

Luhmann, Susanne

## **Pedagogies of displacement. On playing Indian, Gypsy romanticism, and growing up queer**

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# Pedagogies of Displacement: On Playing Indian, Gypsy Romanticism, and Growing Up Queer<sup>1</sup>

*Susanne Luhmann*

Two photographs: The first was taken in the early 1970s and shows a primary school aged kid in beige burlap pants and a fringed tunic. The suit is decorated with a vaguely “Indian” looking patterned border. Her black wig is parted into two braids, held in place by a headband adorned with a bird’s feather. Her face is made up in “war paint.” The second is from the mid to late 1970s. A costumed pre-teenaged girl poses in a long skirt. A shiny red satin kerchief hides her hair. She wears big gold loop earrings and a lot of other costume jewelry. The color of her skin is darkened with facial make up.

These images show me wearing two of the most ubiquitous carnival costumes from the 1960s and 70s in Germany: *Indianerin* (“Indian Squaw”) and *Zigeunerin* (“Gypsy”). Each year as Halloween is nearing, the carnival-esque holiday so widely celebrated in North America and Canada where I live today, I am reminded of these images from my German childhood photo album. Each year critical discussions of costume choices preoccupy the media. One concern tends to be with the ways costumes are profoundly gendered, with those for girls and women limited to a narrow range of female characters that emphasize their physical appearance, heterosexual relationship status, and sexual availability. Emblematic of a different discussion of “what not to wear” for this holiday are critical media campaigns that seek to discourage students from dressing up in precisely the kinds of costumes that my childhood photos represent. Here the argument is that “[m]aking someone else’s culture and/or identity a caricature for you to wear for one night is a terrible costume idea. ... It’s ‘problematic and racist’.”<sup>2</sup>

1 I am grateful for the editorial suggestions offered by Kylie Burton and Nat Hurley.

2 See the widely circulating “I am not a Costume” digital poster campaign by a Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada) student group. Each of the six posters in this series shows a non-white

My childhood dress-ups as *Indianerin* and *Zigeunerin* embody all of these commonly voiced critiques. They are steeped in heteronormativity and simultaneously sexually objectify and repeat racial and ethnic stereotypes. In this paper, though, I am less interested in pointing out the sexist and heteronormative gender regimes that rule carnival costumes past and present, nor do I simply want to confess to racist childhood dress-up, though I do all of these things too. I am more interested in taking these two costumed moments as occasions to think about the scenes of subject-formation they represent—and to understand them as sites of pedagogy: my parents', the culture's, and my own. Becoming a subject—both the subject to and of knowledge—is at the heart of teaching and learning, thus making becoming a subject a profoundly pedagogical endeavour. The subject is made in and through processes of subjection and is inseparable from knowledge because she emerges through, and attaches to, the very same knowledge that claims to merely represent her (Foucault 1990).

In my paper, I am particularly interested in what I call “pedagogies of displacement.” I will explore this concept in more detail in a moment. For now, it suffices to say that such pedagogies displace from view what Deborah Britzman (1995) calls “difficult knowledge.” In the cases discussed in this paper, pedagogies of displacement make invisible genocidal histories, as well as the difficult affects that such histories continue to animate today.

What informs this paper then is a sense of the difficult work that a “decolonizing pedagogy” might require. Such pedagogy requires, but does not end with, revisiting the unsavoury pasts—our own, our families', and our nations', so as to understand better one's implication in foundational violence.<sup>3</sup> These instances of violence include, but are not limited to, settler colonial logics, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy, which continue to be accepted as “normal” and even “just” in the present. This paper is a story. In effect, it is a story of implication in these scenes of unsavoury pasts, foundational violence, and technologies of normalization. It is also a story of implication in a scene of subject-formation that is structured fundamentally through pedagogies of disavowal. Thus, when looking at these scenes of dress-up for play and carnival I am called to account for what these photos leave out as well as what they make in/visible. They occasion my reflection on the conditions that made these photographs possible, on the politics they crystallize, and what they can tell me about the queer feminist pedagogical subject I have become. I observe here the (untaken) path toward a heteronormative future while also seeing the racialized, yet disavowed, queerness of childhood play. When feminism privileges a gender analysis above all others, heteronormative analytics prevail and

student holding up a photo of a white person in stereotypical garb of a minoritized ethnic, racial, or cultural group with the campaign title—“I am not a Costume”—running in big print across the bottom of each poster. (<http://www.lspirg.org/costumes/> accessed July 16, 2017).

