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Get Krack!n:

Intersectional Comedy Goes Mainstream

When the comedy show *Get Krack!n* premiered on the public national ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) television network in 2017 as part of the broadcaster's Wednesday night comedy line-up, it marked the crossover of its creators and stars, Kate McLennan and Kate McCartney, from a niche web platform to primetime exposure. Although each of them had been working in the entertainment industry for many years, McCartney and McLennan first came to national prominence with their online comedy *The Katering Show*, which debuted on YouTube in 2015. Their earlier series had parodied the cooking show, and *Get Krack!n* took on the similarly ubiquitous format of the "breakfast" or "morning television" show. The new show was acclaimed as a popular and critical success, and as a watershed moment in Australian television: "That the ABC has managed to outrate the rest and please News Corp with a vulgar half-hour created by two feminists is a moment the national broadcaster should pause to enjoy" (Razer 2017). Much of the acclaim was generated around *Get Krack!n*'s expert parody of its source material: the "relentlessly cheerful, one-dimensional view of life offered by Australian morning television." As this reviewer goes on to note, this is a genre "based on denial: denial of the realities of bodies, of bigotry, and of racism, and it's a denial that is perfectly captured by *Get Krack!n*" (Colwell 2019). McCartney and McLennan populate the program with bodies and identities that do not "fit" in this format; the show plays with the disruption effected by the presence of non-white women, disabled women, and gay women to expose the constructedness of commercial television and the blinkered worldview it offers.

Across the eight episodes of Series 2, which aired in early 2019, the intersectional feminist politics of *Get Krack!n* became more sharply focussed. Here, I am using *intersectional feminism* to describe a perspective that considers aspects of identity alongside and within those of gender, attending to "the connections between multiple axes of oppression and exclusion, on the understanding that these are not simply 'additive' but constitute distinct experiences and subjectivities" (Gill 2014, 510). While in Series 1 *Get Krack!n* featured several moments where the persistent association of feminism with white, educated,

middle-class women was challenged, Series 2 explicitly addressed issues of race, class, sexuality, and disability.

This intersectional focus positions *Get Krack!n* differently to other media products which have emerged in Australia during the resurgence of pop-cultural interest in feminism over the past decade. In the Australian media the emphasis has most often been on celebrity or "popular" feminism, a form of feminism which is "broadly invested in upholding the status quo and not enacting any kind of systemic overhaul" (Ford and Macrossan 2019, 59). As Sarah Casey and Juliet Watson have shown, this plays out through an "overrepresentation in the mainstream media of white, middle to high socio-economic status, heterosexual, able-bodied women who could also be considered *relatively safe*, or *palatable*" (2017, 4, emphasis in original). These voices are deemed acceptable and given prime media space, whereas "unpalatable" voices, including those expressing an intersectional politics, "are outliers and are viewed as more difficult or dogmatic" (2). Casey's and Watson's theorisation of the palatable-unpalatable dynamic in Australian celebrity feminism offers a useful framework for understanding the unique position of *Get Krack!n*, a product espousing so-called unpalatable perspectives within the ostensibly palatable format of ABC Wednesday-night comedy.

In this paper I examine the feminist agenda of *Get Krack!n* within the context of mockumentaries, sketch comedy shows, and other forms of comedy verité, and show how it is facilitated by the distinct performative approach of the program. The segmented nature of the breakfast television format, and its reliance on a constant turnover of commentators, experts, and interviewees, enables each episode of *Get Krack!n* to feature various guest performers; and it is in the use of guest performers that this show's agenda becomes apparent. In a field dominated by male writers and conservative feminism which feeds the neoliberal status quo, *Get Krack!n* instead places stars of Australian entertainment alongside stage and stand-up performers whose work is far less recognised in mainstream culture, thereby enabling the program to become a site of extraordinary diversity—of identities, performance styles, and points of view and thus to function as a form of deeply political performance of a kind that is normally relegated to the fringe.

Krack!n Breakfast TV

In 2016, the second series of *The Katering Show* was commissioned to stream on ABC iview, the broadcaster's video-on-demand service, promptly becoming "the most watched ABC iview original series ever" (Kentera 2016). The success of this venture saw McLennan and McCartney take a significant further step, with a commission to produce a new program for ABC free-to-air television in partnership with Film Victoria and Seeso, the comedy channel for NBC Universal's streaming platform. At the time of its launch, *Get Krack!n* was a high-profile example of a developing trend in Australian television production, whereby web-based ventures become the catalyst for more network broadcast products, "actively disrupting traditional practices of script development" and empowering the audience in the process of production (Tofler, Batty, and Taylor 2019, 73). What's more, the association with the American NBC network fed into *Get Krack!n*'s conceit: a

breakfast television show which airs "at 3am Australian time in order to hit America mid-morning, the day before" (McLennan in Knox 2017).

