Terror Australis: David Hicks and citizenship in an age of insecurity.

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Introduction:

The day after the September 11 attacks in the US, President George W. Bush publicly resolved to retaliate against “those behind these evils acts”. In a strident US policy to fight terror, there would be no distinction made between those who committed terrorist acts and those who supported them (George W Bush, 2001). Within a month, Bush had launched a retaliatory military attack on Afghanistan with the central aim of destroying the Islamic group al Qaeda and the semi-official government of Afghanistan, the Taliban. This was the first part of the global ‘war on terror’ and Bush quickly established that in the political and the discursive sense, “you were either with us, or you were with the terrorists” (The President, 2004). Since the beginning of the war on terror, Australia has been very much ‘with’ the USA. Australia’s involvement in the Coalition of the Willing has mirrored US concern about Islamic fundamentalism. A nonetheless Australian political sensibility has coloured governmental discourse about the ‘war on terror’, with historic issues of border control and illegal immigration, as well as terrorism in Indonesia and continued military presence in East Timor also part of wider understandings of post-September 11 insecurity. Australian governmental discourse in the media, and media reportage itself, has preoccupied itself with particular questions about insecurity in the post-September 11 age, particularly concerning ways to identify and thwart potential terrorist acts in Australia, as well as finding potential terrorists before they ‘strike’ and bringing them to justice. With this preoccupation at the forefront, an Australian media still absorbed the aftermath of the events of September 11 on US and Australian policy, reported on another threat to our security in 2001; ‘home grown’ terrorists.

On December 14, 2001, Attorney General Daryl Williams and Defence Minister Robert Hill released a joint press statement about the capture of Australian citizen, 26 year-old David Hicks in Afghanistan by the Northern Alliance and his subsequent handover to US custody. It was alleged that he was caught on the battlefield aiding the Taliban’s resistance against Coalition troops. Hicks was held by the Northern Alliance until the December 17, 2001, when he was transferred to US military custody. On December 24, approximately 15 days after his capture, Australian authorities spoke to Hicks for the first time (Interview of Mr Hicks, 2001). On January 12 2002, Australian authorities were informed of Hicks ‘imminent’ removal to Cuba. Hicks has been held at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba since the mid January, 2001. He now resides at Camp Echo at Guantanamo Bay (in Lasry, 2004:8) after pleading not guilty to ‘conspiracy to commit war crimes’, ‘attempted murder by an underprivileged belligerent’ and ‘aiding the enemy’.

The arrest and detention of Hicks by the US captured Australian newspaper headlines for weeks and saw him branded as a ‘rat in the ranks’; the embodiment of Australia’s ‘new’ insecurity about the seemingly ubiquitous terrorist threat. Though he would not be officially charged with an offence until three years later, Hicks was accused by the US government of being associated with the Taliban and al Qaeda, and because these groups were connected with Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, this association was enough for both American and Australian authorities to deem him a terrorist too. While the fact of his ‘Australianness’ ruptured the traditional understandings of a ‘terrorist’ as a Middle Eastern Muslim, David Hicks’ capture in fact confirmed governmental discourse about the post-September 11 terrorist threat. In defining an ‘era of insecurity’, Hicks is emblematic of the global, ubiquitous threat of terrorism, where only eternal vigilance and the physical force of a ‘war on terror’ can thwart the threat in your own backyard.

Otherness and Citizenship:

I wish to explore the representation of David Hicks by governmental discourse in the media following his capture by the Northern alliance in 2001. In defining terrorism as the major source of insecurity in
Australia, two interconnected themes, the first establishing a terrorist as ‘Other’ and the second establishing the ‘Other’ against themes of ideal and contingent citizenship have been utilised to define and contextualise post-September 11 insecurity about terrorism. Themes of ‘Otherness’ have been attributed to David Hicks and his alleged ‘terrorist acts’ as a Muslim convert in Pakistan and Afghanistan and by extension, of Islamic belief. Hicks’ ‘Otherness’ is represented in conjunction with discursive themes of contingent citizenship, where notions of recognition as a ‘true’ or ideal Australian citizen are dependent on their identification with superficial national identity politics. Contingent citizenship is represented as a discursive theme where Australian citizenship and the protections it affords are presented as contingent on the performance of duties or actions that show true ‘Australianness’. Thus, the underlying theme of governmental discourse in the media representing David Hicks as ‘Other’ is to portray a citizen whose un-Australian actions are legitimation for his incarceration. An Australian accused of terrorism gives up a ‘normal’ citizen’s right to justice or the rigours of appropriate legal process because their alleged actions are so unjust—it is the weight of the meaning that the idea terrorism is imbued with that is in itself a justification for normally unreasonable responses from governmental authorities.

