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EDITORIAL

Reprise

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In this issue of *Cultural Studies Review*, Sean Sturm considers Ruth Barcan's book, *Academic Life and Labour in the New University: Hope and Other Choices*, in which she describes the contemporary university as a 'a palimpsest: a scholarly community, a bureaucracy and a transnational corporation'.¹ It would seem that academic journals might be similarly palimpsestic. Publications in refereed journals offer an opportunity to share original scholarly research, to review and debate research published elsewhere, and (in this journal at least) occasions for intellectual creativity and exploration. At the same time, articles in refereed journals are subject to relentless systems of quantification which both measure individual productivity and are fed into metrics of aggregation which, in turn, are harvested to produce rankings which are then key marketing messages for the promotion of particular corporate entities. And, more often than not, the journals we read and publish in are themselves products of transnational corporations. Although not this journal.

Yet somehow the affirmative affect of gathering articles together, of reading works which, while they may be disparate, are nevertheless nestled together within a particular issue always promises excitement. Perhaps this has something to do with the excessive reading practice that a journal envisages. It's a mode of reading very unlike that produced by specialist, project-oriented research, or a focused quest for keywords in databases. Journal reading suggests a different order of intellectual endeavour. This journal asks a reader to encounter a set of experiments in thinking cultural studies and that invitation requires a readerly imagination best characterised as a web of intensities rather than a line of inquiry. Sites, objects and instances that at first consideration may be seen as ordinary, old fashioned and even forgotten become suddenly alive to us because of the nature of the authors' engagement with them. We might call this capacity to surprise an order of (positive) academic affect. We might also think

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about ‘surprise’—with its history embedded in sudden and unexpected attack—as something else the journal might do, however quietly.

Our special section in this issue revisits, evaluates and repositions the figure of Xavier Herbert, a controversial Australian novelist and activist. The focus of this section is unusual for *Cultural Studies Review* in being concerned with a determinedly nationalist, rudely masculinist Australian author of fiction. But as the work of critical race and whiteness and feminist thinkers shows us, that which we believe to be already, always, ‘known’ can yield accounts of the very ground where the ‘known’ can be undone. We will leave Liz Conor and Ann McGrath to fully introduce the section but here let us note that the essays therein provide a persuasive case for the centrality for rethinking not only the colonial frontier but postcolonialism itself as always deeply unstable; as a world in which political imaginaries are made of fraught masculinity, fantasies of race, along with physical and representational violence. The complex and thoughtful ways in which these essays appraise the twentieth-century fiction and the contradictions of Herbert’s ‘hybridity’ are very productive for our contemporary moment when many in settler-colonial states are fearfully defending an impossible white-supremacist inheritance as a model for a purified future.

Elsewhere in this issue, you’ll enjoy two essays focused on question of language and culture. Michael Richardson writes about the complex relationships between political speechwriters and speechmakers, drawing on his own experience of writing from Jack Layton, former leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, and a number of other prominent examples. His argument is that the relationship between speechwriting and speechmaking hinges on the question of how attuned the actors are to the work of fashioning political identities. After witnessing the campaign and aftermath of the recent US Presidential elections, who could not want to think through such issues? Prithvi Varatharajan is also concerned with public utterances; those of contemporary Chinese-Australian poet Ouyang Yu broadcast on Australian public radio. Varatharajan uses the concept of ‘adaptation’ to consider these utterances as interventions in and documents of the space of critical multiculturalism. In a very different register, Nicole De Brabandere explores the rich materiality of ordinary domestic figurines and dinnerware. Through careful analysis these mass-produced objects are re-vivified in this essay prompting surprising speculation about inhabitation and interiority. A very different sense of interiority pervades Vahideh Aboukazemi’s history of revolutionary Iran. Forming its argument through its staccato poetics, a world of lost political imaginings is critically evoked. As always, our reviews will repay your attention. This issue they include a warm and generous engagement with Stuart Hall’s memory and work, robust interaction with Alain Badiou, a reconsideration of melodrama, an appraisal of how best to think oceans and water, and wonderment at just what the university has become.

Notes

1. Ruth Barcan, *Academic Life and Labour in the New University: Hope and Other Choices*, Routledge, London, 2016, p. 42.

Bibliography

Barcan, R., *Academic Life and Labour in the New University: Hope and Other Choices*, Routledge, London, 2016.