



**Newsletter May 2005**

CSAA Newsletter editor:  
Greg Noble  
Centre for Cultural Research  
University of Western Sydney  
Parramatta Campus  
Locked Bag 1797  
Penrith South DC 1797  
[g.noble@uws.edu.au](mailto:g.noble@uws.edu.au)

## PUBLICATIONS

### Books

Milner, A. (2005)(ed) *Postwar British Critical Thought* 4-volumes, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi.

Probyn, E. (2005) *Blush: Faces of Shame* UNSW Press & University of Minnesota Press, Kensington and Minneapolis.

### Articles by Postgraduate Students

Maravillas, F. (2005) 'Unsettled Geographies: Going South by South-East', catalogue essay for *Open Letter* exhibition, Asia Australia Arts Centre, Sydney and Asialink Centre, University of Melbourne.

Marshall, J. (2004) "Operatic Tradition and Ambivalence in Chamber Made Opera's Recital (Chesworth, Horton, Noonan)," in Keith Gallasch and Laura Ginters, eds, "Music Theatre in Australia," special edition of *Australasian Drama Studies* October.

### New Projects

*Reconfiguring intimate life: Gender and sexuality as sites of national redefinition in Australia since 1996*

Barbara Baird

This interdisciplinary research project will elaborate the proposition that there has been a significant reconfiguration of intimate life in Australia since 1996. It will argue that this reconfiguration, staged across issues of maternity, sexual relationships, the care of children and interpersonal violence, amounts to a process of national redefinition bearing meanings related to race and national belonging. The contests and shifts which comprise this reconfiguration have been neither identified as such, nor critically analysed. This project's post-structuralist analysis of changes in sexual and reproductive relationships challenges contemporary debate about changing forms of national identity, citizenship and belonging.

(awarded for three years)

*Demanding the Impossible: Utopianism in Philosophy, Literature and Science Fiction*

Professor Andrew Milner (CCLCS, Monash), Professor Andrew Benjamin (CCLCS, Monash), Dr Kate Rigby (CCLCS, Monash), Dr Roland Boer (Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology, Monash) and Professor Ian Buchanan (Charles Darwin University). ARC Discovery Grant of \$360,000 for 2005-2007.

## Welcome!

Here is the latest issue of the newsletter of the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia.

This issue features, amongst the usual inclusions, an item on the state of Cultural Studies in New Zealand, a brief review of the 2004 conference in Fremantle and a discussion of 'Australia's top public intellectuals'. We also list recent publications, forthcoming events, calls for papers, and so on.

Ian Buchanan, CSAA President, has suggested we might want to include a new section on 'Cultural Studies in the News' given the number of media items discussing Cultural Studies that have been published in recent times and the presence of Cultural Studies scholars in the media. Let me know if you are interested in this idea or having something to contribute. As it happens, it connects nicely with the theme of the editorial on public intellectuals.

If you have any items that you'd like to tell us about, please pass them on. I am always interested in suggestions, so please feel free to send them to me.

Greg Noble  
Newsletter Editor

Centre for Cultural Research  
University of Western Sydney  
Parramatta campus  
Locked Bag 1797  
Penrith South DC  
NSW 1797  
Australia

email: [g.noble@uws.edu.au](mailto:g.noble@uws.edu.au)

## REPORTS AND REVIEWS

### Everyday Transformations: The Twenty-First Century Quotidian

CSAA Annual Conference, Fremantle, 9-11 December, 2004

For postgraduate researchers, conferences present the rare opportunity to develop and articulate a sense of how our own work sits within and across disciplines and research fields. For those of us who in various ways identify with cultural studies in our work, our official candidature is likely to be served out in schools or departments with some other quite distinctive disciplinary orientation – from philosophy to media and communication to Creative Industries. For cultural studies postgraduates, then, the CSAA conference works a bit like a visit home from some neighbouring town: if it works well, you reaffirm your place there, while taking stock of how much things have (or haven't) changed.

It seems to me that one of the reasons I found this to be such a stimulating conference was its theme – in focusing on an area of *culture* to which cultural studies approaches can be taken, rather than, as has been the pattern in recent years, a particular theme of meta-cultural *studies* (utility, 'theory', etc), the 2005 event brought to the surface the strand of cultural studies as a practice with which I most strongly identify: practical, engaged, and theoretically informed without being theoreticist. To me, in paper after paper, the conference felt like a most welcome seismic shift away from the theoretical ventriloquism that sometimes stands in for cultural studies as research practice – a shift I felt as much in the comparatively 'quotidian' spaces of the conference – on the bus, at lunch, and in the pub - as much as in formal sessions.