While Gayatri Spivak is credited with providing the analytical basis for understanding Otherness, Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism will be used as an example of how administrative, governmental and some media discourse has been established through structured discourse of binary opposition of unequal partners. Said’s description of Otherness in the form of Orientalist theory seems to be more instructive in exploring specifically the ways in which Western representations of the Middle East and Islam have been formulated over time, as well as their current discursive form within institutions and texts. Orientalism is applied as a ‘discourse of knowledge’ used as a form of marginalisation; that is, the political ramifications of communicated ideologies based on simplistic forms of binary opposition and difference. Said’s examination of Orientalist thought in his three books, Orientalism, Culture and Imperialism and Covering Islam are credited as some of the first texts to examine perceptions of the ‘East’ from a ‘Western’ literary and administrative perspective. Said’s analysis of Orientalist thought covered artistic, governmental and administrative texts using discourse analysis to examine how ‘the other’ was created through procedures of structured cultural meaning-making and discursive practice. In Covering Islam, Said examines how Orientalism still survives today in Western media reports of Eastern, especially Arab lands (McLeod, 2000:39). Said suggests the modes of representing colonised cultures and minorities as ‘other’ have continued after decolonisation and are still very much a part of the contemporary world. In creating the orientalist other, Said isolates various modes of representative literary and administrative construction which assert a binary division between Orient and Occident; the Orient is conceived as being everything that the West is not, its ‘alter ego’ (in McLeod, 2000:40). Said’s texts suggest the ways in which Western powers came to represent North African and Middle eastern countries as the inferior ‘alter ego’ of colonial dominance and development, and how representations of Middle Eastern development—whether economic, political, theological or militaristic is seen as a threat to (post-colonial) Western dominance. Orientalist themes can be identified in much governmental discourse about the post-September 11 terrorist threat and Hicks’ representation by governmental authorities and in the media sees a crystallisation of Orientalist fears.

Orientalism also draws upon Marxist theories of power, especially Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault to show how the West produced this knowledge to ‘prove the truth’ of their inferiority in a post-colonial era. These representations continue into the present day where presentation of knowledge about the Middle East and Islam is based upon commonly held assumptions about ‘the Orient’ as a mythic place of exoticism, moral laxity and primitive degeneracy (McLeod, 2000:21). Orientalism thus shows the modes of representation common to colonialism have continued after decolonisation and are still very much a part of the contemporary world as forms of ‘knowledge’ about the Middle East, Islam and the ‘Orient’. (McLeod, 2000:40). In the text, Said illustrates the structure and form that Orientalist knowledge takes as a “western fantasy”. Orientalism is first and foremost a fabricated construct that represents the ‘reality’ of the Orient for those in the ‘imagined community’ of ‘the West’ (See Anderson, 1991). This contrived
reality does not actually reflect what may or may not actually be in the Orient; it does not exist outside of the representations made about it. Instead, Orientalism imposes upon the Orient specifically Western views of its reality (Said, 1995: 36).

Orientalism’s purpose in propagating these stereotypes is fundamentally legitimating: its discourse is part of a far-reaching system of representations that structure a relationship based on political domination. They legitimate the marginalisation and domination of other peoples and lubricate the political and judicial structures that maintain this power (McLeod, 2000:43). Thus, Orientalism must also be seen as an institution that allows certain forms of knowledge to become available and ultimately make possible, a whole institutional structure where opinions about the Orient circulate as objective knowledge or wholly reliable truth. I am not suggesting that these discursive binary oppositions physically exist, nor do I want to make totalising assumptions about essential Islamic ‘victims’ or ‘Western oppressors’. Where Graham Huggan (2005) suggests that Orientalism is somewhat ‘counterintuitive’ in its insistence of a methodological consistency of Orientalist thought and production, (without a sense of historical, political or geographic context), I am utilising the theory merely as an interpretive tool of institutionalised governmental or media discourse used to communicate a politically expedient response to terrorism. As Said suggests in Orientalism, “I have no interest in, much less capacity for, showing what the true Orient or Islam really are… words such as Orient and Occident correspond to no stable reality that exists as natural fact” (Said, 1995: 331). Instead Said argues that the construction of a ‘national identity’ always involves an exclusion of sorts; it involves establishing ‘Others’, “whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from us” (Said, 1995: 332).