This temporal dissonance contributes significantly to the aura of the show as always slightly off, an aura that continues through the flimsy set, often incompetent or resentful cast and crew, and awkward demeanour of the hosts. In *Get Krack!n*, McLennan and McCartney work to adopt the proper demeanour of breakfast television hosts but repeatedly fail. While McLennan is overly fawning and familiar, becoming desperate in her efforts at likeability, McCartney is frequently hostile, looking at the camera with suspicion and distaste. Their approach powerfully exposes the performativity at work in the breakfast television host's presentation of self. Breakfast television is a genre which is "full of contradictions": it has to be "fast-paced and relaxed at the same time"; it is highly segmented and constructed yet works to foster a sense of flow and natural unfolding (Wieten and Pantti 2005, 28). *Get Krack!n*, on the other hand, lurches from segment to segment, with the hosts frequently unaware of the next progression, or becoming overwhelmed by their personal preoccupations and animosities.

By taking on the breakfast or morning television genre, *Get Krack!n* parodies a format that has been ubiquitous on television over the last forty years. Such programs, typically broadcast between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m., combine news, interviews, analysis, light entertainment, and lifestyle advice. Each episode of *Get Krack!n* follows the hosts entering the set and moving to the couch, which is placed on a centre podium. The couch is ground zero of the morning television format, the site where the hosts are at their most relaxed and "natural," engaging in a performance of intimacy. It is around these moments that the audience is invited most directly into the world of the program, and in which the dependence of this format on personality becomes obvious. In his discussion of the emergence of the Seven Network's *Sunrise* as breakfast television behemoth in the mid-2010s, Stephen Harrington notes the importance of personality to the success of this program: "Whereas television newsreaders have historically been defined by their *lack* of visible personality—that they are mere 'talking heads'—on *Sunrise* we see the news team as 'real' people who are 'like us', and who become part of the family" (2010, 177). *Get Krack!n* parodies this emphasis on the host's "true self" in its casting—our hosts are the two Kates—and by repeatedly taking it too far, as McCartney and McLennan disclose aspects of their medical histories, sex lives, bodily regimens, and childcare arrangements. The personal becomes political as *Get Krack!n*'s focus on the self underscores the simultaneous scrutiny and erasure of women's bodies and behaviours in public life.

Get Krack!n shares features of several comic forms that have achieved success on Australian television, including the sitcom, the sketch comedy show, and the mockumentary, in that it borrows the use of a recognised presentational format as the vehicle for its satire. Australia has produced a number of notable examples of comedies that play with televisual modes. The celebrity interview format was utilised in *The Norman Gunston Show*—a program described as "the genesis of Australian television news parody" (Harrington 2012, 28); the television current affairs show provided the model for *Frontline*; and twenty-four hour cable news networks were the object of satire in *CNNNN: Chaser*

Non-Stop News Network. Harrington identifies these works as examples of what Graeme Turner has theorised as "transgressive television," works that play with perceived conventions and produce a sense of mischief and anarchy. He goes on to list a variety of other works for which this "culture of transgression has proven to be fertile ground" (2012, 29), including *Clive Robertson's Newsworld*, *The Glass House*, *Yes, We Canberra*, and *Newstopia*.

These Australian examples follow in the wake of pioneers of the mockumentary form, such as *Monty Python's Flying Circus* in the UK and *SCTV* and *Saturday Night Live* in the US, who established its primary comic technique, namely "to replicate sober discourses of authority, then position them in such a way as to reveal their absurdity" (Hight 2010, 169). Later works in this genre (notably *Frontline* in Australia) also employed features of the sitcom, including its half-hour broadcast time, self-contained narratives, and use of stereotyped, recurring characters to produce a catch-all category Brett Mills describes as "comedy verité." Through their use of recognisable televisual forms, these shows "function as powerful critiques of the ways in which factual programming presents itself as 'authentic' to its viewers" (Mills 2009, 128), thereby forcing a focus on the performative nature of these shows. In the UK show *The Day Today*, for example, actor Christopher Morris plays the anchor on this parody of nightly television newscasts, cuing "viewers' expected responses by either dramatically emphasising key words within a sentence or switching tone when changing from 'hard' news to 'soft' news" (Hight 2010, 227). Morris's performance strategies, including "how aggressively he put emphasis on words (and not always the obvious words) and the suddenness of his shifts in tone" (ibid.), enable the show to function as satire by exposing the very elements of performance technique that viewers have come to accept as markers of authentic, real, factual TV.

