

drugs and domesticity

Fencing the Nation

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If, as Foucault suggested, liberalism proceeds on the suspicion that one always governs too much, it is by this principle endowed with a remarkable capacity to enlist various (and disparate) critiques of and dissatisfactions with state practice to the purpose of dislodging the traditional ambit of state responsibility.¹ This process only looks like retreat. Responsibility for social risks is indeed devolved, but indirect techniques for controlling individuals are advanced, promoted in terms of a moral vocabulary of ‘self-care’. One of the challenges for a national culture disaggregating in this way is how to contain, channel, even profit from the fears, resentment and anxiety that accompanies the loss of various prior forms of security. Here I explore, through analysis of a number of texts, the ways in which the representation of drugs is rallied to this purpose—inciting, concentrating and managing the fear surrounding changes to the economic, political, racial and sexual landscape of our time, while refiguring expectations, demarcations and investments in the public and private domains, and how these spheres of action are made to appear. As the globalisation of economic and cultural transactions proceeds, drugs are put to work to align the family and nation in a seductive and nostalgic imaginary that marks out and delimits horizons of personal and collective action, bearing repercussions for sex, race and the production and distribution of material (in)security.

My thinking on this matter has been influenced by the ways drugs have recently featured in the conservative rhetoric of Australian politicians on both sides of the political fence. Despite the innovations of harm minimisation policy in this country, drugs recently began to feature in more reactionary and spectacular political formations. In 2000, the Prime Minister’s office took the unusual step of intervening in the production of a national drugs campaign,

insisting that it reflect the need for a more authoritarian approach by parents, and that the booklet bear the title 'Our Strongest Weapon Against Drugs ... Families'. The title was later modified to the slightly milder 'Our Strongest Defence Against the Drug Problem ... Families' and was mailed, a few months before the 2001 federal election, to 'every home in Australia'.² When you live, as I did at the time, on a street where a fairly common sight is heroin-users wheeling prams around, you have to wonder about the efficacy of this advice. (I've not yet been game enough to ask whether there are babies in those prams, or whether these characters are counting on exactly the sort of presumptions informing campaigns like this to push more than just prams, but either way they appear to shoot holes in its premises).

At about this time, a word entered Australian political discourse with such force—and with such an apparent monopoly on its signification—that I found myself wondering whether I had ever understood the real sense of the term before. The election, by all accounts, hinged on the voting patterns of a new 'aspirational' class. 'Aspiration' was taken to denote mobility—both 'upward' and 'outward', economic and geographic: a mortgage-holding, double-income, upwardly mobile lower-middle class residing in the outskirts of major cities. A creature of focus-group testing conducted in electorally significant areas on the part of both major political parties, the aspirationalists were said to:

believe in the private sector and in being self-reliant; they are individualistic, competitive, and materialistic; they belong to private health funds, own shares; they are heavily in debt to their mortgages, their credit cards, and their cars ... they are, in the main, opposed to asylum seekers and migrants whom they see as a threat to what they hold dearest of all: a high standard of living.³

The reference to asylum seekers recalls the Tampa affair, which saw the government intercept and turn away a boat of Afghani asylum-seekers, purportedly to great electoral effect. It became fitting, over the course of these events, to detect the drug campaign's 'weapon' as the suppressed referent of the (now ubiquitous) term 'defence', and understand this affective posture as a basic component of what Paul Kelly, writing on the significance of Howard's re-election, described as Howard's conception of national life: a 'family based aspirational society'.⁴

I mean to draw out the associations here between a privatised ethic of the self, a barricaded sense of domestic space, a defensive stance towards the unfamiliar, and a heteronormative conception of intimate life. But rather than suggest these amount to some characteristic set of national attributes, I want to show how they are transmitted onto and into bodies by the discursive and affective mediation of a regime of the personal. I'm inspired here by Anna Gibbs's idea, drawn from the work of Silvan Tomkins, that 'the media act as vectors in affective epidemics in which something else is smuggled along: the attitudes and even specific

ideas which tend to accompany affect in any given situation'.⁵ But I do not mean to suggest that drugs are deployed in some crude and deliberate attempt at media manipulation designed to beget aspirational. Rather, a historically situated and discursively shaped fear of drugs defines a particular world view, and these fears and desires get embedded in quite precise and deliberate media interventions that, ultimately, are no less crude or manipulative. But just as often, they seem entirely natural and right to their proponents: the earnest reflection of real concerns and a proper way to live.

My analysis begins in what may seem like an odd place: a reading of the widely acclaimed North American film *Traffic* (Soderbergh, 2000). This film is part of our culture. Not only does the television component of the National Drug Campaign lift some of its scenes directly, but also *Traffic* has found its way into local political rhetoric. In his speech to the Inaugural Press Forum in 2001, the premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, cited the popularity of *Traffic* as evidence, oddly enough, of a more enlightened, humane attitude to drugs in the community. Odd, given that the current framework of harm minimisation is by any measure a more liberal policy than zero tolerance—even the 'soft' version that *Traffic* recommends. So the identity of the draconian past that Carr's example of humane progress is supposed to amend is difficult to figure. This moment encapsulated several defining features of contemporary Australian political culture: the nurturing of the press for state political projects; the poaching of American cultural forms to model 'progress'; the effort to constitute an alert—if not alarmed—popular imaginary; and the currency of drugs as a way of typifying the hopes, fears and character of this constituency.⁶ Such moments efface local histories as much as they organise the future. They cite the discourse of progress in order to append political culture to a familiar set of figures—parents, families, police, and a putatively 'familiar' Australia—employing the language of not only reform, but *liberal* reform to import specific templates of domination. Avital Ronell has written that drugs 'resist conceptual arrest':

Everywhere dispensed, in one form or another, their strength lies in their virtual and fugitive patterns. No one has thought to define them in their essence, which is not to say 'they' do not exist ... Precisely because they are everywhere and can be made to do, or undo, or promise, anything.⁷

One aspect of this, as a reader of this article observed, is that drugs rhetoric tends to spiral out and attach itself to any number of social and national(ist) discourses. One way of countering this tendency would be to get specific about the material dimensions of specific substances and their ingestion. Another would be to look at the innumerable ways in which drugs rhetoric fails, and so, for example, to explore how we laugh at it, the ways in which everyday life exceeds its terms. For all the value of these strategies, my approach in this article has been to take drugs rhetoric at its word—to see where it travels, what it attaches itself to,

and how (on its own terms) it unravels. I am particularly interested in how drug discourse frames the terms of moral citizenship (with implications for sex, race and class) so I am interested in how, exactly, this archive models familiarity and difference.

