

ISSUE NO. 6**Mutt, Monster or Melting-Pot? Mixed-Race Metaphor and Obama's Ambivalent Hybridity****Nathan Rambukkana**

'ObamaNation raped & killed 1,000 Christians'

Kenyan citizen Hussein Obama spent \$1-million in US campaign funds to massacre 1,000 Christians in British Kenya, after his Communist cousin lost the presidential election. 800 Christian churches were arsoned [*sic*], with dozens of people cooked alive. Men and women were raped by Obama supporters. To stop the violence, the Kenyan government was extorted by Obama to make his cousin 'prime minister', a job that did not exist.

~ Anonymous, *piratenews.org*, October 25, 2008

'Obama's Brother in China'

If elected, Obama would be the first genuinely 21st-century leader. The China-Indonesia-Kenya-Britain-Hawaii web mirrors a world in flux. In Kenya, his uncle Sayid, a Muslim, told me: 'My Islam is a hybrid, a mix of elements, including my Christian schooling and even some African ways. Many values have dissolved in me.'

Obama's bridge-building instincts come from somewhere. They are rooted and proven. For an expectant and often alienated world, they are of central significance.

~ Roger Cohen, *New York Times*, March 17, 2008 ^[1]

The above two textual excerpts from the period between February 10, 2007 when Obama announced he was running for the Democratic nomination, and November 4, 2008 when he was elected president, are metonymic of the polar opposite ways Barack Obama's particular hybrid identity is framed and reflected on in the digital public sphere. While the sources are divergent in terms of scope and reach—a mainstream newspaper site and an underground website—the black and white binary of the way they articulate hybridity marks them as part of the same discursive process: one of skinning (Ahmed and Stacey 2001) a powerful and prominent mixed-race subject. This short paper collects some of these varied but linked representations, using a broadly Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis (Foucault 1980), working together

academic and popular discourses and analyzing them in tandem; mixing theory, memory, reflection, and discovery into an archeology of the present cultural moment that pries open the layers of meaning inherent to culture itself.^[2] This flexible method allows us to investigate what these prominent representations of mixed-race and hybrid identities *do*, situated as they are in such a prominent position: attached to a figure as he contended for and then assumed the most privileged seat of power in the US — arguably even world — context.

Drawing on Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey's (2001) concept of dermographia, or skin writing, this paper attempts to read the ways that Obama's skin, as text, is an effect of the various and overlapping ways it is 'surfaced' in discourse. At once a real and material organ that wraps and envelops what is currently the world's most protected of bodies,^[3] Obama's skin is also 'dependent on regimes of writing that mark the skin in different ways or that produce the skin as marked' (Ahmed and Stacey 2001, 15). As such, the skin of the 'leader of the free world' is at once a private and storied flesh, and a public text that emerges in the intertextual dermographia of its multiform figurings. In fact, writing may even be thought of as a form of skin (Ahmed and Stacy 2001, 15), a second skin that acts as discursive layer between ourselves and the world. The skins of hybrids of multiple sorts are ones that are ambiguously written or written upon: fetishized and demonized, worked on and managed from without and within, hybrids are by nature and nurture hacks of the binaries they straddle, and inherently political as such—though not always through a progressive politics. Many times a hybrid figure, Obama's body is fetishized, demonized and detailed across the political spectrum both as signifying object and as symbol of multiple politics.

Much has been said about Barack Obama's body. Even preceding his presidency, Obama was often discussed in a metaphorical manner in the public sphere. Born in Hawai'i to a white mother of mostly English decent, and a Black Kenyan father; raised for a time in Indonesia, and with an Indonesian step-father; and a late-in-life Christian from a family tree containing both Christian and Muslim roots ("Barrack" 2014), his mixed-race, mixed-ethnicity and mixed-religious heritage position him as a hybrid figure *par excellence*. Coverage on Obama collects the full range of charged metaphor and imagery that prehends to hybridity generally and multiraciality specifically: that of the monstrous chimera, insidious half-breed, or untrustworthy mongrel on the one hand, and of the global-citizen, multiculturalism, bridge, and melting-pot America on the other. But this dense layering of tropes cannot be divided into 'good' hybridity metaphor and 'bad', for in addition to the strong links between the negative tropes,

structural racism and Islamophobia, the positive tropes that attach to hybridity generally, and modern mixed-race identities specifically, are also discursively implicated with other problematic ideologies such as top-down globalization (Kraidy 2005, 148), the facile ideals of a non-critical post-racial or race-blind society (Sharma and Sharma 2012), and even colonial narratives such as 'the American Dream' (Berlant 1997). Accordingly, both the positive and the negative tropes used to mark his hybridity are fraught with intertextual meaning, legacies of power, and politics of privilege.

