

Is there anything left  
after global spectacles  
and local events?

— Craig Calhoun in  
conversation with  
Peter Beilharz &  
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Introduction by Nikos Papastergiadis

Γεια σου, welcome, wominjeka — as our friend Gary Foley first said in our little cultural centre. This is a place with a mixed heritage. We know a bit about the past two hundred years but there is a ‘black hole’ for the other 99% of its Indigenous past — we know almost nothing of the first 29,800 years! After white invasion, this site has been used as both a pub and a brothel, after all we are close, very close to parliament. In the post-war period, a cluster of shops owned by Greeks on Lonsdale Street laid the foundation for the horizontal precinct. These shops and cafes were also proxies for social, cultural, welfare and legal centres. Then the Greek welfare society was located in this building, and through the organisation, it has been acknowledged, that the Greek community was at the forefront of Australian multiculturalism. In broader terms, it could also be argued that, as a policy framework that aimed to support emergent cultural practices, multiculturalism is one of Australia’s greatest contributions to world culture. The city has changed in demographics, not least because of the pressures of gentrification, and so the Greek community, cognizant that the horizontal precinct is fading away, became proactive and built this new building to serve as a vertical precinct. The Greek Centre for Contemporary Culture looks forward to a new cultural agenda. The aim is not confined to protecting our specific linguistic and cultural heritage, but has opened up to embrace a cosmopolitan vision. Such a wide scope for thinking about culture is now a necessity given the new hybrid cultural forms that arise from mixed marriages, and the complex range of local and global cultural influences. The



Greek community can draw on its history and resources in order to also provide leadership for emerging communities, collaborate with government agencies, and build a platform that can connect us to other diasporic networks and Greek communities across the world.

In this context, we are grateful to have this opportunity to ask Craig Calhoun and Peter Beilharz, world-renowned scholars on nationalism, modernity and cosmopolitanism, to reflect on the conditions for public culture in the current context, and even to consider the question: have we ever been cosmopolitan?

Let's start with Criag Calhoun and your long-term interest in nationalism. One thing you certainly got right, is that the advance of globalisation did not make nationalism go away. If anything, the rise of globalisation stimulated the re-configuration of the nation-state in the economy, transferred roles in production and expanded regulative function. But it also spawned new forms of belonging. It encouraged some to understand themselves in terms of flexible, multiple affiliations — while it also drew new primordial, defensive and xenophobic forms of attachment.

As you predicted, nations still matter, perhaps even more than ever before, because they still shape (1) categories for representing belonging, (2) institutions for ensuring justice and welfare, and (3) mechanisms for redistributing economic benefits, which are still primarily, even if not exclusively, national!

However, this does not make you a neo-nationalist. You have also listed the harm done in the name of nationalism: the capacity to turn inwardly with prejudice and neglect for the needs of others, to destroy the institutional approaches that actually bind people together, and to perpetuate, if not expand, inequalities at home and atrocities at large.

Where does this leave us? Are you resigned to nationalism, because it is the least worst option, in the sense that you believe that is better than the feudalism and colonialism of

the past, and as faulty as it may be, you insist that it is still a more realistic system for securing human rights and social justice than the rhetorical versions of cosmopolitanism?

Should we resign ourselves to this pragmatic version, or is there another task that needs to be pursued simultaneously? That is, to open up the tension between a pragmatic resignation to nationalism and the enduring capacity to imagine cosmopolitanism as an alternative. I would argue that this critical tension between geopolitical accounts of world power and cultural visions is always evident in the aspirational contexts of scientific and creative work. By this I mean that scientists and artists usually declare that they are against national boundaries, and that, in some instances, there is a strong claim that a kind of cosmopolitical vision is also a constitutive force in scientific thought and cultural production.

Let us face the aspiration of all inventors — they want to be recognised at home, but they want their work to be available to all — to be part of what is common for all humanity. This banal observation does not easily fit into nationalist paradigms and categories for representing belonging and loyalty. On the one hand, it could be argued that these people are redeeming the cosmopolitan qualities that are already embedded in the national category, such as the way John Howard and others always say Australians are humanitarians, but we are also not ‘suckers’, and so our sovereignty in relation to border control will be exercised independently of international or humanitarian perspectives on refugee rights. On the other hand, the desire to be part of the world could be seen as an outsider position. From this perspective, there is the more explicit rejection of the prevailing categories. This is especially manifest during cultural events, when artists and others declare that there is a side of the imagination that does not overlap with the geopolitical concerns. In general, if we were to map the geopolitical narratives, theoretical discourses on nationalism and cosmopolitanism, and the cultural practices

such as Biennales, etc., we would find a very wobbly kind of Venn diagram, there would be lots of bits that are repeated, and some that remain incompatible with each other. In short, it would appear that there is not a neat overlay, where not all the parts do not sit squarely on top of each other.

Where are these different political, theoretical and cultural trajectories heading?

Is it reinforcing the institutional settings of a national culture, even as it mixes it up — or reinventing intimacies that are modelling an emergent form of cosmopolitan culture, one that may only be glimpsed, but nevertheless felt as real, in the encounters and relations with others? What does this reproduction of complex cultural institutions and a cosmopolitan imaginary yield?

It appears that these questions can only be answered by focusing on the agents — the people who can mediate between different systems, and the existence of institutions that realise collective cultural practices. Otherwise we are entangled in a dance of dependency and disavowal — the cosmopolitan agents are dependent on national institutions but disavow their dependency. Meanwhile, the national imaginary is dependent on cosmopolitan values but disavows any binding force to anything that compromises its sovereign independence.

Let us try to get out of the stultifying binaries — good cosmopolitan/bad nation — that are not simple opposites but are, as you say, ‘mentally constitutive’, and then pair them up so as to enable us to move towards a different understanding of social solidarity. First, let us clear away a common misconception: cosmopolitanism is neither a product of, nor equivalent to, globalisation. Globalisation has an integrative logic that seeks to facilitate flows by establishing transparent pathways, standardised identification and measuring services, consistent platforms and totalising networks. In short, to enable mobility and lubricate exchange it requires a hermetic, flat, homogenised world. This has nothing to do with

cosmopolitanism; that is a way of being open to the world in which the meaning of each encounter is not subordinated to an overarching system, but is generated by the internalisation and reiteration of difference. There is a wonderful paradox at the heart of cosmopolitanism — it creates a radical equality among all people, but it accepts that the encounter with different people can only be meaningful if both our similarities and our differences are articulated. Thus the overwhelming tendency of cosmopolitanism is toward heterogeneity, it reflects and contributes to a vivid world of generative differentiation.