— TRAFFIC: DESIGNATING 'FACE-TIME' IN LATE CAPITAL

'When Americans make the pilgrimage to Washington they are trying to grasp the nation in its totality', writes Lauren Berlant. She describes this journey as a 'test of citizenship competence', for 'one must be capable not just of imagining, but of managing being American'.⁸ When *Traffic* shows Robert Wakefield in his new office after hours, having recently taken up the public office of Drug Czar—the White House looming promisingly in the moonlight through his window—it is just such a pilgrimage that he is supposed to have undertaken. After an initial preparatory visit to Washington, he returns to his family to report proudly on the prospect of doing 'face time' with the president. The latter remains uncannily faceless throughout the film, but Wakefield's teenage daughter Caroline's escalating drug habit comes to be hypothesised as a function of lack of 'face-time' with her father. Depicting a nation fractured by the structural tensions of late capital—between work and home, public and private, and by the porosity of national borders—the remedy *Traffic* offers is to revert to a logic of familial identification, envisioned in terms of proper parenting and the reinstatement of the absent father, who in turn must appear as an authoritative but tender head of household.⁹

The film weaves together several stories with a level of complexity that can itself be interpreted as symptomatic of the fractured, confusing world it sets out to portray.¹⁰ In an early sequence a primary theme is declared: Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) cops chase a suspect into a children's amusement park. The threat drug trafficking poses to the world of children is announced. From the onset, *Traffic* makes an incisive and self-justified critique of the 'war on drugs'. But the vision of the future this critique contains expounds a brutally neo-conservative version of the nation-state, in which the overriding question is how to protect the 'infantile citizen' from the excesses of contemporary America.¹¹

Traffic's drug problem certainly traverses socioeconomic, racial and national lines. But it is not exactly the drug problem identified with hopelessness, lack of economic stability and inadequate prospects of housing, jobs or education for the underprivileged in the modern metropolis. Rather, the drug problem that *Traffic* frets about is the risk of displacement that drugs are thought to pose to the vulnerable members of privileged white families. The primary engine of fascination and horror in the film is the daughter Caroline's habit, and almost all of the drug use that takes place occurs among her and her resolutely privileged peers. Caroline is a 'straight-A student', and to a large extent the drama revolves around the possible derailment of her aspirations. But the sort of mobility her compulsion produces,

and the type of disorientation it represents, is inscribed as more chilling than this. In a basic sense, Caroline misrecognises home. When she visits a seedy hotel with her boyfriend to hit up (always a point of intense intrigue in drug films), she murmurs, as her drugs kick in, 'Wish we could just stay here, just be here forever and have a room—make a little home here'. The hotel is depicted grittily in a run-down, ethnically mixed neighbourhood, and this has the effect of rendering Caroline's desire both brash and pitiable, the indiscriminate indifference of adolescence. In her delirium, Caroline seems happy to trade the stability and security of home for the transience of a rented room. Later in the film Caroline escapes from the rehabilitation program in which her parents have placed her. Her father eventually finds her in a hotel room with a man who is apparently a client, after sex. After throwing the man out, he approaches Caroline, who lies in bed dazed and sleeping. She is so doped that she is oblivious to her whereabouts or what has been happening, and so is not surprised to wake and see her father. 'Hi Daddy', she says dreamily, in the quintessential (but horrifically mistaken) tenor of domestic harmony, and her father breaks down in tears.

At the thematic heart of Caroline's fall from grace, then, is an apparently willful mistaking of domestic space, a misapprehension that *Traffic* treats with a pitying and anxious fascination. The allure of drugs and their associated evil renders the unfamiliar familiar, or makes that which is properly kept strange seem like home. Being on drugs means being at home with degradation. Here, the topic of drugs is not an opportunity for thinking about actual material ingestions, but rather acts as the sign of a seductive and dangerous social terrain. The thrill of contamination conveyed by watching the well-heeled character Helena walk the same dangerous precinct as the street-wise Mexican policeman Javier in her efforts to maintain her family's affluent lifestyle, or Robert Wakefield surveying (from the safety of his official, anonymous vehicle) the same downtrodden neighbourhood that his daughter walks moments later by foot in her quest to score crack, is precisely the currency of the film.¹² The sullyng of these vulnerable, hopeful characters is what is at stake; they risk becoming matter out of place. Drugs form a sign of abject *displacement* in a textual logic that foregrounds the menacing proximity of the socioeconomically and racially dissimilar, the shiftiness of that which is (mis)recognised as home. The sense of unease produced by these referential sequences arouses feelings of estrangement from changing urban cultural topographies, fomenting a misplaced nostalgia for a certain sort of (white) cultural security and centrality.

If the problem the film constructs is Caroline's hazardous inability to distinguish between (or, more accurately, her habit of conflating) home and away, the challenge for her father is to put this confusion straight by finding himself a role most appropriate to the task. This marks out a trajectory from 'faceless bureaucrat' (versed in abstract generalities) to 'head-of-family man' (with first-hand experience of the problem). The primary narrative culminates with him quitting his position as Drug Czar after he breaks down while giving his maiden

speech to the press. Ostensibly the sequence rebukes the rhetoric of the 'war on drugs'. But in its place a sentimental, even more conservative vision of the national future is offered, expressing major disillusionment with the capacities of the state, while consolidating *even more insistently* the criteria of the cultural war that the 'war on drugs' represents:

The war on drugs is a war that we have to win and a war that we can win. We have to win this war to save our country's most precious resource—our children ... I can't do this. If there is a war on drugs, then many of our family members are the enemy, and I don't know how you wage war on your own family.

At face value, the appeal makes humane sense. But rather than questioning the terms of a system failing people, it makes that system personal. 'War' stands in here for all possible embodiments of public action, locking any public future in this area to the failures of the past. In an act of atonement, Wakefield abandons the 'war' and leaves his office to support his daughter's recovery, embarking on an intimate project—'to listen'—that need only be extended to his immediate kin for him to fulfil his commitment to the nation. The suggestion is that intimate humane labour (among parents, children, citizens) will counterbalance the effects of a market whirling dangerously out of the state's control. This move to retain order in the private realm is meant then as an exemplary attempt to secure a national future unblemished by history or power, where the role of parent comes to exhaust the public dimensions of managing American citizenship.

Race is bound up in this crisis of domestic space in complex ways. In a motif that recurs in this archive—see, for example, *Requiem for a Dream* (Aronofsky, 2000)—the full degradation of drugs is conveyed dramatically when the young white female character is forced, through sheer compulsion to sustain her habit, to have sex with a drug dealer, specifically a muscular or otherwise physically domineering Afro-American male. In *Traffic* this event takes place downtown at daytime, to the eerie sounds of children playing outside, and culminates in Caroline beckoning the dealer to inject drugs into her ankle. This 'Desdemonic' moment is offered as the ultimate point of danger and depravity, the upraised ankle suggesting a system vulnerable, volatile, stretched to limits. The vision of compulsive female agency in the hands of the racial, economic and moral other enables *Traffic* to express what it imagines as the incommensurable differences of the worlds through which the drug trade moves and whose extremes it is thought to represent.