This is also a key technique in *Get Krack!n*. For example, in Episode 2.3, announcing that the day's episode will be devoted to disability awareness, McCartney adopts a solemn tone to remind viewers that yesterday "it was International Google Face Swap Remembrance Day," as the camera cuts to McLennan looking sorrowfully into the camera, before McCartney whoops that "tomorrow it's a Hats Ahoy spectacular!" and they both grin maniacally. The rapid switches in tone and demeanour show how emotion in this context is moulded to fit the moment, inviting us to question issues of feeling and authenticity within the breakfast television format.

Facing a Void

The works of comedy verité described above are dominated by male creators; while they may offer (limited) opportunities for women performers, there is little sense of female authorship in these examples. Comedy remains a fraught arena for women. Commenting on the US context at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Linda Mizejewski notes there has been an upsurge of female comic writers and performers across a variety of platforms in mainstream media (2014, 2). And yet, despite such apparent advances, there remains the ongoing "assumption that a woman's ability to be funny is, in fact, still up for debate," notes Stayci Taylor, with reference to Christopher Hitchens's notorious article

"Why Women Aren't Funny" which appeared in *Vanity Fair* magazine in 2007 (Taylor 2015, 64). Joanne Brookfield's recent volume on women in Australian comedy *No Apologies* (2019) offers some stark statistics and harrowing firsthand accounts of the barriers met by women attempting a career in a field that remains dominated by cis gendered, white, straight males, and consequently, comedy rooms which can be hostile places for women, queer people and people of colour, as writers, and, as Brookfield notes, audience members and performers as well (53-54).

Writing in 1989, comedian Wendy Harmer noted the lack of attention paid to the history of Australian women in comedy, despite the significant and trailblazing work of individuals such as Rita Pauncefort and Dorothy Foster (whose radio banter of the 1940s and 1950s bears comparison with the dynamic between the two Kates), Joy Nichols, Noeline Brown, Dawn Lake, and Mary Hardy (1989, 9). Several of these women enjoyed enormous success in mediums such as radio and live performance but struggled to find a foothold in television. While female comic performers have occasionally been given the opportunity to lead sketch comedy series, such as Lake in *Here's Dawn* (1964-1965), Jean Kittson and Maryanne Fahey in *Kittson Fahey* (1992-1993), and Magda Szubanski, Gina Riley, and Jane Turner in *Big Girl's Blouse* (1994-1995), these have been typically short-lived ventures (see Turnbull 1996, 15-16). Szubanski noted the effects of this absence of women's voices in Australian comedy when she, Riley, and Turner approached writing *Big Girl's Blouse*: "We couldn't find our way in. The history of comedy had all been from the male perspective. Who were our role models? [...] We faced a void" (quoted in Neutze 2015). Feeling like pioneers writing into a void is not unique to female comedians of course; it is a situation mirrored elsewhere in Australian and global contexts, as women have faced greater barriers to inclusion in the visual arts, literature, theatre, and film (Miller 2016), not to mention politics and business (Caust 2018).

In the US and UK, however, the success of the second-wave feminist movement in the 1970s was reflected in a relative expansion of opportunities for female comedians, particularly on television. Maggie Andrews (1998) has shown, for example, how the sitcom format grew to take on the work and arguments of the feminist movement. Drawing on the example of UK program *Butterflies*, Andrews suggests "this sitcom carried into the popular sphere many of the debates and discourses of feminism, which had always been at one level about creating a cultural space for women where they could prioritise their issues and concerns" (1998, 59). Such televisual spaces expanded in the 1980s and early 1990s through shows such as *Roseanne* and *Murphy Brown* in the US and *Absolutely Fabulous* in the UK, but they would take longer to find room in Australia, especially on a mainstream platform. Indeed, the first female-led sitcom to achieve success on Australian television did not come until the twenty-first century, with the launch of *Kath and Kim* on ABC television in 2002. Written by and starring Jane Turner and Gina Riley, the show ran for three successful seasons on the ABC before being picked up by commercial broadcaster Channel Seven for a final season.

