BRITISH UNIVERSITIES IN THE BREXIT MOMENT

Political, Economic
and Cultural Implications

Mike Finn

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CONTENTS

PART III

CONCLUSIONS

LIST OF TABLES

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BEIS: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

ECJ: European Court of Justice

EEC: European Economic Community

ERC: European Research Council

ERDF: European Regional Development Fund

Euratom: European Atomic Energy Community

HEFCE: Higher Education Funding Council for England

HEPI: Higher Education Policy Institute

NSS: National Student Survey

REF: Research Excellence Framework

TEF: Teaching Excellence Framework

UKRI: UK Research and Innovation

VC: Vice-Chancellor

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A VIGNETTE: 'POLITICAL PROJECTS'

The point of departure for Britain's universities from their European Union-sponsored relationships with their partners on the Continent could perhaps be located in many places, most obviously Britain's referendum on EU membership held on 23 June 2016, which saw a narrow majority of the voting British public electing to Leave.

But the beginning of the long road to the Brexit crisis for Britain's universities might be traced back still further. In 2005, a Conservative MP named David Cameron had declared his intention to stand for the party leadership following the resignation of Michael Howard. Whilst largely unheard of by the general public, Cameron was a rising star in the Conservative Party, having served as a backbencher on the Home Affairs Select Committee following his election as MP for Witney in 2001. During this period, he penned a diary column in *The Guardian* newspaper. In 2003, he became both a shadow junior minister and vice-chairman of the Conservative Party. In 2005, he helped draft the party's manifesto as head of policy co-ordination. The campaign focused on fanning the flames of public anxiety about

immigration, following the accession of the A8 countries in 2004, which was followed by a surge in immigration from those former Eastern Bloc nations. The party was accused of 'dog whistle' racism as a result. Following the defeat, Cameron became Shadow Education Secretary.

Cameron swiftly disavowed the manifesto and rebranded himself a 'liberal conservative' and a 'moderniser'. The 'Notting Hill' set which clustered around him followed New Labour's previous modernisation agenda with gusto (Finn M., 2015b, p. 35). Tony Blair had declaimed the centre ground as the place to fight and win in British politics; Cameron's agenda was to move the Conservative Party there after two successive general election campaigns where the party had run to the right, with dire results.

Cameron's background as a former PR consultant and his comparative mastery of public speaking and communications (when contrasted with his chief rival David Davis) saw him build a following. After the Conservative Party Conference in September 2005, he moved into the lead. In December, he was elected as Leader of the Conservative Party.

But that is not the whole story. Whereas Tony Blair in his 1994 campaign had sought to emphasise the legacy of his predecessor John Smith (Finn & Seldon, 2013), whilst making it clear his intention was to face down his party — as he did less than a year later over Clause IV — Cameron's journey was one of compromise. Despite three successive election defeats and a sense of crisis in Conservative politics, they had not sustained the psychological shock that Labour had in 1983 under Michael Foot; a 'never again' moment which gave grist to the mill of successive leaders — Kinnock, Smith, Blair — to remake the Labour Party in order to 'save' it.

Not all Conservatives, who in many cases regarded themselves as the 'natural' party of government, were as convinced that the party needed 'saving' in quite the same way. For

some parliamentarians, Cameron was a scion of the gilded aristocracy who felt himself entitled to lead. For others, his newly trumpeted liberal Conservatism wasn't really Conservatism at all — and certainly not Conservatism of the Thatcher variety.

Cameron needed to give the right of the Conservative Party something. Something that would assuage their fears that he would change the party out of all recognition. Something that would remind them that he was, at the end of the day, a Tory.

Given that the previous two election campaigns had focused attention on Britain's relationship with Europe — in 2001 William Hague's *cri de coeur* to 'save the pound', and in 2005 the 'it's not racist to talk about immigration' approach which Cameron had been involved in developing — it was natural enough that Europe should remain central to the party's concerns. Cameron knew that he was perceived to be 'weak' on Europe when contrasted with his rival Davis, a figure with impeccable Eurosceptic credentials.

So, Cameron declared that, if elected leader, he would withdraw the party from the European People's Party (EPP), the main Conservative grouping in the European Parliament (Smith, The UK's Journeys Into and Out of the EU: Destinations Unknown, 2017, p. 59). The EPP was too federalist, too Europhilic. Britain needed to stand up to Europe, and the best way to do that was to build a new alliance with other like-minded parties.

The story of David Cameron's political life has a certain poetic quality to it. 'In my beginning is my end', T. S. Eliot wrote. This was nowhere truer than in Cameron's case. With the EPP decision, a decision of note only to political anoraks and those it was intended to hit home with — Conservative members — Cameron mortgaged the future of his leadership and any potential premiership to the goodwill of the

Eurosceptic Right. Subsequently, Cameron gained a (justified) reputation as an arrogant political gambler (Kettle, 2016). As Prime Minister, Cameron would later mortgage the future of his country — again on the question of Europe — to win a general election, promising a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union if he were elected as Prime Minister of a majority Conservative administration (Smith, 2015).

Cameron was no true Eurosceptic, but as with successive British leaders, he was prepared to play that card when it suited him to appease his doubters, never imagining it would come back to haunt him. Even prior to the referendum, the EPP decision hit Cameron — and by extension, Britain — hard. Conservative MEPs' marginalisation in the European Parliament meant they had little say in the election of the new President of the European Commission in 2014. That was the first year that MEPs had been able to wield such influence. As Chris Bickerton describes, 'the main party groups … nominate their "top candidate" for the presidency … The candidate from the group that wins most seats gets the job' (Bickerton, 2016, p. 24).

The EPP won the most seats, and that meant their preferred candidate, Jean-Claude Juncker, would be president. But Britain's Conservatives no longer sat in the EPP, so they had had no say in the nomination. Cameron tried to frustrate Juncker's election, arguing that 'the authority to nominate the President of the European Commission lay with member states, not with the European Parliament. Cameron lost' (Bickerton, 2016, p. 24).

Cameron would then be compelled, as a result of a choice he had taken years previously for reasons of political calculation, to renegotiate Britain's relationship with the European Union ahead of his promised referendum with parties including a man he had publicly condemned and proclaimed as an

adversary (Watt, 2014). For all the Eurosceptic cries that the Juncker nomination had been 'undemocratic', the truth was that it was the most democratic presidential appointment in the Commission's history, with the pan-European electorate of Europe able to choose their preferred candidate through the Parliamentary elections. Televised debates were held (Bickerton, 2016).

Why does this vignette matter? Not because it seeks to ascribe 'blame', or the totality of responsibility for British universities' plight in the Brexit moment exclusively to David Cameron. Far from it. Historians use vignettes as a literary flourish, because they are illustrative. Cameron's (mis)calculations in dealing with the EPP reflect Britain's relationship with Europe more generally — a more-or-less pragmatic engagement with the European Union for largely economic rather than ideological reasons. Britons — as a whole — never bought into the project of 'ever closer union'. In the 1960s, the British government sought membership of the then-European Economic Community because the Commonwealth was clearly not viable as a market. It was pragmatism that took Britain into Europe, even as a post-war, post-imperial political culture continued to trumpet British exceptionalism (Finn M., 2016b).

