanson's controversial views have been criticised for jeopardising Australia's relationship with its Asian neighbours. Asian migrants make up around 4.7 per cent of Australia's 18 million population and about a third of the nation's 100,000 immigrants each year (*The Straits Times*, November 7, 1996, p. 4). Furthermore, the Australian Department of Immigration had estimated business migration would attract A$856 million in investment capital in the financial year ending June 30, 1997 (*The Straits Times*, November 15, 1996, p. 16). In other words, Asia and Asians are becoming even more important to the economic and material well being of all Australians.

Articles in *The Straits Times* covering the race debate serve a dual purpose. On one hand, it serves the information purpose by letting the reader know about the current situation. On the other hand, it also serves an ideological purpose. Through the articles' content and use of language, they imply that Australia is not a safe place, thus inviting the Singaporean reader to see Australia through a different lens; as a place of potential danger rather than as benign tourist or immigration destination. The following articles illustrate this:

- "71% of Aussies feel immigration levels are too high, poll shows" (*The Straits Times*, October 5, 1996, p.4)

- "A question of race" (*The Straits Times*, October 12, 1996, p. 4)

- "Unease in Australia over race issue" (*The Straits Times*, October 12, 1996, p. 36)

- "Race issue may start civil war: Australian MP" (*The Straits Times*, October 14, 1996, p. 3)

In each example, Hanson's views on the issue of Asian migration are stated, along with reports of acts of racial discrimination, thus clearly implying that Australia is a racist nation. The behaviour in Australia towards Asians attributed to Hanson's rhetoric has forced senior Australian politicians to provide alternative accounts of the role of Asians in Australia. Prime Minister John Howard's acknowledgement of immigrants' contributions to Australia is evident in his statements attributing them to Australia's economic growth,

> The contribution that Australians of Asian descent have made to this country has been immense. They have brought to this country many skills.

> (*The Straits Times*, October 12, 1996, p. 36)

However, despite Howard's defence of Australia's immigration policy, he is reported to have little influence on changing the views of Hanson's supporters. Reports of Hanson's maiden speech, in which she voices her opinions on Asian immigration, as

well as the reports from Liberal Party MPs of "outbreaks of racial abuse against Asian-Australians", all help to deliver the message of Australia being an undesirable destination for Asians in the current climate. Interestingly, none of *The Straits Times'* reports provide any analysis of the conditions underpinning the Hanson phenomenon such as the changing work conditions of Australians arising from changing economic practices associated with the globalisation of the Australian economy. Australia is no longer a high employment country and the closure of industries and the subsequent loss of jobs clearly create conditions where people seek to scapegoat groups. This seems to be the case with Hanson and her supporters.

Articles in *The Straits Times* dealing with Australia's immigration concerns put in place by Hanson's views establish Australia as an undesirable destination for Singaporeans The articles emphasise the different policies of Australia to Singapore in regard to multi-culturalism. Australians' fear of the "Asianisation" of Australia (*The Straits Times*, October 12, 1996, p. 36) illustrates not only the deep seated concerns of many Hanson supporters but also serves as an instance of Othering by *The Straits Times*.

Tourism

Since the arrival of Pauline Hanson on the Australian political stage several Asian tour groups have cancelled trips to Australia (*The Australian*, November 4, 1996, p. 2). The implications of more extensive boycotts has profound implications for the tourist industry in Australia. This is recognised by John Brown, head of the Tourism Taskforce in Australia, who has urged the Federal Government to fund a $25 million "rescue package" aimed at restoring Asian confidence in Australia in the wake of the damaging race debate. According to Brown, "we need the government to reinforce the view that we want Asian tourists here. All of that money and all of those jobs within the tourism industry are at threat" (*The Straits Times*, November 5, 1996,

p. 4). Cancellations are seen to be a cause for "genuine national concern" (*The Straits Times*, November 5, 1996, p. 4). According to Brown,

