

School of Media, Communications and Creative Arts

**Reports of My Death Are Premature:
A Biography of the Public Intellectual**

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the function, role and nature of the public intellectual in contemporary society to establish the ethical grounds upon which they can justify political intervention. It begins by arguing that the public intellectual, contrary to reports during the 1980s, is not dead: its transformation from Immanuel Kant's "legislator" to Zygmunt Bauman's "interpreter" signals, not a decline, but rather a historically contingent function that adapts to ideological and structural shifts in the public domain. Despite these adaptations, however, the public intellectual remains identifiable across the histories of western societies by a consistency of underlying critical, political and ethical functions. These functions were first outlined by Kant as mechanisms to regulate civil society, and they remain evident in the Australian History Wars of the 1990s and the David Hicks case during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Nonetheless, contemporary public intellectuals face a fundamental dilemma: the absence of universal "truths" by which to establish ethical grounds for any assertion of values that sustain democratic civil society and justify political intervention in it. The thesis proposes that one way to think about this challenge is to consider the critical/self-fashioning ethics of Michel Foucault and the critical humanism of Edward Said. These theories affirm a public intellectual who continues to work against the practices that restrict freedom. Together they argue that social values and concepts are made by history and can therefore be renegotiated, and that political engagement is made possible by an ethical commitment to the critically conscious citizen as the site of social renewal.

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Introduction

THE LIFE OF IDEAS

This thesis began as the biography of a mid-twentieth century empirical, rationalist historian whose intellectual hero was the seventeenth century Enlightenment philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Leibnitz. Along the way the thesis turned into a history and Foucaultian genealogy of the contemporary public intellectual.

The change in direction occurred as I discovered how my historian's unwavering commitment to producing the most precise record of the past was animated by his belief in truth. He believed that truth provided the foundation for ethical action and that "true history" encouraged civic virtue. It was proven facts, he argued, that added to those systems of knowledge that both affirmed what was real and preserved Kant's freedom: a freedom defined as the public exercise of reason that both ensures individual political rights and preserves civil society.

My historian's view of the past and of truth, however, became caught up in the changing philosophies of the second half of the twentieth century, which saw the idea of "true history" emerge as a highly contested concept. Philosophers like Michel Foucault came to argue that official history was the story of repressive power. For Foucault the threading of ideas and identities into a single coherent and dominant narrative appeared to be a wilful sabotage and suppression of other voices. He didn't believe that history was a fixed record of events that prepared citizens to assume their political responsibilities. Instead, he argued that stories of the past were discourses of power and that when contested by emergent narratives new possibilities for the future could be opened up by understanding the misrepresentations of the past.¹

One result of this philosophical contest over understandings of truth and the past was that I came to see my historian's life and work as the site of a broader

¹ In *True Stories* Inga Cleninnen argues that these positions do not have to be mutually exclusive and that it is possible to produce a true or verifiable history out of the negotiation of shared stories.

ideological struggle between the values of the past and the emerging social values of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Gradually my proposed biographical study ceased to be the story of a single exemplary life and instead became a history of the conditions that shaped scholars who, like my historian, sought to use the idea of truth as the legitimating foundation for ethical public action. In other words, my thesis became the story of the public intellectual.

The story of the public intellectual begins in the eighteenth century and western philosophies closely link the function to the rise of democracy. As a result of this early association with civil society public intellectualism has developed a diverse range of affiliations with ideas like those of the public sphere, citizenship, morality, knowledge, culture, and ideology. These complex associations, while legitimating the claims of the public intellectual in particular historical contexts, also complicate and obscure how the term is deployed, especially during times of contested realities.

Yet, despite the complexity and shifting nature of the term “public intellectual,” and regardless of the wide variety of performances through the centuries, the term has always been understood as a signifier of certain forms of social, political and cultural authority. This authority appears to derive primarily not only from the role of the intellectual in helping society to understand itself by circulating ideas and facilitating public debates about issues that affect the social and political events but also, and more significantly, by the public intellectual’s typical appeal to “truth,” when describing such issues and proffering advice. This is a truth that has been historically privileged because it is broadly understood to protect freedom and justice, which are the conditions necessary for the preservation of Western democratic civil society.

It is this enduring social and cultural role of the public intellectual as the defender of truth, however, that was called into question at the end of the twentieth century. It was at this time that challenges to the idea of an absolute truth posed by post structuralist philosophies led to a contestation of the authority of the public intellectual. This struggle over the nature of truth therefore became associated with talk of the death of the public intellectual.

Indeed, many commentators at the end of the twentieth century who perceived an intellectual crisis, also argued that complaints about the lack of new ideas, the loss of social meaning and direction, and the erosion of hope for the future of western civilisation was also linked to the demise of the public intellectual function. Implicit in these dystopian conversations was the idea that the world is fixed and that changes to the fundamental concepts that govern Western society implies death. Yet, ideas and concepts – even truth and freedom – change all the time in response to historical conditions. Indeed, Friedrich Nietzsche observed that ideas are *not* non-negotiable gifts bestowed by the past on present generations, but rather things that can be, should be, constantly re-invented. He noted that, since concepts have both a history created by the specific circumstances that gave rise to it, and a future that emerges from its reformations and new associations, it is possible for ideas to be remade.² Comparably, Michel Foucault insisted that ideas and concepts are inherently flexible, and so argued that the talk of a cultural and intellectual decline is just a way of saying we don't have the means to explain what is going on in contemporary society ("The Masked" 325). Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari made a similar point when they suggested that the contemporary idea that "systems are bankrupt" merely reflects a change in the system rather than their end (9).

This growing sense of cultural decline that seemed to pervade western public discourse from the 1980s onwards was my lead for this examination of the conditions that shape the role, function and value of the contemporary public intellectual. Through this research – a form of genealogical analysis of the figure of the public intellectual – I argue that the dominant trope of a cultural and intellectual decline emerged primarily as a reaction to the contradictions, paradoxes and limitations produced by the proliferation of competing visions of the public intellectual in contemporary society. Moreover, it was also evident that the talk of an intellectual crisis not only served to misrepresent the public

² This can be seen in the reworking of the notion of freedom, which in the late eighteenth century was seen as the ability to reason. By learning to reason the subject could operate as a mature citizen without the tutelage of others. In contemporary society one of the meanings of freedom is the awareness of the individual's own subordination to economic and political forces.

intellectual function but also to camouflage underlying issues shaping and remoulding its operation.

Death of the Universal

The public intellectual has been widely perceived to be in crisis since the 1980s. The trope of the crisis began specifically as a complaint by French and American theorists that intellectuals had withdrawn from their public and political responsibilities as they were transformed by the forces of late modernity from the privileged voice of reason and social order into paid knowledge-workers, academics, technicians and media celebrities. It was argued that this shift had eroded the role of the intellectual in society and, as a consequence, theorists like Allan Bloom, David Wood and Jeffrey Goldfarb wrote that citizenship was enfeebled, liberal values jeopardised and political democracy imperilled.

Those who talked of an intellectual death connected the health of the public intellectual to the effective functioning of democracy and conflated fears about a perceived decline in critical and diverse public debate – which serves to hold power accountable – with concerns about the erosion of cultural standards that preserve and enable the progress of western society. Fears about the declining political potency of liberal and social democratic values were also assimilated into concerns about the implications of the commodification of knowledge. All of this resulted in anxieties about the emergence of a moral relativism that was seen to fray social coherence. Fears for the public intellectual were widely reiterated in the literature and, I argue, these eulogies not only misrepresented the reality of the public intellectual at the end of the twentieth century but also obscured the ways in which the circumstances of late modern western societies reshaped the public intellectual: once a static, heroic and authoritative figure, now a historically contingent, adaptive, and emergent entity. In the context of contested realities this more adaptable intellectual doesn't just articulate truth, adjudicate cultural standards or express ideal social orders. Rather, this late modern public intellectual re-thinks concepts, challenges inherited narratives, and translates and negotiates ideas in order to demonstrate that sociality must be constantly remade in the ongoing battle for freedom.

This more recent intellectual model is both critical and creative. It emerged in response to the institutionalisation and systematisation of power in the late twentieth century, which led to “wars of position,”³ and which was linked to an endless contest among western political ideologies for control the networks of social reproduction. This contest for dominance implicated the public intellectual in political struggles. As a result their work of rethinking the past and interpreting culture came to be generally seen as a threat to social stability rather than as a means of negotiating a better life. Further, this new more adaptive intellectual model, unlike his or her modernist predecessor, didn’t apply to the idea of absolute truth to legitimate assertions. Instead this intellectual faced the dilemma of identifying the ethical grounds for intervening to challenge power and, within various changing social contexts, assert the common standards that produce social coherence. This was the central dilemma implicit in the talk of the intellectual crisis.

Who is the Public Intellectual?

A traditional biography is usually an empirical project that describes the subject by recounting the facts and experiences in order to demonstrate the special or exemplary nature of an individual life and, thus, how it has broader social meaning and significance. In contrast, a genealogy examines how an object is created discursively. This thesis, therefore, has extensively examined primary and secondary sources to examine how the operation and function of the intellectual emerges and changes as a result of the way it is talked and written about in various cultural, historical and political contexts. Identifying in this way how the public intellectual has been characterised in contemporary discourse makes it possible to draw attention to the major arguments associated with its contemporary performance – and so to understand how its social and political shifts of the last four decades came to be seen as a death rather than a transformation.

³ Gramsci argued that capitalism permeates all of civil society and is a part of a private network that enables social reproduction by “permeating all organizations and mass consciousness” which facilitates the diffusion of hegemony and the “enlargement of the state” (qtd. in Mouffe 5). “The attainment of power” therefore requires an endless struggle to occupy the state positions in social institutions and to control the “whole process of social reproduction” (5).

The term itself, “public intellectual,” emerged in the mid-to-late twentieth century in response to the institutionalisation of knowledge enabled by shifts in global capitalism and technology. However, the public intellectual function continues to maintain its inherited links to its earlier incarnations, including its eighteenth century role as a philosopher and religious scholar whose role was to elucidate that which was real, true, beautiful and good. This role shifted when the seventeenth-century British revolutionary and civil wars led to the introduction of a range of concepts that sought to justify the expansion of political rights. As a result, the function of the “public intellectual” emerged in the eighteenth century as the voice of reason which challenged religious and autocratic power. This intellectual was fundamental to educating subjects and transforming them into mature citizens by circulating philosophical ideas, often through journalistic and literary works. The construction of public intellectualism shifted again in response to the rise of mass society at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was at this time that the intellectual appears to have assumed three central identities: the professional who applied knowledge systematically, the literary intellectual who claimed the role of cultural hero and conscience of the nation, and the political ideologist whom Antonio Gramsci described as the “organic intellectual” “who gave a social group an awareness of its own function” and who took on the role of “educators, organizers, leaders” (Forgacs 425). These intellectual formations evolved again after the Second World War when French and German literary public intellectuals adopted a largely Left-wing, critical and oppositional role in an effort to restore their intellectual authority in holding power accountable. This remained the dominant political orthodoxy of the European and Western intellectual position until the mid-1970s, at which time it changed in response to two developments. The first development was the leftist political orientation of the intellectual was eroded by the growing evidence of the totalitarian practices of the Soviet Union. Second, the extension of global capitalism and technological developments enabled the institutionalisation and commodification of knowledge, with the result that intellectuals were largely absorbed into a diverse range of technical, professional and academic occupations. From this point onward the late modern intellectual formation

emerged, and it was the institutionalised nature of the public intellectual that led to concerns about the independence of the intellectual, its ability to impartially hold power accountable and given its implication in institutional power whether it deserved a privileged role in addressing the public domain.

So severe were these concerns about the public intellectual's ability to protect the public domain that a new term "public intellectual" emerged in the late 1980s. The term was specifically a response to a perception in the United States that intellectuals were withdrawing from their civil obligations, and that this posed a threat to democracy. The term was put into circulation by Russell Jacoby's book *The Last Intellectual*, which was an effort to remind academics and scholars of their "public" obligations to society.⁴ The very complexity of the modern public sphere, however, made the term a problematic concept and, as a result, any effort to further define the term added to the confusion about the role and function. The term "public intellectual" has therefore been declared a "tautology" by Robert Manne (qtd. in Bartolini 3), "not a useful category" by Sylvia Lawson (qtd. in Vistonay), and "irredeemably pretentious" by Drusilla Modjeska (40). Joseph Epstein insisted that it was a "phrase, in short, that absorbs no truth whatsoever" (185) and Edward Said suggested that it was a term devoid of "any coherent and definable separate meaning or existence" ("Public Role"). Worse still, the term became associated with "arrogance and egotism" and connected to a "sense of class and privilege" which, according to Joyce Carol Oates, is unacceptable in these egalitarian times (qtd. in Anthony, "What?"). Indeed, I would argue that the anti-intellectualism and political populism that characterises late modern political society, and which takes the shape of a suspicion of elites claiming special knowledge, has amplified the negative response to the term.

Despite these negative definitions and the confusion that emerges from the multiplicity of contexts in which the public intellectual performs in contemporary society the public intellectual still assumes a range of leading,

⁴ According to an article by Daniel C. Brouwer and Catherine R. Squires, although Jacoby put the term into wide circulation, the term can actually be traced to a 1958 statement by C. Wright Mills who used it to express his concern with public life (33).

interpreting or educating roles. As a consequence it is therefore possible to make some generalised observations about the operation of the public intellectual and to imagine that it still plays a significant role in contemporary society. Indeed that is the purpose of this research.

Overall Thesis Argument

This thesis examines the nature, function and value of the contemporary public intellectual and argues that, while shifts in the public domain have clearly transformed the intellectual from Kant's legislator to Zygmunt Bauman's negotiator, the public intellectual retains throughout all its various manifestations fundamental critical, political and ethical functions grounded in the notion of a free civil society. Further, these functions have remained constant from the public intellectual's inception in the late eighteenth century to the present primarily because it is these functions that both legitimates the public intellectual role in society and also enables a distinction between public intellectuals and other knowledge workers and pundits in the public domain. However, at the same time this thesis notes the continuity of the public intellectual functions, it also argues that in the context of contemporary populist conditions and new social media, citizen engagement and activism is fundamental to the effective operation of public intellectualism. As a consequence, existing forms of public intellectualism that have traditionally appeared in the mainstream media now are complemented by intellectual formations emerging out of grassroots social movements.

In analysing the operation and range of performances of the contemporary public intellectual and mapping the changing formations, I suggest that the trope of the death of the intellectual reflects broader concerns about changing political systems and bigger fears about a sense of the incoherence of the public domain. Further, I argue that, not only did the talk of the death of the public intellectual obscure the way the function has adapted to contemporary society, it also exposed one of the major challenges confronting contemporary public intellectualism: the problem of establishing, in a diverse global society characterised by competing cultural and social values and contestable truth, the

common ground that provides the foundation for the consensus necessary to mobilise social and political action.

In order to describe contemporary intellectualism and the conditions that shape it, this thesis provides an historical overview of the emergence of the public intellectual and then proceeds to examine in detail two case studies that illustrate two modes of contemporary public intellectualism. The first is the Australian History Wars and the second is the case of David Hicks, an Australian held prisoner in Guantanamo Bay for seven years after he was captured fighting with the Taliban in Afghanistan. In regard to the first case study, I argue that the Australian History Wars indisputably led to the nation's most robust conversation about issues of race since the 1967 Indigenous vote referendum. Further, these public debates were responsible for putting into broader circulation beyond the university ideas about Australia's Indigenous past and the nation's sovereignty. These debates firmly placed race relations on the national political agenda, and in doing so, created the conditions that led the former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to apologise to the Indigenous nation as one of his first actions in office. In spite of these concessions, however, the highly contested nature of the battles led to simplifications, exclusions, and the sensationalist/politicised media coverage amplified ideological divisions. As a result, participants withdrew from public debate, as did, generally, a public disillusioned by the inability of the public discussions to shape decisive political or social action. The inability of the History War debates to progress important issues like Indigenous reconciliation or even produce the grounds for some form of non-partisan consensus on Indigenous issues led me to conclude that they illustrated a less effectual form of contemporary public intellectualism. Further the History Wars served to reinforce how it is citizen engagement that legitimates contemporary public intellectualism.

I contrast the History Wars with the David Hicks' case, which provides an example of how effective modern specific public intellectuals can be in intervening politically to mobilise citizens to action and to resist bureaucratised power. The intellectual produced by the Hicks' case did not just appeal to the notion of truth or overarching principles of justice to justify their intellectual

intervention. Rather this intellectual sought to show how the Australian government's actions actively worked against individual freedom, at the same time it paid lip-service to the idea of justice. By producing a critical awareness of this anomaly, intellectuals appealed to the ethical choices of individuals as a way of moving them to take social action. I argue that it is this appeal to the ethical choices of individual citizens that serves to demonstrate how citizen engagement and action legitimates the function of the contemporary public intellectual. Moreover, I argue that the Hicks' case provides an example of how Michel Foucault's institutionally-situated specific intellectual engaging in the public domain was able to reclaim the notions of justice and freedom. By exposing these terms as the appropriated rhetoric of power, it was possible for public intellectuals to reconstruct the concepts as the practical public standards that preserve a just civil society and the dream of democracy. Edward Said wrote of these practical standards as a form of civic wisdom which he argued enables a "better situation" to be hypothesised "from known historical and social facts" (*Humanism* 140). It is this notion of civic wisdom as a conversation among citizens led by public intellectuals that provides a path through contested realities and the basis for negotiating common standards across cultural and political diversity.

The Hicks' case illustrates the contemporary public intellectual as a critical, political, ethical and imaginative entity grounded in interpreting and translating difference and rethinking concepts to expose the operation of power in ways that engage citizens. Kant's legislator has given way to Baumann's interpreter and this intellectual clearly remains defined by its commitment to a public and political role in a democratic society, based upon the assumption of the exercise of reason, free speech and a capacity for political action amongst the citizens of society. This intellectual formation also operates from a belief that democratic freedom is best served by an educated and rational citizenry, and that society can be improved through the raised consciousness of its citizens. Importantly, the Hicks' case showed that interpretation can be powerful, that contingency does not have to equate to moral relativism and that appeals to the individual self-fashioning ethical practices of democratic citizens is sufficient to move them to action. Indeed, the Hicks's case affirms that the central function of the

modern public intellectual is to foster the critical consciousness of the individual citizen, who through his or her own awareness of the operation and effects of power is in a position to become a site for social change and renewal.

Chapter Overview

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter documents the forensic scrutiny of intellectuals that occurred in the early years of the new millennium and speculates about this interest. It reviews several British and Australian public polls about public intellectuals, and sketches the complexity of public intellectual labour in contemporary western societies and the resulting confusion about the nature, function and role of the public intellectual. These polls make evident that western public intellectuals face particular challenges in a global, networked world: a complexity of issues; the diversity of the public domain; the level of uncertainty that accompanies constant change; and consequent reactionary practices that challenge representational democracy and consolidate political and cultural divides. The polls also demonstrate how the performance of public intellectuals is shaped by new social formations and modes of political mobilisation, and enabled by technology, as well as by the impact of the growing ascendancy of non-western nations whose social and cultural values challenge the dominance of western ideologies.

Chapter Two undertakes a genealogy of the contemporary public intellectual from its origins in the Enlightenment in order to demonstrate that it is an historical, contingent and adaptive entity. This Chapter is a history of the intellectual and it draws upon the major philosophical concepts that shaped its operation. The chapter maps the emergence of the modern public intellectual as a function grounded in the shifts from religious to secular power that led to the rise of political society and the expansion of the public domain. I draw upon Immanuel Kant, Jurgen Habermas and Antonio Gramsci to identify the various philosophical concepts, conditions and traditions that have shaped the operation of the public intellectual from the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century across France, England and Germany.

Chapter Three considers the debates about the death of the intellectual, which took place in France, the United States, England and, to a lesser degree, in Australia. Drawing upon an extensive reading of primary and secondary sources, it documents the way structural and ideological shifts in the public domain wrought by capitalism, technology and philosophy led to the perception of the demise of the public intellectual. These shifts fractured the assumptions of Enlightenment thought and values, and in doing so highlighted the inherently paradoxical role of the intellectual which, as Jeffrey Goldfarb argues, has always been to both subvert consensus and civilise conflict (1). This sketching of the key changes in the public domain and of the factors affecting the operation of citizenship enables me to conclude that, while many have written of the demise of the intellectual, the alleged death of the public intellectual is, in fact, just another evolution in the life of the public intellectual. Further it is possible to conclude that the fears about the public intellectual really exemplified concerns about the loss of particular dominant ways of making meaning.

Chapter Four serves to localise the global issues identified in the preceding chapter by providing a case study of how the talk of an intellectual crisis played out in Australia during its History Wars. The History Wars began in the 1990s and were an intense ideological struggle between Left-leaning public intellectuals (who rethought concepts and historical narratives as a way of resisting the dominant conservative discourse) and the growing legion of conservative intellectuals and media commentators. The spoils of war were the right to define the nation's past, to shape a contemporary national identity and consciousness, and to define the values which provide a sense of unity in an ethnically diverse, global, post-colonial nation. While these debates certainly led to a proliferation of public intellectualism – clearly demonstrating the fallacy of the death – and put into broader circulation ideas about race and identity, the sensationalised and politicised media coverage of these debates narrowed the number of participants and created confusion. I also argue the contestation over the past failed to progress Indigenous reconciliation. Thus the History Wars provide an example of a less effective form of public intellectualism at a time when citizen engagement is what legitimates public intellectual authority.

In contrast to the History Wars, Chapter Five presents a second case study of Australian public intellectualism which demonstrates how public intellectuals *can* work effectively in contemporary western societies to mobilise citizens to action, despite contested truth. The Chapter applies Michael Foucault's theory of power and of a self-fashioning ethics and the humanism of Edward Said's humanist critique to the public intellectual practices evident in the David Hicks case in an effort to demonstrate how individual citizens can be engaged in political action through an appeal to the individual ethical identity. It is the negotiation of shared ethical positions that I believe provides the basis for the contemporary public intellectual's engagement with the citizen. I suggest the public intellectual activity of the Hicks' campaign was successful because it operated like a social movement in the sense that intellectuals, mobilised by an ethical commitment to the idea of the rule of law and notions of justice, formed a broad and diverse collective to respond to a specific public problem and engaged in a negotiation with citizens as a way of raising their consciousness. It is my contention that the Hicks' case provides a valuable example of how the public intellectual was able to suspend traditional Left/Right political binaries, and set to one side elitist definitions of their function. They were able to do so because the focus of the campaign to bring David Hicks home was not the replacement of one set of normalised standards with another or a battle over absolute truth. Rather, it was the exposure of how governments had transgressed their mandate, and acted unethically and inconsistently in terms of their avowed social values and governmental responsibilities. By demonstrating this lack of integrity, and how the concepts of justice and freedom had been appropriated and distorted to further political agendas at the expense of Hicks' human rights, institutionally situated intellectuals engaged in a public issue in order to identify the broader threats to citizen freedom. In this way, the campaign raised the critical consciousness of the individual Australian citizen, and, by making each aware of the forces that seek to dominate, reminded them of their power to hold governments accountable and so to protect freedom and the conditions that preserve civil society.

Summary

This thesis is the biography of the public intellectual in all its complexity, paradoxes and reformations. It is an investigation into the interplay of power in order to understand how the talk of the death of the intellectual emerged, and how, despite the prognosis, the public intellectual remains a powerful function in contemporary western societies. The public intellectual makes visible the ideas and concepts that scaffold society, and as such, it has considerable force in transforming the nature of public debates and shaping social change. It is for this reason that intense examinations of public intellectuals have become a way of reflecting upon broader society and a mechanism by which to “sift a distinctive reality out of the historical detritus of image and cliché” and thereby determine if “thought, enquiry, imagination, pursued to the highest level” can produce any “wisdom about how we ought to live” (Collini 9). It has thus been my intention to embroider a more coherent picture of a complex function that remains essential to our global future and to write the biography of a concept critical to our lives.

Chapter One

A VANISHING INTELLECTUAL CULTURE

National and global magazine and newspaper polls conducted during the first decade of the twenty-first century illuminated an intensified interest in public intellectuals, despite the fact they had been declared in crisis or dead in all western democracies more than two decades earlier. This renewed interest was attributed to the search for new ideas that would reinvigorate what appeared to be a failing civil public sphere which struggled to adapt to the structural and ideological shifts induced by global capitalism and technology. These shifts appeared to challenge established social values, dismantle traditional authority and undermined concepts that had structured the operation of the public domain since the Enlightenment. There was wide-spread confusion, according to John Carroll, as “traditional signposts” were removed and “old certainties eroded” (*Ego* 1). Citizens withdrew from an increasingly incoherent public sphere, political parties became more and more institutionalised and partisan, and the story of cultural impoverishment became a dominant public discourse.

The sense of confusion in western public life that Carroll referred to also seemed to exacerbate fears for the future of political democracy. Some of these concerns had been detailed in a 1993 essay by Samuel Huntington, who predicted that globalisation would lead to a world-wide “clash of civilisations”⁵ (22). Though reductionist, his fear for the West was progressively mirrored by 9/11, the invasion of Iraq, the following “war on terror,” the messy debates about global warming, and the 2008 global financial crisis. Each of these events appeared to highlight the limitations of existing western political ideologies and

⁵ Huntington argued that in a global world the primary sources of conflict would not be ideological or economic. Rather conflict will be cultural and will occur between nations and groups of different civilisations. Thus he concluded: “The clash of civilisations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilisations will be the battle lines of the future” (22).

governmental systems to deal with complex transnational issues — and exposed an absence of new thinking. The intellectual cupboard had never seemed so bare according to Dominic Sandbrook, who, as late as 2009, wrote in the English intellectual magazine *New Statesman* “we are at a political watershed, and we are hungry for initiatives that will remake our world” (30). He argued that “not since the 18th century” had there been so few big ideas (30).

England was not alone in this crisis. In 1998 in the United States, Jeffrey Goldfarb had noted that the “repertoire of political ideas” had become “strikingly stale” (73), and David Wood insisted that the knowledge economy⁶ had devalued thinking and produced an anti-intellectualism which eroded the ability of citizens to engage with power. He insisted that it was no longer “possible to maintain the fiction that we are a society guided by the rational and responsible consensus of its populace” (8). In France in the first years of the new millennium, Pierre Bourdieu made similar comments, arguing that globalisation had made politics subject to the “tyranny of the marketplace” and, as a result, under the heel of neo-liberalism/neo-conservatism politics had moved away from the “citizenry” (14). And in Australia at about the same time, Inga Clendinnen expressed fears about the infantilisation of citizens in the quest for simple solutions, “[t]each grown men and women a nursery version of their history and you will make babies of them” when it comes to understanding their own society (*True* 10). This sentiment echoed British cultural theorist Frank Furedi’s conclusion in 2004 that the anti-intellectualism of contemporary British public domain had debased and banalised intellectual and cultural life. Though each author had a different explanation for the sense of cultural impoverishment, all were joined by concerns about a lack of critical thinking which sustains and renews social life — a concern that the absence of critical thought and debate was eroding public culture, democratic citizenship and political democracy.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, in the search for new ideas that would darn the fraying social fabric of western civil society, the public gaze came to

⁶ The knowledge economy is the practical application of knowledge to achieve economic or political goals.

rest upon public intellectuals who, before their alleged death, had been thought to circulate important ideas, impart meaning and mediate power. A series of eight public polls conducted 2004–2009 in England and Australia provides an insight into the intellectual terrain of the new millennium and the broad definitions associated with the public intellectual entity. Lists of top public intellectuals appeared in newspapers and magazines in an effort to illuminate emerging and original thinking that shaped or could shape society. It may appear ironic to investigate the role, function and significance of public intellectuals, who have been historically associated with philosophy, critical reflection and aesthetic values, through an analysis of their listing in ephemeral media polls designed more to measure the popularity of pundits than to define the function of the public intellectual. These polls, however, reflect the contemporary conditions, mediatised circumstances and political priorities in which contemporary public intellectuals perform. They thus provide a snapshot of how list-makers operationalise the entity of the public intellectual, and so illuminate the particular social and political realities within which the figure performs in the western world today.

Old White Males

A 2004 poll of public intellectuals conducted by the British centre-Left current affairs and political magazine, *Prospect*, sought to shine a light on major contributors to contemporary British public life and in the process illuminate new ideas. In their July issue, celebrating their 100th edition, the editors explained that they sought nominations of intellectuals who communicated “well to generalist audiences through the written and spoken word.” These intellectuals must also have made an original contribution to public life and “represent an important strand” of British culture. Interestingly, the magazine did not seek the “cleverest or most rigorous thinkers,” but rather those able to balance their intellectual and public commitments. These poll criteria clearly signalled the expectation that the intellectual’s commitment to the public was as important as the quality of his or her thinking. One thousand *Prospect* subscribers voted and the final results were, in order, biologist Richard

Dawkins, feminist Germaine Greer, economist Amartya Sen, historian Eric Hobsbawm and theatre director and TV personality Jonathan Miller. Each nomination was a high profile, well-established public intellectual who clearly met the magazine's specifications. Yet the selections were highly contentious, both with the magazine's own subscribers and with the mainstream media blogs and newspapers that picked up on the story.

Some dismissed the poll as a narrow, sexist, old-fashioned and an unoriginal listing of stale and poor-quality thinkers. Unrepresentative of broader British society was the refrain. Certainly, the overwhelming dominance of older white males, many of whom had seen their halcyon days in the 1960s and 1970s, did not seem to reflect the ethnically and culturally diverse Britain of the new millennium. Clare Cumberlidge wrote to the editor on 24 July saying "the list of white, middle-aged male academics was lazy and parochial" and betrayed "a major lack of engagement with British culture." Even poll editor David Herman, expressed surprise at the age of the nominees. In his article of 22 August he noted that there had been no nominee under 50 and speculated that the absence of younger people was either the result of a youth/popular culture devoid of ideas and thinking, or a problem with the poll criteria, which he conceded may have been "old-fashioned," "out-of-date" and part of a "vanishing intellectual culture."

The poll was most significant for what it exposed about the extent of the confusion over the role and function of the public intellectual. Herman suggested several reasons for this lack of clarity, including changes in media technology, which he argued had led readers to confuse intellectuals with celebrities. He insisted that intellectuals should be more than "intellectual impresario[s]" who draw attention to an issue because they are personally well known or have a media profile — they also should have something of substance to say that contributes to the public life of society. A similar point was made by another magazine subscriber, Richard North in his letter of 24 June 2004 wherein he suggested that the list was an ensemble of poor quality thinkers because voters had confused "pundits," "propagandists" and "policy-wonks." North provided his own description of a public intellectual, who, he wrote,

should have “insights which are explosive and showy enough to disturb and resonate (that’s the public bit); (and) he has to be systematic enough to make a claim to intellectualism.”

Confusion about the public intellectual in this poll also seemed related to changes in its traditional associations. For example, the intellectual has long been associated with the philosopher, but it was clear from the poll nominations that the British intellectual now was seen more as a technical knowledge expert. The rise of the expert can be seen as a reflection of the specialised and technical nature of contemporary knowledge, but Herman was concerned that the absence of philosophers from the lists signalled a move away from trying to answer the big questions that once gave philosophy its “point and meaning.” His observation reiterated what Rita Felski described as a “leitmotif of much contemporary thought” (157) in which philosophy, “once viewed as the ultimate repository of human wisdom” is now mocked “for its grandiose aspirations towards eternal verities” or “vehemently attacked for its role in enforcing a Eurocentric, phallogocentric tyranny of reason” (157). She suggested that talk about the obsolescence of the philosopher raises questions about the “status, function and authority of knowledge” and this has led to a “profound uncertainty” about the “meaning and value of intellectual work” (158).

Another changing association was apparent in the almost complete absence of politicians and political theorists from the *Prospect* poll, despite how dominant such figures had been in shaping public intellectual life in Britain as late as the 1980s. Herman speculated that the change was due to either a “soundbite-driven political culture” or the “larger decline of ideology.” Alternatively, the change might reflect a broad public disenchantment with politics driven by narrow partisan interests and unable to represent the more fluid political associations of a post-industrial, post-colonial knowledge economy. Or perhaps, Herman suggested, the lack of political thinkers in the polls was an indication of the inclinations of the magazine subscribers who liked the “fine detail of policy”

and gradual social reform rather than “big rhetoric” of politics or the expression of utopias or big theories.⁷

Another trend in the *Prospect* poll which contributed to the confusion about what a public intellectual is was the lack of nominees who work in popular culture. This was surprising given the influence of popular culture and the effectiveness of social commentators like Michael Moore and John Pilger, who use popular culture to circulate critiques of power. It was perhaps understandable, however, given the orthodoxy that intellectualism and popular culture are antithetical. The basis of this view is a belief that the values and formats of the mainstream media enfeeble intellectual standards and critical approaches and erode public intellectual authority, even as it circulates, promotes and broadens the demand for intellectual work. The deep ambiguity of these two functions is grounded in the conflict of values between commercial media requirements and traditional intellectual standards. This conflict highlights the tension between the educative role implicit in the traditional intellectual function and the entertainment, novelty and appeal demands of the contemporary media. As a result, popular culture is seen by many as devoid of critical ideas and substance, and the intellectual who engages with the media runs the danger of being branded a pundit and celebrity, a compromised figure who has sold out their intellectual rigor for publicity.

While the absence of social theorists, generalists and politicians revealed the changing contours of the British intellectual terrain, some of the inclusions were equally revealing. For example, historians have featured in lists of public intellectuals since the nineteenth century, primarily because of their work in shaping national identities and political ideologies. The large number of

⁷ Dominic Sandbrook in a 2009 *New Statesman* article made a similar observation, arguing that the narrow trajectory of the new political class meant the world of ideas no longer played a significant role. Sandbrook compared the current political focus on getting re-elected and maintaining the free market legacy of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, with earlier periods when the nation’s political life appeared imbued with ideas. Sandbrook draws upon the work of *Pistols at Dawn* author John Campbell who contended that the age of political seriousness in Britain fell between the 1870s and 1960s. This was a time when politicians still saw politics as a serious business and sought to communicate ideas to “what they imagined to be an informed and interested public” (33). Sandbrook also disputed the argument that the contemporary world has lost interest in grand narratives. He points to the simple appeal of nationalism and religion as examples of how the public has not “lost its appetite for big ideas” (34).

historians in the 2004 British poll reflected their intensified participation in public life as they re-thought inherited concepts, narratives and social identities. In doing so, they engaged in ideological struggles for control of the cultural resources that legitimate political power. This trend reflected the way in which social divisions at the end of the twentieth century were produced less by clashes over material assets or geographic boundaries and more by ongoing tussles over cultural resources.

The *Prospect* poll didn't identify any new or original thinkers, domains of thought or emergent new ideas. It did, however, highlight changes to modern intellectual labour and reveal that perhaps the talk of a lack of ideas, particularly about social renewal, may have been amplified by the lack of consensus about who the idea producers were and what they did.

Absurd, Ridiculous and Unjustifiable

Despite the confusion over the role of the public intellectual, the editors of *Prospect* were encouraged by the “noisy” response to the 2004 poll and attempted a more ambitious poll the following year. In collaboration with the US magazine *Foreign Policy*, *Prospect* sought to identify the world's top 100 public intellectuals. The editors conceded that the task was difficult enough within one culture but trying to look across different cultures and languages made it “tricky.” To help the process the magazine further refined its criteria in its 24 July 2005 article; intellectuals had to be alive and active in public life and demonstrate “public influence, not intrinsic achievement.”

Nominations ranged across a wide variety of occupations, from scientists to novelists to policy makers and journalists. An original list of 400 was reduced to 100 and the final list drew more than 20,000 votes. There were some unorthodox nominations which showed a mix of associations with the idea of the public intellectual. The nomination of Pope Benedict XVI revealed the ongoing sense of a moral and divine connection, while the listing of Japanese management consultant Kenichi Ohmae exposed the way in which capitalism had linked intellectual performance to profitability through the idea of

innovation. Former president of the World Bank, devout neoconservative and Iraq war proponent, Paul Wolfowitz, was also on the list, demonstrating the vast public power of conservative think tanks.⁸ The poll winner by a margin of 2,000 votes was linguistics professor and political commentator Noam Chomsky. He was followed by novelist Umberto Eco, biologist Richard Dawkins, playwright and statesman Vaclav Havel and journalist and polemicist Christopher Hitchens.

Again the final list of 100 nominations appears to have been representative of the “male world of strategic studies and policy institutes” that compromised the magazine’s subscribers, according to *Guardian* writer Patrick Barkham. In his article published on 1 October 2005, Barkham marvelled at the dominance of older white men and noted the absence of women, young people and French thinkers. The latter was particularly surprising given the French had dominated the European cultural scene since the Second World War. There were also few political theorists and hardly any philosophers. Yet, once again, it was possible to discern distinct trends that showed the changing nature of the contemporary intellectual terrain. First, the nominations revealed a western bias, which suggested that western media could not produce a credible list of the *world’s* top thinkers. But *Prospect* magazine editor David Goodhart denied the poll was western-centric. He argued, somewhat tendentiously, that the North American world constitutes a large part of the global intelligentsia, which naturally was reflected in the poll. More cogently, he also suggested that the western tendency towards media polls and awards makes its intellectual trends more visible in the west.

