



The Resurfacing of the Public Intellectual: Towards the Proliferation of Public Spaces of Critical Intervention

Ulrich Oslender¹

Department of Geographical & Earth Sciences
University of Glasgow G12 8QQ Scotland UK
Email: Ulrich.Oslender@ges.gla.ac.uk

Abstract

In this paper I engage with current debates over the role of the public intellectual in a world shaped by re-emerging binary thinking and old dualisms in new disguise. As some see ‘new public intellectuals’ emerging in Geography, I examine these issues beyond the Anglo-American context. Through a personal account of a lecture given by the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy at the University of California, Los Angeles, in April 2006, I will reflect on the embodied performance strategies of much public intellectual debate today. Drawing on Bourdieu, the paper goes on to argue that new public spaces of critical intervention have recently emerged, in which collective intellectuals act within a series of critical networks that resist the imposition of a global neo-liberal ideology. While some of these spaces may start as apparently small-scale attempts (such as the launching of a critical journal, an independent radio station, or internet site), it is here where collective intellectualism is put into practice and the proliferation of public intellectual intervention becomes apparent.

¹ © Ulrich Oslender, 2007

And I am also looking forward to 2000. Let's see what will happen. If only there won't be war again. First down there. And then everywhere.

Günter Grass, reading from his book *Mein Jahrhundert* in the Deutsches Theater, Göttingen (Germany) in 1999, imagining a 103 year-old great-grandmother reflect on the new millennium.

Introduction

In a recent intervention in *Antipode*, Noel Castree (2006) reviews three books on contemporary geopolitics, suggesting that their respective authors do more than just address a geographic readership. Castree suggests that David Harvey (2005), Neil Smith (2005), and the San Francisco Bay Area-based collective *Retort* (2005), “some of human geography’s most influential left-wing voices” (p.396), are consciously branching out to wider audiences with their respective contributions, to become (possibly?) ‘Geography’s new public intellectuals’. This, to Castree, is an important new direction not only for those authors and for geography as a discipline, but also as a necessary step of speaking truth to power in the contemporary moment of danger that we are living through. In a world shaped by a re-emerging binary thinking and the construction of old dualisms in new disguise (think about the ‘clash of civilizations’ and the ‘war on terror’ rhetoric of ‘us’ versus ‘them’), new public voices must emerge to counter these discursive reductionist constructs and denounce their underlying logics of war and domination.

I want to engage here with these concerns and, more specifically, examine these issues beyond the Anglo-American context that is at the heart of Castree’s intervention (as he readily admits). In particular I want to reflect on some of these debates in France, seen by many as the true ‘home’ of the practice of public intellectualism. As a recent special issue of the monthly publication *Le Monde Diplomatique* (2006) has it, France is in dire need of re-inventing its rich tradition of critical public debate to counter the current ‘intellectual misery’ haunting *la grande nation* (Bouveresse, 2006). Others have also asked questions over “this death wish, this collective *harakiri* of intellectuals, this suicide of the very Figure of the intellectual” in France (Castro Nogueira, 2002, 83). No one has stepped into the void left behind by Pierre Bourdieu with his death in 2002. And public intellectualism in France has been reduced to a media spectacle, it seems. A recent personal experience of listening to one of France’s intellectual ‘media stars’, Bernard-Henri Lévy, speaking at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) in April 2006, will serve to flesh out these concerns. Finishing on a rather hopeful and upbeat conclusion, however, I will suggest that the very nature of public debate is changing today. And that new spaces of intellectual intervention and debate have emerged that allow for a more positive assessment of the state of public intellectualism than many critics today may (want to) recognise.

The public intellectual debate – why now?

When Castree asks why the three books he reviews have appeared now (p.405), he suggests that apart from the relative security of the authors' respective career stages, there is something about the "objective situation unfolding" (p.407), which does not only provide a favourable environment for these kind of critical interventions beyond the disciplinary field of geography, but which actually *requires* them here and now. In other words, there is something about the current moment we are living through that necessitates these kinds of voices. There is, I suggest, a collective desperation in the air that makes us thirst for intelligence as opposed to numbing down, for critically engaged arguments rather than brainwashed repetitions that insult our very notion of reasoned thinking. We simply cannot sit by and allow that the hypocritical, pathetic and plainly wrong arguments made under the banner of the 'war on terror' hijack our contemporary moment and serve as a pretext and justification for those in power to limit and roll back hard-fought for civil rights of free speech, thought, expression, and movement. If due to the "present total obedience of the culture industry to the protocols of the war on terror ... the silence of so-called 'popular culture' in the face of September 11 has been deafening" (Retort, 2004, 14; also in Retort, 2005, 28)² – and it was up to good old Neil Young in his 2006 album to come up with the obvious lines ("Let's impeach the President for lying / spying") – there exists even more of an ethical and political imperative to make our voices of criticism heard. We *must* speak up and out against the colonization of everyday life as a specific necessity of capitalist production (Retort, 2004, 8; Retort, 2005, 20),³ or what Habermas would refer to as the 'colonization of the life world', or Lefebvre as the dominance of representations of space over a grounded experience of representational space in everyday life.

Whereas the last two authors already conceptualised global capital's effects on the everyday some time ago and have spoken out against it (Lefebvre arguably more radically so than Habermas) (Habermas 1987, Lefebvre 1991), there is an added drama-tic to our contemporary moment. The all-pervasive, penetrating power of 24/7 mass media – what Perry Anderson (1998, 89) refers to as 'perpetual

² Page references are made both to Retort's (2005) book and to a shorter version of their principal ideas in *New Left Review* (Retort, 2004).

³ Drawing on the work of Guy Debord (1990, 1994), Retort (2004, 2005) recover two of the key notions of the Situationist International – 'the colonization of everyday life' and 'the society of the spectacle' – to analyse the current state of world affairs as characterised and driven by 'military neo-liberalism'. More than just a conceptual nod to Situationist ideas, however, Retort's very style of writing and language deployed (as well as their writing as a collective) suggest a more ambitious project of confronting military neo-liberalism with the analytical and rhetorical fervour of – shall we say? – 'neo-situationism'. The birth of a new angry brigade, so to speak – that's a fair retort.

emotion machines, transmitting discourses that are wall-to-wall ideology' –, is more than a structural necessity for capital's tendency to the overproduction of commodities. It plays a crucial part in the construction of a weak citizenship that the modern state depends on (Retort, 2004, 9; Retort, 2005, 32). How (and where) then to construct counter-spaces of analysis in the face of these powerful structures of capitalism's endless survival game? And how to break down capitalism's 'communicative fix', as David Harvey might ask? There is an unprecedented urgency today to resolve these questions, and a tremendous need for thoughtful analysis, cautious reflection and progressive political projection and activism; as well as to subversively slow down in the hurricane of frenzy we are continually seduced to buy into.

Autopsy of the (male) public intellectual

The function as careful dissector of dominating power's unproblematic self-portrayal has been a key task of who we refer to as public intellectuals. Although there is no consensus as to what exactly a public intellectual is, I would suggest as a principal characteristic her/his critical position in relation to the powerful.⁴ The public intellectual works from a non-partisan position, while not refraining from taking a clearly articulated political stance. The adjectival specification of the intellectual as a 'public' one can refer both to 'speaking in public' and on issues of public interest, which is not necessarily the same thing. For Edward Said (2001, 5), the "intellectual's role generally is ... to challenge and defeat both an imposed silence and the normalized quiet of unseen power, wherever and whenever possible".⁵ We can think about a public intellectual then as a 'critical personality' ('critical' both in terms of a critic; and as an important / incisive person) who articulates the voices of a collective oppositional conscience finding its words. It is this loss of critical positions and personalities that many perceive as the crisis of public intellectualism today (Le Monde Diplomatique, 2006).

