# Multiculturalism From Below: Transversal Crossings and Working Class Cosmopolitans

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This chapter is based upon a research project entitled 'Contact Zones' that explored what I have termed 'quotidian diversity', or 'multiculturalism from below'[i]. The project focused on mundane modes of intercultural crossing in culturally diverse localities. It aimed to identify points of affinity and disjuncture in order to better understand how, where, and why diverse Australians 'get along' or 'rub-along' (Watson 2006, p. 2) together (or not) and how they negotiate the 'accident' of propinquity in shared multicultural spaces. In this chapter, I argue that there exists certain 'everyday' individuals I term 'transversal enablers' who employ and facilitate 'transversal practices' which, in essence, are forms of exchange and gift relation that foster everyday relationships across cultural difference in multicultural settings.

## The Field Sites

Between 2002 and 2005 the project involved in-depth qualitative research in two Australian settings; Ashfield, a multicultural suburb in Sydney, and Griffith, a mid-sized country town in regional New South Wales. With 43% of its population born overseas, Ashfield is an old suburb with a large population of elderly Anglo-Celtic Australians[ii]. During the post WWII migration boom, Ashfield became home to a sizeable Italian and Greek population, and later to migrants from places such as Lebanon and the Philippines, and since the 1990s to large numbers from China and India. The Ashfield field-site involved ethnographic participant observation in and around the local shopping centre and high street, and in local pubs, clubs, parks and churches over a period of three years. It also included in-depth open ended interviews with forty residents from Anglo-Celtic, Italian, Greek, Indian and Chinese backgrounds.

Griffith is a town of about 50,000 residents. There are some seventy first languages represented there and at least forty settled communities. A citrus farming area, Griffith was established following WWI by Anglo-Celtic solider settlers in the 1920s who were closely followed by a large settlement of Italian migrants pre and post WWII. In the 1970s a sizeable population of Punjabi Sikhs settled in the area, and more recently a number of Pacific Islander groups and refugees from places such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Sudan have made Griffith home. The Anglo-Celtic, Italian and Sikh communities dominate the commercial sector in town and own most of the farms in the area. The remaining communities tend to be employed as workers on these farms, and to a lesser extent work in manufacturing and retail. For the Islander

and newer refugee communities, farm labouring and fruit picking work is a key occupation, while a number work in a large chicken processing factory on the outskirts of town. The Griffith field-site involved in-depth open ended interviews with fifty residents, from a range of backgrounds including Anglo-Celtic Australian, Italian, Afghan, Kurdish, Turkish, Indigenous, Tongan, Maori, Fijian, Chinese, Samoan, Cook Islander, Indian (Sikh and Hindu), and Zimbabwean.

## Conceptual Framework

As a key framing device in this research undertaking, the notion of the 'contact zone' deserves some elaboration. Mary Louise Pratt (1992) uses the term to describe the 'space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations…' . Pratt in turn lifts the idea of 'contact' from linguistics where it is used to denote 'the improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently' (1992, p. 7). It is this twin emphasis on space of contact and everyday communicative improvisation in cross-cultural encounter that underpins my approach to uncovering the mundane strategies people employ to smooth and foster relations across difference.

I term these mundane strategies forms of 'quotidian transversality'. At the simplest level it refers to those processes which sociologists and anthropologists have typically thought of as establishing and maintaining sociality within an ethnically homogeneous socio- cultural group: forms of gift exchange and reciprocity, kinship and social networks, ways of talking, and place orientations, for example. The notion of transversality however places emphasis beyond basic relations of exchange, to highlight practices of *interchange*, in the sense of opening up and reconfiguring identities.

The concept of 'quotidian transversality' is loosely underpinned by the notion of transversal politics, developed by Nira Yuval-Davis (Yuval-Davis 1999a, 1999b). Transversal politics is an inter-group strategy to work through conflict. Initially developed by Guattari [iii], transversalism was eventually developed by Italian feminists in the 1970s and 1980s, and more fully by Yuval-Davis and taken up by academic and peace activist, Cynthia Cockburn (1998) who used it in her research with women's groups in conflict zones. Cockburn and Yuval-Davis suggest that the central aspect of a transversal politics is a dialogue centred on the idea of dialogical 'rooting' and 'shifting', whereby each participant in the dialogue brings with them the rooting in their own membership and identity, while also trying to shift in order to put themselves in a situation of exchange with those who have a different membership and identity. Cockburn (1998, p. 9) points out that this process of rooting and shifting does not mean discarding one's political and other sources of belonging, but neither should rooting render participants incapable of movement, of looking for connection with those among 'the others' with whom they might find

compatible values and goals.. As Yuval-Davis argues (2004:27) 'transversal politics is not only a dialogue in which two or more partners are negotiating a common political position, but is a process in which all the participants are mutually reconstructing themselves and the others engaged with them in it'.

I employ *quotidian transversality* to describe how individuals in everyday spaces use particular modes of sociality to produce or smooth interrelations across cultural difference, whether or not this difference is a conscious one. It signals the process by which local and diasporic modes of inhabitance intersect through momentary cross-cultural transgressions and displacements (Amin 2002: 15) in everyday, mundane situations. Quotidian transversality is different to hybridity or code-switching. Nor is it and assimilationist or ingegrationist notion of exchange across difference where the 'guest' culture over time merges with the dominant culture over time. Instead it highlights how cultural difference can be the basis for commensality and exchange; where identities are not left behind, but can be shifted and opened up in moments of non-hierarchical reciprocity.

Adding 'quotidian' is an attempt to mark out slightly different territory to Yuval Davis's transversality, which she uses to refer to particular modes of conflict resolution. Quotidian signals the everyday, situated nature of transversal exchange which is not necessarily about conflict resolution. It can be about conflict avoidance, conflict prevention, or indeed, not about conflict at all but about interchange that consciously or unconsciously produces permeable borders of being across difference. It is through such practices that identities are not only traversed but reconfigured, and biographies are intertwined.

