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Recover

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- 'recover'

As 2008 marks the tenth anniversary of M/C Journal, there is opportunity to take stock and reflect on its impact and value. So too, can we revisit its archives and recover some of its best material in rediscovery. Such a process allows for recovery of certain trends and movements that could be said to characterise the preceding decade. While measuring time in ten year blocks is essentially an artificial exercise, it can also be seen as a practical means of stimulating reflection on what has been recovered. This is important to consider at a time when speed is increasingly of the essence in all aspects of life, but especially in media and cultural production, as well as academic production. In such a climate, time to recover is increasingly sparse, with the focus sometimes overwhelmingly on the future.

In this context, recovering the past is often only partial recovery: a process of raiding that past for fragments applicable to an imagined future, a recasting of memories in brighter lights. Still, recovering something may give it new life, in different colours or a different wrapping. Implicit in the other meaning of the concept of recovery is that of 'loss', whereby recovery directly implies a sense of healing. This may be letting go of the past, understanding, and reconciling the interconnections between private and global landscapes of healing - culturally, physically, spiritually.

For this issue of M/C Journal, we invited submissions that would address the process of 'recovery' from a wide variety of angles. We gave a number of examples of what that might include: recovery of cultural artefacts; recovery after prolonged periods of dominant political ideologies; recovery of memory; recovery after war or personal loss; and ultimately, the role of both 'old' and 'new' media in all such processes. We ended the call for papers with something of a 'battle cry': let us recover! Given the dual strands of meaning attached to recovery, that of recovering or repurposing the past, and that of recovery in the healing sense, it was the latter

which provided inspiration for most of the articles submitted. Moreover, within the 'healing' papers, there was a strong emphasis on healing in the medical sense of the word, which provided an interesting insight into the power of the connotations of the word in its medical context.

When we initially decided on 'recover' as the theme in late 2007, the choice was primarily related to the political context at the time, pre-global financial crisis – clearly. The ALP had finally succeeded in ending the 'Howard years', and the atmosphere seemed to be brimming with a sense of relief, fresh starts and new beginnings. Put another way, there seemed to be a need for recovery, at least in a political sense, and this is where we expected the primary focus to be. Instead, and apart from the 'medical papers', we received an eclectic mix of interpretations of recovery, which is reflected in the variety of papers that ultimately make up this issue.

The political slant on recovery was the direction suggested to the author of our feature article, Brian Musgrove, who graciously accepted. While a good number of his ink-infused arrows are clearly aimed at the 'Howard years', Musgrove's feature article covers a much wider and more ambitious terrain. Indeed, it brings together the different 'recovery' trajectories outlined above, in that it recovers multiple theories and the memory thereof, and in the process it shows us glimpses of ways to 'recover' from the culture wars. The culture wars are identified here as the underlying ideological impetus behind the 'politics of contempt': let us recover indeed!

Musgrove's call to recover the role of the Frankfurt School in enlivened critical efforts to "expose the machinations of contempt and its aesthetic ruses" historicises mass-mediated reality in Australia, the "land of the long weekend", sounding an affirmation of thought, of lived experience, as exceeding conformity to ritualised "values". And, as Martine Hawkes conveys, in "What is Recovered", sometimes these thoughts and experiences remain unforgettable, inconclusive, in their promise.

Like Musgrove, Hawkes responds to an encounter with the mass-mediated interview but this time, the subject is a survivor of the Srebrenica genocide, Saidin Salki?, who remembers "the smell of his father's jumper, or the flowers growing in his mother's garden". Is this, sometimes, the sound of recovery? Loss, as an impossible utterance: "the lacuna in testimony." Moving through her own encounter with the ruptured archival process, Hawkes turns to Derrida. She explores ways in which his "departure from the examination of the structure and institution of the archive", traces a line through the dust of memory. In her theoretical journey, Hawkes comes to "a secret which can never be told, but which is hope." And hope, then, turns out to live beyond verbal description, but is recovered, nevertheless.

A related form of recovery is the focus of "From Loss of Objects to Recovery of Meanings: Online Museums and Indigenous Cultural Heritage", in which Jeremy Pilcher and Saskia Vermeylen explore "how museums can be transformed into cultural centres that 'decolonise' their objects while simultaneously providing social agency to marginalised groups such as the San." Pilcher and Vermeylen argue that providing agency to the social relations linking objects with people, places, and memories may be possible within the online environment. They argue that opportunities for engagement between marginalised Indigenous groups, such as the San, and multiple audiences, "may be enabled through the generation of multiple narratives within online museums". Echoing Hawkes, Pilcher and Vermeylen observe how recovery of lived experience as cultural artefact carries an impossibility inherent in representation, in "that any form of

representation or displaying restricts meaning."

