ELEGIES, BOUNDARIES, DISCIPLINES: THE HUMANITIES AFTER LIBERALISM

Mark Davis

Writing elegies for the humanities is currently something of a growth industry. The historian Keith Windschuttle has argued that history, the ‘Queen of the humanities’, is a discipline ‘now suffering a potentially mortal attack from the rise to academic prominence of a new array of literary and social theories’.¹ Don Anderson, who teaches in the English department at Sydney University, laments that works of literature are no longer ‘privileged artifacts’ in the ‘brave new world of anti-elitism and Cultural Studies’, siding with those who think that the ‘barbarians are not merely at the gate, but are ensconced and tenured within the citadel’.²

Eulogies for the humanities are especially popular among those with public literary affiliations and faded degrees in English tucked in a bottom drawer somewhere. The Australian’s former literary editor, Barry Oakley claims that poetry has gone out the window, displaced by Cultural Studies.³ Literary journalist Peter Craven champions a re-evaluation of the ‘almost obsolescent style of lecturing’⁴ used in English departments in the sixties, and the literary values that go with the style, to attack what he sees as the irreverent fascinations of the Nineties. In two separate series of articles in the Melbourne Age and Sunday Age earlier last year, he worked his way through the timeless merits of the traditional literary
canon, as if by way of correction for academic excess. Overseas the genre of complaint against the contemporary humanities is already well estab-
liished via an array of melodramatically titled testimonies such as Bill Reading's *The University in Ruins*, John Ellis's *Literature Lost: Social
Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities*, or Allan Bloom's *The
Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed
Democracy and Impoverished the Minds of Our Youth*.

Local eulogists for the humanities have been joined by more trenchant
critics of what they see as a new wave of dehumanisation in the arts. Jour-
nalist Luke Slattery has railed against critical theory from the pages of
the broadsheet press and is another to have gone into business
attempting to re-establish the traditional literary canon with regular
articles advertising the merits of Henry Lawson and Norman Lindsay. Robert Dessaix has argued that the use of categories such as ‘multicul-
turalism’ by academic ‘culture doctors’ tends to create a disease rather than
define a cure, and that new and novel academic terms are of no interest
to anyone but academics themselves, who use them to build careers. In
an article entitled ‘The Humanities Without Humanism’, Tony Coady
and Seamus Miller joined forces to voice a similar complaint, such that,

> If we give up on truth and the possibility of objectivity, we abandon
> the intellectual life for fantasy, power-plays and propaganda. We also
> abandon what is fundamental to our social role as intellectuals, and
> with it, incidentally, our genuine credentials for public funding.

Whereas five years ago most attacks on newness in the humanities
targeted critical theory, specifically ‘deconstruction’, more recently they
have been mounted on ‘cultural studies’, with little distinction between
the two — Anderson, Slattery and Craven, for example, have all argued
first against one, then against the other as if they were speaking of the
same thing. This lack of discrimination between two very different
disciplinary formations and methodologies is itself enough to demon-
strate that their attacks don’t exhibit intellectual rigour, so much as they follow
a set of well-worn generic tracks.

What elegists for the humanities tend to lack, paradoxically, is a sense of
history. When Anderson complains that some in the English department
where I work seem unfamiliar with the work of FR and QD Leavis, whose
‘epigoni played such a crucial role in the structure of feeling’ of that
department ‘a mere generation ago’, he seems to forget that two
generations before that no-one had heard of FR and QD Leavis, or of their
idea that certain literary artifacts and certain literary subjects act as mutual
attractors. The moment of the great books isn’t timeless or universal, as
fans of the great books tend to suppose, but is specific to a particular time
and social context. The particular critical idiom that eulogists generally
advocate was itself born out of comparatively recent crisis. Following the national disaster of World War I, when a generation of young English men lost their lives, English literature proved a non-secular institution capable of inculcating social unity at a time when the moral authority of church and state was being questioned. It was only following this crisis, as Terry Eagleton points out, that the discipline was taken seriously. Far from being timeless, as Eagleton says, the "modern sense of the word "literature" only really gets under way in the nineteenth century".11 The sorts of academic life that the eulogists soliloquise, and the particular type of professionalised academic subject they often represent, are an even more recent invention, which wouldn't have been possible without the work of IA Richards or FR and QD Leavis, from the 1920s to the 1960s.

