ANTHROPOLOGY,
THE INTELLECTUALS
AND THE GULF WAR
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Patrick Wickens, a native son of Australia, has just completed a bachelor's degree in anthropology at Goldsmith's College, University of London where he won the prize for best student in his year. This essay was submitted as a dissertation in partial satisfaction of the conditions for awarding that degree. It remains substantially unaltered in the present form of this pamphlet.

PREFACE

The lead issue of this series, Anthropology and the Crisis of the Intellectuals (Prickly Pear Pamphlet No. 1), sought to place debates about anthropology's trajectory within the wider context of challenges to intellectual authority at the end of the twentieth century. In the course of composing many drafts of this piece, we felt obliged to respond to a 1991 editorial by Akbar Ahmed in Anthropology Today which drew attention to anthropologists' silence on matters of world politics such as the Gulf War. Recently, Alex de Waal has made a similar complaint in respect of Rwanda in the same journal. The question is, if anthropology has nothing to say about the most pressing issues of our world, what has it become and what use is it to anyone?

Imagine our pleasure when one of us, as external examiner at Goldsmith's College in 1994, came across Patrick Wickens's undergraduate dissertation on Anthropology, the Intellectuals and the Gulf War. Whereas our essay was grounded in the intellectual history of British social anthropology, this one embraces a full-scale comparison of America, France and Britain in the context of the greatest political crisis since the end of the Cold War, leaving anthropology's inglorious contribution as an afterthought to an analysis of the leading literature on the plight of the intellectuals today.

It would be surprising if anthropology's attempt to develop organised knowledge of itself, were not in the doldrums at this time. Nevertheless, we believe that positive directions may emerge from critical discussion of the present impasse. The editors invite responses to these two pamphlets from our readers, so that perhaps a further edition might combine a selection of opinions. (David Schneider...
has already sent in a scurrilous rebuttal of Pumphier No. 1 which would certainly be included in such a selection.) We also hope that, by publishing Patrick Wickle's essay, we will encourage others who lack full professional standing to air their views on anthropology through Prickly Pear Press.

Anna Grimsby
&
Keith Hart

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INTRODUCTION
Introduction

One of the notable features of the reporting of the Gulf War in the mainstream U.S. media was "the near total unconcern with Iraqi casualties." (Herman 1991:5.) While "the new weaponry was working well, giving great cause for optimism" continuous Herman, there was not a hint of "anything morally dubious about a great power using its enormous technological superiority to pound another Third World country into submission" (1991:5).

Not only the U.S media but all mainstream press displayed a similar lack of critical commentary, an inability to look beyond official justifications and a complete blindness to the devastating consequences of such one-sided military action. Where were the dissenting voices? Where was the journalist collision with the military and ideological filtering of news content certainly did occur. But even within these bounds, numerous inconsistencies, flat contradictions to the more propaganda were broadcast without serious critical reflection.

In this essay I argue that there are more profound reasons for such silence. Due to structural changes in the intellectual community there has been a marked decline in informed critical commentary in the general public arena. The massive expansion of the universities has meant that intellectuals, those with the power and resources to speak out publicly, have been absorbed into the state, occupying ever narrower fields of expertise in large academic institutions. The mass media have also expanded, but in so doing have become centralised corporate organisations that play an increasingly pivotal role in disseminating ideas to the general public. Intellectuals can no longer go straight to the public but must bow to the demands of the media if they are to reach a wider audience than their insulated academic circle. This reorganisation of the production and distribution of ideas has relocated the sphere of public criticism and decentralised the public voice of the academy.

The first part of this essay will look at the evolution of this situation in the U.S., France and Britain taking a critical look at the work of Russell Jacoby, Régis Debeas and Terry Eagleton and will conclude that this process, although country specific, has had certain common outcomes. The institutionalisation of intellectuals has severely curtailed their independence, made obsolete the role of the free-ranging generalist and signalled the rise of the professional specialist. This situation has not arisen for purely functional reasons (such as the expansion of data requiring the subdivisions of disciplines and the growth of society's dependence on knowledge demanding the massification of education), but has been underpinned by power relations between the state and the nascent professional classes.

While the expansion of the universities has produced some growth in radical discourse, these critiques have more and more circumscribed within the institution and between the academics themselves. This insitutionalisation of discourse has had a profound impact on the theoretical frameworks in which debates are conducted. In the second part of this essay, we will examine the relationships between the changes in the intellectual's institutional arrangements and the theoretical realignments that occurred at the same time: Post-structuralism, postmodernism and various other anti-statist doctrines which pervade the social sciences, although stimulating much intra-university debate, have weakened the potential for launching broad-based attacks on wrong-doings in international politics.

Using the concrete example of the Gulf war, the last section of this essay will examine the uses of the intellectuals in the media and will show that the theoretically agnostic climate, coupled with an accommodation on the part of the intellectuals to the media's political agenda, stifled dissent. A look at low-circulation radical journals will show how contradictory, inaccurate and biased much of this "expert" commentary was and how much potential there was for serious oppositional voices in the public arena had institutional conditions been different.
In conclusion, we will look at anthropology's position in this distribution of opinion. As a discipline uniquely qualified to counter the racist propaganda, cultural misunderstandings and gross oversimplifications produced by the media during the Gulf crisis we will ask along with Altuar Ahmed "is the discipline to have relevance in the real world in which we live or is it merely an academic indulgence restricted to limited seminars and teaching courses?" (Anthropology Today 1991:1). Ahmed suggests the latter when he says that during the crisis anthropology "lost its nerve" and its experts "spoke out... because they were either too busy" or "too captured to do anything" (Anthropology Today 1991:2). Ahmed himself, however, champions the former approach but his exhortation to anthropologists to "refuse to bend over the media" must be treated with caution.

The main protagonist in the representation of events like the Gulf War - the intellectuals, whether 'specialists' or 'generalists' - require definition. Following Chomsky, the intellectual will be defined as "a class, which includes historians and other scholars, journalists and political commentators...[which] undertake to analyse and present some picture of social reality" (Chomsky 1979:4). The distribution of knowledge mapped out above will be used to explain why there is a "systematic divergence" between what these people say and "the world of fact" (Chomsky 1979:6). While the 'experts' or specialists are now the primary defenders the 'generalists' whose position has been eroded by current institutional arrangements is an intellectual who is prepared to comment on and critically analyze issues which fall outside his/her area of expertise.
"The Age of the Acadeeme": Intellectuals in the U.S.

