

editorial

CHRIS HEALY AND STEPHEN MUECKE

One of the tasks of the humanities academic—the philosopher, the cultural studies researcher—is to devise informed judgement through the exercise of a complex intelligence. It's a matter, one might think, of sorting out the truth from bullshit and telling it how it is. If only the world would just stay simple ... This directness has some appeal, until you start trying to specify the appropriate criteria, grounding and form for judgement. Disciplines address precisely these issues, and to the extent to which they do so successfully, they specify complex phenomena in particular ways; they authorise certain kinds of enquiry and speech as they productively cultivate their own patch of knowledge. Cultural studies has made interdisciplinarity its business, bewitched and distracted by the complexities of actual existing cultural practices, by spatial and temporal mobility and seepage, by authority and exclusion, ownership, belonging and boundaries.

The philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers gives us a tag for this issue as she crosses the humanities–sciences divide and asks what procedures distinguish true scientists from charlatans, dwelling on the case of Franz Mesmer in the late eighteenth century. Medical science, in particular, has had a hard time shaking off quasi-scientific 'healers' whose success seems unaccountable. Medicine itself remains full of mystery, and Stengers challenges sciences in general to embrace the risks of innovative experiment and collective responsibility.

A variety of historical engagements and explorations in historicity provide material for our other essays. The mania for historical re-enactment, 'lived' history, is explored by Simone Bignall and Mark Galliford through a study of the replication of the *Duyfken*, the ship from whose decks Cape York was sighted by Europeans on the first recorded occasion in 1606. They show how the replication of history is a detailed business that has much to do with

cultures of the present. Sara Wills and Kate Darian-Smith, on the other hand, move from cultures of the present to the past as they turn a quasi-ethnographic gaze onto the Frankston festival celebrating a Britishness that is fading, and perhaps distorting, memories and identity.

Cross-cultural work of a different kind is demonstrated by Minoru Hokari and Alison Lewis, both of whom are concerned with historical imagination and the nation-state. Hokari, who has done historical fieldwork in Gurindji country, here attempts to use reflections on his subjectivity as a Japanese researcher to break open old debates between black and white in Australia and re-locate reconciliation issues, at last, in a more global register. Lewis reports a recent bout in Germany's disputative memory culture.

In an outstanding 'New Writing' section, Linda Neil offers a stunning piece of family memory-work and John Kinsella performs poetically a reflection on 'A Loss of Poetics'. Finally, among many excellent reviews, is another piece that engages our theme: who indeed are the charlatans in the debate about Indigenous history that Keith Windschuttle has whipped up? Taking a fresh and challenging approach, Klaus Neumann asks just why it is that historical debate is so often, in historical circles, content to dwell on the past, deploying a regime of truth that can only *imply*, and not fully discuss, questions of culture: as if what we think about Indigenous presence (or absence) in our conception of the nation is only a question of facts and has nothing to do with the constant work of the plastic arts that are Australian identities.

Two things to look out for with our next issue: we will be launching a new section, 'Provocations', where we'll feature excitations, debates and disputations; and we're shifting our publishing schedule so that, from 2004, we'll appear in March and September.