While earlier generations of women comedians frequently disavowed feminist intent in their work (Gilbert 2004, 148), *Get Krack!n* wears its feminist politics on its sleeve, striking

at a diverse range of targets. Feminist messages appear as direct statements in the ticker tape newsfeed that runs across the bottom of the screen: "Knews: Mother drafts UN strategy on phone while her kid has swimming lesson." The news broadcast captures both the sobering scale of violence against women in contemporary Australia and the fetishisation of these issues in the media: "In the news, a woman was shot in the face by a man. Another woman was killed by a man. In other news, a woman has been murdered. A woman has been stabbed. A woman has been thrown off a bridge whilst being stabbed" (*Get Krack!n* 1.2, 2017). In Episode 2.6, the difficulty of sustaining a female point-of-view on Australian television is demonstrated when the Kates are sidelined by a male co-host: "Because apparently a lot of you out there think that these two exceptional ladies need to have their 'shrill girl voices' broken up a bit" (2019). Co-host Brendan O'Hara, played by Matt Day, switches between ventriloquising the Kates' words, recasting them through a lens of masculine authority, and reminding the women of their subordinate position in the media landscape. Although this episode may feel "like a very heavy-handed parody," all the dialogue uttered by Brendan O'Hara draws directly from things that have actually been said to McLennan or McCartney or those close to them (McCartney and McClellan 2019), demonstrating the extent to which this comedy is grounded in lived experience.

At other times, a feminist viewpoint is revealed through the narrative content or, most interestingly, a performative approach. The weathergirl segment is a striking example of the latter. Performer Adam Briggs, one half of hip-hop duo A.B. Original and a physically imposing masculine presence, is cast as the show's "radiant" weathergirl Bekjut, enabling the hosts to take reverse sexism to ridiculous lengths. On each occasion, the weathergirl segment becomes an opportunity for the Kates to adopt leering personas and bombard Bekjut with commentary on her appearance: "you look absolutely stunning this morning," McCartney tells the bearded, track-suited Bekjut; "Who had the pleasure of dressing you?" The absurdity of Briggs's casting works in combination with the meanings of his character's name as a play on the name Rebecca Judd—a footballer's wife and former weathergirl renowned for her flawless performance of femininity—to foreground both the archaic quality of such strategies of objectification and their continued currency in contemporary Australian media.

On a number of levels and through a variety of strategies, *Get Krack!n* offers a deeply politicised feminism that is rarely encountered in Australian mainstream media. When formats such as breakfast television (alongside other lifestyle shows and mainstream feminist platforms) promote a feminist message, it is typically furthering a neoliberalist project of empowerment and self-actualisation. As Mizejewski notes, the "empowerment rhetoric of feminism, originally directed toward social change, was instead easily funnelled into an empowerment of the individual through sexuality, femininity, money, and cultural capital" (2014, 8). *Get Krack!n* makes the role lifestyle television plays in neoliberal discourses of self-improvement and self-actualisation a particular focus of its parody. The hollowness of this brand of feminism, its distance from lived experience, is perfectly captured by *Get Krack!n* through the jingle which is played between segments: "*C'mon girl, you can change the world*" an upbeat female voice sings over an image of mundane reality—a battle with fitted sheets, or the struggle to fit a portable kettle back on its stand.

Here McLennan and McCartney function, in Sara Ahmed's terms, as "feminist killjoys," simply as a result of "not finding the objects that promise happiness to be quite so promising" (2010, 65).

Mainstreaming Intersectional Feminism

In Series 2, McLennan and McCartney extend the show's agenda to specifically focus on intersectional feminism: "the importance of a broader, intersectional feminism attentive to the overlapping oppressions and differences of race, gender and class has recently become highly salient in the feminist blogosphere and news reporting" (Kanai 2019, 2). This intersectional focus then is in keeping with trends in contemporary feminism this century, and, as Sarah French notes, the postcolonial Australian theatre context (2017, 232). Originating in Kimberlé Crenshaw's pointed critique of the legal structures that reinforce discrimination on the basis of race and gender, ignoring interactions between the two, intersectionality has since "become something of a catch-all term, frequently used to highlight when certain groups are left out of, or untouched by, particular feminist analysis or activism, rather than analyzing the intersections of varying factors in addressing oppressive actions or the presence of privilege" (Rivers 2017, 122). Claims to intersectionality that do not extend beyond a commitment to inclusivity are therefore insufficient: "when intersectionality becomes synonymous with promoting diversity in this way, there is a danger that it simply becomes a box-ticking exercise" (ibid.). What *Get Krack!n* manages to do is to further the public discourse on intersectional politics within the more hostile environment of mainstream television—which, as I have shown, has remained stubbornly resistant to feminist narratives and makers—and to do so in a way that is incorporated into the creative process from the outset.