As with many hybrids, the figuring of Obama in discourse is profoundly ambivalent. Discourse that frames Obama's hybrid positionalities as positive and desirable aspects of his bid for political power is as overwhelmingly prevalent in the public sphere as that which paints the opposite picture. As for which is numerically superior, the numbers of possible keyword combinations and literally tens of millions of hits for many search terms make such estimates difficult to gauge – and that is just with respect to English-language discourse. But what we can do is delve into the textuality of supportive and condemnatory metaphor to explore the warp and weave of Obama's discursive figuring from 'melting pot', to 'monster' to 'mutt'.

Obama as Melting Pot

To understand the dermographia that writes Obama as a bridging figure and rhetorical figure for change, it is useful to delve into the archive of hybridity writing, and to note, as well, its popular uptake and mythical appropriation. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha discusses the role that hybridity can—and, indeed, *must*—take on with respect to a more positive and constructive mode of postmodern and postcolonial thinking and action. For Bhabha, the hybrid is a bridge between the status quo and *something else*, a not-yet-articulated futurity separated from the now by a definite boundary, but one that is productive: 'the place from which *something [new] begins its presencing*' (1994, 7). Quoting Heidegger he says: 'Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men [*sic*] to and fro, so that they may get to other banks... ' (1994, 7). For Bhabha, the hybrid's role is as translator, and indeed translation, that embodied location where alterities co-exist and form something new, some not-yet-known.^[4] They are the border as lived experience, a definition which echoes Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of borderlands identities — though in her figuring, being sprung between cultures is more fraught and complicated, a mixture of pain and possibility, loss and community, code-switching and survival (2007). Shirley Ann Tate discusses Bhabha's notion of hybridity as a Third Space with respect to lived Black

identities in Britain. For her, that Third Space is one between essentialism on the one hand and fragmentation on the other (Tate 2005, 5), and emerges in talk where actual identities are negotiated, pored over, deconstructed and reconstructed within the space of everyday discussion.

These more complicated renderings of hybridity as the beginning of something new, as a space that opens the possibility of negotiation and change, can be contrasted to what might be thought of as the essentialized or fetishized hybrid. Hybridity in this rendering is always already a new politics, and it is this figuring that Marwan Kraidy critiques when he discusses hybridity as “the cultural logic of globalization” (2005, 148). Rather than touching future history “on its hither side” (Bhabha 1994, 10), the essentialized hybrid is figured as *change embodied*, and we can read much of this mode of discursive investment in supportive discussions of Obama’s hybrid positionalities.^[5]

One commentator, for example, refers to Obama’s family and heritage as ‘unusual in the extent of its continent-crossing, religion-melding, color-fusing richness,’ and speaks of how his multi-ethnic family connections ‘[mirror] a world in flux’ (Cohen 2008a). This rhetorical framing marks Obama’s overdetermined embodiment as ‘unusual’, and outlier. And, perhaps with respect to the higher echelons of the US political class, it is; yet, as Lauren Berlant notes, mixed identities are becoming the new normal, an encroaching demographic spectre of diaspora and multiraciality threatening to edge out White-America—at least in the fears of reactionaries (1997, 175). This framing turns this feared-difference around and uses his mixed-race, mixed-cultural and mixed-religious upbringing to position him as a natural ambassador of multiculturalism, a way to heal the rift between Christianity and Islam, and the embodiment of the end of racism. Like Tiger Woods, to whom he is often compared, Obama’s mixed-race identity ‘position[s] [him] across old black-white lines in a new hybrid model of multiracialism’ (Starn 2007) that makes him a stand-in for a hybridized America itself.

It should go without saying that this investment of so much *de facto* change in the hybrid positionality of a having Black man in the White House^[6]—not as an *agent* of change, but as *change embodied*—courts tokenism and becomes an alibi for a structural racism that, in this argument, no longer exists with Obama as president (e.g., McWhorter, 2008). As Arnold Itwaru (a Black Caribbean-Canadian scholar) argued addressing a critical race studies conference in Toronto shortly before Obama’s election, that a Black man could become the head of the most destructive and powerful white supremacist world power in history was hardly a fact to be celebrated (2008); and

Achille Mbembe, commenting on the Kenyan reaction of both euphoria and 'great hope' to Obama's lead in the polls, said that, in excess of an understandable racial pride, pinning so much hope on one individual bringing about vast systematic change was 'irrational, unrealistic and misguided' (qtd. in Nevin 2008).