3 Elsewhere I have called considering one's implication in regimes of violence past and present “pedagogy of implication” (Luhmann, 2017).

the queerness of childhood falls out of view. Without attention to the racial formations that intersect with gendered subject formation, both queer and feminist pedagogies displace from view the racist logics involved in becoming a white woman.<sup>4</sup> The auto-ethnographic impulse with which I seek to re-consider these childhood photographs has me read them as semiotic performances of both gender and race and, in so doing, I complicate the common understanding of the processes of gendering and heteronormative subject formation as always grounded in racialization and racism. The photos show a kid performing and becoming a girl and a teenager performing and becoming a putatively heterosexual young woman. She does so in changing forms of ethno-racial (and racist) drag. Becoming a white girl and becoming a white young woman arguably works within historically specific modes of racial (dis)placement. I am specifically interested in reading these photographs as sites of performative contradictions: at once proleptically heteronormative in their deployment of gender and racial scripts, while instantiating what Katrin Sieg (2002: 112) calls “technologies of forgetting.” Sieg argues that the specific German fascination with “playing Indians,”—and I would add with Gypsy<sup>5</sup> romanticism—allows for the “[cathartic] purging [of] profoundly ambivalent emotions about race, nation, and gender” (112). These images collectively display forms of subject formation that depend as much upon disavowal as they do on productivity, a material configuration that I understand through “pedagogies of displacement.” By “displacement” I refer to individual and group affective processes that seek to redirect ideas, wishes, or impulses because they are unconsciously perceived as dangerous or unacceptable. Displacement describes the activities by which what is perceived psychically as dangerous is redirected and placed with new aims or objects. Displacement is a means to allay anxiety, especially in the face of aggressive and/or sexual impulses. In turn, by locating these images within broader social, historical, and political conflicts, I read each carnival costume as symptomatic pedagogies that displace from view anxiety-evoking and conflictual knowledge: of infant sexuality, colonial histories, genocidal guilt, and the potentialities of same-sex desire. Central to my argument is that to merely call out these costumes for their sexism, heteronormativity, and racism, which is a widely practiced pedagogical approach, displaces from view how fundamentally implicated white gendered and sexual subject formation is in the racist logics—and pedagogies—of elimination central to (settler) colonialism.

4 For over thirty years now feminists of color as well as some white women in the US, Germany, and many other places have pointed out the “tunnel vision” (Rich 1979) that a feminist privileging of gender over other categories of difference entails (Mohanty and Spivak 1988, 2003; Anzaldúa 1987; hooks, 1992/1994; Lorde 1984, Lutz 2002, Oguntoye 1986/1992; Rommelsbacher, 1994; Ware 1992)—and yet the problem of making gender the primary and often only focus of feminist analysis continues.

5 I use capital Gypsy when speaking of the culturally constructed figure, but use Roma and Sinti when speaking of the ethno-racial group.

## 1 Carnival, Performance, Gender

Feminist and other critical cultural studies scholars have long been interested in the social and cultural role of carnival and the carnivalesque. Following the influential work of Michael Bhaktin (1968), scholars have sought to ascertain the social impact of the carnival's topsy-turvy world, when, for a limited time, social rules are suspended and 'anything goes.' Here the debate has been about whether the suspension of the social order makes new social possibilities imaginable or whether carnival is essentially conservative. Natalie Zeman Davis' (1965) influential valuation has been that the carnivalesque is both transgressive and reactionary. As a liminal space, carnival is the site of popular, if symbolic, resistance. There comes to mind, for example, the long-standing German carnival tradition of women storming the major's office and cutting off men's ties in acts of symbolic castration. And carnival is the one time when it is permissible for women to make a spectacle of themselves, sexually or otherwise. Yet, these and other modes of symbolic resistance and political usurpation of power are also reactionary as they are permitted precisely in order to be contained and to firmly reestablish the existing social order when the holiday is over. Additionally, carnival is often a time when minoritized and socially disempowered people (women and ethno-racialized groups) are targeted, both physically and symbolically, such as when white folks and men dress up specifically to enact demeaning and grotesque stereotypes about women and racialized groups. That said, feminist scholarship on carnival and masquerade has animated what we have come to understand as the "invented" and "constructed" quality of gender. In her 1986 theorizing of carnival in "The Female Grotesque," Mary Russo foreshadows the performative aspect of femininity, which a few years later became a staple in gender studies through Judith Butler's (1990) *Gender Trouble*. Russo suggests that "to put on femininity with a vengeance suggests the power of taking it off" (224), while also acknowledging that "the hyperbole of masquerade and carnival suggest ... some ... acting out of the dilemmas of femininity" (225). Like these early feminist approaches I take carnivalesque masquerades seriously as sites of subject formation, or, to use Russo's words, as sites where subjects come to act out the psychic dilemmas that the social relations of power, such as racism, sexism, and heteronormativity, confront us with.

