toolbox for | electric fences

MELISSA GREGG

> … the more 'open' the democracy the more closed the language will become.
>
> Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*[1]

Reading Don Watson's formidable memoir of the Keating years, I'm reminded of a resonant speech from a Palm Sunday rally in 2002, and the voice of Sister Susan Connelly reverberating across a searing hot Belmore Park: 'If they accuse us of having bleeding hearts, at least it proves we *have* hearts,' she declared, to rapturous applause. And while her comment referred to the federal government's stance on asylum seekers, I sometimes wished Watson would drop *that* line to the 'pointy heads' in the Prime Minister's office to unsettle their obsession with trade figures and current account deficits.

Watson's decision to include the 'bleeding heart' label in his title points to something I want to reflect upon here: the idea that an affective dimension is often at work in constructions of political 'reality'. Such a recognition might be seen to reinforce the value of certain legacies in cultural studies, particularly the role of articulation in public debate, and the renewed importance of such work in framing responses to volatile issues like the mandatory detention of asylum seekers. Revisiting the work of Stuart Hall on Thatcherism, and taking note of Judith Brett's recent history of the Australian Liberal Party, I want to contemplate the prominent role language plays in political life, and, alongside Watson and others, question the priority the Left accords this key element of contemporary politics.[2] In doing so, I use Hall as an example of what might be called scholarly affect: a voice of intervention that catalyses the Left in moments of crisis, and a voice that deploys cultural theory to make sense of concrete political problems.

While the title of this essay genuflects to Deleuze and Foucault's notion of 'theory as tool-box', it also suggests some of the implications of that notion, namely, that abstract ideas can and do service present political issues.[3] This is what I argue Hall's voice achieves—it brings the rigours of scholarly analysis to bear on specific historical moments, rearticulating a conjuncture towards more hopeful possibilities for a Left project. But as part of a wider tendency in cultural studies, Hall makes use of an affective address in his deployment of theoretical knowledge, to encourage widespread momentum for alternative political outcomes. As recent critiques of Hall's work suggest, the trouble affect still poses traditional paradigms of intellectual practice is its imbrication with charisma and, hence, irrationality.[4] Still, a concerted use of an affective voice need not discount criticality. Moreover, the combination of both is possible and necessary when the language with which humanist concerns are voiced succeeds in alienating the heart from political considerations.

— The grain of the voice

While 'voice' suggests the idea of speaking position, a concept critical in cultural studies' development, it also alludes to Roland Barthes's discussion of the 'grain of the voice' in *Image Music Text*.[5] Barthes describes a mode of listening directed not to 'the tyranny of meaning' he claims dominates the genre of music criticism, but one that's interested in producing an admittedly 'impossible account of an individual thrill' experienced in listening to certain performers.[6] This 'climactic pleasure' is an appreciation of 'the *diction* of the language', and he asks that conventional parameters of critical judgement be suspended in order to enact an '*encounter between a language and a voice*'.[7] Striving to hear the 'enunciative strategies' consistently employed by individual writers and to 'activate an encounter' with a distinct voice, I am following Laleen Jayamanne when I seek ways of entering an object of analysis, 'though not necessarily through the door marked "Enter"'.[8] Against what appears 'customary to talk about', I want to get the style of enunciation, the register and the tone of a writer into the conversation about a work's importance.[9]

The 'individual thrill' of Hall's voice is its 'will to connect', that guiding principle he once suggested for cultural studies that arises from a sense that 'there is something *at stake* in cultural studies, in a way I think, and hope, is not exactly true of many other important intellectual and critical practices'.[10] To me, this oft-quoted line tries to convey cultural studies' particular commitment to communicating affect. It doesn't claim that other disciplines are somehow lacking, as critics argue, but that cultural studies tries to convey the weightiness of its subject matter—weighty in that sense of a *heavy* heart—in ways not conventionally available to other disciplines. Viewed in this light, cultural studies can be seen to offer a space for expressing what's objectionable about the society described and recorded by disciplines and institutions serving different epistemological tasks. As Dominick LaCapra