There are certain types of people that emerged over and over again in the study. I call them *Transversal Enablers*. Transversal Enablers are personalities in towns and neighbourhoods who produce what I call intersectional gossip, knowledge, and inter-ethnic information networks. They are individuals who typically go out of their way to create connections between culturally different residents in their local area, workplace or other such micro-public (Amin 2002, p. 959). There were a number of such characters across all of my field-sites. They all had very similar outgoing and cheerful personalities, and interestingly, were all women. However their role went beyond simply creating paths for new networks to establish. Transversal enablers served a number of important functions which seemed to assist in creating threads of connection across cultural difference – for themselves, and for their local communities. They do so by engaging in and facilitating transversal practices involving *gift exchange; intercultural knowledge exchange; creating opportunities for the production of cross-cultural embodied commensality; and the production of spaces of intercultural care and trust.*

In this next section, I elaborate a number of examples of quotidian transversality at work –mundane practices which produce transversal rooting and shifting across cultural difference, enacted or facilitated by the transversal enablers in my study.

## Transversal Exchanges: The Gift in Intercultural Encounters

Much has been said about transnational cultural traffic, about the circulation of material goods, indeed gifts, to facilitate sociality across extended space. This next section explores how such gift traffic—which may have transnational or diasporic roots/routes/histories (Clifford 1997)—weaves through suburban streets across cultures, borders, boundaries, and tie people together, not across space, but across difference, however momentarily.

I will return to the notion of the gift economy towards the end, but for now it is worth providing Cheal's definition. Cheal argues that the circulation of gifts underpins the moral economy, which he describes as a 'system of transactions which are defined as socially desirable (i.e. moral) because through them social ties are recognized, and balanced social relationships are maintained' (Cheal 1988, pp. 15, 19). He proposes that gifts are used to construct certain kinds of voluntary social relationships (Cheal 1988, p. 14) and should be viewed as symbolic media for managing the emotional and interpersonal aspects of relationships. In complex and multi-fractal social systems such as super-diverse cities (Vertovec 2007), those living in close proximity are not likely to be constituted by 'strong ties'. However in such contexts gifts have a kind of 'free floating' presence within a moral economy of interpersonal relations, and facilitate types of interaction that might otherwise be only weakly institutionalised' (Cheal 1988, p. 19).

When Lakshmi, one of my Indian research participants, moved into her house in Ashfield, she was pleasantly surprised when Frank, her Lebanese neighbour, called over the back fence to present her with freshly picked figs from his garden in a gesture of welcome. He had seen her admiring his crop the day before. This first gift precipitated a regular exchange between them; the latest produce from their respective vegetable patches would be passed over the fence along with cooking hints to accompany unfamiliar varieties. On Friday's Frank visited the big Sydney fruit markets to purchase fruit and vegetables in bulk for his extended family. Bringing home a large box of oranges, peaches, cucumbers or whatever, inevitably some would come Lakshmi's way. To her delight, her arrival home from work on a Friday evening would be regularly greeted by a box on her doorstep containing a selection skimmed from the top of Frank's bulk purchase. Not long after her latest chillies or limes would end up on his side. Meanwhile, Tony, their Italian neighbour

at the rear whose balcony overlooks both Lakshmi and Frank's yards, had seen this exchange and eventually joined in regular three-way vegetable conversations. He gave Lakshmi some of his tomato seedlings, via Frank the Lebanese neighbour who was also given some, to grow in her yard. And from the other end of the street, curry leaves from the tree in the yard of the sister of another Indian neighbour would be offered to Lakshmi whenever a new crop arrived at their place. Marjorie, an Anglo-Celtic neighbour further down the street contributed lemons from her tree and fresh rosemary to this intercultural neighbourhood exchange.
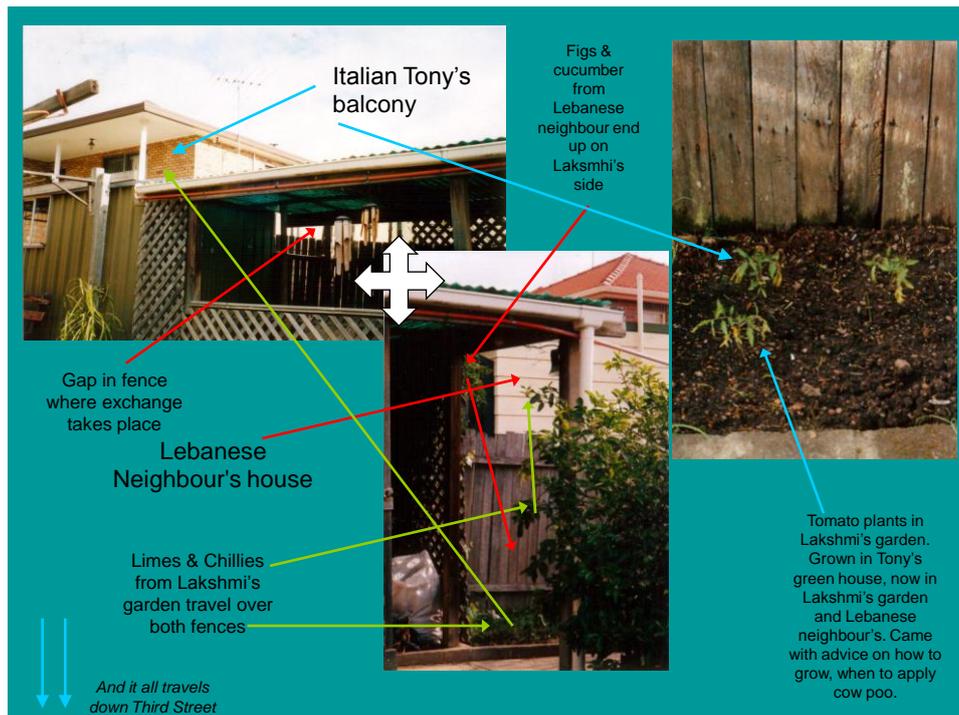


There is a long tradition backyard vegetable growing, gifting and trading among Anglo-Celtic Australians. Gardening historian Seddon (1994) argues that Australian gardens were somewhat unique in this production and trade of surplus produce, because of their large size and the favourable climate.