As a short reconnaissance exercise, what do the following all have in common?: Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu. Yes, they are all French. And secondly, they are all dead. Which is the dilemma that Anderson (2004) (from whom I take this enumeration) and others point to in the exercise of current public

⁴ For recent edited collections of essays on public intellectuals, see Cummings (2005) and Small (2002). For a vividly written 'comparative autopsy' of public intellectuals in France, Britain and the United States, see Jennings (2002). Among Collini's many books on intellectualism, see particularly his recent study on the ambiguous nature of (anti)intellectuals in Britain (2006).

⁵ Page references to Said (2001) are from the pagination of his article's web-version (<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20010917/essay>). A longer version of this article can be found in Said (2002).

intellectualism. Yet thirdly, it should be pointed out, they are also all men, and questions must be raised as to why it is still predominantly men who appear in people's minds when asked about public intellectuals. Only two women are mentioned, for example, and rather in passing, in Castree's (2006) paper, namely Germaine Greer and just a short nod to Naomi Klein. How is it possible that we can still think of JP Sartre as a great public intellectual, but only few remember in the same breath Simone de Beauvoir? The public/private – male/female binaries are still dangerously alive today, despite the incisive onslaught of feminist critique that has deconstructed the public-male-space association and attacked the continued practice of male-dominated analysis (Gibson-Graham, 1994; Haraway, 1988; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Rose, 1991; Weisman, 1992). Even in 'radical' theories such as Marxist geography and critical geopolitics, continued male-biased / dominated analysis and the absence of a serious engagement with feminist theorizations and practice is too often still the order of the day. We all remember Doreen Massey's (1994, 224-241) critique of David Harvey's (beyond-our-discipline) influential work on 'The Condition of Postmodernity' (1989), where she accuses him – despite his including issues of difference and otherness – of ignoring basic analytical advances made by feminist theory and of still applying an exclusively male authority in his analysis.

More recently, critiquing the male-biased analysis of established critical geopolitics deconstruction work-sites, Dowler and Sharp (2001, 167) observe: "The language of critical geopolitics is presented as being as universal as that which it seeks to create, and yet it is a Western form of reasoning, dominated again by white, male academics. Women and others omitted from this tradition have not generally been included on the pages of the international texts. Thus they remain invisible to critical geopoliticians ... A few women are allowed into the footnotes of some works, but still the central narrative is one of the exploits and thoughts of men." Dowler and Sharp take this masculinocentric critique as the starting point for their elaboration and proposal for a 'feminist geopolitics' (see also the other articles in the special issue of *Space & Polity*, 2001; and Hyndman, 2003).

Such a gendering in analysis and practice has also taken hold of the imagination of the public intellectual debate, where the masculine gaze and presence is still the dominant one, despite the powerful public presences and articulations of intellectuals such as the controversial political philosopher and theorist Hannah Arendt; French writer and existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (considered by many to be the mother of post-1968 feminism); contemporary physicist, eco-feminist, environmental activist and author Vandana Shiva; or the controversial literary critic, essayist and human rights activist Susan Sontag, whose death in 2004 produced countless obituaries and passionate reviews ("We wouldn't recognize our postwar intellectual history without Susan Sontag." - *Talk magazine*; "a powerful thinker ... and a better writer, sentence for sentence, than anyone who now wears the tag 'intellectual.'" - *New York Observer*; "one of

our very few brand-name intellectuals” - *The Yale Review* ; all available at: <http://www.susansontag.com/reviews.htm>). And let’s not forget the ‘black feminisms’ of bell hooks or Alice Walker. Yet despite these critical presences and feminist critiques of the commonplace association of men and the ‘public’ realm, in many accounts to be a ‘public intellectual’ is still associated with being male. So my gendered apologies if I focus on the latter for the sake of my analysis here.

The male scholars previously enumerated by Perry Anderson certainly belong to the *crème* of French intellectualism. And some were decidedly public intellectuals at that. In particular Sartre, Foucault and the later Bourdieu were prominent both in choosing the public space as site of critical intervention and political activism on some of the most pressing public issues (Swartz, 2003). The last of the mohicans of this French radical public intellectualism triumvirate, the late Bourdieu (1998, 1999, 2003) in particular spoke out against social injustice and suffering in ways that were aimed at transforming academic practice, while also leaving academy’s safe haven for more public enunciations (more on Bourdieu below). On a more personal note, I also remember listening to Jacques Derrida at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in a series of public lectures in 1999 on the death penalty. It was part and parcel of Derrida to give these lectures to a general public once a month at the Boulevard Raspail in Paris. No admission charge, no entrance requirements, no enrolment procedures. Just a healthy dose of curiosity and enthusiasm for ‘thinking in public’ was required. Another very public intervention was JP Sartre’s version of existentialism, profoundly conditioned by political commitment and activism. His condition as ‘bourgeois intellectual’ caused him some concern before he was able to deal with the contradiction that he continued to write (and enjoyed doing so) books for the bourgeoisie (e.g. his 4-volume work on Flaubert), while at the same time feeling solidarity and support for a workers’ movement whose aim it was to destroy the bourgeoisie (Sartre, 1976). To Sartre, of course, all intellectuals were bourgeois, or were born out of the bourgeoisie. Which in itself was not a problem. Rather one had to avoid becoming a defender of bourgeois values, or as Paul Nizan (1971) put it, bourgeoisie’s ‘watchdogs’.

And this is precisely the charge that is made of today’s unprecedented “conservative turn” in the changing role of the French intellectual (Bonelli and Fayat, 2006). That most intellectuals have become self-satisfied with their role in society as commentators on themes constructed and diffused by the mass media. In fact, today’s intellectuals in France are often seen as representing a neo-reactionary shift to the right arguing in the interests of domination and showing respect for the established powers, the market, and money. Worst of all, they are said to portray an indifference to social injustice and provide no answers to problems that were recently raised in France, for example, by the student protests in March 2006 and the riots in the urban peripheries in late 2005. Symptomatic for this attitude, the prominent French intellectual Alain Finkielkraut decried the search for social

causes of the riots and announced that the problem instead was hatred of France by those with a 'Muslim identity'. As Bouveresse (2006, 16) characterises the typical French intellectual today: "He is strong on moral questions, but doesn't want to be harassed with questions of social justice and social questions in general. He carefully refrains from giving lessons to the representatives of Big Capital, but does so happily to the representatives of the poorest social classes." To these critics, the public intellectual has succumbed to Nizan's watchdog philosophy of the established order, a constant danger that Albert Camus (2000, 125) already hinted at in the 1950s in his study on the nature of human revolt: "He who has understood reality does not rebel against it, but rejoices in it; in other words, he becomes a conformist."