In America, a recent spate of books has assailed academic intellectuals from both the Left and the Right. From the Right, books like Alan Bloom's best selling The Closing of the American Mind (1987), Roger Kimball's Tenured Radicals (1991) and Dinesh D'Souza's Illiberal Education (1991) represent a ground swell of conservative backlash against the supposed corrupting influence of the 60s. The common thread runs something like this: 60s student activism, having lowered traditional standards in their own time, continue their subversive influence at the top - as professors of the nation's once great academies. Feminism, Afro-Caribbean Studies, courses on popular culture and 'P.C.' have desecrated America's centres of excellence. The radicals have not just backed the system, they are the system.

These potentiol attacks vastly over-exaggerate the influence of the Left in the U.S., but nevertheless their media exposure has given the Left (yet again) a serious image problem. But attacks from within the Left itself are potentially more damaging. In a far more credible thesis, Russell Jacoby in his book The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe (1987) locates the seeds of decline a decade earlier in the 1970s. At this "critical juncture", independent free-wheeling essayists like Althea Kazin, Lionel Trilling, Daniel Bell, Irving Howe and Dwight Macdonald were either left out in the cold or succumbed to the insecurity of academic tenure (Jacoby 1987:272). Rising inner-city accommodation costs, falling returns from publishers and the growth in lucrative academic positions squeezed out the unattached intellectual as the remnants of bohemia moved into the suburbs and onto the campus.

The expansion of the universities was indeed dramatic. As Jacoby points out, while between 1926 and 1950 the U.S. population doubled, college faculty members rose at a gridlock, from 50,000 in 1920 to 250,000 in 1970 (Jacoby 1989:275). But amongst all these new recruits Jacoby looks in vain for the up and coming fleet of young maverick public voices in the mould of the New York intellectuals who coalesced around the radical Partisan Review in the 30s and 40s. The missing generation, Jacoby surmises, are either anonymous professionals working for the government on technical issues or specialised radicals producing elaborate theoretical formulations for each other. Elsewhere radical publications like Partisan Review or The New York Review of Books have turned Right as the New York intellectuals have failed to reproduce themselves.

Such an all encompassing indictment of the current intellectual community has not surprisingly provoked a strong critical response from the 'missing generation' themselves. Lynn Garafola's review perhaps best summarises Jacoby's shortcomings. She argues that Jacoby's mounting of a hyphenated in born of a vision of American cultural life that is hopelessly behind the times. Jacoby's former idols were "mostly male, mostly Jewish" and their continuing visibility owes as much to their drift rightwards as to their impeccable credentials as hard-nosed critics whose formative years were spent on the outskirts of society. According to Garafola, the new generation does exist; Jacoby can't find them because "he looks for them in the wrong places" (Garafola 1988:125). New radical journals have emerged since the golden age of the catalogue (e.g. Signs, In These Times, and The Village Voice among others) and the next generation - writers like Edward Said, novelist Toni Morrison and feminists Ann Kaplan and Barbara Ehrenreich are all "youngfled", "radical" and "highly visible" (Garafola 1988:127).

Garafola contends that there is a considerable gap between the New Left and the general public; but she also notes that the Left itself, not the university environment in which they are forced to work, but the institutional conditions in which intellectuals write and publish: corporate publishing houses commission little high-risk serious literature. Critical thought is marginalised in low-circulation university journals and the mainstream media is off-limits to radical voices (Garafola 1988).
Other problematic features of Jacoby's work are its unrealistic use of the word 'public' and his assumption that the outsider knows best. Recent theorising has questioned these claims. Identity politics has taken apart the idea of the homogeneous public space, charging that the public voice is exclusive in character, necessarily hegemonic and monopolises discourse at the expense of other groups. The legitimacy of the outsider has also come under attack with critiques like Rose's No Respect (1989) arguing that the aforesaid intellectual has for too long adopted a position of moral superiority and looked down with disdain on popular culture.

The expanded university may have professionalised academies but it also diversified the student population and pluralised academic discourse. The new wave of identity politics, the liberating of once suppressed voices of minorities, women and gays may have been some of the more tangible gains in the academy since the 60s - but at what cost? Why are these supposedly popular concerns so often couched in incomprehensible jargon? Why has mass culture's movement into the academy given rise to a style of theorising inaccessible to the general public? Who stands to gain from such highly specialised analysis? One could argue that feminism and race discourse in the long run have not so much alleviated the plight of America's burgeoning underclass but instead have created "professional spokesperson(s) for the seemingly permanently aggrieved" (Giddens, 1994:3). Another consequence has been that problems which can only be addressed by looking at power relations on a global scale have been obscured in favour of micro-politics.

Even if, as Edward Said claims, the university still offers Western intellectuals an almost unchallenged space for research, this factor alone does not guarantee that this freedom will produce desirable results (Keith Lectures, 1993,3). For Said, it is not the academy but the ethos of professionalism that sustains oppositional voices, producing the highly specialised nine-to-five, working within the dominant paradigm in the pay of higher powers. (Said, Keith Lectures, 1993,3).

But Said falsely divides intrinsically related factors. Those of today's intellectuals who hope to appeal to an audience outside their peers are not isolating negotiating their way through frustrating specialist fields, waging off compromises offered by the publishing industry and the media. They are part of a wider system, a system which to a large degree defines their roles and the audience they reach. Specialisation is often a precondition for advancement, jargon-loads language as a prerequisite for publishing and state patronage an unavoidable fact of life. Given this situation, being above the fray, untainted and independent has distinct advantages.

But, more importantly in the context of this essay, this set of relationships between academies and institutions, publishing houses and contributors and the mainstream media and commentators unevenly distributes political opinion. The specialist carries disproportionate weight, the dissenting generalist is forced into significant access to the wider public. Radical thought lives on, but largely within the private domain of the academic journal.

Even this domain is to a degree subject to market pressures. Kadushin's study of the publishing world shows that while specialist "schorlary scientific" journals are sponsored non-profit affairs, more generalised journals of opinion like Dissent and The New York Review of Books are expected to be profitable even if most usually run at a loss. (Dissent, for example, is constantly being bailed out by beneficent donors.) It is also salutory to remember that specialist scientific book publishing is by far the most profitable branch of the publishing industry in terms of returns on a given amount of capital investment (Kadushin, 1982:256). Since the specialist, forming tight-knit communities, are both the producers and consumers of their own literature, they constitute a "steady, easily locatable market" (Kadushin, 1982:257). For those hoping to reach a wider audience the odds are considerably longer. The general book publishing industry is polarised between the best-seller and the technical manual. In the absence of a strong intellectual community which can exert some power over the editors of big publishing houses, the general
intellectual, Kastenshconcludes, "does not easily fit into the mo-Sen- occupational structure" (1984:5).