recently argued, 'there is something inappropriate about modes of representation which in their very style or manner of address tend to overly objectify, smooth over, or obliterate the nature and impact of the events they treat'.[11] Scholarly writing that acknowledges emotion can in certain circumstances act as an important 'counterforce to numbing … attending to, even trying, in limited ways, to recapture the possibly split-off, affective dimension of the experience of others'.[12] LaCapra endorses the appropriateness of an affective speaking position in those situations where a 'complacent reasonableness or bland objectivism' fit poorly with the subject matter under discussion.[13] While his work is concerned predominantly with the legacy of the Holocaust and the fruitful potential of testimonial narratives in activating empathy, I find this position useful in other, perhaps more modest, applications, similarly concerned to transmit what's unacceptable in political debate.

— MARKET FREEDOM

Stuart Hall's appraisal of Thatcherism certainly acted as a 'counterforce to numbing' in its explicit condemnation of the Left's bankruptcy. As Wendy Brown comments, for Hall, Margaret Thatcher's ascendancy was 'consequent to the Left's own failure to apprehend the character of the age, and to develop a political critique and a moral-political vision appropriate to this character'.[14] Hall's voice troubled Left advocates with its ruthless questioning of orthodoxy. Against revolutionary narratives still circulating at the time, Hall argued that:

> a politics which depends on 'the' working-class being, essentially and eternally, either entirely 'Thatcherite' or entirely the revolutionary subject-in-waiting is simply inadequate. It is no longer telling us what we most need to know.[15]

Hall called for a new agenda for progressive politics: 'I believe, with Gramsci, that we must first attend "violently" to things as they are, without illusions or false hopes, if we are to transcend the present'.[16] Following Gramsci's lead in reassessing key aspects of Marxist theory, Hall argued in *The Hard Road to Renewal* that the strategies fitting a socialist project can only be determined by attending to the unique characteristics of a specific historical conjuncture. This entails defining 'what is specific and different about this moment', for 'the combination of what is similar and what is different defines not only the specificity of the moment, but the specificity of the question, and therefore the strategies with which we attempt to intervene'.[17]

With this attention to conjuncture and specificity, Hall's description of Thatcherism highlighted the precariousness and light-footedness characterising the formation of hegemony. For Hall, the Thatcherite ideology could be read like any other, a unity 'always in quotation marks and always complex, a suturing together of elements which have no necessary or eternal "belongingness". It is always, in that sense, organized around arbitrary and not natural

closures'.[18] In her ability to assert British identity in terms servicing Tory interests, Thatcher recognised the power of cultural politics:

> One of Thatcherism's great strengths is its drive to embed its politics in civil society. It seeks to achieve this through cultural change—enterprise culture, the spread of Thatcherite personal identities of home-owner, credit-card holder, and share-owner. It has also wrought significant institutional changes in civil society. Companies have become not merely sources of employment and output, but geysers for Thatcherite values—value for money, choice, efficiency … The company and the private home have been elevated as key institutions in society.[19]

As Brown relates, the key problem this posed for Thatcher's critics was that it surpassed the Left's own 'dismissive or suspicious attitude toward cultural politics'. For Hall, this was not so much 'a sign of its unwavering principles but of its anachronistic habits of thought, and its fears and anxieties about revising those habits'.[20]

When freedom is described only in terms of market freedom, the possibility of voicing 'the affective dimension of the experience of others' is severely challenged. For Hall, this was the cornerstone and the outrage of Thatcher's hegemonic goal of a shareholder society. The only emancipatory narrative available in this vision is trust in the market. Thatcherism worked by prohibiting even the linguistic terrain on which a political alternative might be described. Those opposed to the market became susceptible to charges of treason; any form of dissent, opposition or conflict represented a potential conspiracy against society as a whole. In this situation, according to Hall, 'whatever the state does is legitimate (even if it is not "right"); and whoever threatens the consensus threatens the state'.[21] The state is able to exercise power legitimately by claiming to represent the will of 'the people', in what Hall famously termed an example of 'authoritarian populism'.