Even the most narrow historicisation of the humanities shows a similar pattern of ongoing change. Against the idea that crisis is a new thing, most disciplines have been in an almost constant state of crisis since their formal inauguration, which in the case of English occurred little more than a century ago. In my own department over the past thirty years Leavisites have looked sideways at New Critics, Australianists have battled internationalists, Liberals have gone to war with Marxists, and traditionalists have argued with theorists working in areas such as feminism, queer theory or postcolonialism, in a series of debates that have not merely exposed factional differences of opinion, but which have determined the way the discipline has been taught, researched, and structured itself as a discipline.

Similarly, in History, Politics, Art History, and Economics, Nietzscheans, Marxists, structuralists, feminists, Friedmonites and Freidians have all wrought ongoing crisis—all with the potential, to 'demolish everything' their host disciplines and those who practise them 'once stood for', as Keith Windschuttle has lately complained.12 But to suggest that crisis is itself the status quo of the humanities isn't to license quietism. The humanities are in crisis, again, and the point about change through conflict is that it always involves active participation.

The humanities and the academy in general are currently going through a period of economic as well as disciplinary upheaval. Simon Marginson has written about the rise of market liberalism and the academy, asking what it means for the future of tertiary education when governments assume that every member of the public is a potential *homo economicus*, 'making rational economic choices with the sole objective of maximising their individual utility'.13 John Frow has pointed to a 'narrow monetarist questioning of the benefits of a general education' that has taken place at the same time as an instrumentalist, vocational model of learning has been imposed on the academy.14 Meaghan Morris has mentioned that the future of the humanities depends on an education system that remains 'future
directed' in a classically modern way – while confronting a future in which the category of 'culture' is ... collapsing, relatively slowly but inexorably, into the economic and the informal'.

That these sorts of pressures should impact on the very nature of disciplines tends to come as a surprise to many outside the academy, where the traditional idea of the humanities continues to hold sway to an often surprising degree. The public, pandered to by elegists and the wider media, and nursing often dated pedagogic histories of their own, generally seems to imagine the humanities as a timeless formation of forever naturalised disciplinary entities that remains, or that should remain, above history, economics and even developments in knowledge. When an internationally syndicated news item expresses surprise that an academic conference on Bob Dylan at Stanford should be held at the same time as a concert by Bob Dylan, in such a way as to question that a humanities conference on the topic of popular music should be in any way necessary or useful, it serves as a reminder that the humanities aren’t merely a vehicle for ideologies; the humanities are an ideology.

This difference between how the humanities are learning to think themselves, and how the broader public continues to think them, raises further questions. If some disciplines within the humanities are no longer supporting the various traditions that make them relevant to the public, and if they aren’t purely vocational in a narrow, instrumentalist sense, then how do they justify their continued existence? Liberalism, with its attendant notions of individual appreciation and private contemplative pleasure, hasn’t been a central compelling term in the humanities for over twenty years, yet arguably remains a key concept through which the humanities generate public cachet. In the worlds of the literati, arts festivals, newspaper books pages, or TV dance specials, the traditional episteme of the liberal-arts continues to produce popular meanings, often in tandem with the nexus of capital and class-interest that provoked initial Marxist critiques of Liberalism. So what kind of knowledges does the academy now have to offer these sorts of publics? Given the relationship between what the public wants and what governments spend, how might academics situate these knowledges in ways that are widely compelling but which retain their power of critique, so as to facilitate longevity for the humanities?

The present complex situation of the humanities can be read in terms of a number of specific crises in Liberalism.

