

editorial

CHRIS HEALY AND STEPHEN MUECKE

Seeing a hot Subaru (driver with baseball cap) cruising Norton Street, Sydney's Italian precinct, with the personalised number plate *CATTIVO* reminded this editor that cultural studies can be *bad*, in that streetwise sense. It has that mischievous strand which likes to celebrate mischievous cultural activists. The very first issue of the *UTS Review*, in fact, had an article by Ruth Barcan, 'A Symphony of Farts: Saul Alinski, Social Activism and Carnavalesque Transgression' (1995). Alinski was a criminologist and social activist in the USA in the 1950s. Recalling a battle for better working conditions for black workers in the Eastman Kodak factory in Rochester, he recounted his tactic of buying 'a hundred tickets for one of Rochester's symphony concerts ... The hundred blacks who were to attend would be given a three hour pre-concert meal consisting of nothing but copious quantities of baked beans.' This tactic was designed to confound the experience of the establishment, who would be expecting the usual demonstrations and confrontations.

Ruth Barcan goes on to note: 'While it seems to me that the "hyper-transgressive" moment in cultural studies has now largely passed, it also seems that much cultural studies work on popular culture (including my own) still works within a paradigm structured around the twin poles of containment and subversion'. It is useful to bear this tension in mind as we read and think through the problems of cultural activism presented by this special issue and perhaps to imagine other forms of thought. Leading Italian feminist intellectual Ida Dominjanni, for example, in her essay here, 'Rethinking Change: Italian Feminism between Crisis and Critique of Politics' seconds Judith Butler's call for a 'politics of mourning', writing: 'This politics of mourning supposes a new ontology of globalisation, based on fragility, loss,

extreme precariousness and interdependence in which we all live today'. But she adds: 'And perhaps, after many decades thinking about only conflict, it is now time to think of the twin of the politics of mourning, that is a politics of love'.

Noting in passing that our New Writing section picks up the scatological theme with Leopold Podlashuc's 'Praxis of Poop', the more extended parallel with Alinski's 'artful politics' is, of course, the post-1968 Italian counter-cultural, militant and theoretical/philosophical cultural complex reflected upon here with great thoroughness by the writers of the Italian Effects essays. These essays were brought to us from a conference organised across four Sydney universities in September 2004 where the key speakers were Italian 'nomadic' cultural theorist and media activist Franco Berardi (Bifo) and Dominijanni, whose contributions we are delighted to be able to include here. 'Italian Effects' necessarily looks to the roots of contemporary Italian thought in those mid-to-late twentieth century movements, but there is also a very contemporary effect evinced by the great interest in philosopher Giorgio Agamben, philosopher-activists Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, and the way in which their thinking articulates with anti-globalisation movements. Our thanks to Michael Goddard and Brett Neilson for editing this special section and to Melinda Cooper, Timothy Rayner and Ilaria Vanni, the other conference organisers, for their assistance during the editing process. For the rest, this issue presents more brilliant reviews, and another two new writing pieces, Dominique Hecq's subtle reflections on new writing itself and Hamish Morgan's desert adventure, which should be the envy of any philosopher of time.