But Britain's universities — and universities within and without the European Union — did think of collaboration and the networks between them in more idealistic terms. British academics in the post-war period saw greater integration with their European counterparts as essential to forestalling the threat of war and, critically, the rise of demagoguery and totalitarianism within societies (see Chapter Three, this volume). Networks with European universities were long-standing, with strong Anglo-German collaborations in particular from the nineteenth century (Ellis & Kircheberger, 2014). In the 1930s and into the early stages of the war,

Britain had received her share of academic refugees from Germany and then occupied Europe. This helped frame academic views on collaboration and networks in the post-war period, with British academics (amongst others) playing a key role in the post-war reconstruction of the German universities they had once admired so much (Phillips, 1980).

Although Michael Polanyi might not have agreed with it, many in the scientific community across Europe saw its institutions as part of the realisation of a 'republic of science' (Polanyi, 1962) which transcended national divides. European subject associations flourished independently of the EU, but the freedom of movement guaranteed by the Union deepened and strengthened collaborations across the bloc.

In this sense, British universities have always been out-of-step with their politicians on the role of European institutions. To concede a point to those critical of academics' role in the EU referendum debate, this does indeed amount to a 'political project' (Hayes, 2016), though it is not clear to the present author why that should pose a problem. Universities have, at least since the later nineteenth century, increasingly seen themselves as international institutions with a global outlook, in sharp contradistinction at times from the nationalist politics which may flourish in their host countries. When universities themselves fall prey to such politics — either through assimilation as in the 1930s in Germany or through their potential destruction as in the case of the Central European University in today's Hungary (Economist, 2017) — these are taken to be the exceptions that prove the rule that universities are fundamentally international, and internationalist.

In Britain's case, that has also meant increasingly European. From the ERASMUS student and staff transfer scheme, to participation in Horizon 2020 and its predecessors, to collaboration with European partner institutions, to

Euratom — itself one of the founder institutions of the European project (Bickerton, 2016; Hinson, 2017, p. 4) — British and other European scholars, scientists and students have been drawn ever-closer together.

For the duration of Britain's membership of the European Union, Britain's universities were more enthusiastic about it than much of the general public, a divide brought into sharp focus when those universities were on the losing side in the referendum. As Britain's universities dust themselves down and contemplate their futures in tumultuous domestic and international political landscapes, this book seeks to highlight the prior character of the relationships they had — and have — with the European Union, with a clear agenda to helping those within them shape their own futures. In age of impact, where universities are consistently expected to be 'in step' with wider society, on the question of Europe Britain's universities have not been. It does not betray anything of what follows to note that this author thinks that this is no bad thing. But it does raise questions not merely about where Britain's universities go from here in terms of their international links, but also their place in wider British society — questions that go to the heart of what universities are for, and the agendas they can, and do serve.

This book could not have been completed without incurring a significant number of debts. Of course, none of those listed below are in any way responsible for the views expressed here, but they have each helped the author in their own way. Firstly, my thanks go to Kim Chadwick, education editor at Emerald Publishing, who both suggested the volume and then provided invaluable support throughout the process. In addition, I'd like to record my gratitude to an anonymous reviewer who made several suggestions for improvement. An enormous debt is owed to my research assistant, Hope Kilmurry, whose support was first-class

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One 'upside' of the Brexit moment and thus the writing of this book has been the collegiality of academic colleagues, many of whom I had never previously met. This include my interviewees — Professor Michael Arthur, Professor Stuart Croft, Professor Gerry McCormac, Professor Chris Husbands, Professor Simon Goldhill, Professor Robin Osborne, Professor Michael Dougan and Dr Rob Davidson all spoke to me on the record about substantive matters to do with Brexit over the past year. A significant number of academics and policymakers spoke to me off the record. I am grateful to them, and they know who they are. I am grateful too to Professor Mary Beard, who brought me into contact with the classicists, and Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve, who corresponded with me on issues of trust and expertise and allowed me early sight of her current work.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: BRITISH UNIVERSITIES IN THE BREXIT MOMENT

[W]e must emphasise the common element in civilizations, rather than the minor variations. We must teach at all times the impersonality of knowledge and the transcendence of values. We must dwell on the universal element in the human spirit. Above all, we should set our forces against the intrusion into science and learning of the anti-social forces of nationalism … We need — Britons, Frenchmen, Germans, all of us — to return to the outlook and values of the Aufklarungzeit, to that Enlightenment which stressed the unity of humanity, rather than its differences. Without weakening the sense of duty to their local society, we must seek to make our young men and women citizens of that republic of mind which knows no frontiers.

— Lord Robbins
'The University in the Modern World', an address to the Conference of European Rectors and Vice-Chancellors, Gottingen, 2nd September 1964 in *The University in the Modern World* (1966b)

1

In this policy sector in which more is achieved by co-ordination and choice than by law, [the] EU has embod-ied the idea that institutions, individuals, and ultimately the state, become more competitive by being more cooperative. There is much that can be done and much diversity retained within systematised rules and values.

This notion is foreign to much of the British population.

— LSE Commission on the Future of Britain and Europe,
*Higher Education and Research: Report of hearing held
on 8 December 2015* (2015)

… academics have politicised higher education. The fact that the UK voted to leave the EU, against the advice of many academics and other so-called experts, has left many academics feeling depressed. Their political project appears to be over.

— Dennis Hayes (2016)

THE BREXIT 'MOMENT' AND BRITAIN'S UNIVERSITIES

Brexit and universities may at first seem disparate topics to a disinterested onlooker. One relates to existential questions about the place of Britain in the world, the other to the education of its people. And yet, even in that sentence, it is possible to discern — even before explicating economic links, political ambitions and cultural ties — how Brexit and the universities are interrelated. This is because the education of a country's citizens is never innocent of assumptions about that country's place in the world, and because universities — as institutions — at least to some extent, enshrine certain

visions of the society they inhabit. Indeed, the sector-level analysis of an institution such as the university offers reflexive insights into the macro-level of the Brexit moment itself, since in many ways, Britain's universities and their relationships with the European Union throw into sharp relief the broader issues and problems the United Kingdom and its democracy must now confront.

Whilst much attention thus far has focused on how Brexit may negatively impact UK research funding (Finn M., 2016a; Engineering and Technology, 2016), or the security of non-UK EU staff (Savage M., 2017) or the appeal of UK universities to EU students (Morgan, 2017a) — and due attention to all these will be paid here — it's worth noting at the outset that this book is also an extended reflection on what the Brexit moment says about the place of British universities in the society they seek to critique, support and advance. This book then is a study of British universities in the Brexit moment — not simply Brexit's material impact on those universities, important though that will be in due course.

