



## 2012 SYMPOSIUM CONVENOR'S WELCOME

The humanities, in Australia and internationally, are currently presented with a rare combination of challenges. These include changing policy environments and priorities and the need for new styles of thought and intervention to engage with these effectively; the need, particularly in the midst of the still-unfolding financial crisis, to rethink the economy and the interdisciplinary issues at stake in its investigation; and the more general changes in the prevailing intellectual environment that are evident in the increasing emphasis that is now placed on the role

played by material forces – technologies and infrastructures – in organising social life. Significantly new cross-disciplinary concerns have been prompted by the conceptions of the human, and of the relationships between human and nonhuman actors, proposed by post-humanist perspectives and the environmental challenges presented by the conception of the anthropocene. More specifically Australian difficulties attach to the continuing importance of the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives, questions nowhere more pressingly raised than in the higher education sector.

The humanities have not been slow in responding vigorously to these changing contexts. New paradigms for critical thought and its modes of social and political engagement have resulted in significant challenges to purely scientific, technocratic or economic framings of policy challenges and solutions. A flurry of significant theoretical innovations and new research orientations has significantly illuminated the role of things in social life while also rethinking the concepts of matter and materialism. Humanities scholarship has brought new light to bear on the ways in which the human is always shaped by its relations to the nonhuman in its environmental, technical and animal forms. The increasingly prominent role of Indigenous perspectives in Australian intellectual life has also prompted widespread recognition of the relevance of Indigenous knowledges to the practices of Australian universities, and of the difficulties that have still to be addressed to accord these their proper places and recognition.

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Symposium of the Academy will debate the contemporary challenges that face the humanities and the challenging responses that these have elicited.

Tony Bennett FAHA

The 43rd Annual Symposium of the  
**AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF THE HUMANITIES**

**CHALLENGING (THE) HUMANITIES**

15-16 November 2012, University of Western Sydney, Parramatta

<b>PROGRAMME DAY 1 Thursday, 15 November - Lecture Theatre 1, Building EA</b>	
9:30am	<b>Registration, Tea and Coffee</b>
10:00am	<p><b><i>Welcome and Introductions</i></b>            Uncle Wes Marne, University of Western Sydney  <i>Welcome to Country</i></p> <p>Janice Reid AM FASSA, Vice Chancellor, University of Western Sydney            Lesley Johnson AM FAHA, Academy President</p> <p>Tony Bennett FAHA, University of Western Sydney, Symposium Convenor  <i>Challenging (the) Humanities: Themes and Perspectives</i></p>
10:45am	<p><b><i>Session 1: After Critique: Refocusing Critical Thought</i></b></p> <p>Stephen Muecke FAHA, The University of New South Wales  <i>After Critique: From Judgment to Composition</i></p> <p>Paul Patton FAHA, The University of New South Wales  <i>After Critique: Experimentation, Creation, Construction ...</i></p> <p>Ien Ang FAHA, University of Western Sydney (Chair)</p>
12:15pm	<b>Lunch</b>
1:15pm	<p><b><i>Session 2: Posthumanist Perspectives</i></b></p> <p>Kay Anderson FASSA, University of Western Sydney  <i>Up From the Ape: Race and the Rise of Anatomical Humanism</i></p> <p>Gillian Whitlock FAHA, The University of Queensland  <i>A Testimony of Things</i></p> <p>Moira Gatens FASSA FAHA, The University of Sydney (Chair)</p>
2:45pm	<b>Afternoon Tea</b>

<b>PROGRAMME DAY 1 Thursday, 15 November - Lecture Theatre 1, Building EA</b>	
3:15pm	<p><b>Session 3: <i>Indigenous Studies and the University</i></b></p> <p>Asmi Wood, The Australian National University <i>Indigenous Students and the University</i></p> <p>Susan Green, The University of New South Wales <i>What Comes First – The Chicken or the Egg?</i></p> <p>Irene Watson, University of South Australia <i>Indigenous Knowledge: Why Do I Feel like a Space Warrior, in the Contest for Space?</i></p> <p>Timothy Rowse FASSA FAHA, University of Western Sydney (Chair)</p>
5:15pm	<p><b>Reception at the Female Orphan School hosted by the Vice Chancellor, University of Western Sydney</b></p>