In Episode 2.4, Zoë Coombs Marr, a stand-up comedian whose work "shows it's possible to be a feminist and also the funniest person in the room" (Jackson 2016), appears as EJ Hayes, presenter of a new segment, "Homo Hacks." With its catchy title, disco lighting, and upbeat jingle, McLennan envisages the segment as *Get Krack!n*'s version of *Queer Eye*: "the gays can be so useful for turning something drab into something fab!" McLennan demonstrates that she has wholly absorbed the ethos reflected in popular media that "gay men have an innately privileged access to the knowledge that characterises discerning modes of consumption" (Brady, Burns, and Davies 2018, 46); yet, rather than "a larger-than-life gay man with an innate sense of design," the Kates are offered EJ, a very "average-looking" woman with a ponytail and a wrist support. As EJ, Coombs Marr pushes the trope of ordinariness to the level of banality—EJ's hacks are a series of mind-numbingly obvious examples presented with little sense of flair. She completely fails to capture the interest of the hosts, powerfully defeating the purpose of the segment and evacuating the identity category homosexuality of the meanings it is supposed to hold in this context. EJ, oblivious to her distance from the desired ideal, applauds the show for its inclusivity as the Kates will her to leave, their eyes on the camera. "I just wanted to say thank you so much for having me on… there are still a lot of really negative stereotypes about lesbians, and everyone thinks gay men are the fun ones, so it really just means a lot to represent my community

like this," gushes EJ earnestly, crediting the program for rejecting exactly the position it has in fact just demonstrated.

Persisting in their efforts to "raise awareness," the breakfast show devotes an entire episode (2.3) to "International Day of People Living with a Disability Day," the "one day of the year when *Get Krack!n* puts the focus on disability!" To this end, the set has been festooned with signage, walking sticks, "lowered accessible door handles and this box of easy grip cutlery and lithium," and the addition of an Auslan interpreter. McCartney assures the audience of a "bumper show" that is "wall-to-wall disabled people, except for us," including a live cross to Parliament House for "The Big Disabled Breakfast." However, these enthusiastic gestures of inclusivity are soon undercut, when the first guest, Christie Dawes, a wheelchair racing athlete and former Young Paralympian of the Year, is unable to join the Kates at the couch because they've forgotten to remove the multiple steps that surround it.

In one of the segments for this episode the Kates are joined by Kate Mulvany, a stage and screen performer who has achieved particular renown for her work with the Bell Shakespeare Company, appearing as wellness blogger Skye Hannaford. As Skye, Mulvany employs a passive-aggressive tone that repeatedly skewers the Kates' failure to understand, in their words, the "chronic illness lifestyle that you've chosen." The segment expertly captures the distance between the self-improvement ideologies of neoliberalism and the lived realities of the disabled and chronically ill: "Why aren't you trying to cure yourself with matcha?" asks McLennan in confusion. "I use… drugs," smiles Skye, lifting a large tub of assorted pharmaceuticals onto the counter. Through the use of dissonance—Mulvany's broad, lifestyle-personality smile is starkly at odds with the latent aggression in her words—the segment effectively pillories multiple targets, including the wellness industry, government health policy, and public attitudes to the chronically ill and disabled.

Some viewers took issue with this episode, as a writer to the *Age* newspaper's "Green Guide" television letters demonstrated:

> Chronic illness and serious disability should never be fair game for satirists(?) seeking a place to use their meagre talent. Would that writers, producers and alleged actors be condemned to live a few hours in the skin of a chronically ill or seriously disabled person. (Lay 2019)

The response of this writer reveals the difficulty of producing comedy that puts disabled subjectivity front and centre. The *Get Krack!n* episode is in stark contrast to other examples of disability and chronic illness in television comedy, such as British "dark comedy" of the early 2000s, in which "disabilities are shown as contributing to incidents and situations which are clearly positioned […] to be found humorous by viewers" (Collings 2018, 64), or indeed Australian comedy team the Chaser's infamous 2009 "Make a Realistic Wish Foundation" skit centred around terminally-ill children (Harrison and Strong 2009, 3). Beccy Collings notes how the disabled bodies in dark comedy exhibit what Goffman describes as *stigma signals* (2018, 65). In dark comedy, the creators and performers push