> When I was young in the 1930s, and for several decades on either side, the function of the Australian back yard ... could be known easily from a list of its contents. ... There might be chooks ... A lemon tree was nearly universal; other trees varied with climate. ... For a few weeks, there was a gross overabundance of fruit, and much trading (I'll take some of your plums if you take some of my apples next month'). (Seddon 1994, p. 22)

Today, Australia's backyard food is as diverse as the backgrounds of the Australians who grow it. Lemons and lime, banana trees and Lebanese cucumber, grapes and guavas, mangos and mandarins, basil and Thai mint, chillies and okra, aubergines

and figs—they are as much about the sensual reconstruction of homely tastes and smells as they are about gardening. However I argue that the flows between neighbours described above also represent a micro-moral-economy that emerges through the exchange of surplus produce—surplus gifted to facilitate neighbourly and kin relations. Increasingly these neighbourly environments incorporate households of diverse cultural backgrounds. Unlike many cities in the UK and US, Australia does not have the same scale of ethnic concentration as most neighbourhoods are home to a large number of cultural groups (Poulsen, Johnson & Forrest 2004). Whether or not those engaged in these everyday modes of reciprocity are consciously aware that they are producing and reproducing social relations and cultural intersections is unimportant. It is also important to emphasise that what is exchanged matters. Gifts carry biographies and they have a material and sensual quality. In the narratives of exchange collected in my study, food—especially the home grown variety—was very often accompanied by stories about cooking and family histories about when and where this or that was traditionally eaten, how to grow it, how to cook it, what you might do with it. The material, sensual and aromatic qualities of food exchanged is significant as food is as much about taste and smell (Choo 2004; Duruz 2005; Seremetakis 1996) as it is about sustenance. As Law has argued, sensory perception and memory connect the body with material culture (Law 2005, p. 237). So when Lakshmi eats one of Frank's figs, or when he cooks some of her chilli's, traces of the biography of these edible gifts are re-embodied in the recipient, in turn intermingling with their own sensual life-world. The taste and aromatic quality intermingle with the stories that travelled with the food, and the sentiments of reciprocity and care embodied in these gifts. Their very sensuous quality, as writers such as Rodaway (1994) have argued, works to embody stories, places and associations. Over time, such transversal exchanges have the potential to dialogically produce sensory and narrative intersections which produce the kinds of relations and networks to which Cheal refers but across cultural difference.

Major religious or cultural festivals also provided opportunities for transversal crossing. The following account from Mrs Whitworth is a good example. At 75, she has lived in Ashfield, indeed, in the same street, her whole life. She lived in one house till she was 20, then married a man in the house across the road and moved in with him where she has lived ever since. An Anglo-Celtic working class woman now widowed, her mobility is limited to the local area and she spends her days in the local shops and going to senior's social groups and the local clubs. I asked her about her interactions with Chinese in the local area, especially at the shops.

> *I talk to them. I will say a* ni how *(how are you), to them, to the Asian places. When it was* gong xi fatt choy *(Chinese New Year) in February, I had just heard from Mary and Edward, the Chinese couple who run the chemist, about the little red bags they give in China, with money in it. And I knew the*

*gold was popular. So I went to Tek (the $2 discount shop, also Chinese owned) and I got some little red bags, paper ones. And I got some gold foil paper, and I cut a couple of strips and I put a few dollars in and gave to Mary and Edward and the Chinese fellow who does my massage, and the Vietnamese lady in the bread shop. So I do mix.*

Such exchanges can be characterised as a moral-economy of place-sharing. What is important about such exchanges is how the people, objects and social relations involved are made and remade, understood and re-understood in everyday transactions (Carrier 1991, p. 121). The reciprocities just described also create what I call local and diasporic intersections. As Mauss (1969, p. 11) has argued, gifts are inalienable and to some extent part of persons'. And as scholars such as Miller have demonstrated (cf Miller 1998) objects (and in this context, the more general definition of gift) carry with them both general cultural meanings, and cultural biographies, and also take on meanings within specific personal relationships. This intersection of the cultural biography of the object and its giver, with the inters-subjective relations produced in the giving, produces narrative, embodied, material and emplaced intersections.

Gifts are not just material objects, but can involve gifts of care and service as well. 'What makes a gift is the relationship within which the transaction occurs' (Carrier 1991:122). What I think is interesting about Mrs Whitworth's narrative is that these exchanges are with local business people involved in 'care' professions. One the the more difficult transitions Anglo-Celtic seniors in the Ashfield area have had to make is accepting that the old Ashfield with a community of familiar shopkeepers who 'knew their name' and 'would stop for a chat', had (at least for them) now been replaced by a largely Chinese dominated shopping precinct on the local high street. Formerly a social milieu in which they felt a sense of belonging, many now feel quite alienated from the space. An outcome of that change in the local shops has been a sense of displacement, and among many Anglo-seniors has produced quite bitter feelings towards local Chinese in general. However the local Chinese run masseurs and chemist shop came up time and again in the interviews with Anglos as 'islands of care' in the local area. Although essentially involved n a commercial relationship with Mrs Whitworth, the nature of these professions is such that it is normal to ask after the health and wellbeing of the customer. In her case, this is experienced as a 'space of care' (Conradson 2003) and is reciprocated by Mrs Whitworth who deliberately reaches out across difference, to engage in the gift rituals of the cultural Other.