To clarify this distinction between globalisation and cosmopolitanism, and to highlight the challenge of defining the agents of cosmopolitanism, it is also useful to briefly return to the ancient Greek meaning of the term ‘cosmos’ in cosmopolitanism. In this term, ‘cosmos’, three meanings are held together. It combines a reference to (1) all of humanity, or ethical solidarity, (2) a sphere, bigger than the earth *geia* but less than the boundless *apeiron*, a physical entity, (3) the ‘cosmetic’ art of making space attractive to the other, i.e., aesthetic activity. The first person we know who used this term was Socrates, but he used it as a kind of negative affirmation. Diogenes adopted it as way of articulating his own paradoxical sovereignty of disenfranchisement. Perhaps the most radical vision came from Zeno, and the Stoic school, who incidentally were all migrants. Zeno was clear that the person who could be in harmony with the cosmos was a sage, and he admitted that such a figure was not evident anywhere in his midst, and so we can repeat the question: have we ever been cosmopolitan? Or, put another way, given that a sage does not resemble global tourists and corporate traders, who is capable of being cosmopolitan today?

It is also significant to note the precise topos of this cosmopolitan vision: we return to ancient Greece, and Athens in the Hellenic era not to celebrate another milestone of this civilisation, but to pinpoint the significance of the *stoa* — the

arcades as a liminal zone. The arcades were adjacent to the agora, below the pantheon, away from private homes, different to the places of assembly, the *panyka*, less ceremonial than the theatre, distinct from the secluded institutions of learning such as Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum, and also in contradistinction to the deliberative enclosed spaces of the *tholos* and *bouleuterion*. We can also point out other such liminal zones — artists' studios, scientific laboratories, writers' bars — as figuring in significant ways the history of the cosmopolitan imagination.

From this little excursion I want to return to some of your strongest points on the limits of cosmopolitan ideas. Quite rightly you stress that even the most virtuous claims about cosmopolitanism should not be overplayed (i.e., flexible citizens, hybrid cultures and human rights that exceed national rights) because they risk expanding the consumerist basis and widen the integrative frontiers of globalisation — or at least promote the banalisation of cosmopolitanism.

There is no denying that some of the rhetorics on cosmopolitanism — in particular, the way that the term has been adopted in governmental policies on cultural tourism — does blur deeper social issues of inequality and exaggerate the material condition of social solidarity. This evident in the way the discourse produces a chain of equivalence that links together artists, NGO activists, refugees, tourists and corporates with platinum frequent flyer cards. This equivalence is obviously unhelpful as it puts out of view the multiple differences between these agents. However, your critique of this kind of cosmopolitan rhetoric is not that it provides a smokescreen against class inequality, gender bias and cultural difference, but that it avoids the more complex task of facing the ground for social solidarity. Can we see this meeting place in the Greek Centre for Contemporary Culture as an example of social solidarity? What is the limit to feeling connected to this place, and how do we imagine the possible forms of solidarity that occurs in such a place?

Two limitations are advanced in your writing, and I would like to question their scope and scale. Basically, you argue that:

1. Social solidarity is not open-ended: there is always a need for an adversary — the constitutive outsider. Greeks had their Barbarians, etc. How fluid is this boundary? Is a Barbarian always a Barbarian, or did they become Greek when they could speak Greek? If we hang onto this particular form of identity construction, it would presuppose some kind of symbolic violence towards the outsider. However, it also suggests that there is a prior form of solidarity that extends to all that are already Greek, and it is this prior form of identification that allows other forms of cultural connection and production follow. But what if we turned it around: everyone who is engaged in the production of contemporary culture is not only a potential Greek, but it is this form of cultural engagement that enables anyone or everyone to experience solidarity.
2. Then there is a problem with the need for spatial finitude to produce cultural belonging. Do we need boundaries for the experience of connection, and should we assume that there is a logical limit to the scope of this boundary? Proximities are important, day-to-day interactions are vital, but our sense of belonging is not diminished but constituted via abstraction — a national form of belonging is already abstracted as it is experienced as an imagined community — therefore let us consider the scale of belonging alternating between or across three levels: (1) the human body, (2) social and physical horizons, and (3) a spherical consciousness of the world as a whole. If we can move through these levels, is the cosmopolitan imaginary just as graspable as the national?

I will end by asking some questions — methodologies — for cosmopolitanism and culture. I think the present conditions of cultural production take us deeper into this problem of

determining the relationship between the insider and the outsider and also the finitude of space. Given that contemporary culture blurs the boundary between the virtual and real, the high and low forms of culture, and proximate and distant relations, and the looping feedback processes disrupt our conventional experience of duration and revelation, as well as undoing the categories of cultural evaluation which valued the permanent over the ephemeral, then what sort of tools and approaches should we adopt to interpret, judge and make sense of the cultural activities that are already shaping this little cultural centre?

Peter Beilharz

I'm very happy to consider myself an honorary Greek, otherwise I'm not too sure who I am. Johan Andersen once described me as a lapsed German, but I don't think that was quite right either. I hope you'll all indulge me — I want to begin with three apologies. I'm sorry that we were late. I'm sorry that, as our friend Jonathan VanAntwerpen would say, this is a sausage party, we're all boys. And I'm sorry if what I have to say will necessarily disappoint you. This is an old kind of introductory device which I borrowed from a good source, Max Weber. In 1918, he was delivering these famous lectures in Munich, a politically interesting kind of culture and his opening was: 'Ladies and gentlemen, what I have to say will necessarily disappoint you'. This is partly because, picking up on some of the earlier conversations that we've been having with Craig over the last several days, I also want to take seriously the exultation that people like us, and people like me, should try to spend a bit more time connecting up the dots, because a lot of the conversations that we have, especially conversations of despair about new times, are kind of privatised, they're conducted in the relative comfort of our homes, and in corridors. I think it's timely to try to bring to bear the critical apparatus that we are trained with more closely upon the nature of the times that we are inhabiting.