It would be a mistake though to interpret *Traffic* in terms of an even logic of exclusion on the basis of race. Its system of value is more brutal and in fact more inclusive. I want to sketch it here using the concept of faciality. Deleuze and Guattari offer the concept of faciality as a way of thinking about modern racism that locates its source not in exclusion, but in a system of differential inclusion that supposes a basic prepolitical humanity, modelled on 'the



Drug dealer, *Traffic*. © 2000, International Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

White-man face'.¹³ Faciality is a grid that tests humanness according to a logic of personal identification. Patricia MacCormack usefully understands this as an inability to recognise the body of the other except as it conforms to the terms of the dominant culture. Faciality thus becomes a refusal to allow the other a viable body at all: 'Where the face differs is why the face fails, not because certain genders or races are destined to fail but because certain bodies are wrenched into a facial assemblage destined to fail them'.¹⁴

In *Traffic*, transactions with the drug dealer take place through a small caged grid in a bolted door, through which it is possible to make out only a fraction of his face. This threshold is breached only twice in the film, once in the scene described above, and once when Wakefield is searching for his daughter. Both occasions are produced as violent and violating—the release of a dangerous, untamed force. The grid is otherwise in place in the film, grading its characters according to a facial logic that takes its bearings from two complementary axes—involvement in the drug trade, and devotion to the national-family form. Racial difference is tolerated in the world of the film 'at given places under given conditions'.¹⁵ Jaundiced, bustling streetscapes of poverty are contrasted with the cold puritanical blue of affluent domesticity (associated with the Wakefield's residence). As effectively as shades of skin, these pigments determine 'degrees of deviance in relation to the White-man face'.¹⁶ On this coding system, whiteness is less a pre-existing attribute than a source of value and aspiration: nonconforming traits are integrated according to its terms, which map only loosely onto racial categories. Ascending from the low points of this virtue-value ladder are characters such as Javier, the Mexican policeman who manages to resist corruption (and precarious

offers of 'family'-like loyalty from members of the Juarez cartel) by sticking to his goal of getting lighting installed in Tijuana parks, so that children can play baseball at night ('Everyone likes baseball').¹⁷ But perhaps the most interesting performance of a sort of cumulative racial-national capital is that of Helena, the unsuspecting wife of a wealthy drug dealer.¹⁸ When she discovers her family's affluent lifestyle and rapid upward mobility have been built on drug crime (her husband is placed in confinement at the start of the film) she is faced with the prospect of a serious reversal of fortune. Catapulted into action when a thug chasing a bad debt threatens to kidnap her son, she takes on aspects of her husband's operation. In so doing she adopts the conflicted status of a protagonist engaging in the unvirtuous deeds of drug trafficking for purposes nonetheless invested as highly virtuous in the world of the film (protecting her family). This ambiguous relation to the terms of national authority is encapsulated humorously when she takes a tray of lemonade out to a van outside her house in which undercover DEA officers are busy monitoring for any signs of illicit activity. She asks them politely if they could keep an eye out for any signs of danger to her children, constituting herself, momentarily, as a proper beneficiary of, rather than threat to, national protection.

The racial coding of Helena and her family is ambiguous, to say the least. The DEA cops monitoring the case are excited at the prospect of getting 'the top people, the rich people, the *white* people!' But Helena distinguishes herself to her friends as 'European' at the start of the film, and her darker features (she is played by Catherine Zeta-Jones) and those of her husband, Carlos (played by Steven Bauer), produce some dissonance on this count. Their character names are marked as exotic, if not specifically Hispanic. Their surname, Ayala, is distinctly shady. On the logic of faciality, there are 'only people who should be like us and whose crime it is not to be'.¹⁹ Though devoted to the comfortable family form, these characters are disqualified from whiteness, it would seem, on the basis of their morally suspect involvement in trafficking. They are, in short, not-yet-quite-white.

The drug trade is used to figure Helena's displacement as a strong but palpably vulnerable woman moving in public (albeit criminal), male space. The ambiguous implications of her mission are stressed further by her situation as a mother carrying a foetus. In Mexico, she reveals to accomplices details of a plan called 'Project for the Children', an operation in which children's toys are to be fabricated entirely from high-grade cocaine in order to escape detection at the border. Here Helena is made to *embody* the incompatibility of the domains of parenting and drugs when she risks losing the deal by refusing—on account of being pregnant—to engage in the ritual of testing the drugs that she produces. If Helena's performance as heroic parent shores up her moral status in the film, this status is compromised by the corrupt 'Project for the Children' the film codes as located in the very substance of the traffic in which she trades (kiddies' toys composed insidiously of cocaine). Here her 'mother's



Caroline caught using drugs, *Traffic*. © 2000, International Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

instincts' are shown to override the risks of this most repugnant and unauthorised of trades. But these parents' project for their own children cannot ultimately be evaluated without reference to the generic category of 'children' that their project is deemed as affecting.

Who are these endangered children? The answer the film gives is Caroline, an 'entirely specific' child, which does not preclude her from 'acquiring and exercising the most general of functions'.²⁰ Caroline is the uniform image of life that drugs are shown to endanger. Caught using drugs in her bathroom, she swings round to face her father proclaiming 'fuck you!' in adult, guttural tones that recall her altogether more abject predecessor Regan from *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973). *Traffic's* overall remedy is not exorcism, if exorcism is understood as expulsion of the abject other, but rather the implementation of a wavering zone of control, the ferocious intimacy of a precious resource—'face-time'—that considers all difference amenable to a self-assured uniform standard in order to turn away from a strife-ridden public sphere. So when Caroline is confronted with her father's authority in this scene what we end up seeing, as her father cleans out the bathroom, is the volatile labour of incorporation: her face, gaping, stunned and staggering, propagating 'waves of sameness until those who resist identification have been wiped out',²¹ reeling in the process of trying to absorb or reject the multiple divergences from her type encoded, by the film, in the sign of drugs.

Traffic is used to grade families and families are used to guard against traffic in a referential system in which traffic also stands for the perceived dangers and futility of managing a

society in which everything is not ultimately the same. The gendered dimensions of this picture are apparent in its complex siting of vulnerability, in which *the child* is exposed, through parental neglect, to the same hazardous excesses of the contemporary world that prevent *the mother* from being able to competently or safely carry out her duty to defend her child.²² Enter Dad. Within a terrain viewed as teeming with radical, perilous, (but ultimately assimilable) differences, a trope of protection is brought into being that designates racial, economic, and sexual order by confining them to the privileged terms of white nuclear space. Dad's face ciphers and stands in for the face of the nation, the president, the bosom of the White House, all of whose presence is otherwise elusive in the accelerating rush of traffic.

— DOMESTICATING CONSUMPTION

In our cities, girls as young as 14 sell sex for as little as \$10 to buy drugs from Asian gangs.

Pauline Hanson²³

So far we have examined the availability of the trope of drugs to a privatising logic of national morality. The protective authoritarianism drugs are thought to call for is easily transplanted from state to family, leaving a rubble of bureaucratic bungling, squandered funds, and undue anguish and violence as evidence for the rightness of this path. But I have also tried to illustrate the fears and desires that animate this narrative, fears of the loss of security and control over the hope of the nation. If Caroline embodies a national character exposed to the control of unfamiliar and alien forces, the story engenders desire for a basic moral alignment that has little time for the historical disparities and economic conditions that produce the misfortunes of the present.