## Transversal knowledge exchange

Transversal enablers also produce spaces of social exchange where questions about differing cultural practices can be asked in a safe environment. The Transversal

Enablers in the various field sites typically employed some kind of ritual or conversational form designed to identify everyday cultural orientations of the cultural Other. This was typically the kind of information useful to prepare the ground for future cross-cultural contact and sociality, and was in turn passed on through gossip networks to 'prepare' others so that their own social contact with the cultural Other would go smoothly. Another of the Griffith participants talks of her practice of always learning about the greetings and manners of cultural others in her locality.

> *If I think I know how to say hello in any language, I always try it. If I bungle it and make a mistake, I apologise. I'm very mindful of being respectful of… so not saying, 'Oh this is me., Like me, or love me', I go and I'm very respectful, because every culture interacts. Like in some, you know, you have to bow and be… so I try to look in there and see if I can find out before I get to meet them, something I might need to know, and if I don't, you know, I ask, and find out, and so it really is going in with a respectful attitude rather than going with an attitude of, 'You're actually here to meet me.' I'm there to meet you, so I want to know as much as I can.*
> Anglo-Celtic woman - Griffith

Note that she specifically refers to the ethical dimensions of her desire to learn how to 'say hello' in the other languages. She appears to be very aware of the importance of not expecting the cultural other to simply assimilate to her way of doing things, and that there should be some level of equality in such exchange, rather than paternalism.

While there has been some attention in the migration literature paid to the role intra-ethnic immigrant networks play in the settlement process (cf: Vasta & Kandilige 2007; Waldinger 2005), less has been said about inter-ethnic networks. We found that transversal enablers played a key role in sharing local knowledge about Australian society and suburban neighbourhoods. They would actively attempt to work out what newer comers needed, and open up networks of knowledge and assistance. Most commonly this had to do with local knowledge around shopping, schools and local services, and opening up friendship networks to assist new arrivals access employment. A good example is this farm manager's wife in Griffith:

> *… with my husband's job, we have a lot of people that come, not just from interstate but overseas, to work for him, and so … as a farm manager's wife, I take it upon myself to, you know, go by and say, 'Look, when you've got time, I'll take you on what I call the* Housewives' Tour*', so then we take them to all the bargain places, I take them to supermarkets, and if they are from another country, I show them different shopping items that are equivalent to something that I think they might need. I sit and I talk to them about, you know, just even food, but they may not be able to even prepare their family meals as they would normally, because they can't find the ingredients. … so I just do things like that.*

Transversal enablers helped to produce knowledge networks. Gossip was often used by them to let other members of the local community know who was new, what they were like, what cultural orientations they had, and what they might need. In most cases gossip seemed principally to be employed to produce information networks and knowledge sharing as a means of assisting new arrivals. However theorists such as Gluckman do speak of some of the more problematic social control aspects of gossip. It functions as a means of social control because 'when you gossip about your friends to other mutual friends you are demonstrating that you all belong to one set which has the duty to be interested in one another's vices as well as virtues' (Gluckman 1963, pp. 313-314). While the transversal enablers for the most part shared information for positive ends, there were instances of gossip expressing disapproval over behaviour deemed inappropriate or culturally incompatible. This was particularly prominent when it came to issues where a major clash of religious or cultural values was present, such as gender codes circumscribing the behaviour of Afghani Muslim women.

## Non-dominant forms of host-guest relations

A further characteristic of transversal enablers was that they tended to host or facilitate gatherings involving food, song and other forms of embodied commensality, and initiated everyday rituals involving diverse members of the community. Secular, or everyday rituals can function to produce some level of social solidarity and affirm social ties (Komter 2005, p. 121). To qualify as transversal, such everyday rituals need to incorporate diverse traditions and be open in their orientation. An example of everyday ritual is related by this farm manager's wife, who has instituted a tradition of regular gatherings for her diverse farm workers.

> *"There are always cup of tea, coffee, and a biscuit, maybe some free morning, fifteen minutes, and afternoon they have afternoon tea. They have half an hour or hour lunch, and that's it. And they always make barbecue when they finish.*
>
> *We always have a table there, and talk, and so on. There's talk about family, sometimes sport, sometimes people go for wedding, or what's happening, about cooking, and a lot of fun with… a lot of girls are from Taiwan and Timor, and always happy little girls, and laughing, and bring something. They have lunch, they give us to try what they do, I bake a cake, I always give somebody too, some. You know, biscuits or cake, then we share."*
>
> Italian (2nd Generation) farmers wife speaking about her culturally diverse farm workers.

The Transversal Enablers in this study appeared to be aware, at least in everyday terms, of the problems of an uneven distribution of power in a dominant culture guest/host relationship. In his recent book 'Respect', Sennett (2003) points out that for Mauss, 'The Gift' doesn't have to be about equality of exchange. In Mauss's view too much equality of exchange simply turns exchange into transaction. Yet Mauss

still believed that 'those who benefit' from a gift, 'must give something back, even if they do not and cannot give back an equivalent'…as Sennett points out, 'they must do so to achieve respect in the eyes of others and their own' (Sennett 2003:219). Indeed, for Sennett, mutuality is the very foundation of respect because 'if we ask nothing in return, we do not acknowledge the mutual relationship between ourselves and the person to whom we give' (2003: 219).

The transversal enablers were aware at some level about this politics of reciprocity, particularly the problems associated with a dominant culture 'host' being in a position of power (and sometimes paternalism) through giving without return. They would typically attempt to ensure the social situations they created for interacting with cultural others had some kind of reciprocity involved. This extended from a stated expectation that the cultural 'guest' should contribute in some way to the occasion, to a more nebulous emphasis that both equally benefited from the engagement. This kind of orientation is present in the following extract from an interview with a Maori[iv] woman from Griffith.