The epitome of the rejoicing conformist of a public intellectual in France is often said to be Bernard-Henri Lévy, known by his initials BHL, a self-styled and stylish media star. For Perry Anderson (2004), "it would be difficult to imagine a more extraordinary reversal of national standards of taste and intelligence than the attention accorded this crass booby in France's public sphere, despite innumerable demonstrations of his inability to get a fact or an idea straight. Could such a grotesque flourish in any other major Western culture today?" This is harsh stuff. And maybe a bit unfair, too. But what Anderson and others are getting increasingly irritated and even desperate about is the unprecedented media attention that is given to people such as Lévy. In fact he has become a mediatic celebrity, a media guru. I want to briefly illustrate Lévy's public appeal and his reasoning as displayed during a recent public lecture that he gave at the University of California in Los Angeles, UCLA. This will do two things, I hope: first, it will shed some light on how public intellectualism is enacted and literally put on stage today (by some); and second, it will show how particular truths are constructed and presented not as interpretations but as facts to an already converted audience that sees its worst fears and suspicions merely confirmed, not questioned. I think it is important to give such attention here to Lévy and not just dismiss him as Anderson does. His performance in itself sheds a crucial light, in my opinion, on the *embodied exercise* of much of public intellectualism today.

BHL @ UCLA

On 11 April 2006 Bernard-Henri Lévy presented a public lecture on 'Anti-Semitism today' at UCLA on invitation of the University's Center for Jewish Studies. After a short introduction by the Centre's director, who praised the speaker's many publications and his international reputation, BHL took to the stage. Without notes or visual help other than a single power-point slide projected against the wall behind him that announced his talk and showed an immense photo of BHL in 'thinking pose' at a desk, Lévy began to address the filled-to-capacity room in heavily French-accentuated but grammatically perfect English. Leaning leisurely on the speaker's lectern, his rotating arms seemed to dictate the rhythm of

his speech. He commanded complete authority. Without hesitation, and only occasionally dropping (quite deliberately, it seemed) an always understandable French expression or word, BHL began to elaborate his argument. It became apparent that this was not just another talk; this was a thoroughly rehearsed performance that could not fail to captivate the audience's attention (and I may add, one that many academics could learn from in its style of presentation).

He began by explaining how until ten years ago to him anti-Semitism did not seem to constitute a major problem of the modern world any longer. While still resurfacing every now and again, he had then felt that anti-Semites were a dying breed. He also related how, different from Jewish intellectuals before him such as Walter Benjamin, he did not go through a formative personal experience of anti-Semitism in his youth. In fact, BHL claimed, he had never had a personal encounter with it. Yet over the last ten years or so something had changed. He felt a 'whiff' of anti-Semitism in the air today (at which point, his right index finger, in a swift move forming a half-circle in front of his face, briefly brushed his nose). BHL then proceeded to enumerate a list of five already well-rehearsed 'justifications' of anti-Semitic thought, ranging from the accusation that the Jews had killed Jesus Christ, and the Hegelian desperation that no State could be made with the always moving Jews who could not be trusted, to the Nazi racist ideology aimed at the extermination of the Jews as a people. There the list seemed to end. It suddenly occurred to me that BHL had talked for almost one hour without mentioning once the name of Israel. I found myself jotting down a comment on my notepad, so that I could query him on that during question time at the end. The perfect speaker that BHL is, however, he must have anticipated this. He announced a sixth 'justification' of anti-Semitic thought: the policies of the state of Israel. Aha, I thought, now this is getting interesting. Yet, BHL made only a quick remark on how, of course, it was good and even beneficial to receive criticism, especially from friends, but that behind the criticism of Israeli state policies lay merely the vilification of the Jews. End of story.

By now BHL had changed tone from the more objective position as commentator to include himself and create a bond with the mostly Jewish audience. 'We' must be careful, he announced, because anti-Semitism was all around us and on the rise again in Europe. To underline this point, he dwelt to some extent on the case of the young Jew Ilan Hamili who had been kidnapped, tortured and killed in Paris in February 2006. An approving murmur went round the audience. Yet even in the United States, BHL warned, where the 'beast' of anti-Semitism was not quite on the loose yet to the same extent, 'you' (he pointed at the audience) must be careful. Was it not a 'whiff of the beast' (again the rehearsed swift move of the right index finger chipping at his nose) that was present in the discourses of Jesse Jackson? And indeed, before that in the speeches of Malcolm X?

I felt increasingly uneasy and wary of where his argument was going. I certainly did not recognise this Europe that BHL described. Anti-Semitism is a problem no doubt, and will probably always be one that needs to be countered relentlessly. Yet it seemed blown out of all proportions in his interpretation (of course, this view of mine would probably be regarded as emanating from anti-Semitic thought itself, according to BHL's logic). It seems to me that racism, for example, is a much bigger problem in Western Europe. And xenophobia against immigrants and refugees. Should the role of Israel's state terror against the Palestinian population not be examined more seriously, in that it may actually construct an anti-Israeli attitude in many that then gets confused and denounced as anti-Semitic thought? This is obviously a dangerous circle of ideas, politics and misrepresentations that any public intellectual should challenge and critically reflect on rather than further promote. Yet these objections are beside the point. The lecture of the public intellectual BHL was not even meant to be a challenge to an imposed silence and the normalized quiet of unseen power, as Said (2001) sees the role of the public intellectual. Rather it was a carefully constructed exposé of propaganda in the guise of an objective public intellectual intervention. It did not speak truth to power. Quite on the contrary, it spoke to power and lay by its side. It joined sides with and gave an 'intellectual' argument, if ever there was one needed, to parts of the powerful Jewish lobby in the U.S. (and elsewhere) who continue to believe in and disseminate conspiracy theories against them, while at the same time remaining silent on, or even wiping out their own part in the perpetuation of social injustice. This was not a 'crass booby' in action, as Anderson may think of Lévy. This was a well-thought out (and excellently presented) argument with the purpose of appealing to an anticipated mostly Jewish audience into whose fears and worldviews it was intended to play.

Yet, the danger here lies not merely in the misrepresentation-by-omission of a phenomenon of serious implications that anti-Semitism is. BHL's deliberately constructed silence regarding the possible responsibility of the genocidal state policies of consecutive Israeli governments in the diffusion of anti-Semitic thought smelled of awkwardly-hidden ideological propaganda. There certainly was a whiff of intentionality in the air at UCLA. And I began to wonder if the category 'anti-Semitism', as employed by BHL, was not turning itself into one of those 'ideological confections' that Said (2001, 5-6) talks about, which "are deployed not as they sometimes *seem* to be—as instigations for debate—but quite the opposite, to stifle, pre-empt and crush dissent".⁶ By choosing *not* to address the degree to which Israeli state policy may contribute to the spread of anti-Semitic thought, BHL (unwittingly? / crass booby-ly?) may end up strengthening the very beast that he pretends to confront.

⁶ Said considers "the West", the "clash of civilizations", "traditional values" and "identity" as such 'ideological confections' and some of the most overused phrases in the global lexicon today.