Instead, hopes for social repair are pinned on a fragile and luminous reserve that can be elaborated on the notion of 'face-time'. It connotes access to a pure empathic immediacy and authentic humanity capable of restoring moral order and accommodating difference within a mutually legible system of value. The word 'face' evokes a sense of intimacy, suggesting the extracurricular terms of the private sphere, whereas 'time' implies a fraught relation and potential availability to an economy of labour, indicating a competitive relation with, or subjection to, labour time. Face-time must be slotted in, scheduled wherever possible, to do the work of relational maintenance and social repair in a world viewed as increasingly abstract and abstracting. It holds out for a realm of transparent contact and unmediated exchange where the self and its desires are plainly apparent, decipherable and soluble. In fact, face-time never materialises in the film. Instead, it is suspended tantalisingly, endlessly deferred as a pledge—'to listen'—offering a disingenuous alternative to the political.

Feminists have highlighted the ambiguous status of women's domestic work, and shown how this sort of affective labour is usually relegated to operating *outside* the scope of public transactions, as their necessary but unaccounted pre requisite. But here we have the allocation of this form of intimate labour to the male 'head-of-household' and its invocation even in relations between members of public office. Perhaps face-time is not a private matter, after all. Perhaps it connotes face-to-face communication, the rational-critical paradigm of public discourse? In fact, face-time indicates a merger of these domains in the national imaginary.²⁴ Now that the dangers, pleasures and disruptions of the world of exchange are seen to cut across national and traditional borders in ways that apparently escape the state's control, the labour of recognising and commanding an original, transparent humanity at the base of social transaction assumes increased responsibility and exercises increased force. In *Traffic*, Barbara Wakefield's provision of mother-to-daughter face-time has, by implication, fallen short. Robert Wakefield's assumption of the job only indicates the increased force such a function is expected to exercise when the state is cast as incapable of fulfilling the role of securing order. An authoritative instatement of the national-family form is hoped to domesticate all exchange and consumption.

But there is an interesting slippage here. Though it is generally *the market* that requires the separation of wage-earners from their dependents, giving rise to circumstances presumed to breed habits such as Caroline's, the offending preoccupation in *Traffic* is identified only, a priori, as 'drugs'. It is drugs as a problem for the nation-state that demands Robert Wakefield's attention and separation from his family. Elided from this picture is the way market forces play into the family's deterioration. Instead, 'drugs' are posed as the conveniently blameworthy substitute. Next, *family* is prescribed as antidote to the unsatisfactory conditions and unhappy outcomes of deteriorating domestic relations. While *drugs* are constructed as the primary nuisance to families, only *families*, in their pure and natural form, can protect against drugs. Families become, in the manner of an infinite regress, both poison and cure—a *pharmakon* of their own—leaving economics uninterrogated.

In this way drugs take on the vague but sweeping symbolic status of that which is felt to be lacking in the present constitution of the nation, acting, in William Connolly's words, as a container for 'diffuse feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and resentment'.²⁵ As Connolly observes, the specific valences of the 'war on drugs'—what it represents and for whom—can change according to cultural variations in the lived experience of insecurity, danger and displeasure. Among these, he points to the threat of racial violence on the street, the shifting ethnic composition of the population, the loss of work and economic prospects (as projected onto women and minorities thought to have stolen them), the inability of the state to control the effects of economic change, and the rapid pace of cultural shifts in general. Encap-

sulating the negative affects linked to these concrete experiences of globalisation is the particular achievement of the political deployment of drugs. And as a subcategory of the media theme of 'law and order', drugs enjoy a further capacity to scare people into increased support for authoritarian measures and styles of government.

This dynamic is entirely pertinent in the Australian context. The revelation cited at the beginning of this section, in which young girls' sexuality provides the stage for a worrisome drama of declining white cultural dominion over the future of the nation, was penned by the leader of the One Nation party. As significant, in this image, as the icon of a compromised will vulnerable to foreign control, was the \$10 price tag. Hanson's subjects weren't just morally imperilled—they were getting *ripped off* in the process. Buoyed by a tide of economic protectionist, anti-immigration and national-racist sentiment, this extremist party achieved a considerable measure of cultural and political power by stirring economic and cultural disaffection among Anglo- (or 'middle') Australians.²⁶ And yet Hanson was not nearly as successful as her symbolic heir, Prime Minister John Howard, in directing these reactionary sentiments to the purpose of producing a pervasive, suspicious insularity, achieved by floating the ideal of the nuclear family, and thus characterising domestic space. Howard's discourse managed to inflect the space and time of citizens' ambit of agency in such a way that the familial home came to offer the symbolic protection you have when you *don't* have economic protectionism. I am interested in how drugs featured in this process.

But first, it may help to elaborate further the way drugs are enlisted to refigure the terrain of the economic, by making reference to the notion of the fetish, psychoanalytically conceived. In this story, the fetish is a defensive mechanism adopted by the male subject to deal with the sight of his penis-less mother. In response to the fear of castration this sight is thought to provoke, the young male libidinally invests in another object, which must operate, ever-tenuously, as a substitute phallus. Tenuously, because the subject knows and does not know that the fetish is a mere substitute. The investment flickers tentatively between knowledge and belief, 'haunted by the fragility of the mechanisms that sustain it'.²⁷ Without wishing to apply this story at any individual psychosexual level, I believe it provides a way of imagining the political operation of drugs discussed here, and the concomitant symbolic and material investment in the family. If drugs operate, as I have argued, to trope a distressing lack in the present tense of globalisation, the cultural fetish they provoke is, by virtue of a well-trodden history of associations, the nuclear-family-in-the-home. And, like the fetish, this figure must steep itself in elaborate fictions, contrivances and massive proportions of wishful energy if it is to adequately fulfil this function. To the liberal imagination, shoring up the safe haven of the home space is an entirely reasonable way of resisting a hazardous, unpredictable and messy outside. What is not visible from this perspective is the way the

family gets invested in this process: as a narrow pedagogical apparatus; an intensified site of responsibility and blame; a pressurised thing that comes to bear more and more of the charge of social harmony in conditions that actively disrupt it.

As though to confirm the existence of these compensatory and circular attachments comes the Australian National Drugs Campaign of 2001. Accompanying the booklet that proposed families as the strongest defence against the drug problem came a series of linked TV ads, which achieved some mention in the critical literature, most notably in Guy Rundle's analysis of John Howard's prime ministership. As Rundle described:

The first part of the campaign featured a couple of grungy scenes—a teenage girl in a dingy room prostituting herself for money to buy drugs, a boy being zipped up into a bodybag ... Still more bizarre was the follow-up campaign in which we saw a couple of seconds of the first ad, which then pulled back to reveal a family watching the ad and discussing the dangers of drugs, which pulled back to reveal another family discussing the family discussing the first ad which then ... and so on in eternal recession.²⁸

Rundle laughs the first ad off—'pure Fassbinder ... practically a marketing campaign for the lifestyle'—but I want to take its animation of parental fear more seriously.²⁹ Piping over its images of everyday despair—teenage prostitution, petty crime, a mother–daughter tussle and an overdose—come the wavering voices of children telling us what they want(ed) to be when they grow up.³⁰ A mournful register is mustered to depict futures that might have been. The goals are not extravagant: an English teacher, a mother, a fireman, a restaurant owner. But as these modest dreams come into articulation with drugs, a disembodied chorus of personal aspirations is offered as compensation for the visual spectacle of disgust, poverty and despair.