When I say 'Liberalism', I refer to Raymond Williams’ observation that Liberalism carries with it a cachet of individual freedom and open-mindedness in part descended from fourteenth and fifteenth-century ideas that the liberal arts and sciences encompassed a range of skills and pursuits
available to a certain class of free 'men of independent means and social position, as distinct from other skills and pursuits ... appropriate to a lower class'.\textsuperscript{18} Contemporary Liberalism, as Williams points out, picked up further associations to do with open-mindedness, democracy and egalitarian freedom, from the early nineteenth century on, with talk of ‘Ultras’ and ‘Liberals’ in 1820s Paris, and as a nickname for progressive Whigs and Radicals. One thing that remains is an early sense of the word where adherents to the liberal arts were regarded as not only free, but undisciplined. As such, contemporary Liberals find themselves under attack from conservatives, who accuse them of excessive, weak and sentimental generosity – this is particularly the case in the US. Liberals have also found themselves under attack from the left, especially Marxists, who also accuse them of lack of rigour, and who point out that the freedoms beloved of Liberals are mainly bourgeois, individualist freedoms, and that there is a contradiction in any theory of individualism that also claims to be a doctrine of social freedom.

The difference between bourgeois, individualist freedoms and social freedom can be read as a difference between private and public, which is itself an important difference for Liberalism. As D.A. Miller has said, Liberal society is structured by the idea of the 'open secret', given that secrecy is

the subjective practice in which the oppositions of private/public, inside/outside, subject/object are established, and the sanctity of the first term kept inviolate.\textsuperscript{19}

For this system to generate properly Liberal subjects, such secrets must be knowable, and even broadcast, yet, paradoxically, must maintain their status as secrets to function as a structuring device that constitutes the individual as the keeper of the secret, to demarcate them from the rest of society. According to Miller, speaking of a secret of his own (which I will keep secret – to find out you will need to read his book), one needs intimate a secret,

if only not to tell it; and conversely, in theatrically continuing to keep my secret, I have already rather given it away ... I can’t quite tell my secret, because then it would be known that there was really nothing special to hide, and no one really special to hide it ... secrecy would seem to be a mode whose ultimate meaning lies in the subject's formal insistence that he is radically inaccessible to the culture that would otherwise determine him.\textsuperscript{20}

In other words, subjects that keep secrets can consider themselves ‘free’, even as the very act of positing secrets acknowledges the existence of a range of institutions that might practice social control, including the
surveillance and regulation of individuals, in the domain known as ‘public’.

Academic disciplines are often structured along similar lines. Frow has spoken of the ‘mystery’ or ‘craft secret’ that has underpinned the professionalisation of academic disciplines throughout this century, forming the ‘basis for the closure of the professional group against the uninitiated’.21 Such professionalisation has involved ‘the consolidation and closure of a body of knowledge within clearly demarcated disciplinary boundaries, and an internal differentiation of this body of knowledge into discrete but interrelated parts … [and] the more efficient monopolization of this knowledge by a definite group’.22 My own discipline, English, has complied with this definition of knowledge formation especially since the Second World War, championing the idea of literature as a set of codes accessible to those with the requisite discrimination, sensibility and personal tastes. The interiority of these codes, and their status as private secrets that are paradoxically kept open, in so far as their limited availability to a select group structures both the discipline of English and the institution of literature, is evidenced by the ideologies of the solitary reading and the individual appreciation, along with the idea that contact with the right books under the right circumstances will make you a better person, and the desirability of owning a private collection or library of books. An example of such codes being put into circulation even as full knowledge of their contents is withheld is Don Anderson’s frequent use of Latin and his regular references to Greek and Roman mythology in his newspaper articles and columns, on the assumption that readers, even if they don’t understand the references, might recognise him as someone who does.

The present ‘crises’ in the humanities are occurring in the context of a more general problematisation of what counts as public and what counts as private. Some instances of this include:

- The gradual turning away of the humanities from its traditional role facilitating the creation of private selves who benefit personally from their education in the sense that they become a ‘better person’, to a vocational, more clearly instrumentalist model of the uses of knowledge.