Within a discourse of post-September 11 insecurity, governmental communications and media reportage have made use of binary opposition, stereotype and generalisation as a method of representation, especially in the presentation of the ‘West’s enemies’. Nonetheless, while Orientalist imagery is undeniably powerful, this method of communication also has its limitations for governmental and media discourse, especially as the number of authorities and parties that have a stake in certain representations fight to have their voice heard in the public domain. For example, while Hicks was initially portrayed in the media as betraying his obligations as an Australian citizen, an increase in dissenting viewpoints in later media coverage suggested that in fact, the Australian government could be accused of not fulfilling their duties towards an Australian citizen. As Said suggests in Orientalism, the power relations inherent in international political life mean that “far from a static thing then, identity of self or the ‘other’ is a much worked over historical, social, intellectual and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies (Said, 1995: 332). Without the possibility of resistance, or the suggestion of the precariousness of social structures and representations, there would be no power relations at all (Racevskis, 2005).

Discourses suggesting a ubiquitous terrorist threat as the source of a ‘new era of insecurity’ have become dominant in media and governmental communications. Within this discourse, a greater importance has been placed on the politics of identity and citizenship; situating the actions and behaviours of ‘true’ citizens, especially when the ‘enemy’ could be anywhere. When potential terrorists are described, it is to illustrate how different they are to ‘true citizens’. The idea of citizenship is based on categories of inclusive and exclusive. It is based on the notion of belonging to something when others do not, and the benefits and protections that that may bring. As Binoy Kampmark (2003) suggests, “Citizenship, in its obsession with charting the boundaries of belonging, excludes and privileges”. Within governmental discourse, citizenship is seen as a legal and social contract between citizens and government, where mutually observed rights and responsibilities are observed in order to form a consensus of society (Lentini, 2005: 2), that is, a political community with a recognisable and communicated identity.

Within the political community of Australia, citizen’s right are defined by three elements; the first is associated with the individual freedoms that the rule of law and the court system provide; secondly, the
right to participate in political and parliamentary institutions and lastly, the social right to a prevailing standard of life and social heritage (See Lentini, 2005). Within the context of a multicultural community, liberal theorists have also suggested that citizenship is not merely a legal status, defined by rights and responsibilities, but also the expression of an identity and membership to a particular political community (See Lentini 2005). This is extended by Jan Pakulski who suggests cultural citizenship involves the right to “unhindered and legitimate representation, and propagation of lifestyles through the information systems in public fora...within three sub-streams: the right to symbolic presence and visibility (versus marginalisation); the right to dignifying representation (versus stigmatisation); and the right to propagation of identity and maintenance of lifestyle (versus assimilation) (1997: 80). Terrorists, therefore, by the very nature of their activities, reject the legal dominion. Within an era of insecurity, terrorists have been ‘individualised’ in terms of their activities and citizenship—they do not belong to nations; they belong to an ideology. Terrorists are instead ubiquitous entities with no sense of national or patriotic duty. Thus because a terrorist does not ‘play by the rules’, the rights given to civilians are altered for a terrorist.

Response to Hick’s capture in Afghanistan:

Despite the preponderance of media reportage and expert opinion about David Hicks, the exact circumstances of the event of capture by Northern Alliance troops has not been verified. A joint press release from Attorney General Daryl Williams and Defence Minister Robert Hill on December 14 was seemingly the first public announcement of Hicks handover to US custody, and other than general advice concerning Hicks’ safety, the statement reveals nothing of the circumstances of Hicks’ arrest (Australian National, 2001). Nonetheless, the statement contextualised the events within the statement, “If Mr Hicks has committed a crime against Australian law, the Australian government will do whatever is necessary to bring him to justice” (Australian National, 2001). The repetition of this sentence in another media statement released on December 17 (David Hicks transferred, 2001) is somewhat suggestive of the course that governmental discourse on David Hicks would take; the idea of “bringing him to justice” being a somewhat emotive appeal that is often applied to fugitives of the law.

