

## Editorial

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This edition brings together the discomforts and pleasures of religion or spirituality and the pleasures and discomforts of the television series *Mad Men*. The two excellent introductions to each section by their guest editors, Holly Randell Moon and Sophie Sunderland (for 'Secular Discomforts') and Prudence Black and Melissa Hardie (for 'On *Mad Men*') leave us the great freedom in this editorial to think more broadly and in some ways obliquely about these two sites as places where key cultural studies work is carried out. As Christina Petterson suggests in her essay in this volume, 'Colonial Subjectification: Foucault, Christianity and Governmentality', there is a 'general non-existent relationship between cultural studies and religion, which this special issue addresses'. This, one might say, is the opposite to the critical, creative and continuous relationship cultural studies has had with contemporary culture including popular and 'quality' television series. But there are similarities in their connection to cultural studies.

The sites—religion and *Mad Men*—share an order of madness and an order of masculinity and they both have multiple and diverse relationships with secularity. Secularity as a passionate environment of libidinous consumption, secularity as repentant programs of saving and recycling and secularity as the simple denial of the religious in forms of politics and viewing of television that seem nonetheless informed by historical ideas of religious display and theatre. If we think of the possibility of culture per Hall as signification where signification is a question of affect, then these two sites surely represent where cultural studies needs to be.

Of this decade it seems like there have been two cultural activities that have given us a sense of its 'structure of feeling'—ideas of 'faith' and being a religious subject and our evolving relationship with the moving image that is still a form of mass communication but feels increasingly a like a hand-selected bespoke product. Boxed DVD sets offer high-quality product with cinematic budgets but also the comfort and one-on-one passion of reappearing characters, in their/our highly coloured, creatively heritagised lives. We watch when we wish, or we save up to watch and we follow along on blogs and forums as we copy, convert and redact what is going on in this stylish extension of ourselves that is *Mad Men*. Religion too is a form of mass communication but only sporadically as a 'mass' attendance at church or temple. But as 'faith' or as a calling through of the sacred its particular power and order of sensation moves and shapes us in other places. Lyn McCredde (reviewed in this issue) in describing Pamela Brown's poetry writes:

There they are, those devastatingly onion-like little poems, with furled skins and layers, offering up biting street-scapes and cafés, half-remembered far-away places, distant friends, rock & roll, and lost, ordinary cities; that deceptive, seemingly autobiographical voice cruising between wit, boredom, disillusion, nostalgia, paranoia, irony.<sup>1</sup>

Is this what we would call 'affect' or is this what we might call an order of sacredness, that moves us to experience this writing and Brown's poetry, as more than poetic? Is this one order of the desiring subject that was created through the 'pastorate' per Foucault and which shapes itself with and through television, and with and through the sacred?

Cultural studies is a field that can hold secular discomforts and *Mad Men* together not by discovering any immediate connections or strange coincidences (although poetry clearly has a role in each) but through *how* these diverse sites are celebrated, critiqued, connected and emplaced. As a single volume, with a very complementary and compelling set of reviews, this is an issue of *Cultural Studies Review* that should be read from cover to cover—starting at either end.

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<sup>1</sup> Lyn McCredde, *Luminous Moments: The Contemporary Sacred*, ATF Press, Adelaide, 2010, p. 89.