If you'll indulge me a little further, I have two quotes. One is from the *TLS*, it's a review by Becca Rothfeld of Howard Jacobson's new book, *Pussy*, and it's about somebody you'll recognise:

The first mistake was to give Donald Trump our attention. The second was to make him President. The third is to continue to afford him the pleasure of relentless coverage. Like rubberneckers at a car crash, we remain so perversely engrossed by his antics that it's difficult to disentangle our opprobrium from our fascination.

The second quote comes from a lecture that David Harvey gave at Harvard last year, and I'll just read verbatim, it's a very powerful opening line, worth stealing. This is David Harvey, talking to architects, of all people:

I want to start with a simple fact which astonishes me. Between 1900 and 1999, the United States consumed, according to a US geological survey, 4,500 million tonnes of cement. Between 2011 and 2013, China consumed 6,500 million tonnes of cement.

So, in three years, China consumed nearly forty-five percent more cement than the United States consumed in the whole of the preceding century. There's a panda in the room, and it seems to me that often discussions about populism and the alt-right and political leaders misses the fact that there are other really important stories going on which will probably have a more significant influence over our lives, and the lives of our children.

I want to open with some fairly general comments on Antonio Gramsci and Zygmunt Bauman. Bauman, as you will know, left us on the ninth of January, at the age of ninety-one. But he left us a lot of books, I think fifty-three or fifty-eight or something, more than I can count. The last is called *Retrotopia*, and I recommend it to you, but I recommend it with some reservations. It has four key chapters:



'Back to Hobbes', 'Back to Tribes', 'Back to Inequality', and 'Back to the Womb'. Plainly, the 'back to' is the key kind of trope. He is much taken in this last work by Svetlana Boyne's work on nostalgia, wanting to argue that the dominant motif in world politics is the desperate desire to return to the past, to return 'back to', that nostalgia is the most politically dangerous component of his sensibility.

Gramsci, why Gramsci? Well, bad habit, I suppose. Whenever we're in trouble, we reach for precedents. Gramsci's precedent comes out of that extraordinary period between the wars, the crisis, especially in Italy. There's been a degree of enthusiasm for his occasional use of the category of interregnum. The idea that we are between two regimes, and I guess many of you will know this famous quotation from him: 'In the process of interregnum, whether between two worlds or two regimes, a great many morbid symptoms appear.' A great many morbid symptoms appear, including, I think, Mr Trump. And this is worth contemplating when we talk about signs of the times, because Trump will, in fact, go away, sometime. But the structural problems of which he is a symptom will likely remain. We've spent some time in the last few days, and I guess this is a major point of discussion for people like me, talking about the decline of the American empire, about the decline of hegemony, about de-industrialisation, about the fact that the Industrial Revolution, which Craig's written about with great acuity, is now perhaps something that we should shift sideways. We should be talking about the de-industrial revolution. None of which I mean to discount the power of the personality and its choreography. Plainly, there are good reasons for the fascination with Mr T.

Are we, then, in between? I'll defer to Craig further on this question. I'm not so sure. I think, in my amateur manner, that it's probably reasonable to describe Brexit as reactionary. I can't see the positive dynamics in this story. But in the Trump story, it seems to me there are a complex of dynamics, including something that was almost like a revolutionary

rhetoric. And the rhetoric I'm responding to is Faustian. That's the rhetoric of Faust, the developer. The idea of rebuilding the world, rebuilding America, rebuilding it in concrete, the image of the wall. These are all parts of an ambition to catch up with China, which may be too late.

Nikos has mentioned in a different register the notion of the event. It seems to me that, actually, Trump is an event. Trump is a rupture which responds to the line which we associated earlier with Baudelaire. 'Give us something new!' There's some release here from what some people would perceive as the 'death clutch of the Clintons'. But to put in a different register and defer to my Greek heritage, there's also an argument that we find in Castoriadis, the idea that creativity is something which has a multiplicity of results, including totalitarianism. There's a kind of left wing creative prejudice which thinks of creativity as being aesthetic, as being something that we like. The world is full of forms of creativity which differ, Schumpeter tried to capture these by clipping them together in the idea of creative destruction. I think there is something fascinating about the Trump phenomenon, what it feeds into — and again, not to anticipate Craig too much — but the argument that populism is already a kind of dangerously over-used word, though the notion of authoritarian populism has not had much purchase, ever since Stuart Hall and Jessica Nangis. And I think it's worth reconsidering the notion of authoritarian 'populism', but what needs to be focused upon when we talk about populism is its mutually constitutive relations. It's a master-slave relationship. There is no populism, there is no threat, there is no danger of populism without a constituency that can be mobilised to support it. And my hunch is that a good deal of the attention that people who come from my part of politics, somewhere on the left, a good deal of that attention is focused on leadership to the detriment of what it is that generates the enormous resentment which makes this electorally possible. At best, it tells a small part of a very large story about global

transformations, about the shift in the world system towards China, and about the unsettling of both the heritage of the British Empire and the American Empire in this story.

So is this, then, an interregnum? My suspicion is that, in the case of the US, we're not in between, we're already somewhere else. It raises incredibly difficult issues of reversibility and irreversibility, what it is that can be wound back, what it is that can change. It raises a whole series of questions about new dynamics, and indeed new modes of cultural performance on the part of Trump and his people. And here I'm thinking in particular — and I'm sorry if this is banal, but it's important — of the new legitimacy given in particular to misogyny in this discourse.

The reservation I have about populism is that populism conceptually divides the world into two. I want to here solidarise with the argument of people like Craig Calhoun, that there are always multiple divisions, there's always a multiplicity of divisions, there's always a multiplicity of struggles over resources, over identity, and so on and so forth. To divide the world into two is to risk the reproduction of dynamics of master and slave which otherwise might be subject to a different kind of scrutiny.