From my own perspective, conversations that were begun in the lead-up to and during the conference continue to provide the impetus for research collaborations and extended debates, and there can be no better outcome than that. Having said that, there were a few papers that continue to resonate with me. Ien Ang's keynote in the final plenary session was to my mind a cogent articulation of the ways in which the need for pragmatism in cultural studies research – eg the need to find and work with industry partners – can be seen as an intellectual challenge and an opportunity for renewal, rather than a threat that can be countered only with resistance or cynicism. A

## Vital Signs

Design and Social Context Portfolio  
School of Creative Media National Conference

Opening: Evening of 7th September, 2005 Conference Dates: 8th & 9th September, 2005  
Venue: The Australian Centre for the Moving Image Federation Square, Melbourne

A conference presented by RMIT University, School of Creative Media in conjunction with the Australia Council for the Arts.

Conference Director: Lyndal Jones

Vital Signs is the next event in a series of annual conferences presented by RMIT University, School of Creative Media. This year's conference will focus on the urgent issues for New Media artists relating to both our future and our past. We are interested in bringing together the key players of new media art to discover - collectively - new ways forward. We are interested in reading the Vital Signs.

Please submit an abstract of 300 words, ([www.rmit.edu.au/creativemedia/conference](http://www.rmit.edu.au/creativemedia/conference)) and a select number of low-resolution JPEG images or Quicktime, if relevant. Written material must be in Word (RTF) and sent to this email address: [pauline.anastasiou@rmit.edu.au](mailto:pauline.anastasiou@rmit.edu.au) by Monday, 23 May, 2005.

A curriculum vitae is required and also a biography of 250 words stating affiliations (for journal publication). Include your postal address, fax, telephone, mobile and email (not for publication).

## Culture Fix

2005 Annual Conference of the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia

University of Technology, Sydney  
25-27 November 2005

preFIX, sufFIX

what is happening in culture and cultural studies as prefixes and suffixes multiply their attachments to words such as history, science, politics, sex, race, class, bodies and education? What are Cultural Histories, Cultural Writing, Cultural Politics, Cultural Performance, Science Cultures and Feminist or Indigenous Cultural Studies?

getting a FIX staving off a hunger, feeding a craving by the imbibing of 'cultural product' in the shape of music, sex, theatre, film, television, celebrities, books, drugs, comics, visual arts, new media and other forms of popular and high culture speaks to the ways in which ideas of addiction, euphoria, ecstasy and ordinary pleasure are particularly conjured up by culture and the cultural.

in a FIX and yet for some, Cultural Studies continues to be in a fix as in a 'tight place', a predicament, a dilemma, a problem, a difficulty. Is it?

A call for papers will go out in June.

Conference Contact: Initial enquiries, offers of sponsorship, scholarships, and financial fixes please contact Katrina Schlunke via email. [Katrina.schlunke@uts.edu.au](mailto:Katrina.schlunke@uts.edu.au)

particularly strong example of the ways in which such work is actually being done was provided by Zoe Sofoulis in her keynote address on the 'Everyday Water' project at the Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Western Sydney.

Ben Highmore's paper was a masterful performance of cultural studies as practice in dialogue with everyday design – I will never look at carpet or teapots in quite the same way again. The inclusion of Andrew L. Urban as a keynote presenter was a particularly inspired touch, and one which I hope marks the beginning of a trend towards better dialogue with media practitioners, designers, policy-makers, and perhaps even conservative newspaper columnists in future conferences.

I congratulate the organisers on a particularly stimulating and positive manifestation of Australian and New Zealand cultural studies' futures – a hard act to beat.

Jean Burgess  
Queensland University of Technology

## SPACES FOR CULTURAL STUDIES

### Cultural Studies in New Zealand

In 2005, Canterbury University is still the only university in New Zealand offering a full degree program in Cultural Studies from L-100 to PhD. In addition to an already wide array of courses, Canterbury's program continues to develop new and popular undergraduate courses, recently including popular culture representations of violence, animals; nature and gender in American pop culture; and sexualities in culture; and there are plans to strengthen Media Studies. Cultural Studies is also succeeding in research grant applications, with Phil Armstrong and Annie Potts gaining a prestigious Marsden grant for their study of animals in culture in Aotearoa-New Zealand. There are currently six PhD students, including international students. However, Howard McNaughton believes the program is threatened by moves to eliminate double-coding of courses, so that courses contributed from other departments will lose their ready identification with the Cultural Studies major, eroding the visibility of the degree.