While governmental discourse took a restrained but legalistic focus to the initial events, newspaper reportage took a much more judgemental and sensationalist approach to the event of Hicks’ capture. While most of the newspapers reviewed showed a definite negative editorial tone in their initial reportage on David Hicks’ capture, The Herald Sun was particularly judgemental. Given that Hicks was not formally charged with an offence until three years after his arrest (and has not yet been found guilty of a crime), the prefix ‘alleged’ or ‘accused’ was not used enough in Herald Sun published articles [1]. Indeed, the Herald Sun’s repetition of the term “traitor” seemed to admonish a person the newspaper had already deemed guilty of somewhat ambiguous crimes of ‘terrorism’. The Herald Sun’s reportage on Hicks’ capture started on December 13, 2001 with the headline, “Traitor” (Herald Sun, 2001:1). Above the headline, which took up approximately one-fifth of the total page space, the newspaper signalled the theme of its reportage with the words, “Rat in the Ranks” (2001:1). The phrase “Rat in the Ranks” was placed in the masthead of the next five pages of the Herald Sun’s reportage on Hicks’ capture (2001: pgs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7). The theme “rat in the ranks” also continued over the next two days of reportage. In an article entitled “traitor”, Mark Dunn wrote that Hicks was a “terrorist fighter” and the next day, that Hicks was a “Taliban traitor”. Another article in the same issue entitled “traitor faces death” stated that Hicks was a “captured terrorist”. The next day, in the article, “Rebel trained for jihad” Mark Dunn asked why Hicks “chose to betray his country [and] train with terrorist group al Qaeda and fight for the Taliban”. On December 18, 2001, Dunn again reported on the “Aussie traitor” grilled by the CIA and the following day that an unconfirmed story about Hicks applying for the Australian Army was “sad news for the army; General laments traitor’s history”.

The dearth of information about the circumstances of his capture from Australian governmental authorities and reliance on US authorities’ version of events, and of course, inability to access Hicks.
himself meant that initial reportage was very much focussed on David Hicks as a terrorist. Within this discourse, Hicks, situated as a traitor to the Australian ideal is “irrational, depraved (fallen), different” (Said, 1995: 40) and in this process defines the Australian self against its Other. Within this representation, the Oriental other is depicted as “something one judges, something one studies and depicts, something one disciplines, something one illustrates” (Said, 1995: 40). Indeed, the subversion of Hicks’ character that led to his conversion to Islamic fundamentalism, and subsequently to terrorism, was a popular subject in the Herald Sun. Belinda Heggen reported on “A Boy’s dark side”, where a 15-year old Hicks is described by Heggen as a “freak with a passion for drugs and Satanism” (2001:2). Heggen’s report is based on an interview with a classmate from Hicks’ high school, who said that he knew Hicks ten years ago, but was “never really close” to Hicks, nor did he see him “outside of school” (2001:2). The classmate suggested that while in high school Hicks drank and smoked cannabis and scratched “satanic symbols” into his arm with a compass, though he did not specify how many times he saw Hicks engage in those activities. Heggen’s report is justified by “psychological experts”, who have never met Hicks, but who nonetheless “paint a chilling portrait of Hicks as a lonely young man seduced by religious fanaticism. They said fundamentalist militants had lured an alienated man into Osama bin Laden’s terror network” (Heggen, 2001: 2).

Whichever of the journalist’s assertions are true, they are reliant on those who claim to have ‘known’ Hicks, rather than Hicks himself. Indeed, Said suggests that two themes dominate Orientalist thinking: knowledge and power, “To have such knowledge of a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for ‘us’ to deny autonomy to ‘it’—the oriental country—since we know it and it exists, in a sense, we know it” (Said, 1995: 32). Similarly to Orientalist forms of knowledge, most reportage seemed to be especially interested in the ‘character’ of David Hicks, though with Hicks being detained and unable to talk, this seemed the most unlikely aspect of the reportage that could be deemed accurate. The Australian also seemed to focus on representing David Hicks’ character in their coverage. Under the headline, “soldier of misfortune”, four reporters attempt to paint Hicks as a something of a paradox; a man described by some as “a soldier of fortune”, while others describe him as a man “on a quest for spiritual fulfilment and got mixed up with the wrong crowd” (Altmann et al, 2001:1). This continued into reportage on the next day, where The Australian broke the story about “the Taliban the army rejected” (Altmann et al, 2001:1), an unconfirmed report from an ex-girlfriend that Hicks had attempted to join the army but was rejected because he was illiterate. In another breach of the MEAA Code of Ethics, the story reveals the location of Hicks’ father’s home and his place of employment, as well as suggesting that Hicks’ former defacto—who is described in terms of her indigenous ethnicity—refused to talk to the media unless she was paid for her story (Altmann et al, 2001:1). Nonetheless, the newspaper published a letter of complaint about this type of reportage the next day, where Anthony Gates suggested that The Australian’s reportage had “taken a newsworthy story and sensationally stretched it beyond its logical boundaries” (Gates, 2001, 18) [2].