Its focus is on the implications of the Brexit moment for Britain's universities, and that word is carefully chosen. 'Impacts' would imply a definitive verdict. This book doesn't attempt that. What it does seek to do is highlight the potentialities of the Brexit moment for universities — in the hope that within this 'great debate' universities will be able to recover some measure of control over their own destinies. This book rests on the premise that we are living through a 'Brexit moment' in British political culture, of which the referendum itself is certainly the centrepiece, but which is not simply reducible to the referendum itself. The Brexit moment is the apotheosis of Britain's existential post-war dilemmas about its place in the world, but it is not merely that. It is a moment of profound interaction between those dilemmas and a genuine breakdown of the post-war British social contract,

a breakdown in which universities are themselves implicated
(in a number of ways). At the risk of oversimplification, this
breakdown can be conceived of as follows: the 2008 financial
crisis and the subsequent pursuit of 'austerity' policies by suc-
cessive governments have resulted in a measurable decline in
the standard of living (Butler, 2013; Hastings et al., 2013).
Simultaneously, the gulf between the winners and losers of
contemporary British political economy has become stark. As
the Grenfell Tower tragedy showed so brutally, the gap
between rich and poor in this country — the *real* value
ascribed to human beings — costs lives (Eaton, 2017). The
social divide in Britain has itself — in Baudrillardian vein —
been commodified into the realm of the hyperreal
(Baurdrillard, 1994). Working-class communities are demo-
nised through reality TV shows from *The Jeremy Kyle Show*
to *Geordie Shore*, whilst conspicuous consumption is cele-
brated via *Made in Chelsea* and *Meet the Russians*.

The popular perception that life-chances have diminished
and the social contract has broken down has been growing.
One interesting aspect of this is its generational flavour
(Gardiner, 2016). The breakdown of the 'intergenerational
contract' is a key feature of the Brexit moment (Gardiner,
2016). In 2010, Ed Howker and Shiv Malik published a book
entitled *Jilted Generation: How Britain Has Bankrupted Its
Youth* (Howker & Malik, 2010). In the book, Howker and
Malik argued strenuously that the post-war generations had
enjoyed benefits and life-chances out of proportion to their
successors. As 'millennials' became demonised by their elders,
often in the Brexit moment as a 'snowflake generation' (Fox,
2016), Howker and Malik chronicled the advantages the
post-war state doled out to those same elders, from mortgage-
interest relief to help them onto the housing ladder to final
salary pension schemes and 'free' higher education after 1962
(Howker & Malik, 2010). The millennial generation, by

contrast, entered the working world saddled by debt in a consumer economy driven by rising house prices and credit. The latter plunged them further into debt whilst the former made it increasingly unlikely they could enjoy the privilege of owning a home. And that is without raising the question of tuition fees, and the ever-growing cost of higher education.

At the same time, discourses of globalisation — integral to neoliberal political economy since the 1970s (Harvey, 2005) — promoted human capital theory as the magic ingredient in a successful 'knowledge economy'. This discourse fell on fertile ground in Britain, as we shall see later. Higher education expansion was the ideal vehicle for this vernacular human capital theory — more trained brains, more economic growth ran the argument. Though questioned by senior economists, notably Alison Wolf (2003), this has been the axiom at the heart of British higher education expansion over the past several decades (Brown & Carasso, 2013). Successive governments told the swelling ranks of students that the investment would be worth it; that a 'graduate premium' would subsist, making the fees and loans worthwhile (BBC News, 2004; Vasagar, 2010). The breakdown of this consensus in the Brexit moment, and the return of the tuition fees debate, is but a symptom of a broader socio-economic malaise (Sparrow, 2017). The comparative success of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party with the young in the 2017 General Election was at least in part attributable to 'his post-austerity platform, which included a signature commitment to abolishing university tuition fees' (Wheeler, 2017, p. 46). As the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Warwick, Stuart Croft, notes, for the young this resonated in the Brexit moment:

> I think the Brexit element is really important as well, as it's been interpreted — or it's being felt — I think

> by a lot of people who are student-age and recently-
> graduated that there's been a closing of doorways,
> a closing of opportunities, a closing-in really of
> everything … we've seen significant youth vote in
> favour of Remain, and even more significant votes in
> favour of Labour, who seem to be offering — quote
> unquote — 'hope' against some of the things around
> austerity, and around fees. (Croft, 2017)

But it was about more than that — it was about providing a 'credible alternative to the economic assumptions that have dominated British politics for nearly four decades' (Wheeler, 2017). Those assumptions — which had turned students into consumers — impacted across society and politics. The 2016 referendum result wasn't their Gotterdammerung, nor the 2017 election result for that matter. But it did mean that they were contested as they had not been for a generation or more.

The Brexit moment in British political culture — where the referendum is seen as a touchstone, rather than an isolated event — is the concatenation of a range of forces in British society, many of which universities have not been isolated from. One such force was anti-establishment sentiment, which reflected rising discontent with austerity, but which in some political guises also represented the outcome of the mainstreaming of far-right discourse (Stocker, 2017). Central to the Brexit moment has been the revitalisation of nationalism as a viable discourse at the heart of British political culture. Indeed, the very language of British higher education policy post-referendum has been emphatically nationalistic (see Chapter Three). A consistent feature of the referendum campaign was the prevalence of discourses on immigration and Europe that espoused a neonationalist frame for Britain and a 'dynamic reconstruction' of her

historical memory (Trentmann, 1998, p. 230) in favour of nationalist conception of the past (and the future). This was a vision of Britain, and her place in the world, which was anti-pathetic to the 'networks' which characterised globalisation and its vision of global interconnectedness (Runciman, 2016a).

Yet universities exist within transnational networks, and since the medieval period always have done (de Ridder-Symoens, 1992). During the lifespan of the European Union and its predecessors, such networks have been facilitated, endorsed and even sponsored by the organisation itself. The revolt against networks, perceived by David Runciman amongst others, amounts to some extent to a revolt against the very values of the university in Western society (Runciman, 2016a). When the British public elected to leave the European Union, Britain's universities found themselves at one end of a gulf of understanding between them and a significant propor-tion of the population. As the Cambridge classicist Robin Osborne notes:

> One of the things that I suspect was true of almost everybody in the academic world was that it took the Brexit revolt to reveal how separate their world was and their set of expectations were from that of what turned out to be a narrow majority of the rest of the country. And I think no-one really realised that they were quite so out of touch. (Osborne, 2017)

Runciman enumerated university towns which were outliers in their region as Remain-voting bastions in otherwise Leave territory; 'Newcastle in the North East, Warwick in the West Midlands, Exeter in the South West, Norwich in East Anglia' (Runciman, 2016a, p. 5). 'University towns'

were — according to the historian Peter Mandler — 'pockets of London-like entitlement scattered all over the country' (Mandler, 2016). For Mandler, academics contributing to the debate ostensibly on the Remain side exacerbated this gulf:

> The Remain campaign undoubtedly contributed to widening this divide. Rather like the *New York Times*' attitude to Trump, Remain thought it could laugh off Leave, or dazzle it with 'facts.' A very large part of the Remain campaign was focused on troupes of 'experts' — investment experts, science and university experts, fiscal policy experts — signing collective petitions and open letters declaring their loyalties to Europe. This played directly into anti-elitist sentiment. (Mandler, 2016)

Europe was seen as a good deal for 'the establishment', including 'experts' of the academic variety. Academics may not have seen themselves as part of the 'elite', but, as Osborne notes, this reflects their own distance from the wider public.