## 2 Doing and Seeing Gender Heteronormatively

Queer and feminist studies offer us a large theoretical archive on which to draw for reading the performativity of gender that the Indian and Gypsy costumes

engender. A general agreement across different theoretical schools posits gender as an accomplishment.<sup>6</sup> Sociologically oriented gender studies tend to draw upon the ethnomethodological “doing gender” approach, which understands gender identities, rather than being the passive natural developmental outcome of given biological sex differences, as crafted actively in social interactions (Garfinkel 1967; Kessler and McKenna 1978; West and Zimmerman 1987). Normative social expectations associated with masculinity and femininity in historically and situationally specific contexts shape the always relational constructions of gender. To successfully “pass” as male and female respectively is associated with the reenactment of dominance and submission. These re-enactments of socially expected modes of doing gender, in turn, tend to be mistaken in the broader culture as evidence of an alleged naturalness of gender and gender difference, while the reproduction of the hierarchical gender system at stake in successfully doing gender is misconstrued as a confirmation of the alleged naturalness of gender inequality. Subsequent work (Schilt and Westbrook 2009) has argued that “doing gender” always involves “doing heterosexuality,” heteronormatively so.

Reading the two scenes of carnival costumes through a “doing gender” framework allows us to see doing and becoming girl in the *Indianerin* costume. The gypsy costume engenders becoming a young woman, who tries out and on a heteronormative heterosexuality, albeit in this photo in a homosocial context. These costumes show directly how the doing is a becoming. One way to read these images, then, is to see them as representative of the active enactment of normative social gender expectations as the child moves from being a not yet heterosexual—thus not yet fully gendered—toddler to the gendered girl, and the allegedly (hetero)sexualized young woman. These costumes then map a path towards a conventional femininity and a presumed heterosexual future as gender is tried on and tried out.

That the *Indianerin* costume included a beige fringed pantsuit rather than the more conventional feminizing skirt or dress seems relevant in this context. It is the braided wig and the headband with a single feather that gender me female. The Gypsy costume is most clearly feminizing. It included a long satin skirt in changing tones of grey, red, and gold. As a cut-off from my mother’s 1950s engagement dress the skirt is a signifier of heteronormativity, now accessorized with a shiny red satin kerchief, a white embroidered so-called *Zigeunerbluse* (Gypsy blouse), my mother’s high-heeled leather boots, lots of costume jewelry—and make-up. The costume was my favorite and the only one I wore for more than one carnival season. The photo, archived today in my childhood album, shows me in a later incarnation, with slightly altered acces-

6 This sociological argument increasingly finds support in biological science too, where recent research (Ainsworth 2015) supports what biologist Fausto-Sterling (2004) has argued for years, namely that gender, rather than being a dual and binary biological truth, exists on a spectrum of variations.

sories: a form-fitting vest that shows quite a bit of skin, as well as a top hat decorated with a white trail, reminiscent of a wedding veil. In this photo, three costumed girlfriends frame me. I try out a flirtatious gesture as I coquettishly raise one naked leg from under my skirt. Doing gender by doing sexuality.

### **3 Gender Masquerade – Gender Melancholy**

While the doing gender approach shapes much of social science research, humanities based gender studies have tended to draw more on the poststructuralist work of Judith Butler. Her contributions to gender performativity, gender as drag, and gender melancholy allow me to make further sense of these scenes of childhood. The images confirm Butler's (1990) widely cited claim that "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (43), with the photos recording the scenes of production of gender within a heterosexual matrix. One of the most important arguments of Butler's work, and of the work that has influenced her in turn, is that the femininity we see in these images might not quite be what it seems to be. As early as 1929 the psychoanalyst Joan Riviere, in her study "Femininity as Masquerade," suggests that the hyper-feminine (and the more generally heightened heterosexual) performance is a mask women use to hide their masculine aspirations. In so doing, women seek to avoid the retribution that their usurpation of male power might provoke. Claiming all "womanliness" to be "a masquerade," Riviere suggests that the submission at the heart of feminine sexuality is a ruse as it disguises the desire for (masculine) power. In a similar vein, Luce Irigaray's (1985) feminine mimicry captures how the repetition of patriarchal images and representations becomes a mode for women to displace them playfully. In so doing, Irigaray argues, women recover their exploitation, rather than being entirely reduced to it. Both Riviere and Irigaray thus invite us to not (or not only) read heteronormatively. And if we return these arguments to my photo album, we might be able to see that the sexualized gypsy girl costume with its coquettish gesture might not to be quite as clear evidence of female heterosexual submission as it may seem at first glance. This sexualized femininity may also be a cover for feminine (and feminist) ambition, for aggression, and for masculinity and its associated power.

Building on this and on Freud's (1917) "Mourning and Melancholia," Butler (1995) argues that what seems to be the expression of a heterosexual feminine gender identification is actually a form of gender melancholy. Butler revises Freud's Oedipal narrative to suggest that the universal incest taboo that he posits is preceded by a taboo against homosexuality. Accordingly, the desire for the same-sex love object, usually a parent, but potentially also a sibling or

other meaningful relation, must be repressed. It is a love that is never entirely given up, and thus gets preserved through melancholic incorporation: One becomes the gender of the parent (or other loved one) one is not allowed to love and thus not allowed to grieve. Butler writes, “a masculine gender is formed from the refusal to grieve the masculine as a possibility of love; a feminine gender is formed (taken on, assumed) through the incorporative fantasy by which the feminine is excluded as a possible object of love, an exclusion never grieved, but ‘preserved’ through heightened feminine identification” (Butler 1993: 25). In Butler’s (1993) narrative, the girl becomes the girl or woman she was not allowed to desire and whom she embodies instead. In these formulations gender performance is not voluntary nor a simple psychic truth nor merely surface appearance (24).