Bernard-Henri Lévy is a phenomenon. His extraordinary presence in the French media has certainly contributed to making him one of the most widely recognised public intellectuals in France. His recently published travelogue through the United States ‘in the footsteps of Tocqueville’ has further established him as a recognised French intellectual internationally (Lévy, 2006). This in turn has attracted the ire and spite of those who lament and decry the lack of critical, radical interventions of today’s public intellectuals in the face of expanding neo-imperial geopolitical trends, the increasing colonization of our life worlds by capital, and the revanchist individualization of our societies. What this critique fails to perceive, however, are the many critical public interventions by intellectuals in a whole range of spaces. In other words, public intellectualism is or should not just be about the highly visible intellectual as individual, but about the proliferation of public spaces for the practice of critical, intellectual interventions. In the remainder of the paper, therefore, I want to examine some of these newly emerging spaces of public intellectual activity. Moreover, I want to show how these spaces emerge as sites for the practice of the ‘collective intellectual’, as Bourdieu (2003) envisaged the production of realistic utopias through bringing collaborative expert research to bear on urgent civic issues and making common cause with others to resist the entrenched dogmas of domination.

Towards the collective intellectual

It is common today to affirm that there were two Bourdieus. The early Bourdieu, prior to the 1990s, a professional sociologist mainly concerned with developing a critical social scientific research orientation and transforming sociology into a rigorous research enterprise. This Bourdieu was highly critical of the ‘total intellectual’ role played by JP Sartre, who he saw as compromising scientific vigour by aligning himself with a vast array of political issues and causes. And the later Bourdieu, post 1990, increasingly taking on the role of the leading public intellectual in France (and Europe), who sought to reduce the ontologically unbreachable gap between the theoretical aims of theoretical knowledge production and the practical, directly interested aims of practical understanding of the interaction of social actors through a socio-epistemological research strategy. It is from this scientific vantage point that he declares the social scientist’s important public political role. Faced with governmental policies eroding the welfare state in France, Bourdieu turns into an outspoken public critic of neo-liberalism, globalization, market-oriented reforms and privatisation.⁷ This shift into radical denunciation is perhaps most powerfully documented in the collectively authored work under his direction titled *The Weight of the World*, published in 1993. It is

⁷ Swartz (2003) painstakingly traces the moment and reasons for Bourdieu’s increasing political activism, including public appearances during strikes and high-profile trials, on television, and organising and signing petitions.

during this later phase that he developed the idea of the ‘collective intellectual’, to Remi Lenoir (2006, 25), Professor of Sociology at the Université de Paris I, “one of the most important contributions to sociology ... which he [Bourdieu] endeavoured to establish as a principle of scientific method.”

In its most general sense the idea of the ‘collective intellectual’ is a series of critical networks made up of ‘specific intellectuals’ that oppose the production and imposition of a neo-liberal ideology promoted by conservative think tanks and ‘experts’ in the service of Capital (Bourdieu, 1998, 2003).⁸ The collective intellectual has two functions: firstly, a negative (i.e. defensive) one, critiquing and working towards the diffusion of tools to defend against dominant power discourse; and secondly, a positive (i.e. constructive) one that contributes to a collectively perceived political re-invention and political and economic alternatives. At the same time it is a call for the collective organization of intellectuals, a form of intellectual militancy that defines an activist strategy for an intellectual field threatened by public policy discussion and formulations that have become framed by neo-liberal economic assumptions (Swartz, 2003, 811). This is to be achieved through the development of new structures for collective research, interdisciplinary and international(ist) in scope. To this end Bourdieu created the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, “a collective, cumulative scientific project, which would integrate the theoretical and technical advances of the discipline [of sociology]” (Bourdieu quoted in Lenoir, 2006, 25). What is at stake then is the creation of what Harvey (1996, 8) refers to as ‘permanences’: these structures, organizations, institutions and programmes that bring about a radical change in the way we perceive, project and relevantly practice and perform intellectual intervention. As Bourdieu states elsewhere, “the whole edifice of critical thought is thus in need of reconstruction. This work of reconstruction cannot be done, as some thought in the past, by a single great intellectual, a master-thinker endowed only with the resources of his [*sic*] singular thought, or by the authorized spokesperson for a group or an institution presumed to speak in the name of those without voice, union, party, and so on. This is where the collective intellectual can play its irreplaceable role, by helping to create the social conditions for the collective production of realist utopias” (quoted in Said, 2001, 7-8). This collective production should be achieved through collaboration and new forms of communication between researchers and activists, in which academics do not stand out as symbolic figureheads for social movements but as collective intellectuals seeking common ground and cause with resisting others in a nonhierarchical manner (Bourdieu 1998: vii-viii).

⁸ Foucault makes the distinction between the ‘specific intellectual’ as one who is related to specific struggles, and the ‘universal intellectual’ who acts as a general collective critical conscience in society.

This insistence on the collective intellectual does two things. First, it challenges the commonplace assumption of the production of intellectual thought as an individual enterprise. It therefore breaks with the scholastic tradition that places ‘intellectual’ and ‘collective’ in opposition, as it does with ‘theory’ and ‘empirical research’ (Lenoir, 2006, 26). This would then suggest a move away from emphasis being put on the public intellectual as celebrated individual and intellectual superstar *a la* JP Sartre. There simply should be no more need for those individual gurus, if they form part of collectivities. Of course, this is of no use to the news-as-snippets aesthetizing mass media, for whom it is important to present a (preferably good-looking) figurehead as commentator on public issues – and what a handsome chap BHL is at that. But the real (collective) intellectual work, one may argue, is done outside the mass media circuits, even if ultimately these should also be considered as necessary sites of intervention.

And this is where the second point about the collective intellectual comes in. There are a great many sites, spaces and places where collective intellectual research and activism quite literally do take place in the public realm. Thinking about the collective intellectual in terms of structured networks, connections, alliances and linked-up solidarities takes into account the multiple sites in which intellectuals participate. To be sure, not every activist scholar is necessarily an intellectual. The latter should still be regarded as a kind of ‘orienting figure’, the ‘glue’ that holds things intellectually together in critical collectivities. But there is a multiplication of activist / militant intellectual activity today that has to be recognized as such. To say it again with Edward Said (2001, 8; my emphasis), we should “stress the absence of any master plan or blueprint or grand theory for what intellectuals can do ... So in effect this enables intellectual performances on *many fronts*, in *many places*, *many styles*, that keep in play both the sense of opposition and the sense of engaged participation.”

Fighting (at) the media front

One of these fronts is the media. A media that has undergone tremendous structural changes over the last decades with the advent of informational technologies, cable and satellite television and the sheer mind-boggling ‘choice’ (that master word of neo-liberal conceit terminology) of channels and programmes. On the one hand the ghosts of Adorno and Horkheimer’s (1972) clairvoyance seem to be materialising in frightening clarity and transparency. There is indeed something despairingly accurate about their pessimistic ‘culture industry’ thesis that portrays the docile and content masses manipulated into passivity through their consumption of popular culture.⁹ It is in this spirit of despair that Hoggart (2004,

⁹ Thanks to Chris Philo for insisting on undigging Adorno and Horkheimer’s work and pointing to its current significance.

15) lodges his scathing critique of contemporary mass media as numbing the masses and playing its part in producing Britain as an “under-educated society,” in which 15% of the population is “insufficiently literate”: “They exist at a level of near-literacy, one sufficient for them to be comprehensively deceived.”