<b>PROGRAMME DAY 2 Friday, 16 November - Lecture Theatre 1, Building EA</b>	
9:00am	<p><b>Session 4: <i>Rethinking the Economy</i></b></p> <p>Laikwan Pang, The Chinese University of Hong Kong <i>Autonomy and Economy: The Circulation of Culture in Socialist and Post-Socialist China</i></p> <p>Brett Neilson, University of Western Sydney <i>Logistics of Cultural Economy</i></p> <p>Martijn Konings, The University of Sydney <i>Austerity's Redemptive Promise</i></p> <p>Stuart Cunningham FAHA, Queensland University of Technology (Chair)</p>
11:00am	<p><b>Morning Tea</b></p>
11:30am	<p><b>Session 5: <i>Material Histories</i></b></p> <p>Chris Otter, The Ohio State University <i>Materiality, Biology, and the Nutrition Transition</i></p> <p>Jane Lydon, Monash University <i>Materiality, Invisibility and Australian Heritage</i></p> <p>Anna Haebich FASSA FAHA, Curtin University (Chair)</p>
1:00pm	<p><b>Closing and Lunch</b></p>



## SESSION ONE

### *After Critique: Refocusing Critical Thought*

The currency of critique within the humanities has been a subject for vigorous debate as many of its assumptions have been called into question. The possibility that critique might be enunciated from a position of pure externality in relation to the state or markets; the assumption of an inherent confluence between the principles of social and aesthetic critiques; the voice from on high of the transcendental critique – there has been a widespread movement away from these positions in the varied attempts that have been made to define critical and engaged roles for scholars and intellectuals that take account of their entanglements within the processes they engage with. The papers in this panel review the reasons for these questionings of critique, the attempts that have made to define strategies for critical work that will be ‘after critique’, and the relevance of these to matters of critical social, cultural and political concern in contemporary Australia.

## Stephen Muecke

Stephen Muecke FAHA is Professor of Writing at The University of New South Wales, Sydney. He works in the experimental humanities, with Indigenous groups in Broome, and on intercoloniality in the Indian Ocean. *Reading the Country* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1984) won the non-fiction prize for the West Australian Week Literary Awards (1985), and *Joe in the Andamans and Other Fictocritical Stories* (Local Consumption Publications, 2008) was shortlisted for the 2010 Adelaide Festival Awards in the Innovation Category. *Contingency in Madagascar*, with photographer Max Pam, appeared in 2012 with Intellect Books' Critical Photography Series.

### ***After Critique: From Judgment to Composition***

In the humanities, critique is the engine of debunking, revealing, or unmasking the reality that lies behind mere appearances. This modern engine steams towards its utopian vanishing point, but according to Bruno Latour, is running out of puff. There is a fundamental misapprehension that critique is above reality, rather than mixed up with it in the practical tasks of analysis. In this reassessment of what the humanities are for, a certain philosophical strand of experimentalism is recovered as an alternative to critique. Further, what goes on in the heterogeneous space of the classroom or research seminar belies the simple bifurcation that allows one the conceits of interpreting the world or denouncing false representations of it. In the composition of texts, what critical moves can achieve practical ends without judgement from above or the quasi-religious power of revelation? What will keep the experimental machine moving? The presentation will use some examples of experimental projects that are taking the humanities in new directions.