The implications for the university in Britain occasioned by the Brexit moment are profound. Economically, Britain's universities stand to suffer considerably because of Brexit. Culturally, Britain's universities have already sustained reputational damage as a consequence of the vote, but more than this have become more isolated from the national community they serve. Politically, British universities — fee-heavy, and unable to deliver on inflated government promises in terms of social mobility — stand in conflict with a government agenda aiming to repurpose them in the service of economic nationalism. These are but three examples of how the Brexit moment poses challenges to Britain's universities. As this book will explore, they are far from the only implications.

One theme, which has recurred consistently in the research and writing of this book, is that of citizenship. The historian Matthew Grant writes of 'three registers' of citizenship; that of legality, that of belonging and that of 'engagement' (Grant, 2016a, 2016b). In his 'first register', citizenship cuts across the topics discussed in this book in a range of ways. In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty developed the concept of European citizenship (European Commission, 2017a), which will soon be removed from British citizens post-Brexit. This removal will end their freedom of movement within the EU — and potentially more critically the continued possession of such citizenship will no longer guarantee EU27 citizens, including many academics, right of remain in the United Kingdom. But beyond that, it also touches on broader issues regarding changes in British state and society which were taking place long before Brexit. Labour came to office under Tony Blair in 1997 with one of their senior figures pledging to 'institute a modern view of the relationship between the citizen and the State' (Mandelson & Liddle, 1996, p. 192). New Labour — and governments since — became fond of referenda as mechanisms to gain greater legitimacy for decisions, or even abdicate responsibility for them (Flinders, 2009). This integration of direct democracy within a representative system posed fundamental challenges to the nature of that representative democracy, not least the place of expertise. As the legal scholar Michael Dougan puts it, in the Brexit context this has laid the groundwork for the regular democratic legitimacy of both Parliament and Government to be 'challenged by the irregular democratic authority of popular referendums' (Dougan, 2017a, p. 2). As the political scientist Matthew Flinders characterised it, by the end of the New Labour era Britain was in a state of 'democratic drift' (Flinders, 2009). This sets in contemporary context Grant's belief that ideas of citizenship in Britain are 'diffuse'

(Grant, 2016a). And this is without taking into account ideas of *academic* citizenship, which are customarily transnational and borderless. Meanwhile, in attempting to fulfil the requirements of Grant's third register — that of 'engaged' citizens (Grant, 2016a) — academics found themselves demonised. As Dougan puts it, academics 'who volunteered to perform the public service of participating in various debates surrounding the 2016 referendum' were met with 'ferocity' from some quarters (Dougan, Editor's introduction, 2017a, p. 5). This book then is also a study in what the Brexit moment means for competing notions of citizenship, and the problems which ensue when these cannot be reconciled with one another. Brexit may be seen as, at least in part, the failure to develop an authentic and successful 'European citizenship'. But this was not for the want of trying, and universities were — and are — at the heart of these conflicts in the Brexit moment.

THE BREXIT VOTE AND THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

What is clear is that on 24 June 2016, academic citizens across the United Kingdom awoke to news the vast majority of them had dreaded: in the previous day's referendum, the people of Britain had voted to leave the European Union (Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2017; Oliver, 2016; Shipman, 2016). At one academic conference taking place that day, proceedings were described as 'more of a wake … experienced academics, who thought themselves hardened to trauma by years of bombardment from REF, TEF and NSS, were almost in tears at the first session' (Edwards, 2016, p. 113). Within hours the Prime Minister tendered his resignation, and the United Kingdom as a whole was plunged into uncertainty, with the depreciation of the pound the first significant

economic symptom (Allen, Treanor, & Goodley, 2016). At time of writing, for Britain, and her universities, that uncertainty still shows no sign of abating.

In the words of the new Prime Minister, Theresa May, Brexit meant Brexit, a meaningless phrase that could not hide the uncharted territory into which the United Kingdom, was now headed. Much of the pre-referendum debate had been conducted on two levels — an appeal to economics and an appeal to nationalism (Scott Crines, 2016); a dichotomy characteristic of Britain's interactions with the European Union over the course of their tortured relationship. In terms of the former, Brexit had implications for the whole of the UK economy, but nowhere was this truer than in the case of higher education.

Higher education has been a growth industry undergoing rapid expansion in the past several decades and is, by most indicators, a 'world leading' sector of the British economy. Looked at purely in financial terms, universities and other institutions of higher education are estimated to 'contribute £73bn' (at 2016 values) to the wider UK economy, 'including £11bn of export earnings' (Hubble, 2016, p. 3). Reputationally, the rankings which proliferate in the globalised higher education landscape routinely rate Britain's sector second only to that of the United States. 'Leading' British institutions (a phrase in commentary customarily referencing members of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities) typically feature in the upper echelons of the rankings, and in the past decade Oxford and Cambridge have taken turns at the summit of different league tables (Kershaw, 2011; Press Association, 2016). As Jo Johnson, the Universities' Minister, put it in a conference speech to university leaders in September 2016:

> Our universities consistently rank among the best in the world, with 34 institutions in the top 200, and more than twice that number in the top 800. UK

> universities are home to both world-class teaching
> and life-changing research, and they have been for
> many, many years. (Johnson, 2016a)

The dramatic expansion of higher education since the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, which converted the former polytechnics into universities, and the concomitant rise of the 'knowledge economy' discourse which promoted higher education as both socially just and economically vital, ensured that throughout the UK universities were — or became — significant players in regional economies (N8 Regional Partnership, 2016). In Leave-voting Sheffield, the city's two major universities — the Russell Group University of Sheffield and the post-1992 Sheffield Hallam University — joined forces to promote economic growth in the region through a new 'prospectus for the Sheffield City Region' (Morgan, 2017b, p. 36). A report in 2016 estimated that eight northern research-intensive universities contributed over twice the amount to the northern economy than the income provided by Premier League football (University of Sheffield, 2016). This placed the universities' collective contribution to the regional economy in the range of £6.6bn gross value added (GVA), creating nearly 120,000 full-time equivalent employment roles (University of Sheffield, 2016). In recent years, universities have reshaped Britain's built environment, with the construction of new buildings and the attendant (and not uncontroversial) 'boom' in student accommodation at the heart of towns and cities (Bennett, 2017). As Nick Hillman, the Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), is wont to put it, when searching for a university, 'look for the cranes' (Cocozza, 2017).