It can be seen that some newspapers published details of Hicks’ life that diminished his actions within a discourse of civic duty and the characteristics of Australian citizenship. It is these negative aspersions on Hicks’ character, coupled with the assumption of his terrorist activities against Australian political and military interests in the ‘war on terror’ that lent themselves to the presentation of Hicks as a traitor to Australian ideological values that were being fought for by Australian soldiers within the Coalition of the Willing. As Mark Dunn suggested (taking considerable poetic license given the extent of information at the time) Hicks was a traitor to Australian military and political commitment to the Coalition of the Willing with his description of Hicks as “an unlikely veteran of years of bloody action, [who] surrendered alongside his al Qaeda warriors. A short distance away, 150 Australian troops were fighting in the war against terrorism” (Dunn, 2001:3). Thus, for an Australian born and raised citizen to convert not only to Islam but also to alleged violence against the Coalition of the Willing was bound to stir some aspects of the public to moral outrage. A Herald Sun editorial suggested, “Australians have no doubt that, on the facts revealed so far, Adelaide man David Hicks has betrayed his country. To the average citizen, it is an open and shut case” (Editorial, 2001:20) and this was supported by a letter to the editor the next day
which urged the *Herald Sun* to “stop calling this Hicks fellow an Aussie...this man has renounced his Australian citizenship by taking up an alien cause” (McWhirter, 2001:28). The writer suggests that a true “Aussie” can be described as people like “the players we support at the Davis cup” or “the Digger who fought to keep this country free” (2001:28). Thus, the *Herald Sun*, on the first day of reportage about David Hicks and before he had been formally charged with a crime, published several articles that called for Hicks to be given the death penalty on charges of either terrorism or treason. Reporting that “Death penalty calls came from around Melbourne” (Frenkel et al, 2001:7), a prominent Victorian David Galbally QC was quoted as saying “I think that in the situation now, what we have is a group that have virtually declared war against western civilisation…I think that you need to have the death penalty as the ultimate penalty” (Herald Sun, 2001:7). On the same day a somewhat macabre survey was published as a ‘treason debate’ asking whether “Taliban fighter David Hicks should be put to death?” (Should Taliban fighter, 2001:15). Not surprisingly, of over 2272 calls received, almost 2000 respondents said “yes” (Should Taliban fighter, 2001:15).

The overwhelming negativity of Australian media coverage about David Hicks after his capture made it easier for governmental discourse to frame its public response to the situation in a somewhat judgemental way. Within this discourse, a contingent citizenship is only superficially recognised as the equal recognition offered a citizen: the state is able to revoke this recognition at politically opportune moments. When a crime is committed, the citizen is deprived of certain liberties and rights (Kampmark, 2003). To this end, when the Attorney General Daryl Williams first commented publicly about Hicks’ transfer to Guantanamo Bay, he ‘reminded’ the media that Hicks was a dangerous person: “it needs to be remembered that he was captured with the Taliban in Afghanistan. He has had significant training with al Qaeda” (Transcript C, 2002).

**Response to Hicks at Guantanamo Bay:**

Within a governmental discourse of post-September 11 insecurity, the capture of David Hicks was a pertinent representation of the ubiquitous terrorist ‘other’ that the ‘war on terror’ needed to combat. Initial media reportage reflected Said’s description of an ‘Orientalist other’ in the judgemental framing of Hicks’ character and alleged actions as a ‘traitor’ to Australian ideals. However, by the time Hicks was transferred to Guantanamo Bay, initial issues of legality and citizenship had become more complex within both media and governmental discourse about Hicks’ rights and obligations as an Australian. Increased public outcry from political groups and supporters created more space for debate within the media about the flexibility of notions of citizenship and the protections it affords—and thus, more difficulty for governmental authorities attempting to set the agenda about responses to Hicks’ incarceration. The arrest of another Australian accused of ‘terrorism’, 46-year old Mamdouh Habib allowed for a more in-depth examination of the legality of processes of interrogation and detainment practised within a ‘war on terror’.

In the case of Mamdouh Habib, his strong links with Islamic groups suggested his association with terrorism. Habib taught Islamic scripture at a local high school and was involved in religious community events. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) first became interested in Habib in 1993 following a trip he and his wife Maha made to visit his sisters. At the time Habib also visited Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, who was later sentenced to life imprisonment for attacking US targets, and involvement in the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing (Profile, 2005). Habib travelled to Pakistan in the months before the September 11 attacks in the US. According to his wife, he was thinking about resettling in Pakistan and wanted to look at schools for his children. However, in October 2001, as he travelled on a bus to Karachi to catch his flight home, he was arrested by Pakistani police. Pakistani authorities interrogated him and then sent him to Egypt, apparently at the request of the US (Profile, 2005). Habib was flown to Egypt at the end of 2001 and it is alleged that he was tortured while being interrogated. He said he was subjected to an interrogation process where he was “beaten, electric shock... no sleep, injections, brainwashed” (Dateline, 2005). He said he was made to feel like “a baby” and forced into
making a number of confessions. From here, Habib was then transported to US custody in Afghanistan, and from there, in May 2002, to Guantanamo Bay where he stayed until 2005 (Dateline, 2005).