It may be stating the obvious to say that this text mimics and organises a broader sense of cultural nostalgia and loss. Still, its fictive devices remain worth highlighting. These are, after all, not the self-same voices of the figures depicted visually as degraded or deceased, but fabricated voices speculating what these figures might have become at some point in the future which coincides with (and dramatically offsets) the visually represented time. Though they acquire a disembodied, transcendent quality—hovering somewhere beyond these images—these voices are performing a thoroughly immanent textual function. They configure a perspective on the present that is continually conditioned by the retrospective, reconstructed hope of a future imagined as lost.

These are the voices of personal aspiration. If Caroline's and Helena's stories in *Traffic* foreground the prominence of the theme of social mobility in contemporary drug narratives, the title of this ad, 'Lost Dreams', and that of contemporaneous texts such as 'Requiem for a Dream' confirms it. The loss of dreams, understood as aspirations and ambitions for the

future, is one of the primary motifs here. Drugs are portrayed as a calamitous deviation whose principal effect is to endanger, if not obliterate, the realisation of personal hopes and dreams. But what is particularly interesting about this genre is how it reconvenes the wound at the base of this desire. Drugs hover as an always-present possibility of future despair, necessitating prudence. In the process, even the most self-righteous forms of greed become indistinguishable from the most modest and unassuming of anxieties: desire for a stable job, a sense of ontological security. The mobilisation of disgust in these texts, which is associated with particular embodiments of taste, and thus of class and class mobility, is also relevant here.³¹ If the source of the drug problem, in these stories, is an infirmity lodged deep within the moral fibre of the individual, the dreams that have become impossible as a result, and are thus supposed to have been lost, take on the character of a haunting reminder of what could have been, coming to exhaust, with grievous dominance, the conditionality of the present. An aggrieved posture is promoted to commemorate the *propriety* of personal aspirations.

The appearance of this theme in drug texts suggests the significance of a sense of endangerment for this conception of future life: the reactive and reactivated underbelly of ‘all that’s modern, forward-thinking, and entrepreneurial about Australian society’.³² The appearance of the ‘aspirational voter’ served to bolster the claim that policies vouchsafing private provision, rather than redistribution, had most chance of popular support (or at least, the type of popular support that counts). At the time, left commentators pointed out that aspiration ‘is just another word for hope’. Tom Morton wrote that ‘aspirational politics assumes that our hopes are purely private hopes’, aligning a particular set of interests and desires with the national interest, and thereby embodying a very particular ‘distribution of hope’.³³ The drug campaign micro-manages this redistribution of hope in its own small way by offering an alternative sense of security than that associated with the welfare state. Markers of national unity take on a heightened significance in this context, as Ghassan Hage has argued, because disadvantaged populations must cling to the idea that “national identity” is bound to be a passport of hope for them’.³⁴ The last boy wants to play soccer for Australia, we learn, as his body is zipped up into a body bag.³⁵ His humbly added ‘if I’m good enough’ cleaves individual determination to moral intent, suggesting it is as much the possession of a national dream, as the plausibility of the dream itself, that qualifies one as a candidate for this expression of national sentiment. One by one, each image is transferred away from the political, materialising as a question of individual determination and moral intent. In a curious funnelling motion, this works to install an insulated view of the future, in which the scope of citizen agency is reduced to narrow proprietary terms.

Whatever disturbances the first ad arouses—the flickers of fear, disgust, grief, nostalgia and excitement—can take refuge in the slim shreds of hope it offers, a mode of hope that

is produced as innocent enough, personal, and constitutively endangered. But if this is not enough, the second ad provides an elaborate model for channelling and domesticating these unsettling affects with its vision of homely security and family togetherness. This ad performs a didactic function in relation to the first, with an abysmal image of a nation bound only by homes, televisions and families. Here we are introduced once more to the authoritarian but tender parent, capable of impersonating the state. Her first appearance has her calming her daughter, who is upset watching the initial TV ad (described above) alone in her room. As in *Traffic*, where the privacy of Caroline's bathroom is constructed as a place of suspicion and possible youthful deviance, the placement of the television in the girl's room is rendered ever-so-slightly problematic: a source of disturbance and likely confusion requiring the general guidance a good parent can provide. The parent engages her daughter in a discussion about drugs and, instantaneously, the scene is funnelled into television. Now, the parent is the father of an Asian–Australian family, watching this same scene with his two children in their suburban living room. Given the connection in the white Australian psyche between 'Asian' gangs and drugs, the family's ethnicity is marked; but here we are presented with the reassuring image of this ever-suspect ethnicity domesticating itself (in a way that *Traffic's* Ayala family never quite succeeds in doing). This expression of ethnicity is contained—suburban, familiar and homely—not extended, street-based, or altogether strange. The father asks his son about how he would approach an offer of drugs, and suddenly they too are whisked onto TV, suitable viewing for a family of four in a big country house. Our new set of parents' skilled efforts at turning their son's prying questions into an opportunity for instruction are similarly siphoned into the dumpier living room of a family of four, whose respective intent to find out more about the best ways to talk to their children is followed by a brief promotion of the campaign booklet. In the concluding scene, we watch a final Mum tending to breakfast in a smart kitchen. The camera follows her before stopping to linger on Dad and son, who are starting their day watching the TV promotion for the booklet while eating breakfast at the kitchen table (on which more later). As Mum leaves the frame, Dad says, 'we should read that'; and his son agrees straightforwardly, unhesitatingly.

This extraordinary piece of social marketing activates the postwar construction of the TV as a symbol of family 'togetherness', so as to convert, in gradual stages, a potentially uncomfortable and awkward mother–daughter situation into a blueprint for unaffected paternal instruction and agreement. The image of families huddled together around TV sets bears traces of 1950s discourses, whose suggestion that TV would bring families closer together, itself a spatial metaphor, contained the conviction that solutions to domestic discord were available through the skilful organisation of space.³⁶ Thus, a scene of teenage exposure and isolation is ameliorated progressively, finally perfected, via a series of corresponding

situations, at the morning kitchen table. Contrasting starkly with the harsh, abject scenes of the counterpart ad (a hotel room, a public toilet, a shattered household, and a street at night), the ad also binds itself intimately into the production and allocation of comfortable space. The harsher scenes of the first ad form a constitutive 'outside' that works to produce the homely imaginary woven here. We can see here traces of the 'hypodermic model' of media effects, whose concern with mass brainwashing extended to the effects of violence on TV. The disturbing effects of media were supposed to enjoin special efforts on the part of parents to supervise their children's consuming habits. The instruction here for parents to talk to their children about drugs thus becomes a plea for them to domesticate consumption *in general*, with no apparent recognition of the fact that the state has actually *produced* the first ad that it shows parents ameliorating with such exemplarity in the second! The niggling anxiety underscoring the campaign as a whole, then, is that the media does *not*, as this discourse would have it, 'reduce everybody to one drugged faceless consumer'—hence the parental enlistment of the second ad to that purpose.³⁷ And while it may be that, if presumed effective, this attempt at crude social engineering belies at least some degree of confidence in the 'hypodermic model' of reception it admonishes, the effectiveness of the campaign does not lie so much in the way it manages to dupe its consumers. Rather, it lies in its aptitude for touching and arousing tangible fears—of family break-up or tragedy, crime, theft, attack or loss of scarce property—'and since it promulgates no other remedies for their underlying causes, it welds people to that "need for authority" which has been so significant for the right in the construction of consent to its authoritarian programme'.³⁸