The questions about how to navigate the space between the exotification of difference (e.g., Said 1979) and a sound appraisal of the potential strengths a US leader of non-ethnically-dominant heritage might actually have are complex ones we return to in the conclusion. Can, for example, a utopian framing of hybridity allow us to break new ground in a political system notorious for reifying white male privilege, or do such simplifications do little but reify the status quo with a slight twist? But it is also useful to explore the negative portrayals of Obama's hybridity by those who want to use his biracial heritage to discredit him, those for whom normalizing the empowerment of the miscegenated body is threatening. What does the 'dark side' of hybridity discourse add to this intertextual dermographia? How, in particular, does the figure of the 'monstrous' and its modern discursive counterparts the alien, terrorist, communist, fag and Muslim^[7] play into Obama's ambivalent discursive rendering?

Obama as Monster

Obama's skinning in writing, while certainly drawing on his literal, physical skin and what it signifies, goes beyond this materiality to shroud him in further layers of meaning and fix him as an abject other: a monster. In his January 22, 1975 lecture about 'The Abnormals', Michel Foucault calls the monster 'a principle of intelligibility in spite of its limit position as both the impossible and the forbidden' (2003, 57). The monster is a conceptual figure deployed precisely to make the unthinkable thinkable. In this way, Obama can be read as hybrid and monster without even needing to consider his multiracial ethnicity. By embodying an unthinkable positionality (a Black man as President of the United States) he represents, to some, something both impossible and forbidden: an abject other who is, beyond reckoning, lodged at the representational centre of the nation's self-concept. The only way to resolve such an impasse without a radical rethinking of this national self-concept is through the category of the monstrous hybrid. It rationalizes (if not normalizes) the intrusion of the abject as a cancerous invader, an alien growth that needs to be excised from the body politic.

In fact, this is explicitly the position taken by David Duke, the notorious neo-Nazi and former head of the Ku Klux Klan. Though in his opinion, along with many in the far-right, *explicitly*-White Supremacist community, this would be a good thing, one that

would shake white Americans out of their complacency. In a prominent article titled 'A Black Flag for White America' (2008), Duke writes:

Obama will be a signal, a clear signal for millions of our people. [...] Obama is like that new big dark spot on your arm that finally sends you to the doctor for some real medicine. [...] Obama is the pain that let's [sic] your body know that something is dreadfully wrong. Obama will let the American people know that there is a real cancer eating away at the heart of our country...

Duke's writing skins Obama by horrifying his aspect, casting his dark intrusion as an unwelcome cancer on the nation's (White) body. Returning to Foucault, the monstrous — the 'foreign body', in the medical sense — is used in discourse to heal fractured narratives, to act as a conceptual stop-gap solution. It's inserted into narratives to make them match up with given world-views: like 'terrorist' for discussing the impossible, forbidden use of violence by non-state actors (and the even more impossible and forbidden use of such violence against the West or in the West); like 'fag' for discussing impossible, forbidden desires that slip the mould of the heteronormative,^[8] of patriarchal structure, of familiar gendered and sexed kinship; like 'communist' for discussing an impossible, forbidden desire to approach any aspect of culture in a non-capitalist mode.

As Puar and Rai discuss in 'Monster, Terrorist, Fag' (2002), these abject categories often overlap and reinforce each other in mainstream Western discourse. But more than that, they constitute each other: for example, the figure of a gay Saddam Hussein with a demonic Satan as his lover on *South Park* (Stone 1999). All of these abjected concepts — alien, monster, terrorist, fag, communist, Muslim — stand in for and constitute each other, and all are breaks from (or intrusions into) larger, more stable, more understood (Western) systems. But in their individual particularity, they are inscrutable, inconceivable. Foucault calls this intelligibility tautological; the concepts are stand-ins and explanations for the *terra incognita* of culture, but as such the only things they cannot properly conceptualize are themselves (57). But we can turn Foucault's definition around — not reversing it, but looking at it from its obverse side. Maybe what these concepts *do*, in discourse, is conceptualize that very categorical instability, perhaps their positive definition is rooted in a structure of feeling (Williams 1977, 128): that of incongruity, ambiguity and abjection, encountered as a non-integratable and *presumed-menacing* presence.

