

It's happened to all of us. You're tired, you're at the airport when suddenly, the dreaded announcement – your flight's been delayed by four hours. So you head to the bookstore. You know that you should go for the Booker-prize winning novel. 🇺🇸 But it's the literary equivalent of Weet-bix, and you're craving the chocolate croissant. 🇺🇸 You want the courtroom drama. You want the sci-fi fantasy

Not Meeting Right by Anita Heiss gives you both. It's an easy, lightweight read. But don't let that fool you. Heiss' chick lit is unmistakably, and pointedly political – and that's her goal: she uses chick lit to write the experience of women like her, 🇺🇸 women who are young, urban and Aboriginal, into the consciousness of mainstream, non-Aboriginal Australia.

In my research I argue that Anita Heiss, 🇺🇸 an Aboriginal woman from Central NSW, represents a uniquely 21st Century Public Intellectual. Though it's easy to dismiss the Public Intellectual as a quaint relic from a bygone era, this figure is fundamental to the function of a just and equitable society. In 2009, the 🇺🇸 conservative journalist Andrew Bolt wrote an article claiming that Heiss, and several others, was too white to be Aboriginal. She took him to court, and won. He was found guilty of Racial Discrimination.

By forcefully challenging the stereotype that to be Aboriginal you must be black, poor, and struggling, Heiss gives voice to the most marginalized group in Australia. And she delivers this message in the user-friendly form of tweets, facebook posts and smart, sexy women.

My research does more than document a new kind of Public Intellectual *but that's important too*. I want to find out if Heiss has been effective in creating social change? In terms of the Andrew Bolt court case, her impact is obvious. She sparked furious discussion about *who* we are as a nation, and *how* we talk about one another.

But has Heiss' fiction changed people's attitudes towards Indigenous Australians? 🇺🇸 Traditional literary studies focus on what's inside the text but this gives little insight into the book's reception and impact in the public sphere. So I read book reviews posted to amazon and blogs to understand how readers interpret the political message of her fiction, and I'm listening in on twitter to find out how Heiss interacts with the public.

I believe Anita Heiss is such an important figure in the literary and social landscape because she understands that social change has to come from the mainstream, and that for ideas to really take hold, and to really make a difference, they need to be discussed beyond academia. She speaks the language of the mainstream, without compromising her politics.

So next time you're stuck for a good read, Anita Heiss is a lot of fun, with just the right amount of fibre.