However, this view of presenting the media as merely misinforming us is one-sided at best. There may be a lot of rubbish on television these days, but there is a lot of good stuff available, too. The proliferation of TV and radio stations has also meant a multiplication of critical channels. The German-French TV channel Arte is a case in point, a channel that broadcasts good-quality cultural programmes as well as political debate. Other German TV stations with critical content include 3 Sat. In 2000, for example, this channel broadcast the complete public reading of the German literature Nobel laureate Günter Grass of his critical assessment of the 20th century (published in *Mein Jahrhundert*, 1999), which was recorded in the Deutsches Theater in Göttingen in 1999. Grass is still one of the most important and critical voices documenting Germany’s collective memory (in spite of recent accusations against his brief spell in the Waffen SS at age 17 during the final months of the second world war). He was also the first German intellectual who, very publicly, came to talk at the student-occupied Free University of Berlin in December 1988 to express his solidarity with our strike, which lasted for six months and spread like a wildfire through other German and European Universities (with the exception of Britain, if I remember correctly), sparking off distant memories of 1968.¹⁰

More recently, and in Spain, the Catalan sociologist Manuel Castells was interviewed on a principal national TV station in May 2006. In an astonishingly clear and jargon-free language, he explained his main theses of the challenges of the network society in the information age and the dangers and problems that it brings, while the reporter was as enthusiastically enthralled as I have ever seen anyone on TV. Yet Castells’ performance as such was disappointingly bland, even boring. It could not have been more different from the flamboyant style offered by BHL. Castells appeared slumped, backward leaning in a worn-out chair in a TV recording studio that featured a pale blue wall behind him (compared to BHL’s

¹⁰ For those who prefer their history lessons in literarily exciting forms, you could do worse than read the brilliant novel “Crabwalk” (Grass, 2002), which explores the historically-sedimented German collective sense of guilt through various ways of remembering the sinking of the *Kraft-durch-Freude* vessel ‘Wilhelm Gustloff’ (named after a Nazi officer who had been assassinated by a Jew in Switzerland). A cruise ship turned refugee carrier, the Gustloff was chased and torpedoed by a Soviet submarine on 30 January 1945. An estimated 10,000 refugees, who fled the advance of the Red Army approaching Königsberg (today’s Kaliningrad) died in the freezing waters of the Baltic Sea, making this the deadliest – yet also most silenced – maritime disaster of all time. As a word of encouragement to Grass-despairing readers: the book is remarkably short compared to his previous, wordy (translator-nightmare) novels.

commanding ‘thinking pose’ projected by a power-point slide onto a screen behind his tall, moving, dynamic and gesticulating body). Castells smiled shyly and almost apologetically into the camera, motionless and seemingly trapped in his seat, quite at the opposite end of the performance enhancement quality scale, spearheaded by BHL’s authoritative, pausing-for-effect embodied speech style (confidently employing his trade-mark nose-tipping lower arm movement – the ‘whiff’). Castells seemed to gain in confidence as the interviewing journalist grew ever more excited at his own understanding of the complex arguments laid out in straightforward, jargon-free explanations. Yet, compared to BHL’s exuberant showmanship, Castells appeared like a grey mouse. BHL was the sparkling fox.

Now is there something to be learnt from this? I do think so. There is no doubt that BHL’s performance was a compelling one to the audience (including to this author). If public intellectualism increasingly is enacted as public performance in a whole range of audio-visual settings, then more attention should be paid to the performance aspects of the dissemination of ideas and thought in public. This includes our work as academics facing a student audience in the lecture hall, and I think we should give more thought to lecturing in more compelling ways. This is not so much about ‘fighting BHL’s fire with fire’,¹¹ but if our job as academics is also about winning minds and wresting them free from mass media induced ‘under-educated society,’ then we should be more compelling, not only in content but also in audio-visual context and appearance. That, to me, was one of the crucial messages taken away from BHL’s performance, as I stared into the shining eyes of a glaringly happy audience all around me ...

The internet front

The advent of the age of electronic media and digital reproduction, the possibility of reaching virtual audiences via video-conferences and transmissions, and the sheer speed with which communication has accelerated have changed the “technical characteristics of intellectual intervention today” (Said 2001, 3). Connected to this, as Susan Buck-Mors (2002, 73) observes, “the masses are converting themselves into a multiplicity of publics ... that observe, listen and talk in a critical fashion.” Nowhere is this maybe more evident than in the exponential rise of the presence and use of the Internet in today’s globalizing societies. For example, the explosion of indymedia onto the alternative news and analysis Internet scene as a tool in radical political activism is proof of how a small idea can turn rapidly into a big impact. Originally perceived as a temporary alternative Independent Media Center (IMC) during the mobilisation against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999 to counter distortions of the demonstrations in the mainstream media, it quickly evolved into a global network of over 160 local and

¹¹ I thank Ian Cook for his ‘fiery’ engagement with this paper.

thematic IMCs worldwide. Their slogan – “don’t hate the media, become the media” – illustrates the many possibilities that are ‘out there’ to meaningfully contribute in the construction of a better news coverage, if not world. This is not to say that these spaces of alternative media production do not have their problems. In fact, indymedia can be critiqued for its problematic informal hierarchies, difficult decision-making processes, or the barrage of sheer nonsense that uncensored reporting may also entail, and which can be found in some of the IMC’s web-posts. It’s just not easy to be non-hierarchical and well organised at the same time.¹² But that doesn’t make the former any less ‘imperative,’ if you forgive me the pun.

Websites such as indymedia have increasingly also become the space of action for collective intellectuals, where their work may appear even without the author’s knowledge. Since we live in an age of electronic media, the possibilities of digital reproduction have created the potential of reaching an almost unlimited virtual audience (both in space and time), an imagined community, in an expanded new space (Said 2001, 3-4). Public intellectualism is then also about the construction of and participation in more and more public spaces of critical intervention. These may start as apparently small-scale attempts, such as the launching of a journal, an independent radio station, or a critical internet site. Yet, as Castree (2006, 408) puts it, “Lots of small contributions matter as much as a few big ones.”

Such a call seems to imply a scalar variation on the public intellectual theme. Whereas the attention has usually been placed on the intellectual as individual and the degree of visibility that s/he achieved in public debates (usually of national or global importance), focussing on the ‘small contributions’ may imply looking at the work of intellectuals done in local debates and regional struggles and how these connect to wider issues. What we see emerging then is a spider-web like structure in a three-dimensional space, along the axes of which the public intellectual moves backwards and forwards on glocalizing threads. The notion of scale, as much as some want to do away with it (Marston *et al.* 2005), is still very useful and can help to conceptualise these shifting terrains of representation and activism. The increasingly complex interconnectedness of scales may make it harder to represent them as bounded units (which they are not, of course). But it does not mean that scale has lost its ontological place and merely functions as an “epistemological ordering frame,” reason for which we should expurgate it from the geographic vocabulary, as Marston and others (2005, 420, 422) would have it, to then replace it with their version of a flat ontology. The argument for dissolving scale is a short-sighted epistemological foray that pays more homage to the space

¹² See, for example, a debate posted on the indymedia site on where the globalizing anti-capitalist movement may be heading: <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/80676>.

of flows idea than to the still very much territorially anchored, albeit multi-scalarly connected, real life experiences on the ground.¹³