Hall emphasised that, despite its victories, Thatcherism never achieved full hegemony. Even at its height, he regarded Thatcherism as 'dominant but not hegemonic. It must impose—because it cannot lead.'[22] So when governments aren't capable of winning full support for an agenda, Hall suggested their investment in introducing issues for debate, or offering new priorities, weakens. Politics instead becomes a matter of responding to what happens, reworking the terms and 'common sense' notions already available in the public realm. Indeed, as Hall saw it, '"Thatcherism", far from simply conjuring demons out of the deep, operated directly on the real and manifestly contradictory experience of the popular classes under social-democratic corporatism'.[23]

Even so, Thatcherism's particular strength was its use of 'the people' as a uniting force, to sanction government rhetoric and policy:

No political counter has proven so effective, such a guarantee of popular mobilization as being able to say 'the people think …' Conjuring yourself into 'the people' is the true ventriloquism of populist politics. Political leaders who claim to have no ideas of their own: they just reflect what 'the people', out there, think …[24]

The degree of abstraction underpinning statements on behalf of 'the people' offers the possibility of speaking for both everyone and no-one at the same time. If your beliefs aren't represented by the statement, it's easier to think there's something wrong with you, rather than to disbelieve the authority behind the politician's statement. As you shrug off the relevance of the political decision being taken, your participation in democracy becomes as 'virtual' and abstract as the statement itself.[25]

With these thoughts in mind, consider some of the similarities Hall's reading of Thatcherism brings to bear on recent issues in Australian politics. Such (hetero-normative) gestures as the First Home Buyer's Allowance, the Baby Bonus and the reification of the Mum-and-Dad shareholder accord well with Thatcher's attempts to imbricate civil society with enterprise culture. Under Howard, the small business has been elevated to the status of a key institution in Australian society, public institutions have been subjected to neoliberal modes of value, while health care and education have been refashioned around choice, efficiency and consumer accountability. 'The people' have been summoned to perform in service of government statements. This is what Hall showed authoritarian populism achieves: the capacity to invade language so that the national interest, and by extension democracy, can be defined in ways that favour the values of particular sectors of society. What's unique about Howard's affective appeal, however, is his ability to frame the Australian Labor Party as representative of special interests. Liberal governments simply serve the will of 'ordinary' Australians.

— From forgotten people to battlers

While critics have been known to accuse Howard of taking Australia back to a phantasmic idyll of the 1950s, Judith Brett's recent work argues the contrary. *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class* is a cultural history of the Liberal Party that makes a convincing case for Howard being 'the most creative Australian Liberal since Menzies'.[26] Further, and against those who would see him as simply adopting the language coined by Menzies, Brett writes:

He is not. Menzies too was adopting an inherited political language. Howard is Menzies' successor not because he has gone back to him, to mine his words and images to oversee a return to 1950s Australia, but because like him he has been able to adapt the language and thinking carried in his party's political traditions to the circumstances of his political present.[27]

Howard has attended to the specific grievances generated in the present and combined these sentiments with an awareness of the resonant themes of previous leaders. Symbols like 'the home' and 'family' are recognised to be broad enough to be reinvigorated and mobilised in the popular imagination. As Brett explains, when Menzies employed the home as a principal unifying symbol for his party, he did so 'against Labor's construction of social identity in the relations of work and the economy':

> He was not defining the traditional home against other sorts of homes, inhabited by gay couples, single mothers or blended families. Nor was he presenting the home as fragile and threatened by family breakdown, crime, social decay. The homes of Menzies' middle class were solid castles of privacy and individual freedom whose only threat was too much government interference.[28]