A second trend revealed by *Prospect’s* second poll was that, despite the impressive listing of technical experts, a yearning for a particular form of “universal” and oppositional intellectual persisted. This longing was evident in the final choice of Chomsky as the world’s leading public intellectual. A professor of linguistics, Chomsky is better known as a public intellectual on the

⁸ Andrew Gamble documented the impact of conservative think-tanks, which emerged first in the 1940s and 1950s in Britain and which led to the dominance of neo-conservative values in the mid to late 1970s and 1980s. Philippe Fontaine in his 2006 article also linked the rise of the conservative think-tanks to F.A. Hayek’s belief that public intellectuals exerted enormous influence over public opinion and that, if conservatives were to overcome social democracy, they had to produce their own intellectuals.

basis of his long history of critical public political commentary on conservative America. He is a thinker and writer in the tradition of Emile Zola, George Russell and Jean Paul Sartre, whose social activism led Herman, in his 20 November 2005 article, to describe him as a heroic intellectual who “speaks out on the great public issues of his time, opposing his government on questions of conscience rather than the fine print of policy.”

And still another trend apparent in the poll selections was the struggle to define the various functions that constitute the intellectual entity. In particular, tension emerged between the political and popularising responsibilities of the public intellectual. The former requires drawing upon expertise to speak about public culture and society-at-large; the latter making technical work or abstract concepts broadly available to a larger public. This struggle between a leading function and an educating or enabling role, according to journalist Jonathan Derbyshire, in a review of Stefan Collini’s *Absent Minds*, suggests that the internal tension between these two functions may lie at the heart of all the talk about the decline of the intellectual. He believed that the fear about an intellectual decline was really related to “anxieties about the academisation of intellectual life and the perceived inability of specialist intellectuals to make contact with a non-specialist public” (“Intelligent”).

And a last, fourth, trend evident from the *Prospect’s* 2005 Poll was the role of the media in gate-keeping the distribution of ideas. In his 22 October 2005 analysis of the poll, Herman noted what he called the “excessive role of the media in promoting certain names and in setting the cultural agenda.” A similar point was made by German author, journalist and blogger Arno Widmann in his 10 October 2006 blog, entitled *Prospect’s Blunder*. There he dismissed *Prospect’s* poll as a “stupid list” and popularity contest that only served to highlight the absence of new voices, lack of ideas and narrowness of public debate. He argued that an intellectual was not someone who filled editorials and commentaries with “his own world views,” but rather someone who “researched and pondered” and “figured something out that changes our lives and/or our views in a radical way.” Widmann cast the intellectual as a philosopher and educator, arguing that, though the 2005 poll sought to list the “idea providers” of today, all

the editors had done was make a list of people who knew how to be a celebrity. He fulminated that those on the list were never going to produce anything new, because they all do the same thing in order to get noticed. The poll, according to Widmann, was a publicity stunt that served only to highlight the “provincialism of the few media that operate worldwide,” and completely overlooked the people who really were generating the new ideas about the world.

The failure of the *Prospect* poll to produce a convincing, coherent and agreed list of global public intellectuals can be seen as a reflection of the diversity of the public domain in contemporary western societies. Yet, for many, the diversity of the nominations discredited the authority of the poll. The nominees themselves expressed disquiet over their inclusion and whether or not anything meaningful could be deduced. Historian Eric Hobsbawm argued it was not possible to measure intellectual endeavour across cultures, and Germaine Greer declared the list “political,” “absurd” and “unjustifiable,” insisting that she had only been included because they needed an Australian. “These lists are always so right wing,” she added. “It’s like the Nobel Prize; it’s always people we can do business with” (Barkham “Great Minds”). Chomsky himself was sceptical of his ranking, remarking his numbers had been “padded by some friends of his” (Campbell “Chomsky”); and Michael Ignatieff declared both the polls and the term public intellectual “ridiculous” (Editorial, *The Vancouver Sun*).

David Herman speculated in a 22 October 2005 feature whether or not the results of the poll meant the “end of the age of the great public intellectual.” However, it is probably more accurate to say that the poll shows how the function of the public intellectual has been reshaped in response to the changed social and political conditions of late modernity in which old late-nineteenth and twentieth century labels and orthodoxies no longer work.

Smart, Clever and Bright

It was not only in Britain that polls about public intellectuals were taken as a way of illuminating ideas for social renewal. *Prospect’s* global poll inspired *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) journalist Michael Vistonay to run one in

Australia. He had several reasons, but his primary one was to discover where fresh and challenging ideas were occurring. His interest was linked to a belief that spaces for new ideas and public debate were diminishing in Australia as universities lost resources and governments had “less tolerance for [public intellectuals] and the media devotes less space to them” (“Australia’s Top 100”). He was not alone in this observation. Throughout the early years of the twenty-first century many authors had noted a pervasive anxiety about the future and an absence of ideas for social renewal. Macgregor Duncan and colleagues wrote that the social shifts produced by global capitalism had stretched the social fabric of the nation and new ideas were needed to move the nation forward and “broaden what is currently imaginable” (6). Hugh Mackay noted that the dislocations of globalisation had led to citizen “disengagement from politics” and a shift towards “an inward looking focus and a loss of interest in big-picture issues” (*Advance* 7). Donald Horne spoke of the loss of ideas about civic identity (*Looking* 261) and Brian Howe wrote of the need to rethink the nation’s social policy as the nation struggled with a multiculturalism which had produced a “sense of uncertainty and a stronger sense of Australia as a society in transition, a risk society” (18). It was against this susurrant about an impoverished intellectual climate and the need for new ideas that Vistonay conducted his poll, which he hoped would affirm that people who generate ideas matter.

But the *SMH* poll reproduced the same confusing trends evident in the British polls. It was dominated by men and there was a conspicuous absence of new voices. Moreover, the wide variety and volume of intellectuals nominated for the list seemed at odds with Vistonay’s broader concerns about an absence of ideas critical for a coherent society. He tried to explain the anomaly, wondering if it was a matter of terminology and observing that people seemed to have difficulty in distinguishing between “those people with genuine ideas and those who fill our media with lots of heat, but often not much light” (“Australia’s Top 100”). Sylvia Lawson suggested that the vague nature of the term meant that “public intellectual” was not a useful category and mostly applied to “pundits” who are “given authority by the media” (qtd. in Vistonay). Others like Greg Noble speculated that the difficulty in distinguishing between genuine intellectuals and others may reflect Australia’s culture of egalitarianism.

Vistonay himself noted that he had a sense that Australians did not appear to be comfortable saluting its public intellectuals, whom he described as “people who question the way things are and have used their expertise to engage broadly the public to advance our society” (“Australia’s Top 100”). He argued that Australians preferred to use words like smart, clever or bright, rather than intellectual, and concluded that this was a response to a culture that sought simple solutions rather than “inquiry and confrontation.”

Vistonay’s poll drew criticism. It was condemned for its “dodgy” methodology, its narrowness and its elitist standards, which Bridget Rooney argued were based upon a “familiar logic of elite, field-based recognition of peers” which ranked mostly “white, male academics” (*Literary* 143). The poll was also criticized by Noble as a just competition to see who had the most cultural capital. Still, the poll had value. Importantly, it showed that, even though the universal intellectual was considered dead (done away with, suggested *Griffith Review* editor Julianne Schultz, by specialisation within the academy, the diversity and popularity of the media, and the proliferation of content and distribution outlets), it still appeared to have a role in Australian public debates, if for nothing else than for its capacity to generate controversy (“Australia’s Top 100”).

The Celebrity

Yet another Australian poll was conducted by Melbourne’s *Age*, with the results published on 18 April 2005. Journalists Shane Green and David Rood didn’t discover anything new but they affirmed that shifts in the public domain had affected the authority and operation of the public intellectual. This led them to conclude that, although the list had been topped by five university professors, it was celebrity and popularity rather than academic status which defined the contemporary Australian public intellectual.

Green and Rood speculated that the shift from academic qualifications to media exposure as the qualifying criteria for recognition as a public intellectual had been, in part, orchestrated by changing conditions in higher education. Recent

doctoral graduate Claire Wright, who was interviewed for *The Age* article agreed. She said young researchers like her were driven to commercial “profile generating” because of the decline of academic tenure. She argued that tenure previously had enabled a generation of intellectuals like Robert Manne and Geoffrey Blainey the stability and longevity necessary to build public authority and cultural capital, but that young intellectuals do not have that luxury any more; thus, to make people listen to what they have to say, they must embrace the media and compete for exposure.

Changes to the academy, however, did not explain the inclusion of entertainers like Andrew Denton and Barry Humphries in the final list, and Green and Rood drew upon the work of Australian researcher Tania Lewis to explain. Lewis argued that the inclusion of Denton and Humphries reflected changes in perceptions of public authority. Because the media has blurred the line between intellectuals and celebrities, TV presenters like Denton have come to serve as interpreters of specialised knowledge, opening up public space for different voices to comment on issues that shape how Australians see themselves. For Lewis this constitutes a form of public intellectualism.

Another person who remarked on how technological shifts in the public domain have affected the traditional definition of the intellectual was one of Australia’s best known intellectuals, Robert Manne. He observed that, as technology expanded opportunities for engagement with the public, there had been a subtle but important shift in the nature of the intellectual’s work. Once the public intellectual was a term applied to a scholar who had an interest in public and contemporary issues. Now the term applies more broadly to people who can influence public debate through a much wider range of “writing, thinking and speaking” (qtd. in Green and Rood) and who did not have to be scholars at all. And so it is not only academic credentials that define the public intellectual, but also the capacity to influence public debate. This democratisation of the role, Manne added, does not lead necessarily to the devaluation of the function. Rather, he argued, it is possible for popular works like Helen Garner’s *The First Stone* to foster people’s deeper reflection on social values and political judgments, and he saw the growing trend for novelists and writers to be called

public intellectuals as evidence of how their work has the capacity to affect the “sensitivity of society” (qtd. in Green and Rood).⁹ For Manne it is this concern with society or morality that distinguishes different types of intellectual work.

Green and Rood’s *Age* poll affirmed that the public intellectual appears to be most valued in contemporary society for their role as circulators of ideas and that the public intellectual’s public authority had become linked to the degree of media exposure. While these shifts had broadened the range of those regarded as public intellectuals, it also made a clearer definition of the role even more important.

Asleep at the Wheel

A third poll of Australia’s top 40 public intellectuals, conducted by general editor of the *Australian Public Intellectual Network*, Richard Nile, and published in *The Australian’s Literary Review* on 4 October 2006, criticised the quality of Australia’s public intellectuals. After receiving feedback from more than 200 scholars, Nile concluded that Australian intellectuals had been “asleep at the wheel” during the Hawke and Keating years. He suggested their absence from public engagement at that time had eroded trust in the intellectual and so, when public intellectuals were finally galvanised into action and public engagement after the 1996 election of John Howard, intellectuals found themselves without credibility and influence.

Nile, like Vistonay and Rood, discovered that his respondents had difficulty in defining what a public intellectual is. Some of his respondents even suggested that Australia didn’t have any public intellectuals because “there are so few venues out there for critical thinking and partly because our society has become

⁹ David Carter and Kay Ferres observed that literature has been central to shaping Australia’s public culture and that literature still plays a key role in “authorising and disseminating the interventions of public intellectuals” (Bennett and Carter 141). The authors further suggest that Australia’s public intellectuals have always been “one or other kind of literary intellectual” and they argue that even if the public intellectual is not a creative writer they are still characterized by literariness that is invested with an ethical value and interest in national culture (150).

so docile” (“First Cohort”). Nile’s poll revealed the same recurring trends produced by the other lists — it was dominated by historians, social scientists and men. He noted that, while there was a growth in Indigenous scholars and cultural theorists, there appeared to be no contemporary equivalents to the likes of Thomas Keneally or Patrick White. While this would appear to be at odds with Manne’s observation that writers and novelists are increasingly thought of as public intellectuals because of their ability to affect the “sensibility of society,” not through a daily commentary on politics, but rather by their imaginative examination of social values, it is likely that Nile was alluding to the absence of the heroic qualities of these earlier literary intellectuals (qtd. in *Brain Power*). Nile concluded that there are two types of contemporary Australian intellectuals: a technical specialist and an organic intellectual who is connected to citizenship and he suggested that it might be useful to make distinctions between these two types.

Many of the issues raised in the Australian newspaper polls were examined in greater detail in a series of articles on Australian intellectual life in a 2005 issue of the literary magazine *Meanjin*. Editor Ian Britain, who introduced the issue, wrote of the extreme external pressure on intellectuals “to prove themselves and compete with each other for attention in the public arenas far beyond the lecture hall or the pages of their latest book” (1). Like Claire Wright, Britain suggested that this pressure came from shifts in both the media and in higher education, where academics furiously compete to demonstrate the “relevance of their ‘products’ to contemporary public concerns — as well as their immediate profitability” (1).

One of the several contributors to the *Meanjin* feature, Jane Grant, argued in “Ins and Outs” that the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Age* polls were mostly useful for what they say about the list-makers and “their moment of historical production” (80). She went on to muse about the relative absence of teachers and women¹⁰ in both lists and puzzle over the lack of politicians given that Parliament “has

¹⁰ Citing the work of historian Marion Lake, Grant speculated that the lack of women in the public domain was related to the view that women only represent women’s interests, while men are not thought to only represent their interests as men but to also gauge the state of the nation.

always been the public forum for the communication of ideas” (81). She observed that examinations of intellectual performance tended to focus upon the nature of the moral address or the constraints imposed on the intellectual message by the media. She also suggested these limitations had hollowed out the educative nature of the relationship between the intellectual and his or her public and speculated that, if there is a perception that the ideas communicated by public intellectuals are narrow, then this may be a reflection of the limited engagement of intellectuals and the public. Grant concluded that the nature of public intellectualism needs to be rethought beyond traditional associations with Left-wing ideologies and that what is needed is the development of definitional criteria that enables distinctions between the variations in intellectual work.

Finally, in another *Meanjin* article author Stephen Muecke linked Australia’s intellectual and cultural future to the nation’s global position. He argued that the nation’s inward and white colonial vision of itself needs to be refurbished as Australia confronts competition from its Asian neighbours, who can no longer be dismissed as inferior or irrelevant. Hopeful for the formation of a post-colonial intellectual climate in Australia, Muecke remarked that by the end of the next century no one will grieve for the white Enlightenment project. Rather, he argued that Australia’s major intellectual project is reconciliation with the nation’s Indigenous past, something that can occur through the negotiation of stories of the past and can be the basis for the Australia’s ability to see what is “significant, powerful and different” about its own culture (51).

Careful What You Wish For

The combined five British and Australian polls held between 2004 and 2006 largely provided lists of western intellectuals. This was to change, however, with a sixth poll conducted by *Prospect* in 2008. This poll was an effort to measure, for a second time, global public intellectuals, and it succeeded in demonstrating not only how social activism enabled by online technologies was

providing new sites of intellectual activity, but also an entrenched distrust between West and East; between secularism and fundamentalism.

In announcing the 2008 poll in their 24 May issue, the editors declared it another attempt to track global intellectual trends and identify men and women who were shaping the world and “reflecting the emerging trends in global thought.” In particular, the editors wanted to address the gaps in earlier polls and sought to identify younger and non-western voices and to demonstrate how they influenced “debates across borders.” They were completely overwhelmed by what happened next. During four weeks of voting more than half a million people — in comparison to the 20,000 people who cast their vote in *Prospect’s* 2005 poll — voted for the world’s top 100 public intellectuals. The final top 10 were all Muslim and the winner, Turkish cleric and Islamic scholar Fethulla Gulen, was almost completely unknown in the West prior to the poll.

Alarmed by the results *Prospect* editors set about “exposing” what they considered a fraud — and in doing so overlooked the irony that the announced goal of the poll has been to seek out “new” and non-Western intellectual voices. In a 26 July 2008 article, staff writer Tom Nuttall argued the results were the outcome of a carefully orchestrated promotional campaign driven by *Zaman*, Turkey’s highest selling newspaper, which then had a circulation of over 700,000. Nuttall alleged *Zaman* had promoted the poll in their newspaper and actively encouraged people to vote. True, the editors were aware of the impact of mainstream media on voting patterns in their earlier polls, if only because Chomsky admitted that his fans had promoted his nomination. However, the volume of votes in the 2008 poll led Nuttall to argue that Gulen and his followers had made a mockery of the voting process.

Nuttall observed that the poll results were the outcome of a new type of social mobilisation where intellectual influence is expressed through “a personal network, aided by the internet, rather than publications and institutions.” Of course, this type of intellectual activity was not new, having been around since the emergence of online technologies in the mid-1990s. What was different about the Gulen result was the speed and magnitude of the mobilisation. Nuttall attributed this to the “Muslim effect,” which he saw as the Islamic strategy of

voting for their own. He argued that this parochialism was possible because of the technical connectivity of the Muslim World. Turkey, according to Nuttall, has more than three million Facebook users, more than any other country outside the United States, Britain and Canada.¹¹

Prospect's claim that the poll was rigged was disputed by *Zaman* columnist Muhammed Cetin, who argued in a 26 June 2008 article that the outcome was the result of the particular demographic of Gulen followers: mostly well-educated and computer-literate people who have a "strong economic-functional position" that makes them likely to mobilise. Cetin explained that the voters were essentially Islamic capitalists who valued "freedom of expression, democratic participation and self-government in the public domain." Moreover, he argued, members of "information networks and social movements are often more committed than those who have formal membership in political parties."¹² The polls, Cetin concluded, revealed to the West that the Muslim world cannot be dismissed as technologically disadvantaged, and that there is a huge desire for peaceful democratic society amongst Islamic people.

In this observation, Cetin alluded to Gulen's insistence that peaceful coexistence between the West and Islamic world is possible. A similar point was also made by another *Zaman* columnist, Bulent Kenes, in a 25 June 2008 article that proposed the nomination of Gulen expressed appreciation for his efforts to "shatter into a thousand pieces the twisted perception of Islam shaped by Islamophobia." At a time when the War on Terror and the invasion of Iraq had created distrust between the Middle East and the West, it was Gulen, according to Kenes, who drew a powerful distinction between terrorism and Islam. Gulen not only wrote about peace but also established a social movement and

11 The win, according to Nuttall, was also helped by the fact that Farsi is the fourth most popular language in blogs on the web.

12 Gulen's followers were mostly "educated and upwardly mobile Muslims" and Gulen was seen as an "intellectual activist," according to President of the Turkish Dialogue Society, Ozan Keles. Keles suggested the poll results revealed that Gulen appealed to an "international, young, educated audience. This is a generation that uses the Internet, reads in English and is open to the world." *Prospect's* suggestion that the poll results had been produced by poll fixing, Keles wrote, overlooked the main point: "If one man is able to have hundreds of thousands of people spare time to enter into a site and vote for him, he is certainly a great man" (qtd in Balci).

supported interfaith and intercultural schools devoted to his thesis that it is possible to establish interreligious and intercultural tolerance and dialogue. According to Kenes, these actions not only made him “one of the leading intellectuals of the world” but also “one of the greatest men of action.”

Prospect editors didn't agree, and in a 26 July 2008 profile of the Turkish cleric, Ehsan Masood implied Gulen was a self-promoting hypocrite and closet fundamentalist. He compared the 67-year-old Sufi cleric to a “modern televangelist” who, while reassuring “his followers that they can combine their statist nationalist beliefs . . . with a traditional Islamic faith” continues to live in self-exile in the United States where he runs a slick commercial operation in which he communicates with his followers through his more than sixty books, DVDs, MP3 recordings and websites. Impugning the reputation of the cleric, however, did little to explain how so many people had been mobilised in such a short period of time to vote Gulen as a public intellectual. The explanation by magazine editor David Goodhart that this must indicate something unique and valuable about the power of public intellectuals to influence ideas didn't seem quite adequate (26 July 2008). It is perhaps more likely that an explanation lies more with the nature of those who use social media, rather than a reflection upon the public intellectual itself.

Practical Selections

Unsurprisingly, Gulen's win signalled a shift in the way *Prospect* conducted its polls, and its editors, claiming a desire to avoid another “sharp-elbowed” campaign, stopped consulting with the public and moved away from democratic online voting (Crabtree, “An Intellectual Surge”). They instead assembled a judging panel to select the nominations for their fourth poll in 2008. And once again they changed the definitional public; this time nominees for the role of public intellectual had to conform to three criteria: novelty, real world impact, and intellectual pizzazz. With these new, albeit still vague, criteria another type of public intellectual emerged, one who worked with institutionalised knowledge and intervened in specific issues to resolve social particular

problems. The winner was American general and commander of the United States Central Command, David Petraeus. Petraeus, who holds a PhD from Princeton, was chosen because he had prepared the first “actively humane warfighting doctrine to ever come out of the Pentagon.” The Petraeus doctrine enshrines the ideal that the winning of modern wars requires ensuring the security and well-being of civilian populations, and recognises that “humanitarian assistance and construction projects are critical to any fight.” Since “80 percent of the battle is a political one,” Petraeus was also applauded for putatively waging a “war of ideas” against many in Washington who had argued “that fewer constraints and more ruthless tactics were required in Iraq” (Crabtree, “An Intellectual Surge”).¹³

Soon after *Prospect* held still another poll that searched for intellectuals engaged in specific issues. On 16 December 2009 the magazine launched its fifth poll, which it titled the *Top 25 Brains of the Financial Crisis*. According to journalist Jonathon Ford, the poll was prompted by Alan Greenspan’s comment that the “whole intellectual edifice of the efficient market hypothesis collapsed in 2008.” Thus the editors set about looking for public intellectuals who were rethinking the operation of the West’s banking and financial sectors. Simon Johnson, Professor of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and a former international monetary fund chief economist, was selected because he had contributed to the public conversation by popularizing the case against “over-mighty banking.”

The selection of Petraeus and Johnson showed the way in which, in response to the technical and complex knowledge of contemporary society, the public intellectual increasingly has become associated with specialised knowledge, and the label “public intellectual” has become what Amitai Etzioni calls a “temporary social accreditation” (4). That is, the function of the public intellectual has come more and more to be understood in terms of what Frank Furedi calls a “particular identity” whose authority rests on the ability to express, not the

¹³ Petraeus exemplifies the soldier scholar “and is recognized around the world as a man of intelligence and integrity” (Quinones “Leach, Petraeus”). He was also listed by *Esquire Magazine* as one of the 75 most influential people of the twenty-first century and a top global thinker for 2009.

“truth” but rather a particular identity, specialty or viewpoint (44). In other words the public intellectual is most valuable for the way their critique publicises a particular issue of broader social concern.

Soar on the Thermals of Public Opinion

Since their fifth poll affirmed the ongoing confusion over the nature of the public intellectual, *Prospect* editors sought to produce a more precise definition to help guide future public deliberations. The editors asked British public intellectual Christopher Hitchens to write an article on how to be a public intellectual.¹⁴ Hitchens produced a standard definition of the function when he opined that the public intellectual was someone who “makes his or her living through the battle of ideas,” and he drew a distinction between a “true intellectual” and opinion-makers and pundits. He insisted that public intellectuals, even though committed to public debate in the interests of preserving effective sociality, must be “prepared to do their own thinking.” That is, such figures must reject the legitimacy offered by the populist vote. As a consequence, the contemporary intellectual living in anti-intellectual times must be prepared to live with the accusations of elitism.

Hitchens also observed that the contemporary intellectual was secular and no longer leftist. Further, he insisted that the intellectual was “something one is rather than something one does.” With this description Hitchens seemed to be invoking Edward Shil’s description of the intellectual as a vocation, which attracts those with an “unusual sensitivity to the sacred, an uncommon reflectiveness about the nature of their universe and the rules which govern their society” (3). Hitchens also argued that the public intellectual must be characterised by a sceptical attitude to authority and to Utopias, as well as by a sensitivity to the relationship between language and truth that enables the exposure of lies and rhetoric in public discourse. He concluded that the intellectual should survey the present from “the optic of a historian, the past

¹⁴ Hitchens had been listed in the top five British public intellectuals, edited a book with Edward Said, and he had participated in a public forum with Russell Jacoby to discuss the future of the public intellectual.

with the perspective of the living, and the culture and language of others with the equipment of an internationalist” (“How to”).

An Altered Character

The polling of public intellectuals over the last decade can be seen as partially a response to a widespread perception in Western democracies that, despite the expanding knowledge economy and the proliferation of the cultural industries, there has been a shortage of new ideas and a general sense of cultural impoverishment, which is felt to imperil certain forms of political democracy. Since historically it was public intellectuals and their predecessors who produced the ideologies, expressed the national and cultural identities, and circulated the ideas that guided the development and operation of democratic society, it was not unreasonable to think that a measure of their numbers and types would illuminate new ideas and new ways of thinking. However, what the polls did in bringing the variety of intellectual labour and the conflicting perceptions of its operation to the public gaze was to expose the vastly changed and complex nature of the figure of the public intellectual. The contradictions, paradoxes and limitations exposed by the polls’ undertaking to define the public intellectual and identify examples of intellectual performances makes clear that not only is the figure quite alive but also that the contemporary globalised economic, political, technological and social forces have altered its character. Thus what is needed is an analysis of the intellectual’s role and public obligations in the context of contemporary conditions. First, however, it is useful to learn of the public intellectual’s past and dominant legacies.

Chapter Two

INTELLECTUAL LEGACIES

The wide diversity of intellectual performances nominated as public intellectualism in the several polls taken in Britain and Australia at the turn of the century suggests a widespread confusion about what constitutes an intellectual in contemporary western society. One way to understand this confusion is to think of the public intellectual as not a fixed figure, but rather a contingent, emergent entity shaped by diverse, and often competing historical traditions, and by particular historical contexts. Put differently, the poll driven debates did not manifest a public intellectual that was easily recognised at a moment when a combination of powerful social, economic, political and technological forces had altered its appearance. But the public intellectual can be identified because, despite successive historically produced manifestations, the entity remains defined by a persistent set of characteristics rooted in its Enlightenment origins. By nature the public intellectual is a critical, political and ethical being, whose key function is to promote and preserve both individual freedom and the collective social order. This sometimes paradoxical function provides the contemporary public intellectual with his or her special value in contemporary society and privileges their truth claims. This chapter traces these critical, political and ethical continuities across several incarnations in order to better understand the situation of the public intellectual in contemporary society.

The Scholar

The modern intellectual function has its origins in the rise of modern western political society, which Hannah Arendt described as the “organisation of the life processes” (*The Human Condition* 45). These societies emerged from the sixteenth century onwards and were characterised by a secularism which usurped religious revelation as a source of knowledge, and transformed

conversations about the divine right of kings and the natural order into discussions about the rights of the individual and the legitimacy of state authority.¹⁵ In England these conversations led to the seventeenth century Civil Wars (1642–1652; 1648–1649; 1649–1651) and the Revolution of 1688–89, which had challenged the absolute power of the sovereign by establishing an English Bill of Rights (1689) and extending the powers of Parliament. Similar political demands followed in the United States after the American War of Independence (1775–1783), which installed self-government and implemented a Bill of Rights in 1788, and in France, which saw the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789 and the establishment of the representative National Convention in 1792.

As constitutional and parliamentary forms of government began to emerge in the seventeenth century as ways to avert revolution, scholars sought to find a balance between the individual rights of man and the responsibilities and authority of state power.¹⁶ In England, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) declared that man needed a civil government to protect him and ensure peace and order, and John Locke (1632–1704) insisted that the modern government had a role in protecting the rights of the citizen, including life, liberty and property, but that, for this protection to be legitimate, it would require the consent of the people. It was French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), however, who elaborated further on the idea of consent. He argued that the relationship between man and government constituted a social contract in which man agrees to submit his personal will to the universal will in return for the protection of individual freedom. The contract was “made not between ruler and the ruled, but among the general body of the people, who by an act of will associated themselves into civil society, adopted laws and established institutions of

15 Up until the early Enlightenment the idea of natural law had been used to justify the divine right of kings, which assumed that the universe was governed by a benign and reasonable god and that the sovereign was his representative on earth. With secularism, intellectual discourse began to argue that if there were natural laws that kept monarchs in their role then there were also natural rights that empowered the individual and enabled them through “action, speech, and thought” to engage in power (Arendt, *The Human Condition* 35).

16 This intellectual formation drew upon both the legacies of the “Roman rhetorician” and the “Italian humanist,” the latter especially associating the intellectual with the divine and so enabling intellectuals to construct themselves as a secular clerisy. At the same time, however, this new liberal entity also represented the emerging middle classes, and thus their agenda was not just about “the conscience of society” but also about a new world order (Krieger 228).

government” (McNeil 536). The idea of the social contract outlined the will of the people as a new source of authority and, importantly, implied that citizens, as opposed to subjects, needed to be informed in order to participate in power.

This notion formalised a political relationship between citizens and the State wherein citizens constitute a political power by acting as a unified force.

Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651) described this new being who was both citizen and subject and who willingly delegates power back to the sovereign state. The sovereignty of this collective of citizens, however, was not created by the formation of an identical will but rather by a commitment to an agreed purpose “for which alone the promises (to civil society) are valid and binding” (Arendt, *The Human Condition* 245).

Rousseau’s notion of a social contract influenced the work of eighteenth-century German moral philosopher Immanuel Kant¹⁷ (1724–1804) for whom reason replaced divine knowledge in determining what was true, real and moral in society.¹⁸ Kant agreed with Rousseau that men had “inalienable rights” and that in a civil society governed by law all “men are free, equal and self-dependent” (Reiss 25). However, Kant was also aware of the threat the social contract posed, not just to autocratic power, but also to social stability. He, therefore, sought a theoretical framework that would balance the exercise of state power, necessary for the preservation of a peaceful and stable society, with individual political rights. He believed the solution lay with reason, arguing that there existed *a priori* principles — or pre-existing objectives and universal moral laws — that could be established by reason. Reason would allow man to analyse the

17 Kant’s political writings were theoretical and philosophical primarily because the German middle classes under Frederick the Great and Frederick William were not as emancipated as those in Britain and France, and so the middle classes did not have first-hand political experience. Kant, therefore, “mapped out a theory of politics independent of experience,” which not only served to influence other philosophers, but also rejected the idea that politics was merely an “exercise in statecraft” (Reiss 14). Kant exerted great influence on other philosophers, including Herder, Hegel and Marx, thus his work has value in understanding the operation of modern western civil societies.

18 Kant sought to produce knowledge that proved reality and it was this intellectual quest to develop a systematic world view based upon man’s use of reason that became the basis for the articulation of the modern public sphere and political society. Kant re-constituted his categorical imperatives as principles of right, which could only exist in a civil society in which a constitution and a system of laws protected both individual and collective or universal freedoms. Upon this basis Kant’s conceptualisation of the intellectual as the expresser of political rights emerged out of the dominant discourse of the time, which revolved around the modern political state and conversations about the rights and the legitimacy of state power.

world, legitimate his own deductions and in understanding the *a priori* principles that inform human life citizens would acquire the confidence necessary to take political action and progress society. Indeed, if the individual citizen would “dare to be wise,” society as a whole could reach Enlightenment.¹⁹ In this way Kant produced the social contract as the product of reason — an argument that gave political force to the public opinion of the citizen.

However, while believing man was possessed of free will and capable of reason, Kant insisted that people had lived under the tutelage of monarch and church for too long and thus were immature and unable to use their reason without the guidance of others. He therefore, argued in “What is Enlightenment?” (1784)²⁰ that, while freedom was a necessary pre-condition for the use of reason and the evolution of society, not everyone could challenge authority, or exercise their reason publicly. For Kant it was the scholar or “learned man” who was entitled to share his “considered and well intentioned thoughts” in the “spirit of criticism” in public — the site of civil society — and so help others to learn to use their own reason (56).²¹ Kant’s privileging the scholar in this way reflects the fact that in the eighteenth century it was the scholar, more than the ordinary citizen, who was committed to the use of reason, a commitment that related to his role in evaluating society and pursuing the “public presentation of truth” in the interests of the common good (Habermas, *The Structural* 105). Kant’s scholar, however, was only privileged if he spoke in public, for the public sphere was the conceptual space in which the political function of “articulating the state with society” occurred (104). It was here that citizens could determine what was true by engaging in rational critical debate, and by determining if something was “valid for all human reason” they could produce the public

19 The term “Enlightenment” covers a range of intellectual ideas, but Kant specifically described Enlightenment as the public use of reason. If men could think freely, reasoned Kant, they would act freely and this would influence the operation of government and lead to the civilization and progress of society.

20 Kant’s essay “Heisst Aufklärung?” was published in the December 1784 issue of *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. In it he established a conceptual function for the operation of intellectual discourse in society and its central role in making visible the exercise of power by evaluating its operation.

21 It should be noted that in the same year that Kant wrote his essay which outlined the role of the scholar, German King Frederick II issued a promulgation stating that a private person had “no right” to challenge power in public because they were not capable of making judgments as they did not have “complete knowledge of the circumstances and motives” (*The Structural* 25).

consensus that regulated power (qtd. in Habermas 108). The publicness of this process was very important because Kant believed that it was only in front of others that man would moderate his own personal inclinations and, through public debate with others, discipline himself to rise above self-interest to find balance between competing individual political demands and the demands of authority. It was for this reason that Kant argued that a political action was moral if it was public.

By casting the scholar as the voice of reason, Kant defined the public, critical and political functions that established the fundamental orthodoxy of the modern western public intellectual. He called upon the scholar to apply the rules of reason to determine what was true and moral for society and to share his “carefully considered and well-intentioned thoughts” concerning the mistakes of society as well as suggestions for its improvements (56). Through public debate the intellectual could determine what is true/right, and shape the public opinion that both legitimates and moderates autocratic power. It is important to note that Kant never saw public opinion as just the will of the collective, rather he saw it as the voice of reason. In other words, public opinion was the effect of deliberative debate and this sort of debate was the only basis that formal power should consider when negotiating the demands of citizens. Thus the scholar became responsible not only for expressing the individual rights of man but also for protecting the social and political conditions that would preserve those rights. The idea was that constitutional forms of government relied upon preserving equality and freedom of expression (along with social progress), and that these values not only defined the public sphere but also the presiding values of the scholar. Kant’s scholar was, therefore, a representative of reason, an educator and social leader: he arbitrated the standards of citizenship, he mediated power and he sought to transform individual consciousness.

Kant’s construction of the scholar established the idea of the public intellectual as a scholar who was fundamentally a social libertarian and progressive, both a critical thinker and activist grounded in political society. This notion endured for two centuries. However, by constructing the scholar as an adjunct to the operation of constitutional government and political democracy, Kant placed

the intellectual in a permanently paradoxical role — something that has become more obvious in contemporary western society and the expanded public domain. The paradox flows from the scholar's bifurcated role in which he simultaneously civilises political conflicts in order to create the consensus necessary for a peaceful society and challenges consensus in order to facilitate progress and change. In a similar tension, Kant's scholar affirms individual political rights and the ability of the citizen to initiate political action, yet acts to qualify those privileges. Moreover, Kant's notion of the public intellectual as scholar relates to a time when citizenship was extended to just a few propertied and educated individuals. In that context the scholar might easily act as public leader and authority. In contemporary society, however, education and political enfranchisement are standard rights for all citizens. As a result the public domain has become more complex and the public intellectual struggles to claim authority. Indeed, Zygmunt Bauman has suggested the intellectual has become just one more voice in the clamour of voices in public.

Men of Letters

Alongside Kant's scholar and philosopher, whose role was to develop the systems of thought that would govern the operation of political society, another intellectual formation also emerged: the "men of letters."²² A product of the democratisation of the cultural domain of modern society, the role of the man of letters was to circulate ideas about society to the growing reading public. By the late eighteenth century in western society, the cultural domain had moved away from its earlier exclusive affiliation with the church and the Royal court. It had become, instead, an extension of the political sphere and it consisted of the reading, critically debating and property-owning public found in public coffee houses, reading societies and literary salons. The members of these associations came together in public to discuss literature but also, increasingly, to discuss

²² According to Habermas the name "men of letters" was derived from the major literary form of the 18th century, which was the letter.

economic, social and political issues of common concern.²³ There they criticised authority, espoused citizen rights, provided the impetus for social change and manifested the idea of the unified social world. It was to these, mostly male, audiences that the men of letters used literature, art, playwriting and poetry to circulate ideas about the operation of society. The term “men of letters” signalled a shift in role rather than function: armed with reason and the systems of thought developed by philosophers, men of letters used the artefacts of culture to engage with a rapidly growing public who increasingly demanded political rights. Thus, the domain of “culture” became a critical force in shaping the emerging political consciousness of the members of civil society and served to reinforce the rational and critical standards of behaviour thought necessary for citizenship. Writers and artists, as well as philosophers/scholars, expressed concerns for the freedom, rights and capacities of every man and advocated the liberal middle-class values of equality and freedom, as the operating principles of civil society.²⁴

It was also during the eighteenth century that the term culture came to operate as a synonym for civilisation. This association emerged as culture came to mean, according to Raymond Williams, the description of the secular and “historical self-development of humanity” (89). As a result, a relationship was established between the men of letters, as the producers of culture, and the health of western civilisation. The use of cultural products to educate citizens politically affected the role of the intellectual in two ways. First, it established the cultural domain as the site of education, refinement and cultivation. Second, it cast the intellectual as the keeper of the cultural and intellectual standards set by reason and enabled them to build up “systematic world views” within which to operate (Krieger 229).