Despite his links with actual crimes being tenuous, Australian governmental authorities continuously suggested that he had prior knowledge of the 11 September 2001 attacks [3]. The US also alleged that Habib helped train al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan (Habib trained, 2004). Since the US did not press charges and Habib was allowed back to Australia in 2005, the precise allegations against him may never be known. In fact, during his four year incarceration, it was never clear what Habib had done, other than be tenuously linked to abstract crimes associated with terrorism.

Kampmark (2003) argues that within issues of Australian citizenship, governmental discourse about Hicks is still “privileged in its white-centric favouritism of rights…[whereas] Habib is faced with the problem of being a Muslim in a conflict purportedly arraigned against Muslim fundamentalism”. Habib, however, was subsequently freed by the US while Hicks, a practicing Muslim, remains in detention despite continued debate about the legitimacy of his imprisonment. The argument about discourses of citizenship in an age of insecurity appears to be more complex than issues of racial or cultural discrimination. It could indeed be argued that the fact of Hicks’ nationality is an important part of his imprisonment; the first military trial involving a blonde, blue-eyed Australian is the perfect illustration of the US government’s argument that the ‘war on terror’ is not an attack on the Middle East, its people or culture. The governmental discourse of post-September 11 insecurity requires a terrorist ‘other’ to be ubiquitous, capable of defying traditional understandings of what a terrorist might be; the discourse revolves around a ‘new threat’ requiring ‘new responses’. If Hicks and Habib demonstrate a key development in this discourse, it is to suggest that a government can set the limitations and protections of citizenship according to their evaluation of an individual’s adherence to Australian values. In justifying Hicks transfer to Guantanamo Bay, governmental discourse relied upon situating Hicks and Habib’s political identity as the dangerous, terrorist ‘other’.

As traitors to citizenship, Hicks and Habib fulfil the role of ‘enemy’. This discursive identity intervened to moderate notions of citizenship to exclude these ‘others’. Moreover, a government may merely cite an association with an abstract notion of terrorism and be justified in subjugating the protections citizenship affords; terrorism, as the crime of an individual ‘other’, is thus afforded an individualistic justice according to strong governmental authorities believe their link to terrorism is. As Kampmark (2003) suggests: “It is revoked; it is repudiated by rumour, a classic ingredient of paranoia that terrorism breeds”. In communicating this, the governmental message seemed to be, if citizens are accused of terrorism: they are on their own. Thus, some governmental authorities attempted to respond to criticisms by continuing the sense of public hostility towards Hicks, as well as their own personal opinions of Hicks’ alleged actions. For example, when Radio 3AW presenter Neil Mitchell asked whether Hicks was receiving his “proper civil rights”, Prime Minister John Howard continued the repetition of Hicks’ association with terrorists—and the implicit suggestion that Hicks was involved in terrorist activities—with his personal opinion of Hicks’ alleged actions as proof of his guilt: “He knowingly joined the Taliban and al Qaeda. I don’t have any sympathy for any Australian who’s done that” (Transcript H, 2005). Foreign Minister Alexander Downer was even more forthcoming with his opinion of Hicks’ association with terrorism—and the implication of his guilt: “David Hicks was a complete fool to get wound up in an organisation like al Qaeda, a complete fool” (The Australian Taliban, 2002).

Nonetheless, these emotive comments seemed designed to stem the growing questions from media about the legality of Hicks’ imprisonment at Guantanamo. For example the use of the headline “push to get Hicks uncaged” in The Age shows a certain softening of the newspapers initial attitude towards Hicks (McGarry, 2002:7) and the broadsheet’s coverage of Hicks’ transfer to Guanatanamo seemed especially focussed on the legal and ethical ramifications of an impending military trial. Furthermore, the editorial on the first day of his transfer seemed to share international concern about the legal precedents being set by Guantanamo Bay. Nonetheless, this was counter-balanced with a front page article headlined “He’s a cocky guy and he talks about killing Americans” was sourced from an interview with a security officer at
Camp X-Ray, Lieutenant-Colonel Bernie Liswell, who describes Hicks as a “hothead” (Alcorn, 2002:1). Reporter Gay Alcorn says that Colonel Liswell won’t speak to Hicks because he is such a “troublemaker” (Alcorn, 2002:1). In the report, Hicks was described as an infamous “minor celebrity” in the US because “he was the one who threatened death to Americans soon after he arrived from Kandahar on January 11” (Alcorn, 2002:1).