## Paul Patton

Paul Patton FAHA is Research Professor of Philosophy at The University of New South Wales in Sydney. He has published widely on contemporary European philosophy, Nietzsche and a variety of topics in contemporary political philosophy. He is the author of *Deleuze and the Political* (Routledge, 2000) and *Deleuzian Concepts: Philosophy, Colonization, Politics* (Stanford, 2010). He is editor of *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (Blackwell, 1996), *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (with Duncan Ivison and Will Sanders, Cambridge, 2000), of *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, (with John Protevi, Continuum, 2003) and *Deleuze and the Postcolonial* (with Simone Bignall, Edinburgh 2010).

### ***After Critique: Experimentation, Creation, Construction ...***

The 'critique of critique' has been a recurrent feature of much European political philosophy at least since the 1960s. It has led to, among other things, deconstructive 'double writing,' Deleuze and Guattari's experimentalism and Foucault's successive historical answers to the question 'what is critique?' More recently, there have been gestures towards movement beyond critique in the direction of a more constructive philosophical practice. Examples might include Habermas's discourse ethics, Derrida's 'affirmative deconstruction' or Deleuze's conception of philosophy as the creation of concepts. These are different suggestions, but all of them remain in greater or lesser degree gestures rather than actually following through on the kinds of creation that is called for. How might the humanities pursue such suggestions in a more positive manner? I propose to explore the idea that various forms of constructivism might offer a path beyond critique. These might include a philosophical constructivism that treats both problems and the concepts required for their solution as objects to be constructed. They might also include a political constructivism that views the content of fundamental values such as justice and the political arrangements with which to implement such values as items to be constructed. Such constructivism suggests surprising affinities between Rawls's idea of public political reason and answers to Foucault's deceptively simple question 'what would be a distinctively socialist governmentality?' Does constructivism offer a new way in which the humanities might pursue the ambition to contribute to solving some of our most pressing social, political and cultural problems?





## SESSION TWO

### *Posthumanist Perspectives*

Although, in truth, a somewhat motley assemblage of different disciplines with, in some cases, sharply contrasting histories, the humanities have generally shared the assumption that their proper concern is with the distinguishing properties of 'the human'. Posthumanist perspectives challenge this assumption, contending that there is no essential division separating the human from the nonhuman. This has resulted in a good deal of critical attention being paid to the varying ways in which the dividing lines between the human and the nonhuman have been drawn, and to their consequences for ways in which the relations between different groups of humans, and between humans, animals, environments and things, have been organised. The papers in this panel contribute to this endeavour.

## Kay Anderson

Kay Anderson FASSA is (fractional) Professor of Cultural Research at the Institute for Culture and Society (UWS). A Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, and also in the UK, she is internationally recognised for her contributions to cultural geography and race historiography. Award-winning author of *Race and the Crisis of Humanism* (Routledge, 2006) and *Vancouver's Chinatown* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), she is Chief Investigator (CI) on the ARC Discovery grant, 'Decolonising the Human: Towards a Postcolonial Ecology' (2011-13) and a CI on the ARC Linkage grant (2012-15) 'Sydney's Chinatown in the Asian Century: From Ethnic Enclave to Global Hub'.

### ***'Up From the Ape': Race and the Rise of Anatomical Humanism***

The fantasy of a human being who *is* or who *becomes* human to the extent they move away from animal nature is stubbornly persistent in Western cultural formations. This presentation critically engages the idea that humans are in some sense *irreducible* to nature. It considers how comparative anatomists of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – in departing from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Cartesian dualism that had identified the human with an immaterial notion of soul or mind – looked to the human body, and above all the human head, in order to try and establish that humans were creatures of a categorically different order from all others. More specifically, the talk considers how it was to 'race' that these 'scientists of man' turned in their attempt to provide an anatomical foundation for humanism. And while the effort to determine a link between the apparently variable mental capacities of the world's people and the size and shape of their heads eventually floundered, craniometry's materialist notion of 'mind' left a formidable legacy. This is evident, for example, in contemporary claims about the specialness of the human brain and the distinct path of human evolution. As Tim Flannery puts it, we are unlike all other animals 'uniquely empowered to shape our ends'. Such investments perpetuate the idea that human beings are to be defined and valued according to some quality that makes us 'more' than just human animals. As such, they keep humanity searching in vain for what barricades it from, rather than bonds it with, the fates of its co-habitants on earth. And, as this talk aims to demonstrate, the importance of current efforts to re-imagine that bond extends to humanity's co-habitation with all manner of 'others': *human as well as nonhuman*. For by drawing into contemporary 'posthumanist' concerns an archetypal category of sociological and cultural analysis, that of race, it engages a cultural research field whose stock-in-trade concepts – of diversity, identity politics, and the politics of difference – have had their ontological gates closed around a notion of the human, and of the humanities, that can no longer go unchallenged.