> *We passed by the pub, and there was this large group of men staying there who looked like they were from Sudan, and so the next day I went…, I just thought, well, I'll take the initiative, go down and introduce myself …  They were new farm workers… just arrived.*
>
> *I think Christmas Eve, I drove by, they were still there. … So I went home, and I asked my husband what did he think of going to invite them to come to Christmas dinner?*
>
> *I didn't know what they ate.  It didn't matter.  They just ate whatever we did, and you know, we discussed over food, we discussed what it was they did eat, and they…*
>
> *…we asked questions, and they introduced themselves, and we made a really huge effort to remember their names, and remember things they spoke about, and do you know every culture, or every country, or every group has songs or folklore, or something, so in our home, when we invite people, we often say, 'We'll feed you, but you have to sing for us!' so they were more than happy to sing, and so they had a guitar and they sang, and just wonderful….*
>
> Griffith Maori (New Zealand) woman

Her insistence that her guests 'sing, or bring an instrument' represents an attempt at 'evening out' the mutuality of the gift exchange; she provides food, they sing.  While there remained many instances of 'hosting' or 'welcoming' newcomers, there was always an emphasis on encounters that had some form of reciprocity involved.

Returning to the earlier discussion, experiences of embodied commensality (such as sharing food, and to a lesser extent dance and music) come up again and again in these narratives of interaction and reciprocity. Crucially, this kind of food reciprocity was not about 'appreciating difference' from a distance. Hage has developed a fairly robust critique of some forms of celebratory multiculturalism where a middle class

'cosmo-multicultural' elite appreciate and consume cultural difference as exotica from a disengaged standpoint, while remaining at the centre with the power to decide who and what to tolerate (Hage 1997, 1998). The encounters described here were qualitatively different to this kind of stance in that they had an emphasis on mutuality and inter-subjective engagement and included interactions as much between minority community members as between minority and majority cultures.

> *"The Afghani ladies have come to my house probably once a month, and that has been wonderful.*
>
> *They first of all were a bit unsure about why I was doing it, why I was inviting them. They were a bit apprehensive. Why? What is it? What's happening? But after a while they couldn't wait to come, because they'd come, they'd kick off their veils and their shoes, and they'd have…*
>
> *I'd show them all the Australian food like pavlovas and lamingtons, sandwiches[v]."*

Anglo-Celtic woman from Griffith, early 70s,

While exchanges of food and information about it are at the heart of many of these exchanges, this extract above highlights that it is not the cosmo-multiculturalist version of consuming the 'ethnic other'. Indeed, in this instance, the Anglo-Celtic woman constructs Australian food (lamingtons and so on) as having an Anglo 'ethnic' identity, which she shares with the Afghani women in a situation of hospitality. Moreover, the foods she chooses to highlight – lamingtons and pavlovas—have a particular history as 'gift plates', brought along to share at 'ladies gatherings', and sold to raise funds at school fetes, for churches, scouts and other charitable activities. Highlighting these foods and including them in the regular gatherings, this woman is in a sense constructing these Afghani women into this narrative of community, interweaving the sensual and material biographies of these food items and the forms of commensality they traditionally represent, to incorporate or these 'strangers'. As Carrier has argued, such gifts 'bear a general cultural meaning, but they also bear the particular personal meaning of the relationship in which they are transacted' (Carrier 1991, p. 133)

## Production of spaces of intercultural care

The gatherings convened by the Anglo-Celtic lady above may also be characterised as producing a space of care – specifically, 'intercultural care'. For example, helping cultural others with their English was a prominent theme in the research. This interview extract from a 90 year old Anglo-woman from Ashfield is a good example of such relations of care:

> *Rose: Our neighbours are Lebanese, and she was sent out here to marry him at the age of 15, which I don't approve of. Anyway she's a lovely young woman. She has two lovely little boys, they're seven and five. But Arabic was their natural language, and when they were tiny they didn't hear English. Their grandparents lived here. The father in there was born here, but he's still very Lebanese in his thinking. Twice a week the seven year old comes in here, and I'm teaching him to read, and we have a wonderful time.*

*Interviewer:      Has that helped with relationships, neighbourly relationships?*
*Rose:    Oh they're very grateful.  She brings in great plates of fruit and all that sort of thing.*
*Interviewer:      So you give them something by helping with the English?*
*Rose:    Yes, but I don't need it, it's just a pleasure to teach the little chap, he's   lovely.*

Spaces of care are shared accomplishments which Conradson defines a involving a space constituted by practices of care, where care is defined as  'the proactive interest of one person in the well-being of another and as the articulation of that interest (or affective stance) in practical ways' (Conradson 2003, p. 508). In everyday multicultural neighbourhoods, the production of such spaces and relations of care have the potential to produce intersections of mutual responsibility that reach across difference without erasing it. This is a form of everyday civitas, which is somewhat different to the identity politics bound conceptions of official multiculturalism where each group is imagined as having defined borders.

# Gift exchange and quotidian recognition

The concepts of gift exchange and reciprocity flow strongly through this chapter. By 'gift', I refer both to exchanges of material objects, and to reciprocity of care and service (Komter 2005, p. 27). The exchanges discussed here are more than just transactional ones. They have an ethical dimension which might be described as 'quotidian recognition', as against the formalistic recognition of group identities and rights as articulated by theorists' such as Taylor (Taylor 1994). Hage argues that;

 *"Perhaps the foundation of all ethical practices, and certainly the foundation of any social ethics is precisely this: relating to the presence of the other as gift. … Because the other, <u>through my desire to interact with him or her</u>, offers me, by making it visible, my own humanity. When I interact with others and I fail to receive from them the gift of the common humanity that we share, when I fail to see them as offering such a gift, it means that I consider such others as less than human."  (Hage 2003:151)*