- At the same time, a turning away from fostering traditions of taste and connoisseurship to knowledges considered to be of social benefit.

- That things such as sexual preference, gender and ethnic background, once considered to be aspects of private life, have taken on public purchase and become institutionalised as ‘identity poli-
tics' which have energised the humanities to the point where they are, as Ken Ruthven says, 'career options in humanities research'.

- The explicit politicisation of disciplines, against those who think the humanities should be a politics-free environment, and who in attempting to resist changes taking place within disciplines, have claimed the New Humanities are dominated by 'political correctness', a claim which is itself an attempt to resituate the political as private.

- The changing status of knowledge and its integration into capitalist systems of production. Jean-François Lyotard has discussed how knowledge and power have become increasingly intertwined and serve to legitimate each other, especially in a system where knowledges are commodified and privatised.

- The general move towards privatisation of the academy, including the trend to privatisation of research in the humanities.

- The increasing pressure being brought to bear on academics by university administrations seeking to own and control copyright over works produced by their staff, against the idea that knowledge should circulate freely through open publication.

- The reformulation of the arts as a whole, as a private business. An example of this is the United States Congress attempted funding cutbacks to the National Endowment for the Arts, from SUS162.4 million per annum two years ago, to a proposed SUS10 million in 1998. The cutbacks were made on the basis that the government had no business in funding the arts, on two grounds: first that the arts had become overly politicised, debasing what were more properly matters of private taste and personal enterprise; second that the NEA fostered a relativist egalitarianism out of keeping with conservative high-culture notions of the arts. As Toby Miller points out, the cutbacks coincided with the Republican belief that 'left-liberal forces were entirely dependent on government funds to do their work', and could be defunded.

- The more general spread of the idea of radical individualism throughout society, with an emphasis on 'market reform' and the imagining of subjects as privatised 'economic man' in the name of competitive individualism, along with the erosion of the idea of the social and the collective.

Obviously there are contradictory messages here, both for supporters of the traditional humanities and for those concerned with the New Humanities. Seeking to untangle these contradictions brings us back to Williams, and the triangle of interests he sets up between Liberals, Leftists and
Conservatives. Both Leftists and Conservatives have succeeded, over the past thirty years or so, in destabilising the public/private opposition at the centre of Liberalism. The idea that identity politics are a fit subject for study flows from 1960s critiques of Liberalism along the lines that the personal is political, which destabilised the public/private system. One impact of feminism has been to drag gender politics out from the formerly private, feminised space of the home into the public spaces of the social and politics. Critiques of postcolonialism have similarly rendered visible, public and political, fundamental cultural and ethnic differences that Liberalism generally occludes and renders private as matters of personal history. Conservatives, on the other hand, have sought to extend the notion of individualism to the point where everything is a function of the private, including the idea of public good and the role of government.

Deeper complicities abound. Even as Leftists problematise the public/private opposition, they often appeal to a classically Liberal notion of public good and public property when they rail against conservative privatisers of the academy. Even as conservatives attack Liberals for their sentimental humanism, they tend to appeal to classical Liberal notions of high culture when defending the humanities against the new knowledges that are currently changing disciplines from within.\textsuperscript{25} Both conservatives and leftists, meanwhile, continue to attack Liberals for their woolly thinking.

An irony for local elegists for the humanities is their tendency to admire works such as Bloom’s The Closing of the American Mind, or Roger Kimball’s Tenured Radicals for their attacks on those who would change the humanities. Bloom’s and Kimball’s books were widely championed within the US far right as part of an anti-affirmative action push and were largely funded by the Olin Foundation, a right-wing think tank, out of a bequest granted by the late John Olin, head of what was once one of the largest slave-owning families in the US south. Both books have become an important legitimating plank in agendas that threaten to prove more damaging to the Liberal-arts than the above-mentioned new knowledges. Alongside its soliloquies to the value of the one true knowledge, The Closing of the American Mind includes powerful attacks on the notion of democracy, whilst advocating a narrow, Darwinist elitism that many Liberals would find disturbing in its stark meritocratic assumption that education and markets operate in much the same way. Both Bloom’s model for the humanities and Republican cuts to the NEA have a basis in Alexis de Tocqueville’s idea that equality and egalitarianism compromise artistic transcendence and equate with a taste-flattening relativism that goes against the traditional notion of the arts as a hierarchical ranking system.\textsuperscript{26}