It is also at the internet front, where local, regional and national real life experiences on the ground get connected, mobilised and articulated in strategies against corporatist neo-liberalism. Websites such as indymedia coordinate resistance for the globalizing anti-capitalist movement that finds one of its powerful expressions in the convergence spaces of the World Social Forum, celebrated once a year since 2001. It is here where we can maybe best see Bourdieu's notion of the collective intellectual at play. Although narrow-mindedly and counterproductively critiqued in a recent intervention in *Antipode* as a producer of logos and thereby supposedly replicating the functioning logics of capitalism (Huish, 2006), the World Social Forum has emerged as a crucial space of collective intellectual knowledge production, diffusion and activism. It has become an important site of critical debate and radical political activism, where many of those we consider public intellectuals today participate to share their ideas, analysis and political convictions with a concrete multitude (Fisher & Ponniah, 2003). To me, these open spaces reflect the same democratic, critical spirit as the public lectures at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, open for anyone to attend, that Jacques Derrida gave in his lifetime. Highly visible public intellectuals, such as the Portuguese writer and Nobel laureate José Saramago, the US American linguist and political analyst Noam Chomsky and others mix at the World Social Forum with the less visible but not less active ones, many of who are specific intellectuals working closely with particular struggles and social movements. It is precisely in the spaces of transnational anti-capitalist resistance and activism that the proliferation of public intellectual intervention becomes apparent (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Klein, 2001). It is there where collective intellectualism is put into practice. And it is also the strength of the collective that the San Francisco Bay Area group of dissenting intellectuals of *Retort* (2004, 2005) have evoked in their analyses of the present moment of danger and military neo-liberalism, publishing as a "gathering of antagonists to capital and empire," rather than as individual academics.

The academic front

And what happens at the academic front? Clearly, many academics today feel an "ethical and intellectual responsibility" towards the wider world, as Gregory and Pred (2007, 6) do. To them, this "involves the fostering of a critical public culture as an indispensable part of any genuinely democratic politics." To contribute to such a critical public culture, different or more accessible ways of

¹³ See Leitner and Miller (2007) for a fuller critique of Marston *et al.*'s (2005) call for a 'human geography without scale.'

writing may be an appropriate (first) step. Certainly Gregory has tried to do this with his latest projects. In his scathing critique of the colonial present as manifest in Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq (Gregory, 2004) he has ‘dropped’ heavy theoretical baggage to privilege a more investigative journalistic style of writing and denunciation. However, this approach is by no means less ‘academic’; it is just a different way of being academic, which takes serious Said’s (2001, 8) call for “intellectual performances on many fronts, in many places, many styles” (as cited earlier). It is another ‘small contribution’ to the wider cause.

Let’s stay for a moment with the theme of small contributions. When thinking about possibilities of resisting neo-liberalism, the Chilean economist Max-Neef employs the metaphor of the rhinoceros and the mosquito bites (in Fals Borda 1998, 67-76). During the 8th World Congress for Participatory Action Research “Convergence in Knowledge, Space and Time” in Cartagena, Colombia (1-5 June 1997), he argued that to fight the rhinoceros of neo-liberalism we best not create a similar beast to confront it but attack it in swarms of millions of mosquitoes whose bites will finally bring it down to its knees. The strategy in opposing neo-liberalism thus becomes one of multiple struggles and small contributions in every corner of the planet. Following this metaphor, the radical academic’s task may be seen in facilitating these mosquito attacks, in liaising between the different swarms, in providing the venom and searching for the vulnerable part of the rhinoceros; not unlike the events unfolding in the Nibelungenlied, the epic poem that tells us of Siegfried’s vulnerable spot on his back, which was not bathed in the dragon’s blood (although I do not suggest that Siegfried was a capitalist).

There have been, of course, many attempts by academics – both individually and collectively – to engage in socially relevant and committed research and activism. And lately the issue of the engaged role of academics has received a reawakening that is both necessary and exciting. What has not always been acknowledged is the link to previous radical experiences by academics and their efforts to create ‘permanences’ of activism and lasting structures of socially relevant and committed intellectualism. Many of the current ‘new’ radicalisms *en vogue* could be strengthened in theory and practice by establishing the links to the wider history of radical academic activism. In Geography we tend to think of the late 1960s as witnessing the emergence of radical geography and first forays into the practice of applied scholarship. Best known of this phase maybe, William Bunge argued against the ‘tyranny of professionalisation’ in the academy and participated in the Detroit Geographical Expedition, quite literally taking geography out into the streets of Detroit to apply the discipline practically in attempts at solving real and tangible social problems (Bunge, 1977).

Much less known in our discipline, however, seems to be an influential radical methodology that developed in Latin America in the 1970s, which was regarded by many as an incisive methodological tool in bringing about social

change: Participatory Action Research, or PAR. It is interesting to see how many of today's collaborative research initiatives mirror some of the earlier ideas of PAR, although only rarely do they mention this connection. Building on work by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1971) on popular education and collective knowledge production, PAR aimed at creating conditions for dialogical research between academics and the subjects of their study, a collaboration through which the poor and oppressed would progressively transform their environment via their own praxis (Rahman & Fals Borda, 1991). Some considered PAR as "an original input from the world periphery ... a revolutionary science" (Fals Borda, 1987, 336, 330). First measurements in the theoretical and methodological advances as well as of PAR's practical implications were discussed in 1977 during the International Symposium on Research Action and Scientific Analysis held in Cartagena, Colombia. As Rahman and Fals Borda (1991, 40) write: "We began to understand PAR as a research methodology with an evolution towards a subject/subject relation in order to form symmetrical, horizontal and non-exploitative standards in social, economic and political life, and as a part of social activism with an ideological and spiritual commitment in order to promote collective popular praxis." The researcher was expected to play a catalytic and supportive role in this process, yet without dominating it (Rahman, 1991, 23). Importantly, these catalytic external agents play a crucial role in linking up the local dimension to regional and, at a later stage, to the national and international levels (Fals Borda, 1987, 334).

A lot of water has run down the mill since then, and the representational postmodern angst of the 1980s has certainly contributed to PAR losing some of its radical edge. Yet its language still speaks to us today, and there is clearly a resurgence of ideas, actions and projects throughout the social sciences that put academic commitment in action into practice. In Geography, we have hopefully moved on from the at times narcissistic navel-gazing debate over whether or not our discipline is 'relevant' (which it clearly is) to concrete efforts of taking it out into the big wide world and *making it relevant*. And there are many different ways of making Geography relevant (and radical). One is by engaging with the wider public on different levels. I am thinking, for example, of the Open University radio lectures by Doreen Massey delivered in November 2006 at "Free Thinking: a festival of ideas for the future" in Liverpool, later broadcast on BBC Radio 3, where she reflected on and disputed some of the 'obvious' claims over the end of space and a shrinking world put forward by Zygmunt Bauman and the like. Or of the Public Geographies Working Group at the University of Birmingham, where a collective of geographers engages with the public in a number of ways, including through the development of more challenging and socially inclusive school and university geographies.¹⁴ These are only two examples, in which geographers can make important contributions in the public sphere. There are many others of

¹⁴ (see <http://www.gees.bham.ac.uk/research/pgwg/projects.htm>)

course. And this is not the place to review all of these experiences. What matters here, however, is to stress the need to not just act individually but within a wider collective effort that can hopefully be embedded institutionally in society. It is, as Bourdieu intended his proposal for the collective intellectual to pan out, about the creation of structures of research clusters and networks that connect throughout. This can happen through the setting up of new structures, such as in Bourdieu's Centre de Sociologie Européenne, or through the appropriation of an already existing structure by committed collectivities. I want to finish this section here on briefly relating the experience that has recently been made within the Latin American Studies Association LASA, which has seen a significant move towards becoming a progressive institutional space, a 'permanence' (to use Harvey's phrase once again), through which committed scholarship in action is promoted and financed, even though the institution itself is still inscribed in the wider corporate business culture of the North American university system.