Figure 1. Kate Mulvany as wellness blogger Skye Hannaford, joins hosts Kate McLennan and Kate McCartney on Episode 3, Season 2 of *Get Krack!n,* 2019. Image © ABC Television. Courtesy Tamasin Simpkin.

these bodies to the point of grotesquerie: "the characters are presented as overtly combining the aesthetics of disability or impairment with traditional horror aesthetics, and as individuals who are lacking something; they are 'incomplete'" (2018, 69). In contrast to the world evoked in dark comedy, in *Get Krack!n* it is the two Kates who are shown to be lacking something and incomplete.

Part of the force of the *Age* letter writer's response to the episode may lie in the fact that the Skye character does not exhibit overt features or signs of disability or illness. And yet actor Kate Mulvany lives with chronic pain, the legacy of childhood cancer and its treatment, which left her "with severe spinal malformation. Only half of my back muscle remained after treatment, and only the right side of my vertebrae grew beyond my illness […]. The right-hand side has formed a tight, curved muscular hunch to compensate for an empty left" (Mulvany 2017). Her own physical condition brought Mulvany particular insight to the character of Richard III, which she played to significant acclaim on stage in 2017: "I have the same condition as Richard, severe scoliosis. I know exactly the kind of pain he suffered" (quoted in Blake 2016). Yet this is a pain of which the audience are generally unaware: "I have also had to learn to disguise the physical pain of working with 'half a back.' It is chronic and debilitating and often leaves me almost unable to walk at the end of the day" (Mulvany 2017).

Playing Richard III gave Mulvany a rare moment in her career where she did not have to deny the reality of her body: "[In this role] I can actually exploit it—the scoliosis, the scarring, the missing bits and pieces. Playing Richard, I can walk the way my body wants to, rather than the way I usually present to the world" (quoted in Blake 2016). When Mulvany, as Richard, strips naked on stage and exposes her gendered and "deformed" body, it enhances our understanding of the character's sense of otherness that fuels his anger and hatred. In terms of the politics of representation, it is a powerful moment in Australian theatre. Like her Richard III, Mulvany's performance in *Get Krack!n* is powered by her subjectivity as a woman who lives with disability, but it goes further in its political and affective force. The intersection of gender and disability through the character of Skye Hannaford enhances the sense of invisibility and erasure that attends the experience of chronic pain. It reminds us that women are disproportionately affected as sufferers of chronic pain yet struggle to have their suffering taken seriously (Samulowitz et al. 2018). The affective force of this recognition is revealed in responses to the segment, with hundreds of positive comments on Facebook and Twitter, most of them from women: "[this segment] is bunched up with every NOPE i've [*sic*] tried to give in the last five years at the 'have you tried' army and hurled it at their heads like a grenade made entirely of shit. It sees me. I feel seen" (Kirri 2019).

In its final episode, *Get Krack!n* made its intersectional politics impossible to ignore, in a show that was described as having given "Australian TV its most searing half-hour in living memory" (Moran 2019). The episode was written by McCartney and McLennan in collaboration with Nakkiah Lui, who has become one of Australia's most acclaimed playwrights and a respected commentator on Indigenous issues, with further input from actor Miranda Tapsell. We can read Lui and Tapsell's work in this episode as an example of Aileen Moreton-Robinson's call for an "Indigenous women's standpoint theory," a calling attention to "the sets of complex relations that discursively constitute us in the everyday [yet] are also complicated by our respective cultural differences and the simultaneity of our compliance and resistance as Indigenous sovereign female subjects" (2013, 332). The notions of compliance and resistance reflect the shifting states Tapsell and Lui move between across the course of the episode.