Such authority is portrayed as securable with/in the family, in particular, the masculine embodiment of home command. But family is also, in this appellation, a highly leveraged product. Guy Rundle is quick to observe the emphasis here on 'training families to behave as families, as if they could no longer be trusted to perform that duty without prompting'.³⁹

The idealised social relationship between the family and the state was thus reversed: instead of the family being the ground of society upon which the state and law rested, the family was reconstructed as an arm of the state, to whom was subcontracted the role of shaping the behaviour of the young, in a manner scripted by professionals.⁴⁰

Here, 'the parent' attains the status of 'the new virtuous category of majority', as Lauren Berlant puts it.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the uniform arrangement of national-domestic space—figured to consist entirely of families around televisions in homes, drawn together against a hostile and threatening outside—directs attention toward subtle gradations of affluence and respectability among them, enabling a practice of incremental comparison to take place. Relations based on alternate bonds—ethnicity, sexuality, class, friendship—are disregarded

in favour of an axis of familiar-national aspiration. A grid of nuclear homes conjoined by mass media is what it must take to make the nation a home in this vision of domesticating consumption.

Before proceeding, it's worth considering how this coding of domestic space played out in the political unconscious of the 2001 Australian federal election. The appearance of a \$27.5 million dollar initiative as part of the Liberal Party's re-election campaign 'to develop and introduce retractable needles and syringes to protect the public from needle-stick injury leading to HIV infection' was perhaps the most minor of its material ramifications: 'Many parents of young children, whose great fear when their children are out playing in the park or on the beach are [sic] needles, will welcome this initiative very warmly', Howard was quoted as saying, without noting the complete absence to date of any reported instances of infection in Australia by these means.⁴² Parents and their charges were taken to coincide with 'the public' at the expense of other, more pertinent subjects. But there were further, more oblique traces of this broad shift in the national-cultural constitution at this time. While opposition leader Kim Beazley made a point of campaigning steadfastly on 'domestic' issues—health, jobs and education—Howard had already characterised domestic space in terms conducive to his cultural program, leaving the opposition to play hopelessly to his cultural specifications. Amplified by the threats thought to be posed to national security by Tampa and September 11, the election saw Howard campaigning on 'certainty, leadership, and strength', a situation that involved a bizarre gendering of the electorate, in which the perceived 'strength' of the candidates was endlessly calculated, Howard touted as 'Iron Johnny' and the 'Ladies Man'—'Women will see Howard home'.⁴³ If the Tampa affair was, as some commentators observed, experienced by many as a law-and-order issue—court cases involving gang rapes by men of 'Middle Eastern' background dominated tabloid newspapers and talkback radio well before the Tampa incident—it also illustrated the changed terms of national racism. While racial prejudice undoubtedly coloured popular attitudes to the asylum seekers, it is significant that race itself was not the explicit basis of exclusionary rhetoric. Rather, the asylum seekers' deficit of national belonging was publicised in the highly fabricated terms of their moral status as *parents*. Photographs suggesting that children had been thrown overboard were used by the government to propagate the view that the asylum seekers were unsuitable, too inhuman, in fact, to become part of the Australian community. This ground of exclusion carried all the more significance given that the category of 'economic refugee' (the 'non-genuine' asylum seeker) might otherwise be considered the aspirational subject *par excellence*.

After a desperate last-minute dash on the eve of the election on Beazley's part to get through to 'the kitchen table of the average Australian family'⁴⁴ 'where ordinary Australians are doing it tough',⁴⁵ newspapers announced Howard's victory by proclaiming: 'Suburbs make a fellow

feel at home’;⁴⁶ a motif anticipated some weeks earlier in Paul Kelly’s ‘When Johnny comes marching home’.⁴⁷ In the aftermath of the election, Beazley was left to ponder the key to re-establishing social unity, which, he proposed, in remarkably acquiescent imagery, was to look ‘to security in the hearts and minds of those around the kitchen table’.⁴⁸ ‘We have looked down through the fog of war to the kitchen table of the average Australian family ... We’ve listened to their hopes and their dreams.’⁴⁹

My suggestion is that this kitchen table is the very same piece of national-symbolic furniture assigned the task of resolving our *mise-en-abyme* of drugs, families, homes and TVs. As a scene of national aspiration and civil correspondence, it ‘neutralizes in advance any expressions or connections unamenable to the appropriate significations’.⁵⁰ Its mood of homely readiness and seemingly natural demarcation of gender roles; its no-nonsense configuration of paternal dictation and parental guidance; its appeal to the ‘middle Australia’ it actually functions to constitute, and its transcendence of other forms of social affiliation: these aspects combine to provide an exemplar of domesticated consumption and civil coincidence in the Australian present tense, one that is continually reproduced and naturalised by drugs and other fear-inducing tropes on ‘outside’ space. But this iconic scene of national action and affiliation does a great disservice to the ‘ordinary Australians’ it tries to woo, not only by foreclosing and depreciating other forms of social and political relation, or by transmitting a collective temperament of suspicious insularity, but also because of the complacency inherent in its tendency to refer the challenges of globalisation back onto this fetishised and over-invested form. Just as feminist critics of psychoanalysis advise against confusing the penis with the phallus, it is worth recalling at this point that drugs do not equate with the social dangers that economic injustices engender; nor is ‘the family’ a sole, fair or sufficient way of coping with them.⁵¹

— ASPIRATION DEPENDENCY: ‘TELL HIM HE’S DREAMING!’⁵²

Australian critics and commentators have become fond of identifying sexual politics with market forces. On this view, the sexual revolution destroyed the family; thus feminists and queers appear as willing accomplices in a consumerist agenda that whittles away any remaining defences against global capital—the family appearing as the last unit separating the individual from the market, the last bastion of human intimacy and community.⁵³ As I have argued elsewhere, the consumer context has certainly shaped the politics of identity in crucial ways. But this left-conservative attitude profoundly mistakes the shape of contemporary power. In particular, it misses the ways in which the family itself has become subject to a politico-cultural commodity fetish. Frankfurt School theorists have described how in modern societies the commodity is invested with the hope of overcoming the alienated condition, only to wrench human relations further apart and condemn the consumer to a perpetual

re-creation of frustration'.⁵⁴ This dynamic features potently in these images of domesticated consumption, where the family appears to be embedded in an endlessly self-referential recursive structure, almost despite itself.