LASA is the largest professional association of Latin American Studies in the world with over 5,000 individual members. 2006 marked a milestone for the association in many ways. Firstly, it took decisive action against the fact that since 2003 Cuban scholars intent on attending LASA's Congress (which takes place every 18 months) had their visa applications denied by U.S. authorities. The latter invoked Section 212f of U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Law, which states that the American president can deny U.S. entry to foreigners when their coming to the country is deemed "detrimental to the interests of the United States."¹⁵ In 2006, all 58 applications from Cuban scholars to attend LASA's Congress in Puerto Rico were denied. The same massive visa denial had occurred during the previous Congress in Las Vegas in 2004. During the Congress in Puerto Rico a motion was proposed by the LASA Executive to express outrage at the U.S. administration's continued discrimination against Cuban scholars. It was also proposed to relocate the LASA Congress 2007 from Boston to a location outside U.S. territory, in order to allow Cuban scholars to participate. This motion was subsequently put to the entire LASA membership by e-mail ballot and was overwhelmingly supported by 79% of the vote. The next Congress will now take place in Montreal in September 2007. This publicly announced and explained decision will not make Mr Bush shiver in fear and cause him sweat outbreaks at night. But it certainly feels good to be part of an association that takes a stance and acts against the continued

¹⁵ Section 212f has been applied since 1985, when U.S. President Reagan issued Proclamation 5377, particularly affecting Cuban nationals. Although U.S.-Cuba relations loosened through Clinton's second term, the current Bush administration has made repeated use of this legislation to bar Cubans from entering U.S. territory. In particular the denial of visas for top Cuban musicians intent on attending the Grammy awards has made headlines in recent years. In 2004, for example, Cuban musicians forced to cancel performances due to visa denials included Buena Vista Social Club singers Ibrahim Ferrer and Omara Portuondo, jazz pianist Jesus 'Chucho' Valdés, and the exhilarating salsa band Los Van Van.

aggressive discrimination tactics by the U.S. administration (somehow I cannot see the AAG doing similar).

Secondly, LASA's theme for the Montreal congress – “After the Washington Consensus: Collaborative Research for a New America” – sets a proactive agenda to engage with the recent powerful shifts towards the Left throughout the region (in electoral results and social movement activity) and to actively promote reflection on innovative methodological steps in activist scholarship and various action research strategies. For this, LASA created the ‘Other Americas’ initiative (*Otros Saberes*, or ‘Other Knowledges’, in Spanish), which supports collaborative research on indigenous and Afro-descendant issues, bringing together academics (both from the global South and North) and indigenous and Afro-Latinamerican intellectuals and social movement leaders. The initiative received 160 applications, and I am glad to form part of one of the seven chosen research teams. Our project looks at the territorial, political and cultural struggles of a sector of the Afro-Colombian social movement, in particular as it has come under significant pressure in recent years from armed groups and capitalist displacement strategies.¹⁶ One aim of our project is the launch of an international campaign that raises awareness over the struggle of black communities in Colombia, incorporating NGOs and political activist networks in putting pressure on the Colombian government and the international community to not sit idly by, as these populations get forcefully expelled from their lands. It is in the Colombian Pacific coast region where we can see the processes that Retort (2005) and Harvey (2003) refer to as new cycles of primitive accumulation being played out in chilling ways (see Escobar, 2003, and Oslender, 2007).¹⁷

What strikes me as exciting here is that it is not (only) the individual academic who acts as catalytic external agent (as proposed in PAR) but the academic institution (embroiled as it is in a corporate business culture) that acts as catalytic (and financing) source, enabling this sort of activist scholarship. In LASA's case, the institutional structures have been appropriated to facilitate these kinds of interaction with the wider public and commitment in action. LASA has indeed created an institutional space for the working of the collective intellectual, much in the way that Bourdieu envisaged it. This, I think, is encouraging, and – why not say so – makes me feel proud to belong to the association. This experience

¹⁶ Our Project can be found at: http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/specialprojects/Documents/GruesoLibia_Proposal.pdf. For a list of all accepted projects and to download proposals, see <http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/specialprojects/otrossaberesawardees.html>.

¹⁷ Retort (2005:192-196) think about these new cycles in terms of ‘endless enclosure’ and attack on the commons, whereas Harvey (2003:137-182) proposes the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’.

may also point towards ways of opening up other institutions to do the same or similar (do I hear someone say AAG? ...).

Conclusions

The face of public intellectualism is changing today. On the one hand, an unprecedented media demand for ‘experts’ on all sorts of topics has given rise to some intellectuals as media gurus and celebrities in the public sphere and mediatic imagination. The mass media effectively produce this kind of intellectual to fulfil their demands, desires and ideological orientation. The intellectual’s celebrity status has often come hand in hand with a loss of critical position and an eroding radical edge in public interventions. There is no doubt that this very real erosion of critical thinking in and for the public has led to a crisis of public intellectualism, as lamented by so many these days. The figurehead of this development in France, Bernard-Henri Lévy, maybe best represents this trend.

On the other hand, the sites of applied public intellectual intervention have multiplied, and there is a much more horizontally widespread arena of public engagement for intellectuals emerging. This can often be at sites that remain largely invisible in mass media coverage – such as collaborative work done with social movements. I have tried to argue here that to bring these kinds of intellectual activities more significantly out into the public realm, we should turn to the figure of the collective intellectual, as originally envisaged by Bourdieu. To construct powerful alliances against military neo-liberalism and the atomization of society we need to create institutionally embedded spaces of resistance that debate, coordinate and put into practice (some of) the many alternative proposals that float around in academic, activist and policy circles. The role of the public intellectual, as I see it, is to provide the intellectual ‘glue’ to hold these various debates and actions together.

Of course, this is hardly a blueprint for revolution. But what I have suggested here is that debates on public intellectualism should not so much focus on the individual as highly visible intellectual. It may be more accurate to think of public intellectualism as a collectively enacted strategy of critique against dominant power, which may employ certain individuals at particular moments as visible figureheads in a highly mediated world, while the networks of collective intellectuals ceaselessly operate in the murky, gritty, and – to some – invisible terrains of everyday life.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ignaz Strebler and Chris Philo for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Thanks are also due to *ACME*'s three referees for their very constructive critiques, and to Rachel Pain for her interest in the paper. Moreover, I am grateful to the European Union for financing my Marie Curie Outgoing International Fellowship (2005-2008), which has facilitated my stay at UCLA for two years and enabled me to observe the embodied performance of BHL first-hand. It was this (also very embodied) experience of observing public intellectualism 'on stage' (with a shiver running down my spine) that triggered the present reflections.