## Gillian Whitlock

Gillian Whitlock FAHA is an ARC Professorial Fellow at The University of Queensland, where her research project focuses on the archives of asylum-seeker letters held at the Fryer library. She is author of a number of edited books and monographs, most recently a study of life narrative and the 'war on terror', *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago, 2007). Her new book *Postcolonial Life Narrative* will be published by Oxford University Press in 2013, and her most recent publication is a special issue of the journal *Biography*, 'Posthuman Lives', co-edited with Tom Couser. She is a member of the Board of the Australia India Council, a judge for the Miles Franklin Award, and is Vice President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

### *A Testimony of Things*

The absence of autobiography in mappings of posthumanism to date – and vice versa – is extraordinary. The concept of 'posthuman lives' is both provocative and contradictory. It suggests that autobiographical engagements with nonhuman others, the changing parameters of 'life' that extend agency to the lives of animals, machines and things, the dramatic changes of embodiment and temporality that occur through self representation in new bio and media technologies, produce alternative approaches to self-recognition and the boundaries between self and others: we are, argues Cary Wolfe, 'not that "auto-" of autobiography that humanism "gives to itself"' (2010, 119). The posthuman does not mean the end of humanity or a turn to the antihuman, but it does offer resources for rethinking the liberal humanist view of the self, it does signal the questioning of conceptions of the human that draw on hierarchies of speciesism and anthropocentrism, ideas 'that may have applied, at best, to that fraction of humanity that had the wealth, power and leisure to conceptualise themselves as autonomous beings exercising their will through individual agency and choice' (Hayles, 286). For posthumanism, 'the human' is entangled variously in nature, culture and technology; the state or condition of the human 'being' is made, remade, unmade in proximity to a widened 'field of alterity: animate and inanimate, natural and artificial, living and dead, organic and mechanistic' (Fuss, 3). The limits of the human are a work in process. In *Vibrant Matter* Jane Bennett asks us to imagine 'a testimony of things'. What might this mean? My current research project focuses on the archives of asylum seekers as testimonial effects. What might it mean to approach these artefacts in terms of 'posthuman lives'?

### References

- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Fuss, Diana (ed.). *Human, All Too Human*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Hayles, Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Wolfe, Cary. *What is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.



## SESSION THREE

### *Indigenous Studies and the University*

Australian universities have recognised 'the Indigenous' as naming a hitherto neglected set of entitlements. In simplest operational meaning, this recognition has mandated reaching out to persons so identified, encouraging them to enrol as students and to serve as academic and non-academic staff. The process of enabling such a demographic mobilisation of 'the Indigenous' has sometimes raised a deeper question about the cultural constitution of 'the University itself', for the history of 'the Indigenous' as a problem or anomaly to be rectified entails a history of the colonial processes that gave rise to the conceptual couple 'colonial/Indigenous'. How can even the most solicitous engagement of 'the Indigenous' NOT pose questions about that solicitous agent itself? The historical constitution of its magnanimity is just as important an inquiry as the historical constitution of its former indifference and hostility. So, what reflexive inspection should the University's openness to Indigeneity trigger? And what account of Indigeneity has this recently arrived, self-consciously different academic/student constituency been offering? Respect for the claims of Indigenous *persons* has been operationalised (Equity and Diversity programmes, Indigenous Studies Centres charged with pastoral care), but how might the concept 'Indigenous *knowledge*' be actualised in programmes of pedagogy and research? And should it be? These are questions that the humanities should try to answer.