In Howard's articulations, emanating from different political circumstances, much more can be condensed into, and implied by, a principal signifier. In this sense, Howard finds new ways to deploy old concepts so that they might attend to the specificities of the present conjuncture—precisely the procedure Hall urged that the Left adopt. As Brett argues, the Liberals' 1996 campaign slogan only backfired for being *too* successful; the rise of One Nation indicated just how much 'the promise to govern "for all of us" had become a siren song to accumulated grievances, including the extreme and paranoid versions which are always lurking at the fringes'.[29]

Reading Howard's 1996 Menzies lecture, Brett points out its similarity to Alfred Deakin's speech in the first Liberal Party meeting in 1909, in stating that, 'The Liberal Party has never been a party of privilege or sectional interests or narrow prejudice … Liberalism has focused on *national* interests rather than *sectional* interests.' Brett notes that 'national' is a contingent inclusion depending on the occasion; in different contexts, Howard's vision claims to represent the 'whole' of society as opposed to Labor's 'part' by interchanging 'nation' with a number of alternatives: 'the national interest, the Australian way of life, ordinary Australians, middle Australia, the mainstream'.[30] Here Howard successfully implicates the contemporary Labor Party in a tradition of advocating special interests. Originally it was the interests of the workers, but then, successively, the trade unions, the multiculturalists, the 'aboriginal industries', the republicans, the arts and the 'elites', so that by 1996, Labor's own traditional constituency could be rendered farcical. Following the Hawke and Keating reforms, Brett claims 'The cry "What about the workers?" ceased to be a rallying cry for Labor supporters and became an accusation of betrayal. Labor's central symbol of work was left to drift, vulnerable to take over by the other side.'[31]

Brett's work demonstrates that without an effective riposte to the charge of sectarianism, the Labor Party continues to be defined by its opponents. Her valuable history brings the

critical significance of language to the fore, revealing how the 1996 electoral victory was assured by the resonance of particular articulations:

> With the widespread acceptance of the term 'Howard's battlers' Australian Liberals won a historic victory over Labor, from which Labor has not yet recovered. It not only claimed to represent the mainstream, or the whole, but did so in a way that directly challenged Labor's core historic identity.[32]