Obama is framed, alternately, using all of these conceptual short-cuts. He is framed as an alien, for example with the Birthers' questioning of his US origin (Chancellor 2011); as a communist, for example in relation to his community organizing in Chicago (Wolking 2008) and his stance on universal health care (Stewart 2008); as a terrorist and friend to terrorism, for example as a 'secret Muslim' (Rutenberg 2008), as a friend of ex-Weatherman Bill Ayers (Bahnisch 2008; Wolking 2008), as someone with the middle name 'Hussein' and the last name 'Obama' (*piratenews.org* 2008); as a monster, for example, in the epithet 'ObamaNation' (*piratenews.org* 2008); and as a 'fag' — the phrase 'Obama is a fag' produced approximately 200,000 Google hits in 2011 and over 460,000 hits in 2014, with searches using related terms growing to over 9,720,000 in 2014. Interestingly, at least within the time range I am focusing on, the majority of comments specifically referring to Obama as a monster were linked (in both articles and comments threads) to his pro-choice politics (e.g., MacInnes 2008; Morrissey 2008), further underscoring Foucault's framing of monstrosity as linked to supposed breaches of moral and judicial law, as well as Puar and Rai's insight that 'monsters and abnormals have always also been sexual deviants' (2002, 119) — here framed as a discursively perverse attitude towards 'normal' generative reproduction, one of the pillars of the heteronormative (Berlant and Warner 554).^[9] If Obama's pro-choice stance frames him here as monstrous, *par excellence*, this perhaps more than anything underscores Foucault's take on the discursive role of monstrosity: Obama's political approach to abortion makes him illegible as a good and moral figure, and the easy figuring of him as monstrous is the only way legibility can be restored. This skinning restores a certain semantic stability and the dermographic rendering of his mixed nature as corruption fulfills a certain ready logic in the public sphere.

But how does such a discursively nebulous figure take part in his own skinning, and how does this framing interact with the above two vectors of discourse?

Obama as Mutt

The fact that Obama is himself a writer, one not only of political rhetoric but of autobiographical narrations of his own past, present and future, makes him a party to his own discursive construction through text, what Ahmed and Stacey might call the management of his own skinning (2001, 2; 15). Alec MacGillis, who traveled with Obama during his campaign tour, remarked that this layered upon him a further form of hybridity, one that placed him between actor and critic, participant and observer (2008). In writing his own narratives, he contributes to the intertext that surfaces in and

on his skin — such as when he famously and strategically referred to himself as a ‘mutt’ in his first press conference as President-elect (Silverman 2008; Bone 2008; Washington 2008; Rhee 2008).

One mainstream media source reflects on this seemingly offhand (but no doubt calculated) use of the term ‘mutt’, drawing on a post by Nina Moon on *kimchi mamas*, a blog she runs created for and by Korean-American mothers (Rhee 2008). This critical reflection highlights how the dermographic qualities of Obama’s skin are multiply encoded, ambiguously legible, and fraught in their intertextual subtext. Noting Moon’s post is ‘one of the most thought out’ of those ‘offended by his self-deprecating description of himself as a “mutt”,’ he quotes her at length:

I’ve heard mixed-race people use that term to describe themselves before, usually in the same ha-ha way Obama did. I’ve also heard it thrown around as an insult, a pejorative, a slur. I’ve felt the slap of that word across my face and it is not a word I can “reclaim,” she wrote.

My fear, however, is that Obama, as the first mixed-race president, will shape the way most Americans view people of mixed race for at least a generation. And will Obama calling himself a “mutt”; — with humor, as if the word is nothing, nothing at all — make it socially acceptable for people to start calling me a mutt? My kids?’

‘Because not only does the word have a history as a slur, but there are reasons that that word makes such an easy slur. It allows people to rhetorically reduce us to animals—people “bred” like dogs are bred. For all our “mutts are better!” talk (it is, as Obama knows, better to adopt a dog from a shelter, right? Rejected, but nonetheless in need of love), it still comes from a place where “purebreds” are better.’