This shift in the economic 'presence' of Britain's universities was driven by a dynamic of expansion — in terms of

institutions and student numbers — which had characterised the post-war period but which accelerated dramatically after the 1990s. As Stefan Collini notes:

> In 1990 there were forty-six universities in the UK educating approximately 350,000 students. Twenty-six years later, following the founding of a whole raft of new universities, often based on an earlier college of higher education, there are now more than 140 universities with over two million students. (Collini, 2017, p. 1)

Brexit has economic implications for universities, to be sure. But it also has cultural and political ones. Universities are now more prominent in British public life and popular culture that at any previous point in history. A greater share of the UK population than at any previous point has an investment in them. Universities have gone, in Robert Stevens' phrase, from 'university to uni', from the margins of popular culture to the mainstream (Stevens, 2004). Once a staple of elite cultural forms, the image of the university conveyed in *Brideshead Revisited* has been displaced by the students of TV shows such as *Fresh Meat* and *Campus* (Finn M. T., 2012, p. 251). Universities are, as Collini recognises, constantly under discussion (Collini, 2017).

As we have seen, they were no bystanders in the Brexit drama, either. 'Nine out of ten university staff' were thought to have supported Britain remaining in the European Union (Morgan, 2016), and academics sought to use their expertise to contribute to the public debate (Dougan, Editor's introduction, 2017a), often on the Remain side. University-related interest groups proliferated, including Historians for Britain IN Europe, Scientists for EU, Universities UK and the National Union of Students (Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley,

2017, p. 14). The Leave campaign had its own academic interest groups and prominent spokespeople, but they were far fewer in number. The academic consensus was clearly for Remain.

But the vote's outcome seemed to imply that academics — and their universities — were on the wrong side of history. Less than two months before the referendum, the Political Studies Association (PSA) had published an expert survey which had claimed near-certainty for a Remain victory (Finn M., 2016c). This prediction was wrong, just as the PSA's earlier expert survey on the 2015 General Election had been wrong, and just as their subsequent expert survey on the 2017 General Election would also prove to be wrong (political science appears to have particular disciplinary challenges that transcend the broader issues around expertise; Fisher, Hanretty, & Jennings, 2017). Academics working in the social sciences seemed to be increasingly out of touch with popular opinion in the society they were studying, reinforcing perceptions of an 'ivory tower'-dwelling 'elite' amongst those who sought (for their own reasons) to do universities and their academics down. Yet academics' own opinions were in keeping with the much-discussed 'education gap' which defined the referendum outcome. Whilst nine-out-of-ten academics supported Remain, the likelihood of a Leave vote increased the less-educationally-qualified the voter. Whilst a clear majority of university graduates supported Remain — 57% — rising to 64% for those with a postgraduate qualification, those with no formal qualification saw a clear majority for Leave (Aschroft, 2016). Amongst the most likely to vote Remain amongst the whole population were those currently still in education (Aschroft, 2016).

Education was not the only axis on which the Remain/Leave divide fractured. Eric Kaufmann noted a split between those who subscribed to (broadly-speaking) libertarian/

authoritarian values. Leave support also correlated strongly with authoritarian values and support for the death penalty (Kaufmann, 2016). These are views not generally widely held on British university campuses. In terms of immigration, it is worth noting that even amongst Remainers there was also a significant proportion with concerns about scale. It was nonetheless the case that Remainers were more comfortable with immigration in general than their Leave counterparts (Morris J., 2016). This led to a number of more-or-less controversial analyses of the vote. David Goodhart, the longtime Eurosceptic proprietor of *Prospect* magazine, advocated a divide between 'Nowheres' and 'Somewheres'; this thesis argued in terms of what had become a familiar refrain in media coverage — that there really *was* a 'liberal elite' divorced from much of society (Goodhart, 2017). A small number of academic critics agreed. Dennis Hayes, an educationalist based at the University of Derby, characterised academic soul-searching over Brexit in the following terms:

> After the referendum, many … academics spent time publicly crying and ranting about the vote. Once the hysteria had passed, there was a period of agonising self-blame: 'We've failed as teachers!' 'What more could we have done?' But this lament wasn't about education, it wasn't about academics' failure to teach English, history, maths, physics and all the other disciplines that constitute the universities. No, these academics felt that they had failed to instil students with particular behaviours, beliefs and attitudes. There academics see higher education as having aims beyond the pursuit of knowledge within the disciplines. They believe that the university is ultimately concerned with 'social justice'.

> In other words, these academics have politicised
> higher education. The fact that the UK voted to
> leave the EU, against the advice of many academics
> and other so-called experts, has left many academics
> feeling depressed. Their political project appears to
> be over. (Hayes, 2016)

For Goodhart, the academics Hayes criticised would be part of a group he described as 'nowheres' — those comfortable with a globalised world and comfortable with transnational identities. 'Somewheres', by contrast', amounted to the bedrock of the Leave lobby — those uncomfortable with globalisation and its impacts, those to whom national identity was far more critical (Goodhart, 2017).

This diagnosis — though superficial — generated significant media coverage and built on the emergent narrative of a 'liberal metropolitan elite' which also drew on the more substantive contributions of Matthew Goodwin and Robert Ford on the behaviour of so-called 'left behind' voters in the years leading up to the referendum (Ford & Goodwin, 2014). 'Left behind' voters were by definition less educated and successful in terms of employment and earnings (Runciman, 2016b). This sometime-UKIP narrative — appropriated by significant Conservative Leave figures — existed in the same discursive space as Michael Gove's statement that 'we've had enough of experts' (Mance, 2016). The attack on expertise, and by extension universities, was a marked feature of the Brexit 'moment' and part of the reason it is best considered as a 'moment' in political culture rather than simply a one-off event divorced from wider history. It is one of the most significant cultural implications for Britain's universities posed by the Brexit moment.

THE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN A DIVIDED NATION

Contemporary UK higher education is characterised both by its international outlook, and its international makeup. As one university leader, speaking before the referendum outcome, put it:

> Insularity is not the way forward, increased collaboration, sharing resources and ensuring mobility of expertise for the common good is the path we're on and the one we need to continue to follow. (Finn M., 2016a)

In terms of people, as Stefan Collini notes, 'overseas students constitute an ever-higher proportion of the student body (over a third in some institutions)' (Collini, 2017, p. 2). Students from EU27 countries amount to 5.6% of the student body in UK universities, or over 125,000 students (James, 2016, pp. 7–8; House of Commons Education Committee, 2017, p. 8). In 2016, there were 31,635 personnel from EU27 countries in the UK university workforce, equivalent to 16% of the entire staff in UK universities (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017, p. 13). This proportion is higher in certain fields and institutions (see Chapter Three). Around 16,000 British students annually spend some part of their studies abroad in the wider European Union as part of the ERASMUS+ transfer scheme (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017, p. 21).