So, are we back to the future? I don't think so, I think the 'back to' really captures the analytical, intellectual, cultural challenge that we have trying to make sense of these new times. I think we have a new kind of Brave New World, and we have our work cut out trying to make sense of this. This may well mean that we need to think in different ways, and different collaborative ways, to try to make sense of these worlds. We may also need to exercise a bit more caution than is sometimes exercised. The results of electoral processes and trials in the Netherlands, and I think quite clearly in Western Australia, which have not really generated a great deal of notice, indicate that the notion that we're on a downward slide of a universal global kind towards something like Trumpism needs to be dealt with right, in a very circumspect

manner. What that might suggest, then — and here I'm in sympathy, solidarity with Nikos — is that whatever the significant reservations we might have about the pattern of modernity that we call Australia or the Antipodes, there are still some spaces — linguistic, discursive, policy — which might be available in places like this, which mean that the story of Brexit and the story of Trump are not necessarily to be presumed to be our fate.

### Craig Calhoun

Sitting between a Greek and a German, in the context of recent European events, is challenging. It may demand both cosmopolitanism and solidarity to get through this.

I can't resist playing a bit more with that, just to point out how a decade ago it was almost constant to talk about cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan democracy, the ever-greater advance of supra-national unity in Europe, and almost instantly, with the beginning of the financial crisis, the conversation was national. The conversation in Germany and the conversation in Greece were set in opposition, by national stereotypes. But also, throughout the EU, there was such a rapid turn to an engagement with the idea of the various nations — even national character, religious stereotypes, stereotypes about who worked hard and who saved, and all these sorts of things — that it revealed that the genuine advances in institution building in the European Union were not matched by the production of a culture adequate to the tasks of both economic and political integration. Now this isn't a talk about the EU; if it were, we could go into things like to what extent is this about enlargement of the EU, to what extent is this about the governance of the European Central Bank, to what extent is it about the tension between a Europe of the nations and a Europe that aspired sometimes almost to be a new kind of nation. The story about the EU is not where I want to go. But I want to note the enduring power and importance, and appeal, of national discussions. Even though they had been

largely back-burnered, they never went away. It wasn't as though people in the different European countries stopped imagining themselves as nationals, stopped speaking their different national languages, but they were not seen — particularly by intellectuals — to be the main way to think about what was happening in the world.

I don't want to suggest that nationalism is in some sense the path forward. I rather want to point out how basic it is, not just as an ideology, not as passion — 'My country is better than your country!' kind of thing — but as a feature of the way people inhabit the world. People inhabit the world in a variety of ways, as individuals, through family connections, through communities, through their economic and business projects. But many people, possibly most, also with a sense of nations. Now, it turns out that nations aren't an easy way to inhabit the world in all senses, because many people are in diaspora and they're moving, and they're participants in multiple national projects at the same time. So, this doesn't mean it makes everything simple, but it is constitutive of much of the world as we understand it. I'm going to come back to some of these things.

Let me return to Greece, and remind us that the contributions of Greece to thinking about this are not only the contributions of Athenian philosophers, and others, migrants into Athens like Diogenes of Sinope. The Ancient Greek world of philosophers is one part, perhaps even a disproportionate part, of our memory of Greece. But the Greeks also figure in this story as conquerors and as seafarers. So two other features of Greece matter in this. If we want to understand cosmopolitanism, there is indeed a philosophical history traceable back to Socrates and Diogenes, the Cynics, and the Stoics, exactly as Nikos has said. But there's also, if you will, a demotic, less philosophical side to the Greek heritage in this: Hellenism. The spread of Greek philosophy and language, and much else, by the Alexandrine Conquests, helped to create a space that was not defined just by any

particular philosophical tenets. It would be the space in which there would be Roman Stoics as well as Greek Stoics. It would be a space *for* philosophy, among other things. But it's another dimension of cosmopolitanism. Now, it happens that Alexander's Empire didn't last very long, it didn't much outlive his death. It's not one of the great empires, but Byzantium is. And so we should think also of a Greek heritage of the way in which diverse peoples were linked by some elements of common culture and common systems of authority, without the demand that they become one. So, anticipating some of the dilemmas of modern Europe, both the Hellenic Empire of Alexander, and the later Byzantine Empire of the Eastern Roman Empire, anticipate this dilemma and offer an idea about trying to achieve some sort of unity, which is not a complete integration into one, in a sense.

And indeed, though I could play on this further, I won't go much further with it, but only note that we would be misunderstanding the history of modern cosmopolitanism in thinking about the ways in which we theorise being a part of larger wholes if we left religion out of the story. And if we left, in particular, Orthodoxy out of the story, we would leave out a religion which, among other things, anticipated in its very institutional structures certain elements of modern nationalism, as well as cosmopolitanism. That is, not producing a religion organised around a figure like the Pope and the Catholic image of integration. In the Western-Roman Empire and its successors in parts of Europe, this produced a different notion of being whole and integrated to that which was produced in Byzantium and in the Orthodox world, and in part even absorbed into the post-Byzantine Ottoman Empire.

Empire is an interesting further constituent. Not as a philosophy of empire, not simply as an idea, but as a material condition of connectedness. I won't belabour the point infinitely, but one of the things that goes on with empire, if you will, as a social reality or a political reality, is the continued existence of different peoples under a common authority structure.

Contrasted to democracy, among other things, contrasted to the building of modern states with the demand for a kind of integration of those modern states that is different from the canopy of authority in an empire over peoples who are, and remain, different and distinct. So, modern state-building, in Western Europe, and then in varying degrees around the world, sought to create more strongly integrated wholes in the nation-states than were presupposed by empire. I won't belabour the Catholicism/Orthodoxy contrast, but there's a hint and an anticipation of the same issue there, and it affects the rest of the world.

China, with its extraordinary continuity for 6,000 years, becomes a nation in the nineteenth century. The sense in which Greece is a nation is transformed, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It becomes a modern nation in a way that is different. For all of the extent to which Orthodoxy presages and builds a certain Greek identity, that identity isn't national in the way that it will become after a transformation with the idea of building a Greek state. It's worth noting, also, that nationalism at the time that the modern Greek state was developed was the cosmopolitanism of its day. And here, in a way, I'm really pretty sympathetic to what Nikos is laying out about this, including about his project, for what might be a different future. Nationalism was the cosmopolitanism of the late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth centuries. There was a cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment and ideas spreading, but there was also a direct continuation of that in the more romantic production of modern nationalisms. So, what is Byron, after all, doing dying in Greece? He is, in fact, engaged in a project of celebrating the notion of national self-determination in an era when it was believed that every nation could, should, and probably would determine its own future and become autonomous.