Brett's catalysing scholarly work extends Hall's example by demonstrating that a working class identity 'is no longer telling us what we need to know'. Howard's success rests on an initial and 'a decisive rhetorical victory': a success won through cultural politics.[33] As the Labor Party struggles to define itself without recourse to the charge of sectional interests, the Liberal Party, ironically the party of individualism, can claim the capacity to unite the nation.
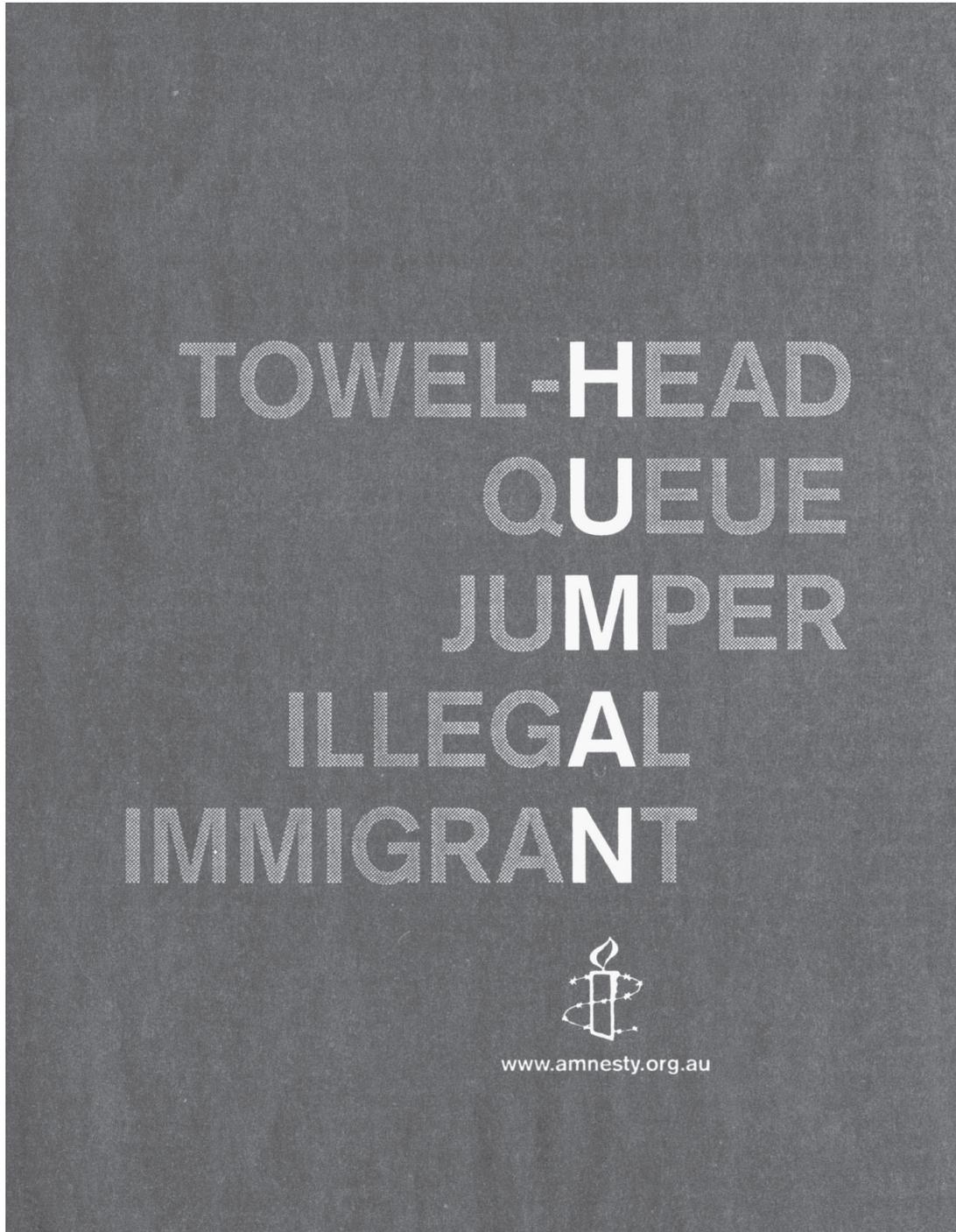
In classic Barthesian fashion, Brett changes the object of analysis: rather than following those reliving Labor's past victories in an attempt to reinvigorate an opposition, like Hall, she acknowledges the real strengths and innovations of the ruling bloc. But in doing so, Brett recognises Howard's weaknesses too. This is what's hopeful about her conclusions:

> Howard is not a great orator, his language is plain and repetitive. There are no striking metaphors, no rolling cadences, no flights of fancy. Once he has hit a form of words—like practical mateship—he repeats it, without embellishment, in speech after speech. This may be dull, boring even, but it does not mean Howard does not have a vision, nor that he is unable to strike chords from aspects of Australian experience.[34]

As Brett writes elsewhere, Howard's critics seem unable to recognise the 'positive rhetorical power of Howard's re-imagining of the nation'.[35] Seeing themselves as global citizens—cosmopolitans, rather than parochial nationalists—these critics dismiss the language of nationalism because of its exclusionary uses in the past. Viewing Howard's appeal as 'mainly a language of insecurity and fear', Brett claims 'they fail to see the positive values and experiences nationalism still carries for many Australians and the way Howard has spoken to these'.[36] Howard's successful articulation of nationalism exemplifies the affective contagion certain discourses generate, the positive resonance that makes the sensibility of a particular voice infectious. This is the weapon the Left still hesitates to use to anywhere near its full capacity. But if Howard's strength lies in rhetorical skill, Brett highlights the limited range and momentary unity of his hegemonic articulations. So what would an alternative to these statements look like? If dis- and re-articulation are Howard's pivotal political tactics, how do these strategies become those 'with which we attempt to intervene'?[37] What methods might be unearthed from the history of the Left to service the pressing concerns of the current conjuncture?