In the other universities that don't offer such a degree, the stakes are somewhat different. Cultural Studies remains dispersed across specific Cultural Studies courses taught within existing departments and disciplines, or Cultural Studies approaches taken in teaching those disciplines, usually the newer and interdisciplinary fields such as film, television and Media Studies, Gender Studies, and visual culture. Auckland University, for example, has Cultural Studies components taught in sociology (a paper on Cultural Studies, another on popular culture, and offerings on visual culture and the media), as well as in Film, Television and Media Studies, and in English. There are postgraduate theses that deal with such topics as youth subcultures and moral panics, and Maori identity and the internet. Staff are engaged in a wide range of research topics, and the Centre for Critical Inquiry, directed by Lee Wallace, supports work that engages with how arts and social science research agendas have been transformed by Cultural Studies. Running a wide range of seminars, workshops, and public lectures—from a History and Cultural Theory Workshop in 2003 featuring Meaghan Morris, to a public lecture by Susan Stryker in 2004, to a seminar on Hip Hop as Migrant Expression in Australia with Tony Mitchell in 2005—it facilitates networking within the university and across the country, as speakers often visit other universities during their time in New Zealand.

Deadline: 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2005.

We also invite similarly-themed proposals (200 words) for WWW/CD/DVD-based audiovisual or multimedia projects, to be presented during the conference; please submit either written proposals, URLs or CD/DVD media. Multimedia projects will also be considered for exhibition in the ArtSpace section of the *Transformations* website.

Deadline: 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2005.

Details concerning registration, travel and accommodation will follow shortly.

The Badlands conference is run conjointly by *Transformations* and the Bundaberg Media Research Group. Links at

<http://www.cqu.edu.au/transformations>

and

<http://bmrq.cqu.edu.au>

For further details please contact one of the conference organisers

Warwick Mules      [w.mules@cqu.edu.au](mailto:w.mules@cqu.edu.au) (ph: 07 41507142)  
Phil Roe            [p.roe@cqu.edu.au](mailto:p.roe@cqu.edu.au)                      (ph: 07 41507088)  
Grayson Cooke    [g.cooke@cqu.edu.au](mailto:g.cooke@cqu.edu.au) (ph: 07 41507136)

School of Humanities/School of Contemporary Communications  
Faculty of Arts, Health and Sciences/Faculty of Informatics and Communication  
Bundaberg Campus  
Central Queensland University  
Locked Bag 3333 DC  
Bundaberg Qld 4670

Ph: 07 41 507177  
Fax: 07 41 507090

## Making Badlands

A conference hosted by *Transformations* and the *Bundaberg Media Research Group*, Central Queensland University.

1 – 2 December 2005, Central Queensland University, Bundaberg campus.

Keynote Speaker: Prof. Ross Gibson, New Media and Digital Culture, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building, University of Technology Sydney.

Deadline for abstracts and multimedia proposals: 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2005, to be submitted to any one of the conference organisers (see below).

Ross Gibson's book *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland* (UQ Press, 2002) describes the central Queensland region as haunted by a violent colonial past and fraught with troubling incidents that make it an Australian badland. This conference will address the concept of an Australian badland. What it means to speak of a space as a badland, its relation to history, the imaginary, and to questions of regionality, representation, myth, archival authority, and the formation of narrative and discursive knowledge.

The conference will also examine how imaginary spaces are *actively produced* through technological, aesthetic, conceptual, visual, audio and other sensory engagements with the materiality of regional contexts, and develop ways in which these may be contested through alternative practices of *making* that may lead to more progressive and empowering visions of regions.

A region may be considered as a space of multiplicities, greater than, and hence excessive to, the centres found within it – a site of boundaries, margins, peripheries, and frontiers, with contingent and transversal relations to any 'core' centre. All centres are regional, and all regions have their centres. Urban, suburban, inner and outer metropolitan, town and country, outback, bush, are all regions capable of both producing and resisting badlands as cultural imaginaries.

The conference will be divided into a critical, reflective component consisting of panels and individual papers presented and discussed on the first day, and a practical component in which specific projects and material practices will be workshopped and examined on the second day. This second component will include the work of artists and cultural workers, as well as other stakeholders in the production of regional imaginaries. These may include members of indigenous communities, social and welfare activists, environmental workers, and others concerned with implementing new ways of thinking about and perceiving badland regional imaginaries.

We invite abstracts (200 words) for presentations from academics, researchers, writers, artists and cultural workers on any topic related the making of badlands, both past and present. A selection of papers will be published in the refereed journal *Transformations*.

The Screen and Media Studies department at Waikato University, the Massey University extra-mural courses on popular music Studies, and Cultural Studies and the media, and the Media Studies program in the School of English, Film and Theatre at Victoria University of Wellington are all among the many sites of active Cultural Studies teaching and research. Otago University is, like Auckland, another institution with a variety of Cultural Studies papers and approaches across departments and disciplines, including English, the Film and Media Studies, Visual Culture, and Communication Studies programs, and Gender and Women's Studies. Staff and postgraduate research topics include surfing cultures, digital media and sexual and cultural identities, gaming, slow living movements, and indigenous media. Researchers and postgraduates network actively in both formal and informal groupings and projects, so that an 'organic' Cultural Studies collective has become effective in generating teaching innovation and individual and collaborative projects.