Now, we don't believe in the same way in this ideal of a springtime of peoples in which these different peoples would all flourish without an essential competition among

them — and we probably haven't since the mid-nineteenth century. But it's worth remembering that our understanding of nationalism isn't forged simply with a set of negative examples, as though Nazism is the be-all and end-all of nationalism, as though the negative, nasty cases are the whole. It's forged in the context of a set of aspirations, aspirations to unify peoples who experience their being as incomplete in disunity. And here my German and my Greek friends each have versions of that, for Greece has a long history of a common cultural identity, a common sensibility, without a common statehood of the national variety, and this is forged in the context of modernity. And Germany has the same. There are obviously many differences, but the many German principalities which come together in the wake of empire to create modern Germany were also engaged in this aspiration as a nation, the aspiration of building a nation.

There are a couple of things to remember out of that, and I'll go into a more directly contemporary discussion of this. One thing is that nationalism can be a project. This is the most important thing I want to say, now, about nationalism: nationalism does not have to be simply the celebration of a national inheritance. It can be participation in a national project. How do we make the nation better? How do we make our shared existence with each other better? Those Greeks and Germans of a couple of centuries ago were engaged in the project of building nations to fit with the cultural identity and the modern idea of states in order to make life better. They were not just celebrating inheritance, but celebration of inheritance with celebrating difference and disjuncture and enmity with various others or neighbours and taking on a project of achieving unity. National projects are often that.

I refer again to China. The Chinese national project as it develops in what we would call the nineteenth century, and they might call the late Qing Dynasty era, has impetus from some old Ming loyalists, but it is a reformulation of what it means to be Chinese in a series of ways that will be



consequential. It's a formulation of what it means to be Chinese, which, among other things, makes far more of the idea of a Chinese population of potential citizens than the imperial idea of a hierarchy from the emperor through various other intermediaries to family. And so, it comes alongside things like a project to reform the Chinese language, the *Baihua* project, in order to be able to have a version of Chinese compatible with modern printing presses — and I'm going to get around to social media, and the internet, and your [Nikos] challenges of this — in order that all Chinese people can fully participate in China as a nation. The May Fourth Movement is emblematic of this, with its ideals of science and democracy. But Mr Sci and Mr D (as they were popularized) are not just what we mean by science and democracy; they are the roles of knowledge and equal citizenship in constituting a nation of culture and equal citizenship. Equal citizenship can be expressed in terms of democracy, but it's an important idea in the Chinese case. The idea of equal citizenship overcomes regional differences, differences of dialect, mutually unintelligible versions of Chinese except for when people can write. Writing, making writing easier with *Baihua*, is in part a way of unifying China by contrast to a China in which only a very narrow elite can in fact communicate around the country. It becomes possible for anyone who is literate too, and literacy becomes far easier. And China will move in a remarkable twentieth century, whatever else happens, from a country of negligible popular literacy, to a country of almost universal popular literacy. And then capacity created with literacy continues on into a world of televisions and computers.

I could talk about this story in various places, but I think the point is made that *nation* can be a project. It doesn't have to be what often the marriage of nationalism and populism makes it, a look backward to what we have inherited ancestrally. It can be a look forward to what we want to be together. Now, what we want to be is likely to be built on

what we inherited, it's likely to draw on the heritage, but it will draw selectively, and we'll say some of these things that are in our history are more helpful to us than other things in building the future we want to have. And this makes nationalism something that can co-exist potentially much better with cosmopolitanism — that is, with a wider sense of inclusion — because we can make our countries better at being cosmopolitan. This is important because most of what we have in the way of an international order is literally international, the treaties are international, the structures of that world order are international, they are relations among nation-states. We may move past that. It's true that nation-states are challenged as vehicles for taking hold of a world that is intensively globalised the way ours is, but they aren't going away overnight. The way in which we take hold, the institutions we build, are deeply shaped by nations. So it's very important if we want a better global order that we don't get the idea that was so common ten years ago, twenty years ago, that we can wish away the nation-state. That we can leap past the nation-state into a world of global harmony, rather than global discord and chaos. Or, rather than domination by the economic systems and others. Nations remain important to organising that structure, but we can do *nation* better.

In responding to some of what Nikos and Peter have said, I am trying to weave a single story. I'm very much in agreement with the idea of thinking about cosmopolitanism and nationalism, or cosmopolitanism and belonging, solidarity, all of this, as in a sense 'co-constitutive'. I like Nikos's idea of doing this. I want to add, though, that this isn't just a matter of ideas. We aren't who we are in the world just based on how we think, it's also what kinds of institutional structures we live in. And so, there is a political economy and a sociology of this as well; there are social foundations. The issues of inequality and differential power always matter. Germany and Greece are not in the same position in the EU, just to use that as a mnemonic. Officially they are, but in practice

they aren't, because it turns out that money and your international bond ratings, and a variety of other things, matter to how much clout you have in the internal structure, even if formal rules say they shouldn't. So there's a limit to purely formal rules and to abstract equality. A nod to Karl Marx, on the German side here. Marx spoke about bourgeois equality, abstract equality, as the freedom to pick which bridge you wanted to lie down under to die in your unemployed misery. It's an illusory freedom if you don't have the capacity to be able to act on the ideas, to form life projects, to put in motion your self-determination in the world at an individual level, or, indeed, at a national level. It's crucial, then, for cosmopolitans thinking about global unity to think carefully and reflexively about global unity.

Does my picture of global unity reflect my relatively privileged position, being invited to Melbourne by the Thesis Eleven Centre and actually getting to fly in business class? I travel to a variety of conferences, I speak at a variety of universities. Business executives, some other people, travel a lot, also even get to travel business class, go to the airport clubs, mingle, stay at a certain class of hotels. That gives you a view of what the world is like, but it's not a view that is shared by everyone. It's not a view that accurately reflects the experience of refugees, the experience of labour migrants, or the experience of people who don't travel because they don't have the resources to travel. Indeed, even from what we know about migration, migrants aren't the poorest of the poor. We may think that migration is pushed by necessity, like poverty, but it's usually the people who have a little bit of wherewithal who are able to migrate to get better jobs or start businesses or create futures elsewhere. So, we need to be reflexive as we think about that world.