(Rhee 2008)

Moon’s grappling with the signifying work Obama is doing to manage his own skinning activates the deep affect and biopolitics at play. The choice of ‘mutt’ speaks to a playful reclaiming — as with similar uses of ‘queer’ and ‘slut’ — but, as with those, the response can be fraught for those with histories in relation to that word and/or for subjects, such as Moon, who fear possible futures that could see the term’s normalization. Obama’s jokiness is key to his rhetorical, reclaiming, move here, but also shows it’s the kind of humour that exists on a knife’s edge: a humour of risk, where behind the laughter and playfulness are deadly serious issues. In other places, such as his memoir *Dreams from My Father* (1995), Obama makes partial, provisional alliances with multiple seemingly

opposed discourses: Black rage and white civility; race blindness and racial consciousness; Christianity and Islam; drug culture and anti-drug sentiment (Serrano 2007), in a way that seems to tap affinities across the political and racial spectrum. Such moves to inscribe his own embodiment and biography with significations fall short of the ringing and unqualified endorsement that some wanted to read off him, such as the facile and oft repeated notion that him becoming President would herald an end to the US's legacy of racism (e.g., McWhorter 2008), and is of a more measured sort. Humble, occasionally edgy (like when he recounts an incident where he bloodied someone's nose as a teen for calling him a 'coon') (Serrano 2007), but ultimately calculated and considered, his self-positioning acknowledges both sides of the ambivalent signification that his hybridities allow him, and works with them attempting to craft a public narrative for others to use when reading his skin as text.

This ambivalence that marks the hybrid in discourse is a second-order binary, one that calls, perhaps, for a *second* Third-space, one that acknowledges the wayward essentializing of hybridity and attempts to read the complex intertext woven between its polar appropriations.^[10] Obama's dermographia is one of rhetorical self-fashioning, an autobiodermographia^[11] perhaps, a self-writing and -reading of his skin and its significations, as well as what political work that particular skinning can do for him, his party, his nation. But how can we articulate this skinning, this skin writing, this skin reading (both the autobiographical and third person aspects) with Obama's subsequent politics: with his slow, rhetorically measured, slide from a troubled and non-supportive stance on same-sex marriage, to gradual acceptance, to enthusiastic support; with his introduction and routine use of drone plane bombings and extrajudicial killings; with his largely status-quo approach to the politics of Israel-Palestine? Dermographic rhetoric works to surface Obama, but so do his actions and policies. From melting pot to monster to mutt, to truly read where Obama's framing in the public sphere situates him, or to gauge what that situation does (for him as an individual, for the 'changing face of America',^[12] for the embodiment of the US on the world stage) we need to move beyond skin — not to a facile post-racial fantasy, but to a place where skin and our readings of it are merely one signifying factor among many. This perhaps speaks to the impossibility of a utopian politics of hybridity,^[13] one we should be just as wary of as its more-easily-dismissed dystopian doppelganger. No single figure or embodiment, no matter how their hybridities or bodily iconoclasm signify, will completely hack the structural ills of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. But for a nation and a world coming

to terms with this shift in the somatic representation of elite power in the Western context and what it might portend, subtend or allow for post-Obama politics, such an other 'other space' of self-consciously polysemic hybridity—stemming not from such embodiments alone, but from a critical reflection on how they variously signify—might be useful to fully unpack just what these shifts mean with respect to publics, power and privilege.

Bio

Nathan Rambukkana is an Assistant Professor in Communication Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, in Canada. His work centres the study of discourse, politics and identities, and his research addresses topics such as intimacy and privilege, hybridity and mixed-race identities, digital intimacies and non/monogamy. His book *Fraught Intimacies: Non/Monogamy in the Public Sphere*, is forthcoming from UBC Press in 2015. Email: nrambukkana@wlu.ca Blog: complexsingularities.net
(<http://complexsingularities.net>)

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Endnotes

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Footnotes (returns to text)

1. This short paper is part of a larger project interrogating how hybridity tropes are mobilized in both theoretical and popular discourses. I would like to acknowledge the support of the Fonds Québécois de la Recherche sur la Société et la Culture (FQRSC), whose Bourse de Recherche Postdoctorale funded this work. Special thanks as well to Jennifer Musial for introducing me to the concept of 'dermographia' when we were planning a panel on 'Skin as Text' where an early version of this paper was first presented in 2011.
2. The methodologies used to gather my texts and data included a Factiva database search of digitized newspaper and magazine articles of the period from February 10, 2007 to November 4, 2008; Google *searches and counts of relevant keyword combinations (primarily within the same delimited range, but also looking at subsequent events) to locate further articles, blogs and websites; keyword searches within and*

across texts in this archive; tangential searching of found links amassed through mentions, comment threads and pingbacks; and finally the excavation of now-defunct blogs and websites through the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine <<https://archive.org/web/>

(<https://archive.org/web/>) >. While Google searches and counts can only be used provisionally as a metric due to their proprietary and opaque algorithms, they do indicate possible trends and tendencies that can be tapped for further study. The everyday microaggressions of racism, cultural appropriation, and tokenism (as well as their intersectional modifiers and amplifiers such as sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia) can be evanescent, ephemeral, but the archive of the internet and the stickiness of search metrics can compile such discursive violences allowing us the ability, as researchers and activists, to surveil and hack these elusive cultural flows.