While invisibility is a problem for Cultural Studies where there is no named degree major—it's difficult for students and others to *locate* Cultural Studies options on the university website, or to construct an effective interdisciplinary program while meeting disciplinary subject requirements—there are arguably some advantages in remaining below the radar, and/or presenting a dispersed front in times of economic retrenchment and institutional reorganisation. It can also be an advantage, at universities with divisive structural and funding policies emphasising competition, to prevent Cultural Studies being appropriated by managerial interests that threaten the critical edge and spirit of interdisciplinarity that the field represents.

Canterbury continues impressively to lead the way into the future of Cultural Studies as an institutionalised interdisciplinary field. It will host a one-day conference, 'What is the Contemporary Now? Current Issues in Visual Culture' in July, featuring Nicholas Mirzoeff (NYU) and Carol Mavor (U. North Carolina). Nevertheless, Cultural Studies is healthy throughout Aotearoa-New Zealand, more at the level of teaching and research practice and informal co-operation, networking, and collaboration, than at the level of institutional recognition and formalisation. The inclination to keep it like this was possibly evident at the CSAA conference in Christchurch in 2003, when very few people attended a meeting held to discuss formalising a New Zealand association (a move that might have strengthened bids to develop more degree programs). However other platforms for articulating what is shared and what is distinct about Cultural Studies agendas, practices and

formations in Aotearoa-New Zealand exist in recent edited collections of essays on that topic (Anna Smith and Lydia Wevers, *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004); Claudia Bell and Steve Matthewman (eds), *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004), as well as in journals, at conferences, and so on. At the same time, being part of the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia offers the opportunity for more transnational work that explores shared critical concerns.

Chris Prentice  
Otago University

### **Journalism Education Association 2005 Conference**

Surfers Paradise 29 November to 2 December

For details, see:  
<http://live-wirez.gu.edu.au/jea/default.html>

At the website you will find information on how and when to submit abstracts and papers for refereeing as well as the form to book accommodation.

Associate Professor Stephen Stockwell  
Convenor, Journalism and Communication Programs  
School of Arts, Griffith University

<http://live-wirez.gu.edu.au/Staff/Stephen/default.html>

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### **Contemporary Popular Music Studies**

IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music), AUSTRALIAN-NEW ZEALAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Wellington, New Zealand, 3-6 December 2005

The conference theme is "Contemporary Popular Music Studies".

The deadline for submission of conference papers is 31 July 2005.

Papers will be allocated thirty minutes for presentation and discussion.

All paper proposals should be sent to the conference chair:

Roy Shuker  
Media Studies,  
Victoria University of Wellington,  
P.O.Box 600,  
Wellington.  
[roy.shuker@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:roy.shuker@vuw.ac.nz)

Details regarding registration etc will be available shortly.

## **Cultural Intimacy and Social Poetics: a new agenda for cultural research A Master Class with Michael Herzfeld**

Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney August 8-10, together with the Cultural Research Network.

Michael Herzfeld is Professor of Anthropology at Harvard University and author of many books, including *The Social Production of Indifference* (1993), *Cultural Intimacy* (1997) and *Body Impolitic* (2003).

This master class will address the place of empirical research in analysing cultural dynamics in the transnational contexts in which we live. It will explore the continuing relevance, or otherwise, of disciplinary specialisation and its relationship to methodology in the study of culture, identity and relations.

Herzfeld's work offers an innovative approach to fieldwork defined against both the textualism of postmodern theory and the positivism of the conventional social sciences. Herzfeld offers an anthropology – which he defines as the critical appraisal of common sense – that is comparative and reflexive. It entails a politically engaged grounding in experience that is neither reductive nor romantic. It occupies the 'militant middle ground' between simple binaries of theory and practice.

In one of his most provocative books – *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* – Herzfeld draws on wide-ranging fieldwork to explore the 'dirty laundry', the collective secrets, that sustain a nation-state by securing the loyalty of its citizens. His approach, which he calls a 'social poetics', examines the disjuncture between official models of national culture and the experience of ordinary citizens. This social poetics is an attempt to connect the minutiae of everyday life to cultural change in the *longue durée*, utilizing a semiotics of cultural form to explain how social norms not only inform everyday interaction but also draw from its accidents and distortions.