## Asmi Wood

Asmi Wood LLB (Hons.) PhD is Senior Research Fellow and Higher Degree by Research Coordinator at the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at The Australian National University. He also teaches at the ANU College of Law and until recently was in charge of the Indigenous Students' Support Scheme at the ANU School of Law. He is a legal practitioner in the ACT. In 2010 he received a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence.

### *Indigenous Students and the University*

This paper examines Indigenous law students' wellbeing. A problem many Indigenous students face, from the earliest experience with the Western educational system, appears to be a form of negative cultural stereotyping, and this paper explores some of the underlying contributing causes. At the practical level, participation is not just low but the gap between the Indigenous and mainstream continues to diverge. While improving Indigenous participation is intrinsically beneficial, Indigenous people also bring with them significant knowledge and human capital that can benefit society as a whole.

The case study of law students at the ANU is used to guide the discussion. It is *not* a representative study. However, what is intuitively clear is that every step in improving participation by Indigenous students will help the overall participation rate. On the issue of wellbeing, the adverse effects on the mental health and wellbeing experienced by 'mainstream' law students is well known as an issue of concern. Indigenous students often experience lower levels of wellbeing even before commencing law studies. Further, Indigenous students also face huge expectations, carry the burdens of history, and endure a lack of family support, alienation, financial difficulties, often living quite far from home and in very unfamiliar surroundings which together tend to pose an even greater threat to their general wellbeing. Finally it is argued that successful learning is contingent on mutual respect, something that is not always present in contemporary institutions.

A key contributing factor to Indigenous students' (relatively poor) wellbeing levels and disadvantage in education appears to lie in the lingering effects of inter-generational neglect. This and other factors contributing to this phenomenon of poor participation should therefore be addressed strategically. To this end better and more reliable information and statistics on Indigenous participation can help to improve the policy settings that affect Indigenous participation in the tertiary sector and this paper calls for the proper identification of several gaps in the data so that policy makers have reliable and accurate data to ensure that the policy settings are appropriate and that they will yield better results in the coming years.

### References

Wood, Asmi. 'Law Studies and Indigenous Students' Wellbeing: Closing the (Many) Gap(s)', *Legal Education Review* Vol. 21 (2011) No 1&2, 251 – 276.

## Susan Green

Susan Green is a Wiradjuri woman and is an Associate Professor of Social Work in the School of Social Sciences and International Studies, University of New South Wales, where she teaches within a number of social work courses with a particular focus on Indigenous social work practice at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. She also is a member of the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council and is involved in a number of projects regarding Indigenous inclusive curricula. Her areas of research and publication interest are on Indigenous welfare both historically and currently as well as Indigenous social work and on decolonisation.

### *What Comes First – The Chicken or the Egg?*

Over the past four decades we have seen a lot of changes regarding the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. This period has also seen a struggle regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their place within the Australian psyche. This has been played out in many different forums and formats. One recent example is the so-called ‘history wars’ and the debates around what Australians, in particular Australian children, should be taught regarding the history of this country. Many different professions are discussing and, in some cases, are locked in fierce battles about their responsibilities for ensuring that the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the true history of this country, are respected.

One group of people heavily involved in this battle (whether vocally or else standing silently on the side lines) are academics within the humanities – whether that be anthropology, history, sociology, etc., or within the so-called professional degrees such as social work or education. Over the past few years a lot of work has been done regarding the role of academics in providing culturally inclusive curricula, with a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and issues.