Such internationalism is manifested both in financial terms and in wider academic links. Transnational research collaboration, often sponsored or promoted by the EU through its initiatives (including, but not limited to, Horizon 2020, the European Research Council (ERC), the European Research Area and staff exchange via Erasmus+), is a feature of

contemporary UK academic life. This is not by accident. Whilst UK agendas in relation to research collaboration have often been driven by the political economy of globalisation and the relative strength of UK universities in a range of fields, other collaborations — such as ERASMUS — have had more deep-seated roots in the European project. As Cherry James notes, part of the rationale behind ERASMUS was the desire on the part of 'community politicians' to foster a 'European identity' (James, 2016, p. 16). In this sense Leave supporters and critics such as Hayes are right — the EU was a part of a clear academic-political project. But it is difficult to see why this is, in itself, a problem. Greater internationalism has been a *sina qua non* of intellectual life as it has developed in the West. As François-René Chateaubriand wrote in the eighteenth century:

> It will not only be commodities which travel, but also ideas which will have wings. When fiscal and commercial barriers will have been abolished between different states, as they have already been between the provinces of the same state; when different countries, in daily relations, tend towards the unity of peoples, how will you be able to revive the old mode of separation? (Rothschild, 1999, p. 106)

Prior to the referendum outcome few academic voices could be found to argue in the media that Brexit would result in a positive outcome for UK higher education. Academics from STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines were particularly vociferous in the other direction. Scientists for EU, led by Dr Mike Galsworthy and Dr Rob Davidson, became a high-profile media presence arguing strenuously for the case for Britain to remain (Scientists for EU, 2017). Scientists for Britain by contrast,

a Leave-supporting group, were fronted by Professor Angus Dalgleish, an oncologist and unsuccessful UKIP election candidate. But Dalgleish was notable by his comparative isolation (Tonkin, 2016).

Those who were more sanguine about British universities' prospects outside the union rested their case on a number of premises that subsequently turned out to be false. Some argued that fears — articulated by vice-chancellors and others — that Britain would be cut off from Horizon funding and wider European collaboration were simply scaremongering. Such scaremongering, it was argued, paid little attention to the reality that non-EU members were already participants in Horizon; Britain could expect the same (Wigram, 2016).

However, this analysis ignored an essential point. Such arrangements do not exist devoid of a broader political context. Many non-EU participants in EU research schemes do so on less favourable terms than the United Kingdom currently enjoys; none receive anything like the funding the United Kingdom currently does. In addition, the facility to access these schemes is predicated on contextual factors. For some nation-states research partnership is a step on the road to potential EU accession, for others participation comes as part of membership of the European Economic Area (EEA). The EEA gives access to the single market and many of the benefits of membership without the ability to play a key role in the EU's decision-making processes. In some cases — such as Switzerland's (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017, p. 20) — it also requires a commitment to the most contentious of the EU's 'four freedoms' in a British context: freedom of movement, which, with anxieties over immigration running high, was seen as a key reason why the British elected to leave the EU in the first place. Despite the 'Norway option' (and its Swiss cousin) being promoted Leave

spokespeople prior to the referendum (Allegretti, 2017), with the arrival of the May government this option was ditched in favour of what became popularly known as 'hard Brexit'.

May elected instead to place restrictions on immigration as central to her Brexit positioning; this meant an unequivocal end to freedom of movement. This will severely impair the ability of UK higher education to function, as it places further constraints on staff mobility, but also actively disincentivises a favourable EU approach to British universities remaining in the European research funding framework. Those who argued that British institutions could expect a good deal from the Brexit settlement also failed to recognise that, important as UK universities are to the wider economy, they were but one sector. Some university leaders were shocked to learn following a Cabinet Office leak in February 2017 that education was considered by government to be a 'low-priority' sector which was unlikely to require as much support post-Brexit as others (Coates, 2017).

The challenges posed to the international university living in a divided nation transcend the economic sphere into the realms of the cultural and the political. As we have seen, one of the key characteristics of the Brexit vote was a stark educational divide between Remainers and Leavers. As we have seen, one of the strongest barometers of voting intention was level of education, with graduates breaking for Remain and those with fewer or no qualifications breaking for Leave. As Runciman has noted, this represents a broader cleavage in society in the era of mass higher education — between those with degrees and those without (Runciman, 2016b). An age-participation rate of 'close to 50% ... is enough to start splitting the population into two camps' (Runciman, 2016b). But whilst Runciman is quick to note that 'the education divide' is not simply 'another version of the [socio-economic] class divide' (Runciman, 2016b), it may be a cultural class divide

of its own. Education has long been a significant 'form of capital' which in its 'embodied' state differentiates (in this case) graduates from non-graduates attitudinally (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 280). Naturally, this is truer still of academics. The proportion of graduates in the population is now so large that though they remain in a minority, the minority is so sizeable — especially in particular areas of the country — as to raise the spectre of what the historian David Cannadine describes as a 'dichotomous' mode of class representation; 'us and them' (Cannadine, 1998).

The growing awareness of 'the education gap' (Runciman, 2016b) in the Brexit moment begged a number of questions which prompted significant soul-searching on the part of academics and administrators in Britain's universities. This was particularly the case for those universities located in strongly Leave areas. The University of Warwick, to cite one example, is situated in south Coventry. Coventry — and the West Midlands as a whole — overwhelmingly voted to leave the European Union, a sentiment few of the university's academic staff or students sympathised with. And yet the gulf pointed up key issues — whilst international universities such as Warwick recruit students and staff globally, how integrated are they with their local communities?

Another tension was that of the 'impact' agenda. Nominally, the Brexit vote showed universities to be 'out of touch', and this fed into characterisations of the subsequently-demonised 'liberal metropolitan elite'. British universities, which now take as a unquestioned mantra the need to demonstrate the 'impact' of their research, took this to heart. Yet this book will ask if the Brexit vote reemphasises the need for critical distance on the part of the university, and examine the dangers inherent in being too responsive to trends in civil society. The impact agenda is a policy choice,

one borne out of constant reform in an rapidly evolving policy landscape.

THE PREVAILING POLICY LANDSCAPE: BRITISH HIGHER EDUCATION IN CONTEXT

The higher education policy landscape at the time of the referendum outcome was one of constant change, driven by what Collini has described as 'market fundamentalism' (Collini, 2017, p. 28). As Roger Brown has shown, since the 1980s British higher education — and English higher education most particularly — has been increasingly inflected with the premises and language of marketisation (Brown, 2015, p. 83; Brown & Carasso, 2013). It is worth noting at this point that whilst the British marketisation process has parallels with the 'commercialisation' of higher education in the United States and elsewhere (Bok, 2003), it is a singular beast. British higher education had its own tradition of reform and expansion in the post-war period which has lacked an adequate history, and instead remains shrouded in mythology. Two principal forces shaped higher education expansion in Britain's post-war era; a liberal-idealist 'post-war' conception of the university, which reached its apotheosis in the Robbins Report, and a technocratic advocacy of the university as an antidote to geopolitical decline (Finn M. T., 2012).

The post-war vision of the university as a liberal, critical, disinterested, scholarly force has had enormous purchase on academic self-perception to this day. It is an emphatically post-war vision, articulated firmly at a time of expansion from the 1940s on as a response to the spectre of totalitarianism as witnessed in Nazi Germany and as feared in Soviet Russia (Finn M. T., 2012, pp. 48−96). This context (which

itself was never so simple) has been lost, but it was never true that the post-war British university was a simple child of 'welfarism'.