The exchanges and interactions outlined so far are all experienced (or at least described by participants thus) some level of pleasure at giving, which, it is possible, is not too far removed from what Hage describes as recognising in the other their 'gift of common humanity'. These forms of exchange and reciprocity hold out the potential to prepare subjects able to see cultural others as 'gift'. I call these practices of 'quotidian recognition'.  As is well known, Taylor has argued for a politics of multicultural recognition by way of a model of differential citizenship which recognises individuals and groups 'in their distinctiveness' (Blum 1998:52). By employing the notion of quotidian recognition I hope to, if not overcome some of the problems with Taylor's model to do with its emphasis on the promotion and maintenance of group cultural identities, then to augment it. Noble is critical of approaches to recognition which turn concrete others into 'ciphers for wider

categories of ethnic identity' (Noble 2008, p. 4). Taylor's conception of multicultural recognition does not deal well with the kinds of hybridised, fluid and cross-cutting identities that are produced through intercultural exchange and crossing at the level of inter-subjective engagement. However as Young points out, following Honneth, 'a person's sense of dignity and worth derives from interaction with others who care for him or her, and acknowledge him or her as contributing to their own well being' (Young 2007, p. 193) Honneth's model of recognition places a good deal of emphasis on the realm of inter-subjective encounters involving relations of 'love'—is not confined to romantic love, and includes the primary care relationship between parent and child, as well as relations within the intimate sphere, and close friendships. Following Hegel, Honneth characterises these as the pre-condition, or structural core of all ethical life, of a capacity for recognition that carries over to the generalised other (Honneth 1995, pp. 107-108). Despite emphasis on the intimate sphere, the role of encounter in his model seems to stop at the boundary of family and intimate friendship from where he leaps to much larger scale relations of recognition in the legal, institutional or state spheres. What I would like to propose is that neighbourly cross-cultural encounters not necessarily close enough to describe as 'friendship', does in fact, through a relation of care, does at some levels produce capacities for the recognition or acknowledgement of otherness in situational specificity. This speaks to Noble's lament that some philosophical models effectively describe a moral ideal, but say little about how one 'does' recognition in situated everyday practice and whether this even entails recognising 'difference' in all instances. He argues that we need to 'look at the set of practices outside that state that invoke solidarity and difference in everyday life (see also Hage 2003, p. 144; Noble 2008, p. 5). The encounters described in this chapter then, perhaps represent no so much philosophical ideal, but examples of how in everyday situations, subjects approximate modes of recognition in practice, and in turn how a certain ethical relation is established, and how identities are reconfigured in the process. The narratives presented in this chapter suggest what recognition might look like in certain situated contexts of everyday practice.

Quotidian recognition recognises difference through everyday exchange and encounters, but also incorporates the inevitable transversal transformation of difference and the intersectional relations of care produced. Quotidian recognition might look something like this: … 'I recognise you in the moment as related to me through this loosely connected place community, but different from me, through your stories, your objects, your gifts.  I am also responsible to you and you to me through this gift exchange and mutuality of care, and this carries over to how I view others of your kind'.

These exchanges produce what might be termed 'spaces of care' and involves an ethics of encounter (Conradson 2003: 508). These are prosaic situations which

produce a feeling of mutual care. This mutual care is able to carry over beyond the moment to how subjects view abstract others –by way of a disposition of gratitude which emerges from the relations of reciprocity. By gratitude I don't by any means mean the lopsided gratitude of the host/guest relationship where the migrant is expected to feel eternally grateful to the white hosts. The gratitude I refer to instead can be read as a bodily affect and rests on a basis of mutuality and reciprocity. Gratitude, as Simmel characterises it (Simmel 1950, p. 388) 'is an ideal living on of a relation which may have ended long ago, and with it, the act of giving and receiving'. He argues that although it is a purely personal affect '. . . gratitude's thousand fold ramifications throughout society make it one of the most powerful means of social cohesion' (Simmel 1950: 388). As he says, 'it creates innumerable connections, ideal and concrete, loose and firm, among those who are filled with gratitude toward the same giver' (388). Moreover, he argues, importantly, that it is not simply thanking a person for what they do. It can be an exchange of recognition and gratitude for one another's existence. Simmel, for this reason, calls gratitude the 'moral memory of humankind' and characterises it as 'an ideal bridge which the soul comes across again and again, upon provocations too slight to throw a new bridge to the other person, it uses to come closer to them' (388). In this way it embodies two important aspects, for me, of intercultural living, which is mutual hospitality and recognition, which together can produce a flow-on effect.

These forms of reciprocity also have the capacity to produce fluid boundaries. Ien Ang sees these everyday exchanges as contributing to "the incremental and dialogical construction of lived identities which slowly dissolve the boundaries between the past and the future' (Ang 2001, p. 11). This is akin to John Urry's notion of 'fluidity' (Urry 2000, p. 187) of boundaries 'neither boundaries nor relations mark the difference between one place and another. Instead, sometimes boundaries come and go, allow leakage or disappear altogether, while relations transform themselves without fracture. Sometimes, then, social space behaves like a fluid' (Mol and Law 1994: 643, cited in Urry 2000, p. 187).

As Mauss and other theorists of the gift have argued, gifts are inalienable; they are, says Mauss, 'to some extent part of persons' (Mauss 1969:11). They are 'inalienably linked to the giver, the gift generates and regenerates the relationship between giver and recipient' (Carrier 1991, p. 125).  As Carrier points out 'Mauss's model suggests that there is more involved than general cultural meaning. Objects derive identity or meaning from the specific personal relationships in which they are transacted'(Carrier 1991, p. 132). Gifts of care and service across cultural difference help to dissolve boundaries because  food, stories, song, and cultural dispositions around 'good manners' carry with them a 'cultural scent' which intermingles with the affects produced in the relationship of reciprocity. In this way, the narratives of how to eat the food, who cooked it, where it came from and so on produce cultural through a space of situational care.

It is then, this kind of exchange which is close to what Sennett is referring to when he says 'exchange turns people outward' (Sennett 2003, p. 226) with the potential to produce a more general disposition of trust beyond the concrete to the abstract other through creating the conditions of possibility for inter-cultural trust. Simmel again, argues that trust involves a degree of cognitive familiarity with the object of trust that is somewhere between total knowledge and total ignorance. … When faced by the totally unknown, we can gamble but we cannot trust' (Lewis & Weigert 1985, p. 970). This disposition emerged numerous times in the study where research participants who had received cross-cultural gestures of care extracts from the concrete other—such as an elderly Anglo women saying 'my Chinese neighbours are lovely because they help carry my shopping bags up the stairs of the block of flats'—to the abstract other, in saying that 'and so Chinese are really great'.