Herzfeld's work invites us to consider a new agenda for cultural research and to think about the ways a social poetics might inform our own projects. In this seminar, we will focus on the ways interdisciplinarity and empirical work form the basis for cultural research, teasing out what we might mean by the 'militant middle ground' of theoretical and political engagement. A range of readings, centring on Herzfeld's own writing, will be provided to inform and initiate debate. Participants will be invited to give brief presentations to bring their own specific intellectual interests into play in this discussion, reflecting on the relation between anthropology and broader cultural research, and what that might mean in terms of the kinds of methodologies that cultural research might develop.

Participants will be required to submit an application outlining the relevance of the Master Class to their own work. Postgraduate students outside Sydney may be eligible for a bursary to cover costs of travel and accommodation. For further information, contact Greg Noble at [g.noble@uws.edu.au](mailto:g.noble@uws.edu.au)

## **The Cultural Research Network**

The Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies, University of Queensland

The Cultural Research Network, under the direction of Professor Graeme Turner, has developed significantly since it achieved ARC funding in 2004. The Network, consisting of about 50 scholars around Australia, is organised around a number of key nodes: cultural technologies, cultural literacies, cultural identities and communities, cultural histories and geographies, early career researchers and postgraduates. Each node is convened by one or more academics, who met earlier this year to discuss organisational and thematic issues. As well as appointing node convenors, the Network has also employed a project officer, John Gunders, and other staff, set up a management committee and initiated a discussion list.

The nodes are intended to provide a basis for planning and integrating a range of activities: node activities are project based, organised to facilitate the progress of research collaboration. Activities for postgraduates and early career researchers will be built into node activities, as well as being addressed by a separate node. The CRN is also in the process of setting up a register of postgraduate research in areas relevant to the network. The register will function to advise participants of events, and to form a communications network for research work.

The nodes are currently preparing a plan of activities, but some events have already taken place or are in development.

*Building Creative Regions: New Dilemmas & New Solutions.* A travelling masterclass featuring Kate Oakley. Visiting Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Brisbane, and Adelaide. 22, 26, 29 April, 5, 13, 18 May.  
<http://www.cpe.qut.edu.au/events/KONMSS05.jsp>

*Fresh and Salt: Water, Borders and Commons in Australia and Asia.*  
University of Technology, Sydney, 8-10 May.  
[http://www.transforming.cultures.uts.edu.au/news\\_events/index.html#water](http://www.transforming.cultures.uts.edu.au/news_events/index.html#water)

*Making Badlands* : A conference hosted by *Transformations* and the *Bundaberg Media Research Group*, Central Queensland University, Central Queensland University, Bundaberg campus, 1-2 December, 2005.  
<http://transformations.cqu.edu.au/conferences/2005.shtml>



## **Biculturalism or Multiculturalism**

A conference hosted by the School of Culture, Literature and Society, University of Canterbury, 1-3 September 2005

Today the terms biculturalism and multiculturalism draw attention to an argument in countries where colonial histories still shape thought and where the effects of immigration have not been assimilated. They indicate an unresolved conflict between the weight of history and the accommodations of the present, between indigenous sovereignty and immigrant rights. The preference for one or the other implicates the role of the state in shaping ideas of nationalism as whole countries seek to 'rebrand' themselves. In September 2005 the School of Culture, Literature and Society at the University of Canterbury in conjunction with the Canadian Government and ACSANZ will host a conference on 'Biculturalism or Multiculturalism'. Topics covered will include 21st Century citizenship, the meanings of biculturalism, Asia in Australasia, First Nation rights and immigrant cultures, the multicultural museum, creolisation, the Pacific diaspora. The conference will look at the differing but overlapping histories of the terms in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. As well attention will be paid to the Pacific. But being held in New Zealand/Aotearoa, the conference will reflect particularly the cultural situation there.

Speakers include: Simon During, Jonathan Lamb, Diana Brydon, Sneja Gunew, Robert Sullivan, Epeli Hau'ofa, Bridget Orr, Alex Calder, Chris Prentice, Ghassan Hage, Vijay Mishra, Lydia Wevers, Alice Te Punga Somerville, Denis McDermott, Simone Drichel, James Meffan, Deidre Brown, Gregory O'Brien, Huhana Smith, Kylie Message, Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, Teresia Teaiwi

The conference will be held in 'Our City' in central Christchurch. Note that due to the size of the venue numbers will be limited; so people are advised to register early.