Butler’s suggestion that gender is the effect of a normative citation, “a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted” (22), has been widely accepted in gender studies, as has her suggestion that this is a normative citation of a gender ideal, an ideal which is related or even foundational to an idealized heterosexuality, which cannot simply be thrown off. Her suggestion that heightened or conventional forms of femininity (and masculinity) are “the embodiment of norms,” a “compulsory practice ... [and] forcible production” and “assignment” (23) also gained wide acceptance, as has the understanding that this assignment is “never quite carried out according to expectations” (23).

While Butler’s diagnosis of a broad “gender failure” and the impossibility of the gender ideal have been widely accepted, her argument regarding the melancholic quality of gender has not. Yet, taken together, these arguments make heterosexuality far less stable than generally presumed. The photos from my album testify to this. Butler’s revisiting of the classic Oedipal narrative in her discussion of gender melancholy reminds us that the most “conventional” (and most heterosexual) femininity, as enacted in the gypsy costume, is readable as the remnant of a forbidden same sex love, a love never acknowledged but also never given up entirely. Thus, it is a heteronormative gaze that keeps us “reading straight” (Britzman 1995), that can only ever imagine a heterosexual future for the seemingly gender conforming girl child. Under such a heteronormative gaze the feminine girl, contrary to the tomboy, is, mistakenly so, imagined as always already on a straight path towards conventional heterosexuality. Thus, Butler’s notion of gender melancholy asks us to look at the images from my photo album as not always or only already straight, but maybe instead to imagine a queer femme—or some other gender variation—in the making. Indeed, reading children only as straight displaces from view both childhood sexuality but also queerness.<sup>7</sup>

7 I am writing this hesitantly because I am skeptical of the heteronormative future that we tend to assign to children, at least to those who seem gender conforming. However, I am equally skeptical of the ways in which as adults we narrate and re-narrate our gendered and sexual

The notion of gender melancholy intervenes in the ways that same sex early childhood desire is normatively displaced from view, and, in so doing, interrupts the assumption that all kids are straight. The appeal of Butler's gender melancholy is that it unsettles heterosexuality from its normative center, through a universalizing gesture, which allows us to imagine everyone as queer, at least a little bit. This move also asks us to think about femininity in more complex ways. But this queering of conventional femininity is ambivalent too, because it risks making invisible the ways gender conforming kids and adults benefit from and are implicated in the heteronormative gender regime that targets, in harmful ways, gender variant, gender flexible, and gender creative children and adults. Furthermore, by reading my girlhood carnival costumes only in terms of femininity we displace from view the distinct racial form that these childhood gender performances take. An exclusive focus on gendered and sexual subject formation prevents insight into processes of racialization, engendered by my costumes, even while the ethnic drag that instantiated this article is in plain view.

And here I suggest we pause for a moment. It seems worthwhile to note that what instantiates my thinking about racial subject formation as always intersecting with gendered subject formation happens at the moment when I am confronted with troubling images of my own childhood. Why did this article not take the other images in the photo album, images of conventional femininity, as its starting point to read whiteness? Whiteness continues to function as the unmarked (and unremarkable) normative racial category—but only to white people. The “invisibility of whiteness” is a central fantasy of white people for whom whiteness and ‘race’ are shot through with such troubling feelings that any knowledge about these feelings has to be displaced.

biographies retrospectively, often in a teleological manner so as to fashion a developmental continuity that fits our current (queer) identities. I do not think of myself as a queer child. I did identify as a girl and recognize myself today as a cisgender woman. I have, if not always, then at least predominantly, desired masculinity, though not always, maybe even rarely, the masculinity of bio males. That said, it is difficult to decipher whether the narrative I tell today of a seemingly non-queer youth and young adulthood is just more evidence that only heteronormative constructions of gender were available to me while growing up, which, in turn, made nearly all queerness, but certainly queer femininity, unthinkable. Or whether my wish to consider the possibility of my queer childhood, even a displaced one, is merely another example of a retrospective reconstruction of what, essentially, was a straight and cisgender childhood and adolescence. A second hesitation concerns my discontent with Butler's focus on gender, as being formed through a singular early attachment that, because it is prohibited, cannot be acknowledged, and thus its loss cannot be mourned. It seems to me that it might be quite generative to consider multiple early prohibited attachments, so as to understand that our specific gender configurations are made up from plural un-mourned loves.