One place to begin formulating an alternative articulation is where 'complacent reasonableness or bland objectivism' fit poorly. Taking the example of asylum seekers, for instance, a different description of their plight might look something like this:

TOWEL-HEAD
QUEUE
JUMPER
ILLEGAL
IMMIGRANT

www.amnesty.org.au

'What is specific and different about this moment' has been the heightened prominence of asylum seekers in shaping the political environment. This advertisement from Amnesty International sets out a number of alternative descriptions, its composition indicating the positive or negative affective resonances certain terms make possible. This helps demonstrate Hall's important point, that articulation is always a choice, a construction chosen for preferred effects. The darker tones of the ad's horizontal lettering shows the terminology commonly available in the discursive field. Yet the ad's special significance is its pedagogic structure. It implies that a different message can always be produced to counter the ones that serve hegemonic interests. An alternative articulation *could* emphasise that these people, above all other considerations, are human (just like a different articulation of populism could voice the best hopes and aspirations people share, rather than playing on hip-pocket anxieties). The ad's simple re-arrangement questions the process by which hegemonic definitions gain precedence. It parades the ideological function performed by language and works to dismantle the understandings put forward in other contexts of representation.[38]

Despite the history of exclusionary models for humanism, and the legacies of benevolence still painfully reverberating in this country, I'd argue that any toolbox for electric fences needs humanist rhetoric as its key weapon.[39] Howard's example reinforces the success to be won in raiding the history of successful political strategies in the service of conjunctural priorities. That the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations would not run the television version of this same campaign without a political disclaimer only adds weight to the idea that certain affective articulations do pose a threat to the current government.[40]

These examples of Howard and Thatcher don't take away the strength of articulation as a radical resource. As Hall acknowledged:

> rearticulation is attractive only so long as we think *we* are going to do the rearticulating. When it is we who are rearticulated, we don't like it so much … That is how, in my view, Thatcherism has understood hegemony much better than anybody on the Left. Its effectiveness shows that disarticulation and rearticulation need not necessarily be directed towards any progressive, humane or socially just end. It has no necessary political belongingness. But that should not disturb us *theoretically*.[41]

Hall's voice of conjunctural intervention and articulation fosters a sense of responsibility to speak out against ruling definitions in ways that will act as a 'counterforce' to the 'numbing' effects of hegemonic statements. This is still the challenge Hall's voice delivers to his colleagues, that they 'know more than the traditional intellectuals do: really know, not just pretend to know, not just to have the facility of knowledge, but to know deeply and profoundly'.[42] Hall incites scholars to produce knowledge that reveals the processes alienating the heart from political decisions and thwarting our 'will to connect' with Others:

the work that cultural studies has to do is to mobilize everything that it can in terms of intellectual resources in order to understand what keeps making the lives we live, and the societies we live in, profoundly and deeply antihumane in their capacity to live with difference.[43]

Rearticulating the language of humanism to fit contemporary conditions is one way to tap into the rich history of intellectual resources on the Left. Against Ruddock-style Amnesty Internationalism, it's crucial that a critically rigorous and affective humanist project unhinge the hierarchy of political priorities Australian neoliberalism currently maintains. Just as Hall urged the Left to take a leaf out of Thatcher's book and make use of dis- and re-articulation as political strategies, I argue that cultural studies practitioners might learn from Howard's example and recognise the successful legacies a strong intellectual history offers in times of crisis. The unique combination of scholarly rigour and affective address cultural studies brings to the academy and wider political questions promises to inject some humanist sentiment back into public language, at a time when the 'anaesthetic writing' evident in so many other discursive contexts 'lacks almost everything needed to put in words an opinion or emotion'.[44] Against Watson's recent claims, I argue that the forms of expression that might convey human sympathy *do* exist, but without a marketing campaign or a publishing contract it's hard to hear them. An important function cultural studies can play is to seek out these alternative articulations, and amplify their voices for wider audiences. Perhaps it is anachronistic to imagine that language will remain the site for politics, or political intervention. As recent commentators have noted,[45] the power of the image threatens to supersede that of the spoken word, so that pictures of children floating next to one boat are allowed to speak an assumed story, while cameras are kept away from another vessel for fear of capturing images that might trigger our sympathies.