> We are concerned with the impact on Asian tourism in Australia and the jeopardy it puts on the jobs of these kids (employed in tourism). Unless we do something to nip in the bud this view that Australia is a racist country then there will be a lot more cancellations ... we are concerned about the cancellations we will never hear about.
>
> (*The Australian*, November 4, 1996, p. 2)

Tourism contributes $14 billion to the Australian economy (*The Australian*, November 4, 1996, p. 2), with nearly four million international tourists (mainly Asian), visiting the country in 1995 (*The Straits Times*, November 5, 1996, p. 4). Asia accounts for sixty per cent of Australia's tourists. The reports of specific incidences of racial attacks of Asians in Australia constructs Australia as being an unsafe environment for Asian visitors. Examples such as "Attacked 'because he was Asian'" (*The Straits Times*, November 14, 1996, p. 6) emphasises the racial distinction made more evident by Hanson's anti-Asian views. The article reports a case where two Asians were assaulted by Australians for no apparent reason other than their race, "They attacked us because we were Asian". This article can be seen as exemplifying Australia as a racist society and so serving an economic aspect by discouraging potential tourists to Australia.

Education

Aside from affecting immigration, Hanson's opinions are also seen to affect Australia's lucrative overseas education market. Individual Asian students pay close to $20,000 a year for education fees and accommodation in Australia (*The Straits Times*, November 11, 1996, p. 6). Overseas education for Singaporeans is a problematic area for the Singaporean authorities. Education, in the neo-Confucian tradition, is a highly valued social attribute and demand for tertiary education cannot be met domestically in Singapore. However, an overseas education exposes the

Singaporean student a range of cultural values frequently deemed unsuitable in Singapore and *The Straits Times* continuously highlights both reports of racial abuse and examples of perceived undesirable cultural and moral values in the West. Commenting about the race debate, Singapore's High Commissioner to Australia, Lieutenant-General Winston Choo says,

> I think this to an extent could, if not controlled, affect say tourism, Singapore students wanting to come to study here, and eventually if tourism is going to be affected, then I think the investment into the tourism industry.
> *(The Straits Times*, October 31, 1996, p. 8).

Hanson views on racism, then, provide *The Straits Times*, and other media, with material whereby Australia may be constructed as dangerous, unpleasant and Other for the Singaporean. Moreover, *The Straits Times* portray her views as highly influential among Australians. The opinion poll conducted by *The Sydney Morning Herald* in October 1996 allegedly found that 48 per cent of respondents backed Hanson, and only 38 per cent disagreed with her views (*The Straits Times*, October 15, 1996, p. 4). The following month the paper reported a rise in support for Hanson. Results from the *Sydney Morning Herald* purported to show that sixty-two per cent of the respondents supported Hanson's plan to freeze immigration and fifty-three per cent endorsed her call to reduce the proportion of Asians coming into Australia (*The Straits Times*, November 15, 1996, p. 16). *The Straits Times* adopts the view that "Opinion polls, radio shows and newspaper columns have shown broad community support for her" (October 12, 1996, p. 4). Hanson's influence on and support from Australian society as illustrated in *The Straits Times* serves to reflect the PAP view of Australia as a racist society.

Conclusion

Hanson is a new player in the complex Singapore/Australia equation. By emphasising her statements and the alleged support for her in the Australian

community and the weak leadership of Howard on this matter *The Straits Times* has successfully deployed Hanson as a force in the process of Othering Australia. However, it is more complex than simple recourse to the claim of Othering - the economic aspects contained with the Hansonite discourse and anti-Hanson discourse also have a bearing on Singapore's future. *The Straits Times* correctly takes the view that Hanson is bad for Australia and for Singapore. However, given its continued ambivalence towards Australia, it is not too sure what to make of her. On the one hand she represents the aspects of Australia that *The Straits Times* has always suspected to be just beneath the Australian surface but on the other hand Singapore is now closely linked to Australia economically and any disruption is detrimental to Singaporean business interests. The implied solution is that strong leadership - just like Lee's would solve the problem (*The Straits Times*, June 16, 1993, p. 22).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis examines the way in which Australia is reported in Singapore's main English newspaper, *The Straits Times*. I have argued that Australian/Singapore relations are ambivalent at best for historical and economic reasons and that this ambivalence is expressed in the way in which Australia is reported. However, relations between Singapore and Australia are of strategic importance to both countries, especially in the areas of economy, defence and regional relations. Australia and Singapore contribute to each other's trade and investment as well as having joint defence agreements. I have argued that despite (or possibly because of) Australia's geographical location, the Singapore press frequently "Others" Australia and this type of reporting constitutes a form of Occidentalism which is a recent derivative of Orientalism. Occidentalism has emerged as a powerful ideological framework in Asia reflecting the changing economic relations between Asia and the West in the past decade. It is mobilised by key political and institutional figures to positon the West in a negative light in order to demonstrate what Bhabha calls "mastery". This is certainly the case in respect to the reports on Australia in *The Straits Times* that I have analysed.