However, one important factor appears to receive limited attention: who is educating the educators and how is this being done? Any strategy regarding the implications of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curricula also needs to develop a plan to educate and assist academics in ensuring that their curricula are based on correct information and that the academics themselves have dealt with their own positioning to and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Furthermore, academics need to be able to deal with the issues that will play out in the classroom, whether it is racism, whiteness, or resistance and the impact that these have on students, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders or non-Indigenous students.

## Irene Watson

Irene Watson belongs to the Tanganekald and Meintangk peoples of the Coorong and the south east of South Australia. Irene is Associate Professor in the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research at the University of South Australia. She has published in the area of Aboriginal rights and law, including *Looking at You: Looking at Me* (I. Watson, 2002), and is currently working on a manuscript for publication, *Raw Law*. Irene is an established researcher on Indigenous legal issues in both domestic and international law. Her research is particularly influential in the field of Indigenous knowledges and the law. She has worked as a legal practitioner in South Australia, a legal academic and as an international lawyer at the United Nations, working with Indigenous peoples and international law experts since 1990. Irene was involved with the drafting of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples between 1990 and 1994 and has more recently, in 2009 and 2012, made interventions before the UN Human Rights Council Expert Advisory Committee on the current position of Indigenous peoples. She has worked with her family on the struggle to protect country, the recording of traditional language place names, oral histories and language projects.

### ***Indigenous Knowledge: Why Do I Feel like a Space Warrior in the Contest for Space?***

The question arrived when I was thinking about the tensions that arise when negotiating for Indigenous Knowledges to hold space and become grounded. Indigenous (knowledge) legal systems have been breached by the colonial societies that have built over Aboriginal lives and lands. What remains is to re-build the possibility of Indigenous spaces that are able to co-exist with an alien worldview. But the possibility of co-existence is hampered by a colonial indifference to Indigenous philosophy. From the beginning of invasion times there has been scant reference to Aboriginal religion, values and traditions, and where mentioned Aboriginal knowledge has been contained within the academy, listed under the 'discipline' of anthropology which informs on 'the native' for the benefit of the other expert knowledges. An Aboriginal approach is different to one where rationality is seen as a white trait, not possessed by the 'native'. For Aboriginal futures to emerge, a shift is required from the ever-present racialised, colonised views on Indigenous Knowledges to a position which restores an Aboriginal humanity, which recognises an Aboriginal philosophy and with that an understanding that 'the native' doesn't need to progress to an 'end point' in history. It needs to be acknowledged that we already live inside Aboriginal history and knowledge; that 'the native' has already 'arrived'; and that the recognition of Aboriginal philosophical knowledges is necessary for the respect of 'native' reason, and all things about the 'native' being. This paper will discuss how we might make up for the historic and ongoing erasures of Aboriginal Knowledges.



## SESSION FOUR

### *Rethinking the Economy*

It has perhaps never been clearer, in the midst of the still-unfolding financial crisis, that 'the economy' is no more thinkable in terms of the tenets of classical economics than it is amenable to management in terms of purely economic instruments. Economies are made up of a complex weave of economic theories, institutions and devices whose interactions mould and condition economic behaviours and relationships. They are also shaped by cultural factors whose role in these regards is now the subject of active interrogation in the 'cultural economy' perspectives that have been developed across a wide range of humanities and social science disciplines. The papers in this panel engage with these perspectives in relation to labour processes in an age of digital globalisation, the cultural industries in China and the nature of our affective investments in the economy.

## Laikwan Pang

Laikwan Pang teaches cultural studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her books include *Creativity and Its Discontents: China's Creative Industries and Intellectual Property Rights Offenses* (Duke University Press, 2012), *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), and *Cultural Control and Globalization in Asia: Copyright, Piracy, and Cinema* (Routledge, 2006). She is currently working on new research related to the tensions and mutual conditioning between the politics and aesthetics of China's Cultural Revolution.