## 4 “Indianthusiasm”

My masquerade in an “Indian” costume has to be contextualized within the lasting presence of images of Indigenous peoples in German popular culture. The ubiquity of this presence is often credited to the German author Karl May, whose widely popular 19<sup>th</sup> century Wild West fiction created an idealized representation of the Plains Indians. The historical record gives us much insight into the long presence of “Indians” in German culture, while presenting us with an equally long history of its pedagogical displacement. This includes the displacement by the very authors that create this record, when they, while meticulously describing the two-century “long [German] enthrallment with American Indians” (Penny 2013), analytically minimize this preoccupation to a benign form of “Indianthusiasm” (Lutz 2002; Usbeck 2015) or an expression of (allegedly mutual) “affinities and attachments” between “Germans and Indians” (Penny 2013).

As suspicious as one might be of the interpretation that German Studies scholars proffer of the significance of this archive, it helps us to understand what the race performances of my childhood materialize and what they displace from view, such as the long history of implication into racial violence. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, when the German press condemns American aggression and violence against Indigenous peoples, the role of Germans in that settler colonial violence receives no mention. Instead, Germans conveniently align themselves with “Indians” and ignore that many of the American aggressors were in fact German settlers (Penny 2013). Over the next two centuries the specific articulations of the German attachment to North American First Nations would shift and change. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, “Indianthusiasm” took the form of a German melancholic lament over the loss of wilderness and freedom. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indigenous peoples were venerated as the embodiment of resistance to progress, territory expansion, modernity, and as the preservation of a mythological spirituality. Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century *Völkerschauen*, human zoos, brought Indigenous people, rather than just their images, to Germany. Exhibited in ethnological expositions, they were to highlight the cultural differences between Indigenous peoples and the Europeans. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Wild West shows casting “authentic” Indigenous performers became popular in Germany. At the same time, the hobbyist scene emerged, which still thrives today, with scores of Germans reenacting Indigenous life and culture as a pastime. Rather than denouncing this as a racist and fetishist spectacle of human capture, Penny (2013: 148) claims both the shows and the act of Germans playing Indians as expressions of a “genuine interest” in meeting “authentic Indians”, studying their customs, and collecting their artifacts. These exhibitions and the later Wild West shows, Penny (2013) argues, constituted attractive and desirable employment opportunities for Indigenous people, a means to travel the world, and a celebration of their culture, all of

which denied to them in North America. While this may be true, clearly more is at stake in the German fascination with “Indians.” And even Penny acknowledges eventually that “Germans ‘playing Indian’ were ultimately playing themselves” (154), thereby conceding, at least implicitly, that the German fascination with all things “Indian” is ultimately about solipsism and understanding oneself differently through mimesis.<sup>8</sup>

My 1960s *Indianerin* costume must be situated within the post-war period and the aftermath of the National Socialist romanticization of “Indians” (Uzbek 2015). The Nazis venerated Indigenous peoples as proud warriors and resisters to modern life—characteristics with which they identified and which they claimed for themselves. While Hitler’s fascination with “Indians” might be quite well known, less well known is the fact that National Socialist race politics extended Aryan race membership to select Indigenous nations, specifically the Sioux, based upon a presumed “shared warrior culture” and its associated morals and characteristics (Parkhill 1997; Penny 2013; Townsend 2000). This identification, however, did not stop Hitler from also admiring the USA’s genocidal settler colonial expansion into the West, which directly targeted the elimination of Indigenous peoples. Quite the opposite—the genocidal American settler colonial expansion became the model for the National Socialist *Lebensraum* politics and the elimination of the Slav population in Eastern Europe that it entailed (Uzbek 2015). In short, American settler colonialism became quite literally a pedagogy for violently displacing people.

The National Socialists’ identification with and their semiotic deployment of Indigenous peoples constituted a complex and contradictory site of pedagogy. Considered to be like Germans, Indigenous peoples were cast as a model for Germans to emulate. At the same time, Germans were to copy and enact the very mode of Indigenous peoples’ elimination, thereby materializing the violent fantasies of this pedagogy of identification. The war strategy of both likening Germans to “Indians” and making “Indians” Aryans had the goal of infiltrating and weakening the American enemy during World War 2. But even before the war, Nazi pedagogy projected its violent anti-Semitism onto those who had dispossessed Indigenous peoples from their land by casting the executioners of the US government’s violent dispossession strategy in decidedly anti-Semitic terms: the “contractors”, who had swindled Indigenous peoples out of their land together with the Indian agents, were described as “white hyenas”, “crooks”, and “vultures” who “had appeared ‘from the Jewish quarter of Eastern Europe’” (cited in Penny 2013: 171).

8 While the German fascination with all things Indigenous might be judged to be either a benign or a racist spectacle, yet without doubt it is compensatory for a perceived lack. One example of this are the founders of the first hobbyist club in Munich, in 1913. They wanted, but could not afford, to emigrate to the USA. “Playing Indian” presented these white Germans with the excitement that their often tedious office jobs lacked. Playing Indians appealed to a specific masculine ideal that was fast becoming redundant in an industrializing society, where physical strength and bodily capability were increasingly replaced by machines.