Othering occurs to differentiate individuals and societies. Orientalism and Occidentalism are instances of Othering and arises out of the desire of individuals and societies to distinguish themselves and establish notions of identity. Asian nations, including Singapore associate Western nations such as Australia as characterised by "individualism, selfishness, materialism and decadence" while their own countries possess a sense of "community, spirituality and family" (Rodan, 1993, p. 40).

Singapore's adoption of Asian values is a defence mechanism authorised by the PAP and circulated by the Singapore media to contest Western cultural pollution.

I have also drawn out the links between the Singapore government and *The Straits Times* in order to demonstrate the nature of government control of both communciations in its broadest sense and the media in particular. *The Straits Times* articulates the PAP view as well as help to shape the nation in accordance to their dominant ideologies. Media policies are formulated to serve as tools which aid in the construction of a Singaporean national identity reflecting the Singapore Government's stated desire to exercise firm control over all dimensions of ideological work in the state (Birch, 1993, pp. 20-21). Governmental control over Singapore's press comes in the form of licences which media owners may renew annually on the condition that they agree not to run "any article which is likely to cause ill-will or misunderstanding between the government and people of Singapore and the government and people of Malaysia; or which is likely to excite communal or racial emotions, or which glorifies or justifies the use of violence in politics" (Lim, 1985, p. 118). While my argument has been specifically about Singapore, Singapore's regional significance and its sensitivity to the affairs of its immediate neighbours (with which it often identifies) must be seen as a factor here, albeit an under researched and undeveloped one. Further research should take into account the question of regionalism in an Asian context. The Singapore government has a long proactive tradition of using the national media for nation-building purposes, having designed and implemented policies and strategies which see the media mobilised to achieve government decreed ends such as family planning, language education and so on. This proactive policy has also spilled over into regional affairs through Singapore's membership of

ASEAN. Therefore, the negative view of Australia adopted in Singapore's press may be seen to reflect the conviction of PAP that Western values are decadent and if allowed free access to Singaporean society would have a detrimental effect. Press reports of Australia in *The Straits Times* frequently emphasise issues such as family values, sexuality (especially homosexuality), work ethic, lack of communal harmony and the fragmentation of society, all of which are represented as Australian values and dramatically opposed to the values perceived as important as social glue in Singapore.

The formation of a set of collective 'Asian values' has been seen to help Singapore's nation-building policies and establish it as a significant Asian nation. Asian governments believe that "Asian values" are superior to the values of Western societies. Singapore's adoption of Asian values is a defence mechanism authorised by the PAP and circulated by the Singapore media to contest Western cultural pollution. National stereotypes serve to construct "unity while sustaining difference within national groups" and to "mark off those who belong to the nation from others through their possession of the secret...to read it" (Hodge, 1989, p. 443). By juxtaposing reports of Singapore's achievements with Australian failures the press clearly articulates the belief that the Singapore government through its restrictive polices has indicated its desire "to show" that it has mastered the modern.

The principle question that arises from this situation of Othering is, quite simply, why does *The Straits Times*, and by implication the Singapore government, choose to "Other" Australia in a remarkably consistent manner? I have attempted to answer this complex question by looking at past events in the history of Australian/Singapore relations which have affected this relationship in a number of

identifiable areas including economics, cultural exchanges, education, tourism and politics which have been reported in a number of specific articles dealing with Australia in the Singapore press.