### ***Autonomy and Economy: The Circulation of Culture in Socialist and Post-Socialist China***

The contention that capitalist logics have dominated most facets of human life and have made the independence of arts and culture increasingly impossible is a familiar one. My purpose in this paper is to recast the terms in which such questions are posed by investigating the changing relations between culture and economy in contemporary China. I do so by examining the different ways of realising and circulating economic and cultural values associated with the transition from Socialist to post-Socialist China. How have these processes reconfigured the connections between culture and economy produced by the practices of cultural institutions and those of cultural governance in Socialist and post-Socialist China? In addressing this question, I pay particular attention to the tensions between the conception of art as socially embedded and art as a transformative practice in contemporary Chinese debates.

## **Brett Neilson**

Brett Neilson is Professor at the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney where he co-convenes a research theme on Cultural Economy and Globalisation. With Sandro Mezzadra of the University of Bologna he is co-author of a book entitled *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* to appear with Duke University Press in 2013.

### ***Logistics of Cultural Economy***

In recent decades studies of culture and economy have emphasised global connections and disconnections. Concepts such as flow, mobilities and transnationalism have dominated the scholarly debate. Meanwhile there has been muted attention to the technical and organisational conditions that enable the global passage of people, goods and things. This paper aims to remedy this situation by investigating the role of software-driven logistical processes in globalising operations. Logistics has been central to developments in trade and production for several decades, but it has been overlooked in the widespread work on global cultural economy. Drawing on empirical research conducted in the cities of Shanghai and Kolkata, I argue that an attention to logistical technologies and knowledge practices shows why culture is so important to an understanding of current capitalism. A focus on infrastructural forms of organisation and spatial economic networks allows a new perspective on culture and economy by highlighting how logistical routines drive labour forces to the work of global integration while also forming diverse regional and urban niches.

## Martijn Konings

Martijn Konings is a Senior Lecturer and ARC DECRA Fellow in the Department of Political Economy at The University of Sydney. His research centres on the role of money and finance in the making of modern life. He has edited *The Great Credit Crash* (Verso, 2010) and is the author of *The Development of American Finance* (Cambridge University Press, 2011). He is currently working on two studies, one on the affective life of modern finance and another on the role of the US central bank in the governance of American and global capitalism.

### *Austerity's Redemptive Promise*

Whereas the immediate aftermath of the financial crisis was characterised by tremendous optimism about the return to a more civilised form of capitalism, five years on the political agenda is dominated by austerity discourses. Prevailing progressive interpretations tend to attribute the absence of substantial change to a failure to learn the lessons of the crisis, but this picture of a return to neoliberal business-as-usual sits uneasily with the popular anger and democratic energies unleashed by the crisis. Indeed, in the US it is precisely the mobilisation of populist forces that has been a driving force behind the turn to austerity. Making sense of these paradoxical developments requires that we recognise the element of faith at the heart of the operation of contemporary capitalism. Austerity is not merely or primarily a 'wrong policy' but an article of faith, holding out a promise of purification that commands tremendous affective force. Insofar as commentators have paid attention to the theological aspects of modern capitalism, they have tended to interpret this as an anachronistic phenomenon curiously at odds with the rationalising thrust of modern capitalism. Such perspectives do not allow us to understand how a particular form of faith is embedded at the heart of economic life itself. The paper seeks to shed light on this problematic through a selective genealogy of economy that foregrounds its latent theological content, its ability to regulate our affective investments in unseen ways. Economy is conceptualised as a paradoxical logic of governance, capable of organising authority and belief in a secularised context that rejects the idolatrous worship of mundane signs. Exploiting this vantage point, the paper will advance a new interpretation of post-crisis struggles over financial questions, and in particular the ability of austerity's redemptive lure to shape the dynamics of democratic engagement.

## SESSION FIVE

### *Material Histories*

One of the more distinctive aspects of contemporary debates across the humanities and social sciences consists in the attention they accord to material forces as active 'players' in social worlds. Sometimes referred to as the 'material turn' to distinguish it from the focus on the role of the symbolic in social life signalled by the earlier 'cultural turn', this reorientation of scholarly concerns has brought into view the significant entanglements of a wide range of material actors in the make-up and organisation of distinctive economic, social, cultural and political relationships. What are the capacities of things and substances? How does their agency make a difference? The papers in this panel explore these questions with regard to the 'material histories' that are now being produced across the historical disciplines.