3. *(Recent Secret Service scandals notwithstanding.)*
4. *This also has links to Foucault's conception the discursive function of monstrous (2003), which I discuss below.*
5. *One can hear echoes of Obama's campaign slogan 'Change' here. In many ways this aspect was the essence of Obama's nomination and presidential campaigns: after years of misery under Bush Jr. he was promoting his presidency as a bridge to something different.*
6. *Black Man in the White House was also the title of E. Frederic Morrow's 1963 memoir of his time as a Black man working on Eisenhower's staff. It was re-released and heavily marketed during Obama's campaign run, and in 2014 an edition was published with the subtitle 'Before Obama...'*
7. *The following section draws heavily on Puar and Rai's 'Monster, Terrorist, Fag' (2002), as I elaborate below.*
8. *We could define heteronormativity as the normativity of orthodox heterosexuality, including, in its broader sense, normative gender relations, normative sex acts, and normative relationship forms and narratives (Rambukkana in press). For further information, see (Berlant and Warner 1998).*
9. *In one particularly telling quote, he is also likened to Hitler, that trope of monstrous humanity par excellence:*

He has shown himself by his actions and inactions that he is, in truth and in deed, something absolutely unconscionable to the civilized mind: he is a radical proponent and activist for the cause of infanticide. The harsh reality is that

behind the smiles and lofty rhetoric lurks the real Senator Barak Obama, a man who is a monster of Hitlerian proportions. (MacInnes 2008)

10. *As Consuela Francis pointed out during the review of this paper, we could also read this ambivalence as stemming from a tension between those who want to see this binary disappear and those who would wish to preserve it for various political reasons, an insight that could provoke an important parallel analysis.*
11. *I use this term to mark this process as similar to, but different from, Jay Prosser's concept of 'skin autobiographies', which are more specifically a life-writing of personal encounters with skin disorders (Prosser 2001).*
12. *For a discussion of mixed-race identities being the new or changing face of the US/America, see Berlant (1997).*
13. *Many thanks to Carol Stabile who provided this apt wording during this paper's review.*



Nathan Rambukkana (<https://adanewmedia.org/author/nrambukkana@wlu.ca>)

*My work centres the Study of Discourse, Politics and Identity; I track flows of discourse as they move in and out of the public sphere influencing both individual and group identities, embodiments and politics (both within cultural groupings and between those groups and the larger structures of society). Specifically, my research addresses topics such as digital intimacies, the relationship of intimacy and privilege, hybridity and mixed-race identities, the social and cultural aspects new media forms, and non/monogamy in the public sphere. It is situated disciplinarily at the nexus of communication and cultural studies, methodologically within discourse analysis, and draws theoretical energy from a wide range of sources such as feminist, queer, postcolonial and critical race theories; semiotics, affect theory, event theory and psychoanalysis; and other post-structuralist work. I have recently completed a two-year FQRSC postdoctoral research project entitled "Postcoloniality and Privilege in the Hybrid Subject: Mixed-Race Identity and Intimate Privilege in Theory and Popular Discourse" that explores the discursive investments of figures of "hybridity" in the public sphere with a particular focus on how mixed-race identities are framed and discussed in our shared discursive spaces. I am also currently finalizing a book project prospectively titled *Non-Monogamies in the Public Sphere: Intimacy, Privilege and the Space of Discourse* (forthcoming, UBC Press). Based on my dissertation work, but extending beyond it to discuss ongoing public sphere debates, the book uses discourse analysis to unpack recent Western conceptions of non-monogamy. By exploring the privileged logics that frame our conceptions of intimacy, I explore the political and cultural implications of how we frame non-monogamy broadly in sexual discourse, as well as how the public*

sphere presences of three major forms of non-monogamy (adultery, polygamy and polyamory) display a complex relationship with "intimate privilege," an emergent state in which one's intimacies are read as viable, ethical or even real. I have recently started work towards an edited collection about Hashtag Publics.

2 THOUGHTS ON "MUTT, MONSTER OR MELTING-POT? MIXED-RACE METAPHOR AND OBAMA'S AMBIVALENT HYBRIDITY"

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