23 After the 1750s these sites grew rapidly as state authority separated from the monarch’s power and the literary sphere progressively shifted to the towns and their salons and coffee houses, in which critical public debate took place. In Germany, Great Britain and France, these places were centres of both literary and political criticism from the late-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, and they provided a bridge between the former courtly public sphere and the expanding public sphere of the emerging civil society.

24 The role of the men of letters was to instill in the early reading public the liberal values of equality and freedom, and these became the operating standards and principles of the newly emerging civil society (Habermas, *The Structural* 106).

The operation of the men of letters was also defined by the size and freedom of the public sphere within which they operated. Those spheres were different in Germany, England and France. In Germany, the nobility retained a strong reliance on the court system and thus the public domain was unable to develop the larger critical public spheres seen in England and France. As a consequence, Germany's intellectual traditions remained largely religious and philosophical and located in universities, rather than trending toward the broader and more public role of the men of letters. This division was reinforced by a relatively rigid class structure which positioned middle-class Germans to promote education as a mechanism for social mobility, and so they kept the cultural domain narrow and separate from the labouring classes. In this context, German scholars, like Kant, assumed the role of educator and maintained the ideal of the scholar as philosopher and guardian of the national consciousness — a role that was seen as above court politics.

In contrast, French men of letters, according to Pierre Lepape, formed a new social group “characterised by their unfettered use of knowledge” and a “demand for complete liberty of expression” (qtd. in Jennings 70). These men of letters operated as a “dispersed community united at the level of ideas by the same creed of the search for truth by means of reason and experimentation” (qtd. in Jennings 70). Voltaire described the man of letters in the early 1760s as a man with “no power” other than his “own words” and “no competence” other than his own “capacity to move opinion” — a man who in “the name of humanity” attacks “arbitrary political power with all the weapons at his disposal” (qtd. in Jennings 70). Voltaire insisted such attacks should occur in public and in 1765 called upon philosophers to reject the “obscurism of decadent universities” and engage with the “*L'Homme de lettres*” (qtd. in Bourdieu 657). It was this strong intellectual intervention in public that produced a thriving French cultural life during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The French Revolution (1789–1799), however, changed all of that. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the men of letters were blamed for the excessive violence and they became objects of distrust and scorn. As a result their function in guiding

society was eroded. By the 1820s, the French Romantic poets had publicly criticised the early philosophers for interfering in political life and for proposing a “rational vision of historical development” (657). The Romantics took what was at the time a populist stance, and demanded the re-establishment of spiritual and religious sensibility, rather than a critical rational one.²⁵ This Romantic intellectual formation, however, did not survive the disillusionment that followed the 1848 French revolution. Gradually the men of letters, both romantics and scholars, withdrew from engagement with the public domain. In his analysis of the public domain during this time, Habermas saw this withdrawal as a sign that the middle classes had been successful in their bid for power. He argued that, though the men of letters initially spoke for the economic and political interests of the growing middle classes, by the middle of the nineteenth century much of the middle class had been absorbed into positions of formal authority and power and no longer needed writers and artists to agitate for social change.

In England, the intellectual formation of nineteenth-century men of letters was strongly shaped by the violence of the French Revolution, which provided the impetus for a program of gradual political reform designed to maintain the peaceful society necessary for economic and industrial growth and accommodate the growing demands for wider political enfranchisement. As political and legal rights were progressively extended to a broader range of citizens, there was a corresponding change and growth in the judiciary, political parties, social movements, and the media. The development of these institutions and structures both expanded and stabilised the public sphere and the realm of freedom of speech. As a result the British man of letters had a clear and decisive role — to assist the nation’s citizens to adapt to the dramatic social transformations and unprecedented change produced by industrialisation and urbanisation, and to equip citizens to participate in civil society. During the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s the man of letters, whether “novelist, poet, historian or

²⁵ Karl Manneheim analysed the Romantic intellectual formation and argued that it had been more socially isolated than other forms of intellectual work, because its members had been unable to support themselves from their intellectual activity. These were the intellectuals who he was to later describe as “free-floating,” who were passive and attached themselves to various social forces (qtd. in Heeren 3).

social critic," was "expected to help the audience through the troubles of economic, social and religious change" (Heyck, "From Men" 160). The primary responsibility of this widely diverse group was to maintain a peaceful society; as Matthew Arnold argued in his 1869 *Culture and Anarchy*, the role of the men of letters was to "instruct society in order to repress its fractious nature" (qtd. in Todorov et al. 1124).

As a moral and civic leader, the British man of letters acquired definite characteristics. No longer a philosopher, he was a generalist and he was expected to "create, distribute and apply culture . . . the symbolic world of man" (Heyck, "From Men" 161). He was to "communicate knowledge but research — the deliberate discovery of new knowledge — was less important to his function than assimilation and interpretation" (161). In England the term men of letters also came to refer to writers of imaginative literature. The popularity of this form of intellectual labour showed the influence of the marketplace and rising middle-class consumers, who sought out ideas produced in an entertaining and/or useful manner. This trend not only produced a particular form of intellectual work, it also contributed to a cultural suspicion of anything too theoretical or abstract. Accordingly, England developed an enduring reputation for an indifference to ideas. Stefan Collini documented some examples of this attitude which was apparent in the work of British author Bulwer Lytton, who in the 1830s noted that the British had been "very little alive to all speculative innovations in morals and politics" (qtd. in Collini 70). And it was also evident in the comments of J. R. Seeley in the 1860s when he spoke of "philistinism" as an "English characteristic" and referred to the "barrenness of ideas" and "contempt for principles" which defined "English backwardness" in the "warfare of thought" (qtd. in Collini 70). This anti-intellectualism, which Edward Shils describes as the rejection of "excessive intellectual analysis and discussion" because it can "erode the foundations of order" (21), ensured that England never developed the same radically dissenting intellectual climate as was apparent in France nor the highly theoretical and scholarly intellectualism of Germany. In any case, the nineteenth-century English public seemed to agree that the role of the men of letters was to educate rather than to reform; to moderate rather than revolt. As a result, during this period the English men of

letters emerged as stable and authoritative public identities and this led nineteenth-century British writer and politician Thomas Carlyle to describe them as the “most important modern person: What he teaches the whole world will do and make” (qtd. in Heyck, “From Men”161).

The operation of the British men of letters, however, underwent a change at the end of the nineteenth century, a change reflected in a shift in terminology as the term “men of letters” was replaced by the label “intellectual.” The word intellectual had been used for the first time as a noun in 1813, and, though there was occasional reference to it throughout the nineteenth century (mostly in a derisive manner), the term came into common use only after the 1880s, when it was used to describe a new intellectual formation. The change in name fundamentally was part of a broader effort by intellectual groups to preserve control of knowledge and cultural production in the context new demands of a growing mass marketplace. In particular, this attempt to reinstitute control over cultural production was a response to four key developments that reshaped the nineteenth century intellectual landscape. The first development was an expansion of science, which accompanied the technological developments of industrialisation, and which introduced the idea that humanity could only be understood through the systemic study of “both the physical world and human nature” (Nicholas 362). This development positioned science, rather than reason, as the disinterested pursuit of organized knowledge, and as a methodology of evaluating knowledge. In time this led to the rise of technical and specialist knowledge. New scholarly and technical standards emerged, together with specialist audiences, who looked for “contributions rather than moral edification” (Heyck, “From Men”181). These new scientific scholars scorned not only the pursuit of “pure reason” but also public approval as a legitimating force. In this context men of letters came to be judged as “shallow, dilettantish, amateurish and out-of-date” (Heyck, “From Men”179).

The second development that impacted upon the operation of the men of letters was the reform of the British universities in the 1850s, which resulted in the steady retreat of nineteenth century men of letters from the public domain. The reforms saw higher education move away from its traditional religious and civil

affiliations in order to align with the commercial and industrial interests that seemed to better articulate the goals of the nation. The consequent expansion of university subjects beyond the classics increased the number of students attending university. It also enabled a widening of the divisions in intellectual labour as university scholars, and their associated professional academies, dissociated themselves from the demands of the culturally consuming general public. By embracing the ethics and professional standards of their specialised domains of knowledge, intellectuals were no longer subject to the demands and expectations of the public. Thus, the amateur — the traditional man of letters — increasingly was excluded from public conversations.

The third important change was the rise of aestheticism during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Aestheticism was a reaction to the utilitarian and capitalist approach to knowledge which had accompanied the new industrial society. As a school of thought that expressed an appreciation of beauty, aestheticism sought to restore ideal standards of learning and thinking, which were seen to be threatened both by the new scientism and debased by the cheap populist literature that had begun to flood the expanding cultural marketplaces after the education and electoral reform of the 1860s.

Aestheticism argued that art shouldn't be valued just for the answers it gave in regard to social problems, but for its own sake. This view attempted to detach artistic appreciation from class and marketplace considerations and to establish a cultural elite who saw culture as a serious pursuit conducted beyond the political fray of nation-building, which had been a fundamental concern of intellectual work during the nineteenth century. Subscribing to the ideas of excellence and genius, the attitude of aestheticism was captured in the work of Oscar Wilde who wrote in *The Critic as Artist*: "Yes, the public is wonderfully tolerant. It forgives everything except genius" (1108). Aestheticism was significant in the evolution of the public intellectual because it broke the bond that had been established between the men of letters and their audiences in the earlier part of the century. And as a result the men of letters were left

vulnerable to the onslaught of intellectual competition that arose at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁶

And a last, fourth, trend in the genealogy of the public intellectual which emerged in the early to mid-nineteenth century was a growing competition for control of public opinion from the expanding political classes that emerged in response to the extension of legal and political rights.²⁷ There was considerable overlap between political and intellectual classes in Britain in the nineteenth century, since both were drawn from the educated and propertied elites. They, therefore, shared the same concerns about the capacity of the masses to participate in public decision-making. According to David Marquand, this shared concern drove conversations about citizenship across the nineteenth century, as well as conversations about professional standards, service to the common good, and citizen participation in government (55). As industrialisation began to create significant social problems, the propertied classes became increasingly concerned that the induction of the property-less and the uneducated into political society would see “economic antagonisms” translated into “political conflicts” (Habermas, *The Structural* 146). The fear was that public opinion, which up until this point had been mobilised against the common enemy of tyranny, would become a coercive public force and would lead “to the reign of the many and the mediocre” (133). As a result, intellectuals like John Stuart Mill and Alex de Tocqueville argued representational political systems were necessary if Kant’s deliberative debate was to be saved from the “unenlightened opinion” of the many (137).

This led to the rise of liberal constitutional and representational politics and it was from this point onwards that the men of letters were increasingly absorbed into the political, commercial and educative structures of the British Empire. As a result from the late nineteenth century until the 1950s Britain’s educated

26 Heyck argues that nineteenth century literature contains many references to the death of the men of letters during this time. He suggests, however, that it was not so much the death of the function, but rather the demise of the man of letters who was able to “empathize with a general public that agreed with them on the same ultimate concerns and standards of life” (181). This moment in the genealogy of the public intellectual seems a foreshadowing of the debates of the 1980s and 1990s about the death of the public intellectual.

27 The *British Parliamentary Reform Acts* (1832, 1867, 1883) which extended electoral suffrage and political representation were contingent upon the social hierarchy.

classes — except for writers like George Orwell, George Bernard Shaw and Virginia Woolf — performed less as public intellectuals in the role of “men of letters,” a label that in Britain continued to smack of abstract dilettantism, and more like professionals focused on technical expertise. By and large, following the trends sketched above, the mainstream of British intellectuals did not aspire to roles beyond those dictated by their individual class and/or professional allegiances.

Intellectual concerns about the competency of the masses to participate in political processes may have been sublimated in Britain through the effects of imperialist nationalism, capitalism and representational democracy. However, the same concerns manifested themselves in a politically divisive way in France and produced a different western intellectual orthodoxy.

The Universal Intellectual

The idea of the public intellectual which developed in France at the end of the nineteenth century grew out of a response to a corrupt and politically unstable Third Republic. Deep divisions existed between a conservative establishment comprised of government and military institutions and an anti-Semitic Catholic church, and the growing liberal, progressive middle and working class socialists. These tensions were transformed into public violence and civil unrest by the arrest and imprisonment for treason of a young French Jewish military officer, Albert Dreyfus, in 1894.²⁸ The popular French author Emile Zola, who was convinced of Dreyfus’ innocence, led a public protest against the government and military. In a public letter published on 13 January 1898 in the newspaper *L’Aurore*, Zola accused the French Government of anti-Semitism and the unlawful jailing of Dreyfus. The next day the same newspaper published an

²⁸ Hannah Arendt documented the case in her book *The Rise of Totalitarianism* and she described how sections of the French intellectual community were moved to protest when a young Jewish military officer was charged with treason in 1894 for passing military secrets to the Germans. Though the evidence was flimsy, Dreyfus was court-martialed, tried and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devils Island. In 1897 additional evidence emerged which convinced the Head of Information of the General Staff, Colonial Picquart, of Dreyfus’ innocence, but this was suppressed by the Chief of the General Staff and Picquart was suddenly transferred to a dangerous post in Tunisia. Zola was asked to intervene by the Dreyfus family who had spent four years unsuccessfully lobbying for a review of the case.

open letter of protest and support for Zola signed by 1200 students, academics, writers and other intellectuals, who called for a new trial for Dreyfus.

From this point on, the Dreyfus Affair divided the French nation between the anti-Dreyfus conservative forces of State, church and military and the Dreyfus supporters consisting of the progressive and secular forces of moderate liberals and socialists. The conservatives, exploiting a long-standing fear in France that Jews would take over the nation, deployed groups of elite young nationalist intellectuals and professionals to organise anti-Dreyfus and anti-Semitic mobs. These Right-wing intellectuals claimed their attacks on members of the Jewish community were legitimated by the authority of “the people.”²⁹ In contrast, Zola and *L’Aurore* editor and owner, George Clemenceau, mobilised liberal democrats and socialists to the Dreyfus cause by arguing that a violation of Dreyfus’s human and legal rights was a threat to the universal ideals of the French Republic. Complicating these divisions was the rise of a vocal, educated and politically franchised working class whose allegiance was mostly to the growing socialist movement, and which increasingly found a voice via newspapers and political action.

Zola’s involvement in the protests eventually let him to be charged and convicted of libel of the army, and he fled to England to avoid imprisonment. However, shortly after his exile, officers of the counter-espionage division of the French Military admitted they had forged evidence for the Dreyfus file and the Court of Appeal re-opened the investigation. In 1899, Dreyfus’s sentence was reduced to ten years imprisonment and a week later he was pardoned. He was not, however, exonerated until 1906, when Clemenceau became Prime Minister of France.³⁰

29 At the time, Arendt argues, the voice of the people was considered the voice of God (*Totalitarianism* 106), and young conservative intellectuals were able to successfully mobilise mob sentiment against Dreyfus by fermenting workers’ distrust of the bourgeois and Jews. According to Arendt, it was the “philosophy of pessimism” and the “delight in doom” shown by young Anti-Dreyfus intellectuals, who were turned into national heroes by the mob, “that was the first sign of the imminent collapse of the European intelligentsia” (*Totalitarianism* 112).

30 The Court of Appeals had no legal right to acquit and, therefore, Dreyfus was never really acquitted legally or in the eyes of the public; as late as 1908 Dreyfus was openly attacked in the street.

The Dreyfus affair was significant for a number of reasons, not least of which was that the protest led by Zola served as a catalyst to bring the French men of letters back into the public domain and to reposition them as cultural heroes and defenders of universal values in the face of state authority and manipulation of those values. This action not only established the template for the operation of the modern intellectual in French public life, which was to remain dominant for almost a century, but also introduced the intellectual as a recognisable social category.

Zola's actions defined what we now call the public intellectual in several ways. First, by politically intervening in formal power, Zola reconstituted the modern intellectual as a political activist, and thereafter in France intervention in politics became "constitutive of the definition" of this "category" (Collini 49). Secondly, Zola not only openly challenged formal authority but also used mainstream media³¹ to launch a campaign to influence public opinion against government. As a consequence, the intellectual ceased to be what Christopher Charle calls a "passive memory" (np) and emerged as an adversarial and oppositional figure, alienated from society, and, according to Richard Hofstadter, integral to contemporary protests (38–39). As a part of this shift, the intellectual also emerged not just as the cultural mediator of the abstract desires and needs of the public but also as a political and moral leader. From this point onwards in France the intellectual was established as a moral force and a man of action.

A third characteristic of the modern intellectual produced by the Dreyfus affair, and the source of significant contestation in contemporary society, was the perception of the intellectual as independent and objective. This view emerged

31 According to Richard Hofstadter it was also the Dreyfus case that introduced the term "intellectual" into the United States and established its association with notions of liberal progressives. The term was used in a *Nation* editorial and then achieved particular force after 1907 when William James wrote: "We intellectuals in America must all work to keep our previous birthright of individualism" (Hofstadter 39). In America the word intellectual was generally considered a questionable label, primarily because the capitalist nation prized a utilitarian and functional approach to knowledge. In the 1920s intellectuals were not generally found in universities but rather operated as freelance writers. The role of the intellectual, however, changed with the onset of the 1930s when intellectuals began to proffer solutions for the improvement of society. In doing so they became more closely aligned with government and institutional power and their role shifted from independent prophet to advisor.

from the conflation of two types of intellectual work: the work of the men of letters like Zola who made a moral argument and the work of academics whose force was an appeal to impartial principles. The Dreyfus protest drew academics back into the public domain from whence they had fled after the failure of the 1848 Revolution, and they used the authority of their professional standards, academic accreditations and associations, developed in the autonomous cultural and scientific domains of the universities, to legitimate their public pronouncements. According to Bourdieu, these intellectuals no longer derived their power from the public, as the preceding men of letters had, but rather drew their authority from the “unwritten laws of an ethical and scientific universalism in order to exercise a kind of moral ministry and to launch . . . a collective mobilization for the purposes of struggle designed to disperse throughout the whole social world the values which were current in their own universe” (“Fourth Lecture” 658). This species of intellectual leveraged the “public esteem” accorded to their “professional status and expertise” in order to speak in the name of “objective knowledge” and as the “enemy of ignorance” (Jennings 70).³² This gave them the authority to speak on issues beyond their technical expertise, and use the notion of disinterested and objective inquiry to justify political intervention. In this role the intellectual could legitimate challenges to political authority by claiming to defend the “real” or ideal France and the values at the heart of the French national identity — liberty, equality and fraternity. These values were perennial and universal, they argued, and thus were beyond the capacity of state authority and political structures to determine.³³ In appropriating for themselves the role of adjudicator of national

32 Collini makes a similar observation when he suggests that in grouping the 1200 intellectuals by their qualifications in their letter of protest, the intellectuals had traded upon their cultural capital and institutional alliances (21).

33 In taking this position, it could be argued, that the intellectuals were drawing on Kant’s conceptualisation of reason as universal and therefore beyond mere statecraft. Kant argued that politics and morality were linked because politics dealt with what should be done in any particular context to settle a public conflict of interest. Therefore, a political action could become moral if universalised through rational debate in the public domain. This theorisation was an effort to reconcile rationalism and empiricism by subjecting empirical behaviour to the discipline of rationality in the interests of society. This discipline dictated duty. For Kant there really was only one moral law and that was to “act always so that you treat humanity whether in your person or in that of another always as an end, but never as a means only” (Reiss 18). Thus the overarching moral law was not to “use ourselves or others as means to our subjective ends. Man should not merely be subject to another will, but he should be his own lawgiver”(19). It was this moral imperative that led to the duality of the imperative that the Kantian scholar (as public intellectual) presented to citizens: individuals were to be

values, intellectuals further consolidated their power in expressing the “true” French identity. According to Charle, this is what made the Dreyfus Affair so explosive; it was not just a struggle over the innocence or otherwise of an individual, but rather a battle over the system of values and imagined identity of a nation — and who was entitled to define it.³⁴

The Dreyfus Affair put the term “intellectual” into wide public circulation, and, while at the time it was used as a derogatory label associated with an illegal bid for power, it became a self-description that was embraced by social libertarians. It was a label that gave intellectuals a sense of belonging to a particular social grouping and Zygmunt Bauman has argued that the word was an effort to recapture a sense of unity among men and women in increasingly diverse occupations and social stations and to define their responsibilities. As intellectuals emerged as a discrete social group, Charles Kurtzman and Lyn Owens note that debates began to emerge about whether intellectuals were bound to their class of origin, whether they were classless — as Karl Manneheim had argued — or whether they constituted a class in and of themselves. Nonetheless the term, once it was co-opted, assigned to French public intellectuals the role of addressing “the nation on behalf of Reason” and attached authority to their pronouncements (21).³⁵ Yet, in claiming the right to defend the values of freedom, justice and equality, Dreyfus’ largely progressive middle class “public intellectuals” successfully alienated both the conservative political Right and Marxists who saw middle class intellectuals as an impediment to the workers revolution. Indeed, in the words of Socialist writer Mike Gold the word “intellectual” became a “synonym for the word bastard” (qtd. in Collini 32). The negative associations attached to the term “intellectual” also were exacerbated in the early years of the twentieth century when key

encouraged to think for themselves to determine their own laws, but also to also to think objectively for society in order to pursue the conditions that would produce an enlightened society. Just as Kant had constructed the scholar as the voice of morality – the rules that guide collective society – the Dreyfus Affair served to produce the middle class intellectual as a voice of libertarian ideals that exist above state, law and the people, a figure who’s universal humanist allegiances, leads citizens to a higher consciousness of the principles of civil society and beyond that of politics.

34 The Dreyfus intellectuals questioned the values that had been a part of French political memory and, according to Charle, this gave France a new sense of its “historical self” (np)

35 Bauman finds it interesting that “the fact that such a commonality of status and purpose was postulated at a time when the pristine unity of reason was already in an advanced state of disintegration” (21).

supporters of Dreyfus came to political power and were perceived to have betrayed, for political advantage, the very principles they had defended. This negative view grew after the First World War when intellectuals were blamed for doing nothing to avert the horror.³⁶ According to Kurtzman and Owens intellectuals during the inter-war period were seen as disillusioned. Roberto Michels wrote that intellectuals were “largely demoralised” (qtd. Kurtzman and Owens 64) and I. V. Lenin expressed disgust that intellectuals had not become revolutionary and united with workers. Theodor Adorno documented the “anti-intellectual intellectuals” during this interwar period, Roger Levy wrote of how the war had “decimated” the intellectual and Edouard Berth described the “prostration” of the intellectual to industry (qtd. Kurtzman and Owens 64).

The Dreyfus Affair exposed how the intellectual function had changed in response to the politicisation of public life and, according to Tzvetan Todorov, it was Dreyfus who restored to the intellectual the function that “Socrates had reserved for the philosopher” that of a “gadfly” who criticises “in the name of principles superseding current laws or reasons of state” (1122). This modern intellectual assimilated Kant’s scholar and his commitment to reason with the men of letters who used cultural products to connect with people. This notion of a public intellectual also called on the claims to independence and objectivity of the new class of professionals, whose allegiance was to standards and ethics not necessarily grounded in the values of the public domain. Through this reformation early twentieth century French intellectuals set up their role: to dissent with authority, intervene in politics and mobilise citizens to action on behalf of libertarian values. And all the while this manifestation of the public intellectual claimed to speak with the authority of truth, universal reason, and rationalist, humanist and democratic values. Thus it was the universal intellectual activist entered into public political life and by the 1930s the term intellectual had become a widely accepted label.

³⁶ Collini documents the Manifesto of the Intellectuals of Germany in 1914 in which 93 German professors publicly supported the German war effort.

The Organic Intellectual

Just as the political competition and class struggles of early mass modern democratic society in France produced the universal intellectual who emerged to claim the mantle of the voice of humanity and the consciousness of a nation, another form of intellectual labour emerged in Europe in the early years of the twentieth century. This manifestation of what we now call the public intellectual was associated with Socialism and Marxism and with a questioning of the nature and good of capitalist democracy.³⁷ Karl Marx never adequately clarified the role of the intellectual in a proletariat revolution³⁸ and so it was left to Italian journalist and Marxist scholar Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) to theorise the “organic intellectual” as a part of his investigation into the ongoing failure of Marxists to achieve a workers’ revolution in the West in the early decades of the twentieth century.³⁹ In his analysis of capitalist power Gramsci came to realise the important role that culture played in creating political dominance. He theorised that capitalist society needed to ensure stable social and political conditions in order to maintain an uninterrupted flow of economic production. The middle classes, therefore, needed the support of other classes and this required a subtle form of power that would reconcile differing social, economic and political demands. This power was exercised through cultural products, which shaped individual political consciousness and the expression of the collective political will.⁴⁰ In understanding how power uses culture to shape political consciousness, Gramsci rethought the role of the intellectual. He rejected the idea of a “universal intellectual” whose thought is objective and

37 Todorov argues that, after the Dreyfus case, intellectuals began to question the nature of democracy and this is what led them to engage with antidemocratic theories like “fascism, nationalism, communism, theocracy,” and provided the grounds for Julian Benda’s accusation of the treason of the intellectuals (1122).

38 Karl Marx never elucidated upon the social stratification amongst those advocating for a proletariat revolution and thus seems to have been ambiguous about the function of the intellectual. He did, however, argue in his introduction to the *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* that the worker needed the intellectual consciousness produced by the study of philosophy (Avineri 272).

39 This period was characterised by a growing clash between nineteenth-century values and the growing mechanisation of modern life. This clash produced a renewal of an older idealism in an effort to provide a moral sense in an increasingly alien reality. The period was characterised by both nihilism and social activism and this is what led to the various forms of new Kantism, new Hegelianism and new Marxism (Krieger 232).

40 It is this organisation that enabled capitalism to reach a compromise with “different social interests and political forces to give new tasks to the state in order to maintain a social basis of consent and to expand the forces of production” (Sassoon 142).

independent. Instead, he argued intellectuals are typically complicit in the production and perpetuation of liberal bourgeois society through their role in reproducing the cultural stories, national identities⁴¹ and histories⁴² that establish the power of the middle-class military elites, subordinate the interests of other groups to the capitalist goals of that class, and create the appearance of consensus necessary to establish and maintain the dominant ideological view of the ruling elites.

In order to combat this subtle dominance, Gramsci argued, workers needed to have their own intellectuals who would assist in the expression of working class values and goals, and in the formation of politically potent groups. Such an intellectual was, in Gramsci's terms, an "organic intellectual." This intellectual formation would express the natural order of things and consciously argue for the interests of his or her own social class while articulating the unified visions needed to mobilise political action (44). The organic intellectual emerges from the political group itself and assumes the role of building class consciousness through both education and organisational action. Thus Gramsci's intellectual has a distinct political function and operates as a category of labour — he or she undertakes concrete "organising, administering, directing, educating" functions in order to create the social cohesion necessary for political resistance (Forgacs 300). But the most important intellectual role for Gramsci was their role as agents of ideology — "the ones in charge of elaborating and spreading organic ideologies" and thus they were responsible for "moral and intellectual reform" (Mouffe, *Gramsci and Marxism Theory* 187).

The power of the organic intellectual flowed from his function as an oppositional political activist. This constructed the intellectual as a more democratic function that included "the scholar, the writer, and other men of letters" but also to "anyone whose social function is to serve as a transmitter of

41 Gramsci saw the intellectual as inherently political and sought to neutralise traditional middle-class intellectual power by organising political parties to assume collectively the role of the collective intellectual and take on the responsibility of training citizens in the deliberations necessary to raise their consciousness.

42 Intellectual discourse distributed via the growing mass media provided the site for each of these battles over the definition and function of 19th century society. However it was Karl Marx's (1818 – 1883) analysis of the economic structures of society that revealed the universalised middle class values embedded in the ideas of reason and civil society.

ideas within civil society and between government and civil society”⁴³ (Adamson 143). A diversity of intellectual functions was important because Gramsci believed that by having many people involved in intellectual labour this would impede the formation of large bureaucracies whose “decision-making is monopolised by a specialised elite of intellectuals” (Forgacs 425) who form and express the dominant ideology.

Gramsci also theorised the intellectual function as a part of his recognition of the shift in how social change occurred in mass modern society. A single “revolutionary act culminating in an assault on the state” was not possible in advanced capitalist societies, argued Gramsci (qtd. in Adamson 87). A revolution could be achieved, however, through passive resistance and the ideological colonisation of the structures of the public domain, which would enable the development of an alternative superstructure that would finally encompass the state. Gramsci used the term “war of position” to describe this “revolutionary tactic appropriate to advanced societies” (qtd. in Adamson 10) and insisted that real social change could only be produced through a long “war of position” which involved the “gradual occupation of all those positions occupied by the state in social institutions” (Mouffe 5). It was the organic intellectual who would undertake this war.

Gramsci’s theory of intellectual labour was important because he linked the intellectual to the expression of political ideologies and detailed the way in which individual political consciousness was mediated through culture to produce compliance with capitalist goals. He established a model of intellectualism for a mass political society characterised by ideological competition and grounded in political activism. The organic intellectual affirmed the idealised political and moral leadership of the function established by Kant and the men of letters. However, Gramsci produced a more inclusive and democratic mode of intellectual consistent with the expanding public sphere and emerging modern society in which citizens were becoming politically and socially organised and thus able to exert greater political force.

⁴³ Thus Gramsci saw not just the managers, economists, doctors and lawyers as organic intellectuals but also journalists, publishers, and those associated with the culture industries.

Definition

By reviewing the major historical evolutions of the intellectual and its reformations in response to historical ruptures and events it is possible to see that the intellectual is a contingent and adaptive practice that reinvents itself in the face of broader political and social demands. Yet, though manifesting differently at different times — a scholar, man of letters, professional, ideological activist —the intellectual remains fundamentally tied to the operation of political society through its public commitment to freedom, which is understood as finding a balance between individual rights and maintaining social cohesion. This commitment establishes the intellectual as an inherently political and moral/ethical function that critiques power in order to defend the social conditions and political rights that preserve freedom and equality. Furthermore, the public intellectual in contemporary society undertakes this task in a variety of ways, from literature to political essays, all the while addressing a broadly educated public in defence of the values that sustain the social contract that underpins civil society. It is this public role, however, that towards the end of the twentieth century became increasingly contested.

Chapter Three

REPORTS OF MY DEATH ARE PREMATURE

The intellectual function continued to adapt to various social ruptures, cultural shifts and political demands. By the end of the twentieth century, however, these changes had ceased to be considered evolutions of the function, and instead became implicated in the perception that western civilisation was in decline and the public intellectual was dead. Evidence of this cultural and political crisis appeared in France and the United States and to a lesser degree in England and Australia. Each nation had its own issues but the debate, which progressively emerged from the late 1970s in France through to the early years of the new millennium in Australia, pegged out the major concerns. These went well beyond earlier criticisms of intellectuals for selling out their cultural capital to various nationalistic or political causes⁴⁴ and became implicated in talk about the death of democracy.

The Crisis Debates

Talk of the death of the intellectual appears to have first emerged in France in the early 1970s after the failure of the 1968 Student Revolution⁴⁵ led to a general rethinking of the nature of political activism and the function of the intellectual in society.⁴⁶ In 1977 both Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault

44 Julien Benda in 1928 criticised intellectuals for selling out their universal allegiances and authority to political and nationalistic causes.

45 The revolution started out as a protest by students against the ineptitude of university administrators, the government and police. However, they drew upon activists and intellectuals from the Algerian war to organise the protest. George Ross suggests that it was from this point that the idea that civil society, rather than political parties or the government, was the "locus of social creativity" (58).

46 Leonard Krieger in his 1952 article argued that intellectuals had been on the wane since the post-Second World War period when he insisted that existentialism and the idea of engagement as a transformative social experience had seen intellectuals withdraw from political engagement. This had created a "vagueness of thought" that the author argued saw intellectuals sacrifice their leadership and become "laggards" (243). George Ross was another who linked the decline of

effectively declared that the universal intellectual was dead when they wrote that citizens no longer needed the writerly jurist to represent them. The authors concluded that the universal intellectual who “expressed the stifled truth of the collective” had been replaced by the intellectual who resisted the way power transformed them into instruments of control rather than liberation (Foucault, “Intellectuals” 206).

The “death” of the politically active French intellectual was also extensively documented by Paul Sorum, Pascal Ory and Jean-Francois Sirrinelli. Sirrinelli offered a variety of reasons for the demise: intellectuals were suffering “burnout” after they had been “deceived” by their political engagement in the Algerian War; they had lost their public influence and prestige amidst the competition in the public domain; and, finally, they were experiencing an identity crisis after the totalitarianism of Soviet Communism was exposed (qtd. in Schalk 278). From the late 1970s intellectuals no longer engaged in passionate public debate, according to Sirrinelli, and he suggested that the notion of the heroic universal French intellectual had been buried with John Paul Sartre in April 1980. From this point on, both Sirinelli and Ory concluded, the remaining “French intelligentsia had entered a real and perhaps more permanent crisis of both ideology and identity” (qtd. in Schalk 279).

Others who noted the demise of the intellectual included Bernard-Henri Levy and Jean Francois Lyotard both of whom believed the intellectual was not able to survive “the decline of a belief in Universals” (qtd. in Schalk 271). Lyotard argued that, since there was no longer a universal subject, it was not possible to totalise or theorise a world view. As a result, the intellectual could no longer claim to speak for others. He suggested that intellectuals still had a responsibility to intervene on behalf of the “fate of the most disadvantaged” but he conceded that the contingency of modern society made it difficult for the intellectual to take clear-cut positions on political and community issues and

the intellectual to the 1950s and specifically 1956 when the French Communist party supported the Soviet’s invasion of Hungary. This unpopular move saw an erosion of intellectual power and saw Jean Paul Sartre try to rehabilitate Marxism, which was failing because it continued to reduce the complexity of modern society to one set of variables. According to Ross, it was this theoretical failure of communism that was the beginning of the failure of the Left and created the receptivity towards the economic and political re-evaluations of society (52).

thus had been rendered “troublesome [and] impossible” (7). He concluded that in response to the changed circumstances the intellectual needed to become “flexible, tolerant and svelte” and his political interventions local, specific and defensive (Lyotard 7). In David Schalk’s view, however, this more piece-meal and adaptive approach to intellectual labour would further erode the intellectual function by ensuring that political action became “isolated and ignored acts of moral witness” (282). Schalk feared this would lead to the end of the intellectual’s public engagement because no intellectual would engage in a situation that was “hopeless” (281). Thus the steady withdrawal of the intellectual “from the public stage” and their return to the “ivory tower” signalled the death of the intellectual as a social category and the beginnings of a political crisis in France (272).

Another analysis of French intellectuals by British historian Perry Anderson linked the intellectual crisis to the decline of French culture. Anderson suggested that the talk of the death actually signalled the end of a particularly vibrant and influential intellectual climate that had existed in France after the Second World War. In “Degringolade” he wrote that this vibrant cultural period was killed off in the mid-1970s amidst a decomposing French political life rife with panic at the thought that extremes of both left and right would lead to totalitarianism. Anderson blamed the subsidence of the “institutions, ideas, forms, standards” of France on the “unstoppable forces” of neo-conservatism and the rise of English as the universal language (np). He argued that these developments had banalised culture and slowly destroyed the elite institutions of France, which had sustained its intellectual heritage of excellence in public life.⁴⁷ Anderson’s conclusion echoed comments made by Pierre Bourdieu who in 2001 declared that capitalism was a central factor in the decline of France’s intellectual life. Bourdieu argued that capitalism and its conservative values had not been spontaneously produced by society itself but rather had been imposed through the work of privately funded think-tanks which had carefully

47 For Anderson the “the extraordinary reversal of national standards of state and intelligence” was exemplified in the person of that “vain,” “crass booby” Bernard Henry Levi, who had become a media personality, political advisor and corporate businessman. As far as Anderson was concerned, Levi constituted a “grotesque flourish” to the end of the magnificent intellectual history of France.

orchestrated a new public orthodoxy which could not be challenged. Thus he called upon academics who had retreated into the universities to move beyond their "axiological neutrality" which is "wrongly equated with scientific objectivity" to intervene politically and fight against the tyranny of the marketplace which was destroying citizenship (12).