To the extent that the expansion of our university system and the decline of urban centers have broken these intellectual circles, Jacoby's thesis holds good. But as Garfonda points out, Jacoby misses the profound villain of the piece: the transformation of the media and publishing industries. Radical opinion has suffered in the wake of corporate interests. Ignoring this factor makes explaining the recent rise of the New Right in an era of declining student populations, scarcity of teaching positions and falls in the real value of academic salaries problematic. Under these pressures in the 70s and 80s academics either shored up their positions in the academy or moved into the private sector. While academia began taking up consultancy positions in corporate firms, private money flowed into the university system with funding for "free-enterprise charts". Right-wing economic think tanks, research programmes and Journals (Herman 1982:286)." In a free market of ideas, certain ideological positions pay better than others.

The French Experience

Although, as we shall see, there are many similarities between the experiences of France and America, one principal difference is that of scale. By 1970 the U.S. (at that time around three times the population of France) had more academic institutions than France had personnel and ten times as many college students (Maltz in Debre 1981:18-19). These startling figures have been offset by France's academic expansion in the 50s and 60s but nonetheless the French higher education system remains far more exclusive than its American counterpart. In spite of the rhetoric of France's academic institutions, France has produced very few highly visible intellectuals who have spoken out publicly on a variety of issues. The very origin of the word "intellectual" dates back to the vocal role they played in the Dreyfus affair which divided French society at the turn of the century. Since then, Sarre, de Beauvoir, Althusser and Foucault, to name but a few, have all achieved virtual cult status outside the academy. How have these writers (among others) managed to gain such public notoriety?

Régis Debray in Teachers, Writers and Scribes (1981) argues that French intellectuals have been successfully dominated by three institutions: the university (1880-1930), the publishing houses (1920-1960) and the media (from 1968 onwards). At each transitional phase different factors contributed to one institution w retaking power from another. In the university phase a tiny tight-knit elite called the shrunken, but as the academy expanded, Debray argues, its status was devolved and the teaching profession "professionalized" (1981:44-45). What followed was a process whereby the university was not so much displaced by the publishing houses but subordinated to and forced to work through them. The center of gravity had moved from the teacher to the writer; the professor to the publisher (1981:90-61). Schools of thought formed not around university departments but review journals (Debre 1981:72).

If Jacoby's ideal was 30s New York, Debray's golden age was roughly at the same time when intellectuals like Cipo, Camus and Sarre collected around small publishing houses and could operate outside the institutions and relatively independently of market forces. Publishing costs were still low and wealthy families could set up and run journals without recourse to public or private financial support, but like Jacoby's lost era, the freedoms that the small-scale publishing industry offered were short-lived. Fiscalising production costs began to change the character of the publishing business as the review that was "the concern of the individual or community" gave way to the magazine which was "a concern, full-stop" (Debre 1981:74). What could be launched by a group of like-minded writers now required enormous amounts of capital which only large profit-oriented firms like Hachette and LE Expansion could afford to put up front.
But Debroy reserves his harshest criticisms for the most recent hegemonic medium: television. The ascendancy of television has increased the power of what Debroy describes as the 'mediocracy' which rules French public opinion. The mass media have turned tables on the intellectuals. Whereas before the leading intellectuals influenced media opinion, now professors are called on to give credibility to the journalists. Cultural decisions are now taken not in the academy but by the higher echelons of the mass media, with programmes like Apostrophes (a weekly arts bulletin) making or breaking the professors' books. And while there are 15,000 assistant lecturers and 300 literary advisers in the main publishing houses, there are only thirty influential critics in the mass media who serve as the ultimate arbiters of what will be widely disseminated and what will be confined to the literary shelves (Debroy 1981:121). As a result of this cultural 'headlock', more books are published each year in France, but fewer people read them. The market has been polarized (like in the U.S.) between the best-seller which everyone reads and 'serious' books which circulate amongst the academics and other writers.

Debroy paints a bleak picture of today's opinion makers: a species whose life is lived under the thumb of the critics, who live in fear of the weekly reviews in the papers and spend their Friday nights "either in front of or on the luminous small screen" (Debroy 1981:100). But how accurate is this portrait?

Debroy's account is in many respects useful but in his enthusiasm he overstates his case. His contention that the mass media will always tend towards the Right oversimplifies the complex political situation in France at the time he was writing and was retrospectively proved wrong when Mitterrand came to power in the eighties. (One irony here is that Debroy himself became one of the President's advisors.) The expansion of the university system did not simply "dilute" the intellectuals' power and restrict their autonomy but made them a formidable force in their own right. So much so that the radical anti-stunis 'antagonizers' - France's second left - significantly influenced Mitterrand's initial government policies, although over the long term they were coopted by a rightwards moving socialist party (Ross 1991).

But what Debroy's work, lost in his blindness to the class interests of the intellectuals, he gains when one considers influential individuals like Forcada, Barthes or Baussendant. These writers owe their public visibility primarily to the media. As media celebrities they managed to circumvent the traditional system of intellectual evaluation - the judgment of peers - and go straight to the public (Boudon in Paval 1989:134-5). Just as more recently new wave philosophers like Bernard-Henri Levy have made their debuts not in the academy under the scrutiny of other intellectuals but on T.V. talk shows. This 'short-circuiting' of the French intellectual system, as we shall see later, greatly influenced French theory in the 60s and 70s.

The overall strength of Debroy's approach is that he looks not just at the individuals who have made it into the public arena but, borrowing a term from Bourdieu (1971), the 'intellectual field' or the evolving set of institutional arrangements which allowed the intellectuals' work to be legitimised for public consumption. The university, the publishing houses and the media, each in their turn served as the arbiters of public acceptability. As each held sway, intellectuals themselves rushed in to fill the positions of power that these institutions afforded, from the university chairs, to positions on editorial boards, to elite jobs in the media. And the last transition, as Michele Martinet's question suggests, represented an ironic political about face:

"Is it not surprising that the most effective managers of the current restructuring of communication and information industries are, in many European countries, especially in France, veterans of May 1968 or have ties to movements that attacked the functioning of the dominant media?" (1988:437).
Consensus and Collaboration: The British Intellectuals and the State

Mattelart's question would not need such detailed analysis in the British context. The history of the intellectual in Britain, in contrast to America and France, has been characterised by a strong and enduring alliance between the intelligentsia and the ruling class. In a sense, the independent oppositional intellectual that Jacoby and Debray idealise and mourn the passing of, never existed in Britain (at least not in recent history). Although an institutional transition somewhat similar to Debray's 'three phases' did occur, each institution licensed the powers of legitimation to the next in what was a smooth transfer of power preserving the position of the elites. The B.B.C., for instance, was "born venerable" under the auspices of Reith who gave it a stately solemnity, reverent style (Mulhern in Debray 1981:xvi).