In the previous episode (2.7) of *Get Krack!n*, the Kates' advancing pregnancies had brought them to a state of exhaustion and extreme bodily discomfort. Now, they are in the final stages of pregnancy and have lost all interest in hosting the show, the demands of the body usurping their professional role. McLennan goes into labour and is bustled off to hospital, camera crew in tow, as McCartney discovers, "we are contracted to keep doing the show until one of us crowns." This leaves the guests for the next segment, Lui and Tapsell, to take over hosting duties on set. While Lui is reluctant, Tapsell is enthusiastic about the opportunity, recognising the cultural watershed it represents: "For twenty-five unprecedented morning minutes, two Aboriginal women are going to be hosting this show" (*Get Krack!n* 2.8). Both envisage this as a chance to broaden the meanings of their public personas; for Tapsell to no longer be mistaken for Deborah Mailman (an older, highly successful Aboriginal stage and screen performer), and for Lui to be seen as something other than an "angry Aboriginal woman." The two are promptly given the requisite

Figure 2. Miranda Tapsell and Nakkiah Lui in Episode 8, Season 2 of *Get Krack!n,* 2019. Image © ABC Television. Courtesy Tamasin Simpkin.

makeover into the morning television show uniform of colour-block dresses, alongside repeated powdering of their faces (see fig. 2). Tapsell instructs Lui on the rules that govern their temporary occupation of this space:

> Smile and never complain. Make eye contact. Laugh, and remember everyone's name. Don't ever ask for anything. Say sorry all the time. Order cupcakes for the crew so they like you. Have a face like a Disney squirrel so as not to appear threatening. Be bright, be breezy. Don't make a white lady cry. Don't mention genocide. Definitely don't mention genocide.

Tapsell presents here as eager and committed, excited at the opportunity that has come her way. This presentation masks the horror not only of the tenets she spouts but also her seemingly absolute absorption of them.

Tapsell's speech reflects the labour Ahmed describes women of colour undertaking to ensure they do not cause public discomfort or unhappiness (2010, 67). Thus, by "going along with it," women of colour work to dispel the tension. It is exactly this process that is parodied in the final episode of *Get Krack!n*; in their first couple of segments, Tapsell tries to smooth over Lui's seemingly incorrigible tendency to view the world around her in political terms. The writing here perfectly encapsulates popular feminism's inattention to issues of race; of the ways in which "white feminists can become absorbed in their own

emotions rather than the material conditions affecting black and minority ethnic people" (Swan 2017, 553). In a segment on decorating your mud room, Lui politely questions the statuesque, white "mumpreneur" Catherine McLeod about housing and homelessness, a conversation that does indeed "make a white lady cry," to Tapsell's horror. McLeod is tearfully bewildered by what she sees as Lui's "attack" on *her*, another woman, as "we're all against the same thing—men, and that's it."

From this point in the program, Lui's desire to support Tapsell's endeavours, combined with the mind-altering effects of the constrictive support-wear she has donned, see her give herself over to the devil that is morning television, laughing along with a white supremacist, letting people get her name wrong, and doing "the floss" dance on the podium. In contrast, as the makeup crew return again and again to "whiteout" her face, Tapsell becomes increasingly resistant to the role she is being asked to play, looking on in horror at a segment in which a salesperson advises viewers on bleaching laundry—"the whiter the better!" Tapsell finally erupts during a talking-heads segment on "Does racism exist?" in which the expert panel is composed of three white people. This segment draws direct comparison with an infamous episode on Australian breakfast television show *Sunrise* in March 2018; debating issues of Indigenous child protection policy, the panel "did not include any Indigenous person, made several factually wrong statements, and aired comments by [Prue] MacSween that the stolen generations policy removed children for their own wellbeing and 'perhaps' it should happen again" (Davidson 2018). The segment was met with protests and an investigation by the Australian Communications and Media Authority. The symbolic import of this incident to this episode of *Get Krack!n* is signalled also when the camera cuts to an urn of ashes on the bookshelf, inscribed: "Australian TV: 5-11-1956 – 13-3-2018"; the latter being the date of the *Sunrise* broadcast.

Tapsell launches into an impassioned monologue in which she articulates the work she has put into smoothing things over: "Thirty years of smiling, and making big eyes, and not showing my anger." Now that anger is on full display and harnessed to make a political statement: "Because we are dying in infancy, we are dying in custody, and we are dying decades earlier than you. And you should be as angry about that as I am." Tapsell puts the blame for the inability of Australians to acknowledge the lived reality of Indigenous peoples squarely at the feet of the medium *Get Krack!n* has spent sixteen episodes satirising: "Stop being angry at families who are fleeing war zones, or at schools for teaching kids properly about sex and their bodies or any other thing these bullshit shows tell you to be angry about." As Tapsell proceeds to destroy the set, Lui, inspired by her friend's passion, moves to the camera and offers a heartfelt plea to the audience for connection and understanding: "I have made passionate statements about race in our country, but it's not because I'm angry at you, it's because I believe in you. I know the greatness we are capable of," before she is cut off by Tapsell to join in her rampage. Tapsell's final words and actions destroy any lingering sense of breakfast television shows and their ilk as apolitical light entertainment: "Sovereignty was never ceded," she shouts as she hurls the urn containing the ashes of Australian television, smashing through the glass doors of the set.