So if what counts as private and what counts as public is currently up for grabs, and given that traditional liberalism remains influential in the
purchase the humanities apparently have in the minds of the public as a set of practices worth funding, then how might the humanities proceed in the context of a conservative push to privatise education itself?

Against Coady and Miller, who are among many who worry about the future of a humanities that has forsaken its traditional ideals, the humanities? 'genuine credentials for public funding' don't rest in truth-seeking and the possibility of objectivity, but in their opposite. As Frow has argued, 'the value of the so-called humanities, and more specifically of the disciplines of literary studies, can be defended only by taking to its radical conclusions the critique of the essentialist and foundational categories that have governed the humanities' foundation'.27 Indeed, only by so doing is it possible to produce a critique of the present crisis in Liberalism—a critique which is itself necessary for any institution wishing to know how to survive in the present climate. As Frow says, referring to recent calls from humanities traditionalists, any return to the 'affirmative teaching of a supposed consensual culture, a set of common truths and universal values, in fact summons them to an essentially decorative role; a support role in the business of national reconstruction'.28 He follows: 'It is impossible to counter the present attack on the humanities by appealing to the ethical or civic value of literary study, since it is precisely the value of these values that is in question'.29

The humanities, as Frow points out, have moved from generating affirmation to generating critique. In other words, the focus has shifted from producing private subjects to generating a kind of public policy, on condition that the public/private opposition be kept open for scrutiny. As such, the humanities don't threaten their future by turning away from truth and objectivity. Instead, by problematising truth and value, the humanities enhance their future. Most recent conservative attacks on the New Humanities have attempted to reprivatise new knowledges. The attack on so-called 'political correctness', for example, attempts to reprivatise emerging queer, feminist and postcolonial knowledges by insisting that these are finally concerns for the individual and don't form an adequate basis for either social movements or tertiary courses. Such attacks fail to acknowledge the way in which the priorities of the New Humanities commensurate with a global context in which ideas of truth and value, public and private, are already problematised.

Coady and Millers' remarks include a hint that markets need to be accommodated on the basis that the humanities need to take note of what the public says. But this is to impose a narrow definition of who such a public might be, against increasingly insistent, 'truth' destabilising, class, gender, queer and ethnic considerations. Most traditionalist arguments for public accountability in the humanities are circular given that their projected public tend to constitute precisely the kind of middle-class
clerisy that is impressed by the traditional 'truth and beauty' model of the liberal-arts. But if such genteel populism has little more than propaganda value and is exclusionary, then nor should the humanities consider themselves above markets – which would be to reinvoke ideals of the ivory tower and sovereign critical distance in which traditional models of the humanities have a basis. Coady and Miller are right to suggest that the humanities haven’t sold their new role as critics terribly well to whatever publics are out there. Examples of this include:

- Their failure to translate their interests and concerns to a number of wider publics in a language they understand, and the relative failure of academics working in the new humanities to take up public speaking positions
- The lack of a pragmatic working model of 'public space' and a commensurate tendency to fetishise the difficulty of talking to 'the public'.

The humanities, as Meaghan Morris says, need to learn to translate, such that the specialised knowledges and languages currently circulating in the academy are deployed in spaces outside the academy in languages that excite a wider audience with the possibilities of the New Humanities. A difficulty is that those working in the New Humanities tend to habitually, and rightly, speak in terms of plural publics, abandoning the traditional public sphere and the traditional role of the public intellectual. There are grounds for re-examining both these institutions. In particular, humanities professionals need to articulate what form 'the public' might take given the present crises in Liberalism and the wider pressures currently being brought to bear on what counts as public and what counts as private.