Terry Eagleton (1984) has to go back as far as the late 17th century to find what he considers to be true oppositional critics. Then, the bourgeoisie pitied national discourse against the crumbling rights and privileges of the aristocracy, but in the 18th century, a close and sustained consensual relationship was established between the agrarian aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie. During this period informal intellectual circles flourished in the coffee houses *(Eagleton 1984:13)*. Amateur critics from a variety of professions (although all white, male and properly) indulged in polite national discourse in journals like Steele's Tatler and Addison's Spectator whose only rules were not to step outside the bounds of the elite ethos.

In the 19th century, at the industrial revolution began to disrupt society and divide the bourgeoisie, criticism split between the professional academic and a hybrid figure - half sage, half "critical hack" - the man of letters *(Eagleton 1982:45)*. The professionals poured scorn on the amateur as a new critical hierarchy emerged. According to Matthew Arnold, writing in the mid 19th century, the critic now had to have "digested libraries of philosophy" in order to be qualified to speak out on the issues of the day *(Eagleton 1981:56)*. But even the amateur 'man of letters' writing in popular journals played a moralising, instructive role rather than avantgarde critical one.

The 20th century saw criticism move into the universities as state capitalism eroded what was left of the public forum that had existed in the coffee houses. By the end of the forties Britain's last successful non-academic literary magazine, Horizon, closed. The age of the amateur (as unconventional as he generally was) was over. Lewis' last-ditch attempt to recreate a public sphere with the journal Scrutiny failed because it was launched from within the university system, the very institution which had scattered critics from public in the first place *(Eagleton 1981)*.

An understanding of this history is necessary if one is to grasp the difficulties and ultimate failure of the New Left in Britain since its inception in the 50s. The triumvire of Stuart Hall, E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams did to some degree fit the bill of the oppositional independent but with a crucial difference in comparison to their French and American counterparts. Raymond Williams was a best-selling writer covering a broad range subjects; E.P. Thompson gained his notoriety only after leaving the university and going freelance; while Stuart Hall has maintained a constant public oppositional stance throughout his career. But the New Left, in its early days at least, maintained a firm belief in the state's capacity to combat capitalism, promoting a strong welfare state run by the professionals who would disseminate not only the benefits of health care and education to the masses, but culture too *(Sainsfield 1989)*. Their initial vision was therefore in step with a history of elite/intelligentsia alliance. It was a philosophy of social change in which the emergent professional classes were afforded the most important roles.

By the late 60s, though, the New Left faced bitter disappointment. The Labour government which they had supported seemed just like...
any other political party in its willingness to compromise in the face of corporate interests. What the Left had failed to take into consideration were the links between state and corporate interests which, although in the 50s and early 60s they favoured a strong welfare state, contributed to a series of compromises which were to erode previous gains. Williams himself realised by the late '70s the New Left's 'extraordinary blindness to the overweening powers of the state' which had led to "a kind of complicity" (quoted in Steinfield 1989:246).

So, while in France and America public intellectuals battled it out in the face of the encroaching influence of the state/complex, in the British context critics never strayed outside of accepted norms, with the post-war radicals ending up fighting a losing battle for the state again. There are also some striking parallels that can be drawn between the three countries. In all three, the 50s can be seen as something of a turning point for the fate of public criticism. It was the time when Jacob's free-wheelers flooded into the universities, when in France, large publishing firms were making the small-scale journal unviable and in Britain when potential radicals were joining forces with the state.

Around this time the mass media were beginning to make their presence felt as the institution of public criticism. In response, intellectuals either formed self-sustaining private discourses within the bounds of the academy or gained a public audience through the media. A more commercialised public criticism meant that the successful public intellectual had to adapt his/her message to the requirements of the media, just as the media were more and more adapting their content to the requirements of the advertisers. Critics of writers like Jacoby, Debray and Eagleton (especially Robbins 1993) point to the fact that in every age there is always someone bemoaning the end of intellectual life and that "the death of the true intellectual" is a thematic narrative which recurs throughout the history of literature on intellectuals. A nostalgic tone certainly provides all of these writers' scopes; but nevertheless there can be no denying that this period with its massive expansion of the university system and dramatic changes in the publishing and media industries was a decisive moment in intellectual history. Nor that these changes signalled not so much the end of the intellectual as a transformation of the intellectual's position in society, one which has tended to further distance the public and intellectual arenas.

Some Theoretical Implications

One effect of the cordoning off of intellectual discourse from the public sphere has been the growth of theoretical formulations which, by their sheer complexity and inaccessibility, tend to reinforce the divide. In this department, post-structuralism, postmodernism and various brands of deconstruction score well. A practice such as the deconstruction of literary texts operates at a level of obscurity which renders it incomprehensible to those not in the know and in so doing it reproduces a hierarchy of knowledge. Such theorising is in other (conventionally) immune to public criticism and can be performed endlessly, giving the unaided radical a job for life. In this case, Gouldner's characterisation of the intelligentsia as a "speech community" consisting of numerous specialised "societies" which frame off the intellectual class from the public is an accurate one (Gouldner 1979:28). There is, though, an even deeper level at which changes in institutional arrangements have affected dissenting thought. The emergence of radically anti-teleological theories like structuralism, post-structuralism and postmodernism which have constrained critical thought can be seen to some extent as a product of the institutional arrangements in which they arose. Before tracing these links, a word of caution is necessary. The relationship between a philosophical position and the socio-political circumstances of its inception are highly complex. You cannot simply read off the political implications of a given theoretical stance. Nevertheless, if a theoretical position that enjoys
enduring popularity is clearly unassailable, easily discriminated and in any case unproductive, then one can assume that outside influences must be contributing to such a theory’s continued acceptance (Chomsky 1979, Bracken 1984). And if institutional and theoretical upheaval occurs simultaneously, then there are good grounds on which to investigate correlations between the two.

France is the 60s, for example, experienced not only social and institutional changes but a veritable theoretical upheaval in the humanities. There was a rapid turnover of theoretical positions with thinkers like Althusser, Foucault, Barthes and Derrida making radical and extravagant claims. The post-structuralist movement that grew out of this period took Saussure’s theories, which had been developed half a century earlier in the specific context of linguistics, and applied them to a wide variety of phenomena. The important point here is that this development occurred at precisely the same moment when Chomsky’s generative grammar, which refuted the Saussurian approach to language, was proving to be a highly productive research programme, rapidly producing new findings which corroborated a rationalist theoretical approach (Pavlov 1989:131). Furthermore, Foucault’s work which espoused supposed epistemic ‘ruptures’ in Western thought not only relied on assumptions that were looking less and less sustainable in the light of Chomsky’s work, but also highly questionable claims to back up his claims (Pavlov 1989:93).