I'm going now to differ from Nikos, but not, I think, in value or intention. I'm going to try to make a distinction or a clarification, at least in what I think, which may or may not then reflect what he thinks. I don't think cosmopolitanism

is limited in extent by solidarity, I don't think it's limited in *extent* at all. I think it's limited in *capacity*. That is, it's a way of constituting in unity that doesn't do all the work we might want done for unity. It's not the same as thinking 'community'. Thus, to say we respect human rights in the world, for example, a cosmopolitan idea, makes good sense. We can be completely sincere and we can do this. But the capacity to *effect* respect for human rights typically involves states as enforcers or legal authorities, and necessarily involves resources. We can assert there's a right to employment, if we wish. But to actually deliver any employment, let alone good and meaningful work, poses a different set of economic and sociological questions.

I want to suggest that part of the role of cosmopolitan thinking is to articulate a variety of ideals which depend on something beyond cosmopolitanism for their delivery mechanism. It's often national governments that are crucial to that, but it's also businesses and other institutions — the Greek community, society — it's a variety of organisational structures which may or may not be in the same sense cosmopolitan. And most specifically, in this vein, what was so problematic that it caused me to write a variety of articles, address it in a book, and worry about this in the writings that Nikos referred to, isn't that cosmopolitanism is so problematic, it's the paradox entailed in speaking of cosmopolitan democracy.

The new theoretical wave, the modern wave of writing about cosmopolitanism of the 1990s and the beginnings of this century, wasn't just a turn to Diogenes, or Socrates, neither of whom was a democrat — and look what democracy did for Socrates! They were defenders of individuals and the natural or cosmic rights of individuals against political solidarity. It is precisely an opposition of cosmopolitanism to citizenship that is in large part at stake for both, but particularly for Diogenes, who after all is a migrant because he and his father are accused of debasing the currency back home in Sinope, and is anything but a popular character, who's in a

variety of ways flouting the norms, flouting the local culture and being distinctly individualistic. But whatever we make of him, there is an important niche for defending the right to be a minority. The right to be a minority of one. The right to be different. These are important values but they are not the same as the values of solidarity. Our challenge is to integrate these in a productive way, and this is why I agree with the overall direction that Nikos is pushing us, but I think it's different.

I could take this further a little bit, but just note the idea that to say we are all connected in this larger sense is to answer a question about being human that is important, and a question about living in the world that it is important — indeed, in today's context of environmental disaster. But it's not the question of citizenship. It is, at most, metaphorical that we speak of global citizenship. It has a different sense from national citizenship. And I worry that part of the celebration of cosmopolitanism stayed thin not only because people were not reflexive enough about their own privilege, the class consciousness of frequent travellers, but because they also were insufficiently attentive to the different work being done by citizenship. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive; I'm not saying contradictory, not saying they can't coexist. But they don't coexist very well if you don't pay attention to how the question 'are all of us as humans in the same boat?' is a different question from 'how are those of us who make laws together and enforce them together in an institutional structure organised as citizens?' And, in particular, are we democratically organised? That is, is there a voice to all those people? Which then poses questions like, which people? Who can vote? How is that voice going to work? And this is where some of the tensions come in.

Now, I could say there are two logics to this global connection question. But there are really five, ten, we could go on and on about them. Let me evoke something of it briefly. One way to think about how we are part of a larger human

whole is connections — you could say we're connected to everyone else. In fact, Nikos used the word 'connections' a lot, and I like to say connections. That is, I like to think in terms of how we're connected to each other. This has a lot in common with parts of that Greek heritage, philosophically, but not all, because the Greek heritage also underpins another major way — although it came to fruition more with the Romans — which is that of universal equivalence. We have two basic logics for thinking about the question of all of us human beings together. One is we're connected to each other. The other is we're the same as each other. I just want to put it to you that those are not the same idea. To say we're connected in various ways — we're connected by trade, for example, we're connected by media and communications, we're connected by the fact that if global warming is bad enough we're all going to drown or be toast. But that's different from the logic that human rights is founded on, which is not one of connection, but of equivalence. We have equivalent standing, and there are other logics of equivalence in the world.

One of the reasons I brought up the religious heritage earlier, is that it's part of the source for keeping alive the connection-oriented rather than equivalence-oriented view, although with the particular feature of being connected under God, as in the image of the Pantokrator, ruler of all. Under God, human beings are all connected through God. So, we have different logics of how we're connected. The idea of common denominators is different from the idea of connections. Connections have a history, and they are, in a certain way, not as abstract as the common denominators. We may articulate common denominators in the abstract, they may be extremely important for us as ideals, as human rights are. But they have a certain thinness in relation to the histories that have forged our various connections to each other. And some of those connections have involved conflict, and so being able to be effectively cosmopolitan means working through the heritage of those conflicts. Being able to learn concretely

how to get along with each other, not just abstractly assert that we have the same rights.

There's also the issue that speaking of cosmos in the Ancient Greece sense that Nikos rightly brings up, involves nature. A missing theme in many of these discussions is how we relate to nature. This is very important in the context of global warming and environmental degradation, but also important for getting the concept of the cosmos right. This is left out of most theories of cosmopolitan democracy, which really start with the proposition: globalisation exceeds nation-states, we need democracy to be at the same scale, let's leap and have the same logic on a larger scale. The issue here is one of a common fate. One of the important ways we inhabit the world is that we are facing a common fate. Is it different from connections? Well, it's a kind of connection, and very different from simply equivalence. What happens to the world will happen to all of us. Some of us may have the wealth or resources or the benefit of location to be able to weather the storms, metaphorically and literally, better than others. But we inhabit a common world, and what happens to the world happens to all of us. This is the reason for this connection, and again, it's something that religions have often given us some strong vocabularies for, and we forget the Christian heritage in this case, and the heritage of other religions. If we begin to see the religions, like nations, as all anti-cosmopolitan — so here I just want to build on what Nikos said — that there is a tendency to see both nationalism and religion as necessarily sectional, to emphasise the divisions they impose and the problems that those divisions create, and not to recognise the extent to which each of them brought forward an understanding of a larger unity, which we might want to expand. We might not want to take it just as it's inherited and found, but which is nonetheless brought to us from these different sources.