One way to imagine such a 'public' might be, to use Slavoj Zizek’s term, as a 'rallying point', on the basis that the idea of the public remains a powerful constitutive force, but that no such public need exist for this to be the case. To appeal to the 'public', then, is to create discourses that work within certain frameworks already recognisable as 'public', even as those frameworks are contingent, partial and already under erasure.

Similarly, the idea of the public intellectual might prove useful, not because the idea needs endorsing – in historical practice public intellectuals, as Morris points out, are most often 'a leisured white gentleman' – but because it is a recognisable speaking position, even if the ideas of 'public space' and the especially the idea of the 'public intellectual' are open to criticism in so far as their traditional constituency is narrowly white and middle-class.

There is a symmetry here that points to an archaism in the New Humanities. For all its engagement with popular culture, in practice the New
Humanities tend to mirror the class, ethnic and gender stratifications that define the traditional ideal of public space, with its dualist separation of ‘real intellectual content’ (the traditional liberal-arts) from entertainment (the populist media). To enter public space in an effective way, the New Humanities need to make themselves relevant, not just to the A/R demographic audiences of the broadsheets, the ABC, arts festival forums, books and journals; they need to be relevant to the audiences of talkback radio, television current affairs and popular magazines – popular forms which often aim for a target audience comprised mainly of women and a ‘C/D’ lower-middle class demographic of both migrants and working class white Australians.

If public space is increasingly stratified, media-dominated, and divided into niche markets according to patterns of media consumption, then one way of working around boundaries is to do what the New Humanities increasingly does, which is think in terms of knowledges. The New Humanities, with their acknowledgement that popular culture is as full of knowledges as, say, the average ABC documentary, are uniquely equipped to do this. Those at the downscale end of the various media-orchestrated niches which increasingly go by the name of public space – women, migrants, regional and working-class people – are precisely the audiences who could be (and already have been) most excited by the New Humanities.

Presently the New Humanities lack diversity in practice. Many migrants, queers and women have taken heart from the sorts of knowledges currently being developed in the humanities, but the structure of many departments doesn’t reflect the structure of the knowledges or that of the student populations. The New Humanities have made a start with appealing to the latter audiences when it comes to course content, but not when it comes to the structure of departments, their ethnic, class and gender balance, or the divisions of labour within. The New Humanities are currently a masculinist business. They are class-bound and Anglocentric. Students for whom English is a second language often struggle, as do staff and students with children. In these respects the New Humanities tend to follow the old.

What this archaism signals is that it’s no easy matter to leave Liberalism behind. It’s an open secret that the disciplines remain structured by a difference between public knowledges and private pleasures. In my discipline, English, most are fans of literature, and of certain books and certain writers. Even as theory offers critiques of Liberalism, it’s an open secret that most theorists are interested in classical Liberal ideas centred on living in a plural, open democracy, enjoying freedom of association, freedom of speech, a transparent press, and a transparent political process. With the exception of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and their
associates such as Zizek, few theorists have attempted to work out how democracy might be retheorised in the context of theory.

What these sorts of contradictions suggest aren’t so much fatal flaws as possible programmes. In particular, these programmes might go beyond what Morris has called the this-goes-with—that style of parodically PC theorising in an urgent attempt to schematise the complexities of the present global-political moment without relying on generic oppositions such as theory/Liberalism. New Humanities/humanism. Liberalism/economic rationalism, or New Humanities/economic rationalism.

One of the complexities of the present moment is that the New Humanities are necessarily implicated in global markets. This isn’t to suggest that the humanities shouldn’t critique global capitalism — such a critique should be near the top of any agenda in the New Humanities. Rather, it is to suggest that markets can’t be easily obviated since they shape the present historical moment. As Morris puts it, recent market-oriented changes to the humanities can’t be changed or reversed, simply because they aren’t in the domain of ‘moral choice’. If the values of the traditional humanities are to be seriously questioned, then there is an opportunity here for the humanities to investigate the idea of vocationality and training, and to develop mixed structures that facilitate the teaching of specific career-oriented skills at the same time as they advance knowledges and critique. This might be done, not to pander to marketeers, but as a move towards breaking down the old Schillerian opposition between pure and applied knowledges — a structuring device that secretly underpins and limits the humanities.