In a situation like this it is worth asking how such work provoked the impact that it did. As we saw earlier, this period was characterised by a collapse of critical standards brought about through the circulation of institutional peer evaluation by the media. Pavlov also suggests that the security of academic tenure and the rise in “discretionary income” produced a constent rise in “discretionary intellectual behaviour” which unleashed anarchistic theorising. In short, security and influence permitted intellectuals to launch a theoretical “potlatch” of wasteful hedonistic research programmes (Pavlov 1989:142).

Despite its shortcomings, this epoch of French theory has been hugely influential not only in France, but in Britain and the States as well. The upshot of the success of post-structuralism and postmodernism has been a serious weakening of critical standards. Post-structuralism’s misuse of the human subject attacks two notions on which broad-ranging oppositional intellectual criticism relies. Firstly, the idea of agency which is essential for opposing domination. Secondly, the concept of ideological mystification, a notion which is only meaningful with an acceptance of ideology’s ‘other’ – i.e. a more accurate version of reality to which it can be compared (Guy 1994). For post-structuralists ideology loses its meaning, becoming a constitutive condition of all social relations (Althusser) or synonyms with power relations (Foucault). In each case truth is constituted and there are no standards by which one can separate fact from fiction, or more accurately, factual documentary evidence from government propaganda (see Norris 1992 and Eagleton 1991 for a detailed discussion of these issues).

For quite some time in America, in parallel to the French experience, anti-humanist, behaviourist theories have held sway over the human sciences. Again, the empiricist ‘tabula rasa’ approach to human behaviour endures despite a series of devastating attacks launched against it (especially Chomsky 1979) and despite the fact that as a theory it is circular and self-confirming and therefore lacks any explanatory power (Bracken 1984:31). Chomsky’s own explanation for the endurance of behaviourist doctrines is that the empiricist position correlates with the modes intellectuals’ role as technocrats and social engineers. In other words, believing that humans are infinitely malleable empty organisms sustains the position of the ‘experts’ whose job is to manipulate, manage and control society and refutes the idea that individuals may have some essential desire to be self-determining (Chomsky 1979:90-91 cf. Bracken 1984:31-32).

Chomsky’s own political work shows how the rationalist line provides a far stronger position from which to launch dissenting attacks.
Chomsky uses similar arguments in his work on linguistics against behaviorisms like Skinner as he does in his politics against the likes of Foucault. Linguistically, if we use intrinsic structures in the mind which give humans an innate capacity to acquire and use language creatively; politically, fundamental human qualities - aspects of human nature - give humans an instinctive desire for autonomy and freedom from oppression. Chomsky's work was a diatribe aimed at pointing out the ideology of State domination (even depersonalized) is at variance with this instinct and therefore immoral. Thus, in conversation with Michel Foucault, while both hold a considerable degree of consensus (for example in the distrust of expanding power relations and challenging their validity) they fell out over the fundamental point as far as the possibility of dissident action is concerned. Foucault bridged at the crucial moment when he refuses to concede that striving for a better system of justice is possible. For Foucault, such a struggle is an illusion; for the concept of justice itself is arbitrary and strongly dependent on contemporary social relations (Elders 1974).

Foucault is therefore forced into the considerably less effective role of the 'specific intellectual' - one who concentrates solely on specialized issues pointing out the weakness in dominant ideas and proposing counter-discourses which, in his own formulation, are deemed to be subsumed by more powerful discourses. While Foucault may have had genuine radical political designs, this line of reasoning, if taken to its logical limits leads to the ultra-conservative non-pragmatist theories of Rorty and Fish where community consensus, however gained, is all that can be hoped for - a sort of line of least resistance philosophy which rules out the role of the dissident.

But one has to be careful not to make hard and fast correlations between philosophical and political positions. In economics and sociobiology, rationalist human theories are used to sustain political positions diametrically opposed to those of Chomsky. Some sociobiologists (e.g. Wilson 1975) argue that current (western) social arrangements can be directly related to genetic pre-dispositions while classical economists like Friedman equate capitalism with man's intrinsic urge to rationalize resistances. Both positions act as a conservative apology for the status quo. Yet such theories lack any predictive power, work on a level of generality that they are not easily proved or disproved and rely on arbitrary definitions (such as Friedman's constantly revised notion of the 'natural' rate of unemployment (Herman 1982)). These pseudo-scientific theories are ideological in the sense that they use the authority of science to cover their manifest inadequacies.

But as we have seen, institutional arrangements, the circumventing power of the media, the rise of the specialist and the decline of the generalist have influenced both the form and the content of recent theory in the humanities. Highly specialised, largely agnostic theorising is a product of an intellectual community that is both cut off from the outside world and at the same time beginning to realise its own interests as a class whose specialised knowledge sets them apart from the rest of society.
PART II

RESPONSES TO THE GULF WAR
Theory In The Gulf

There are strong links between the theoretical musings described above and the intellectuals’ response to an event like the Gulf War. The ‘no comment’ approach was perhaps the most widespread in keeping with an indifferent critical climate, but for those who put their agonism in agnosticism was the order of the day. Baudrillard, for example, in his infamous article “The Reality Gulf” (Guardian 11 January 1991) written on the eve of hostilities claimed that the war would not in fact take place. By this he meant that the media had created a ‘hyper real scenario’ of fallacious commentary, empty predictions and reports of treaties and counter-threats that were staged for the media in the first place. In Baudrillard’s opinion, the only real “strategic cite is the T.V. screen from which we are daily bombarded”. There is no other reality; images and their referents are interchangeable. As a result we have on our hands, under the auspices of the UN as an “extended cosmophile”, a “Safe War” (like Safe Sex)—“a form of war which means never having to face up to war” (1991:25).

Baudrillard’s piece as a description of the way the media worked during the crisis holds some validity; but to go from there and suggest that to take any position on such an event by attempting to demystify the media’s ‘simulacrum’ is simply mistaken—in effect just one more illusory exercise—is absurd. Baudrillard’s second article published in Libération (29 March 1991) entitled “La guerre du Golfe n’a pas en lieu” (The Gulf war did not take place) goes even further in this direction. Baudrillard is willing to concede that in the event mass destruction did take place but he goes on to argue that we must not be deceived into taking a moral stand on such an issue but must instead engage in a form of postmodern one-ownership and reject all evidence so as to be “morevirtual than the events themselves” (trans. in Norris 1991:194).