In France it was the demise of the politically active intellectual that was mourned. In the United States, however, it was the public intellectual who addressed a broadly educated public about issues of general concern who was seen to have died. Concerns about the health of the intellectual had been intermittently expressed in the United States since the early twentieth century when they were seen to have moved out of their elite literary cultural enclaves into full-time paid work. In 1954 Irving Howe, against the background of the growing radical conservatism produced by McCarthyism,⁴⁸ had written of his fears for the loss of critical debate as independent intellectuals became increasingly absorbed into the institutions of mass culture and education. A year later C. Wright Mills, who originally coined the term public intellectual,⁴⁹ argued that public life was being killed off by conservative politicians who were eroding the "public relevance of knowledge" and attacking "figures of established prestige" (248). He argued that this had led to the collapse of intellectual liberalism, which was dedicated to the idea of the "public relevance of knowledge" (247). In 1964 Richard Hofstadter also alluded to a "national distaste for intellectuals" which threatened their very existence (5). He argued that this attitude had been produced by the growth in anti-intellectualism, which was fostered by politicians who were hostile, not to intellectuals, but rather to the function they served of encouraging citizens to critically evaluate society.⁵⁰

48 Joseph McCarthy was a US Senator who created a climate of fear when he conducted public hearings into allegations of treason in his efforts to uncover communist plots in the early Cold War period in the United States.

49 The term had actually been first used in the US in 1954 by C. Wright Mills to indicate the social obligations of the intellectual.

50 Noam Chomsky, in a 1977 address entitled "Intellectuals and the State" referred to a study called the *Crisis of Democracy* produced by the US Government's Trilateral Commission. This document argued that the US government had become concerned about the political mobilisation of segments of the US population whose demands during the 1960s would have required a redistribution of wealth and power. The report, therefore, called for "moderation in democracy"

Cultural critic and public intellectual Edward Said picked up a similar theme in the late seventies and early eighties when he wrote of the decline of the Left, the growing irrelevance of criticism, and a “depoliticisation of the citizenry” facilitated by the “compliance of the intellectual class” which accompanied the “ascendency of Reaganism” and conservative capitalism (*The World* 25). Said, who was particularly concerned at the increasing isolation of literary analysis from the political and historical issues of society, argued in a 1979 lecture that the state was central to authority in modern society and that, as a consequence, it was the role of culture produced by artists, writers and critics to negotiate the complex relationships that mediate power and “challenge and revise prevailing values, institutions and definitions” (*Reflections* 20). Yet, he observed, Left-leaning critics had been “stunningly silent” about the rise of the ideas of the Right, and intellectuals seemed to have forgotten that cultural work “occurs somewhere, at some time, on some very precisely mapped-out and permissible terrain, which is ultimately contained if not actually regulated, by the state” (*Reflections* 21). He concluded that it would not be an “exaggeration to say that oppositional Left criticism contributes absolutely nothing to intellectual debate in the culture-at-large today” (*Reflections* 25). Moreover, he suggested, the technical skill of critics and intellectuals had been neutralised, and intellectuals themselves had collaborated in this erosion by selling out their knowledge for money (25).

While these early works foreshadowed the crisis, it wasn't until the late 1980s that the intellectual was declared moribund. In 1987 historian Russell Jacoby documented the retreat of the public intellectual into the universities and their abandonment of political and public responsibilities in fostering debate. He compared modern institutionalised intellectual labour with that of the past, which had been largely independent of institutions, although not the marketplace, and focused upon addressing a broadly literate general public. Jacoby argued that the changes in the cultural marketplace had accelerated the institutionalisation of intellectual labour and, as intellectuals were absorbed into universities, there were no new young voices addressing a broadly literate

and argued that ways had to be found to “control the value-orientated intellectuals so democracy can survive.” The report used the term value-orientated to describe oppositional intellectuals.

general public. As a result, public debate was impoverished and public culture and liberal values, which sustain political democracy, was eroded. Jacoby re-introduced the term public intellectual in an effort to remind intellectuals of their political obligations to the public domain.

Others agreed that there had been a decline. Richard Posner also argued that the independent intellectual who addresses a broad public had been killed off by their absorption into the university, which, he insisted, had produced either complacent academics, alienated from the concerns of the mainstream public, or celebrities focused upon attention-getting (148). As a result, he argued, public intellectuals had become “less distinctive, less interesting and less important” as the world had become more “random and chaotic,” and the term itself had become meaningless as the activity of intellectuals became “too heterogeneous to be squeezed into a common analytical framework” (2).

Richard Rorty expressed similar concerns about the relevance and vitality of the American intellectual, contending that the academic Left in universities had disengaged from their political responsibilities to the broader public. The Left intellectual’s focus upon cultural politics rather than real politics and public debate had made them irrelevant. Furthermore, Rorty suggested, the 1980s intellectual focus upon expressing cultural differences and identities was, in fact, a contributing factor in the fragmentation of the visions that inspire the national coherency necessary for social and political change.

For conservative American philosopher Allan Bloom writing in 1987 it was this plurality of social views at the end of the twentieth century that was killing the intellectual. He argued that the intellectual crisis was the end of the Enlightenment ideologies and cultural standards that preserve social order and sustain citizenship. Alluding to the identity politics of the 1980s, Bloom argued that political liberalism, with its tolerance for difference, had produced a cultural relativism and “openness” that was destroying the intellectual standards necessary to protect the values of the public domain and to enable individuals to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens. He argued that these values had to be learned and he feared that an openness to all ideologies destroyed the “shared goals or vision[s] of the public good” (27) and

impoverished students' souls as they lost hope "that there are great wise men in other places and times who can reveal the truth about life" (34). Ultimately, Bloom argued, this would lead to the collapse of Western civilization (39).⁵¹

David Wood also linked the decline of the intellectual to an imperilled citizenry. He argued that the intellectual crisis was not so much the death of the intellectual as the demise of the informed and critical citizen. He insisted that citizens no longer understood the complex forces that drive their lives and were thus no longer engaged in public debate, which was left to the media, government and specialist technocrats to orchestrate. It was no longer possible, argued Wood, "to maintain the fiction we are a society guided by the rational and responsible consensus of the populace" (8). For Woods the intellectual crisis was a political dilemma. He argued that western society had evolved past the nation's intellectual foundations and that in the new post-intellectual landscape citizens wandered aimlessly looking at whatever catches their attention but without any ability to distinguish its value: they knew neither where they were going or what tomorrow would bring.

Jeffrey Goldfarb also saw the intellectual crisis as a cry for political reform — and the fundamental reconstitution of democratic life — in the context of mass mediated and institutionalised times which work against the rights of the citizen. He argued that in the post-industrial society of the knowledge economy in which "information has become a primary basis of wealth and power," there is no thoughtful or deliberative debate about the problems facing western societies (3). Thus societies are left vulnerable to tyranny. The intellectual crisis for Goldfarb stemmed from both a growing public resistance to intellectuals and what they were saying, and a failure by intellectuals to engage publicly. As a consequence the intellectual had become insignificant and contributed to the de-intellectualization of modern political life.

The debate about the death of the intellectual was not quite so acute in Britain, primarily because the nation didn't have the same legacy of French intellectual

⁵¹ Bloom's work preceded the research of Francis Fukuyama who in 1989 argued that global capitalism would lead to the eventual homogenization of culture. This was followed by Samuel Huntington's argument that global capitalism would bring widely different cultures into contact with each other and this would lead to a "clash of civilizations" (22).

activism, so it was harder to portray shifts in the intellectual terrain as direct threats to political stability.⁵² However, there had been concerns as early as the 1950s about the demise of intellectuals like Maynard Keynes⁵³ and Harold Laski⁵⁴ who had inspired great pre-war debates about politics and economics. These old style thinkers were increasingly replaced by teachers, journalists, writers, academics and others whom F. A. Hayek had disparagingly labelled “second hand dealers in ideas” (Fontaine 191). Bryan S. Turner in a 2006 Sociology Lecture argued that public intellectuals had begun to decline in Britain during the post-war period because they failed to undertake the “macro-sociological analysis” (169) that adequately explained the major social and political rupture that was the “loss of empire and the decline of Britain as a world power” (183). Instead, public intellectuals focused their efforts on analysing consumer society, rather than engaging in the critical social theory that stimulates a vibrant popular culture. Thus Turner concluded that the “mood of affluence and the fact of peace” in post-war Britain not only made talk of “heroic intellectualism difficult to sustain” but also laid the foundations for the contemporary sense of a decline in British intellectuals (175). Phillippe Fontaine has also suggested that during this same post-war period, British intellectual labour was also increasingly absorbed into conservative think-tanks whose focus was to shape public opinion rather than critically explain social forces.

By the 1980s, however, there were persistent references to the same fears for the decline of the critical intellectual function, and in 1987 Zygmunt Bauman linked Britain’s “intellectual controversies” to the shift from modern to postmodern understanding of knowledge and power. He argued that this shift changed the fundamental orientation of the modern intellectual from

52 Lewis Feurer suggests that England did not have a significant history of intellectual alienation and this is primarily because the educated English, throughout the twentieth century, had operated as members of the professional and middle classes. They did not see that they had broader public obligations and they did not see a conflict between cultural and political values because ideally the cultured were also the political elite.

53 Keynes was important for his views on macro-economics, which came to shape the emergence of social liberalism in western democracies during the 1950s and 1960s.

54 Laski was a Marxist political theorist and academic at the London School of Economics and he argued for a society beyond capitalism.

identifying the best social order and educating its citizens to “facilitating communication between autonomous” social participants (5).

The intellectual crisis in England at the end of the twentieth century was also linked to the rise of neo-conservatism. Sociologist Frank Furedi argued that global capitalism had contributed to the institutionalisation and commodification of knowledge and this eroded the Kantian ideal that knowledge deployed in public prepared people to be citizens and to make the best decisions about collective society. This erosion of the link between knowledge and citizenship led to a diminished trust in the public domain, which in turn produced what Furedi described as a rampant anti-intellectualism that fragmented, devalued and debased intellectual life and transformed the intellectual into a “uniquely insignificant figure” (25).

David Marquand expressed similar fears for the public domain and the future of political democracy. Like Furedi, he argued that conservative values and the marketplace had hollowed out citizenship and destroyed the public debate necessary to sustain democracy. He suggested that:

[i]f intellectuals are disappearing from the public stage, or participating in ways that have become invisible or not credible to citizens, then the danger is that only certain truths or values will be represented in the public sphere, that alternative viewpoints will be silenced, or that one view will dominate the others. When this happens, debate becomes ineffective and voices in the public sphere become polarized, making it harder to identify the public interest and shared values, and to develop solutions to the complex issues confronting contemporary society. (128)

In Australia there was little talk of the death of the intellectual *per se*; rather the debate consisted of specific observations about the changing nature of the intellectual. A La Trobe University seminar held in 1996 examined the alienation between intellectuals found in cultural studies in universities and the broader public. Two years later Robert Dessaix observed that Australia’s public culture was defined by the “lack of national forums, the fragmentation of the public for intellectual discussion, the dearth of independent intellectuals, the

corporatisation of the academy and even the spread of excluding, specialised languages” (294). Dessaix’s fears were echoed in a range of books⁵⁵ published in the late 1990s, all of which expressed anxieties for the nation’s future and described an uncertain nation trying to figure out a national identity and direction while suffering under the confusion wrought by global capitalism. Typically these books did not talk expressly of the death of the intellectual but they did articulate concerns about the same social and political changes to the public domain expressed by French, American and British writers.

Concerns about the intellectual function were also implicit in complaints about the absence of public leadership; for example Donald Horne, amongst others, argued that during the Howard years, when Australia was being shaped by big complex ideas, not one politician was capable of making these ideas relevant to everyday Australians. Fears for the public intellectual function were also displaced onto concerns about the decline of diverse and vibrant public debate. Many wrote of the narrowing and conformist nature of public debate during the 1990s and early years of the twenty-first century including Ffion Murphy who saw the silencing of debate as evidence that intellectuals were reluctant to speak out in a climate that did not favour them. David Marr also spoke of the curtailing of public debate, and, Clive Hamilton and Sarah Madison noted the growing “absence of spirited, intelligent and honest debate” (ix) which had led to Australian citizens “denied essential information that would allow them to develop an informed opinion about controversial policies” (1).

Another strand in the collective anxiety about the public intellectual was a sense of the inability of intellectuals to mobilise citizens to political action. This led David Marr in *His Master Voice* (2007) to rail against Australians for failing to take action as their human rights were eroded by the policies of a conservative Federal Government. Concerns about the public intellectual function were also implicit in the fears expressed the nation’s stability and cohesion. And public intellectuals Raimond Gaita (*Breach of Trust*) and Ghasson Hage (*Against Paranoid Nationalism*) wrote of the erosion of the moral standards in public life

⁵⁵ *The Ideas Book*, edited by Philip Adams; *Ideas for the Future* by Macgregor Duncan et al; *Time for a Change: Australia in the 21st Century*, edited by Tim Wright, and *Advance Australia Where?* and *Reinventing Australia* by Hugh Mackay.

which had led to a loss of compassion and hope, a loss that further paralysed political action and frayed the community.

Thus, while the death of the intellectual was extensively documented and speculated about across western nations, it is clear the entity did not die. Rather, the talk of the intellectual death seems to have been a response to the structural and ideological shifts that dismantled the presiding ideologies and values of the public domain, which Habermas described as a conceptual sphere between civil society and the state in which issues of common interest to society are discussed and differences are negotiated (*The Structural* xi).⁵⁶ The public domain is the site of political democracy and civil society, and the underlying anxiety in the debates about the intellectual was that this site was no longer functioning well, and this posed a problem for the production of both the public debate necessary to hold power accountable and for the development of the consensus necessary for governance and a stable society.

Capitalism

Much of the crisis and ensuing debate blamed the demise of the modern intellectual function upon the extension of global capitalism, which, it was argued, had not only commodified knowledge but had also eroded the liberal values that had governed the universal intellectual's operation since the end of the nineteenth century. Certainly the extension of late modern capitalism seems to have amplified the struggle between the economic and social aspirations of democracy. However, according to Habermas there has always been a struggle between these twin goals and indeed it was the inability of the liberal constitutional state to ensure social equity and justice under laissez faire economic liberal conditions during industrialisation that led to the formation of the social collectivist welfare state after the 1930s Depression and the Second World War. This form of government intervened in society to shape the social conditions and regulate the economy in order to ensure equity and social rights.

⁵⁶ Though a conceptual space that exists outside formal power, the public domain is supported by a complex web of relationships between government, the judiciary, political parties, the media and universities, whose activities regulate citizen involvement in power.

The resulting large bureaucracy, however, extended state power and, according to Habermas, fostered a passive disengaged form of citizenship, as representative organizations expanded and took over the role of mediating between citizens and power (*The Structural* 208). As a consequence, while “lip service” continued to be paid to the “liberal fictions of the public sphere” and the idea that citizens provided with information could take part in public discussions, the public domain under social collectivism ceased to be the site of Kant’s critical evaluation and consensus-building, and became primarily a place of competition amongst different interest groups and social organisations, a competition in which the public was generally excluded (211). Habermas argued that, not only did public engagement with rational critical debate disintegrate and, in effect, bring to an end the notion of Kant’s deliberative debate as a mechanism to hold power accountable, but also from this point on the voting public became subject to marketing, political polling and advertising in an effort to influence the decision-making of large numbers of inactive citizens (217).

By the time global capitalism expanded in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the alienation of the citizen from political processes and the decline of deliberative debate had become apparent because even lip-service to liberal values was no longer required. Nineteenth-century liberal values were replaced by classic economic liberalism mixed with a brand of American social conservatism, which argued that economics, not social rights, were the basis for political decision-making in society. The neo-conservatism⁵⁷ of the late 1970s and 1980s was largely informed by the economic theories of American economist F.R. Hayek, who from the 1930s onwards rejected the notion of an interdependent society held together by the common good, which was the idea central to the social collectivist welfare state. According to an analysis by Marion Sawer, Hayek advocated for minimal government intervention in the lives of citizens and insisted that individual and collective action is motivated by a desire to

⁵⁷ Neo-conservatism was the conservative social program that accompanied economic neo-liberalism, sometimes called marketplace fundamentalism, and associated with the ideas of rational choice theory.

maximise returns.⁵⁸ Upon this basis Hayek argued that “public provisions” or wealth redistribution to protect social rights was, in fact, disguised self-interest and an intrusion into the “liberty” of the citizen, which is better expressed via market choices (37). Hayek also called social justice a “mirage” (37) and rejected “shared schooling and universal services,” seeing them as a mask for vested interests rather than the basis for democratic citizenship (39). He believed that to take something from one citizen that is rightfully theirs and give it to another was appropriation not justice. For Hayek, the common good was unknowable and the marketplace the only legitimate mechanism for revealing the greatest benefits to society (Dymond 69). Hayek’s theories strongly influenced the US President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and thus shaped the economic infrastructure for global capitalism.

Generally, neo-conservatism justified itself by arguing that it sought to replace the passive and dependent public culture associated with social collectivism with economic individualism, and to redistribute the mechanisms for wealth creation away from government bureaucracies back to individuals. As a consequence, during the 1980s governments in Britain and Australia began selling off and privatising public assets. Banks were deregulated, universities corporatised, government departments privatized, national competition introduced and protectionist trade policies relaxed as the market model became the basis for public decision-making.

As the public domain became governed by the principles of individualised economic self-interest, the operating standards and social values of the western public domain were “re-engineered to silence the values and assumptions that expressed support for a public sphere based upon the idea that citizen rights superseded the marketplace” (Marquand 97). In England, David Marquand described how institutions like law and education were neutralised through regulation and funding strategies, and Clive Hamilton and Sarah Maddison documented a similar strategy in Australia. As the public sphere became imbued with new conservative values, the representational social and political

⁵⁸ Hayek disputed the idea of social justice, which is the basis of the welfare state, arguing that morality cannot be applied to impersonal marketplace transactions (Sawer, “Populism” 37).

organizations that had moderated citizen's access to political power were undermined. In Britain Marquand described how these roles were replaced by the expanded role of the media and politicians who claimed that they had direct access to the will of people. Marquand argues that through these changes citizenship was "hollowed out" and people became passive "consumers of public policy" (128). As a consequence, he concluded that civic duty became "a broken reed" (97) and the notion of citizenship was reconstituted. It was transformed from a nineteenth-century understanding of it as a "strenuous testing collective moral enterprise that depended upon a capacity for personal growth and the exercise of self-discipline"⁵⁹ into a twentieth-century "voluntary submission to leadership" (Marquand 70). The public discourse shifted from discussions of individual social rights to talk of civic responsibilities, and the values inherent in the liberal constitutional state's shibboleths of freedom, egalitarianism and comunitarianism were replaced by the values implicit in the prioritising of individualized competition. Marquand concluded that "the message that market power is everything created a dominant mono-public debate" and as a result public intellectuals "could no longer afford to challenge the fundamental axioms of the neo-conservative world view" (128).

The growth of capitalism did not just enable new social values, it also facilitated the rise of the knowledge economy, which was described by Charles Leadbeater as the "drive to generate new ideas and turn them into commercial products and services which consumers want" (8). The knowledge economy, which emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century, valued information specifically for its economic potential and, as a result, knowledge ceased to be exclusively about producing informed citizens, but was turned into products and services and tools of self-interest. This commodification of knowledge was facilitated by the absorption of intellectuals into institutions, which tended to produce the intellectual as academics, technical experts and professionals. This trend had been occurring progressively since the Second World War and in

⁵⁹ The big debate in the nineteenth century was whether or not the masses had the capacity to be active and good citizens — this is what produced a strong professional class who were imbued with the "nineteenth-century themes of service, equity and trust." However, "citizenship was articulated in a language of positivist rationality rather than one of civic engagement" (Marquand 75).

1979 Alvin Gouldner documented the rise of the knowledge classes, describing them as multi-national, secular, commercial, morally-ambiguous and self-serving. These sorts of intellectual workers, he argued, seek to ascend to the dominant position by exploiting knowledge for their own commercial and political purposes. They therefore engage in the public domain on behalf of private partisan interests or institutional reasons rather than in the interests of the common good, and they seek to make claims to broader public authority by installing codes of professionalism as the “paradigm of virtue and legitimate authority” (19). Through trading intellect and knowledge for a salary, knowledge workers, technical experts and professionals undermined the notion of universally dissenting and independent intellectuals, which had legitimated the intellectual’s social role, and obscured the real workings of power. Consequently, claims to speak on behalf of others became hotly contested and the competition amongst knowledge workers to leverage their technical expertise into public credibility to maximise self-interest — rather than to preserve civil standards — not only amplified this confusion of voices but also created a distrust of public life. This is why Wood, Furedi and others were able to argue that, paradoxically, the knowledge economy had actually led to the growth in political populism⁶⁰ and anti-intellectualism⁶¹ in which, according to Wood “citizens are no longer enlightened enough to make selfless and long-range decisions for the good of society” (xvi).

The rise of the knowledge worker thus posed a significant threat to the public intellectual’s traditional authority, something that Edward Said recognised when he argued that the problem for intellectuals in contemporary society was not the complexities of mass society but rather the “insiders, experts, coteries, professionals who . . . mold [sic] public opinion, make it conformist, encourage a reliance on a superior little band of all knowing men in power” (*Representations* xii).

⁶⁰ Shils defined populism as a belief that the view of the uneducated had superior moral worth (20).

⁶¹ Shils described anti-intellectualism as a belief that excessive intellectual analysis would erode the foundations of society (21).

Technology

Another fundamental structural shift in the public domain which produced the conditions that gave rise to the perception of a civil crisis and the consequent debates about the demise of the intellectual was the expansion of technology. The impact of technology on the public domain, and its intellectual debate and cultural standards, had been of concern since the 1920s. At this time critical theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno argued that technology was a part of the economic system and power structures, which used technology to standardise and mass produce knowledge and culture and thereby control the citizen. The critical theorists insisted that the role of the cultural industries was to do the individual's thinking for him and let him believe himself free while still being controlled by power. They argued that mass culture is repetitious and standardized and, while stimulating man's appetite for ideas, betrays him by expressing as new ideas that which is nothing more than "refinements of the production system" (136). Thus the citizen is distracted by the trivial and banal. Critical theorists also concluded that popular culture produced by technology was debased, meaningless and uncritical and therefore unable to generate informed debate and the political action necessary for citizenship. Herbert Marcuse similarly believed that technology had sinister implications for freedom and he argued that it was the media-manufactured appearance of rational debate that served to silence the critics of the ruling elites and insidiously enable their dominance.

Fears about the potential of technology were further heightened by the growing political struggles of the 1970s, and in France Régis Debray worried about the dumbing down of intellectual content. He argued that the mass media was governed by only one law: that of "symbolic immiseration" in which the intrinsic worth of the content is displaced by the "mediatic surface" and the "complexity of a message is sacrificed to the volume of its reception" (xi). Debray claimed that the mainstream mass media had not only degraded the message but also the intellectual by taking his cultural capital and social supremacy, based upon standards of excellence, and reproducing him as a middle class celebrity. It was the mainstream media's "monopoly in the production and circulation of events

and values, of symbolic facts and norms” (1) which enabled the convergence of the management of minds and the conducting of state business. And this posed a threat, according to Debray, to the “fate and independence of a people” (2).

The enduring concern with the mass media is that it controls access to the public domain and represents public opinion and in the process and imposes its values, economic priorities and operating functions on intellectual content. Thus, mainstream media transforms the public intellectual from Kant’s civic leader who enables deliberative debate into a celebrity by defining his work “in terms of actual or anticipated audiences” and not cultural standards grounded in a commitment to citizenship (Cosner 228). Lewis Cosner made this point in 1973, arguing that, because audiences do not have the expert knowledge to be able to comment on the content, they assess it based upon qualities like novelty and abundance; since “such qualities are not likely to afford long-term satisfaction, they foster a well nigh insatiable appetite for more of the same” (228).⁶² Further, because the media needs intellectual content to be not only accessible but also entertaining in order to attract audiences and consumers, the critical and dissenting components of the intellectual function have been undermined. This concern about the media threat to critical debate has changed very little over the decades and in 2000 Tod Gitlin observed that intellectuals have been transformed by the media into pundits and purveyors of “pre-cooked” fast food opinion in which the point is not to clarify and never be at a loss for words.⁶³ According to Gitlin, the pundit uses his knowledge of how the game is played to replace “knowledge about what would improve society” and the sound bite nature of modern culture means that the intellectual has come to stand for very little (B7). Thus debates are narrowed and the nature of deliberation changed.

In recent years, however, the critical-theorist condemnation of technology as the contributor to populism and anti-intellectualism has been challenged by a

62 “Novelty, brilliance, abundance may, then, be taken provisionally as some of the hallmarks of the celebrity intellectual.” according to Coser (228).

63 In his article in *The Chronicle Review* Todd Gitlin argues that in debates it has become almost rude to draw attention to the obvious, or elitist to notice something that the viewer hasn’t noticed. He also observed that the “absence of thoughtfulness, the narrowness of scope, the presence of diminished capacity” on the part of public leaders has all been reduced to a question of “management style” (B7).

range of new young voices. Some, like Australian academic Catherine Lumby, have argued the media should not be constructed as a competitor to intellectuals but rather as a structural mechanism that provides “a highly diverse and inclusive forum in which a host of important social issues once deemed apolitical, trivial or personal are now being aired” (*GOTCHA* xiii). Lumby speculates that the public debates in popular culture may be perceived as a threat to intellectual standards because they are conducted in voices that sound foreign to the established producers of cultural products. In a similar argument, Marcus Westbury believes that online technologies have actually provided new sites for public discussions and social change, have enabled new social formations and types of mobilisation and, in the process, have exposed a whole constellation of interest groups and modes of affiliation. Westbury suggests that the idea that Internet sites represent a “morass of cynical, valueless, lowest common denominator, dumbed down culture” is not sustainable (139). Indeed he believes that the diversity of traffic on the internet sites reveal that there is, in fact, a broad public conversation about the “legitimacy of a cultural space” which exposes how the mainstream media is “dominated by a handful of media barons” (139).

Another who sees the positive potential of technology for intellectuals is Geert Lovink. He argues that blogospheres with their capacity for interlinked large conversations can provide insights into public debates and social trends and thereby open up new intellectual landscapes.⁶⁴ Lovink, however, concedes that blogs and their emerging communities’ present challenges for traditional forms of intellectual labour. Not least of these challenges is that the Internet culture is subject to constant change and widely “contradictory forces that make it no longer possible to speak of general trends in either good or evil directions” (xi). He argues that the values of the online public domain, which include amateurism, collectivism and participation, are at odds with the late modernist concepts of the intellectual. Moreover, for Lovink current forms of the modernist intellectual project are grounded in critiques of free market thinking,

64 This was the view of Ron Eyerman in 1991 and Kevin McDonald in 2001, both of whom observed that online social movements provide new sites for intellectual work.

offers of salvation and notions of a rediscovered subjectivity, all of which are inconsistent with the apolitical, free-thinking virtual domains. Bloggers are not interested in political doctrine, according to Lovink. What they want is easy access to information — both high and low culture — as they experiment with putting different concepts and ideas together. Furthermore, there is little value in preaching critique to bloggers, because critically questioning the message is not the act of engaged citizenry to them, but rather “an *a priori* attitude” (Zero 22). Lovink suggests web culture is permeated with a “distrust and resentment towards large organizations” (Zero xii), particularly the mainstream media which increasingly seeks to de-legitimize or manage web content, which threatens their full control of claims on truth and authority.

The relationship between intellectual labour and technology, therefore, remains complex. Indisputably, mass media and online technologies have increased the fragmentation and individualisation of the public domain by producing niche markets and specialist identities. At the same time these technologies have eroded the notion of the common ground, which produces the consensus necessary to facilitate social and political change. Online technologies have democratised the intellectual function by enabling anyone with a computer and internet access to be transformed into a cultural producer with an audience and public. As a result, the basis of the intellectual’s traditional authority has become more tenuous and contested, particularly in the online climate of critical skepticism and distrust of institutions. Perversely, however, the entity of the public intellectual continues to be deployed as a credibility mechanism. Online blogging also highlights how knowledge produced as expressions of objective fact or disinterested analysis, which characterised the universal intellectual labor, has given way to knowledge produced in the more subjective formats of personal opinion. Most significantly, perhaps, online technologies have amplified the underlying paradox of the intellectual function in contemporary society, where talk about the death of the intellectual coexists with the expanded opportunities provided by technology for the production of intellectual content for the cultural markets. At the same time as the intellectual cupboard has been declared bare there appears to be an unending demand for a cultural public intellectualism.

Ideological Revolution

All these structural changes to the public sphere were accompanied by an ideological shift that challenged the dominant modernist conceptualisations of truth and reason that had ordered the public sphere since the Enlightenment and which had provided the basis for the universal intellectual's operation and authority. The idea that reason alone could discover and disclose moral truth had always been challenged; first by religion and then later in the nineteenth-century by the Romantics, and then again in a different way, after the First World War by the critical theorists who sought to reconcile Kant's Enlightenment with Marxism.⁶⁵ It was not, however, until after the Second World War that the intellectual role was revised in the context of new theories of power. This rethinking was broadly expressed in the works of French post-structuralist theorists like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, who argued that power in modern society resided not just in structures but also in knowledge. This retheorisation of power had implications for the operation of the intellectual, for if knowledge was power, then truth could no longer be understood as universal. Rather truth was always a socially-contingent and institutionally situated phenomenon that was produced by particular types of knowledge. Further, the notion that all knowledge is implicated in power leads to the argument that no knowledge is objective and disinterested, a belief that has privileged the intellectual function since Dreyfus. Thus Foucault argued that the intellectual could no longer profess to express the political consciousness of the collective; instead, the intellectual's function was to critique the techniques and procedures of sanctioned or privileged "truth" embedded in the technical and bureaucratised knowledge deployed by authority. While this approach provides a way for social and political resistance in the context of rapidly expanding consolidations of formal state authority and a growing reliance upon technical knowledge, it also has disadvantages in that it undercuts the certitude

⁶⁵ According to George Becker the intellectual formations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had also been fundamentally shaped by an ideological "Quarrel" between the "Ancients and the Moderns" and whether modern men could improve on the works of "illustrious ancients" (400). It is this struggle over whether society is in a state of constant improvement or decay that underpins the modern role of the intellectual as critic (401).

and authority invested in the universally agreed concepts, which had provided the public domain with a foundation for consensus that promised social order and stability, and had guided the intellectual's contribution to public life.

Zygmunt Bauman rehearsed Foucault's argument when he described the difference between the modernist and postmodernist constructions of knowledge and explained how this shift affected the function of the intellectual. The modernist worldview was based upon the assumption that state power was given knowledge through relatively independent intellectual discourse designed to shape the best operation of society. This discourse was ordered by the ideas of absolute truth, universal principles and unified meta-narratives, which provided the coherence and sense of universality that held the concept of the public sphere together. The postmodern theory of the world and its conceptualisation of power fractured this relationship by arguing that, since knowledge was power, there was potentially an "unlimited number of models of order, each generated by a relatively autonomous set of practices," and that "systems of knowledge" could only be "evaluated from inside their respective traditions" (Bauman 4). Consequently the intellectual transformed from legislator of the universal, who could draw upon the idea of disinterested knowledge to authorise statements, to an interpreter who *translates* statements "made within one communally based tradition, so that they can be understood within the system of knowledge based upon another system" (5).

According to Jeffrey Goldfarb, the idea that truth as an "autonomous force in society, independent from competing narrow interests" was a fiction both affected the construction of the public domain and disabled politics (216). The production of ideologies, which Edward Shils described as "comprehensive patterns of beliefs" that express universalising meta-narratives that shape political consciousness and inspire social action, had been a central part of the intellectual traditions of modern twentieth-century liberal and constitutional politics in western democracies⁶⁶ (23). These forms of governance had relied upon the ideas of singular truth and universal values; so their reconstruction as

66 Shils noted that "modern liberal and constitutional politics have largely been the creation of intellectuals with bourgeois affinities and sympathies in societies dominated by landowning and military aristocracies" (9).

relative and implicit in power fractured associated meta-narratives into the “minor narratives of the identity and interests of specific groups in society” (Goldfarb 214). As a consequence, in Goldfarb’s analysis political party platforms and ideologies degenerated into partisan interests and identity struggles. The ensuing competition transformed the public domain into a site of confusion and cynicism, in which the value of debate became increasingly questionable given the logical impossibility of reaching consensus across so many different views and identities.

As capitalism and its increasingly conservative social values came to dominate the West, politics generally, and especially the left, ceased to preach social and ideological transformation, and instead focused on economic management, practical solutions and incremental adjustments to existing systems. This was helped along by the specialisation of knowledge, which saw political processes and decision-making become so complex that technical experts were required to provide advice to decision-makers rather than issues being publicly debated amongst citizens. As a consequence, politics became increasingly subject to the intervention of lobbyists and special interest groups who reached compromises away from the public domain and the scrutiny of the electorate. By the end of the twentieth century, the public political domain could no longer maintain the fiction that it was a site of deliberative debate, ideas, and genuine public engagement.⁶⁷

The growing alienation between the public and politics resulted in a political cynicism and ideological and discursive divides opened up between the traditional working classes, who were adversely affected by the social dislocations of globalisation, and the Left-leaning educated citizens who were part of the global knowledge classes and, in some respects, were proponents of the very conditions and global aspirations that were seen to disable the working classes. The anti-elitist discourse, which replaced class rhetoric, amplified tensions and magnified perceptions of a failing public sphere. Increasingly, those socially alienated and disgruntled by global capitalism became distrustful

⁶⁷ Deliberative democracy emerged at this time and was an effort to include citizens in the collective decision making that directly affects them through public consultation processes (Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy* 1).

of institutional power and were drawn to a reactionary political populism, which found expression in a belief that the “unmediated expression of public opinion” taken in random media polls was more credible and authentic than Parliamentary debate (Sawer and Hindess 5). In Australia those drawn to populism seemed to find common ideological ground with conservative political parties, with their nationalistic rhetoric and messages of economic self-interest.

At the same time that politics increasingly became impotent in facilitating any engaged debate or in reflecting the nature of pluralistic electorates there was a move to deploy culture to further ideological goals. This began with the identity politics of the 1960s and 1970s, which saw culture become an “instrument for identifying, selecting, valorising, normalising, affirming, certain good things, forms, practices, ideas over others” (Said, *Reflections* 28). The struggle over identity produced the political correctness debates of the late 1970s and 1980s,⁶⁸ which subsequently turned into a full-scale war over history and culture in the 1990s. As neo-conservatives fought with the political Left over interpretations of culture, history, human rights and national identity, the idea of the cultural domain as a separate site of Enlightenment, citizenship and refinement declined. These battles over social values were crucial for political dominance at the end of the twentieth century and first decade of the twenty-first century,⁶⁹ and not only eroded the notion of knowledge connected to civic duty but also exacerbated political cynicism amongst citizenry. This contributed to a belief that it was difficult to sustain the citizen action necessary for social change and that intellectuals were no longer of any value to the public.

The resulting confusion in the public domain left citizens vulnerable and Goldfarb repeated Hannah Arendt’s observation that it was “intellectual

68 Debates over the correct use of language waged in both the United States and Australia and the battle lines were drawn along ideological grounds. The Right generally saw political correctness as an effort to muzzle free speech, while the cultural Left saw it as a mechanism to address racist and sexist language and establish more inclusive public debates. Jeffrey Goldfarb has argued that political correctness in the United States was an effort by cultural theorists to bridge the gap between the academy and the public. In Australia Colleen Keane argued that political correctness came to be associated with social redress and that resistance to the term became a “smug, short-hand and lazy way to dismiss the ideas of social reform and social justice as somehow intellectually elitist” (14).

69 In the 2008 US election people voted upon the basis of cultural ideas/identities and values rather than class affiliations (Murphy).

confusion and isolation, linked with minimal ideological and maximal technological coordination” that posed the greatest threat to civil and democratic rights (qtd. in Goldfarb 216). Certainly, there is little doubt that the capitalist, technological and philosophical structural shifts have frayed the public domain, exposed the vulnerability of human and political rights, and undercut the notion of a collective humanity. Thus the incoherence of modern politics sees politicians express the disgruntlement of citizens who don’t comprehend the world and who are not united by a single position but rather represent a range of specific appeals (which are not necessarily rational) (216). In this chaos, Goldfarb suggests, there is little opportunity for the intellectual to contribute; indeed the intellectual voice is hardly audible in the “noise of mass culture and politics” (216).

Reconstruction

The structural and ideological changes to the public domain have impacted the operation of the public intellectual in several ways. First, the belief that the idea of the universal subject and autonomous truth have been replaced by the specific and the contingent, has led some theorists like Lyotard to conclude that generalised pronouncements about the ideal direction for all of society are irrelevant and unhelpful to the specific situations and technical issues of contemporary society. Indeed it is this view that led Herman to argue in his *Prospect* editorial that there is no longer a focus upon the transcendent issues, big questions of society or systems of thought. This is patently untrue and the evidence is in the growing attraction to religion in all cultures, a point made by Jurgen Habermas. While it does appear to be true that public intellectuals have changed their operation in response to the shift to specific issues, technical and specialist information and practical, viable solutions this change does not flow exclusively from competing philosophical views about truth and knowledge but also from the historical developments like the rise in modern mass society and the knowledge classes and the extension of the media. These are the conditions that have also facilitated the intellectual shift in practice from adjudicating public debates as the voice of authority and credibility to the contemporary

function as a negotiator who enters into conversation with others across historically manufactured differences in a process of negotiation, translation and persuasion. This is not to say that the public intellectual does not still invoke authority and credibility as a part of their cultural heritage, but rather that as a result of the changed nature of the public domain and the nature of citizenship, public intellectuals must persuade and engage rather than pontificate.