In the meantime, though, I prefer to follow Hall and Brett, in striving to produce theoretical insights that reveal the key role language plays in securing political outcomes. Along the way, I intend to argue with all the emotion and passion other discourses and institutions nullify, because, in the long run, I'd rather have a bleeding heart than blood on my hands.

————————————

MELISSA GREGG completed her PhD in the Department of Gender Studies at the University of Sydney. 'Scholarly Affect: Voices of Intervention in Cultural Studies' mines the history of cultural studies to describe the situated political projects of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Meaghan Morris.

————————————

1. Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*, Vintage, Random House, Sydney, 2003, p. 50.
2. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, Verso, London, 1988; Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003. My essay is principally interested in political articulations rather than public language on the whole—a topic well covered in Watson's latest book, *Death Sentence: The Decay of Public Language*, Random House, Milsons Point, 2003.
3. Michel Foucault with Gilles Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and Power', in D. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1977, pp. 205–17.
4. Chris Rojek lately argues that Hall's students, whom he calls 'the Birmingham mafia', produce 'anodyne' *festschrifts* in his honour. See Chris Rojek, *Stuart Hall*, Sage, London, 2003, p. 11.
5. This paper arises out of a larger project describing the affective dimension evident in some of the voices cultural studies brings to academic practice. As Anna Gibbs writes recently, 'In Cultural Studies, "affect" seems to be emerging as a key term in the wake of expressed feminist desires to "think through the body" '. Noting that definitions of the term vary, Gibbs reads the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins to provide a biological understanding of affect as 'the primary human motivational system, amplifying the drives and lending them urgency'. For Gibbs, Tomkins's account of 'affect contagion' promises a new means for cultural studies to describe relations between media and their audience. In this same vein, I argue certain voices in cultural studies transmit positive affects to make scholarly work, and a political project, infectious. Anna Gibbs, 'Disaffected', *Continuum*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2002, pp. 335–41.
6. That mode attending to 'everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression, everything which it is customary to talk about, which forms the tissue of cultural value (the matter of acknowledged tastes, of fashions, of critical commentaries), which takes its bearing directly on the ideological alibis of a period'. Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, Fontana Press, Harper Collins, London, 1977, pp. 182, 181.
7. Barthes, pp. 188, 183, 181.
8. Laleen Jayamanne, *Toward Cinema and its Double: Cross-Cultural Mimesis*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2001, p. 15.
9. Barthes, p. 182.
10. Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies', in Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London, 1992, pp. 277–94.
11. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 2001, p. 104.
12. LaCapra, p. 40.
13. LaCapra, p. xii.
14. Wendy Brown, 'Resisting Left Melancholia' in Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg and Angela McRobbie (eds), *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall*, Verso, London and New York, p. 21.
15. Hall, *The Hard Road*, pp. 6–7.
16. Hall, *The Hard Road*, p. 14.
17. Hall, *The Hard Road*, p. 162; Stuart Hall, 'What is this "Black" in Black Popular Culture?', in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. 465.
18. Hall, *The Hard Road*, p. 10.
19. Stuart Hall, 'The Meaning of New Times', in Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds), *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1989, pp. 449–50.
20. Brown, p. 21.
21. Hall, *The Hard Road*, pp. 23–4.
22. Hall, *The Hard Road*, p. 155.
23. Hall, *The Hard Road*, p. 50.
24. Hall adds, ' "The people" out there are, of course, varied; different; divided by gender, sex, class and race', in Hall, *The Hard Road*, p. 191.
25. 'Virtual' in the sense Margaret Morse describes, claiming that the actions of governments increasingly take place in a separate, liminal world in which citizens struggle to have an impact. 'In a world undergoing a process of derealization', Morse sees that the task of critical writing 'is to invent ways of coming to terms with this situation', where the virtualisation of social interaction creates a 'shadowy mix of delegated or deferred humanity'. Margaret Morse, *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1998, p. 32.
26. Brett, p. 184.
27. Brett, p. 184.
28. Brett, p. 185.
29. Brett, p. 193.
30. Brett, p. 187. Brett also reveals that even the Liberal Party's official quarterly magazine now boasts the title *The Mainstream*, p. 191. For Brett, what's particular and pernicious about Howard's Liberalism is this capacity to confuse the ideas of the mainstream with the nation interest. The historical ambiguity characterising the Liberal