The technocratic impulse in turn is older than the marketisation literature, which focuses excessively on neoliberalism. Henry Giroux may well be right when he claims that neoliberalism has made 'war' on higher education, but the story in the United Kingdom is more complex (and ambiguous; Giroux, 2014). As historians such as David Edgerton have recognised, the university was perceived by policymakers in post-war Britain as a vehicle for arresting economic (and thence political) decline (Edgerton, 2005). This was true for policymakers of both parties. Indeed, at the outset of the New Jerusalem, debate took place at Cabinet-level about the extent to which universities could, or should, be bent to serve 'national needs' (Finn M. T., 2012, pp. 59–62). These needs, articulated powerfully by Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the Council and minister responsible for science in the Attlee Government, were conceived of in terms of a nascent human capital theory whereby Britain needed to make the most of its people in a world where she was no longer the dominant economic or political power. There was a deep concern within the state apparatus that universities lacked the willingness to respond to such needs, and advocates of scientific and technological education such as the twice Paymaster-General and Oxford physicist Lord Cherwell reached broad audiences in the 1950s (Fort, 2003). Higher education was discursively constructed in nationalist terms; the referents for debate were the supposed achievements of Soviet science (emblematised by Sputnik, which caused a transatlantic crisis of confidence) and the pre-eminence of US institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As Edgerton has shown, the 'two cultures' debate of the later 1950s and early 1960s represented an anxious Britain in truth not

hostile to science, but desperate instead to maintain a role in world affairs (Edgerton, 2005, pp. 191–229).

As I have argued elsewhere, universities were never 'innocent' of the priorities of Edgerton's 'warfare state' (Finn M. T., 2012; Finn M., 2018a, 2018b). In the course of the post-war decades increasingly ambitious plans were proposed for alternative forms of higher education to alleviate Britain's perceived post-war malaise, from the foundation of the Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs) following the 1956 *Technical Education* white paper (Ministry of Education, 1956), to the establishment of the polytechnic system after Tony Crosland's Woolwich speech of nine years later (Crosland, 1965). Even Harold Wilson's ambitions for the Open University, mythologised in Willy Russell's *Educating Rita*, owed something to Wilson's belief that Soviet correspondence colleges were giving the USSR an edge in the human capital arms race (Dorey, 2015, p. 242).

Many of these initiatives — the 'challenger' institutions of their day — were, then as now, intended to prod universities into action of their own. As Edgerton shows, the university did refocus its attentions on science (Edgerton, 2005, p. 3), but ministers and civil servants were not always happy with how university elites elected to reform. Under the chairmanship of Sir Walter Moberly in the 1940s the University Grants Committee (the predecessor of the Higher Education Funding Councils, albeit far more autonomous in terms of its policymaking function) sponsored the foundation of Keele University (then the University College of North Staffordshire; Finn M. T., 2012, pp. 97–116). As would become characteristic, academics subverted government agendas. Whilst the government-commissioned Barlow Report of 1946 (Barlow Committee, 1946) — which had triggered the Cabinet-level debate on universities — recommended 'at least one' new university (Barlow Committee, 1946, p. 17), the

university which ultimately resulted had no material focus on science. Instead, Keele represented a liberal-idealist expression of 'education for a free society' with a multidisciplinary four-year curriculum anchored in a Foundation Year that did attempt to bridge the sciences and the humanities, but in truth was not geared towards producing scientists but 'active citizens' for a healthy democracy (Finn M. T., 2012, pp. 105, 114). In the 1950s and 1960s, the seven universities sponsored by Sir Keith Murray's UGC disproportionately took the humanities and social sciences — often with an area studies bent — as their focus (partly this was due to the simple fact that 'big science' was expensive; Finn M. T., 2012, p. 122; Sanderson, 2002). Finally, the Robbins Report — often (wrongly) seen as a document which inspired expansion which had in fact already been authorised — enshrined an ideal of higher education as a social good, driven by social wants rather than economic needs (Finn M. T., 2012, p. 248) Whilst publicly lauding Robbins, privately ministers and civil servants were frustrated that the famous economist had produced a document offering a philosophical argument for a particular kind of institution, rather than a determined attempt to link university expansion to manpower planning.

In 1964 Harold Wilson formed a government with a commitment to reforge Britain in the 'white heat' of the technological 'revolution', and the following year his then-Education Secretary Anthony Crosland inaugurated the polytechnic system with a broadside at the universities' purported intransigence and snobbery:

> …we live in a highly competitive world in which the accent is more and more on professional and technical expertise. We shall not survive in this world if we in Britain alone down-grade the non-University professional and technical sector. No other country

> in the Western world does so — consider the
> Grandes Écoles in France, the Technische
> Hochschule in Germany, Zurich, Leningrad Poly in
> the Soviet Union. Why should we not aim at this
> kind of development? At a vocationally oriented
> non-University sector which is degree-giving and
> with an appropriate amount of post-graduate work
> with opportunities for learning comparable with
> those of the Universities, and giving a first-class
> professional training. Let us now move away from
> our caste-ridden hierarchical obsession with
> University status. (Crosland, 1965)

The opening of the 'great debate' on education by Jim Callaghan as Prime Minister in the following decade, and the rise of New Right discourses of marketisation due to the election of Margaret Thatcher as Conservative Party leader, introduced new elements into the policy landscape (Ball S., 2017, pp. 1−2). Whereas Crosland's vision for higher education for 'national needs' was anchored in state control and the development of new institutions through a 'public sector' of higher education, the post-Thatcherite vision was no-less-directive but sought instead to resocialise universities through introduction of market mechanisms and attacks on supposed-producer interests. In the 1970s and 1980s the Institute of Economic Affairs, a free-market, pro-Thatcher think-tank, supported the foundation of the University of Buckingham, the UK's first private-sector university (Tooley, 2001). In the 1988 Education Reform Act, academic tenure was removed from UK universities, making UK academics vulnerable to cycles of performance review and market pressures (Dnes & Seaton, 1998). In 1989 the University Grants Committee, traditionally seen as a 'buffer' to protect university autonomy and academic freedom, was 'abolished' (Shattock, 2012, p. 97).

In 1992 the polytechnics were admitted to university status and most began the process of academic drift which Crosland had anticipated in 1965, as Britain returned to a unitary system and (at least some of) its cultural values. During the 1990s the rise of the 'knowledge economy' discourse as a rhetorical vehicle of 'third way' politics, squaring the circle between what Michael Sanderson once characterised as 'social equity and industrial need' (Sanderson, 1991, p. 159), was embraced by both main political parties. As in the early 1960s, there was an arms race on whether Conservative government or Labour opposition could seem more credible in its claims to be most committed to education and the economy, nowhere more clearly enunciated than in Blair's infamous statement of his priorities: 'education, education, education' (Blair, 1996). For Blair, education reform *was* economic policy.