The simultaneous identification with and projection onto North American Indigenous peoples continued after the war, in both East Germany and West Germany. In East Germany, Indigenous representations were initially controversial due to their ties to Nazism, yet later became once again state-endorsed, now representing the state's identity as grounded in the political struggles against economic and political systems of oppression. Meanwhile post-war West Germany largely ignored the strategic and violent role that this identification had played during the Nazi period; Indigenous peoples remained a site of intense fantasmatic investment through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. This identification pays little respect to the reality of Indigenous life, past and present. Indeed, with a few exceptions, the German popularity of all things Indigenous has all but ignored the genocidal settler biopolitics that continues to target First Nations and Inuit through various changing modes of forced assimilation and elimination in its aim of putting an end to Indigenous claims to the land.<sup>9</sup> Rather than intervening in the ongoing process of Indigenous dispossession, the unrelenting German "Indianthusiasm" exemplifies what we might call a "pedagogy of ignorance."<sup>10</sup> By this I mean knowledge production that refuses to consider any implication in the ongoing state-sponsored genocide.

## 5 Gypsy Romanticism

While the German fascination with "Indians" is about a largely geographically distant venerated Other, "Gypsies" – Roma and Sinti – have dwelled in Germany and Europe more generally for centuries. Today deep and largely negative stereotypes shape the public perception of Roma and Sinti and they are one of, if not the most, stigmatized social group(s) in Germany today.

So how do we explain, then, my own attachment to the Gypsy costume as a teenager in the 1970s and the ongoing popularity of this racial drag in the present? To read this racial drag as part of gendered, sexual, and racialized subject formation requires digging more deeply into the longstanding and ambivalent cultural construction of Gypsies in Germany. Gilad Marglit, in his (2002) *Germany and its Gypsies: A Post-Auschwitz Ordeal*, describes this con-

9 These genocidal assimilation strategies include the century-long mandatory residential school system, which forcibly removed Indigenous children from their families, followed by the so called "Sixties Scoop," the mass removal of Aboriginal children into the child welfare system without family or band consent. The extraordinary high number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls over the last three decades and the steadily increasing overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the prison system continue this history of elimination in the present.

10 My notion of a yet to be fully conceptualized "pedagogy of ignorance" takes inspiration from both Shoshana Felman (1989) and Nancy Tuana (2004).

struction as “on the one hand . . . repulsive and intimidating; on the other hand, [Gypsies] were seen as attractive and enchanting” (12), concluding that “like Jews, they turned from being unknown strangers into a familiar other and thus become an integral part of the German homeland (*Heimat*)” (12). While the figure of the “Indian” in German culture is one Germans have tended to affiliate with in an identificatory fashion, the figure of the Gypsy functions more clearly in line with Edward Said’s (1977) notion of Orientalism—the cultural Other against which Germans can define themselves. Such a figure is nevertheless a “founding element” of national identity. Indeed, across the centuries, Roma and Sinti have functioned as a projection screen for shifting popular fears. These fears range from alleged black magic capabilities in the Middle Ages to accusations of a propensity for property crimes and violence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and culminate in the charge of congenial “antisocial behavior” and welfare abuse during the Nazi period. These racist constructions persist well into the post-war period. With cultural representations of Gypsies abounding in German children’s book, racist displacements became deeply embedded stereotypes in German cultural memory.

The stigmatization of Roma and Sinti is only one aspect of their cultural figuration. Another one figures the Gypsy as a romantic and often sentimental character. This vacillation between the Gypsy as simultaneously outside the accepted social and sexual order and a common romanticized motif helps us understand the appeal of my teenage costume. As already mentioned, my costume was made from the cut-off skirt of the engagement dress my mother had worn a quarter of a century earlier, at the age of eighteen. What I remember about this outfit and its appeal to the pre-teenage girl remains vivid in my memory: It was likely the first time I was allowed to wear make-up and jewelry in public and, in so doing, to dress up as a woman rather than a girl. In this sense the gender script itself is a disguise for and displacement of a racial script—a racial script that itself is a German displacement. The costume displaces discrimination and the difficult feelings that discrimination engenders in favor of the much more amicable romantic and sentimental figure of the Gypsy in German folklore. It plays up the Spanish influence that marks the Gypsy’s popular literary motif, which is embodied in “the exotic, young Gypsy woman, a pretty and seductive figure” (Marglit 2002: 10). It references the century-old cultural figure of the Gypsy that circulates through literature, opera, and folk art, and in so doing popularizes “Zigeunerromantik” (11). As a cultural sign the young Gypsy woman figures as “forbidden fruit” (10). Marglit suggests the figure of the Gypsy girl represents the cultural overcoming of the “fear of the Gypsies through the conquest of the Gypsy girl” (11). Yet her racial status is ambiguous at best.