Conference fees:

Full rate: \$200

Postgraduate rate: \$100

For more information, to submit an abstract, or to pay the registration fee, please contact [howard.mcnaughton@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:howard.mcnaughton@canterbury.ac.nz)

Howard McNaughton  
Head of School of Culture, Literature and Society  
University of Canterbury  
PO Box 4800  
Christchurch  
Aotearoa New Zealand  
<http://www.engl.canterbury.ac.nz/people/mcnaughton.shtml>

## **EDITOR'S PRIVILEGE**

### **Australia's Public Intellectuals**

Many of you would have seen, and argued about, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* article on Australia's top 'public intellectuals' (Visontay, 12-13/3/05:9). The *Herald* compiled the list by inviting '100 people from a broad range of ... backgrounds' to nominate 10 people each. Robert Manne (39 votes), Peter Singer (33) and Germaine Greer (29) topped the poll, while another 20 received 10 or more votes. Among the 100 lucky enough to vote, however, there wasn't a strong pattern of agreement: the vast majority of those nominated (65 of the 100 finally listed) received only two or three votes. They didn't bother listing the one-pointers. Cultural Studies did quite well – several figures directly or indirectly associated with the field featured, and deservedly so – Ghassan Hage, Meaghan Morris, Catherine Lumby, Elspeth Probyn, Ien Ang, Mark Davis, MacKenzie Wark. Whether this means Cultural Studies has found a significant place in Australian intellectual and/or social life, I'm not sure.

In fact, it's not quite clear what to make of this exercise, apart from an enjoyable bit of intellectual gossip, and carping about who was there and who wasn't. I suspect that most of us probably dismissed the list almost as soon as we read it. It is pretty easy to – the methodology is dodgy, as the journalist half admits. How the hundred who voted got picked and what criteria they used to pick their nominees are unclear. Eleven of the top 40 were voters themselves (I stopped checking after 40), which could imply that there was some tendency towards 'votes for your mates'. There is also a suggestion of ideological interest at stake: there were men who only nominated men and women who only nominated women; there were humanities invitees who included no scientists; there were conservatives who only voted for conservatives, and some lists included only media commentators, and so on. Miranda Devine ('what was she doing there?!', I hear some exclaim) voted for her dad (hmmm!). (For the lists of who voted and who they voted for, see the SMH website)

So what is the value of such an activity? Unlike those who dismiss it, I reckon it's an interesting exercise in thinking concretely about the complex of issues around that phrase, 'public intellectual'. It is, as we say, a useful thing to think with. As several commentators have pointed out, there is a problem in working out what is being evaluated when we use this category.

Are we measuring the 'intellectual-ness' or the 'public-ness' of the public intellectual, or the balance of these things? When we are talking about the 'top' public intellectuals, do we mean that there are bad public intellectuals around, and are they bad because of their views, or bad because they don't know how to use the media, or what? But the classic Cultural Studies move – to deconstruct the terms 'intellectual' and 'public' out of existence – seems particularly unhelpful. Rather, it is interesting to think how these categories come into being given that they continue to emerge in national debates.

It is, in fact, a recurring theme in (at least) western media – the UK had an earlier poll, and there has been long-standing debate about public intellectuals in the US for several decades. I suspect other nations – like New Zealand – have their own versions of this discussion. Each version will tell us something about the national formation in which it occurs. As Visontay argues, 'intellectual' is an uncomfortable word in Australian society. He indicates, for example, some invitees said that it was difficult because there weren't enough candidates – in other words, for some there were few worthy of the category of public intellectual in Australia. The fact that several of the nominees, like Greer, no longer live in Australia emphasises what could be seen as an ongoing manifestation of cultural cringe, or it could be seen as an indictment of the lack of connection between intellectuals and public life in Australia – either way, we ain't good enough. On the other hand, some voters said there were too many to choose from, indicating some hesitation in making judgements of or distinctions between candidates – clinging to an egalitarian ethos, perhaps. There are some challenging issues about the place of intellectuals in Australian society behind these comments, but there are also difficult questions around what we mean by these terms. These go to the heart of contemporary intellectual practice, and the dilemmas around autonomy and social engagement.

The first question is, 'what makes an intellectual?' It is not, of course, a job as such. The list contains people who work as academics, journalists, writers and artists, politicians and activists, lawyers and judges, and the odd cartoonist. We might blandly call them knowledge workers. Do all people who perform these tasks get cast as intellectuals? Maybe amongst their friends, where 'intellectual' may simply mean, 'a clever bastard', but generally no. 'Intellectual' implies not a vocation, but a degree of recognised success of their intellectual labour within the field in which they operate. As Bourdieu has shown, such fields are constructed hierarchically: they function around the distribution of various forms of capital that are valued

## What is the Contemporary Now? Current Issues in Visual Culture

A one-day conference, University of Canterbury, July 23, 2005

Visual culture as a field of investigation is usually held to be concerned in some way with the contemporary, whether in art, other visual media or everyday life. But in these haunted and disjointed times, what does the contemporary mean? How does the study of visual culture include the past's contemporaneity without merely replicating the practice called history? With which times are we together and with what others out of step? How are 'we' constituted by our time? In the presumed "real time" of globalization are there still places and spaces that are out of time? Do the canonical indicators of late-20th-century cultural territory - gender, race and class - have any uses for this 21st-century field? What might be the place of Maori and other South Pacific cultures within the contemporaneity envisaged by visual culture? Does the field already suffer from an Anglo-Australian-American hegemony? What do the disjunctions of now look like? Are they only too familiar or peculiar to the moment?