References

- Adorno, Theodor W and Max Horkheimer. 1972. *Dialectic of enlightenment*. New York: Herder & Herder [originally published in German in 1944 as *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, New York: Social Studies Association Inc.]
- Anderson, Perry. 1998. *The origins of postmodernity*. London: Verso.
- Anderson, Perry. 2004. Dégringolade. *London Review of Books* 26(17), 2 September.
- Bonelli, Laurent and Hervé Fayat. 2006. El cambiante papel del intelectual francés. *Le Monde Diplomatique - edición española* (special dossier: 'Guerra de ideas', May 2006) 10(127), 22-23.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. *Acts of resistance: against the new myths of our time* [transl. Richard Nice]. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre *et al.* 1999 [1993]. *The weight of the world: social suffering in contemporary society* [transl. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson]. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2003. *Firing back: against the tyranny of the market 2* [transl. Loic Wacquant]. London: Verso.
- Bouveresse, Jacques. 2006. Intelectuales mediáticos: en esto estamos.... *Le Monde Diplomatique - edición española* (special dossier: 'Guerra de ideas', May 2006) 10(127), 16-17.
- Buck-Mors, Susan. 2002. Ensueño y catástrofe: la nostalgia política del secreto. *Archipiélago. Cuadernos de Crítica de la Cultura* (Barcelona) 52, 69-73.

- Bunge, William. 1977. The first years of the Detroit Geographical Expedition: a personal report. In: R Peet (ed.), *Radical geography: alternative viewpoints on contemporary social issues*. London: Methuen, pp 31-39.
- Camus, Albert. 2000 [1951]. *The rebel*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics.
- Castree, Noel. 2006. Geography's new public intellectuals? *Antipode* 38(2), 396-412.
- Castro Nogueira, Luis. 2002. Notas sobre los intelectuales y el secreto. *Archipiélago. Cuadernos de Crítica de la Cultura* (Barcelona) 52, 81-85.
- Collini, Stefan. 2006. *Absent minds: intellectuals in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cummings, Dolan (ed). 2005. *The changing role of the public intellectual*. London: Routledge.
- Debord, Guy. 1990. *Comments on the society of the spectacle*. London: Verso.
- Debord, Guy. 1994 [1967]. *The society of the spectacle*. New York: Zone Books.
- Dowler, Lorraine and Joanne Sharp. 2001. A feminist geopolitics? *Space & Polity* 5(3), 165-176.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2003. Displacement, development, and modernity in the Colombian Pacific. *International Social Science Journal* 55(1), 157-167.
- Fals Borda, Orlando. 1987. The application of participatory action-research in Latin America. *International Sociology* 2(4), 329-347.
- Fals Borda, Orlando (ed). 1998. *People's participation: challenges ahead*. New York: Apex Press.
- Fisher, William F. and Thomas Ponniah (eds). 2003. *Another world is possible: popular alternatives to globalization at the World Social Forum*. London: Zed Books.
- Freire, Paulo. 1971. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Gibson-Graham, J-K. 1994. 'Stuffed if I know!' Reflections on post-modern feminist social research. *Gender, Place and Culture* 1, 205-224.
- Grass, Günter. 1999. *Mein Jahrhundert*. Göttingen: Steidl.
- Grass, Günter. 2002. *Crabwalk* (transl. Krishna Winston). Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt.

- Gregory, Derek. 2004. *The colonial present*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gregory, Derek and Allan Pred (eds). 2007. *Violent geographies: fear, terror, and political violence*, New York: Routledge.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The philosophical discourse of modernity: twelve lectures*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14(3), 575-599.
- Harvey, David. 1989. *The condition of postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Harvey, David. 1996. *Justice, nature, and the geography of difference*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Harvey, David. 2003. *The new imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, David. 2005. *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hoggart, Richard. 2004. *Mass media in a mass society: myth and reality*. London: Continuum.
- Huish, Robert. 2006. Logos a thing of the past? Not so fast, World Social Forum! *Antipode* 38(1), 1-6.
- Hyndman, Jennifer. 2003. Beyond either/or: a feminist analysis of September 11th. *ACME. An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 2(1), 1-13 (available at: <http://www.acme-journal.org/vol2/Hyndman.pdf>).
- Jennings, Jeremy. 2002. Deaths of the intellectual: a comparative autopsy. In: H Small (ed.), *The public intellectual*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp 110-30.
- Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists beyond borders: advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Klein, Naomi. 2001. Reclaiming the commons. *New Left Review* 9, 81-89
- Le Monde Diplomatique. 2006. Guerra de ideas, Dossier Especial. *Le Monde Diplomatique (edición española, May 2006)* 10(127), 16-23.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1991 [1974]. *The production of space*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Leitner, Helga and Byron Miller. 2007. Scale and the limitations of ontological debate: a commentary on Marston, Jones and Woodward. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32, 116-125.
- Lenoir, Remi. 2006. Scientific habitus: Pierre Bourdieu and the collective intellectual. *Theory, Culture & Society* 23(6), 25–43.
- Lévy, Bernard-Henri. 2006. *American vertigo: traveling America in the footsteps of Tocqueville*. New York: Random House.
- Marston, Sallie, John Paul Jones III and Keith Woodward. 2005. Human geography without scale. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30, 416–32.
- Massey, Doreen. 1994. *Space, place and gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McDowell, Linda. 1999. *Gender, identity and place: understanding feminist geographies*. Cambridge: Polity
- Nizan, Paul. 1971. *The watchdogs: philosophers of the established order* (transl. by Paul Fittingoff). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Oslender, Ulrich. 2007. Spaces of terror and fear on Colombia's Pacific coast: the armed conflict and forced displacement among black communities. In: D Gregory & A Pred (eds.), *Violent geographies: fear, terror, and political violence*. New York: Routledge, pp 111-132.
- Rahman, Mohammed Anisar. 1991. El punto de vista teórico de la IAP. In: O Fals Borda & MA Rahman (eds.), *Acción y conocimiento: cómo romper el monopolio con Investigación-Acción Participativa*. Bogotá: Cinep, pp 21-35.
- Rahman, Mohammed Anisar and Orlando Fals Borda. 1991. Un Repaso de la IAP. In: O Fals Borda and MA Rahman (eds.), *Acción y conocimiento: cómo romper el monopolio con investigación-acción participativa*. Bogotá: Cinep, pp 37-50.
- Retort. 2004. Afflicted powers: the State, the Spectacle and September 11. *New Left Review* 27, 5-21.
- Retort. 2005. *Afflicted powers: capital and spectacle in a new age of war*. London: Verso.
- Rose, Gillian. 1991. On being ambivalent: women and feminisms in geography. In: C Philo (ed.), *New words, new worlds: reconceptualising social and cultural geography*. Aberystwyth: Social and Cultural Geography Study Group / Institute of British Geographers, pp 156-163.

- Said, Edward. 2001. The public role of writers and intellectuals. *The Nation*, 17 September 2001 (available at: <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20010917/essay>).
- Said, Edward. 2002. The public role of writers and intellectuals. In. H Small (ed.), *The public intellectual*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp 19-39.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1976. *Situations X*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Small, Helen (ed.) 2002. *The public intellectual*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Smith, Neil. 2005. *The endgame of globalization*. New York: Routledge.
- Space & Polity. 2001. *Special issue: A feminist geopolitics?*, 5(3), December 2001.
- Swartz, David. 2003. From critical sociology to public intellectual: Pierre Bourdieu and politics. *Theory and Society* 32, 791-823.
- Weisman, Leslie. 1992. *Discrimination by design: a feminist critique of the man-made environment*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.