Party is this: does it stand for 'the interests and welfare of the whole, the national interest; or is it majority opinion, the views and values of the mainstream?' In Brett's reading, 'one is in keeping with the Liberals' belief that it is the party of responsible government; the other is populism, with its new, powerful tools of opinion polls and focus groups to take regular soundings of the public's views, and talkback radio to broadcast them'. The correlation with Hall's reading of Thatcher is clear: both governments, unable to secure hegemonic power, cannot lead the nation and, instead, respond to issues as they happen.

31. Brett, p. 189.
32. Brett, p. 189.
33. Brett, p. 188.
34. Brett, p. 206.
35. On this point I'd suggest Watson's reading of Howard in *Death Sentence* also underestimates the Prime Minister's concerted deployment of particular linguistic tropes—battlers, mateship, the Anzac spirit—which often service very different, and sometimes contradictory objectives. The usefulness of such open signifiers is the point Brett's (and Hall's) more theoretical approach allows for.
36. Judith Brett, 'Nationalism is Howard's Strength—and Weakness', *Australian Financial Review*, 18 October 2003.
37. Hall, *What is this "Black"?*, p. 465. Brett describes Howard's other key tactic has been to ransack much of Australia's radical history to service Liberal ideals, appropriating Labor's 'common sense' status as bearer of these traditions. Speaking at the funeral of the last Gallipoli veteran, Alec Campbell, Howard's attempts to define the man's life as quintessentially representative of the national spirit posed no apparent contradiction to the fact that Campbell had been a trade unionist most of his life, in Brett, pp. 204–5. Of course, Labor's own recent history of re-articulating its constituency to meet the requirements of a global market are well recounted in Meaghan Morris's consummate study, *Ecstasy and Economics: American Essays for John Forbes*, EMPress, Sydney, 1992.
38. The ad's placement, in the business section of a capital city broadsheet, also accords with Hall's key theoretical reliance on Ernesto Laclau, and the notion that ideologies have no guaranteed class specificity. There is no reason why business people would not also be affected by a humanist appeal.
39. If the Left hesitates to employ humanism for fear of perpetuating a tainted tradition, any number of popular examples like the one above demonstrate the continuing affective pull humanist ideals enjoy. I make this argument in further detail in 'Remnants of Humanism', *Continuum*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2002, pp. 273–84.
40. Amnesty International withdrew the proposed campaign, refusing to acknowledge the Federation's ruling that calling a refugee a human is a political statement. My thanks to Gary Highland for this information and for permission to use the image.
41. Stuart Hall, 'Fantasy, Identity, Politics', in Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires (eds), *Cultural Remix: Theories of Politics and the Popular*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1995, p. 68.
42. Hall, 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies', p. 281.
43. Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities' in *'Race', Culture and Difference*, James Donald and Ali Rattansi (eds), Sage, London, 1992, pp. 17–18.
44. Watson, *Death Sentence*, p. 3.
45. A special program on ABC Compass, 'Power, Politics and the Media', included these and other examples to demonstrate the current government's recognition of the power of image. Transcript available at <http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s951199.htm>, accessed 1 November, 2003.