Second, with the rise of the knowledge classes and political elites competition increased for the intellectual's role in ordering the public domain. This competition particularly affected the dissenting intellectual who in a period of institutionalised knowledge could not claim disinterested knowledge in public debate to legitimate their authority.

Third, it is clear that technology has changed the nature of social action and political mobilisation which is the goal of public intellectual work. Intellectuals of the twentieth century used meta-narratives of the past and the dream of social emancipation to elicit social action. These narratives, however, are now at odds with the modern citizen's concerns for individual freedom and self-expression and their cynical view of public life. At the same time the nature of change itself in the interdependent and institutionalised systems of power in modern society has shifted; it no longer takes the shape of revolutions or other dramatic ruptures, but rather the form of incremental adjustments to existing systems. Thus action in contemporary society is less visible and must be part of a coordinated effort by many different individuals in many different sites. This development tends to undercut the traditional idea of the single heroic intellectual perhaps best personified by Emile Zola. Yet, even Zola did not act alone. He was a part of a much broader collective of intellectuals and citizens who also signed a public petition demanding Dreyfus' release.

Fourth, the growth of the knowledge economy and the creative industries, while not restoring Kant's deliberative debate, has opened up opportunities for intellectual labour, and has broadened and democratised the intellectual function. This has led to a proliferation of public intellectual work and growth in the cultural consumption of public intellectualism. In the process the

operational emphasis of the intellectual has shifted from the educator and promulgator of standards, to the negotiator and promoter who seeks to connect with audiences in order to identify, promote and adapt ideas. This shift, while opening up new opportunities for stories about subordinated identities and forgotten knowledge, has stimulated fears that the values of the marketplace have transformed knowledge into commercial cultural commodities rather than being the mechanism for informed citizenship. Thus conversations about truth, judgment and taste, which were once administered by intellectuals, have become coordinated by institutions, and the universal values of the public domain, which enabled authoritative statements, coexist with the authority of the marketplace, which determines the “true and false, good and bad, beautiful and ugly” (Bauman 158). As a result, the intellectual appears to have been reduced to just another interest group vying for the attention of the consumer.

In the context of these changes, it is also evident that talk of a civic crisis was used as a rhetorical device to mobilise citizens to take action. By suggesting civil society and political democracy were imperilled, intellectuals sought to galvanise public action and, for some, through a nostalgic looking backwards to earlier intellectual formations, to argue for the restoration of the standards and ideals that produced social coherence — even Jacoby admitted in 2008 that he was “pining for a world that does no longer exist” (*The Last Intellectuals Revisited*). Moreover, it can be argued, albeit somewhat cynically, that in talking about a crisis and predicting the death of democracy, the public intellectual contributed to the sense of decline as a way of legitimating their role — and this too obscured the ways in which public intellectualism was, in fact, being broadened as new sorts of intellectuals undertook the role’s critical, moral and political functions.

The apparent failure of contemporary public intellectuals to reconceptualise their role in a coherent or consistent way or to address issues of pressing concerns to citizens contributed to their ongoing marginalisation, according to Goldfarb. Indeed, he argues that that Left intellectuals were so busy debating issues of race, class and gender, when everyone else was talking about privatisation, global markets and nationalism, that they contributed to their

own “permanent marginality” (73). Yet, the difficulty of talking generally about such a fragmented function was very apparent to Helen Small who wrote:

As intellectuals have progressively transitioned in response to external pressures — from objective mandarins focused upon a moral good, to mediators of information for the masses, to activists, professionals and media pundits — they have also struggled to find expression or a coherent narrative of intellectual commitment beyond those merely defined by context or the restless shifting between the specific and the general, the local and the global, the active and the renunciative. (9)

The challenge for the modern intellectual, according to Small, is to find a way to preserve a sense of the whole while reflecting the “micro-political,” “multi-contextual” versions of who and what they are (9). While acknowledging the difficulty in developing “coherent statements of allegiance and purpose, let alone theories” (9), her solution is that, since public intellectuals are constructed, they must no longer look to external sites for the authentication of their claims but rather within for a sense of personal ethical obligation (6).

Denial of Reality

The debates about an intellectual crisis have been described by Christopher Charle as cliché and by Helen Small as passé. In Australia David Carter suggested that talk of the death of the intellectual was a way of justifying their ongoing value and relevance⁷⁰ and in Britain Stefan Collini concluded that the talk of the decline of the intellectual was exaggerated and part of a cultural pessimism. He argued that talk of the death of the intellectual served an “ideological function” and “is the systematic misrepresentation of reality” (4). The degree to which obituaries for the public intellectual were written, in the face of their manifest activity, is related to the power and ambiguity of the term

⁷⁰ Carter argued that the perception of a decline in intellectuals was related to the shifts in higher education, the media and think tanks and he suggested structural changes can sometime look like a decline (“The Conscience” 28). He argued that the cultural industries had in fact given new life to intellectuals by creating new publics and cultural consumers.

itself, which Collini suggests is “a kind of place-holder for a whole collection of cultural attitudes” (4).

Yet, the talk of the crisis served as a signifier for other concerns and highlighted several ruptures and shifts that could be considered deaths or endings of particular social conditions. There was the demise of the certainty associated with belief in absolute truth and the related end of the idea of disinterested knowledge, which together had scaffolded the civil domain. There was also an end to the idea of a coherent and homogenised public domain and so the erosion of the dominance of nineteenth century libertarian values. And there was a decline in the appeal of utopian visions and meta-narratives, along with a further diminishing of Kant’s deliberative debate, which holds power accountable. The public domain as a site exclusively devoted to civil education, social order and consensus-making also came to an end, and politics increasingly ceased to be a site of social renewal and change. These many endings and declines generated fears about the future of political democracy and anxieties about the public domain as a site of citizenship. They did not, however, signal the death of the intellectual.

Rather, the crisis was a conversation about the demise of a particular historical form of intellectual labour that had emerged into public life at the end of the nineteenth century, and which relied upon a particular social order to legitimate its role. Once this social order had been significantly altered by the structural and theoretical circumstances produced by technology and capitalism, this form of intellectual labour was disabled.⁷¹ Unable to claim an intellectual authority for preserving the public domain⁷² or to coherently express a role beyond modernist legacies, intellectuals were left vulnerable to criticisms like those leveled by Paul Johnson, who not only scoffed at the idea that public

71 Russell Jacoby, revisiting the topic of the last intellectuals in an article in 2009, argued that his study of the intellectual has been an examination of a shift in the public sphere and that intellectuals are both objects and subjects of culture and thus their fate is tied to the wider culture. In an ABC interview conducted on 18 February 2008 he has also posited that there has been no fundamental change in the operation of the intellectual. He disputed that the rise of the micro-political intellectual who acts as “Foucaultian guerrilla” has advanced intellectual debate (“The Last Intellectuals Revisited”).

72 Andrew Gamble argued that one of the difficulties with modern democracy was the inability of intellectuals in understanding their role in the preservation of the public domain. He argued that they build the public domain through the addresses to the general public (“Public Intellectual”).

intellectuals and writers could tell modern society how to run itself, but considered them downright dangerous.⁷³

⁷³ Paul Johnson expressed distrust of intellectuals for their impracticality, immorality and arrogance, and challenged the idea that they “could diagnose the ills of society and cure them with their own unaided intellects: more that they could devise a formulae whereby not merely the structure of society but that the fundamental habits of human beings could be transformed for the better” (1). He concluded by arguing that there is skepticism towards intellectuals and “a growing tendency among ordinary people to dispute the right of academics, writers and philosophers” to tell us how to live our lives (342).

Chapter Four

KINGS LIE AND THE PAST DECEIVES

Australia's public sphere was also affected by the structural and ideological shifts outlined in the previous chapter and the same concerns were expressed about the quality of public debate, the loss of ideas and meaning, the nature of leadership and the future of democratic freedoms. The Australian intellectual was never officially declared dead — indeed such hyperbolic claims in an egalitarian society tended to be viewed sceptically as a ploy to retain social authority and cultural privilege. Rather, the intellectual crisis in Australia took the shape of Antonio Gramsci's ideological "wars of position" (Mouffe 5). These wars were an endless political struggle for control of the institutions of social reproduction and it put new ideas about race and identity into wider circulation beyond academic discourse. However, the sensationalist and politicised nature of the media coverage of these debates also created the appearance of deep divides between oppositional intellectuals and conservative commentators. In the ensuing media-orchestrated clashes over Australia's Indigenous past intellectuals either withdrew from the public stage reducing the number of intellectual performers or they became mired in the vitriolic media debates which added to confusion over the complex issues. It is my contention that this battle over the past failed to progress Indigenous reconciliation or to produce any social or political action that effectively challenged the Conservative government's approach to Indigenous issues. Thus it can be argued that, at a time when citizen engagement is what legitimates public intellectual authority, the History Wars provide an example of a less effective form of public intellectualism.

Australian Crisis

In examining the conditions of public intellectualism at the end of the twentieth century it is apparent that many aspects of its current operation were shaped by

the nation's past. Indeed, it was not just contemporary public intellectuals who experienced as sense of alienation from the rest of the community. Both A. A. Phillips and Donald Horne commented on this divide in the 1940s and 1960s.⁷⁴ By the end of the twentieth century, however, this gulf appeared to widen significantly, as polarised, polemical and intensely hostile public debates raged over the nation's identity and its race relations.⁷⁵ The debates were mostly institutionally-situated public performances of political rhetoric, which perpetuated ideological positions and, in the process, successfully excluded other social actors and eroded genuine citizen understanding of the political forces of globalisation.⁷⁶ The resulting discursive divides, amplified by the media coverage, unsurprisingly, intensified a general attitude of anti-intellectualism⁷⁷ and political populism, which also expressed the community's confusion and widespread distrust of, and cynicism about, both public institutions and authority figures.

The trope of the intellectual crisis was invoked by both Left and Right intellectuals, academics, writers and media commentators but they deployed it in different ways to affirm their respective ideological positions. The Left specifically linked the crisis to what they believed was a decline in the diverse and dissenting public debate, which they argued was necessary to maintain an open and robust society and protect traditional civil rights, democratic freedoms and social values. So ineffectual were dissenting intellectuals in connecting with Australian citizens during this period that Robert Manne was moved to observe that intellectuals were experiencing an identity crisis as "many of the issues of greatest concern to us are of little interest or are even an anathema to the majority of our fellow citizens" ("Howardism Triumphant").

74 A.A.Phillips had documented Australia's cultural cringe in a 1950 Essay and Donald Horne had written of the intellectual's struggle in Australia in his 1964 *The Lucky Country*.

75 In 2009 the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, reflecting upon the last decade, argued that it was time to move beyond the arid and polemical debates that had infected "every discussion of our nation's past" (Gratton, *Rudd Urges*).

76 David Carter argued that the Australian public intellectual has an established role in expressing national identity and during the last decade, as the nation got "tossed from side to side," the Australia being argued over bore little relevance to the majority of citizens (Introduction, *The Ideas Market 2*). He further noted that in Australia the function of intellectuals speaking truth to power was related to the idea of nation and thus the intellectual is seen as expressing the nation's conscience.

77 Shils describes anti-intellectualism as a resistance to critically examining issues too closely because it may lead to the erosion of the foundations of order (21).

Dissenting intellectuals generally blamed their inability to mobilise citizens to act on the apathy of the citizens themselves and the failure of the Australian political Left to provide any alternatives to the rising tide of conservatism. However, for dissenting intellectuals the most significant impediments to their engagement with the public was the conservative government's culture war and the conservative media hegemony, which dominated public life throughout the late 1990s and early years of the new millennium. A series of essays edited by Marion Sawer and Barry Hindess documented the rise of this Right-wing, populist public campaign which successfully portrayed concerns about public debate, as well as national values and liberties, as a part of the self-interest of the Left leaning elites. So powerful was this campaign in systematically stifling critical alternative views that many dissenting public intellectuals were driven from the public domain. As a result intellectuals, like Manne, concluded that "honest political debate" became impossible during the Howard years ("The Nation Reviewed" 8). Others agreed. David Marr wrote that "public debate had been corrupted and democracy gagged" during Howard's tenure as Prime Minister (4), and Richard Flanagan insisted that the "government's ceaseless and ferocious attacking of alternative points of opinion brought a disturbing conformity to Australian public life" ("A Decade"). Barry Jones, expressing concern about the withdrawal of the public intellectual from political debates, argued that the idea of "open society, rational politics and a sceptical media" had been crippled by Howard and thus it was difficult to "persuade citizens that they have an obligation to participate fully in the way their countries are run, and even higher obligation as humans to contribute to the common concerns of our species" ("Let's Resist").⁷⁸

Unsurprisingly, Right-wing commentators disputed this version of public life, and Janet Albrechtsen argued that rather than a decline in public debate there had been, in fact, "vigorous debate of issues that were once banished from the national conversation" (*The History Wars* 91). She went on to insist that Left-wing concerns about public debate were simply a mask for their discomfort at having their views and ideas challenged. Gerald Henderson made a similar point

⁷⁸ Barry Jones argued in his article "Let's Resist the Forces of Ignorance" that there are more paid academics at any time in history but that "regrettably they have fallen silent."

when he argued that dissenting intellectuals misrepresented the reality of things because, for a group allegedly silenced by Howard, they had been very noisy (“When the Banned”). Others like David Burchell suggested that, if there was, in fact, any alienation of dissenting intellectuals, then they had no one to blame but themselves. He argued that they had been “out to lunch in the past decade” and failed to deliver cogent assessments of the nation’s politicians or to produce any substantive analysis (“Opinion Surfer” R10). Conservative columnists, including Andrew Bolt, Piers Akerman and Miranda Devine⁷⁹ further elucidated these themes, claiming that dissenting intellectuals were out-of-touch with Australian citizens who struggled with the economic and social dislocations caused by the expansion of global capitalism. The Right insisted that these struggles had produced new fears and priorities, to which dissenting intellectuals appear oblivious.

Paul Kelly reiterated the substance of these views in a public exchange with David Marr late in 2007 when Kelly declared Australia’s dissenting intellectuals “second rate” “moralising elites” who were “ineffectual” and “out of touch with the lives of mainstream Australians” (“Time for a Rethink”). Kelly dismissed Marr’s claims that Howard had “brought democracy to despair” and he argued that, if Australia had impoverished public debate, then it was because of the poor quality of public intellectuals who, he suggested, were “self-righteous,” “pompous,” and largely “polemical.” Kelly wrote that by expressing contempt for Howard, intellectuals were really expressing contempt for the very people who voted for him. Furthermore, he turned the situation into a struggle between political and intellectual elites by insisting that criticisms of Howard were part of a self-interested effort by Left-leaning intellectuals to challenge Australia’s “first rate political leaders” for public authority.⁸⁰

Yet a third explanation for the intellectual crisis was proffered by David Carter, who argued that the “sense of an [intellectual] crisis” really expressed concerns about the viability of public culture given the shifts and dislocations in the

79 A complete list of conservative commentators who deployed elitist rhetoric was compiled by Sean Scalmer and Murray Goot who coded Australian daily newspapers between 1997 and 2002 for references to elitism (147).

80 This was an allusion to David Horne’s criticism in his 1964 *The Lucky Country* that Australia was being governed by second-rate and inept political leaders.

public domain (“The Conscience Industry” 19). Such shifts, he wrote, can often look like a decline, particularly if a form of authority is displaced. Thus the intellectual crisis could be seen as a device to reassert a “modernist sense of intellectual authority” and to affirm traditional privilege and relevance at a time when the expanding cultural industries produced a proliferation of entities positioned to undertake the functions of the public intellectual (19). Carter’s view of the crisis did not overlook the increase in conservative political opinion-making, which he acknowledged, but he expanded the contours of the debates about the intellectual crisis beyond its association with clashing political ideologies by suggesting the crisis was also implicated in a struggle over cultural authority and emerging sites of new culture. Others agreed, including McKenzie Wark and Mark Davis who introduced issues of inter-generationalism by suggesting that the perception of a decline in intellectual culture was a reflection of the sterile and narrow nature of public debates and the lack of new public voices.

Similarly, Catherine Lumby saw talk of a cultural and intellectual decline as implicated in a shift in aesthetics and a growing contest between popular culture and elite values. She argued that the talk of the intellectual decline exposed a lack of awareness by traditional public intellectuals that there are new ideas and voices. She suggested that these new voices are not acknowledged because they use the language of popular culture and not the vernacular “traditionally associated with quality press” (*GOTCHA* xiii). This idea that the intellectual crisis was a mask for a clash between traditional elitist and emerging populist values was also of concern to Guy Rundle, who like Carter, objected to the way conservative discourse had positioned cultural producers as elite and “somehow non-Australian” (“The New Social Conservatism” 54). Rundle also expressed concern about the way in which the elitism and cynicism of conservative commentators had been projected onto critical commentators as “decoy and displacement” (“Power Intellectuals” 29). He argued that the real reason citizens had disengaged from public life was not the death of public debate but rather because the institutions of “new media, global markets, and image cultures have utterly reconstructed the public sphere” in which national political conversations previously took place. These conversations now take

place in institutional settings, which are mostly about the perpetuation of the ideology and values of the institution, rather than deliberative debate. As a consequence Rundle concluded that Australia's intellectual life had been rendered "cynical, morally corrupt and bitter" as intellectuals had become "uniquely unable to reflect on broader society as it changes" ("Power Intellectuals" 31). Rundle also observed that both Left public intellectuals and Right commentators failed to realise that mobilising people to take action is difficult now that political passion has been channelled into new priorities like the search for self-gratification, personal fulfilment and a fascination with technology. As a result, Rundle argued, the idea of "broad social life as a meaning-giving project is in abeyance" and the notions of "sustained social intervention" and public debate, which underpin western political society have been erased from the "social imagination" ("Power Intellectual" 29).

It is evident from these theorists that the intellectual crisis in Australia in the early years of the new millennium had several facets, including fears that diverse and dissenting public debate had been eroded; that dissenting intellectuals had become alienated from citizens and had withdrawn from their obligations to the public domain; that intellectuals had failed to address issues of concern to the electorate or to explain complex global stories; that conservative values had come to dominate in public life; and, finally, that there was a growing competition for the intellectual's traditional cultural authority. These shifts were a matter of concern primarily because they contributed to confusion within the public domain and to a sense of a loss of ideas, meaning and intellectual leadership. *Griffith Review* Editor Julianne Schultz alluded to the impact of these shifts when she noted that at a time when the nation was seeking ideas of social renewal many of the nation's big questions remained unanswered and citizens were left without new insights and understanding as intellectuals, whose job it is to "inject new ideas, informed insight and analysis into the public domain," lost confidence to engage publicly (*Launching* 65).

Distrust of Intellectuals

The alienation between Australia's dissenting intellectuals and its citizenry, while amplified by the changing conditions of the public domain at the end of the twentieth century, in fact, had its roots in the nation's colonial and subordinate past as a British penal colony.⁸¹ This past was accompanied by an enduring perception that the nation was culturally flimsy and intellectually impoverished, and its intellectuals pretentious and generally useless. This view of intellectuals persisted because it was grounded in a mid-nineteenth century European belief that new political democracies like Australia and America would impose what Alex de Tocqueville called a "debilitating middling standard which, while enlightening the ignorant, would replace excellence with mediocrity" (qtd. in White 56). As a result, Australia came to be seen by Europeans as anti-intellectual, mediocre and a land of cultural "philistinism."⁸² This attitude was widely accepted by the liberal intellectuals of western society, including Australia's own middle classes, who contributed to the perpetuation of the myth that Australia's culture was "derivative, dependent, closed" (Head 9).

As Australia developed a reputation as a working man's paradise, in which the materialistic, practical and useful were "prized over the beautiful," a cultural cringe⁸³ emerged amongst Australian middle classes, which led them to emulate British culture and scorn home-grown intellectual endeavours (White 4). This attitude created a permanent estrangement, according to Brian Head, between intellectuals and the public, who came to dismiss intellectuals as "ivory tower abstractionists, useful technocratic experts or dangerous dissenters" (ix). The

81 As a British penal colony that became a "working man's paradise" Australia has retained a persistent reputation for anti-intellectualism. According to Richard White this image had its roots in the very new-ness of Australia as a nation, which led British and American intellectuals to suggest from 1830s onwards that Australian culture was flawed and inadequate because it was dominated by "materialism, anti-intellectualism and mediocrity" (White 58).

82 Richard White cites Francis Adams, who described Australia in this way. Adams drew on Mathew Arnold, who had leveled the same accusation at Britain (59).

83 This term was derived from A.A. Phillips 1950 essay on the provincialism of Australia's post-colonial culture. He wrote of working in a vacuum of critical ideas and the difficulties of finding spaces for intellectual work. Historian John Hirst examined whether the cultural cringe had changed and noted that Australians historically have had an uncertainty over their national identity and their need to ask others what they think has been a part of the cultural cringe. He said that Australia was doubly disadvantaged as both a penal colony and as a British colony, which Hirst argued gave us a "shameful place in the eyes of the world" ("Getting Over Australia's Cultural Cringe").

image of anti-intellectual Australia remained dominant throughout the twentieth century and was evident in the work of Donald Horne who wrote in 1964 that Australia's intellectual life was sterile, parochial and mediocre. He criticised intellectuals for taking "shelter from the major challenges and ideas of the twentieth century" (*Lucky* 214) and he insisted that the low quality and limited influence of Australia's intellectual life had produced second-rate political leaders and a superficial and narrow culture.

A generation later the idea of the cultural cringe had been reassessed and Richard White argued in 1981 that the perception of Australia as a materialistic, anti-intellectual and mediocre nation was an invention that persisted because it served the economic and power interests of the British Empire. Brian Head also concluded that the image of Australia as anti-intellectual was a cliché and stereotype. He insisted that Australia was not devoid of ideas and debates, but rather there had been fertile political, artistic and social discussions since the 1840s accompanied by a selective adaptation of overseas ideas.⁸⁴ These cultural achievements were perhaps less visible, Head suggests, because many of the ideas were generated and circulated within the expanding institutional settings and networks which had steadily grown in Australia after the 1930s. The systematised and institutionalised nature of intellectual endeavour in Australia, therefore, linked intellectual work to funding and industry demands, which reinforced the narrow specialist orientation "towards technical efficiency and profitability" (19). This led Head to conclude that in Australia it was the technical expert rather than the learned man that was the "educational ideal" of the "bureaucratic age" (20). This conclusion was reaffirmed in a recent study by German researcher Jens Schroder who argued that the European model of the learned man never really found a place in Australia because elite cultural standards were perceived by the more egalitarian and practically-orientated

84 Julianne Schultz noted this in an editorial in the *Griffith Review* in which she wrote that "Australians have become accustomed to thinking of their history as conservative, practical, cautious and inward looking – to see the country as a place where change is not welcome, ideas are just coffee-chat and narrow self interest prevails. But the creation of the vibrant and successful place this country has become suggests a different reading of history, of people who valued innovation, ambition and creativity, ready to take risks and engage with the world" ("Introduction" 7)

Australians as tools to perpetuate and reinforce European social distinctions and maintain dominance by claiming moral superiority.⁸⁵

Political Breakdown

By the end of the twentieth century the gap that was believed to exist between Australian intellectuals and broader civil society was amplified by the extension of global capitalism and its conservative values which challenged the nation's libertarian and social collectivist legacies and values which had shaped the Australian public sphere.⁸⁶ As a consequence of these changes not only did the Australian Liberal Party and Labor Party find they needed to reinvent themselves to respond to the changing demands of the community, but that they also needed to engage in an endless struggle for control of the social and cultural institutions responsible for the ideological reproduction that ensures political dominance. This period of change had significant implications for intellectuals primarily because the shifts led to a widespread public confusion amongst citizens, which intensified a suspicion of authority, including intellectuals and elite values, and contributed to a citizen disengagement from party politics.

Australia's political Left had struggled to reinvent itself since the demise of political communism and class-based politics in the 1970s and 1980s. However, after the Labor Party (ALP), first under Hawke and then Keating, embraced global capitalism and set about preparing the nation for the competitive global market economy by implementing competitive practices, privatising government agencies, deregulating banking and removing protection from Australian industries, the ALP was seen to have deserted their traditional supporters. The implications of this perceived desertion became apparent after

⁸⁵ Schroder argued that Australians were seen as the "plebeians" of the western world, not because there was little culture, but because, unlike the Europe, cultural capital did not translate into social authority. He explained that Australia's middle classes, in their desire to emulate British culture, had left Australian culture in the hands of the working class, who developed a local, materialistic and more nationalistic culture, less concerned with social pretention and more interested in practicalities. Thus, Schroder concluded, Australian culture and the intellectuals who produced it were more closely tied to populist and nationalistic tastes.

⁸⁶ Geoff Gallop wrote of the nation's libertarian legacy as an experiment in democracy in "A Radical Legacy."

1996 and contributed to the party's ongoing electoral failures at Federal level.⁸⁷ It also led party leaders like Barry Jones, Carmen Lawrence and ALP Senator John Button to call for the renewal of a party that Peter Craven suggested had "lost any ability to muster grassroots support" and was "characterised by factions that stand for nothing but the perpetuation of their own power" (qtd. in Button v).⁸⁸

While the political Left struggled, the Liberal party also needed to renew its white, middle class image in the face of a more ethnically diverse Australia, and to do so they adopted the United States neoconservative social program associated with global economic reform. This reform installed economics as the basis for political and social decision-making and in the process marginalized Left wing human rights and libertarian values.⁸⁹ The nation's political legacy of social democracy based upon ideas of the public good, of the redistribution of wealth and of "shared schooling and universal services as a basis for common citizenship" were gradually eroded (Sawer, "Populism" 39).

These ideological shifts at the end of the century generally saw politics move away from the pursuit of the ideal social order and traditional libertarian social values and became what conservative commentator Paul Kelly called a system of "trade-offs between the public interest and the interests of the individual" ("Time"). Modern politics, according to Kelly, is about practical governance and compromise, and this includes winning elections, providing solutions, and managing competing economic interests. This was, he declared, the pragmatic reality of contemporary Australian politics.

⁸⁷ Barry Jones noted that, after the ALP was defeated in 1996, they went onto lose three subsequent elections in 1998, 2001, and 2004.

⁸⁸ Carmen Lawrence spoke of the declining health of the major parties ("Political Corporations") and former premier of Western Australia Geoff Gallop called for a return to grassroots community activism as a way to subvert the partisan interests that now dominated party politics ("The Case"). Former Western Australian Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Alannah MacTiernan also insisted the ALP needed to broaden its "rank-and-file representation" in order to weaken the grip of "factional leaders on debate and pre-selection" (Taylor, "What Alannah did Next").

⁸⁹ Classic liberalism was the philosophy that underpinned the political ideology of democracy, which positioned freedom and equality as central aspirations to the democratic project. Yet by the new millennium the libertarian values of freedom and equality had become denuded of its value. The words of freedom and liberty became empty symbols disassociated from any real action or understanding, and therefore able to be randomly appropriated by various political ideologies and marketing campaigns.

In contrast, dissenting intellectuals increasingly expressed concern about the economic approach to politics and argued that this form of governance was so corrupted by economic interests that it could no longer protect the public interest so crucial to an effective democracy and civil society. Intellectuals like Ghasson Hage and Raimond Gaita wrote of how pragmatic and expedient approaches to truth and morality destroyed trust in public life. Paul Kelly, however, scoffed at the idea that personal morality had a role in public life. He insisted that by characterising the political realities of public life as immoral, intellectuals only served to demonstrate how significantly out-of-touch they were with modern political realities and was further evidence of their incompetence.⁹⁰ Through this argument, Kelly maintained the conservative line which was to dissociate morality from its original association with common good and instead constructed it as a negative term that implied a sneering at and judging of “mainstream Australians” (Hindess 43), a “superiority over common folk” (Sawer 50) and an effort by dissenting intellectuals to impose their own Left wing agenda on others.

Amidst these competing visions of politics, citizens increasingly disengaged from political processes and public debate, and as a result, dissenting intellectuals extended their concerns to discussions about the viability of the public sphere so necessary to political democracy. Eva Cox and Pippa Norris both spoke of how the performance of parliaments, legal systems and the public service was viewed sceptically and cynically (Norris 2; Cox 25); and Sawer and Hindess remarked that expressions of unmediated public opinion came to be regarded as “more authentic than the outcomes of deliberation” in Parliament (5). Electoral processes and systems also came under fire. Retired Supreme Court Justice Michael Kirby noted that the notion of a “triennial visit to the ballot box” that “authorises everything done thereafter by Parliament and governments” had become an “increasingly unconvincing fiction” (“Bill of Rights Inevitable”). And Barry Jones argued that the “Australian parliament has lost

⁹⁰ Kelly’s comment reflected the conservative government’s embrace of Hayek’s capitalist “public choice theory,” which argued that the common good was beyond the knowledge of the state and that concerns with morality and rights were merely special interest claims seeking privileges at the expense of others in the marketplace (Dymond 69).

much of its moral authority, the public service has been increasingly politicised and lobbying ensures that vested interest has far more influence than community interest” (“Let’s Resist”).

Not surprisingly social divides also began to emerge over whether or not Australia had benefited from global capitalism. The Right argued that economic reform of the nation had been, in fact, a bipartisan project and that Australia had experienced “the longest economic expansion in Australia’s history” (Kelly, “Time for a Rethink”). Others, however, spoke of the cost of this progress and the ruptures and social dislocations caused by globalisation. Hugh McKay wrote of an Australia struggling to adapt in an age of discontinuity. He documented the shrinking family, changes to the workforce, the impact of technology and the “full flowering of capitalism, consumerism and materialism” as having led to “epidemics of anxiety and depression; disengagement from politics; an inward-looking focus and a loss of interest in big-picture issues; more prejudice and less tolerance in our attitudes to ethnic and other minorities” (*Advance Australia*, 7). Robert Manne wrote of the new social divisions as “cities tended to gain against the country; the educated against the uneducated” (“Overview” 5). This led to what Ghasson Hage called “compassion fatigue” (7) and the rise in “paranoid nationalism” (3) which he saw as the “‘product of the decline of hope’ in an era where the dynamic of capital accumulation no longer produces mere inequalities within society but endangers the very idea of national society” (47).

These developments fostered a political populism that manifested itself in a resistance to authority. This populism found expression in a strident nationalism which saw a growing suspicion of non-western nationalities, especially after 9/11, a dislike of refugees, and a growing resistance to the idea that Australia had to keep up with global trends. Politically, conservatives, through appeals to nationalism, were able to leverage these fears more effectively than the Left, and, as a consequence, there emerged a reactionary populist backlash against elites, including intellectuals,⁹¹ who were seen to

⁹¹ Guy Rundle described the knowledge elites as “tertiary educated workers in cultural production, social policy and education, with globalised tastes and orientation, socially liberal, economically social democratic by reflex, even when it is against their immediate interests” (“Power Intellectuals” 25).

support a more inclusive, cosmopolitan and progressive global Australia. Thus elitism and anti-elitism emerged as the “rallying cries in today’s political battles,” according to John Higley and Jan Pakulski (16). This created what Damian Cahill described as a “new-class discourse” that he saw as essentially an “exercise in double-speak” (“New Class Discourse” 86). “Its power as a discourse lies not in its reflection of reality but in its ability to mobilise real fears, anxieties, resentments and insecurities” in ways that divides the community and complement the agendas of the real elites (86). The irony of this situation was that those generating the anti-elitist debate were just as well educated and affluent as their targets. Moreover, because neo-conservative economic elites were exempt from any accusations of elitism, abuses of corporate or economic power were overlooked (94).⁹²

The new social divides of the late twentieth century affected the function of the intellectual in Australia, firstly by eroding the traditional social democratic values, which had defined their orthodoxy since the Second World War and legitimated their right to speak for values beyond political expediency. Secondly, the rhetorical alignment of intellectuals with elite groups adopted by conservative discourse, disabled their role as custodians of the values of the public domain, and indeed, positioned them as adversaries of the people. As dissenting intellectuals became increasingly impotent in mobilising citizens to take political action on complex contemporary issues like illegal immigration, race relations and the war on Iraq, history and national identity increasingly emerged as the sites of political contest primarily because it was a place from which notions of what Julieanne Lamond calls the “mythical mainstream” could be conjured (86).

As a settler migrant nation, Australia always has tended to introspection over the past and discussions of national identity and, according to Richard White, the nation’s identity has always been fought over and continually “fractured,

⁹² The subsequent Global Financial Crisis of 2008 revealed the extent to which corporate practices of the deregulated financial services had remained unscrutinised and validated Edward Said’s 2001 observation that public discourse was saturated with the interests, authorities and powers of those whose argument bears centrally “on the acceptance of a neo-liberal, post-welfare state responsive to neither the citizenry nor to the natural environment but to a vast structure of global corporations unrestricted by traditional barriers and sovereignties” (“The Public Role of Writers”).

questioned and refined” in the process of serving particular interests (viii). Benedict Anderson in his analysis of nationalism also wrote of the political power of national identity to create a national sense of affiliation, fraternity and cohesion necessary to mobilise citizens to action in defence of particular worldviews.⁹³ It is, therefore, hardly surprising that during the confusion created by globalisation and the disarray of politics that Australia’s national identity became the site of political contest.⁹⁴ Each ideology invoked a particular vision of the nation and used this to argue for certain values. The Left argued for a new global identity and sought to expose Australia’s conservative national identity as a colonial construct, embedded in nineteenth century views about European and white supremacy and therefore out-of-date in Australia’s multicultural community. In contrast the Right sought to affirm a more modernist notion of history and national identity as a mechanism for creating social stability and political consensus, and they privileged their position by arguing for the restoration of truth of the past which was under threat by historical revisionism and political correctness. The resulting struggles became the primary form of public intellectualism in the late twentieth century.

The History Wars

The displacement of political struggles to the cultural domain began in the 1970s and 1980s and academics like historians Manning Clarke and Geoffrey Blainey were early casualties of the wars of positions. Also implicated in these early cultural struggles was the battle over political correctness which, not only revealed the growing importance of cultural debates to political dominance, but also exposed the extent of the alienation between academics and the general

⁹³ The nation as an imagined concept articulated by intellectuals in the nineteenth century to complement the growth and expansion of capitalism, and nationalism functioned to further the state’s interests and to instil the cultural values, and to define the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Moreover, nationalism was used to induct the lower orders into the political order and that is why there is a strong sense of populism associated with nationalism, according to Benedict Anderson (47-48).

⁹⁴ Gregory Melleuish also argued that history establishes relationships “between one’s own particular social world and the wider world of humanity” and assures humans that the “past flows easily into the present and with a degree of predictability into the future” (215). Thus history serves to not only express identities but to also tell the narratives of the past which give citizens the courage to commit themselves to social action even if the outcomes are unclear.

public; and flagged the growing competition between intellectual elites, academics, commentators and politicians for public authority.

These early skirmishes, however, were just the prelude for the real war that broke out over history, national values and race relations in the mid-to-late-1990s. This war was in reality a ferocious struggle between two competing visions of the Australian nation which would shape social values. The first vision was put into circulation by ALP Prime Minister Paul Keating, who, after implementing the economic reform that would enable Australia's participation in global capitalism, began to re-imagine history and restructure education as a way of reshaping social attitudes and reflecting Australia as a multicultural and global nation. Keating used cultural resources to create an image of its citizens as bigger, broader, more inclusive and tolerant, able to heal the wounds of its past in order to embrace the opportunities available in a global and transnational future. According to MacIntyre and Clarke, Paul Keating built a story of an Australian people "who had triumphed over their tribulations and prejudices to embrace diversity and tolerance with an egalitarian generosity that would enable them to engage with their Asian neighbours and flourish in the open globalised economy" (3).