Senior figures in the Blair governments' education policy-making apparatus conceived of higher education as in need of reform, and in the later view of Blair's former head of policy, Andrew Adonis, academics as a 'producer interest' who were themselves an obstacle to such necessary change (Parr, 2017). Where neoliberalism was novel in British higher education was not in its diminution of academic autonomy, which had been a process sponsored by the state for some decades prior (and which would continue), but in terms of the shared discursive political economy which spanned both major political parties and which prioritised market mechanisms. Thus it was not a surprise that Labour reintroduced student payment of tuition fees in 1998, nor that it increased them in 2004 and commissioned a further review into them in 2009, which ultimately reported as the Browne Review under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition (Brown & Carasso, Everything for Sale? The marketization of UK higher education, 2013). This was higher education

conceived in terms of national economic necessity and individual economic return; market mechanisms, it was believed, could create equilibrium between the two in a way state direction could not, by fostering incentives to individuals to pursue subjects – particularly STEM – which accentuated employability and a high wage premium. This would, it was believed, have ever-more purchase as students transitioned into consumers and required a financial return on their (increasingly significant) investment.

Whilst post-war politicians eager to sponsor 'national needs' through higher education expansion had been careful to genuflect at the altar of academic autonomy and the cultural value of university education as a public good, by the time of the second Blair government such genuflection was notable by its absence. The Labour minister for higher education, Margaret Hodge, displayed a consumerist idea of citizenship (and a fundamental misunderstanding of the philosophy of taxation) when she condemned the idea that a 'dustman should subsidise … [a] doctor' (Finn M., 2002). Charles Clarke, the Secretary of State, meanwhile attacked medieval history as an 'ornamental' discipline in modern society, reinforcing the government's economic-utilitarian rhetoric on higher education, and legitimating increases in tuition fees (Woodward & Smithers, 2003).

By Gordon Brown's premiership, the proportion of students now attending UK higher education institutions had grown to the extent that the current financial system was no longer tenable. This prompted the review under Lord Browne, former chief executive of British Petroleum, which, reporting under the subsequent coalition government, recommended a lifting of the fee cap (Brown, 2015, p. 76). Though this was the most iconic moment of higher education reform since the reintroduction of tuition fees – narrativised as a Liberal Democrat betrayal of their voters – its true

significance lay inasmuch in what followed. Successive universities' ministers in the coalition and subsequent Conservative governments sought to use market drivers to alter university structures and behaviour (Finn M., 2015c, pp. 88−89). With an emphasis on 'value for money' (VFM), the Conservative Party's 2015 manifesto advocated an increase in two-year degrees (already offered by Buckingham, and central to its core business model) and a fuller marketisation of the sector (Conservative Party, 2015, p. 35). The subsequent white paper promoted opportunities for market 'exit' for 'providers', completing the development of a market begun by the Browne Review (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016b, p. 10). Accompanying such change was the wholesale reform of UK research policy, by forming an overarching body to sponsor the subject-area Research Councils, named UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) which would be housed in the new Department for Business, Energy, Innovation and Skills (BEIS) (UKRI, 2017). The net result was a further deprioritisation of humanities and social sciences research in favour of STEM; the Nurse Review into research policy which pre-empted the formation of UKRI stated baldly that the head of UKRI should be a scientist of 'distinction', which begged the question whether candidates with humanities' backgrounds were even eligible for the appointment (Nurse, 2015, p. 27).

The Conservative government elected in 2015 also had as a manifesto commitment the introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which would seek to reprioritise universities' attention towards teaching in light of the new student-consumer dynamic, and to increase the viability of the market through the provision of accurate information on the standard of education available at different providers (Conservative Party, 2015, p. 35). However, the TEF as realised did not measure teaching, but offered subjective

judgements authorised by a panel based on proxies including university performance in student satisfaction surveys. That such surveys are open to gaming and reflect racial and gender prejudices amongst student populations (Deo, 2015) was ignored in favour of their use as the 'best available' data, thus encouraging further 'gaming'.

THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

In the Brexit moment then, Britain's universities stand in a state of permanent revolution. Even prior to the referendum vote, successive governments — since the end of the Second World War — have sought to motivate change within higher education in favour of perceived 'national needs'. These have consistently been envisaged in economic terms, and since the 1970s, in terms of markets. This is a key aspect of the contemporary British political economy of higher education. Yet, powerful as it is, it is not the only discursive 'frame' in which contemporary UK higher education is 'imagined'. The student protests and riots of 2010−2011 which centred on the government's decision to raise tuition fees paid testament to a residual 'moral economy' of 'free' higher education amongst the wider British public (Ibrahim, 2014). The same moral economy has been made visible in the aftermath of the 2017 UK General Election (Adonis, 2017). The Labour Party, having fought the election with a pledge to remove student tuition fees, found itself mired in controversy thereafter as to whether or not they had pledged also to reprieve existing student debt (they hadn't, though they had claimed that they would seek to ameliorate it; Roberts, 2017).

The persistence of this moral economy of higher education illustrates the rapidity of change in the UK sector. Though, as this account has noted, aims have been more-or-less

consistent on the part of governments of different stripes, means have not been. In the 1960s, it was axiomatic for Labour governments that what was needed were different kinds of taxpayer-funded institutions, just as it was axiomatic in the 1990s for a subsequent Labour government that student payment of fees and an attendant marketised system were both necessary and inevitable. Yet the transition from 'free' higher education to £9000 fees took place so swiftly that the moral economy of higher education did not shift with it, and parents had no opportunity to undertake the decades-long planning that it is a feature of other marketised systems. This has led both to unpredictable consumer behaviour and a residual resentment against fees and the commodification of education which they represent, which transcends the supposed-producer interest and 'hyperbole' of academic critics (Hillman, 2016, p. 342). Into this clash of discourses came Brexit, arguably the biggest exogenous shock to Britain's polity since the Suez Crisis of 1956.

The Brexit moment presents an enormous series of challenges to Britain's universities. Many of their academics would no doubt feel they are ill-suited to meet them. A recent study has argued powerfully that the internalisation of the market-consumer model has been so complete on the part of university leaderships — with the attendant rise of a professionalised, non-academic, managerial class (Smyth, 2017) — that they are simply unable to deal with the unprecedented economic, political and cultural implications of the Brexit moment. Instead, such leaderships are 'zombies' (Smyth, 2017), slavishly adhering to a policy paradigm — neoliberalism — which is itself in a state of crisis, opposed from differing sides by the mainstreaming of neonationalist politics and on the other hand the return of a moral economy of higher education and anti-austerity sentiment anchored in non-consumer 'registers' (Grant, 2016a) of citizenship.

This book focuses on the three domains of these implications — the economic, the political, and the cultural, in terms of their relationship to staff and students (addressed in Chapter Two), research and funding (Chapter Three) and the broader place of the university in contemporary British society. The final chapter focuses on the political economy of higher education, to draw together these implications, and assess to what extent this has created a new political economy in the Brexit moment, and what opportunities are present for universities to reconstruct their destinies according to their own ambitions and values. To some extent, this book deals with essential questions of 'what are universities for?' though it does not propose an essentialist response. Beyond making a contribution to the study of universities in the United Kingdom, it also makes a small intervention in the broader Brexit debate, because the dilemmas facing Britain's universities — whist their own — nonetheless represent the practical manifestations of the wider political challenges facing the United Kingdom, not to mention the development of Britain's relationship with the EU into — and beyond — the Brexit moment.