In *Requiem for a Dream*, Sara, a lonely widow, gets wrapped up in idea of being on TV when she receives a canvassing call from her favourite game show. In a moment of excitement and nostalgia, she vows to wear the red dress she wore to her son Harry's graduation: a relic of family togetherness and pride. But she finds she's too big to fit into the red dress. She begins a cycle of dieting, and soon finds herself embroiled in a vexing battle of wills with her refrigerator. With her doctor's prescription, she enlists the help of diet pills, which thrillingly propel her one small step along her arc of self-realisation. But the game show doesn't call, and soon the pills stop delivering the same giddy sense of momentum and accomplishment. With her hopes pinned on a call from the show, her feelings of remorse and loneliness grow. The longer her dream fails to materialise, the more her obsession to manifest this token of past togetherness intensifies. In desperation, she ups the dose of her diet pills, and on the story speeds to a harrowing and horrific conclusion.

One of the agonising features of this narrative is the individualising force of Sara's desire. Although she initially involves others in her project, she neglects and eventually rejects the company of a large group of friends in her block (other elderly widows) as relevant to her situation, declaring, simply, 'it's not the same!' The focal effect of her desire—to lose weight to fit into the red dress to be on the game show to mimic an earlier moment of happiness and togetherness—pulls her further and further away from any exploration or enjoyment of these proximate and potential relations. It is as though the image of the dream becomes so consuming that it obliterates any real chance of approximating the happiness it so rigidly represents. Instead it comes to assume the character of a haunting reminder of what could have been, magnifying the isolation of her present situation and acquiring a disastrous and amplifying productivity of its own.

The TV works again in the film as a glorified symbol of family togetherness. But *Requiem* manages to stage this glorification, revealing its character as a fetishised referent for a form of hope that is vigorously deferred. The abysmal nature of this bind is played out in the opening credits, where Sara's son, Harry, is shown trying to convince his mother to unlock the TV, which is secured against thieves, or so she claims. Next, Harry and his friend are shown dragging the TV across a desolated landscape of pure recreation, Coney Island, before pawning it for money to buy drugs. Later, Sara is pictured buying the TV back from the pawn shop; a regular occurrence, we are given to believe. Set in an economy that depends for its continuance upon the radiation and atomisation of insatiable desires, it is as though the moment Sara places her faith in the family as a haven of trust and security (by unlocking

the TV), she is forced to meet the costs of her naïve but indispensable belief; something she is prepared and even eager to do, if only to take refuge in its simulated and ever-receding promise of satisfaction and comfort.

In their analysis of urban change in Western Sydney,⁵⁵ urban geographers Brendan Gleeson and Bill Randolph track the purported ‘movement of young families and retired people from troubled neighbourhoods to the relative stability of the urban fringe’ denoted by the term ‘aspirational’.⁵⁶ As they explain, the progressive erosion of public resources in the West, such as transport, hospitals and schools, has raised the appeal of various forms of escape. For some, this entails investment, often under considerable financial pressure, in the ‘pleasures of order, homogeneity, and amenity’ that appear to be offered by the ‘security communities’ located on the urban fringe.⁵⁷ For others, it involves the forms of escape and profit represented by the market in drugs and other illicit commodities. Drugs and crime certainly top the list of popular concerns in this region. They seem to encapsulate the experience and apprehension of a progressively degraded public landscape. But, as Gleeson and Randolph demonstrate, the idealised enclaves of family and home that appear to ‘the more affluent and the more anxious’ as viable alternatives to this landscape do not represent a progressive relinquishing of dependence on the state, as many assume. ‘Far from being simple testimonies to the rewards for individual effort and thrift, these “landscapes of self-reliance” are in fact heavily dependent upon public subsidies and public endeavour for their creation and maintenance.’⁵⁸ They are the outcome, that is, of public subsidisation of private ways of life in the form of state subsidisation of first home ownership, and various other private schemes and tax-cuts. The term the authors coin for this phenomenon is ‘aspiration dependency’:

From a societal perspective, aspiration dependency is an expensive habit that is difficult to break by political means. Once hooked on subsidies, affluent households are not likely to support policies that support a more egalitarian and sustainable distribution of social resources and life opportunities.⁵⁹

Requiem for a Dream maps this geography of addiction in psychic terms. In an hallucinatory and terrifying development, the characters and machinery of the game show Sara idolises suddenly burst out of the TV and force their way into her living room. As well as throwing the poverty of her actual circumstances into sharp and taunting relief, this exposes in lurid detail all the paraphernalia and multiple intrusive contraptions it takes to sustain the fetishised illusion of her desire. The elaborate mechanisms sustaining the romantic investment in ‘family’ intrude here with such force and volume that Sara, plainly mad, is driven out of her home. *Requiem for a Dream* provides little insight into how we might realise the

shared basis of embodied existence. But in a language that our public fear-mongers understand only too well, it conveys the perils of suspicious domesticity.

The author wishes to thank Roslayn Diprose and Helen Keane for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

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1. Michel Foucault, 'The Birth of Biopolitics', in *Ethics: The Essential Works*, ed. Paul Rabinow, Penguin, London, 1994.
 2. Paola Totaro, 'Drug Campaign Not Hard Line Enough for PM', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 July 2000.
 3. Craig McGregor, 'High Hopes', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 July 2002.
 4. Paul Kelly, 'When Johnny Comes Marching Home', *Weekend Australian*, 27 October 2001.
 5. Anna Gibbs, 'Contagious Feelings: Pauline Hanson and the Epidemiology of Affect', *Australian Humanities Review*, December 2001.
 6. The indictment to be 'alert, not alarmed' appeared on the front of a booklet mailed, like the drug campaign discussed below, to every home in Australia as part of a Commonwealth government initiative to conduct education on terrorism in response to the September 11 attacks.
 7. Avital Ronell, *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1992, p. 51.
 8. Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1997, p. 25.
 9. Annie Cot has argued that the expansion of market logic made in the name of Chicago school economics into domains once considered non-economic (family and private space) invokes a fantasy figure whose function it is to reconcile love and money. The tender despot, as head of household, is invested with the task of satisfying the paternalistic nostalgia occasioned by the disintegration of the welfare state. As Cot argues, this fantasy permits an evasion of political responsibility for the social disorder caused by the restructuring of capital. Annie Cot, 'Neoconservative Economics, Utopia and Crisis', *Zone*, no. 1/2 (n.d). See the discussion in Meaghan Morris, *Too Soon, Too Late: History in Popular Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1998, 183–5.
 10. To expand slightly on the video-cover blurb: Robert Wakefield, the new Drug Czar, struggles to divide his energies between the enormity of his office and his daughter Caroline's drug habit; Helena, the 'trophy wife' of a wealthy but imprisoned drug dealer, confronts danger as she becomes involved in her husband's business in order to secure her family's future; a Mexican policeman, Javier, has his principles tested when he discovers the corruption of the General for whom he works; and, while attempting to protect a witness, undercover DEA cops Montel and Ray come up against the magnitude and seeming futility of their role in the 'war on drugs'.
 11. The expression is from Berlant, *Queen of America*. She writes:

in the reactionary culture of imperiled privilege, the nation's value is figured not on behalf of an actually existing and laboring adult, but of a future American, both incipient and pre-historical ... not yet bruised by history: not yet caught up in the processes of secularization and sexualization; not yet caught in the confusing and exciting identity exchanges made possible by mass consumption and ethnic, racial and sexual mixing; not yet tainted by money or war. (6)
 12. One of *Traffic's* most effective filmic devices is to conjoin diegetically discrete plots by joining them sequentially in one shot or thematic phrase. The