There were many strands to Keating's national story, including a struggle between conservatism and progressivism and between colonialism and republicanism. However, race relations and multiculturalism were central to Keating's vision of a twenty-first century global Australia whose strategic economic future lay with Asia. If Australia was to play an active role in building regional economic and political relationships, it needed to build credibility with its Asian neighbours by addressing its legacy of racial discrimination legitimated under the White Australia policy. For Keating this meant dealing with the complex and divisive Indigenous issues at home. There had been an almost complete absence of the Aboriginal Story from Australia's national history, something which had been noted by anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner in his 1968 Boyer Lecture, and again in 1984 by Bernard Smith when described Australia's indigenous past as the "locked cupboard of Australian history" and wondered what this meant for the authenticity of Australian culture (qtd. in

Clendinnen, *True Stories* 16).⁹⁵ This began to change in the 1970s with the rise of Aboriginal land rights. The issue of race relations, however, remained complex and it was Australia's bicentenary celebrations in 1988, when a proposal to acknowledge the nation's Indigenous population, as a part of the event, was declared an effort to discount the nation's British origins and undermine its colonial past, that the politically sensitive nature of race relations became starkly evident.⁹⁶

From this time on, public awareness of and interest in Indigenous issues began to escalate. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was established in 1991 by the Labor Government in an effort to improve relations between Indigenous and white communities, and in 1992 the Australian High Court ruled in the Mabo decision that Australia had not been *terra nullius* or un-owned land. This latter decision firmly propelled the nation's Indigenous past into white Australia's mainstream financial future. The Mabo (1992) and Wik (1996) decisions by the High Court of Australia had accorded with an argument made by historian Henry Reynolds in his book *The Law of the Land*. Reynolds argued that Australia had been an occupied Indigenous nation at the time of the arrival of the white settlers and, therefore, the Indigenous inhabitants and their descendents deserved recognition, and perhaps compensation, as the traditional owners. By acknowledging that Australia had been occupied, the High Court recognised Aboriginal land rights, a decision that transformed the British colonisation of Australia into an act of invasion and occupation.

While conservative commentator Janet Albrechtsen argued that the History Wars was just an imaginary concept conjured up by the Left to misrepresent the heated debates that challenged the work of public intellectuals,⁹⁷ the

95 Australian historian Inga Clendinnen observed that history not only evokes visions of national character, values and identity, but its stories help people to make sense of the world and develop the meaning that produces social action. She quotes a Elazar Barkan aphorism to explain this importance: "History changes who we were, not just who we are" (*True Stories* 46).

96 According to MacIntryre and Clark, calls to recognise the Indigenous past were seen as an effort to promote ideas of "white guilt and black vengeance" (xx), and historian Henry Reynolds suggested the government didn't want "black cries of despair and anguish" upsetting their catalogue of national achievements (qtd. in Pilger 2).

97 Janet Albrechtsen added that war talk was an effort by intellectuals to "curtail free speech while at the same time presenting themselves as the loyal defenders of free debate" ("The History Wars" 85)

conservatives had their own history warriors. Historian Keith Windshuttle led the charge by challenging the accuracy of historical research that documented the extent of damage to Indigenous communities, and which served as the basis for calls for restitution. In 1994 Windshuttle wrote in *The Killing of History* that history had been hijacked by the “old new Left crows from the 1960s” whose literary and social theories corrupted history and destroyed truth. There is no “fundamental distinction any more between history and myth,” he argued (2). Windshuttle called for a return to “teaching from the canon of the great works of Western learning as an answer to the relativism and incoherence cultivated by the late twentieth-century intellectual fashion” (249).

Discursive divides over race relations were further widened by the Stolen Generation investigations and the *Bringing Them Home Report* published in 1997. The report, which had been initiated by the former Labor government, examined the mandated removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities throughout most of the twentieth century and concluded this had violated their human rights and caused long term and systemic damage to Indigenous communities.⁹⁸ After the report was released, Robert Manne claimed in his book *Denial: The Stolen Generation and the Right* that the political Right had sought to discredit, distort and diminish the long-term impact of the Stolen Generation policy on Indigenous Australians, and as late as January 2010 Windshuttle was writing in *Quadrant* that there had been no Stolen Generation.

Windshuttle accused left wing academics of exaggerating the events of Aboriginal History in order to further their own political agenda. In particular, he argued that the extent of the “conflagration of oppression and conflict” which sought to “dispossess, degrade and devastate the Aboriginal people” had been overstated and misrepresented and designed to “create an edifice of black victimhood and white guilt” (*Fabrication* 1). Manne responded in the introduction to series of essays he edited. Entitled *Whitewash: On Keith Windshuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History* Manne argued that Windshuttle

⁹⁸ The damage continues to bleed into the present day and resulted in the drastic Northern Territory Intervention in 2007 which the United Nations declared discriminatory, and an infringement of Indigenous self-determination, and condemned the intervention for further stigmatising an already stigmatised community.

was trying to undermine the process of reconciliation. Windshuttle refuted these criticisms and in a public debate with Manne at the 2003 Melbourne Writer's Festival rejected analogies drawn between the frontier massacres of Aboriginals with the Jewish Holocaust. Windshuttle enumerated what he believed to be the inaccuracies and exaggerations of historians researching Tasmania's Aboriginal past.⁹⁹

National Stability

Keating had only a few brief years to build his image of Australia and after he lost power in 1996 John Howard began the wholesale reconstruction of the national imagination. Howard had a different vision of Australia, and, according to Stuart Macintyre, he had learned well from Keating the power of culture to shape political consciousness. Howard sought to refashion the Australian identity based on his belief that modern Australian's should not feel guilt for past injustices. His vision appears to have been driven primarily by his concern that Australia's unity would be threatened by too much diversity, and so he rejected a view of history that displayed an excessive emphasis on past wrongs and which portrayed Australian history as little more than a "litany of imperialism, racism and exploitation" (Macintyre, *Who Plays Stalin?* 2003).¹⁰⁰ Howard's concern was that Australia's past was not being celebrated and he

99 Other historians tried to get a public word in edgewise. Bain Attwood dismissed Windshuttle's work as the political misuse of history (*Telling the Truth*), and on the other side of the divide Michael Connor argued that Henry Reynold's idea of *terra nullius* was just an imagined concept ("History Brawls").

100 According to an analysis by Gregory Melleuish Australia's national identity had emerged at a time when the dominant narratives of a fixed social order, western and white supremacy and technological progress created a perception of an Australian identity that was fixed and unchanging. This had been further reinforced by an Australian history largely focused upon stories of political systems, administrative processes, national progress and internal consolidation. There were real nation building advantages to this form of historical narrative because it created the sense of a stable and unchanging past and a homogenous identity that did not challenge the nation's role as a British colony. This sense of history complemented Howard's efforts to marginalise the subordinated narratives that emerged at the end of the twentieth century.

feared this would lead to demoralisation at a time when the nation needed confidence to go forward.¹⁰¹

Throughout the twelve years of Howard's tenure he used history as a political tool to foster a particular form of nationalism and to install conservative values. The then Liberal Prime Minister was such a successful cultural warrior that he largely succeeded in stamping out the residue of Keating's socially progressive left-wing values, marginalised dissenting intellectuals and eroded progress made towards Indigenous reconciliation. Eighteen months before the 2007 election Howard felt confident enough to reiterate his cultural vision for the nation during his 2006 Australia Day address when he called for resistance to the "piece-meal" way in which history was taught and the way it decried Australia's national heritage. He argued that there needed to be a balance between diversity and national identity and that a "dominant cultural pattern" was required which should be grounded in "Judeo-Christian ethics, the progressive spirit of the Enlightenment and the institutions and values of British culture" ("A Sense of Balance"). Howard called for a "root and branch" renewal of Australian history and a return to a narrative form that valorised Australia's achievements. He explained that history and national identity are integral to the exercise of citizenship and he felt that young citizens were at risk of being "disinherited from their community" by the sort of history currently being taught in schools ("A Sense of Balance"). Howard repeated many of his views at the 50th anniversary of *Quadrant* which he praised for serving as a "counterforce to the black-arm-band view of Australian history" (Shanahan, "Howard Rallies"). He took the opportunity of that event to take a swipe at Australia's dissenting intellectuals when he observed that *Quadrant* had served as a "beacon of free and sceptical thought against fashionable Leftist views on social, foreign policy and economic issues" (Howard "John Howard").¹⁰²

101 American public intellectual Richard Rorty had made a similar link in his *Achieving our Country* when he observed that "national pride is to countries what self respect is to individuals: a necessary condition for self improvement." He added that too much pride creates arrogance and too little makes "energetic and effective debate about the national polity unlikely" (xx).

102 He argued that in recent times it has "become almost *derigeuer* in intellectual circles to regard Australian history as little more than a litany of sexism, racism and class warfare" ("John Howard").

Impact of the History Wars

The History Wars were described as “bitter,” “vitriolic and savage” (Attwood, *Telling the Truth* 3) and, according to David Carter history was the “most powerful” and “most disputed form of public intellectual work” in Australia (Carter, *The Ideas Market* 9). The struggles over interpretations of the past were amplified by the extensive media coverage and this led to the exclusion of other social actors and narrowed the number of voices. The vitriolic nature of the clashes saw Left-leaning or dissenting public intellectuals, historians and writers leave the public field bruised and battered by personal attacks. Their desertion lent strength to the sword arm of the remaining dissenting intellectuals who became increasingly strident. David Marr’s 2007 *Quarterly Essay* provides an example of how alarmed dissenting intellectuals had become, not only over the conservative dominance in public life but also the apparent failure of citizens to take action to protect their rights. Marr blamed the conservative dominance on Howard who had successfully badged himself as the “authentic voice of the nation” (49) and through this guise had fostered “abuse of those who challenge mainstream ideas” (47). Marr also blamed the Labor party “whose heart just wasn’t in it” and Australians who were more “subjects than citizens” (26) and who had failed to defend their rights because they had found Howard’s reduction of all matters of principle to practical solutions deeply attractive. “We aren’t the larrikins of our imagination,” he observed, but rather “Australians are an orderly people who love authority” and they had happily traded their liberties for Howard’s promise of economic prosperity (26).

No new Indigenous voices emerged in the debates, a point made by Aileen Moreton Robinson, and the dominance of the same old white, mostly male, voices led Mackenzie Wark to suggest the wars were an instance of old white academics colonising Indigenous debates as a way of shoring up their cultural authority and perpetuating a dominant white middle class aesthetic. He argued that Australia’s public intellectuals comprised a bourgeois “conscience industry” which stuck up for the downtrodden and disposed only in so far as it was possible for them to affirm their own values (“Lip Service” 263).

Unsurprisingly, the divisive History Wars also failed to further reconciliation. The Labor Government had established the office for reconciliation in 1991 but by 2007 John Howard still was not prepared to offer the symbolic gesture of a public apology. He argued that he did not believe Australians felt responsible for what had happened in the past, although he somewhat softened his position shortly before the 2007 election when he suggested that the “watershed change” in public mood had led him to promise to hold a referendum “to recognize Indigenous people in a preamble to the constitution in pursuit of a new Aboriginal reconciliation based upon equity rather than apology” (Shanahan, “Howard’s Reconciliation”). It was left to the new Labor Prime Minister Rudd to “apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.”¹⁰³ The issue of race relations, however, continued to burn long after Howard’s exit and Rudd’s formal apology.¹⁰⁴

The History Wars also had implications for citizenship and citizen rights and responsibilities¹⁰⁵ and Gillian Whitlock has suggested that the disputes about the facts and representations of the past were, in fact, efforts to reconstruct a different understanding of “white nationhood” and “the responsibilities of citizenship” (246).¹⁰⁶ It is history that provides the stories that establish the relationship between the individual and the state and both the Left and Right fought over the nature of this relationship. Historian Inga Clendinnen had

103 “We apologize especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, communities and their country. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendents and for their families left behind we say sorry” (Rudd, “Full Transcript”).

104 In January 2010, in an article in *Quadrant*, Windshuttle continued to dispute the minutia of what he sees as Left-wing inaccurate depictions of the past. He once again argued that there had been no stolen generation for the purposes of breeding out Aborigines and suggested that, rather than the estimate of 50,000 stolen children, only approximately 8,000 had been removed, and then solely consistent with policies to protect children. In *Quadrant Online* on 31 January 2010 he followed up the article by calling for Robert Manne to step down from his post as politics professor at Monash University while an inquiry was held into his fabrication of data. Robert Manne responded in an interview with Phillip Adams on ABC Radio National on 2 February 2010 and suggested that Windshuttle has misrepresented the data (“History Wars 3.0”).

105 In contemporary Australia the *Australian Citizenship Act* (2007) describes citizenship as a “common bond involving reciprocal rights and obligations, uniting all Australians whilst respecting their diversity.”

106 Gillian Whitlock also argued that it was the Aboriginal testimony in the *Bringing them Home* report that led to the focus upon history and white memoir, and this had been a difficult area of analysis for white intellectuals because they had to confront their own complicity in the violent treatment of others.

written of the link between history and civic virtue and predicted civil disarray would proceed from the History Wars in which “politicians ruthlessly” manipulated “the past” (8). She argued that “good history made out of true stories” needs time, peace and will. “We need to keep in mind that truth is a direction and an aspiration and not a condition,” she added (9). Clendennin suggested that John Howard’s desire for a “white-out history” of a “triumph of the Anglo-Celts over deserts and empty places” not only ignored the multicultural reality of Australia, and the nation’s first people (14), but also, in trying to produce a structured narrative that would also serve as an “objective record of achievement” that celebrated the past achievements of Australia he had fused patriotism and history and sought “myths and legends not history” (7). She argued that these simplified narratives of the past “[t]each grown men and women a nursery version of their history and you will make babies of them when it comes to grasping the actual workings of their own society, and of their nation in the wider world” (10).

It could also be argued that the History Wars also led to the devaluing of history as a source of authority, and this was particularly unsettling in a nation whose history had largely focused upon the evolution and consolidation of political and administrative processes, which had conveyed a sense of a fixed and stable past. As a result of the growing contestation over history the “credibility of academic historians and the integrity of intellectual life in Australia” was questioned according to Bain Attwood (*Telling the Truth* 2). The discipline of history was already divided between empirical and archivist historians and social cultural historians, a divide reflected in the ideological conflict between modernist and postmodernist approaches to documenting the past. However, as historians bickered amongst themselves during the History Wars about the correct way of doing history, novelists emerged to stake a “claim for the primacy of fictional truth in making sense of the past” (Clarke, R8). *The Weekend Australian* book reviewer Stella Clarke argued that the History Wars were no longer constructive discussions and had lost their “relevance and credibility.” She wrote that while the academic “history warlords” and right-wing commentators and politicians “who think history should be a lumbering, triumphant list” and who had “fabricated [a] story of white settler supremacy” were arguing, the way opened

up for Australia's historical novelists to colonise territory "traditionally owned by professional historians, on the basis that it is the terra nullius of truth" (R8).¹⁰⁷ Nervous about such encroachments, historian Inga Clendinnen argued that, while novelists can get inside events through a process of "applied empathy," imagination could, in fact, obstruct the truth of reality because it is never really possible to understand what it was like to think like those in another time ("The History Question" 20).

The History Wars also increased scrutiny of intellectual labour and positioned the dissenting intellectual as both a highly contested political entity *and* a media commodity whose increased public visibility tended to invalidate any claims by intellectuals that they were in decline. This led to the paradox of a threatened species seeming to thrive by assuming a "larger and larger presence in the media and other public forums" (Carter, "Introduction" 1). Further as intellectuals participating in the History Wars became deployed by the media as essentially ideological caricatures in publicly orchestrated debates, the narrowness of their ideas became increasingly apparent.¹⁰⁸ Dissenting intellectuals, therefore, became so compromised by the nature of their engagement with the media, as well as by the relative success of the conservative agenda and by the retreat of many from the public domain, that it led David Carter to suggest that public intellectuals were no longer the best way to think about how ideas were circulated in Australia. Dissenting public intellectuals themselves didn't disagree and Robert Manne, looking back on the war, concluded the highly "combative atmosphere" of the History War debates and the entrenched and polarised positions of the protagonists became the "enemy of truth" and "nuanced history" ("PM Calls for End").

107 Clarke was talking about a new form of history captured in the works of Roger McDonald's *Mr Darwin's Shooter*, Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* and Tom Keneally's *The Commonwealth of Thieves*. This "lawless literary rabble has opted to fill the vacuum by bickering historians, and taken unsanctioned control of Australia's past" (R8).

108 Carter saw talk of the crisis as a "basic conceit" and way of ensuring ongoing relevance at a time when the expanding creative industries had created a wide range of entities beyond the public intellectual, who could produce and circulate ideas to the public. He suggested that the decline debate is largely defensive and "reasserts a modernist sense of intellectual authority in the face of major structural changes in print culture, in the academic and the media, changes which have involved an unnerving transference of values and practices from one realm to the other" (28). These structural changes always appear as declines or crisis to those whose traditional authority is threatened and he suggested that these same intellectuals find it hard to see the same changes they bemoan as creating significantly new public roles for themselves.

It is apparent that the History Wars raised important questions about the authenticity of the nation's inherited colonial historical identity and opened up the idea that the nation's past and identity was not fixed and uniform but rather a diverse and negotiable entity. Moreover, there is no doubt that the History Wars placed race and indigenous issues on the national agenda and created the conditions that led the new Labour Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, as one of his first acts of office, to apologise to the Indigenous nation. Perversely, however, it could also be argued that the sensationalised and politicised media coverage of the debates narrowed the number of participants and produced an institutionalised form of intellectualism. Furthermore, dissenting public intellectuals also argued that the History Wars succeeded in subverting the reformulation of a national character, identity and future that would embrace a more inclusive global vision of what the nation could be. This was certainly the argument made by Keating who suggested that the debates had crippled Australia's identity ("Keating's History Wars").¹⁰⁹

Repairing the Damage

On 24 November 2007 Prime Minister John Howard lost the Federal Election and Robert Manne expressed relief that the "sterile era when a Prime Minister treated the nation's critical intelligentsia as un-Australian traitors . . . would now draw to an end" (*The Nation Reviewed* Feb 2008, 10). Manne expressed a hopeful optimism that the stranglehold exerted over public debate by the former federal government had loosened and it would be possible to "resume the conversation between public intellectuals and the government" (Manne, *Dear Mr Rudd* 13).

The new Prime Minister Kevin Rudd immediately set about trying to repair the intellectual divides and mobilise a new vision for the nation. During polling for

¹⁰⁹ Keating argued that John Howard's vision of Australia was not big enough, and that his insistence on his proprietorial view of history reduced "the flame and energy within the nation to a smouldering incandescence." Keating saw the failure to build a more mature nation as a "failure of imagination, a failure to read our historical coordinates correctly but usefully to move to a bigger construct, a bigger picture as to who we are and what we can be." In failing to do this, Keating insisted, "Howard had failed the real job of political leadership."

the 2007 election it had become apparent that Australians were tired of the reduction of all issues to economics and part of the change in national leadership was an expectation that a hopeful vision for the future would emerge. Hope for change was therefore central to Rudd's electoral success in 2008, with pollsters noting that many voters rejected Howard because they wanted politics to be seen as more than a "branch of economics" and because they wanted a "vision and hope for the future" (Keenan 21). Barack Obama had also drawn powerfully on such hope during his campaign: "Hope in the face of difficulty, hope in the face of uncertainty, the audacity of hope. In the end, that is God's greatest gift to us . . . a belief in things not seen, a belief that there are better days ahead" (qtd. in Von Drehle 24). Ghasson Hage noted the link between hope and social cohesion when he observed that "societies are the mechanisms for the distribution of hope" and that the strength of hope is related to how much citizens care about each other (3).

To produce this hope for the future and to heal the divisions in Australian society, Rudd held the 2020 Ideas Summit on 20–21 April 2008. Described by Alison Croggon as an "extraordinary experiment in open democracy" (*Rudd Picks Brains for a Creative Australia*), more than 1,000 people attended the national summit to offer up ideas for the future of Australia to the then recently elected government. In an address posted on the 2020 Web site the Prime Minister Rudd emphasised that he sought the best ideas to help the government address some of the "enormous challenges" and "breath-taking opportunities" of the new millennium. "The ground rules of economic success are being rewritten with the rise of nations like China and India. New technologies are continuing to transform our work lives, our social lives and everything from health care to entertainment. Our own society is changing rapidly as well as we live longer and expect greater fulfilment in our older years" ("Australia 2020").

The Summit was criticized by the then-leader of the then Opposition Brendan Nelson as a "PR exercise" ("2020 Summit") and Right wing *Herald Sun* columnist Andrew Bolt considered the event an effort to bypass the electorate in obtaining support for a range of Labour Party initiatives not raised in the course of the December 2007 election ("Rudd's Mates"). Bolt argued that the attendees were

largely Left-wing cultural elites who claimed to speak for the voters.¹¹⁰ Similarly, conservative columnist Piers Akerman remarked that “celebrity delegates not known for their cerebral contributions to the universe” and the “clutch of wrinkle-browed, self-styled public intellectuals” didn’t represent the nation (“Summit”).

The concept behind the Summit was not new¹¹¹ and the criticisms from the Right were hardly surprising. And, in the end the summit was ineffectual in creating a united intellectual front from which the government could draw. What was interesting about the Summit, though, was that it demonstrated an effort by the new Prime Minister to actively re-engage alienated dissenting intellectuals in political processes. Using the celebrity power of actors Cate Blanchett and Hugh Jackman, Rudd sought to use the conference to involve people in the process of nation-building. Moreover, the Summit, however unsuccessful in the end, and however much a ploy to break the hold of liberal conservatism and populism, refreshingly suggested that imagination was useful to reconciling national diversity and to building the nation’s future.

Arid Debates

The intellectual crisis in Australia was not a case of the death of the intellectual. Rather it appears that the new social conditions produced by global capitalism led to vibrant and adversarial debate. This had a dual effect: some intellectuals disengaged from the public domain, driven out by the hostile media, while others became more strident and polemical. The former narrowed the number of participants whilst the latter’s ideological and institutional debates did little to further understanding of complex issue or produce alternative new ideas.

The History Wars both marginalised particular forms of the Australian public intellectual, and contributed to the confusion in public life. However, as Russell

110 Certainly the invitation list was weighted with those with academic qualifications. Also invited, were several individuals whose names regularly appear on the list of public intellectuals including Robert Manne, David Manne, David Marr, Brian Flannery, Phillip Adams, Julian Burnside, Barry Jones and Noel Pearson.

111 It has been used by various Liberal and Labor governments over the years and emulated similar consultative summits held by former US President Bill Clinton and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Jacoby argued in *The Last Intellectual*, the intellectual is an historical figure whose fate is tied to broader cultural and political conditions. Thus it was the conditions of the broader ideological struggle produced by global capitalism that shaped the nature of public intellectualism during these years. David Marr in his 2003 Colin Simpson Lecture made a similar observation and suggested that the influence and status of intellectuals varies, ebbing and flowing according to national prosperity and the degree of receptivity to the outside world. Thus, he argued that during the conservative years of the late 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, the nation's focus on maximising personal wealth, combined with escalating anxieties about terrorism, multiculturalism and transnational globalisation, the speed of change, and the fragmentation of the existing values of the public domain, all saw an ebbing of public intellectual prestige as a part of the growing suspicion and distrust of the institutions of public life. Indeed, the political populism of this period changed the nature of public debate by introducing a suspicion of those claiming elite knowledge. So pronounced was the anti-elitism and anti-intellectualism that Donald Horne felt compelled to note that there was more public discussion under the intensely conservative Prime Minister Bob Menzies than there ever was under John Howard (qtd. in Dessaix 227).

The History Wars were not very successful in displacing conservative values in the public domain or furthering Indigenous reconciliation. Moreover, complex issues were reduced to "simplistic confrontation of claim, denial and counterclaim" (Brett 12) which led the former Prime Minister Rudd, in an interview with ABC Local Radio on 27 August 2009 to call them unproductive, polarized "arid intellectual debates." The Wars, however, were useful in exposing the narrow range of the institutionalised and partisan nature of contemporary intellectual labour. They also showed that in a post-industrial, post-colonial and institutionalised world, intellectual production, knowledge and cultural imagination have become the bases of power and, therefore, highly contestable.¹¹² Moreover it was evident from the History Wars that the

112 Politicians and intellectuals have always been rivals and it was C. Wright Mills in the 1950s who argued that the intellectual had lost control of the public domain to the power elites who turned the public into a mass untrained to make the big political decisions. Richard Hofstadter also picked up the theme and blamed politicians and businessmen

challenge for modern intellectual labour was the rethinking of the grounds upon which the intellectual's critical, political and ethical functions were deployed.

for the rise in anti-intellectualism during the 1960s as these ideological "literate leaders of the semi-illiterate" deployed rhetoric and knowledge for their own purposes (34).

Chapter Five

KANT'S GHOST

The Australian History Wars were one manifestation of the debates about an intellectual crisis in Western democracy at the end of the twentieth century — debates that were evident in the culture wars in the United States and comparable contentions in Britain and France. The rewriting of inherited narratives produced by these history and culture wars placed national stories (and the discipline of history) centre stage, and put new understandings into circulation as re-imagined stories of the past were seen to “show that laws deceive, that kings wear masks, that power creates illusions and that historians tell lies” (Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* 72).

One of the critical conditions necessary for this particular intellectual formation is a belief that all truths are historically created. However, it is this view that also challenges the Kantian notion of reason as a means to discovering universal truth, which provided the ethical framework of the modernist public intellectual and legitimated their political intervention in civil society since the late eighteenth century.¹¹³ Once Kantian and comparable modernist systems of thought were challenged by the philosophies emerging out of the Second World War and amplified by the subsequent social, economic, and intellectual shifts of the late twentieth, and early twentieth-first centuries, all the values that informed and regulated society in western democracies — freedom, equality, justice etc. — were disputed in more than usual ways — becoming perennially debatable, contestable and indefinite. As a result so too did the idea of the public intellectual in society. Thus, in order for intellectual interventions in contemporary society to avoid becoming a part of the ineffectual disputes of history and culture wars, and reduced to what David Schalk has called “isolated and ignored acts of moral witness” (282), the contemporary public intellectual

113 Kant's categorical imperatives included, one, the will of the rational being is subject to categorical imperatives, and two, the subject must always act so “that you treat humanity whether in your person or in that of another always as an end, but never as a means only.” The goal for Kant was that man should not be only subject to the will of another, but that man should be his own law giver (Reiss 18-19).

had to set about the difficult task of devising a coherent ethical framework amidst contemporary diversity that justifies their political intervention in society.

There have been several attempts by a range of theorists to do this and some of the key ideas are overviewed in this chapter. I argue, however, that perhaps a solution to the contemporary public intellectual's dilemma lies in examining both the critical and power theories of Michel Foucault, which provide an insight into the operation and implications of contemporary institutionalised conditions, and the humanist values of Edward Said, which sought to find common ground in an increasingly divisive global society. I outline their respective intellectual theories, and then use the David Hicks' case (2001 – 2007) to illustrate how these theories worked in practice to produce an ethical framework that explains the public intellectual's political role in contemporary democratic society, and one that does not simply rely upon assertions of universal truth. This framework absorbs both critique by understanding that public intellectuals work within systems of power, and creation in which the informed and critically conscious citizenry is affirmed as the grounds upon which the intellectual can continue to justify their public and political intervention in society.

Social Contract

The dilemma of how the individual can be free in society was central to Kant's notion of the proper role and function of the intellectual. Kant's belief that man's individual freedom was best protected by a peaceful civil society led him to argue that reason would enable men to understand that the price of individual freedom was civil society. It was through reason that man could learn to self-regulate his relations with others; to distinguish between "duty and desire" (Reiss 18), and through public debate find what was true for society and for himself. Thus Kant argued reason would not only enable existential freedom but also bring about an awareness of the obligations and responsibilities of the citizens.

There was a problem, however. Since man had been a passive subject under autocratic systems of power, he needed to *learn* to apply reason. Thus Kant theorised the role of the intellectual as not only a mediator of power, but also as an educator who provides citizens with the understanding necessary to pursue freedom consistent with the freedom of others. Such understandings would transform the subject into the mature citizen who would become moral through his consciousness that his demands for freedom needed to be balanced with the demands of others.

Kant outlined three core functions for the intellectual who leads subjects to citizenship. The first was that the intellectual had an obligation to use reason to analyse and critique society and thereby point out its failings and make suggestions for its improvement and progress. This function provided the basis for the intellectual's second function, which was to intervene politically when necessary for the preservation of citizen freedoms. Kant imagined that the intellectual would engage publicly in order to shape the political will of the citizen through deliberative debate and that this would facilitate peaceful social progress as the citizen dared to be wise. Thus the third function Kant assigned to the intellectual — a moral/ethical function in that Kant required the intellectual to articulate the absolute standards and social values that would assist the citizen to become critically conscious of how their desire for freedom was best served by understanding the structure of civil society. In other words it was the function of the intellectual to make evident the truth that one's own freedom depends on protecting the freedom of others.

The Kantian model of the intellectual remained relatively consistent throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, after the rupture of the Second World War and the rise of fascist ideologies, intellectuals rethought their role and the relationship between the citizen and power. As a result, there emerged an oppositional, Left-leaning intellectual who expressed a distrust of formal authority and, like the German School of Critical Theorists in the 1920s,

began to rethink Kant's notion of freedom, which is what had justified the intellectual's political role in society.¹¹⁴

This re-thinking began most visibly with Jean Paul Sartre who argued for an individual freedom grounded in a belief that in a contingent world man is linked to others because he actualises himself in relationship with others.¹¹⁵ By constructing himself within the context of relationships, Sartre argued the individual creates a human universe of "inter-subjectivity" (*Existentialism* 45). This man-made universe is formed by the subject's consciousness that in choosing who he will be this is also the purpose of other men. In this way Sartre could argue that existentialism, while a response to contingency, could also be moral because it recognises that man can only be free when he commits himself to the freedom of others as well as his own. Sartre saw freedom not as an absolute condition, but rather a continually negotiated and reinvented relationship between the individual and the other. Thus Sartre could continue to insist that existentialism was also humanism and the intellectual's primary motivation for engagement with citizens is the protection of the existential freedom of all.

The approach to the problem of freedom taken by Gilles Deleuze was, like Sartre, not to affirm universal freedom, but rather to examine how the relationship of the individual to the other could be understood. Consequently he sought to outline a role for the public intellectual through his ideas on the role of theory. In a conversation with Foucault, Deleuze described theory as a "relay from one practice to another" and practice as "a set of relays from one theoretical point to another" (Foucault *Intellectuals* 206). He insisted that theory is always limited because it always seeks to assimilate other ideas, thus the intellectual who produces totalising theory merely serves to replicate power (206). Rather, for Deleuze, practice offered a promising alternative to theory, and he argued that the function of contemporary intellectuals is grounded in

114 In France intellectuals adopted leftist values at the time because Communism seemed to be the ideology furthest away from right-wing Fascism. However, this was to implicate oppositional intellectuals in the failure of political Communism whose Fascist regimes in Russia and China became increasingly apparent in the late 1960s and 1970s.

115 Sartre argued that "I cannot obtain any truth whatsoever about myself, except through the mediation of another. The other is indispensable to my existence, and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself" (*Existentialism* 45).

practice, and as such, their role is to provide multiple viewpoints from which individuals can choose to act within networks against the edifice of power.¹¹⁶ He suggested his books and theories should be treated as a “pair of glasses to be directed to the outside; if they don’t suit you, find another pair. I leave it to you to find your own instrument, which is necessarily an instrument for combat” (208). Thus, like Sartre, Deleuze saw that within a society characterised by large concentrations of power the intellectual’s role was primarily one of subversive activism. Yet the underlying imperative that propels Deleuze’s intellectual intervention is another notion of freedom — but one where freedom is concerned more with the principle of equality than with the necessity of self-actualisation, or a consequence of the reasoned understanding of the human condition suggested by Kant.

Zygmunt Bauman in his rethinking of freedom as the mechanism which justifies the intellectual’s obligation to speak for others found a solution, like Deleuze, in practice. Bauman suggested that the very word intellectual is an “attempt to recapture and reassert” the ideals of the Enlightenment and applies to a “motley” collection of cultural producers who see it as their right to “interfere directly with the political process through influencing the minds of the nation and moulding the actions of its political leaders” (1). He argued, however, that in the late modern world there are no *a priori* principles, and thus social order proceeds from practice. Consequently, there are an unlimited number of social orders, and this requires the intellectual to enter into different knowledge formations in order to translate them. The intellectual, therefore, operates not as a legislator of the best world order or the producer of truth, but as a negotiator and interpreter of the various orders. Yet Bauman understood the challenge presented to the intellectual by the endless contingency of many knowledge formations and advocated for a pragmatic and contingent humanism. This humanism was not an invitation to make universalising claims but it did not prevent intellectuals from making generalised claims warranted by their own traditions and practices. Such operational and localised claims

¹¹⁶ Deleuze insisted that “only those directly concerned can speak in a practical way on their own behalf” (Foucault, *Intellectuals* 209).

enabled public intellectualism to “arbitrate controversies of opinion and make statements intended as binding” (5).

Each of the above theorists had rejected the modernist notion of universal truth and freedom as implicated in power. One theorist, however, who resisted the argument that reason was implicated in power was Jurgen Habermas, who argued for the restoration of some form of universal standard within the contingency of modern times. He insisted that the post-structuralist notion of the subject as a creature of power eroded all possibility of social meaning. He sought, therefore, in his *Theory of Communicative Action* to recover the place of reason through the role it plays in critical communicative action. Habermas saw that communication contained rational assumptions that enabled the negotiation of social consensus. Thus he insisted that this process could also produce ideas that could be considered universally valid and become the practical basis of universalising claims.

Despite this rethinking of freedom the dilemma faced by the contemporary public intellectuals who wanted to undertake a civic, political and public role was that they could not recur nostalgically to universal notions of truth and freedom as a way of invoking the authority to speak for others, when such truths were recast as contingent and implicated in power. Nor, however, could they just confine themselves to the identification of how power constructs the modern subject, and who thus exists in a state of permanent relativity and a moral uncertainty. Rather in the heterogeneous and pluralist global western societies there is an increasing need to assert common values in order to address complex transnational social and political problems.

One way to reconstitute an ethical framework for the assertion of common values that justifies the public role of the intellectual lies with a consideration of Foucault’s specific intellectual and Said’s critical, humanist intellectual. Though these two models fundamentally diverge in several significant areas, they can, in fact, be read as both endorsing the citizen as the ethical basis for the

intellectual's public intervention.¹¹⁷ Foucault arrives at the citizen through his understanding of how power constructs the human subject and his belief that it is individual self-fashioning ethics that enables resistance. For Foucault it is the citizen's ability to be critically aware of how they are shaped by power, and then despite this knowledge chose to exercise their free will in how they will act that makes them free to reinvent their world. And because for Foucault the individual constructs their ethics in relationship with others, ethics becomes the grounds upon which to assert common standards. By placing ethics at the heart of resistance, Foucault outlined a very specific and adaptable form of intellectual labour. Said, in contrast, was much more focused upon finding grounds to assert common standards, especially those associated with universal ideas of justice, freedom and equality. Yet, he too arrived at the individual subject when he argued for a critical or pragmatic humanism that sought to establish common standards, not upon the basis of faux universals, but rather deductively and critically produced by the subjects themselves as they recognised certain conditions as civic wisdom.

Truth Claims

Foucault's focus was always on the operation of power — not the assertion of common standards, which he saw as efforts to extend power. This focus shaped Foucault's views of the intellectual and led him to declare in a 1980 interview with the newspaper *Le Monde* that he had never met any intellectuals. He disclosed that he had met those who write novels, treat the sick, compose music, teach and paint, but never an intellectual. This remark reflects Foucault's theory of the specific intellectual, which had emerged out his rejection of the inherited universalising intellectual models of Zola and Sartre. Foucault concluded that in the context of the modern institutionalised systems of power and the rise of technical knowledge, the modern intellectual could no longer be just a jurist defending nineteenth-century universal ideals, nor a writer who "rhapsodies

¹¹⁷ Shortly before his death Foucault commented in the French newspaper *Liberation* that there existed an "international citizenship that has its rights and duties and which holds an obligation to speak out against governmental abuses of power" (qtd. in Reynolds 951).

about the eternal” and purports to express the values of all¹¹⁸ (*Truth and Power* 129). This form of universal intellectual labour had become irrelevant from the Second World War, when Foucault argued that Oppenheimer’s nuclear bomb showed that the intellectual had begun to pose a political threat, not on the basis of his general pronouncements about the operation of society, but because of the specific knowledge at his disposal. Thus for Foucault the modern intellectual has specific and specialised knowledge, and is an activist who politically intervenes as the “absolute savant” of the technicians and in command of knowledge that can benefit or destroy life (*Truth and Power* 129).

Foucault argued that the specific intellectual, unlike the universal intellectual, could be part of a particular class, could be institutionally-situated and work in the service of State, capital or ideology, and could be involved in particular specific political struggles.¹¹⁹ These affiliations did not, however, prevent the intellectual from taking action in the interests of a “general truth” that is “essential to the structure and functioning of society” (*Truth and Power* 132).¹²⁰ Indeed, for Foucault the location of the specific intellectual enables him to understand how the “ensemble of rules according to which the truth and false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true” (*Truth and Power* 132). Thus Foucault’s specific intellectual doesn’t express totalizing theory, challenge ideology or tell others what to do. Rather, he operates as a critical function to question the assumed and self-evident. The specific intellectual finds subordinated knowledge, and, in revealing the conflicts and discursive contradictions, produces the “local, flexible and critical understandings” and strategic knowledge that can help alter “power relations”

118 The intellectual as writer has a long legacy but the contemporary intellectual writer was largely shaped by post-war philosopher, writer and activist, John Paul Sartre. Sartre saw writing as a social act and he insisted that “[t]o write, was to implicitly or explicitly take positions in the social issues of one’s time, even if one didn’t mention them” (qtd. in Bree 22). Building upon these views, Sartre outlined three roles for the writer: identifying the social patterns that link humanity behind the chaos, shaping the future through action and reaching as wide an audience as possible. Aspects of these writerly roles have been variously reformulated as theorists seek to define the relationship between the text, the real world and power.