One powerful cultural narrative de-racializes the Gypsy girl as “not really” being “gypsy” based upon a widely circulating racist myth that Roma and Sinti steal (German) children. Beyond constituting a twist on Freud’s family ro-

mance that turns the fantasy of “I am not my parents’ child” into “they are not this child’s parents,” this charge displaces from the collective German memory the still relatively unknown history of the Nazi abduction of “Aryan looking” children from Poland and other eastern occupied territories who were subsequently raised as “perfectly Aryan” children by German parents.

## **6 Racial Melancholy**

The rich archive of the long-lasting German identification with and projection upon Indigenous peoples and the deep cultural roots of Gypsy romanticism sketched above substantiate the claim that “playing Indian” and dressing up “Gypsy”, in their various incarnations, is all about the white German self. Or, as Toni Morrison (1992), in a return to Freud, reminds us: “the subject of the dream is the dreamer” (17). Analogue to the way Morrison explores the role of the African American figure in American literature, I suggest we consider racial masquerade as “reflexive; an extraordinary meditation of the [white] self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the [white] ... conscious” and “an astonishing revelation of longing, of terror, of perplexity, of shame, of magnanimity ... that requires hard work *not* to see” (Morrison 1992: 17). And, arguably, as long as racial masquerades are not challenged for displacing race and racism from view, they proliferate cultural pedagogies of *not* seeing.

Christopher Lane’s broader argument in *The Psychoanalysis of Race* is that race is an irrational category organized by fantasies that shape the meaning racial categories take. Both Homi Bhaba (1994) and Eric Lott (1993) see ambivalence as a central force in colonial stereotypes and racial categorization respectively, with both being rooted in anxiety and productive of erotic economies. Characterizing this economy of whites performing in blackface in 19<sup>th</sup> century minstrel shows as both “love and theft,” Lott suggests that these performances were less “a sign of absolute white power and control than of panic, anxiety, terror, and pleasure” (Lott 1993: 6). Thus racial drag potentially can tell us a lot about the affects (desire, fear, anxiety, terror, shame, and longing) that animate these performances, in my case, of white Germans in the context of 1960s and 1970s post Nazi Germany.

In US critical race studies a central focus of the affective life of race has been on melancholy. Foundational here is the work of Anne Anlin Cheng (2001) and of David Eng and Shinhee Han (2000; 2003). These scholars focus primarily upon the melancholia of racialized others, specifically Asian Americans. While primarily concerned with the melancholia of those racialized as non-white, this work also offers insights into the melancholia of whiteness, which Cheng (2001) locates in the dual dynamic of rejection and internaliza-

tion, with the dominant American white culture both rejecting, but also being deeply attached to, its racial Others. Indeed, offering a slightly different reading compared to Butler of Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia", Cheng writes:

"The melancholic is not melancholic because he or she has lost something but because he or she has introjected that which he or she now reviles. Thus the melancholic is stuck in more ways than just temporally; he or she is stuck—almost choking on—the hateful and loved thing he or she just devoured." (9)

Cheng points out that racism is not just the rejection of the racial Other, but it is about maintaining the Other within existing social structures (12). Segregation and colonialism need the Other who is both hated and feared. The dominant culture's relationship to the racialized Other is structured by a complex affective field of "repulsion and sympathy, fear and desire, repudiation and identification" (12). The dominant white subject introjects the racial Other in the form of a melancholic object or person, which they claim to have never loved and thus never have lost, but whom they also neither fully relinquish nor accommodate. At the heart of white racial melancholia, so Cheng, is a deeply "imbricated but denied relationship" with the racialized as Other (12).

To acknowledge that the ambivalences of love and hate, desire and fear, identification and repudiation structure the deep attachments of the dominant white group to their racialized Others helps us to understand the complexities involved in racial drag and masquerade. They are not (only) acts of derision and humiliation, nor are they only about monitoring and controlling the Other and affirming the normalcy and stability of whiteness—though they might be all of those things too. Racial masquerade is also about identification and desire, and, importantly, theft (Lott 1993). These affects are driven by the long-lasting prohibition against interracial relationships in Western countries. While this prohibition is most recognized in the context of slavery and its abolition in North America, intimate interracial relationships were also criminalized as part of European imperialism and colonialism, and, more recently, during National Socialism in Germany. This prohibition established a long and lasting legacy of whites tantalized and enticed by racial Otherness (Stoler 2002), which is still effective today and further animated by more recent waves of migration—and by the anxieties that these evoke. That is to say, "Indians" and "Gypsies"—or at least the fantasies surrounding these groups—have long played a major role in the constitution of (German) whiteness.

In a recent article on "Race Performativity and Melancholic Whiteness in Sweden," Tobias Huebinette and Lennart E.H. Raeterlinck (2014) diagnose melancholic whiteness in Swedish race performances as "an expression of white desire to bridge the gap between whites and non-whites, an alienating gap characterized by unpleasant feelings of emptiness, lack and even homelessness" and as the desire for "a state before the dichotomous racial order between whites and non-whites that Western culture dictates" (507). The root of race performance in Sweden is the repressed desire for the Other with the goal

of unification: “the complete eradication of racial alterity” (507)—at least in fantasy. The fantasmatic closing of the racial gap through racial performances by whites, however, relies on those racialized as non-white to conform to the white and western understanding of the superior racial subject.