Baudrillard’s position is perhaps somewhat extreme; but its controversial avant-garde flavour assured it copy space. Similar sentiments dressed up differently begin to look disturbingly representative of the intellectual response in the media when one considers Michael Ignatieff’s article in the Observer (3 March 1991). “The languages of moral concern hardly connect,” written Ignatieff, “some people decry the carnage on the road to Baghdad; others, like Ignatieff himself, support the war on the grounds that sanctions would have failed. But in the final analysis ‘neither side has the slightest hope of convincing the other’. What kind of critical commentary is this?” Ignatieff’s relativist stance renders informed debate irrelevant and absolves him from having to defend his pro-war position.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Barbara Ehrenreich (one of Granta’s new generation public intellectuals) in an article in Time magazine (October 15 1990) called “The Warrior Culture” attributes the enormity of the U.S. to confront the Iraqis militarily to America’s culture of aggression. She starts off with a sort of Victorian anthropological chamber of horrors: dozens of “prehistoriological peoples” including the Masai of East Africa and the North American Plains Indians prove that men cannot marry until they have killed in battle; in the Solomon Islands a chief’s status is reckoned by the number of skulls displayed around his door; Aztec kings use human hearts in religious rituals. America possesses just such a ‘warrior culture’ with its unquestionable thirst for violence on TV, its willingness to go toward any pretext, and its warrior elite upsouling off nearly a third the federal budget even in peacetime. While left-wingers may blame this war on imperialism and right-wingers on ‘internationalism’, Ehrenreich concludes, the real villain is in the culture itself.

Ehrenreich’s well-intentioned piece is not only fails to convince ethnographically but, reducing international politics to culture, eliminates the possibility of dissent. Ehrenreich is arguing in effect, that Americans just can’t help themselves; their culture incubates them with the urge to fight. Historical precedents, economic considerations and global power relations become irrelevant.
These three public intellectuals, a highly visible in their respective countries, are unable to assess critically a major political event like the Gulf War. Baussandrard wants to live in "virtual reality"; Ignatoff concludes that any adjudication is impossible; and Ehrenreich reduces the conflict to spurious cultural predispositions. Their lack of conviction, though, owes as much to the theoretical climate as to the requirements of the media. Baussandrard's piece satisfies the market for the bizarre - the intellectual eccentric going over the top; Ignatoff recapitulates the views of the self-liberal readership of the Observer; while Ehrenreich's article has obvious exotic appeal.

Even outside the requirements of the media, the Gulf War showed up the general paralyses of the intellectual community worldwide. In America, Edward Said argues that intellectuals failed to join the debate because of their "lack of affiliation with the public sphere, provinciality and impotence" (1991). Even the editorial board of Dissent was divided over the issue, producing a wide spectrum of opinion. Todd Gitlin described the war as a "catastrophe" which was "avoidable". The late Irving Howe felt compelled to take a pro-war position, but felt that the war was "uncomfortable" for the Left. While Dennis Wong concluded that because of the U.N.'s role, this was a "legal and just war" (Monton et al 1991:153-160). In France ex-radical "soixante huitard" Alain Touraine gave the war his unequivocal support, while Pierre Bourdieu denounced it as "drunken war mongering" (Gamit 1992:25, my trans.). In Britain, Christopher Norris comments that few intellectuals were able to resist the "pressure of ideological recruitment" (1992:25) and the Times in an article written during the conflict described the "old Conscription of intellectual protest" as in "ceremony" (27 Jan, 1991).

Perhaps the most striking example of intellectual disarray was in Germany where the issue of the war was the first event to decisively break up one of the most politically cohesive left-wing groups in Europe. Veterans of 68, Eichmberger and Brunink came out in support of the Allies as other intellectuals appeared to flounder in self-contradiction: Jurgen Habermas commented that the war was justified (as opposed to "just"); Cohn-Bendit supported the war while at the same time condemning the hypocrisy of the intellectuals for ignoring the suffering of the Iraqi people (Rabinbach 1991:462).

The central question is, though, was this war really so morally ambiguous as to warrant such a fateful reaction from one-time radicals? Before looking critically at the more public (and conservative) reaction of the intellectuals in the media let us take a look at what could have been said had the opportunities been given.

Possible Critical Responses To The Gulf War

According to George Bush, the U.S. led the coalition in order to safeguard humanity's aspirations in the New World Order for "peace, security, freedom and the rule of law" (in Brenner 1991:1223), principles which Saddam Hussein had violated with his appalling record on human rights and his unprovoked invasion of Kuwait. There are a number of things that can be said about these claims. Firstly, a cursory review of the history of U.S. foreign policy shows that America's concern for freedom and human rights has been coincidental rather than integral to their policy decisions. Even ignoring the U.S.'s own highly inconsistent record in other parts of the world - (although seemingly consistent in terms of protecting their own interests), U.S. policy towards Iraq alone is enough to demonstrate just how low the issue of human rights and the rule of law comes on their list of priorities. The U.S. supported Iraq's unprovoked invasion of Iran, reestablished diplomatic relations in 1984 - the same year Saddam used banned gas against the Iranians - and despite escalating human rights abuses authorized more than $4 billion worth of credit between 1985 and 1990 (Ridgeway 1991:13). By 1990 Iraq was America's third largest trading partner in the Middle East behind Saudi Arabia and Israel and arms sales continued right up until the night of 2 August (Ridgeway 1991:14, Brenner 1991). During the conflict the U.S. further demonstrated how interested they were in freedom and democracy by repeatedly
refusing to talk to Iraq’s only genuinely representative body, the Iraqi democratic opposition (Chomsky 1992).

Turning to a marginally more plausible justification, what about America’s responsibility to protect the authority of the U.N., making sure its resolutions are respected and complied with? This would be all very well except for the fact that in the last twenty-five years the U.S. has far outstripped any other country in vetoing past resolutions (Chomsky 1992:275).

The next most likely approach, taken by Professor Fred Halliday and much of the intellectual community, was that pragmatically speaking this was the only way. Halliday argues that given Saddam’s intransigence, negotiations and sanctions are destined to fail and therefore war is the sole solution “even if it is conducted by an unsavoury set of powerful states” (Guardian 11 February 1991 my italics). The main problem with this type of approach is that, if these powerful states really mean “surrender”, what guarantee was there that the negotiations, war and final settlement would be conducted satisfactorily?