In the shadow of this opposition it’s too easy to overlook the way that the New Humanities complement a wide range of cultural activities. In my own recent experience, activists, designers, multimedia producers, journalists and business people have shown a strong interest in, and use a similar array of knowledges to do with hybridity, local specificity and anti-foundationalism, as those working in the New Humanities. Professionals working these fields are often excited by the idea that the humanities exist as a place for systematically articulating versions of these knowledges. Their interest, often, derives not so much from a desire for increased profits as from a passion for the type of work they do. Properly investigated, these complicacies might open up career opportunities for graduates both within and outside the academy. As such there is no reason for the humanities not to foster links to industry and commerce similar to those taken for granted elsewhere in the academy. This is already happening with cultural policy studies emerging out of cultural studies and bio-ethics emerging out of philosophy, but these developments are relatively limited, especially given the increasing acculturation of com-
merce and industry, the increased size of the culture industry itself, and the range of claims the New Humanities make about it.

Before this can happen, more needs to be done to open up coherent, tenable career paths for postgraduates. Those presently at the start of their research careers will have a disproportionate effect on the future of the humanities. A generation ago academics could look forward to establishing some kind of ongoing research career. In a climate where research counts for more and more, it is easy for junior staff to get caught up in a situation of self-perpetuating disadvantage due to high teaching loads. Postgraduates often teach on a casual basis, which is time consuming but pays poorly, while trying to accumulate publication points and trying to finish an MA or PhD before the money runs out, and are prone to burn-out. Often they are doing teaching that might have otherwise been done by a tenured member of staff who has accumulated enough research points to get a grant to buy themselves out of teaching. The ARC’s decision to give priority to ‘early career academic researchers’ is a hopeful beginning, as is the new Higher Education Contract Employees Award, which seeks to circumvent the problems of short-term contracts in part by deeming jobs permanent after six semesters, but more can be done.

Terry Eagleton, in his book *Literary Theory*, gives a history of critique, from Copernicus, via Marx, via Freud and in particular Structuralism, summed up as the ‘belief that reality, and our experience of it, are discontinuous with each other’, and that such critiques threaten ‘the ideological security of those who wish the world to be in their control, to carry its singular meaning on its face and to yield it up to them in the unblemished mirror of their language. It undermines the empiricism of the literary humanists’.34 His is a useful formulation because it acts as a reminder that critique is what the humanities have to offer. It is also in some ways too summary a formulation, given the difficulty of escaping Liberalism, humanism or empiricism in any simple way – all leave unacknowledged debts, as Eagleton is aware. What happens next in the humanities after Liberalism depends especially on what the New Humanities do with their own open secrets, their own subjective practices of private/public, inside/outside and subject/object, and on how they take to its ‘radical conclusions’, to use Frow’s words, the critique of foundationalism in which they are engaged, at a time when what counts as public and what counts as private are so crucially open to question.

Notes

5. See, for example, Peter Craven, 'Mad Genius at the Bottom of the Rabbit Hole', Age, Metro, 7.1.98.
16. Reuters, 'And Finally ... ', Age, 19.1.98.
17. This formulation follows Terry Eagleton's remark that to speak of "literature and ideology" as two separate phenomena which can be interrelated is ... in one sense quite unnecessary. Literature, in the meaning of the word we have inherited, is an ideology'. Eagleton, 22.
18. Raymond Williamson, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (London: Flamingo, 1987), 179.
20. DA Miller, 195. Italics per original.
22. Frow, 356.


26. For further discussion of de Tocqueville’s ongoing influence on Republican arts funding policy, see Toby Miller, p. 147.

27. Frow, 358.


29. Frow, 358.


32. Meaghan Morris, ‘Publish or be Damned’, p. 23.


34. Eagleton, 108.

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