The desire to transcend race is another mode of displacement, one that does not move outside the racist social order. It is not oriented towards truly encountering or being in solidarity with non-white immigrants, instead it is about consuming them. It is still oriented around the needs of the white self, their projections, fantasies, and reflections. As a form of psychic self-constitution the white subject, in a consumerist logic, seeks to make herself whole by performing in racial drag (Huebinette and Raeterlinck 2014). Philip J. Deloria’s (1998) groundbreaking study *Playing Indian*, which traces the century-long figuration of the “Indian” in the North American context, has highlighted how “Indians” figure as an embodiment of a supposedly “authentic past” and a connection to something that is lost or feared to be lost in modern life for North Americans, as well as representing a fantasy of an alternative and more liberated self. We see this also in the German historical archive discussed above. However, in addition to the authors cited thus far, I suggest that, taken together, the German masquerade as *Indianerin* and *Zigeunerin* in the postwar period also signifies a further mode of melancholic displacement. This masquerade is not about a disavowed love that cannot be grieved and therefore is incorporated in the body, as in Butler’s earlier cited theorization of melancholy gender. Rather, at the core of these racial performances is a loss that has not been acknowledged and, thus, cannot be mourned, which is the disavowal of genocide in Germany, in the postwar period and beyond.

## 7 Conclusions

The literature on melancholy in racial performances allows for a more complex understanding of the role ethnic and racial drag play during carnival, at masquerade parties, and in other contexts. Beyond merely calling out the racism, sexism, and heteronormativity (re)produced in my childhood costume choices, which is easy, I suggest we read the gendered race performances for what they enact, namely the profound ambivalences and affective dilemmas that surround normative gender and race categorization. Butler’s notion of melancholy gender allows us to see that what appears to be a heteronormative assimilation into conventional femininity might actually be the refusal to give up a forbidden, thus unacknowledgeable and ungrieveable same sex love, which in turn gets preserved in the body. Butler’s narrative is optimistic – and pedagogical. It calls upon us to unsettle the ways heterosexuality has been constructed as natural, central, and constant. Missing from Butler’s account, however, is a

consideration of the ways in which gender performativity is imbricated in and constituted by race and racialization. Indeed, I argue that the racial performance of my childhood carnival costumes is an important site for understanding the pedagogies involved in making and becoming a white gendered and sexual German subject, pedagogies that rest on various modes of disavowal and the longing that such disavowal entails. In my childhood costumes and while being in Gypsy drag, I could publicly try out and on (supposedly) heterosexual flirtation. The non-white race performances speak to the melancholia at the heart of whiteness, of what is lost and has to be given up in the process of constituting oneself as a white gendered and sexual subject.

However, gender melancholy and race melancholy differ in important ways. As discussed extensively earlier, race melancholy, like gender melancholy, is constituted from the unacknowledged and thus ungrieveable foreclosure of cross-racial desire and attachment, as well as disavowed aggression and murder. Different from gender melancholy and its potential to help destabilize heteronormativity, white melancholy does not have a correspondent potential to unsettle the racial and racist norms and pedagogies that instantiate it, at least not initially. Indeed, both the historical archive concerning the German attachment to all things “Indian” and the long history of the “Gypsy” in German culture suggest that race performances in carnival and elsewhere, while they enact an ambivalent identification with racialized Others, incorporate the latter in ways that ultimately do not benefit them. Quite the opposite, these racial incorporations only serve the needs of the white subject. While race performances enact a deep, if forbidden, attachment, they do nothing to acknowledge the implication of the white German subject in the respective genocides that have targeted both groups. Indeed, in Katrin Sieg’s (2003) estimate the race performances of Germans dressing up as “Indians” align Germans with victim status, and, in so doing, purge Germans from the guilt for the Nazi genocide they perpetrated. Sieg’s reading of the German fascination with “Indians” regards the latter as a surrogate for the murdered and unmourned Jewish victims of the Holocaust, with “playing Indian” being a form of substitution where “the body that takes up the guises of another can commemorate and render present that which was lost ... as an act of guilt and denial” (198). Thus non-white race performance, while productive for the constitution of a white gendered and sexual self, does not unsettle the logic of racism. That is, unless we develop a different pedagogy of reading, namely one that reads more carefully for and makes visible the affective textures and attachments that create the conditions of possibility for racial displacement. This would require a pedagogy that schools in at least recognizing, and at best interrupting, racist displacements and disavowals. We might call this a ‘pedagogy of implication’, of producing knowledge and conditions for learning that consider the collective implication in ongoing state- and other sponsored violence and injustice.

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