Halliday blames Saddam’s obstinacy for the failure of negotiations, ignoring the fact that just eight days before Iraq’s invasion, the US ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie explicitly gave Saddam the “green light” to resolve its border disputes with Kuwait and that thereafter numerous reasonable offers were made by the Iraqis which were rejected out of hand by the U.S. administration. 39 We have no way of telling how serious these offers were precisely because of the cynical pragmatism (similar to that of Halliday) of a U.S. administration which simply could not afford politically or economically to keep such a vast force in Saudi Arabia indefinitely or suffer the ignominy of withdrawal and which on all available evidence had clearly made up its mind tooust the Iraqis militarily as early as October 1990. 40 It takes two to negotiate, and as far as sanctions, by the U.S. administration’s own admission, by December the trade embargo was beginning to bite (Webster in Safeguard 1991:154-157, Wiener 1991).

In the event of war Halliday’s “unsavoury” states did not disappoint. Despite the media’s enthusiasm for the so-called “smart bombs”, the overwhelming majority of the huge tonnage dropped on Iraq was in fact “dumb”. 41 Carpet bombing was commonplace, as was the use of phosphorous shells and napalm (Ray 1991, Herman 1991). Legitimate targets included hotels, civilian bunkers, water-supply systems, sewage disposal plants and fleeing Iraqis - the infamous incident on the road to Basra was only the worst of many similar attacks. In less than nine months, the collective impact of Iraqi and U.S. atrocities caused 100,000 deaths, 42 five million displaced persons, over $200 billion in property damage, and untold environmental destruction (Hooftang 1991). 43 Just after the war, when Saddam was busy wiping out the Kurds and Shi’ite populations, a senior U.S. diplomat was quoted as saying “Better the Saddam Hussein we know than an unwieldy coalition, or a new strong man who is an unknown quantity” (Guardian 13 March 1991). Indicating just what the word “pragmatism” really means to America’s political elite. And despite Bush’s concern that “it would be tragic if the nations of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf were now, in the wake of war, to embark on a new arms race” (in Chomsky 1993:105), within days of the cessation of hostilities new arms deals being signed throughout the Middle East in the interests of “regional stability”. 44

Halliday’s argument evades the questions at the heart of a critical appraisal of international relations: who, when all is said and done, stands to gain from U.S. policy in Gulf? Who are the losers? Does the fact that Saddam’s Ba’athist regime was/browse beyond belief mean that it is impossible to assess critically the actions of those who opposed it? Halliday’s line is so close to Bush’s arguments minus the rhetoric that these questions do not even arise. The question of principle codifies that of pragmatism which on a U.S. interpretation means don’t negotiate, wreck the country with as much military force as possible, then leave Saddam to re-impose order by subjugating his population with further atrocities.
A critical response to the problems in the Gulf should not have mobilised to much around pre or anti-war postures, but should have maintained a distance and questioned the whole way the crisis was managed by the U.S. - from its initial responses, to its willingness to negotiate seriously and its conduct during and after the war - with the bottom line being, was a really necessary to turn Iraq into nothing more than a devastated police state in order to solve the crisis?

'Expert' Opinion Weighs In

In the 1970s, the American essayist Randolph Bourne wrote of a special affinity that existed between the pragmatic liberal intelligentsia and war: "there seems to be a peculiar complicity between these men. It is as if war and they had been "waiting for each other" (in Chomsky 1969:9). Fifty years on, Raymond Williams made a similar point in relation to the television coverage of the Falklands war. An alliance between professional commentators and the military produced an "anti-sceptic presentation" distancing the public from the real horrors of violent conflict (in Robinson 1993:56). In the Gulf War, these strategic alliances were more evident than ever. Journalists, in collaboration with specialists or intellectuals, produced a wealth of information which had a numbing effect on the viewer.

The bulk of commentary during the Gulf war came from the technical experts, a sort of military intelligentsia typified by people like Francis Tusa, editor of Armed Forces Journal International, Colonel Michael Desser, deputy director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and, in this case, Fred Halliday, professor of international relations at the LSE. These commentators gave technical assistance to the media with predictions, strategic advice and analysis of military manoeuvres. A few months before the war, for example, when speculation was beginning to intensify, Professor Halliday was reported in the Times as a prominent supporter of the "February 15 military option school of thinking" commenting that "all the armaments will be in place, the weather will be cooler...and sanctions will have been given a chance" (Times 1 October 1990). Other analysts supportive, mid to late November because "the waning of the desert moon" gave America the edge with their advanced night-vision equipment (Times 1 October 1990)

But where political opinion weighed in the professors presented a united front. If Norman Stone, professor of history at Oxford, was correct when he said that support for the war had been "pretty sound...except for the intellectual classes as usual" (Guardian 9 February 1991), the dissenting voices with very few exceptions didn't make it to press. Instead we had Bernard Williams, professor of moral philosophy at Oxford, commenting that the war was "a perfectly just enterprise" on account of the "extraordinary unattractiveness of the enemy" and that the UN had given "greater legitimacy than any of the previous adventures"; and Roger Scruton, professor of aesthetics, describing the American leadership in the conflict as "essentially stable, just and honest" (Sunday Times 27 January 1991).

More extended commentary came from an article by Norman Dixon, emeritus professor of psychology at University College, London. In it, Dixon presents an evolutionary account of man's military encounters: first small bands of battle tribesmen resolved differences through hard to hard combat; then professional armies fought pitched battles until finally the great war mobilised nations against each other. For Dixon, the Gulf war represented the pinnacle of this historical progression with the "propert accuracy" of the Allied bomb attacks providing a surgical precision which "should encourage civilian critics to take a more favourable view of our military adventure" (Times 26 January 1991). The two-generation technological advantage over the enemy made America's defeat in Vietnam at the hands of a "little old man with a wispy beard and his poverty-stricken army" a thing of the past (Times 25 January 1991).

Not all political commentary was so transparently right-wing as those cited above. From the left came Hans Magnus Enzensberger who diagnosed the Gulf war as "the first signs of outsiders beginning to
Anthropology's Silence

If the underlying argument of most of the voices cited above was that the Iraqis were just one more obstacle for the West, a threat which needed eliminating, where were the anthropological voices to counter these ethnocentric claims? In the U.S., Benthill reports, the anthropologists were "largely mute"; in Britain, according to Ahmed, anthropology failed to step out of its "tuturorial inertia" in engaging with contemporary crises (Benthill 1991:1, Ahmed 1991:1). While shying away from public discussion, the anthropologists did manage to talk amongst themselves in a conference on the "Cultural Aspects of Conflict in the Middle East" held at the LSE (29 April 1991).