# Christopher Otter

Chris Otter is Associate Professor of History at Ohio State University. He is a historian of science, technology and environment, with a particular focus on Britain since 1800. He is the author of *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (University of Chicago Press, 2008). He is currently writing *The Vital State: Food Systems, Nutrition Transitions, and the Making of Industrial Britain*, which explores the causes, consequences and experience of the shift to a diet rich in animal proteins, processed grains, sugars and dairy products.

## ***Materiality, Biology, and the Nutrition Transition***

In recent years, there has been appreciable interest across the humanities in the phenomenon of materiality. This paper will use the history of the Western 'nutrition transition' to explore this concept and its potential relevance to the humanities. The nutrition transition is a term used to describe a shift to a diet rich in animal proteins, simple carbohydrates (particularly wheat), sugar, and dairy products. It took place in the West from around 1750 to 1950, and is currently underway in the developing world. This paper will largely concentrate on the first, Western phase of the nutrition transition, drawing particularly on British material. It focuses on the material history of four key foodstuffs: beef, wheat, sugar and milk. Selective breeding and hybridisation transformed cattle and plants, while industrial processing refined the chemical and biological nature of these substances. Temperature regulation produced a cold chain within which meat could circulate without putrefying. The material transformation of these foodstuffs in turn transformed global agrarian ecologies and the teeth, muscles, bowels, stomachs and arteries of the Western bodies plugged into this new food system. Increased calorific thresholds, for example, clearly improved British labour output, while rising consumption of processed foods materially transformed bodies by rotting teeth and clogging intestines. These new material flows also acted as conduits for bacteria, parasites and new entities like prions. The nutrition transition had unpredictable and emergent aspects. It is thus a major event in material, biological and evolutionary history.

## Jane Lydon

Jane Lydon is an ARC Future Fellow at the Monash Indigenous Centre, Melbourne. Her books include *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (Duke, 2005) and *Fantastic Dreaming: The Archaeology of an Aboriginal Mission* (AltaMira, 2009), which won the Australian Archaeological Association's John Mulvaney Book Award in 2010. Her most recent book, *The Flash of Recognition: Photography and the Emergence of Indigenous Rights* (NewSouth, 2012), uses photography to tell the story of the struggle for Aboriginal rights in Australia.

### ***Materiality, Invisibility and Australian Heritage***

In this paper I explore some of the contradictory ways in which archaeological concerns with material remains have informed Australian heritage practices. I explore these questions first by considering how colonial governance harnessed material infrastructures and practices on Aboriginal missions: missionaries' objectives derived from Western assumptions about progress and transformation that were intimately bound up with everyday material practices, and evaluated 'civilisation' in terms of material culture. The missionary regime was structured by an imagined Cartesian opposition between spiritual and secular, however blurred in practice.

I suggest that this orientation continues to define and manage Aboriginal people within mainstream Australian heritage practice, as material remains are perceived to contain cultural essences. During the mid-twentieth century, a burgeoning preservationist movement triggered a process of recognition and preservation at Aboriginal missions around the continent, characterised by a Western aesthetic that privileged monumental relics, and especially churches. These discrete settlement structures have usually been interpreted as expressions of missionary values, and were long judged to be of greater significance than less visible, landscape-wide Indigenous attachments. Recent attempts to develop a more inclusive system have addressed a perceived division between 'tangible' and 'intangible' cultural forms, ironically reinscribing a social-material dualism that is inconsistent with Indigenous views. The continuing association of Indigeneity with the intangible defines Indigenous history and identity in terms of invisibility, nostalgia, and loss. The limitations of this perspective will be explored.

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