Proposals for papers (lectures or seminars) are invited that address these and other related questions. Speakers may focus on any visual culture form, medium or material and should prepare for a 20-30-minute presentation. Interested participants are asked to submit a 200-word abstract to the [howard.mcnaughton@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:howard.mcnaughton@canterbury.ac.nz) by 31 May, specifying whether a lecture or seminar-type presentation of up to 30 mins is proposed. It is hoped that the conference proceedings will subsequently be published. Registration \$60 and \$40.

### Plenary Speakers:

'Happiness with a Long Piece of Black Leader: Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*, 1982.'  
*Carol Mavor*, Professor of Art History, University of North Carolina,  
*Pleasures Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs* (1996),  
*Becoming the Photographs of Clementina*, Viscountess Haywarden (1999).  
(Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* and *La Jetée* will be screened the previous evening as a pre-conference event.)

### 'The Place of the "South": Minority and Visual Rights'

*Nicholas Mirzoeff*, Professor of Art and Art Professions, New York University.  
*Bodyscape: Art, Modernity and the Ideal Figure* (1995), *Diaspora and Visual Culture* (1999), *Introduction to Visual Culture* (1999), *The Visual Culture Reader* (2nd ed.) (2003), *Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture* (2005)

A webpage, containing a registration form, is accessible through <http://www.culs.canterbury.ac.nz/>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Giving an Account of Oneself - A public lecture by Judith Butler**

2-4pm, Saturday 18th June 2005

Presented by the College of Arts, Education, and Social Sciences and the Narrative, Discourse and Pedagogy Research Concentration at the University of Western Sydney.

#### Abstract:

The poststructuralist critique of the subject has been criticized for offering only an opaque, divided, or incoherent theory of the moral subject. Can one assume responsibility and give an account of oneself if one is partially opaque to oneself, inconsistent or divided? Butler suggests here that the opacity of the subject is a necessary dimension of its sociality, and that the emergence of the subject depends on social relations and social norms that are never fully thematizable. As a consequence, the ways in which we fail to be able to give a full account of ourselves refer to those dimensions of relationality that are crucial to any ethical philosophy. In effect, Butler here tries not only to offer an ethical philosophy for poststructuralism, but suggests that any account of oneself requires a turn to social theory and critique. Otherwise, moral philosophy becomes ethical violence.

Judith Butler is Maxine Elliot Professor in the Departments of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. She received her Ph.D. in Philosophy from Yale University in 1984. Professor Butler has published widely, contributing to philosophy, feminist and queer theory. She has most recently published a collection of writings on war's impact on language and thought entitled *Precarious Life: Powers of Violence and Mourning* (2004), and also, a collection of essays on gender and sexuality entitled *Undoing Gender* (2004). Professor Butler's public lecture will be her most recent thinking on 'Giving an account of oneself'.

#### Tickets:

Adults: \$25

Concessions: \$15.

Concessions available to Pensioners, Seniors, full time students, children, and unemployed. Eligibility for concession may be required to collect tickets.

Online [www.cityrecitalhall.com](http://www.cityrecitalhall.com)

Box office: 61 2 8256 2222

For further information contact:

Cristyn Davies

Ph. 61 2 9772 6784

Fax. 61 2 9772 6738

Email: [c.m.davies@uws.edu.au](mailto:c.m.davies@uws.edu.au)

only insofar as they are recognised as valuable. To ask people to vote for their top 10 is simply one peculiar manifestation of the mechanisms of the valuation of symbolic capital that operate in any field. As Bourdieu's own mappings of French intellectual life show, they make us cringe, and yet make some kind of sense at the same time. There is an established historiographical tradition of prosopography, a mapping of fields of cultural life, but without Bourdieu's critical take on these processes. An intellectual, then, is someone who stakes their cultural capital in a wager against others, and does so with some success.