119 The intellectual savant was specific in three ways: his class position in society, his “conditions of life and work,” and the specific struggles that construct the “politics of truth in our societies” (“*Truth and Power*” 132).

120 The intellectual can have multiple political interventions upon the basis of his class, his knowledge and his role in creating truth. It is in the creation of the last which enables the intellectual to intervene in society to engage in disputes not about truth but about the rules that lead a statement to be considered true.

(qtd. in Rabinow, *Foucault Reader* 6). It is this knowledge that enables the intellectual to resist dominance, which in Foucault's disciplined world is no longer about "confronting reality with universal truths" but rather the production of "detailed analyses of the social formation of specific social fields" (Seidman 183) that shape the formation of political will. Foucault's specific intellectual, while critical and analytical — something that paradoxically recalls Kant — does not advocate for an ideal social order, but serves to make visible that everything, including truth, is constructed and therefore subject to reconstruction.

Foucault further refined the intellectual function as he shifted from examining the knowledge/power conditions that create and control subjects to thinking about how subjects can resist power by creating themselves. Foucault came to argue that it is the self-regulation or the technologies of the self "that makes it possible to bring out the freedom of the subject and its relationship with others" and this "constitutes the very stuff of ethics" (qtd. in Rabinow, "Introduction," *Ethics* xvii). In other words, Foucault didn't define freedom as liberation, which he argued was just another universal claim.¹²¹ Instead, he contended that the modern subject could assert their freedom by engaging in self-fashioning ethical choices as a part of disciplining themselves in relation to others. This form of freedom resembles Kant's in the sense that it relies upon man's self-consciousness of himself as a political and social being. However, Kant's freedom was constructed as a consciousness of the *a priori* conditions that moderate the individual demands with those of society, while Foucault's freedom was based upon a consciousness of how power structures the subject. By proposing that the citizen could resist power by assembling and disassembling the self in relation to particular contingent conditions, Foucault transformed Kant's universal moral doctrine into an individual ethics of practice.

¹²¹ Foucault was suspicious of the idea of human liberation because, unless it was delineated, it was possible to universalise the notion. He believed that liberation was not sufficient to define the practices of freedom.

Foucault's theories were criticised by Edward Said¹²² and Jurgen Habermas¹²³ for demonstrating insufficient care for others, and Richard Wolin¹²⁴ argued that Foucault's self-fashioning ethics was evidence of an attitude of "narcissistic self absorption or . . . aggressive self-aggrandizement" (qtd. in Longford 574). Foucault attracted this criticism primarily because he did not explicitly identify how the development of personal ethics, which had replaced universalising moral doctrines, could also contribute to the social project. Furthermore, he had criticised humanism, which he argued had confused itself with the universals of the Enlightenment as a way of perpetuating certain social values, and thus had discarded it as theoretical basis for linking the individual to the other.¹²⁵ Yet, though rejecting the universalising idea of humanism, Foucault did not discard the idea of the interdependence of human life. Indeed, the relationship between the individual and the other infuses his theory of ethics, very much in the same way the collective is implicit in existentialist thought.¹²⁶ The focus upon the other is evident in Foucault's criticism that the modern human subject has been produced as fixed and unchanging by the modern will to knowledge, which had failed to understand how the individual self was constantly refashioned in response to changing circumstances and relationships with others. It was this forgetting of how we are constituted in relation to others that led Foucault to

122 Edward Said expressed concern that Foucault's focus upon power promoted a notion of a disciplined society in which resistance was futile. He thought Foucault's work on ethics demonstrated a lack of care for political intervention. In a commemorative essay published on Foucault's death in 1984 Said described Foucault's scholarship as "ironic, skeptical, savage in its radicalism, comic and amoral in its overturning of orthodoxies, idols and myths" (qtd. in Siddiqi 74).

123 Habermas expressed concern in his lectures at the College de France in March 1983 that there were neoconservative implications to post- structuralism and saw Foucault's work as an attack on hermeneutics when he disputed the idea of text "imbued" with meaning (Bahr 100). According to Bahr, Habermas could not accept "a concept of truth grounded in power" (102) and Michael Kelly asserts that Habermas insisted that it was all very well to identify power but critical theory was necessary to produce the hierarchies of values to adjudicate over whether it was good or bad power (1).

124 Richard Wolin argued that Foucault recommended a "dramaturgical model of conduct in which action becomes meaningful *sole qua* performative gesture" and "this theory risks sanctioning an approach to ethics that is brazenly particularistic and elitist. Formally, it remains only a hair's breadth removed from Nietzsche's rehabilitation of the right of the stronger" (qtd. in Longford 570).

125 Foucault spoke of a seventeenth-century humanism which presented itself as a critique of humanism and a nineteenth-century humanism that was anti-science. He also noted that humanism has been variously appropriated by Marxism, Existentialism and National Socialism, all in an effort to preserve selected values.

126 Existentialism supported the idea of the individual conquering himself rather than revolutionising society. "Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realises himself" (41).

argue that the focus upon the modern individual has contributed to the impoverishment of the relational fabric and produced the “universal unbrotherliness” so evident in contemporary society (qtd. in Rabinow, “Introduction,” *Ethics* xxv). For Foucault, universalising humanism had suppressed our obligations and responsibilities to each other. He argued that a more appropriate philosophical ethos of the modern subject is a self-conscious “critical ontology” of ourselves, which enables us to go beyond the historical contingency of our being and, through self-care, self-invention and self-mastery, undertaken as a part of individual ethical practices contingent upon relationships with others, become able to reweave the social fabric.

Graham Longford similarly argues that Foucault’s ethics do not demonstrate a lack of care for the social project or a rejection of moral codes or self-restraint. Rather, he insists Foucault’s awareness of the contingency and frailty of the self as it is produced by webs of relations and events, in fact, produced an ethics based upon compassion for others. However, while concluding that Foucault provided useful tools to avert the dangers that accompany the consolidation and universalisation of identities — which Foucault argued led to violence — Longford did concede that Foucault did not sufficiently outline the ideal or criteria upon which individuals could stand together.

Another who thought Foucault’s self-fashioning personal ethics implied the other was Joan Reynolds, who saw his ethics as a form of pragmatic humanism. She argues that, despite Foucault’s insistence that humanism, the notion of human right and the principles of justice have little value, Foucault proposed practical ethics as a replacement for universal moral values and a basis upon which the modern subject could reinvent the self in response to the problematisation of the social order.¹²⁷ Reynolds saw Foucault’s pragmatic ethics as a way of leaving behind the idea that knowledge was fixed and replacing it with human activity that is embodied, emergent, creative and created within particular contexts.

¹²⁷ Reynolds noted towards the end of this life Foucault had explicitly stated that there existed an “international citizenship that has its rights and duties” (951).

Foucault's ethical practices, which enable the invention of the self — rather than the modern notion of finding the self — appear to be grounded in his desire to imagine a new subjectivity that would enable the rethinking of “our way of being, our relationships with others, with things, with eternity, with God” (qtd. in Rabinow, “Introduction,” *Ethics* xxiii). Thus for Foucault the intellectual's primary function is no longer constrained by the requirement to produce truth claims. Rather the intellectual's function, according to Foucault, was the “modifying [of]one's own thought and that of others” and in the process assisting citizens to light the path to their own freedom, not through abstracted universals but through the daily practice of constructing the self (qtd. in Rabinow, “Introduction,” *Ethics* xxxix). Thus Foucault transformed Kant's axiom “dare to be wise” to “dare to be conscious.”

Voyage into Other

Foucault theorised a critical intellectual model that analysed truth claims as a part of a conscious ethical practice designed to call the subject into being, not on behalf of the interests of someone else, but for themselves. The functions of the intellectual were, therefore, to exhibit the critical consciousness necessary to make himself and others aware of how they are shaped by power, and thereby enable the self and other to take political action through self-fashioning ethical practices. Foucault's specific intellectual intervenes politically in society upon the basis of an ethical framework grounded in what can be seen as a pragmatic humanism. Yet, Foucault's rigorous rejection of humanism meant that, for some, he did not sufficiently link individual ethical practices to normative standards or a broader social framework. This is where Edward Said's model of public intellectualism is useful because in insisting that intellectual help to negotiate the common standards that can be found in a contingent moral universe he linked critique to humanism. Not unlike Baumann Said argues that in so far as social values are produced by particular historical conditions, their very reoccurrence across time can lead them to be understood as a form of innate civic wisdom. For Said this is what justifies the intellectual's political intervention in society and enables the assertion of Bauman's “universalistic

ambitions” even at the same time these ideals are renegotiated within the local conditions and experiences (5).

Said, like Foucault, saw public intellectualism as fundamentally a critical function and described criticism as a form of political consciousness able to be both aware of how culture shapes the subject and able to “perform as a historical and social actor” (*The World* 15). For Said “criticism must think of itself as life enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination and abuse: its goals are non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom” (29). In his 1993 Reith Lecture, published as *Representations*, Said placed criticism at the heart of intellectual work and this guided the expression of his intellectual model which was a synthesis of Gramsci’s organic intellectual, who is actively engaged in the struggles of society, and Julian Benda’s philosopher king, who speaks truth to power and for whom “no worldly power is too big and imposing to be criticised” (Said, *Representations* 7). With this model Said sought to address the basic question of “how does one speak truth? What truth? For whom and where?” (65).

Said recognised knowledge had been institutionalised and intellectuals co-opted so he insisted that the primary duty of the modern public intellectual was to strive for independence and critical consciousness of the forces that control his critique. Indeed it was co-opted intellectuals, Said argued, who had produced the political ideologies and national and cultural identities that had “created intolerance and fear” and increasingly limited, through the specialisation and professionalisation of knowledge, the number of voices able to speak truth to power (24). To remedy this situation Said called for intellectuals to occupy marginal, exilic and liminal sites from which they could speak out against prevailing norms which are so often “intimately connected” to the authority and obedience of “the nation”¹²⁸ (27). It was from these sites the intellectual could dissent “against the status quo at a time when the struggle on behalf of under-represented and disadvantaged groups seems so unfairly weighted against

128 Said saw the way the intellectual had been used to create national identities and political ideologies and believed that the “result is intolerance and fear rather than knowledge and community” (*Representations* 24).

them” (xv), and from these sites he or she could enter into a “lifelong dispute” to challenge power and expose dogma (65).

Said’s exilic intellectual is at odds with Foucault’s specific intellectual.

Paradoxically, however, the idea of the intellectual in exile served to produce Said’s intellectual function, like Foucault’s, as an individual ethical practice. For Said, however, individual ethics did not provide sufficient grounds to justify the intellectual’s intervention in society and this is why he reclaimed a largely discredited humanism as the basis for asserting universal social values. He argued that humanism was not absolutist¹²⁹ or essentialist, but rather universalist in the sense that it required the “risk to go beyond the easy certainties provided to us by our background, language and nationality, which so often shields us from the reality of others” (*Representations* xii). In other words for Said public intellectualism is transnational. For Said humanism is about a refusal to accept that which is “presented to us as commodified, packaged, uncontroversial and uncritically coded certainties” (*Humanism* 28). It is about going beyond the cultural programming that shapes, reduces and divides the individual subject in order to address the major issue confronting the modern intellectual: how to reconcile “one’s identity and the actualities of one’s own culture, society and history to the reality of other identities, culture, people’s” (*Representations* 69). Yet, it is important to note that in a global society this is not just a quest for the public intellectual.

Said’s humanism, like Sartre’s existentialism, was grounded in the notion that the individual cannot be free without the freedom of others. As a consequence, Said argued that understanding the other was the primary function of the contemporary intellectual and the basis upon which he advocated for universal standards of human behaviour associated with justice, equality and freedom.¹³⁰ These were values that Said, as a political and social activist, had come to

129 Humanism was initially understood as the placement of man at the centre of all things. In the post-war period of the twentieth century it became implicated in the battles over universalism and essentialism and thus became a part of the struggle between practical humanism and theoretical anti-humanism. If the subject was created by systems of power, how could there be an essential human nature, and further, if there is no theory, how can humanism sustain normative values?

130 Said concluded that freedom is “the right to a whole range of choices affording cultural, political, intellectual and economic development” (*Humanism* 134).

believe that people all over the world responded to and which he believed provided the most effective means for overturning tyranny and created the social conditions that best protected a free and democratic society. Thus Said saw humanism as a fundamental commitment to the belief that “all human beings are entitled to expect decent standards of behaviour concerning freedom or justice from worldly power and nations” (*Representations* 9).

In seeking to redress the inequities and injustice of the modern world and restore a common ethical framework, Said also affirmed the intellectual as an activist and inherently political entity. He argued that the invisible powers of dominance could be resisted through a process of “write-back” which resembled Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical methodologies. Write-back, however, went a step further and produced non-coercive, counter-discourse that enabled the reconstruction of the relationship between the self and the other and the redefining of the cultural terrain in order to re-imagine social divisions.¹³¹ Said saw “write-back” as a more effective method of changing thinking than direct opposition, which he felt tended to entrench opinions. It also required imagination in order to foster the empathy and understanding necessary to understand the other. Fundamentally, “write-back” was not just about the rightness of something, but rather its focus is what Yumna Siddiqi calls an “interactive and mutually transformative cultural engagement” (71).

Social transformation remained Said’s goal and underpinned his work into literary and cultural criticism and discourse analysis. Indeed, his 1983 book on criticism can clearly be seen as a lament for the decline of the critical and politically engaged intellectual. However, towards the end of his life Said sought to test how far political and social conditions could change in response to ideas and this interest found expression in social experiments like the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which Said established with his Israeli friend and director of

131 Said argued that write-back is a conscious effort to enter into the hegemonic discourse and mix it up, and that it is always possible to voyage into the other because, no matter how dominant the system, it is not going to be able to comprehensively cover and control everything.

the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Daniel Barenboim.¹³² The goal was to bring together young Arab and Israeli musicians to see if in daily conversations about their music they could confront and dispel the deeply entrenched political agendas and irreconcilable cultural divisions that contribute to the Middle Eastern conflict.¹³³ Through the experiment Said was able to test his view that value systems dictate what we believe and that cultural identities are not fixed but can be renegotiated through the ethical practices of daily life. Over the course of the ten days of the project Said observed how national identities were temporarily superseded by musical identities. This gave hope to Said and Barenboim that there was a way for Arabs and Israeli's to renegotiate their inherited cultural differences and live "side-by-side" (MacKenzie np). The experiment gave Said hope that the "politics of identity" which he believed had "disabled the idea of democratic citizenship" could be overcome (Etherington, "Instrumentalising" 127). The intention of the orchestra was not to find a political solution to conflict in the Middle East, although Said did believe that politics had become ineffectual in resolving divisions, but rather to foster the individual understanding necessary to the formation of a post-colonial critical consciousness that would recognize the extraordinary and "bewildering interdependence of our [global] times" (Said, "The Clash").¹³⁴ The orchestra provided "a metaphor quite removed from politics," one that could demonstrate the way differences can co-exist peacefully, in the same way orchestras play many different notes and still produce harmony; "Music then became the common framework, the abstract language of harmony" (McKenzie np). Though criticised as an idealistic vision of music's "redemptive quality"¹³⁵ the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra is a useful example of how Said sought to rethink the

132 Said's use of music as a form of public intellectualism flowed from his belief that the critical theory that underpinned the "universal framework of comparative literature" had become limited (Etherington, "Instrumentalising" 125).

133 Said and Barenboim brought together young Arab and Israeli musicians to form an orchestra and participate in a cultural program held in the Weimar Republic and which celebrated the 250th anniversary of the birth of German writer Johann Wolfgang Goethe. The experiment was based upon Goethe's "West-East Divan" poems which is a celebration of Islamic culture.

134 This was an effort to find an alternative to both Francis Fukuyama's *End of History* and Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*.

135 Ben Etherington argued that Said's earlier critical work was eclipsed by his "pan-idealistic sense of music's redemptive capacity" (126).

intellectual as a cultural translator who worked as an agent for moving past the distrust of other cultures that had become “endemic to modernity and very dangerous,” and to assert the individual citizen as the site of political and social reform (Barenboim and Said 14).

Said’s search for common ground was amplified after the rise of global terrorism, which led him to fear that the focus upon religious and political differences would foster a “triumphalism and xenophobia” (*Humanism* 137) that would make real Samuel Huntington’s prediction of a *Clash of Civilizations*. Said believed that a community of civilizations was possible. It could emerge from a commitment to humanism, understood as a realisation that the freedom and rights of the individual also entails the freedom and rights of the other. Thus public intellectualism was a search to construct “fields of coexistence rather than fields of battle” and required a dedication to the values of equality because peace cannot exist without it (*Humanism* 141).

For Said humanism was inherently democratic and associated with “participatory citizenship,” and its goal was to make “more things available for critical scrutiny” in the name of “emancipation and human Enlightenment” (*Humanism* 22). Most importantly, Said argued, the essence of humanism in a globalised community is to *understand*,¹³⁶ which implicitly requires a critical thinking that opens up new possibilities and that is part of an ethos committed to a “continuous process of self-understanding and self-realisation” (*Humanism* 26). It should be noted that this does not differ significantly from Foucault’s belief that a “critical ontology of ourselves” in which the “critique of what we are us is one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them” (*Ethics* 319).

136 Said also linked humanism to understanding and he described humanism as “the use of one’s mind historically and rationally for the purposes of reflective understanding” and to move beyond the “polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us” and open up fields of struggle (“Orientalism 25 Years Later”).

The Case of David Hicks

It is clear that both Foucault and Said affirmed the critical, political and ethical functions of the contemporary public intellectual, and, though Foucault expressed his commitment in terms of critique and ethics and Said through a reinvented humanism that asserted freedom, justice and equity as a part of civic wisdom, both theorists made the individual citizen the site of social renewal. The role of citizen activism in shaping the ability of contemporary intellectual formations to challenge systems of power was evident in the David Hicks case, which saw institutionally-situated intellectuals using specific technical knowledge engage in the public domain in order to mobilise the Australian community on the grounds of justice.

David Hicks was a disaffected young South Australian who had trained with al-Qaida and had been arrested while fighting for the Taliban in Afghanistan.¹³⁷ He was subsequently handed over to the United States military and incarcerated in the Guantanamo Bay Military Facility for seven years without trial. The violation of his legal and human rights led to a sustained public campaign by public intellectuals and activists who sought to mobilise public support amongst the Australian community electorate by revealing the implications of the government's unethical behaviour.

During the seven year campaign to obtain justice for Hicks a range of institutionally-situated lawyers, journalists, academics and writers used their technical knowledge to critique the specific truth claims of power. These intellectuals did not speculate about the guilt or otherwise of Hicks. Instead, they engaged in a critique of the technologies and tactics deployed by the United States and Australian governments to assign guilt and misrepresent reality. By

¹³⁷ After being captured by local warlords and sold to the Northern Alliance — a US backed multi-ethnic, political and military alliance in Afghanistan that supports moderate Islam and is opposed to the Taliban — for a bounty of US \$1000, he was allegedly tortured by the US Military, and subsequently incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay for five years without being charged. Following pressure from the international legal fraternity, who expressed concern at the disregard for Hick's human rights, the mainstream Australian community eventually became concerned about the implications of this lack of justice. Finally in 2007, six years after his arrest, Hicks was charged with aiding terrorism and a United States military commission convicted him after he pled guilty. Sentenced to seven years in prison, Hicks was repatriated back to Australia where he served the remaining nine months of his sentence in a South Australian prison. He was released in December 2007.

identifying the political interests, questionable tactics and legal violations entailed in the Hicks' case, intellectuals exposed the way in which Hicks was denied basic human rights, not because of any proven wrong doing, but because he was a signifier of broader fears about terrorism.

The campaign to save Hicks was, by necessity, a public campaign primarily because Hicks had been used as a political tool by the Australian Federal Government to show the electorate — and the Americans — their tough stance on terrorism. Thus lawyers were required to not only fight within institutional legal and political systems to free Hicks, but to also enter into partnerships with other technical specialists in order to engage with the public. Not unlike the Dreyfus Affair more than one hundred years earlier, intellectuals recognised that Hicks' future would be determined, not just in a court of law but also in the court of public opinion. Moreover, they recognised that they could only legitimate their stand against formal authority by mobilising citizens to publicly express their concerns at the abrogation by their duly-elected government of an individual citizen's human and legal rights. By publicly highlighting the unethical and duplicitous practices of power, intellectuals managed to transform the early dominant public perception of Hicks as a radical terrorist into a perception of him as a symbol of the moral corruption of western governments pursuing an illegal war.

Central to the success of the Hicks' campaign to mobilise citizens to action was the need to expose how the Hicks' case had become subject to political expediency and the occasion for public posturing rather than an opportunity for the expression of authentic concerns about his rights or compliance with any notions of justice. Further, intellectuals needed to demonstrate how the words freedom and justice had been manipulated and corrupted in order to further institutional goals. The United States and Australian governments had publicly legitimated their war on terror and subsequent invasion of Iraq upon the grounds they were defending and preserving the western way of life and bringing its goals of freedom, justice and equality to a tyrannical country. This is the basis upon which they differentiated themselves from Islam and justified their invasion of Iraq. Yet, in the case of Hicks, both the Australian and the

United States governments clearly violated their own social values and ethical commitments to the rule of law. Intellectuals, therefore, used their specific knowledge of the law to emphasise the implications of this action for other citizens and in doing so assumed the mantle of the public intellectual. This strategy eventually gained traction because it played into a contemporary suspicion and cynicism about governments and authority.

It must be conceded, however, that intellectuals initially were slow to obtain support for Hicks, primarily because his arrest was wedged between the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers and the subsequent 2003 invasion of Iraq. These events created a climate of fear and uncertainty that saw the Australian public cautious about supporting someone labelled a terrorist by their own government. Progress, however, was made with the media exposé in 2004 and 2005 of Abu Ghraib,¹³⁸ which showed that torture was used routinely by the US intelligence community. This exposé helped to raise doubts about the credibility of the US's actions, and soon after the photos of tortured detainees were released world-wide, the United States proposed the introduction of the *Detainee Treatment Act 2005*. Bush declared this legislation would show the world that the United States did not use torture. However, as Alfred McCoy in his June 2006 article in *The Monthly* noted, the act was, in fact, a mirage because it allowed torture techniques to be deployed by the US Military against the inmates of Guantanamo Bay, which had been declared non-US territory and therefore not subject to the provisions of the act. McCoy went onto forensically detail the torture tactics deployed against prisoners incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay, and he painted a picture of Hicks mentally crumbling after eight months of solitary confinement, sensory deprivation and psychological abuse.

In the same article McCoy revealed that the use of torture to interrogate prisoners had been condemned by the legal professions of the United States, Australia, Britain and Germany, and the European Parliament, as well as earning

138 Alfred McCoy meticulously detailed the stress positions, the psychological abuse, isolation, sensory deprivation and the beatings that transformed Guantanamo Bay base into "an ad hoc behavioral laboratory, and its inmates into involuntary subjects for human experimentation that refined the CIA's psychological torture paradigm" ("The Outcast").

the condemnation of former US President's Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. McCoy explained that the British House of Lords rejected the use of torture as an "unqualified evil" in December 2005 and the United Nations Human Rights Commission had attacked the United State's treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay as torture and called for the facility's closure ("The Outcast"). Despite the lengthy list of countries and organisations who condemned the United States position, the Australian Federal Government left Hicks lingering in Guantanamo Bay and continued to support the US and to abide by the terms imposed on Hicks. According to one of Hicks' US attorneys, Joshua Dratel, this agreement demonstrated an extraordinary "surrender of Australia's national sovereignty" ("The Outcast").

Another tactic deployed by the intellectuals campaigning for Hicks' human rights was to reveal the wide divisions within the United States administration over the treatment of Hicks. To this end the refusal by Bush ally and Republican Senator John McCain, to pass the *Detainee's Act* was widely circulated. When being pressured by his colleagues, McCain, who had himself been tortured during the Vietnam War, unconsciously invoked Foucault's ideal of the ethical being when he insisted that it is "not about who they are. It is about who we are" ("Defence" 38). Others felt similarly. Former US former secretary of state Colin Powell also noted that the discarding of the provisions of the Geneva Convention would cost America "the moral basis of our fight against terrorism" and make it impossible "to remind our soldiers of our moral obligations with respect to those in our custody" ("Defence" 39).

Yet, these concerns were effectively marginalised by the growing tension between Pentagon neoconservatives, the State Department and the military. The Pentagon argued — without the least bit of irony — that the war on terror was an attack on the foundations of western civilisations and this fight to the death over the American way of life legitimated the suspension of human rights and the institution of Executive power.¹³⁹ In contrast, the Judge Advocate General (JAG), who provided legal advice to the United States military, objected

139 This decision would have placed the President above the law.

to Hicks' incarceration, claiming his treatment was a violation of the Geneva Convention and the rule of law.¹⁴⁰

Intellectuals also sought to mobilise Australian citizens to action through appeals to nationalism. They did this by arguing that Howard's abandonment of Hicks was a violation of the nation's traditional values of solidarity, egalitarianism and communitarism. Furthermore, Howard's failure to protect one of its own citizens in order to demonstrate solidarity with another country's increasingly questionable objectives challenged the idea of Australia as an independent sovereign nation capable of making a stand on behalf of one of its citizens.¹⁴¹ As a former British colony that prides itself on its tradition of anti-authoritarianism, this appeal to the idea of an independent Australia sought to embroider into the Hicks' case the divisions created over the ongoing battle for an Australian Republic. McCoy sought to drive home this point by emphasising the actions of Australian Prime Minister John Howard, who, declaring he had no sympathy for Hicks, handed Hicks over to the United States once he realised the Australian could not be charged under any Australian laws.¹⁴² In contrast, the British government brought their nine nationals home.

The Australian government's lack of action in protecting one of its citizens was thrown into sharp relief by the actions of Australia's legal profession, which almost from the outset, demonstrated a strong, politically bi-partisan unity in their opposition to the Federal government's actions toward Hicks.¹⁴³ The Law Institute of Victoria had argued in 2003 that, contrary to legal advice provided

140 The Judge Advocate General is the legal services arm of the US Military and provides legal advice as well as prosecutes violations of the military law including the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

141 The persistence of John Howard in leaving Hicks in the hands of the United States was linked by John Pilger in a *New Statesman* article published on 5 March 2007 to Australia's subordinate colonial past which led the nation's leaders to seek legitimacy from larger and more influential imperial powers.

142 The Law Institute of Victoria had argued in 2003 that Hicks could indeed be prosecuted under the Foreign Incursions and Recruitment Act but this advice was disputed by Federal Attorney General Phillip Ruddock.

143 Though Hicks' cause had been picked by politically left civil libertarians and GetUp!, the Australian counsel for Hicks was Liberal party member and lawyer David McLeod. Indeed, he had replaced former Indigenous Activist and Lawyer Stephen Kenny because he was considered more palatable to the government. McLeod explained in an interview in the *Weekend Australian Magazine* that Hicks supporters had begun a information and publicity campaign targeting politicians and the media. McLeod was unapologetic and insisted that the public campaign was critical because Hicks was caught up in a "political process not a judicial one" (qtd. in Cameron 20). The campaign therefore had to look for ways to engage with the broader community, rather than just special interest groups.

to the then-Attorney-General Philip Ruddock, Hicks could be tried in Australia. Two years and many media releases later, the Law Council of Australia wrote an open letter of protest to the Prime Minister expressing outrage at Hicks' treatment and his ongoing denial of justice. The letter was signed by all fifteen of the nation's law societies and bar associations.

While the Australian legal profession, together with the online activist group GetUp! had mobilised early in defence of Hicks, it took a few years of public campaigning to raise similar concerns amongst Australian citizens. It was, however, in 2006, as Hicks' entered his fifth year of incarceration without recourse to due legal process that his predicament started to be of broader public concern. The basic unfairness of Hicks' treatment became indisputable and Chas Savage captured the shift in public sentiment in his *Griffith Review* article when he wrote that Hicks may have been "reckless, superficial, and fickle" but his legal rights were not diminished by his nature, and that the US assertion of a wrong doing did not justify "indefinite detention, cruel punishment or slow justice administered by way of a kangaroo court" (*Lives of the Australian Undead* 109).

The changing sentiment towards Hicks in Australia was aided by the decision by the United States Supreme Court in June 2006 that the military tribunals convened by Bush to hear the case were illegal. Following closely this decision were further revelations of Hicks' deteriorating mental and physical health and details of the inhumane conditions to which he was subject.¹⁴⁴ Within three months of the Supreme Court decision, GetUp!'s online petition to bring David Hicks home, which had been launched in 2005, increased from 7,000 to 43,000 signatures, clearly demonstrating the potency of the tactic of engaging with the public.

Intellectuals throughout late 2006 kept up the public pressure on the government. Public marches were held around the nation, petitions were

¹⁴⁴ According to Alfred McCoy, Hicks had been treated by Americans to "10 hour torture sessions, shackled and blindfolded, which were marked by kicking, beatings with rifle butts, punching about the head and torso, death threats and gunpoint and anal penetration with objects. Donald Rumsfeld also approved 16 new torture techniques for the inmates of Guantanamo Bay including stress positions for four hours, isolation, sensory deprivation, hooding, prolonged 20 hours of interrogation, wet towel and dripping water to mimic suffocation."

presented to politicians and journalists increasingly expressed sympathy with his plight. Gradually the perception of Hicks as the “worst of the worst,”¹⁴⁵ began to shift and he was transformed from brutal terrorist to naive and foolish young man. According to Guy Rundle, this transformation was helped along inadvertently by the government’s own domestic campaign to celebrate Australian values, including mateship. Rundle argued that Howard used the term instrumentally as a technology to reconstruct civil attachments. However, in the process of glorifying this value he highlighted his own inadequate conduct, and failed to appreciate that Australians had begun to develop a sense of sympathy for Hicks.

Intellectuals sought to build on this sympathy and further efforts were made to humanise the young Australian. Hicks’ US Counsel Major Michael Mori became an advocate for his client and emerged as a white knight prepared to take on the unethical behaviour of his own government in the name of justice. Mori visited Australia and after addressing various Law Societies appeared on Andrew Denton’s *Enough Rope* to speak of the man behind the detainee. Others began to speak out publicly and in October 2006 two of Australia’s leading religious leaders, Catholic Archbishop George Pell and Anglican Archbishop Peter Jensen, expressed concern at the delay in justice. On 10 November 2006 Major Mori addressed a meeting of the State Attorney-Generals’ in an effort to recruit support from the State Labor Governments, and in mid-November GetUp! launched an online appeal and raised \$150,000 in three days. In December Alexander Downer received a petition of 50,000 signatures and Newspoll revealed that 71 percent of Australians and two thirds of Liberal voters wanted Hicks brought home.

It is apparent that one of the reasons intellectuals were increasingly able to mobilise the general population to action was that Hicks’ plight became implicated in the nation’s domestic culture wars. The Government’s apparent disregard for Hicks’ legal rights echoed a similar erosion of Australia’s domestic civil liberties, which had been limited, largely without protest, since Howard’s introduction of the *Anti-Terrorism Act* of 2005, which provided for the arrest

¹⁴⁵ Donald Rumsfeld described the inmates of Guantanamo Bay in this manner.

without charge, and detention without trial, of Australian citizens. It was Richard Flanagan who in 2006 made this link between the erosion of Australian's citizen rights and Hicks in his book *The Unknown Terrorist*, which he dedicated to David Hicks because he thought "in his story was a possible future for all Australians" (*Writing the Unknown Terrorist*).¹⁴⁶ Flanagan argued that the Hicks case was illustrative of a country gone mad in which endless lies had been told about Muslims, terrorists, refugees and our own freedoms and liberties in order "to protect power and money" and "no one seemed to care" (*Politics, Writing, Love*). For Flanagan the issue was about the erosion of public life under Howard and the growth in fear and hate, and he argued that "what joins us is always more important than what divides us, and that the price of division is ultimately the obscenity of oppression" (*Writing the Unknown Terrorist*).

These same fears that western human rights could be so summarily dispensed with by a democratically elected government were also echoed in a letter sent to John Howard on 3 June 2006 by the International Commission of Jurists (IJC) who declared the imprisonment and unfair trial of Hicks an "affront to international legal standards" and illegal under international law.¹⁴⁷ IJC President John Dowd wrote that the US's violation of the fundamental principles of human dignity and respect for human rights, "which was the shared heritage [and values] of the civilised world," posed just as great a threat to the rule of law as terrorism.

By early 2007 Hicks had become not only a sympathetic public figure, but also a political embarrassment and looming electoral issue to the government. This was reinforced by David Marr's January column in the *Sydney Morning Herald* where he noted that there was an "extraordinary consensus" across all political

¹⁴⁶ In a 23 November 2006 interview on the ABC's Radio National Flanagan said that the Australian government's refusal to do anything for David Hicks "effectively endorses the ongoing illegal imprisonment of an Australian citizen for over four years in an institution the name of which has become a byword for evil, an Australian citizen who has been found guilty of no crime, who by his own testament has been tortured and anally raped, and for whom nothing will be done by our government because of its politics. The question at the heart of this novel is this: who of us might be next?" (*Writing the Unknown Terrorist*).

¹⁴⁷ The signatories of the letter included Australian academics, lawyers and barristers as well as Amnesty International, Civil Liberties Council, World Vision and Human Rights Law Resource Centre of Victoria.

parties, including 78 percent of Labor, 74 percent of Democrats and 67 percent of Liberal voters that wanted to see Hicks brought home. The shift amongst liberal voters saw the Attorney-General Phillip Ruddock, who had been largely silent on Hicks, begin to publicly defend the government's action. In an article in *The Age* on 7 January Ruddock explained that the Australian government had visited Hicks on 17 occasions and spent more than \$300,000 on Australian legal consultants. The government had also sought and gained assurances that Hicks would not face the death penalty and that, if he was found guilty, he would be allowed to serve his prison term in Australia. Ruddock also said Hicks had not been brought home because the US had said that the detainee must be prosecuted first. He went onto dispute the commonly held view that the new military commission to be established under the *Military Commissions Act* (2007) to try Hicks was illegal.¹⁴⁸

The government's protestations came too late and a month later Julian Burnside in the February 2007 issue of *Arena* thrust home the point by observing that not only had Hicks been denied the basic justice offered to even the most vicious criminals but also he had been denied the protection offered under Geneva Convention to prisoners of war. Burnside reiterated that the government's behaviour was unethical and contrasted the extreme treatment of Hicks with the relatively minor final charges. Burnside wrote: "[n]one of the things he is alleged to have done involved a breach of Australian, US or Afghan law at the time" (34). Moreover, the new charges "providing material support for terrorism" and "attempted murder in violation of the law of war" hinged upon the assumption that Hicks should have known that the US Government in 1999 in their *Immigration and National Act* had declared al Qaeda a terrorist organisation (34). Burnside wrote that Hicks had not actually killed anyone and at the time he was apprehended Hicks was working for the Taliban, which was the legitimate government of Afghanistan, while the Northern Alliance was, in fact, an invading army. Burnside further insisted that the military commission formed by the United States to try Hicks could not deliver a just decision primarily because it was prepared to receive hearsay evidence — which had

¹⁴⁸ He said that evidence obtained by torture was in fact banned and that the commission would proceed with the presumption of innocence.

been excluded under the western legal system for seven centuries — and evidence obtained by coercion (34).¹⁴⁹ President of the Law Council Tim Bugg made a similar argument in the *Law Society Journal* where he expressed exasperation with the Australian Government for its steadfast refusal to “take action to defend the rule of law and David Hicks’ fundamental right to a fair trial process” despite the fact that the United States had admitted that there was no evidence to prosecute Hicks for war crimes (51).

By mid 2007 specific intellectuals had successfully turned Hicks into a platform for those increasingly disgruntled with Howard and unhappy with Australia’s involvement in the Iraq war. Both the United States and the Australian government were anxious for the Hicks’ issue to be resolved expediently, and in March the United States rewrote the rules of the military tribunals and, after gaining congressional support, Hicks was finally tried. However, even as the end was in sight and Hicks was brought back to Australia to serve the remaining nine months of his sentence, the recriminations continued. Gerard Henderson in an article in *The Sydney Institute* published on 1 June 2007 blamed the delay in processing Hicks’ case on his legal advisors who, Henderson insisted, had the ability to plea bargain on behalf of Hicks since 2003. They had dragged out the process, he insisted, in an effort to put pressure on Bush and Howard. Henderson damned what he called the overblown rhetoric of the Hicks’ campaign and scoffed at the idea that Hicks’ trial could be compared to the “Stalin’s show trials.”¹⁵⁰ Henderson cited a comment by Lawyer and Aboriginal Activist Noel Pearson who had argued in the June 2007 *Griffith Review* that the whole Hicks’ case had become an exercise in hyperbole. Pearson had observed, “I have watched with awe how the progressive lobby turned al Qaeda recruit David Hicks into a relentless, irrecusably and finally triumphant national cause — from Taliban terrorist to latter-day Nelson Mandela of Guantanamo Bay.”