- effect is to emphasise the compression of (what are depicted as) radically incongruent worlds.
13. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Althone, London, 1988.
 14. Patricia MacCormack, 'Faciality', <<http://www.women.it/cyberarchive/>> (accessed October 2002).
 15. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 178.
 16. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 178.
 17. The suggestion is that this virtuously Northern cultural activity will reduce Mexican youths' chances of getting involved in the drug trade. In the final moments of the film, this specific form of hope and identification is again projected onto North America's poor Latin cousins: Javier watching a baseball game in Tijuana at night.
 18. On the notion of racial-national capital and white aspiration, see Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 2000.
 19. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 178.
 20. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 176.
 21. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 178.
 22. The need for masculine authority is naturalised in the world of the film. Examples are Helena's competent but imperiled movement through the world of crime, and Barbara Wakefield's chequered campus past and implied incapability of controlling Caroline.
 23. From her manifesto, 'The Truth', 1996, cited in Hage.
 24. Berlant calls this 'the intimate public sphere'.
 25. Connolly, 'Drugs, the Nation, and Freelancing', p. 184.
 26. This took the (not uncommon) form of linking the lived experience of economic hardship caused by neoliberal economic restructuring to the left-wing cultural and social reforms of previous governments. For astute analyses of this political culture see Hage; Meaghan Morris, '“Please Explain?” Ignorance, Poverty and the Past', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2000; Morris, *Too Soon Too Late*, pp. 158–94, 219–34.
 27. Laura Mulvey, 'Some Thoughts on Theories of Fetishism in the Context of Contemporary Culture', no. 65, October 1993, p. 7.
 28. Guy Rundle, 'The Opportunist: John Howard and the Triumph of Reaction', *Quarterly Essay*, no. 3, 2001, pp. 41–2.
 29. Rundle, p. 41.
 30. The opening image of this ad, which shows a close-up of a young woman's face, upended, seems to have been lifted directly from the 'Desdemona' scene in *Traffic*, described above. The intimation of vulnerability and promise gone wayward seems to have been particularly poignant for both cultural imaginaries.
 31. Questions of taste, embodiment and class have been considered in Laura Kipnis, '(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading Hustler', in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler (eds), *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York, 1992.
 32. Tom Morton, 'ALP Must Pin Its Future on a Redistribution of Hope', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 November 2001.
 33. Morton, 'Redistribution of Hope.'
 34. Ghassan Hage, 'The Incredible Shrinking Society', *Financial Review*, 7 September 2001. This alignment seems evident in the aspiring goals of the bodiless voices: an English teacher, a mother, a fireman, a restaurant-owner. A common language, a role for the parent, a state for emergency, and a place for small business: the key constituents of familiar ideologies of national unity and security.
 35. A remarkably safe choice, given the national obsession with a more aggressive form of 'football', rugby.
 36. Lynn Spigel describes how in 1950s TV discourse solutions to domestic problems were posed in overwhelmingly spatial terms. 'Where should you put the television set?' was a central concern. Lynn Spigel, 'Television in the Family Circle: The Popular Reception of a New Medium', in Patricia Mellencamp (ed.), *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1990.
 37. Lawrence Alloway, quoted in Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, Routledge, New York, 1989, p. 148.
 38. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, Verso, London, p. 55.
 39. Rundle, p. 42.
 40. Rundle, p. 42.
 41. Berlant, p. 76.
 42. Tom Allard, 'Labor's Stance on Illegal Drugs Will Cost Lives: Howard', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 2001.
 43. Fia Cumming, 'Women Will See Howard Home', *Sun Herald*, 4 November 2001. This story was accompanied by a feature in the Sunday magazine profiling Ms Average: 'Meet Ms Average: Size 14, 30 something, a mum, a worker, a wife ... Politicians take note: this is the woman you need to win over'. Maree Curtis, 'Ms Average', *Sunday Magazine*, 4 November 2001.
 44. Mike Secombe, 'Bowing out, with an Appeal for Unity', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 November 2001.
 45. Michelle Grattan, 'One Last Plea from the Man Who Would Be Kim', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 2001.

46. Tom Allard, 'Suburbs Make a Fellow Feel at Home', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 November 2001.
47. Kelly.
48. Seccombe.
49. Seccombe.
50. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 168.
51. As I write, families are conscripted once more, this time at the other end of the *pharmakon*. With a New South Wales election looming, their fragility is foregrounded with the hope of binding voters to the purportedly stable prospect of continued Labor rule. Once again, this campaign provides faces to latch on to, promising instant relief from the shared sense of alienation from the operations of postmodern government. An attractive young policewoman flashes across prime-time TV screens, arousing and absorbing nebulous fears, channelling their expression by presenting another cut-and-dry formula for virtuous citizen action. 'People who deal in illicit drugs are destroying families. We've all got families we want to protect so please, help us get these dealers.' An intense close-up musters the reassuring intimacy and ostensible immediacy of face-time: 'I've seen the damage these people cause, and I feel it's time to speak up'. The missing segments of a suspect's dark identikit face materialise slowly on the screen, and I find myself wondering, where have I heard that compelling appeal to immediacy, conveyed in a tone of disenfranchised injury, before? A copy of this campaign can be viewed at <<http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/drug-information/drug-information.cfm>>, accessed November 2003. On the affect of the televisual mediation of Pauline Hanson's face see Gibbs.
52. I've taken this phrase from the quintessential filmic allegory of the Australian home, *The Castle* (Sitch, 1997). See Fiona Allon's incisive critique: 'Nostalgia Unbound: Illegibility and the Synthetic Excess of Place', *Continuum*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2000.
53. A recent example can be found in Clive Hamilton, 'Pomography's Unholy Alliance', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 2003.
54. John Clarke, *New Times and Old Enemies: Essays on Cultural Studies and America*, Harper Collins, London, 1991, p. 79.
55. Brendan Gleeson and Bill Randolph, 'A New Vision for WestemSydney: Options for 21st Century Governance', Urban Frontiers Program, University of WestemSydney, 2002.
56. The analysis is Mark Latham's, quoted in Anne Davies, 'Latham Warns Labor to Hitch Itself to the New Outwardly Mobile Voter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 March 2002.
57. Gleeson and Randolph, p. 21.
58. Gleeson and Randolph, p. 21. By keeping the focus on the public investment of resources, the authors manage to avoid the cynical diagnosis of 'white flight' offered by Latham, above, without neglecting the fact that the experience of disadvantage and despair in this region is, of course, racially marked and inflected by the forms of socio-economic exclusion encompassed in the experiences of (im)migrancy and class. Recently, this dynamic has been compounded by an insidious form of political positivism in the form of criminological studies that seek to collect statistics to ascertain whether patterns of crime 'really are' racially marked, and map people's *perceptions* of fear and safety (rather than the actual experience of crime) in areas targeted for gentrification and 'clean up' initiatives—such as Kings Cross in Sydney.
59. Gleeson and Randolph, p. 25.