According to Yao (1994), the perception of Australia as Other stems from a fear of 'cultural pollution' which in turn masks a deeper unease about the experience of modernity. Modernity presents the Singapore government with a problem. PAP desires Singapore to be a modern state and reap the benefits of modernity similar to that experienced in Western nations but almost entirely at the material level. However, this desire is mixed with the fear of cultural pollution on the part of the governing elites. The fear on the part of PAP of Singapore adopting the same undesirable Western values associated with Western media has led to the implementation of national ideologies which were formulated to establish a national identity. The Singapore government's desire for Singaporeans to enjoy the same material comforts offered by modernity but at the same time, it is fearful of what it terms 'cultural pollution' which has become associated with the experience of modernity in the rhetoric of government.

In order to make concrete this central dilemma I have examined the issues of race, values and morality in Australia as illustrated in *The Straits Times*, suggesting that the differences between Australia and Singapore are more ideological than material. This analysis further aids our understanding for the reasons behind Singapore's perceived 'vulnerability' and susceptibility to Western 'cultural pollution' on the part of the elites despite the country's economic growth and success in international trade and the process of industrialization. The formation of 'Asian

values' is a response to the fear that the Western media bring the moral and cultural values of the West to Singapore. The government and its instrumentalities view this as undesirable and damaging to Singapore's future economic and social progress. I have shown that the construction of Australia by the Singapore media as Other is a deliberate strategy designed to lessen the impact of the perceived undesirable qualities possessed by Western nations and expressed in their media. Despite the fact that Australia tries to adopt policies of cultural diversity, it is still seen by many Singaporeans to be exclusively a Western nation and one which exhibits a preference (whether in immigration or job prospects) for white Anglo-Saxons or Europeans generally. Australia is seen be the 'moral opposite' (Yao, 1994) of Asian societies and these aspects are perceived by the Singapore government to challenge and question their policies in regard to the moral structure of Singapore society.

I have also examined the economic differences between Australia and Singapore and illustrated the link between economics and Othering and between economics and cultural production, which is a problematic area. Singapore sees itself as a hub of Southeast Asia. The importance of economic relations to both Australia and Singapore is illustrated by their attempts to promote economic stability within their countries as well as forge ties with neighbouring countries. I have argued that the desire of individuals and society to control or maintain control of the means of production and reproduction is the basis of Othering. Whether this refers to the Othering of individuals or societies due to race, culture, or even gender, it results of ways of thinking, in order to control these means. Singapore Others Australia as a means of maintaining power and enhancing its stronger economic position. I have also argued that the Othering of Australia is one of the strategies the Singapore

government employs in order to put itself and Singapore in a better economic position in relation to Australia.

I have concluded with a preliminary and incomplete analysis of the Hanson phenomenon as it brings into sharp focus the problems discussed and also reflects back on the Singapore press, bringing into question the way it is organised and controlled. *The Straits Times* takes the view that Hanson is bad for both Australia and Singapore. Hanson represents the aspects of Australia that *The Straits Times* has always suspected to be just beneath the Australian surface. However, as Singapore is now closely linked to Australia economically any disruption is detrimental to Singaporean business interests and the views often employed in news articles about Hanson are often ambiguous. In the light of the changing economic circumstances of Asia, there is clearly the need for more research in this field.

The Singapore government employs a variety of communication strategies to ensure that its economic, political and cultural agendas are widely understood within Singapore society in general. These strategies are formulated by PAP and implemented in accordance with their view of what should constitute the nation's dominant ideologies by the Singaporean government apparatus.

The Straits Times' reporting about the race debate generated by Pauline Hanson reflect widely held views on Australia within Singapore from an Asian perspective. That is, there is a deeply held view that despite the advent of multiculturalism and specific Australian policies designed to discourage racial hatred,

Australia remains essentially a racist country, shaped by its history as a European enclave in the Asian region.

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