Tapsell and Lui enact the "snap," the rupture to the status quo conceptualised by Ahmed as a feminist act: "we snap because of what we have been doing; we snap because where we have been is no longer where we can be" (2017, 200). When Tapsell snaps she becomes the figure that has shadowed this series through every episode: the feminist killjoy. Quite literally—the laughter stops. That this figure is made manifest in this moment, and that the putative hosts of the series have stepped back and given her over to two Indigenous performers, is the clearest proclamation of the show's intersectional politics. The final moments of the series become all about the rage of an angry black woman.

For Ahmed, the snap that produces and is produced by the feminist killjoy is vital but provocative. "Making feminist points, antiracist points, sore points, is about pointing out structures that many are invested in not recognizing" (2017, 158). Forcing their recognition produces resistance and discomfort, as was markedly apparent in some of the public responses to this episode, which demonstrated just "how difficult white people find it to listen to accounts of racism, and their participation in, and benefitting from, racism" (Swan 2017, 557).

In his column of 1 April, conservative commentator Andrew Bolt (2019a) claimed Lui and Tapsell's actions in this episode represented "anti-white racism" of a kind that could lead to retaliatory acts by white supremacists as in the Christchurch mosque shootings of the previous month. Bolt again reflected on the episode in his column of 18 April (2019b), likening the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris to attacks on Western civilisation, and citing Tapsell's shouting "Sovereignty was never ceded" while trashing the *Get Krack!n* studio as an example of the latter. Although the finale was widely acclaimed by critics from a range of media outlets and across forums such as Twitter, responses in the comments sections of even relatively progressive publications such as the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Guardian* were frequently ambivalent if not altogether hostile. "Ralph's" response is typical, reflecting a desire to patronise McLennan and McCartney and put them "back in their place": "Ok girls you've had a crack, no [*sic*] go away and reflect on the unfunny, screeching, shouty disaster of a series" (Moran 2019). In the *Sydney Morning Herald* comments section "Sam_star" writes: "I found it offensive because I felt I was being attacked. I don't sit down at night after a long day at work earning money to pay bills to be screamed at" (Moran 2019). The resentment felt at the violent interruption of Tapsell and Lui's angry black voices into a comfortable night's viewing is palpable here.

Conclusion

In 2016, Matilda Dixon-Smith lamented the fact that, while US feminist comic performers and writers such as Amy Schumer, Mindy Kaling, and Lena Denham enjoyed widespread international coverage, in Australia "feminist television makers are few and far between." Dixon-Smith pointed to Nakkiah Lui, Kate McLennan, and Kate McCartney as examples of artists whose work deserved wider attention in this context: "These women are carving out a space for diverse women's stories on Aussie TV (where diversity is still sorely, embarrassingly lacking); they are spokeswomen for a new feminism that is intersectional, inclusive and gaining in influence. They should be our household names" (2016). A year

later, the appearance of *Get Krack!n* in the 9 p.m. Wednesday comedy slot on ABC free-to-air television would take a decisive step towards making that happen.

It is true that satire and politics have been "deeply intertwined" in Australian television for many decades (Harrington 2012, 28); and yet, the responses to the Tapsell and Lui episode of *Get Krack!n* expose a limit point for the Australian public's ability to find humour in relation to issues of race, and in particular, the outrage of black women. Commenting on the news comedy genre in Australia specifically, Harrington writes, "we as a culture generally appear to be rather comfortable with the deliberate and sustained transgression of the semiotic, generic, and authoritative boundaries of television news" (2012, 28), and this attitude is representative more broadly of Australia's love of "transgressive TV." However, *Get Krack!n,* in its pursuit of a new feminist satire, exposes an Australia decidedly less than comfortable. Claims that the episode perpetrates an "anti-white racism" are shrill and fantastical when we stop to consider just what this is a claim to; just what oppressive structure or systemic disadvantage is being imposed on white Australia by Tapsell and Lui? It is the discomfort of being yelled at, at home on the couch, by women on TV. But this is truly a radical politics, a return to truly transgressive TV, which is the work of satire.

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