The *Herald Sun* on the other hand, used the power of association as an aspect of their reportage. In a similar way to governmental discourse on Habib, David Hicks, newspaper reportage attempted to suggest a particular link with David Hicks, Muslims with fanaticism in Australia. The *Herald Sun* published a story suggesting that an outing where skirmish or “paintball” games played by Muslim religious groups had taken on a ‘fanatical’ undertone (James, 2002:7). In the *Herald Sun* a few days later “An Australian who prayed at the same mosque as Taliban fighter David Hicks has been jailed for 15 years for terrorism” (Dunn, 2002:5). Despite belonging to the same institution adhering to the same broad journalistic principles, *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* are representative of the different priorities in reporting on Hicks’ incarceration is suggestive of the complexity of the relationship between media and governmental discourses in representing discourses of insecurity—and is something of a reflection of the ‘singularity’ that Said’s theory of Orientalism is often accused of. *Orientalism* has been criticised for its ahistorical capacity to make totalising assumptions about a vast, varied expanse of events pertaining to Orientalist discourse (See McCleod, 2000: 48). Indeed, Said’s methodology seems to insist on an internal consistency of Orientalist thought and production and thus does not consider historical, political and geographic factors that may appropriate or modify the discourse. Specifically, the structure of Orientalist discourse does not take into account the unique experiences of non-European or US countries in responding to and utilising Orientalist discourse. Australia’s varied historic experiences of colonialism as well as subsequent political adherence to US policy in the post-September 11 ‘war on terror’ in particular could make for a unique understanding of concepts of Orientalism.

Said has been equally criticised for being ahistorical and for ignoring gender specificities and possible sites of resistance to Orientalist thought within both Eastern and Western cultures (in McLeod, 2000:45). Indeed, Orientalism has its limitations as an analytical tool and criticism—especially from Terry Eagleton and Aijaz Ahmad—has suggested that the term is overused and simplistic, and has the result of victimising rather than empowering minorities. Said seemingly ignores resistance by the colonised and from within the West itself. Thus, “every European, in what he could say about the orient, was consequentially a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric” (McLeod, 2000: 48). This assertion is undermined, however, by the complexity and range of positions taken up by the writers within his analysis. Huggan suggests that this failing tends the analysis towards ‘self cancelling procedures’ in his historical and theoretical procedures. Taking his cue from Aijaz Ahmad, Huggan suggests that Said’s attempt to write a counter-history to the European literary tradition with a sense of ‘ideal humanism’ contradicts Said’s awareness of European humanism and colonialism as a complicit factor in the subjugation of ‘others’ (Huggan, 2005). Thus it has been suggested that Said’s analysis duplicates the practices of Orientalism in its methodology because it does not suggest the efforts that non-Western intellectuals have made in responding to, resisting or refuting the dominant representations of the Orient (Huggan, 2005). Nonetheless, Orientalist discourse theory has been balanced by analysis dedicated to retrieving the history of the other; in Spivak’s terms, the silenced subaltern (See Spivak). This demonstrates that ‘Otherness’ and the process of ‘othering’ are simply an attitude of reference within Orientalist discourse according to its own binaristic logic (Young, 2001:398).

Terry Eagleton has also routinely critiqued the ‘cult of otherness’ as part of his more sustained criticism of postmodernist and post colonial theory. His criticisms of otherness are rooted in his repeated suggestion that theory has lost its political way; that postmodernist theory has allowed slovenly scholarship of fashionable cultural populism rather than a vigorous, political critique of capitalist culture (See Eagleton, 2003; 2003a; 1995).
At times, Said does not go far enough to suggest Orientalist discourse’s ambivalence beyond a fixed homogeneity and always successfully realised intention. This implicitly suggests that Orientalism is the only mode of addressing other cultures, and in doing so, allows Orientalist discourses to continue. Instead, the most advantageous method of addressing this issue is to suggest in the Foucauldian style that the multiplicity of perspectives and arguments inherent in the discursive power relations amongst institutions, texts and ‘the public’. This necessarily creates space for the ‘language wars’ (See Lewis, 2002) that develop when the varying discourses of the variety of public and private institutions and organisations engage in the social discussion of historical moments such as David Hicks’ capture. Thus we can also suggest that in the ‘micro-physics’ of power relations, differing political viewpoints both within government and newspapers lends itself to a multifaceted ideas of ‘knowledge’.