The second question – what makes an intellectual 'public' – is in some ways an extension of this, but with a twist. Rather than simply turning one's cultural capital to localised success within the field, the public intellectual is one who deploys their capital to another field, and a more open domain. Intellectuals have never been autonomous, of course, despite some shared myths, but the 'public intellectual' is someone who actively seeks to insert their work into this larger domain. This is a dangerous move – as scientists know better than most, any attempt to popularise your scientific endeavour quickly leads to claims of selling out, losing intellectual credibility. It may surprise you that some Humanities academics are also dismissive of colleagues who enjoy regular coverage in the media, despite our valorisation of popular culture! So becoming a public intellectual may, in fact, devalue your stocks in the smaller field. This is akin to what Bourdieu describes as the paradoxical nature of being an intellectual. If you feel your work has a political or a pedagogical point, this may be a price you are prepared to pay. But the 'public' bit also means that you have some success in accessing the mainstream mechanisms of the communication industries. Many of those nominated seem to have regular gigs as journalists or commentators for TV and the newspapers.

It therefore raises the issue of how much intellectual work has become refracted through the massive expansion of the culture industries over the last century in particular. Debray years ago characterised the phases of these changes as the shift from intellectuals to writers to celebrities, emphasising the role modern media had in structuring the articulation between knowledge work and its social deployment. Despite much angsting over the decline of public intellectuals, and the erosion of the 'public sphere', the problem is rather that there are ever more chances for knowledge workers to participate in the public domain. But it is highly competitive, increasingly diverse, and part of a very slick media and PR operation in which sustained, informed

debate is unlikely. As many others have said, the mediatisation of the public sphere shifts the control of the rules of engagement away from the academic expert to the entertainment format of modern media corporations. Anyone who saw the skirmish between Andrew Jakubowicz and Stan Zemanek on Channel 7's Sunrise program will know that if you wait for the rules of fair debate to kick in, you're dead meat.

We could bemoan this trivialisation of proper intellectual exchange, but it rests on a fair bit of structural nostalgia endemic to the intellectual field, a vision of a past of intellectual autonomy (before Nelson? before Dawkins? before TV? before Humboldt?). Shelley, Wordsworth and Schlegel complained about the commercialisation of culture and the loss of an educated public 200 years ago. The more important issue is how we go about analysing the link between intellectual practice and other social domains without falling into (or defining your position against) romanticism. The intellectual as a moral hero (Said), as an activist concerned with their specific conditions (Foucault) or as an interpreter of others (Bauman): these all seem flawed models. The value of Bourdieu's approach is that he resists aligning intellectuals with (or against) a higher purpose, and simply keeps asking how intellectuals position themselves in relation to each other and to other groups, and how others recognise, or misrecognise, the value of those efforts. The recent discussion on the CSAA forum about whether Cultural Studies was inherently left-wing, emanating from a provocative posting by Terry Flew, was another example of how these kinds of questions – of the relation between intellectuals and publics – is still very difficult for us, despite our privileging of the popular and the everyday.

Maybe we should embrace the idea of our audiences in more substantial ways. This takes us back to the *Herald's* article: one of the frequent comments I heard was, 'how did they decide who got to vote?' Usually this means, 'Why didn't they ask me?', but it could mean, 'Why didn't they ask their wider readership?' If we take Bourdieu's ideas seriously, then one's status is always field-dependent. Perhaps we need a series of polls, related to audience. Historians could vote for the 'top historians', then all knowledge workers could vote for the 'top intellectuals'. Finally, we should ask 'the public' to vote for the best 'public intellectuals'. What a scary thought that is! Does the *Daily Telegraph* reader know any of 'our' candidates? Would the list suddenly be Hugh McKay and 99 shock jocks, tabloid commentators and TV show hosts. Even scarier, I have this sudden image of Brendan

Nelson working up a 'Public Feedback Questionnaire' which will become a part of the Enterprise Agreement and linked to funding proposals. Aagghh!

So we don't like the idea of the 'intellectual beauty pageant', but there is a key issue here underlying the debate around the 'public intellectual' that we need to address rather than dismissing the category as meaningless: how do we go about deciding whether our work should have some socially recognised 'public value'? how should we go about entering our work into larger domains? Should knowledge workers be accountable to others? Do we expect lawyers and doctors to be publicly accountable? Accountable to whom, and by what standards? It's a double edged-sword, of course: ask judges about their current dilemma regarding community standards! But it's a necessary dilemma if we don't wish to become a self-referential, gated community. Nelson would pick us off a whole lot easier if we did.

Greg Noble  
Centre for Cultural Research  
University of Western Sydney

#### References

*Sydney Morning Herald* 'The 100 people who voted and who they voted for', <http://smh.com.au/news/National/The-100-people-who-voted-and-who-they-voted-for/2005/03/07/1110160734258.html>

Visontay, M. 'Australia's top 100 public intellectuals', *Sydney Morning Herald Spectrum*, 12-13/3/05:9