Peter brought up the issue of populism, which I think is important, though I almost don't want to delve into it now

because there's so much to go into. But let me just respond a little bit. The reason that I don't want to go into it is not that it's not important, but that I think it has become a word which people use at the moment to describe whatever they don't like. And therefore, it's not a terribly helpful analytic category. I'm part of this problem, perhaps, since I've written about populism and tried to give the word a specific meaning different from some others. In any case, populism means thinking about politics in terms of 'the people' and this is very basic to democracy. So, we're talking about citizenship and democracy, and we're talking about an idea of the people, and the people that cross-cut region and religion and class differences, the people in common. This is a very important part of how modern democracies are constituted. So, some kind of reference to 'the people' is always already available for residents of modern democratic societies. What to do with that is a question. Is it a language with which to be suspicious of and reject some others? 'Those immigrants! Those people who aren't like us! Those elites who are betraying the real people!' So often the language of people, ironically an inclusive language, is used to exclude. We are suspicious of those other people who don't fit our definition of what the right version of the people is. These things get more confusing because we tend to think in national categories as the way to define 'people'.

One of the ways we're nationalists that is not helpful, is we tend to think all these issues of solidarity and exclusion are idiosyncratic to our nations. The first thing to realise about populism and nationalism both is that they're all over the place. We tell the story, the Australian story, the French story, the American story, but there are a lot of commonalities. Why are nationalism and populism and certain kinds of demagogic leaders coming to the fore right now? Some of the reasons for that are in fact inherent in the way globalisation has worked in recent years, and people's anxieties over whether their ways of life can continue. Now, that doesn't mean that populist ideology is a great academic solution and



we should abandon the social sciences and put populism in their place, but it does mean that there are real issues. It may not be globalisation, it may be automation that is causing the transformation of economies. It may not be migrants who are actually threatening people's jobs, but artificial intelligence. But nonetheless, the sense that there are threats to a way of life we value and share which we understand in some part in common in our countries is a powerful motivation, a powerful idea. Not necessarily a powerful set of solutions to the problems that it points out.

There is a politics of identity at every scale. I bring this up because I think the ideas that we have about identity and politics sort of get in the way of better thinking about multiculturalism and all of this. What gets in the way is the notion that there are some identities that are fixed and then we base our politics on them. Remember I said at the beginning that nationalism can be a project, not just an inheritance. The same is true of every politically salient identity. Part of what makes them feel fixed is often ascription, it's often that others treat them that way. 'Well, Aboriginals are never going to be this or do that', and it's the outside that imposes limits, not only people inside a population. It's the same in other cases. What is going on with the German production, the North German production, of a Protestant view of Catholics in Europe, let alone Orthodox, as people who 'don't save and are profligate' and all of that. This is an identity politics from the outside imposing a claim on others which may or may not be fair. Now, what I'll say about this, is that all of these are fluid. Peter cited this claim from my work before, that the identities are historical, they are made and re-made. What it means to be Greek, in Australia, today, is partly, but only very partly, an inheritance from Ancient Greece. It is an identity that's been made and re-made, including in this context, indeed including in this place, over time. And so it is for others, including national identities, but also every sub-national identity. So there's always multiplicity, and we have to

notice that every claiming of 'The Right Way' is a claim to a kind of authority. 'This is the correct way to express your Greek identity in Australia', or 'this is the correct way to be Australian', or 'this is the correct way to be, fill-in-the-blank, a Muslim in America'. All of those are authority claims to tell other people what the right ways are. There are usually some parts of a population who are able to make those assertions, disproportionately men, though not always and only men, as Peter alludes to. They all involve assertions that there is a Right Way. This is at odds with the genuine multiplicity of ways and very importantly at odds with something else that Nikos brought up, the new production of culture.

If being Greek were only an inheritance, it wouldn't matter for very long. It's important because it is living culture, and has been creatively renewed at different moments. So, one of the great Greek poets can be Cavafy. And Cavafy is in Alexandria, Cavafy is not in Greece in a narrow sense, but he is anticipating the kind of 'we can all be Greek' moment that Nikos is alluding to. In every culture, there is creative production which is crucial to it being a living thing, and therefore there has to be an openness to the new. So, ironically, some of the fiercest defenders of national cultures are those who would close off the production of the new on which the future actually depends in this. That said, I'll close with just a couple of comments.

One, we do face a crisis of authority. One of the issues of our contemporary predicament in relation to all of this is that we are short on ways of producing agreement. Now, authority doesn't have to mean somebody saying, like the bad stereotype of a father, 'do it because I said so!'. It can be the authority of ideas. It can be the authority of reason. The authority can come from various sources, but if we aren't able to achieve commonality we've got a problem, and this fragmentation — you [Nikos] alluded to this point from Castoriadis — is a powerful part of our current predicament. We are connected, as it were, behind our backs, by things like

global markets, in ways that we can't get in front of us and achieve a full agreement about very effectively. So in relation to the idea of public culture, which is both the centre as Nikos said, and part of our topic tonight, one important issue is what we might think of as a tension between two senses of democracy.

One sense is self-rule, our everyday sense of democracy, 'We Rule'. That can mean widespread political participation, public discourse, everybody's in it. We see a not particularly liberal version of that in many populisms. Majorities are voting in ways that sometimes worry everybody else because they're voting against the rights of those minorities, against the Socrates, against the Diogenes in modern societies. But another sense of democracy, something we also value, is a system for integrating diverse opinions into policy, based on compromise. So we actually mean two things that are in some tension with each other. We mean everybody gets a voice out of which should come some sort of general will, some sort of policy. But we mean also that there are mechanisms for coming to agreement, finding authority, finding a common voice. We're very short on those at the moment, and the world is very fragmented. The new technology world, the new media exacerbate this at the moment. That doesn't mean that they couldn't be part of a better solution in the future, but right now they mainly fragment, they mainly silo, they mainly separate the different discourses. The challenges we face are to turn these into more effective modes of integration, but some of our other institutions, say political parties, are also broken.