## Contact Zones/Danger zones

This last section reflects briefly upon some of the more problematic aspects neighbourly encounters across difference. So far the chapter has explored mostly stories of positive exchange, however a number of 'failed encounters' and foiled attempts at cross-cultural exchange did emerge during the research and these are worth some reflection. A further discussion of some of the issues around power relations, romanticism and paternalism in prescriptive ideals of neighbourliness follows.

Everyday cross-cultural exchanges can be fraught when participants are unaware of some of the different cultural orientations involved. The importance of the kinds of knowledge transversal enablers can bring is apparent in a couple of examples raised by Muslim participants in the study. An Afghani woman in Griffith—fairly newly arrived as a refugee—recounted her distress at feeling she had no option but to withdraw from the residents of other backgrounds she had come to know when she arrived in town due to cultural and religious differences. She put this down to a negative experience she had when she attended a Christmas party hosted by her husband's Italian employer where she felt a great deal of discomfort at the inappropriate (from her point of view) gender mixing and drinking involved.

*Fatima:*　　*Last time for Christmas party, my husband, his manager, his boss, had Christmas party in their house, their own house…　We went to the party, but I sit around all another people, I don't like to mix another people.　So I go sit in the…sit alone.*

*Interviewer:*　*Who were the communities who were there?　Which communities?*

*Fatima:*　　*Italian people. But I see a couple of drink people, because I'm Muslim. The drink people maybe come and maybe do bad things... Something like that.*

*Interviewer:    And did you get to talk with the ladies?*
*Fatima:          Yes, before they start drinking. (laughs)*

The Italian boss and his wife were obviously full of good intensions, wanting to include their new Afghani workers in their social circle and help them settle into life in Griffith. But for all the positive intentions, this is a situation which, without the appropriate cultural mediation, produced the unintended consequence of making the guests feel excluded and in the longer term, making them feel nervous about future cross-cultural mixing. Here is the same woman talking a bit later about her views now that she has had a few bad experiences. Her early encounters with those unaware of Muslim religious taboos have made her wary of contact involving food and alcohol in particular.

> *Fatima:          They different culture, they different people. … now I learn, I don't like to share with another people food or drink.*
> *Interviewer:    You don't like to share food with people from another community?*
> *Fatima           Yes, because another people may eat pork or dog. Chinese eat dog, Vietnamese eat dog, or drink. I can't feel like that, I don't know.*
> *Fatima:          I share my food. I'm bringing some plate or dish or something like that, but I don't like to eat from another dish, because I don't know what's in there.*
> *Interviewer:    But if they tell you what's in there, will you eat it?*
> *Fatima:          Yeah.*

Her story emphasises the important role transversal enablers may play in preparing in advance both host and guest by 'educating' them on differing cultural customs that may offer points of affinity or disjuncture. In this case, the Italian boss may have felt it more appropriate perhaps to invite the Afghani woman and her husband to a lunch where alcohol was not present, rather than a high spirited Christmas party. Conversely, many Muslims are unaware that drinking is not necessarily about getting drunk and that there are many 'civilised' ways of drinking socially, that also include women.

Returning to the earlier discussion on gift exchange, an important point to highlight in the narrative above, however, is that despite the Afghani woman's reticence to try the food from other groups, she emphasises that she still contributes her 'share' when it comes to social situations where guests contribute food.

While the stories recounted so far are by and large positive, there are situations where neighbourliness can be somewhat judgemental and only certain practices tolerated. Moreover, while most people wish to feel welcomed, there is a point at which too much 'welcome' or neighbourliness can be experienced as paternalism,

nosiness, or simply too much work. It is then important maintain the right to be left alone, to remain invisible when it suits.

Furthermore, as Valentine has argued, propinquity and urban civility in diverse spaces is not the same as having respect for difference (Valentine 2008, p. 332). She argues further that there are differential capacities to participate in micro-encounters of the cross-cultural kind, and that the power to tolerate is not evenly distributed (ibid). She also has reservations about the extent to which positive cross-cultural encounters of the everyday kind can be scaled up beyond the moment.

Valentine's scepticism of encounter and neighbourliness echoes that of Fortier who has recently argued the UK Home Office's recent focus on inter-ethnic 'neighbourliness' as central plank of the government's community cohesion strategy is steeped in a moralistic discourse of conditional tolerance (Fortier 2008, pp. 69-86) where the fantasy of local neighbourly love across difference (within limits) is projected onto the nation. She argues that this is in fact based upon a predominant fear of segregation, where 'mixing was widely hailed as the antidote to segregation, disaffection, distrust, hate and fear all of which results from too much sameness' (Fortier 2008, p. 72). Her critique is that government sponsored 'mixing' interventions and policies tend to calcify cultures within boundaries across which one should mix. She suggests that this in fact keeps the other at a distance, enclosed within their culture (p. 74). Nonetheless, Fortier's objections largely lie in the way mixing and propinquity are framed as discursive, moral ideals, whereas the relations of mutuality discussed in this chapter are intended to highlight instead how identities and biographies of real, lived individuals are reconfigured in the process of transversal exchange.

## Conclusions

An ethnographic perspective on everyday multiculturalism can help to understand the lived experience of cultural complexity inherent in what Vertovec has described as 'super-diversity'(2007). Far from the scare tactics of some politicians who decry the formation of 'ethnic ghettos' and segregated cities, on the ground there are real possibilities for non-assimilationist forms of integration to emerge. While places such as Griffith have their own internal dynamics which possibly enhance or make more obvious some of these processes, everyday interactions across cultural difference happen in every diverse locality, knitting together the here and there, the then and now, the local and diasporic.