149 This was a view also supported by Lex Lasry QC and Law Council observer of the David Hicks military commission, who argued that there was no way Hicks could receive a fair from the tribunal and that the Australian government had either been “negligent . . . or embarrassingly ineffective” (“Negligent or Just Ineffective?”).

150 The comment was made by Robert Richter QC.

Pearson concluded that in Australia “it is easier to sell a terrorist than an Australian Aborigine subjected to ongoing racial discrimination” (49).¹⁵¹

The Hicks’ saga was summarised in a book by ABC National Security Correspondent Leigh Sales who wrote that the debate surrounding Hicks had been unhelpful because it has been polarised around two political positions: either Hicks was a terrorist and, therefore, deserved what happened to him or Hicks was sacrificed “because the Prime Minister does the USA’s bidding” (5). While suggesting the truth lay somewhere in the middle, she concluded that Australia’s treatment of Hicks was the result of a systemic failure that revealed “layer after layer of incompetence” (241), gross ineptitude, and a moral expediency that ultimately “severely undermined the democratic values” upon which Australia is built (244). Gerry Simpson, who reviewed Sales’ book succinctly, summed it up when he wrote that the treatment of Hicks emerged out of “bureaucratic inertia, moral vacuity and political failure” (“Review Detainee 002”). He suggests that this describes Karl Marx’s nightmare of modern society and the “rule by nobody,” which is what enables the triumph of what Hannah Arendt calls the “banality of evil” (qtd. in “Review Detainee 002”). Against this vision of a nameless, faceless bureaucratic and systematised world in which evil can emerge simply by doing nothing, the Hicks case and the work of the intellectuals who intervened on his behalf becomes more significant. It shows how public intellectuals have adapted to a networked, bureaucratised world and can oppose the diffuse and invisible power embedded in systems to undertake their primary contemporary role of mobilising citizens to action.

Lawyers mobilised based upon their own personal ethical commitments to notions of justice and in critiquing power they developed the strategic knowledge necessary to produce a determined political outcome — the trial and return to Australia of Hicks. These lawyers did not stand outside the issue, like universal intellectuals, but were invested in the outcome of the struggles. Furthermore, they did not exclude citizens from the process. Rather they used their specific knowledge of the law to show citizens how each individual was

151 The Hicks case also obscured the Barwon 13 case in which 13 Melbourne Muslim men were arrested under the provisions of the *Anti-Terrorism Act* and have been held without charge for more than 12 months.

implicated in the outcome of the Hicks' case. The lawyers as specific intellectuals and working collectively with other intellectuals in the media and universities sought to show citizens how they could exert political power through their own personal ethical choices.

A Synthesised Intellectual

It can be argued that Foucault's critique of power/personal ethics and Said's humanism, whilst widely different theories about the operation of society, reached an agreement in the Hicks case, which affirmed the idea of the critical and conscious citizen as the legitimating ethical grounds for the public intellectual's political action. The idea of the citizen has been at the centre of public intellectual debates since the late nineteenth century. However, just as the idea of the public intellectual is historically contingent, so is the notion of the citizen. Indeed the concept of citizenship has been hotly contested as a part of the culture wars. Under Howard citizenship was narrowly defined as the right to vote and the focus was upon emphasising citizen responsibilities and duties (Hudson and Kane 1). Howard sought to foster "a core unity in a diverse society rather than promoting critical and participatory citizenship" (Ewins 102). Thus it was the "trappings of civic behaviour" that were emphasised, "rather than a focus on cultivating the necessary values in order to be able to respond responsibility to civic duties" (Arcodia 4).¹⁵² This compares with a more Left-wing approach, which uses citizenship discourse to advocate for legal human rights, promote critical thinking, and present ethical and social concerns to government (Hudson and Kane 1).

Despite these various constructions of citizenship it is clear from the Hicks' case that citizens cannot passively rely upon elected governments, which are subject to political opportunism, pragmatism and self-interested expediency, to protect social values. Indeed, the great intellectual success of the Hicks' campaign was it showed that all Australians were implicated in the unethical behaviour of the

¹⁵² The *Australian Citizenship Act* of 2007 describes citizenship as a "common bond involving reciprocal rights and obligations, uniting all Australians whilst respecting their diversity."

United States and Australian governments, and that citizens must all therefore share the ethical responsibility to take action despite a pervasive cynicism towards political and civic structures. The campaign illustrated how the contemporary public intellectual is an activist who must move others to action in defence of social values based not upon the intellectual's authority, but rather upon the intellectual's ability to foster the citizen's own critical consciousness of their own ethical commitments, responsibilities and obligations in protecting the rights and freedoms that sustain their own roles as democratic citizens. Moreover, the citizen acts upon the basis of values that are not considered universals but rather as the conditions necessary to sustain freedom.

Unfortunately, as the Hicks's case has demonstrated, activism in the complex bureaucratised and systemised interdependence of the networked world is not easy. It calls for a vastly varied and adaptive form of intellectualism, one that is not fixed but fluid and that produces "intellectual performances on many fronts, in many places [and in] many styles" (Said, *Humanism* 140). This form of intellectualism encompasses an intellectual entity that resembles Lyotard's "svelte" or mindful intellectual,¹⁵³ Zygmunt Bauman's interpreter and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's "conceptual personae," which is one-and-at-the-same-time a critical entity, full of contradictory impulses and aware of its own situatedness in addressing problems.¹⁵⁴ It is this collective form of intellectualism which saw writer Richard Flanagan, journalist David Marr, activists from GetUp! and lawyers like Lex Lasry, Julian Burnside and Michael Mori — among others — work in their own specific locations to address their respective audiences in order reinforce the implications of the violation of Hicks

153 Interestingly Lyotard in his analysis of the intellectual also described their function as "svelte" which he described as the Zen term meaning "wakefulness" (28).

154 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari theorised the conceptual personae in response to the failure of philosophy to engage with specific problems. The role of the conceptual personae is therefore the exploration of the multiplicity of relationships, self-interest, historical conditions, political agendas and ideas inherent in any concept. By elucidating how these ideas/interests operate it is possible to show that concepts are made by history, and as such, can be reconstructed. Importantly conceptual personae show that thought can have "antipathetic inspiration and contradictory animation" and that they are not leaders, teachers or ideologists but rather they signify "immanent movements across doxographies and culture" (Curthoys and Ganguly "Introduction" 14).

human rights. In other words they assumed Etzioni's temporary accreditation of public intellectual.

The campaign to release Hicks showed that intellectuals were well aware of the power of the media and the nature of modern political mobilisation. The collection of lawyers, journalists, soldiers, activists, writers operated like an informal social movement bound together by a common goal and driven by a commitment to particular ethical values. Pierre Bourdieu wrote of how resistance against modern systems of power calls for this form of collective and varied action, in response to the complexity of interests now inherent in public discourse and decision-making. He describes collective intellectualism as the drawing together of specific intellectuals — researchers, practitioners and activists — into critical autonomous networks, which relentlessly critique power, define the topics, determine the outcomes of reflection and action and lead to “novel forms of mobilisation and action” (*Firing* 14). Bourdieu argued that this form of collective action is particularly necessary because politics has moved “further and further away from the citizenry” (14). Indeed, it is collective intellectualism that is the basis of global social movements, which have been described by Kevin McDonald as “networks and flows of communication, action and experience” designed to rethink existing frameworks (5). It is these collective social movements characterised by fluid social aggregations that transgress existing social divisions and political allegiances. Such social movements have been providing the new spaces for the emerging intellectual practices for some time, according to Ron Eyerman (10). These sites produce intellectualism as a dynamic, fluid and “situated social practice” (6) that expresses collective identities based upon issues and ethical commitments and that forms new sites of resistance and generates and disseminates the new knowledge most likely to bring about social change. In this context the role of the intellectual in social movements, according to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, is to identify the “discursive conditions for the emergence of a collective action” and turn oppression into a site of contest (qtd in Kennedy 22). As the Hicks' case illustrates this requires the intellectual to be activist and participant.

A New Ethics

The Hicks case showed that within this historical epoch in which knowledge is understood as contingent and partial, and power as institutionally pervasive, resistance is possible through both the critical analysis of truth claims and the creative re-territorialisation of concepts. The latter extends to ideas about social values, including those of freedom, equality and justice, which must be perpetually interrogated as concepts that need to be remade within the struggle between various historical traditions and contested contemporary realities. Thus, contemporary conditions have invoked a public intellectual entity that operates as a combination of Foucault's specific intellectual, Said's humanist activist and Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual personae who assembles and disassembles concepts in order to facilitate the citizen's engagement in a shifting and adapting public domain.

The Hicks case affirms that the public intellectual function is not ineffective as could be concluded from the Australian History Wars. Rather, the Hicks' campaign showed how it is possible for intellectuals to transcend their institutionalised location and engage with the public to create bipartisan support for justice, freedom and equality, understood as the civic wisdom that best maintains individual freedom and protects civil society. This is particularly important since the Hicks' case has made evident the extent of abuses of institutionalised power and the way in which global human rights issues and government responsibilities and accountability need to be rethought, particularly in the context of the new forms of conflict and a heightened fear of the other. There is no doubt that the value of the Hicks' case was in visibly demonstrating democratic systems of government and a United Nations human rights charter do not guarantee democratic human rights.

It is also evident that, despite the historical reformations of the role of the intellectual, the public intellectual's functions remain consistent by virtue of the entity's relationship with the public. Hicks' specific intellectuals undertook Kant's three core functions. They critiqued and problematised a specific issue of justice and human rights in the public domain as part of a commitment to understanding the interplay of power and identifying the limitations of existing

concepts in addressing contemporary problems. It could be argued that they engaged in the process in the hope that the citizen could serve as the site of social and political change. Moreover, the intellectual did so because they were driven by a belief that “understanding and self-realisation” can lead to change (Said, *Humanism* 26) and that they could maintain a commitment to the idea of freedom, even though they were specifically situated within institutions.

In summary, Foucault articulated a view of the intellectual based upon how power constructs the individual subject and argued that a contingent freedom was available through personal ethical self-fashioning technologies, deployed upon the assumption that subjects are created in relationship with others. Said also constructed the intellectual as an ethical practice, but he more strongly advocated for the “voyage into the other” as a way of transgressing entrenched divisions. It was the focus upon the other that informed his specifications for the intellectual function, which included finding sites of peaceful coexistence by uncovering forgotten pasts and deploying critique *and* imagination in the renegotiation of new relationships and perspectives. From the Hicks case it is clear that Foucault and Said’s positions can provide complementary ways of reconciling individual subjectivity with the other through the fostering of a critical consciousness that enables the recognition that individual freedom can only be assured by the freedom of others. Further this freedom can be understood not as a universal but as pragmatic civic wisdom inductively produced across time and societies. The fostering of individual critical self-consciousness will also help address the political challenges confronting contemporary society. It is critical consciousness that will enable the citizen to rise above the “prevailing mediocrity of political decisions” (Goldfarb 5), the lack of deliberative debate, and the public confusion that currently characterises the public domain in western societies. It is the individual citizen who maintains an allegiance to the ideas of freedom and equality, at a time when systems actively worked against these conditions, who will continue to justify the intellectual’s political intervention in society.

Conclusion

AN ETHIC OF HOPE

This biography has investigated the life of the concept of the public intellectual and its changing role since the Enlightenment. Reviewing the multiplicity of traditions and the interplay of conflicting interests and ideas associated with intellectual formations that are known as the public intellectual make it possible to gain a clearer understanding of the public intellectual as a historically produced and contingent entity whose operation cannot be simplified.

Moreover, the genealogy shows how the entity has adapted across the centuries to the changing conditions of the public domain and political society, taking on a variety of roles from proponent of reason, developer of modernist systems of thought, educator, ideologist, theorist, social critic and activist. The history of the intellectual also shows that, despite these changing roles, the intellectual remains connected to an idea of truth and a belief that the individual freedom of the citizen is best protected by civil society. It is this bifurcated commitment to both preserving the conditions of civil society and the protecting the rights of the individual that form the basis of the critical and moral/ethical obligations of the intellectual to society and creates them as political actors and public entities.

Understanding that the public intellectual is linked to civil society and the public domain, and thus an intrinsically emergent and adaptive entity, makes it possible to conclude that the late twentieth-century talk of an intellectual crisis and decline did not, in fact, signal the death of the public intellectual. Indeed, this research has shown that the talk of the decline has been around since before the French Revolution when Voltaire called upon the men of letters to resist withdrawing into the universities. Similarly the threat of the intellectual crisis and talk of a cultural decline returned at the end of the nineteenth century amidst the growing failure of reason to reconcile the diverse complexities of emerging modern mass society. It arose again when Julien Benda expressed fears after the First World War that intellectuals had sold out their divine

obligations to nationalism and political ideology. And it emerged again with the institutionalisation of knowledge in the middle of the twentieth century when C. Wright Mills expressed fears that intellectuals had withdrawn from their public responsibilities. Similar thoughts were expressed in France in the late 1970s and in the United States in the late 1980s as a part of the shifts in technology and the institutionalisation of knowledge. It is clear, then, that the trope of an intellectual crisis is deployed whenever there is social change and does not, in fact, herald a death.

It must be conceded, however, that the talk of the intellectual crisis took on a special urgency at the end of the twentieth century primarily because developments in technology had expanded and diversified the public sphere. The resulting confusion saw debates about role of intellectuals increasingly linked in the West to fears for the future of representational democracy. These fears had started to creep into the public discourse in France during in the 1960s and by the 1980s these anxieties had escalated to concerns that politics was moving away from the people and that it was no longer possible to disguise the decline in deliberative public debate or maintain the myth of genuine citizen engagement. Theorists argued that public debate no longer took place amongst politically engaged citizens but was a part of a media-orchestrated competition between rival political parties and vested interests. As a result, western political societies became characterised by an ongoing suspicion and distrust of institutionalised systems of power, and this extended to a distrust of public intellectuals, who had become implicated through their role as institutionalised knowledge workers. The disenchantment with political society, its existing ideologies and typical players also appeared to intensify as governments increasingly and openly deployed culture as a part of ideological warfare. These wars can be seen as an effort by power, in the face of an increasingly incoherent and divided public domain, to appropriate the function of the intellectual and their role in reproducing particular social realities, in order to reassert dominant values and speak for an imagined mainstream. Indeed, it was the intellectual's ability to disseminate ideas and shape public opinion, and to give groups a coherent sense of themselves, that led them at the end of the twentieth

century to become weapons in the battle between the residual liberal and social democratic Left and the rising tidal wave of Conservatism.

An institutionalised form of public intellectualism emerged from these battles and as the sensationalised media coverage amplified the conflict, other social actors and debates appeared to be marginalised. Further, the polemical nature of the public discussions did little to re-engage citizens in deliberative debate. In Australia, the battles initially joined over issues like Australia's Indigenous past were designed to rethink past practices and issues of race as a way of creating a more inclusive and tolerant nation facing a global future. However, with the change in government in 1996 these debates became ideological clashes that degenerated into disputes over historical methodologies or the minutia of battles fought long ago. These struggles, whilst important in establishing credibility amongst academic researchers, increasingly seemed to have little relevance to the modern citizen struggling to understand the complex social and economic changes wrought by globalisation. Paradoxically, however, these fierce battles for control of the nation's intellectual life intensified mainstream media interest in intellectuals even at the same time the intellectual became more contested more than ever. Moreover, the heightened focus on particular types of adversarial and oppositional public intellectualism obscured the way in which intellectual practices were, in fact, adapting to contemporary circumstances. New forms of intellectualism operating in contingent and partial ways emerged. However, while opening up conversations with the past as a way of re-inventing the present, these forms of intellectualism, do not offer the same certitude that comes from other intellectual formations. They offer only a contingent truth as the basis for the preservation of a free and moral society.

It is not just truth that is reshaped by historical conditions. Freedom is no longer understood as just personal liberation but rather the protection of citizen rights from increasingly dominant forms of institutionalised systems of power. This shift in the understanding of freedom has affected the nature of social resistance and new forms of citizen resistance have opened up around the expression of social values and individual identities. Indeed the Hicks case shows the way in which public intellectuals, working within the contingency of late modernity

and the relativity of viewpoints, still managed to assert the rule of law as both the common standard that justified their political intervention and as the pre-eminent value upon which politically diverse citizens should take action. The Hicks' intellectuals created the consensus necessary for social change not by advocating for the liberation of society-at-large but by reclaiming the idea of freedom as the consciousness of how power regulates citizens. Thus intellectuals were able to promote individual action by the citizen as a self-fashioning ethical choice that when exercised validly resists systems of power, and as a hope that collective individual action can remake the world. It is a mode of work that acknowledges that freedom in contemporary society requires the individual subject to work upon itself as a way of developing the critical consciousness necessary to disassociate from the "intensification of power relations" (qtd. in Meranze 109) which imbues our cultural and political systems. In this way Kant's passive subject in need of guidance and leadership has been replaced by Foucault's independent self-fashioning ethical subject as the object of intellectual discourse.

For Foucault this shift necessarily calls for a critical consciousness that is also creative and where intellectuals bring "an idea to life" and "multiply, not judgements, but signs of existence" ("Masked Philosopher" 323). Foucault felt this form of intellectualism was particularly important during a time when everything was perceived to be "empty, desolate, uninteresting and unimportant" (324). Thirty years after Foucault made this observation, there is still widespread debate about the loss of social meaning, the absence of ideas, failing systems and the lack of hope — indeed it was this pervasive sentiment that partially inspired this research.¹⁵⁵

Foucault rejected the idea of a cultural decline, which he believed simply revealed that society had "inadequate means for thinking about everything that

155 George Becker has argued that the sense of cultural declinism can be traced to the Enlightenment which is based upon the idea that modern man can improve on the intellectual work of the Ancients. Becker suggests that it is the tension between the idea that society is in perpetual decay – which is a view that seeks to invalidate the idea of a modern society in perpetual progress and improvement – versus the idea that society goes through historical cycles, and thus modern man is removed from strict adherence to the authority of those who have gone before. It is this tension that shaped intellectual formations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

is happening" ("Masked Philosopher" 325). He also believed that the search for a new subjectivity, which would enable the recreation of the human subject and its relationship both with itself and with truth, offered a way beyond the idea of the stable subject, doctrinal knowledge and the imperative to "know thyself." These beliefs, he argued, had been the Enlightenment's wrong turn that had led to the contemporary intellectual cul de sac and the West's inability to challenge its own philosophical foundations even though they are clearly insufficient to explain contemporary society. Foucault was not deterred. He believed change was possible because there is "an infinity of things to know" and that people desire to learn and understand (327). Given these conditions, the public intellectual's role therefore becomes one of producing proof of life, proof that the world is not a cultural wasteland characterised by sterile thoughts and a depressing future. They are to operate as "intermediaries" between the mass of things to know and the thirst for knowledge that propels individuals in the journey towards creating a new subjectivity. Moreover, in this "age of curiosity," which Foucault argued heralded a "determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way; a passion for seizing what is happening now and what is disappearing and a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental" (325), the intellectual's role is not only to assist people in understanding how they are situated in society but also to enable individuals to "change at will" as a part of caring for the self (327). "To become someone other than what one is" is not only philosophy, according to Foucault (327), but also the fundamental role of the intellectual, and includes describing "that-which-is by making it appear as something that might not be, or that it might not be as it is" (*Critical Theory/Intellectual History* 36). This intellectual produces knowledge in the pursuit of freedom, but it is a freedom to displace and transform "frameworks of thinking" (*Masked* 327).

The Hicks' case is a useful illustration of how this transforming "frameworks of thinking" can be deployed to not only intervene politically in society even while the intellectual operates within existing systems, but to also change frameworks of thinking in a way that benefits all of society, not just the individual. The public intellectual, intervening in regard to a specific problem and within a particular

regime of truth, works to enable the critical and conscious citizen as the site of social renewal and reinvention. The public intellectuals involved in the Hicks' case did this by moving beyond simply producing normative narratives necessary to produce consensus or the expression of political judgements designed to incite change. Instead they sought to rethink inherited concepts, fixed ideas and ideologically manufactured differences that constrained Hicks and worked against his freedom. By placing the citizenry at the heart of their intellectual work these intellectuals restored the political role of the citizen as an accountability mechanism and in doing so they went beyond the limits of modernity, yet retained an association with the radical traditions of the Enlightenment which seeks to go beyond what J. B. Bury called the "authority of the dead" (qtd. in Becker 402).

Inclusive Sites

While this research has sought to show that the public intellectual deploys her critical, political and ethical functions to rethink and historicise existing concepts in the interests of creating the critically conscious citizen/self-fashioning subject, there are still complex issues shaping the operation of the contemporary public intellectual. Indeed, as a historically-contingent, political function, the role of the public intellectual also must be considered in the context of the complex webs of social and institutional relationships that enable their operation. This means that any reflection on the nature of the intellectual's contemporary role is contingent upon a consideration of the entity's relationship with what remains of Habermas' middle class public sphere and political domain. As discussed in Chapter Three this sphere historically and theoretically has served as a site of mediation between private citizens and power via critical public debate. In late modern society, however, while the idea of the public remains intact, it is in reality a "pale imitation" of its original ideas (Roberts and Crossley 2). The fundamental Kantian assumption that the public sphere is a site of critical citizenship and critical public debate that can hold power accountable must be reclaimed. The public domain now is riven with tensions and competition that expose the internal paradoxes of the

contemporary instantiation of the concept of the public domain and the citizen. The Hicks' case, and more recently the Julian Assange¹⁵⁶ case affirmed an ongoing public disgruntlement with institutionalised systems of power, which increasingly have become alienated from the citizenry. Deliberative democracy, which draws on Habermas' communicative theory, and which argues that binding standards can be produced by open discourse and argument, has been an effort to restore this connection. But the public space has been weakened in contemporary society in a number of ways. There not only appears to be a continuing lack of interest in existing party politics, but as well, public opinion seems mostly to be the effect of media-managed polls rather than the product of informed debate. That is, public spaces have been enfeebled by a largely uncritical media and the relentless production of ideology and, as the Assange case suggests, institutional power appears actively to work against the openness and transparency which are the necessary conditions for informed and engaged deliberative debate. Cornell West observed this shift in 2004 when he wrote that "escalating authoritarianism" has not only narrowed political dialogue but that citizens have given up being heard as the "sheer voice of naked power" dominates (qtd. in Lovink, *Zero* 29).

In this context intellectuals clearly have a role to play in expanding and creating new inclusionary spaces for public debate. Edward Said recognised this when he argued that the intellectual must be devoted to creating "fields of coexistence

156 Julian Assange is the Managing Director of the website Wikileaks, and in early December 2010 he released more than 200 highly confidential government documents on his website. He claimed that these documents had not been obtained via illegal hacking but rather had been leaked to him from organisational informants. As a result of the release of these documents Assange was attacked by the US Government, where Republican Senator Sarah Palin called for him to be assassinated. The Australian Prime Minister also condemned Assange's action, even though the Australian Federal Police found he had not broken any laws. The Assange case, just like the Hicks case, revealed that in an era of increasing apoliticism where there is little to distinguish between political ideologies, it is public issues that make visible the changing values of the public domain, and expose the growing dissonance between citizens and institutionalised power. In the Assange case the clash is between the publicly transparent and open culture of the web and the private spaces of government authority. The response by the Australian public to Assange's arrest indicates that there is great sympathy for his actions. There were public protests over his arrest staged in Melbourne and Sydney, and a Newspann poll published in *The Australian* on the 9th of December 2010 showed that 74 percent of Australians were opposed to the extradition of Assange to the United States. An ABC News Radio Poll also saw 88 percent of respondents indicate they did not think that the Australian government was acting "appropriately towards Assange" (*Julian Assange is Gillard's Hicks*). The case has also drawn interest from other public intellectuals. John Pilger and Michael Moore have posted bail for Assange, with Moore declaring that openness and transparency are amongst the few weapons available to the citizenry to "protect itself from the powerful and the corrupt" (*Michael Moore Posts Bail*).

rather than fields of battle” and that this required them to pursue equality and social justice because peace cannot exist without them (*Humanism* 141). John Frow also saw sites for public debate as critical to the function of the public intellectual but recognised that it would not be easy to find them and that they may appear like a “polyphony which might well sound like cacophony” (142). Moreover, Frow notes that this shift will raise difficult questions of “representation (who speaks for whom, when not all can speak) and of translation between languages with irreconcilable conceptual structures” (142). However, the intellectual’s political function and significance as a representative of an engaged citizenry relies upon an engagement with the public: this is the very grounds of their ethical role. Thus the public intellectual must continue its adaptation to the democratised and participatory public domain, and, while operating as Bauman’s interpreter and Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptual personae, they must do so, as Goldfarb has suggested, in such a way as to establish and protect an “autonomous non-partisan public space” (101).

The establishment of this space requires the intellectual to deploy critique as a part of fostering understanding, which Said argued is the essence of humanism¹⁵⁷ and which guides his belief that the fundamental intellectual function is to conduct a dialogue with other civilizations amidst the “seething discordance of unresolved notions” (*Humanism* 28) and to learn to live with the irreconcilable differences and the contingency of the modern experience and not be discouraged from going forward to find a solution. In a similar manner Robert Manne, who noted that the complex systems of knowledge have ended grand narratives, heroic intellectuals and made achievements smaller, also argued that public intellectualism is a conversation and not a theory. For Manne, humans change because they listen and talk with each other. Thus joining the conversation with a willingness to listen, to argue and to change constitutes a fundamental contemporary intellectual orthodoxy (*Speaking their Minds* 32).

¹⁵⁷ Said also linked humanism to understanding and he described humanism as “the use of one’s mind historically and rationally for the purposes of reflective understanding” and to move beyond the “polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us” and open up fields of struggle (*Counterpunch*, August 4, 2003).

Finding spaces for inclusive debate and sites of common existence, however, is difficult for a variety of reasons. Not least of which is the fact that capitalism in late modernity seems to have eroded the moral connections between people by reducing all relationships to marketforces. According to Clive Hamilton, this constructs the citizen as a competing subject rather than socially-connected being. Since it is the subject's relationship with others that both creates the subject as an ethical/moral being and defines the subject's identity, the erosion of the individual's relationships with others turns capitalism into a "form of coercion" that has led to the alienation of the individual not just from others but also from the self. This has created a form of "unfreedom" in which the citizen actively collaborates in their own "subordination" (*Freedom xi*).

At the same time the spread of global capitalism has amplified the instrumentalisation of humans, "universal" moral doctrines, which previously guided the subject's relationship with itself and with others, have given way to notions of individual ethical practices. Thus, a range of intellectuals, including Ghasson Hage, Raimond Gaita, Julian Burnside, Michael Kirby and Richard Flanagan, have sought to remind people that it is our relationships with each other that not only regulates society but also gives our lives meaning and purpose. These intellectuals write of the importance of love, compassion and kindness to creating stable, sustainable and hopeful communities, and in doing so subscribe to a form of intellectual labour that Said described as "the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for, and unquenchable interest in, the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a speciality, in caring for ideas and values" (qtd. in Biswas 124).

Another challenge to creating these more inclusive spaces was identified by Foucault who argued that the major problem is "[t]oo little: channels of communication that are too narrow, almost monopolistic, inadequate" (326). He argued that the "right to knowledge" needs to be available to all, not reserved for a particular category, and that subjects should be able to "exercise it constantly and in many different way" (326). Thus Foucault was arguing for the expansion of communication and he was not concerned about how this might

impact upon the idea of elite cultural hierarchies, which had once been so strenuously protected by intellectuals because they thought such hierarchies preserved the dream of the informed citizen. No, for Foucault, it is not about filtering out or stopping bad information or knowledge, but rather, he insists, there needs to be movement back and forth between different types of information. He predicted that this would lead, not to a dumbing down, but instead to furthering the “existence and differentiation of these various networks” (326).

This is where online technologies offer not a threat but a promise as they provide expanded opportunities not only for new forms of political mobilisation but also for increased channels for the distribution of knowledge. Paradoxically, both media and online technologies have been seen to erode the standards necessary for informed decision-making. However, as the Hicks’ case demonstrates in a contemporary world such technologies are fundamental to the coordination of the social movements that propel political and social action by providing new sites for expressing new intellectual formations and new types of affective knowledge.¹⁵⁸ It also allows for the assembly and disassembly of self as a part of resistance. This is why Geert Lovink’s work into blogospheres is so important in mapping the political and social issues, online cultures, and trends that are emerging from citizens holding conversation in virtual space. Of course technology is not a solution, it is merely another channel. However, its potential to facilitate inclusive conversations and further democratize and empower individual citizens has seen the online world increasingly subject to “corporate control, surveillance and censorship, intellectual property rights, filtering, economic sustainability and governance” (Lovink, *Zero Comments* x). Intellectuals cannot cut themselves off from these broader conversations,

158 In *Blessed Unrest* Paul Hawkin speaks of large organic groups of politically bipartisan people who seek to “heal wounds of the earth and reconstitute the world” through narratives of “imagination and conviction” (4). According to Hawkins these movements have emerged out of “healers, artists and philosophers who speak for the planet, for other species, for interdependence, a life that courses under and through and around empires” and they seek ideas that question and liberate (5). This group has no vision for the world and its goals are not developed by any orthodoxy, ideology or intellectual movement or strong leader. The new social movement does not have any of these things but it serves to remind people that when they feel helpless “a history of altruism can be a balm because it reveals the power of helpful humble acts” and reminds others that “constructive changes in human affairs arise from intention, not coercion” (7).

especially if they provide ways beyond the current intellectual impasse. If they do not engage with these new sites for public debate, they risk marginalising their own role in defending the values that maintain and sustain democratic communities, and overlooking new ideas. For it is communities of subjects, as the Hicks' case illustrates, that exercise power and expand the possibility of change.

It is important to note that while the identification of sites of coexistence as the place for deliberative debate and the affirmation of shared common values has become central to contemporary intellectual work, this is not a facile call for homogenous culture or consensual politics —something which Chantal Mouffe, describes as a lack of awareness that the political is constitutively antagonistic. Rather it is an argument that recognises that political democracy can work against individual freedom, as demonstrated by Hicks, and so a shared ethical framework that recognises that freedom and equality are social conditions that best preserve and sustain civil society is necessary.

Changing Values

Hand-in-hand with the restoration of the sites for conversation is the ongoing re-imagining of the social values that have scaffolded the civil public domain since the Enlightenment. Foundational concepts and social values like democracy, liberalism, freedom, justice and equality have served to move citizens to political action across time, but these must be understood as made by history and thus subject to ongoing rethinking and appropriation. John Rawls has re-theorised the social contract and the notion of liberalism and justice beyond western philosophies and limitations¹⁵⁹ and economist Amartya Sen has

159 John Rawls (1999) rethought democratic practices, and particularly the notions of justice and equality, in a way that extends them beyond partisan political ideology, national borders and liberal and non-liberal societies. For Rawls mutual understanding and agreement amongst global citizens can not be approached on the basis of partisan ideology. He reformats the social contract between citizens and governments as a notion of realistic utopia, which he describes as a "reasonably just constitutional democracy" (14). For Rawls a realistic utopia is a "hope for the future of our society" that goes beyond what is currently thought to be politically possible (11). Fundamental to a realistic utopia are basic rights and liberties, prioritized by the common good (14). Justice and reciprocity are the basic conditions of this society and the necessary citizen virtues include the use of reason and "a sense of fairness and tolerance and a willingness to meet others halfway"(15).

done the same in his re-territorialisation of the concept of equality, which he has reconfigured as not just the redistribution of wealth but even more as a re-arranging of the condition of power that determines the capability of the individual citizen. It is the equality of individual capabilities that matter, more than inequality of resources, according to Sen. As we have seen, the notion of freedom also has to be re-negotiated. Foucault saw freedom as the ability to ethically self-fashion while Said redefined freedom as “the right to a whole range of choices affording cultural, political, intellectual and economic development” (*Humanism* 134). By understanding that these values and concepts can be rethought, and appropriated, the public intellectual opens up new possibilities to address complex contemporary issues.

Also central to re-imagining the intellectual’s role is the rethinking of the citizen beyond the narrow definitions currently available. The contemporary idea of the democratic citizen continues to retain its association with both the nineteenth-century *learn to be a good citizen* model and the twentieth-century *obedience* model. A more active and informed engagement that goes beyond either of these roles is required by the complexity of modern society. Barry Hindess, invoking Jacques Ranciere, suggests an Aristotelian model in which politics becomes the “the engagement of citizens themselves in the collective work of government” (*Democracy and Critical Responsibility* 115). This is a model of the citizen that both rejects the passivity of social collectivism and the disinterest and cynicism produced by neoliberalism. It suggests a model of the citizen who is critical, conscious and actively engaged in his or her own governance, and importantly, prepared to accept that there is something inherently problematic about “quietly accepting the inequalities that characterise our world” (Sen 1).

A more active and critically conscious citizenship, as demonstrated in the Hicks case, enables Said’s notion of civic wisdom, which he described as knowledge inductively produced across historical and cultural settings in the interests of a sustainable social world. It is this civic wisdom that he proffered up as the grounds for reasserting the common values and conditions necessary for the protection of society. Thus, in order to preserve the civil society that best

protects individual freedom, the public intellectual must remain committed to the defence of social and political conditions associated with democratic and participatory citizenship. This is not necessarily an acceptance of democracy as a self-evident good but the recognition that an increasingly active and coordinated citizenry may be able to refurbish democracy, and by engaging in an ongoing critique of its operation move beyond its current limiting representational systems and which only allows for the periodic involvement of citizens at elections. Barry Hindess has suggested that a more modern sense of democracy is emerging which sees people more directly involved in government decision making, and like the Hicks' case this form of citizenship acknowledges that democratic practices must be constantly re-interrogated within particular contexts, problems and across different voices.

By recognising the individual citizen as the site of social renewal and political progress, the intellectual's primary role is reminiscent of Kant's formulation in that it seeks to foster critical consciousness amongst individual citizens. But it differs from Kant's model in that the voice of the public intellectual is not an instructing voice but rather as a mediating one that interprets across difference and in the context of preserving the most sustainable social systems at any given time or place. The contemporary public intellectual enables citizen freedom by focusing upon understanding how a contingent form of freedom can be achieved through the adoption of Foucault's "self-fashioning," which enables the individual citizen to reflexively assemble the self in response to the multiple relationships that form them — and to do so on the basis of the values of a kind of pragmatic humanism described by Said. This ethical intellectual function suits the conditions of late modernity where power flows no longer are hierarchical, change is constant and social formations are guided by the principles of "holism, multiculturalism and openness" (Stadler 3). Further, this form of ethical public intellectualism extends Kant's efforts to transform the individual's relationship with itself and with authority, and acknowledges that, maybe, in more inclusionary public spaces, there is greater capacity for resistance against systems of dominating power.

Joining the Conversation

In conclusion, contemporary conditions define the operation of the public intellectual's critical, ethical and political function. The systematised power and political disenchantment of contemporary society invokes a public intellectual entity that critically exposes the invisible ideas and concepts that influence society, and in doing so makes visible what Said called the "imposed silence and the normalized quiet of unseen power" (*Humanism* 135). In the context of this largely invisible power it is more important than ever that the public intellectual operates as Said's "representative figure," not in the sense of speaking for others but rather in publicly depicting a social reality that can be contested and by making the operation of power visible through public debate (*Representations* 10). This contemporary public intellectual formation is dedicated to furthering understanding and so operates to translate and negotiate across cultural differences and political divides. Moreover, in a time of complex, interdependent, global social and political problems public intellectuals must do as Jean Bethke Elshtain's suggests and that is keep "nuances alive" despite a media that seeks simplistic responses (*The Future of the Public Intellectual* 54). This contemporary public intellectual engages in the problematisation of real issues and in the re-territorialisation of concepts as a part of the process of finding a way beyond what Foucault called the Enlightenment's wrong turn. Thus through an interrogation of the past and the rethinking of inherited and appropriated universals, ideologies and cultural identities that work against the freedom of all, it is possible for public intellectuals to move past the "renunciation of feeling, solidarity and care for one's self" that has been lost as the price of Enlightenment knowledge, and to produce a kind of engaged citizenship that will enable new ways of being in the world (*Ethics* xxv). This form of public intellectualism is defined by a collaborative approach to addressing specific issues and a hopefulness and faith in the critical capacity of citizens to move beyond the persistent conversations of social decline and political cynicism, and a confidence in the role of the public intellectual in asserting the conditions necessary to preserve freedom even as the world is constantly reinvented.

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