I won't presume to comment on Australia where I have no particular expertise or knowledge of this, but in Britain and the United States, the two countries I've spent most of my life working in, the political parties are pretty much broken. We are in the 'after-party', and it's just like when you go out drinking after you've already been at the party, this is when things get out of hand. This is when behaviour gets erratic. Parties do a certain amount of organizing. What do

parties do? They don't have one point of view. Parties effectively organise compromises. *We'll support your cause if you support our cause. We'll come together around this.* We are really short on the ability to forge those now, we're big on the ability to express things. And we face a number of very basic challenges. It's not just new media technology, it's gene editing, it's artificial intelligence, it's technologies of all kinds that are changing the world we live in. It is the crisis of our international institutions and our ability to cooperate, which depends on things like the World Bank, the IMF, the United Nations, and the Asian Infrastructure Bank and a whole variety of others that are not necessarily delivering all for us. We've got a bunch of big challenges, we need to engage in reimagining and remaking our identities, our world, our future together, but we need to be able to achieve some sort of level of authoritative discourse, some commonality.

A closing remark on culture in that context. Culture is organised both, and necessarily, in relation to places *and* media. There is no public culture, no idea of public culture, that gets a good grasp on what we value and need that is just one or the other. It is the interplay between places like this place, like the corner that has an historical meaning and memory for Greeks in Melbourne, likes lots of shops. People who write about public culture tend to write about the agora, but the agora in the modern world is often a noodle shop, it's often a coffee shop, it's often a commercial establishment that provides people with a place which is neither a private home, nor a legislature, in which they argue and forge opinion together. Now, how do we connect up these conversations? How do we make sure that we have them and we're not just all at home watching Netflix? In a world which is very, very fragmented, in which it is hard to get common authority on the scale of our problems, we need the places and we need the media. Right now, that symbiosis isn't working terribly well, but it's available, so we need the media. The media are many kinds of media, they're not all spectacle. There are also lots of direct,

interpersonal exchanges, there are all kinds of things going on. And it's not just politics, because we need a common culture, not just a common political arrangement in that.

Public culture is always in tension between openness and cohesion, we value two things about it: that it be open, that's the publicness, and that it be cohesive, that there be a public culture, that it be integrated, that it be connected. We can't have all of both of them, they're in tension. And then, finally, this issue of the very large scale, the spectacular, and the personal, the meaningful. So, public culture is an arena in which we confront a set of contradictions that we have to work with and through, but where just picking one side or the other is not in any sense a solution. But we have to work through this because our various reimaginings and remakings of this identity or that identity, or even our sense of the human as a whole, depend on our building a world in which we can effectively communicate and share, and build institutions to act on what we make together of our nations, or of our international cooperation as human beings in a more cosmopolitan way.

## About the authors

Craig Calhoun FBA, FAcSS is an American sociologist and the current president of the Berggruen Institute. An advocate of using social science to address issues of public concern, he was the Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science from September 2012 until September 2016 when he left to become the first President of the Berggruen Institute. He was previously president of the Social Science Research Council and was University Professor of the Social Sciences at New York University and Director of NYU's Institute for Public Knowledge. With Richard Sennett, he co-founded NYLON, an interdisciplinary working seminar for graduate students in New York and London who bring ethnographic and historical research to bear on politics, culture and society.

Peter Beilharz is an Australian sociologist. He is currently Professor of Culture and Society at Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia. Previously he was Professor of Sociology at La Trobe University, Melbourne. Beilharz is also a co-founder and editor of the international journal of social theory *Thesis Eleven* published by Sage. From 2002 to 2014, he was the director of the Thesis Eleven Centre for Cultural Sociology at La Trobe University. He is best known for his work in social theory and socialism, for his intellectual biography of the Australian art historian Bernard Smith, and his several books on the eminent Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. In 1999–2000, he was the Harvard Chair of Australian Studies, Harvard University. In 2015, he will be a Research Fellow at STIAS, Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study.

Nikos Papastergiadis is Professor at the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. His current research focuses on the investigation of the historical transformation of contemporary art and cultural institutions by digital technology. His sole-authored publications

## About the authors

include *Modernity as Exile* (1993), *Dialogues in the Diaspora* (1998), *The Turbulence of Migration* (2000), *Metaphor and Tension* (2004), *Spatial Aesthetics: Art, Place, and the Everyday* (2006), *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (2012) and *Ambient Perspectives* (2013), as well as being the editor of over ten collections, author of numerous essays which have been translated into over a dozen languages and appeared in major catalogues such as for the biennales of Sydney, Liverpool, Istanbul, Gwangju, Taipei, Lyon and Thessaloniki, and Documenta 13. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and co-chair of the Greek Centre for Contemporary Culture, Chair of the International Advisory Board for the Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore, and Visiting Professor at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

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The Research Unit in Public Cultures is based in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. It focuses on transformations in public culture produced by new intersections of knowledge, media, space and mobility, within Australia and internationally.

It brings together scholars from four faculties at the University of Melbourne who are collaborating on projects with a wide range of industry partners. The Research Unit's agenda is to develop projects that address four fundamental trajectories:

- how cultural knowledge is shaped by and against the global forces which articulate Australia's place in the world;
- how developments in digital technologies alter the protocols for inclusion and exclusions within public cultures;
- how new practices of mobility impact on the constitution of public knowledge and cultures; and
- how public space is created, managed and accessed, specifically within networked urban environments.

The Research Unit plays a role in facilitating scholarship, enhancing research opportunities and enabling collaborations between creative industries, cultural institutions, research institutions, academic research centres and public communities. It houses a number of collaborative research projects across various disciplines, such as: education for a multicultural society; digital networks and participatory public space; art as a platform for global culture; transnational cinema practices; aesthetic cosmopolitanism; mediated public spaces; and cultural citizenship.

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Is there anything left after global spectacles  
and local events?

Craig Calhoun in conversation with  
Peter Beilharz & Nikos Papastergiadis

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This pamphlet documents a conversation between Craig Calhoun, Nikos Papastergiadis and Peter Beilharz, world-renowned scholars on nationalism, modernity and cosmopolitanism, to reflect on the conditions for public culture in the current context, and even to consider the question: have we ever been cosmopolitan?

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