The conference took an anthropological look at the crisis, examining Kurd and Shi’ite kin systems, the structure of the Arab family and concepts peculiar to Arab/Islamic social codes. Although insalubrious in its aims, a few examples are enough to show how little light this approach shed on the real reasons behind the Gulf crisis. Sue Wright, for instance, in a paper entitled ‘Surgical Strikes and Segmentary Society’, discussed the inappropriateness of the Western metaphor of surgery. The West, since it supposedly had no quarrel with the Iraqi people, had attempted to excise Saddam like a tumour, leaving the rest of society (or the ‘body politic’) to continue the metaphor untouched. According to Wright this was a mistake since the Kurdish and Shi’ite segmentary societies have the tendency to undergo fission under stress and therefore would not overcome a centralised army when the ‘excision’ was completed (in Benthill 1991:16).

As we have seen, though, the metaphor of surgery was not some cultural misunderstanding but pure propaganda, shrouding what was in fact the massive destruction wrought out in the war. As for Bush’s claims that he had no quarrel with the Iraqi people, this was only true as much as the ‘tough line’ was treated as an insolence to the whole operation. The idea of Kurdish and Shi’ite fission being at the heart of their inability to topple Saddam is plainly absurd. Oppressed people whatever their kin system could hope to challenge Saddam’s mobile
force of helicopter pods, tanks and rocket launchers? How could a regional group like the Kurds defend themselves in the face of a ruthless regime that has been receiving military and economic support from the west for almost a decade? In her attempts to introduce local detail, Wright obscures the wider global issues that in a case like the Gulf conflict clearly take precedence.

Numerous contributors (e.g. Kamml, Werbreer and Gellner) pointed to the fact that the Arab family structure, which emphasised the unchallengeable position of a strong father figure (embodied in the concept of rabib which means both God and father), was related to Saddam’s ruthless dictatorship. But again in the passage from cultural detail to global political reality something is lost in the translation. Saddam was more a type propped up by the west than an ideal father figure. If he really was the latter, how do you explain the fact that there was widespread dissent amongst the Iraqi people during the Gulf crisis? This is not to say that ethnographic detail is an irrelevance, but rather that in this particular case, in a war involving all the major global powers, cultural minutiae elapse little.

For the broader picture, Ernst Gellner produced a paper that bore a striking resemblance to Fukuyama’s article discussed above (and also Halliday’s (1991) piece for Marxism Today). Gellner argued that only the west, with its devotion to economic development, could be trusted with high-tech weaponry since the developed world no longer valued aggression and had no interest in acquiring land. Saddam, on the other hand, had proven trustworthy and had to be decisively defeated by the west (in Mird-Jasmi 1991:5). Like Fukuyama’s article, Gellner’s approach is hard to swallow because he denies the relationships between, to use his own terminology, the “goodies” (the west) and the “badies” (the rest) (in Mird-Hoseini 1991:5). What impact does the west’s pursuit of economic interests have on the rest of the world, particularly areas like the Gulf which is a region of strategic economic importance? Do the historical relationships that have built up between the west and its oil-supplying nations have anything to do with dictatorial regimes that have flourished there?

Gellner’s functionalist approach to global politics leaves such questions untraced.

From all the contributions to the conference one is forced to conclude with Ziba Mird-Hoseini that “If one takes this seminar in as a “brochure” of what anthropology has to contribute to the understanding of events in a major world crisis, then one must admit it to be very little in a world in which realpolitik rules” (1991:5).

The Institutionalisation Of Anthropology

Anthropology’s inability to communicate with the wider public stems from the institutional factors outlined in the first half of this essay. As the universities expanded so too did anthropology as a discipline. Proliferation has brought specialisation with a vengeance, with anthropology parcelling into “small corners pursuing disjointive investigations and talking mainly to themselves” (Ornitz 1984:126).

Theoretically, anthropology has gone from universalism to particularism; from explanation to description; and from materialist outlooks to culturalist ones. There has been a rejection of rationalism in favour of interpretive approaches, as cultural relativism has ironically become one of the few points of consensus amongst anthropologists. Similar to other of the humanities the human sciences have been the un criticised and selective acceptance of post-structuralist theory and a rejection of examining the implications of formal linguistics, perhaps the only branch of the human sciences to have made significant recent progress. Instead, the Whorfian hypothesis of linguistic determinism, is accepted as an article of faith despite the fact that Whorf’s data has since been disputed and that empirical research has been unable to confirm or disprove the theory.
This culturalist approach and relativistic outlook has placed the act of ethnographic research centre stage. The recent Rice school of postmodernist ethnographers have further professionalised the exercise, introducing a highly specialised vocabulary and mode of thinking which, using Marcus' own words "clears the way for reconceptualising anthropological careers" (1986:262).

Anthropological careers may never have been closely connected with broader political issues, but recent developments ensure that private theorising will be kept alive and aces out of the public domain. Part of the problem may well be the media itself, which as Ahmed points out prefers the expert "who can comment on the larger picture" whereas the anthropologist prefers to focus on the "fine-grained ethnography" (1991:2). But another part of the problem lies surely in the institutional conditions in which anthropologists work which effect both the focus of their efforts and the theoretical frameworks they employ. A growing institution that produces ever smaller sub-divisions of knowledge and unshakable theoretical frameworks with which to accommodate these specialist interests stands less and less of a chance of communicating its ideas outside of its own walls. There is some security in this position for the anthropologist but oxification is the price.

CONCLUSION
Conclusion

This essay has related the institutional changes in the universities to the decline of dissenters voices in the public domain. The expansion of the universities has given rise to a class of institutionalised specialists whose interrelations have had a relativising effect producing flexible theoretical positions. This process has brought with it some gains: the activating of new and diverse voices in the academy, the realisation of the plurality of interests that binds any society together and the highlighting of cultural differences that exist within societies and around the world.

But the losses have been heavy. Claims that professional positions have democratized institutional discourse by plausibility cannot be sustained in the face of an international event like the Gulf War. Society may well be composed of different voices, overlapping identities and divergent worldviews, but this does little to explain the fact that a tiny elite in the space of a few months managed to place half a million troops in Saudi Arabia. In this case, for all intents and purposes, the United States did not act like an amorphous body but as a monolithic global power who can send its massive military forces at a moment’s notice anywhere in the world without even consulting congress.

A review of commentary on the Gulf War showed that dissenting opinion was concentrated in a handful of low-circulation radical journals (e.g. The New Left Review, Dissent, Lies of Our Times) while the academic response in the mainstream media was largely conservative. A look at anthropology’s reaction found that the discipline, because of its specialised character could not adequately explain the event. This is not to say that specialist pursuit are not important or even crucial to our understanding; but the institutional precedence of the specialist even in cases that have quite general implications has seriously affected the way such events are viewed.
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