Despite the evidence that media approaches to ‘knowledge’ about sources of insecurity have evolved the Australian governmental response continues to be focussed on ‘bringing Hicks to justice’ and public communication continues to be centred on suggesting the actions of ‘true Australians’ are under threat by the home-grown terrorists. Perhaps one of the most interesting ways that an Australian governmental authority combated the rising public sympathy for David Hicks was John Howard’s press statement in Washington in 2005, where he and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld held a joint press conference in July to boost public confidence in the military commission trials. Telling an anecdote about the London tube bombings in July, John Howard plays on very interesting ideas of citizenship:

> Amongst those who died in London was an Australian of Vietnamese descent; his family had come to Australia after the Indo-Chinese War. He was a wonderful success story of an immigrant family in a strange country. The people who it is believed took his life included children of immigrants to another country, so it is poignant and tragic that somebody who had embraced the opportunities of a new country should die at the hands of somebody who had contaminated and despoiled the values of the country that gave his family a home and an opportunity (Transcript G, 2004).

With this statement, Howard suggests the contingency of citizenship; an immigrant is an Australian so long as they faithfully adhere to Australian national principles. The ‘good other’ is situated in opposition to the ‘terrorist other’ who ‘contaminates’ the united ideals of the nation with their individualistic actions. Within the discourse of a new era of insecurity, governmental discourse has attempted to situate terrorism as the ever-present, indiscriminate threat, where even an Australian-born citizen could convert to terrorism. As Groves and Routt suggest that the truly terrifying aspect of terrorism: “the thing that panics is towards the rhetoric of our leadership is that in it, we are this other we must insist we are not…the other, always outside, looms within” (2003: 30). Paradoxically, our hatred for the other becomes a social tie; in order for the other to be outside, it must reflect what we are.

**Conclusion:**

I have argued that within the governmental discourse of Post-September 11 insecurity, themes of otherness have been used to represent terrorism as the main source of insecurity in Australia. The capture of David Hicks and his transfer to Guantanamo Bay has been a pertinent example of the way that governmental response to sources of insecurity, in both the material and discursive sense, has used citizenship as an exclusionary measure against those who are not seen as representing Australian values, particularly, a united stance against terrorism. In representing their response to Hicks, governmental communication has presented his character and actions as a subversion of his Australian citizenship within a constantly repeated binaristic discourse established to justify governmental actions within the ‘war on terror’. In the initial media reportage of his capture Hicks, and by extension all terrorists, is seen as ‘driven’ to his actions by misguided passion that exceeds the bounds of Western reason. Their collective identity as terrorists is outside traditional understandings of nationhood and citizenship, therefore their punishment becomes individualised to meet the extent of governmental assumption of their
threat. Thus, physical violence perpetrated against another no longer defines terrorism; the terrorist is seen as perpetrating fear, and thus the mere association with terror suggests criminality.

Endnotes:

[1] Indeed complaints about the media coverage of Hicks’ initial capture focussed on the sensational quality of both the tabloid and broadsheet reportage. With a seeming lack of official communication or elaboration of the governmental line that ‘investigations were continuing’, the Law Council’s President, Tony Abbott warned that sensationalised mis-information in the media would contribute to a ‘trial by media’. “The Hicks case demonstrates how easy it is to create an atmosphere of hysteria when the facts are barely known. The Law Council understands Mr Hicks has not been interviewed by Australian authorities, yet he is already being labelled as a ‘traitor’, with some outlandish media comment canvassing the restoration of the death penalty” (in Garran, 2001:9).

[2] Terry Hicks was quoted as saying: “These reporters delve into people’s backgrounds and find the most trivial of details and then sensationalise them. They write about David experimenting with Ouija boards…but this is really irrelevant to what’s happening at the moment. They also printed my address—I thought this was illegal… If only the government were taking as much interest as the media. The media are heading this investigation and therefore creating their own facts” (Brook et al, 2002). This rebuke of media reportage came exactly three months after the initial reportage of Hicks as a ‘traitor’ and was on the back pages of the newspaper.

[3] ASIO and the Federal police also released information from phone taps of Habib’s conversations dating backed to 1993 including a recording of him praising Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the spiritual leader of an extremist group responsible for a terrorist attack in Egypt that killed over 60 people (Habib trained, 2004).

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