There are theorists who argue that mere co-existence in diverse cities can produce a cosmopolitan disposition – where 'indifference to difference' and 'toleration' of side-by-sideness are the most ethical form of co-inhabitance (cf: Donald 1999). However as Amin (2002, p. 976) has argued, coming to terms with difference 'is a matter of everyday practices … and it needs to be inculcated as a habit of practice (not just co-presence).'  He is cynical about the possibility of simply engineering togetherness

through public space and enforced mixing through public housing and the like arguing that it is what he calls 'micro-publics' where cross-cultural engagement most likely takes place: workplaces, schools, colleges, youth centres, sports clubs, community centres, community gardens, child-care facilities, and local sporting teams (Amin 2002; Sandercock 2003). These are prosaic sites of interdependence, engagement and negotiation (Amin 2002, p. 976). I argue that the sorts of transversal practices and exchanges described in this chapter hold out similar potential. However as Valentine notes (Valentine 2008, p. 332), while everyday convivial encounters are important, they do not ensure a culture of tolerance. Inequalities must be recognised and addressed, and policies aimed at developing meaningful interethnic contact also need to pay attention to building the capacity of marginalised groups to participate.

The forms of mutuality in cross-cultural engagement and welcome facilitated by transversal enablers are different to the dominant culture guest-host relations inherent in what was known in Australia as the 'Good Neighbour Movement'. A precursor to subsequent multicultural policies, the Good Neighbour Movement was funded between the 1950s and 1970s by Australia's Department of Immigration and operated in both cities and country towns to welcome 'New Australians' (as they were colloquially known) into local communities. It involved members of churches, Country Women's' Associations, Parents and Citizens committees, youth and returned soldiers' organisations, Rotary clubs and many other voluntary bodies. Their original role was to welcome white British migrants, but this extended to the European migrant intake of the post-war period. Volunteers were, by and large, Anglo-Celtic Australians. Members of the movement would be tasked with welcoming new arrivals, introducing them into the local community and to local services, inviting them to social functions, explaining local laws and customs and so forth. Perhaps well intended, the program eventually received criticism for its paternalistic approach, and the 'culture blindness' of the services offered. Many of the volunteers also seemed to have in mind that their role was to help the new 'ethnics' assimilate to 'our way' of doing things. Not surprisingly, the movement was eventually replaced in the mid 1970s by the model of multiculturalism and multicultural service provision Australia is more familiar with today, where culturally specific settlement services are preferred, and where possible ethnic communities themselves are considered the most effective means of delivering such services.

However, this legitimate shift away from 'welcome committees' towards the multicultural service provision model may have resulted in a perception among long-time (particularly Anglo-Celtic) Australians that they no longer had 'permission or responsibility to care' about their diverse co-citizens. It may be argued that this shift in responsibility of care from everyday people to the state in some ways removed the responsibility of multicultural recognition from the realm of

everyday practice, refocusing it on the institutional level. While an essential step, in the process something was lost; the responsibility of everyday people to engage in modes of quotidian recognition of others. Anglo-Celtic Australians seem confused about know what such recognition should look like in practice, how they might 'do' it, and what role they might play.

While I am suggesting that some of the forms of transversal exchange documented in this chapter offer some possibilities to fill this gap, a cautionary note is warranted; there also needs to be 'permission to be left alone', and its important not to romanticise closed forms of community and a small-town forms of surveillance. However this is different to arguing that culturally diverse communities should live side by side without any form of intersectional engagement, care and mutuality. Further, many of the exchanges discussed here occur often as much between minority cultures, as between mainstream Anglo-Celtic Australians and 'others', thus challenging some of the Euro-centrism that tends to dominate analyses of intercultural exchanges (Narayan 1997, p. 162).

Power relations are always present in place sharing as are various degrees of intolerance and cross-cultural discomfort. Questions of place as representation and ideology have to be considered in dialogue with the sorts of social relations and practices discussed in this chapter. However at a time of increasing anxieties surrounding 'segregation' and a decline in social capital in highly diverse western cities (Phillips 2006; Putnam 2007) it is surprising how little is known about who, where, how and why people get on in multicultural suburbia, how diversity is lived on the ground, from below, in the borderlands, in  contact zones. And the closer one looks, the more it becomes obvious that 'parallel lives' is not necessarily the prevailing norm.

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[i] I borrow the term 'Working Class Cosmopolitans' from Werbner (Werbner 1999), while 'multiculturalism from below' is adapted from Smith & Guarnizo's notion of 'transnationalism from below' (Smith & Guarnizo 1998)

[ii] 'Anglo-Celtic Australians' is commonly used in the Australian context to denote the majority white population descended from settlers from the UK. It is a controversial term in that it excludes white Australians of continental European extraction. However it is my preferred term as it highlights the contextual complexities of whiteness. In the Australian context under the white Australia policy, to be most 'white' meant being of English, Irish, Welsh or Scottish 'stock'. Only post-war were 'whites' from Europe accepted, and even then there was a hierarchy of whiteness with Northern Europeans at the top, and those from southern Europe, especially Greece and Italy at the bottom.

[iii] For a good overview of the term transversality in Guattari's work, see Genosko (2002).

[iv] Maori are the first peoples of New Zealand.

[v] Pavlovas and Lamingtons are typically Anglo-Australian cakes, while sandwiches, as for the English, are typical lunchtime fare. Pavlova is a meringue based desert cake often topped with strawberry and kiwi fruit. It was popularised in Australia during the 1930s and seen as quintessentially Australian. Lamingtons are small squares of sponge cake with chocolate and coconut icing popularised around the early 1900s. They were often sold to raise funds for churches, schools, scouts etc, at what became known as 'Lamington Drives'. The practice is dwindling in the cities, but a Lamington fundraising stall is still a common sight in many Australian country towns. They are also often found served with tea at Australian citizenship ceremonies.