In a sense, Pilcher and Vermeylen's focus on the recovery of artefacts and their cultural value, and indeed the different cultural value ascribed to such artefacts, is continued in Ashton's paper, albeit in an entirely different context. Ashton takes the 2008 Game On exhibition in Melbourne as his starting point to explore the 'cultural heritage' of games development, and attempts to locate this heritage within an identified (Nintendo) push to create a wider appeal that would be inclusive enough to feature "granny on the Wii". This wider appeal in turn needs to be reconciled with a 'bedroom geek culture' that has provided the foundations for today's billion dollar gaming industry. It is important then, as Ashton suggests, to recover a "eulogised and potentially mythical past", but not as something that is 'frozen' in the past, but rather as something that continues to play a vital part in the gaming industry's expanding "cultures of innovation and creative vibrancy".

It is such creative vibrancy and its importance to resisting what Brian Musgrove describes, in his feature article, as the repetition of conformist ritual and imposed "values" that concerns Steve Collins in "Recovering Fair Use". He argues that "copyright enforcement has spun out of control" but that two recent cases "suggest that fair use has not fallen by the wayside and may well recover."

The two 'medical' interpretations of recovery (by Anthony McCosker, and Philip Neilsen and Ffion Murphy) both explore the 'healing power' of writing. In McCosker's case, this is not necessarily about physical recovery, as some of the subjects he discusses sadly do not physically recover. However, the 'illness blogs' in his paper, regardless of whether the subjects ultimately recover, appear to provide an important space to mediate illness and help them record experiences and "stage their recovery or deterioration in a publicly accessible space". McClosker identifies an interesting tension between private and public spaces here. Because these blogs are public, they can be seen as a political tool to raise awareness about particular forms of illness, and at the same time provide opportunities to build 'communities of practice' of people who are forced to deal with similar issues. However, while they are public, the individual nature of blogs, and their relation to their distant cousin 'the diary', create a paradox whereby their authors "attempt to recover a stable sense of self through discourse that frames the writer's suffering, treatment, and healing in a deeply personal form." In many cases it is precisely the public nature of the blog that paradoxically creates the anonimity needed to recover a sense of self amidst extreme personal upheaval.

Neilsen and Murphy's paper discusses the initial findings of a pilot study that aims to design and conduct "life-writing" workshops for a group of people with severe mental illness. This is a collaborative transdisciplinary project where a creative writer and teacher guided the session in consultation with, and monitored by, experienced mental health professionals. Echoing McCosker's paper, there is an interesting exploration here of the different ways in which 'recovery' is defined, an oscillation between objective indicators of recovery, and the subjective experience of recovery, which are not always in alignment. Life-writing potentially allows individuals to express their subjective, lived experience of recovery. Initial outcomes suggest that siginificant elements of recovery (for example feelings of enhanced agency and creativity) can be achieved through life-writing workshops.

The final paper (by Emily Bowles-Smith) approaches recovery from a rather different and more literary angle. Bowles-Smith addresses some of the difficulties that scholars like herself face when

they attempt to recover early modern women's writing. She uses the manuscript poetry of Elizabeth Wilmot, Countess of Rochester (1651-1681), as a case study. Wilmot's poetry survives in a manuscript that she and her husband produced together. This frames Bowles-Smith's paper to some extent as 'feminist recovery work', but this is only the starting point. As she argues, "like the writings of many early modern women, Wilmot's manuscript poetry challenges assumptions about the intersections of gender, sexuality, and authorship". Ultimately, each of these are subject of Bowles-Smith's successful recovery work, whereby Wilmot re-surfaces in three-dimensional form, rather than simply as 'author' or 'sexual body'.

Overall then, to return to the initial 'battle cry' for this issue, we ask ourselves: have we recovered yet? The answer for us is a tentative and partial "yes", with the help of some excellent authors. We are therefore confident there is plenty on offer for the reader here that will stimulate recovery, in all senses of the word, long into the future.

We would like to sincerely thank all the reviewers for their prompt and excellent reviews, and a special thanks to Susanne Slavick for allowing us to use 'Reconstruction (Beirut)' as the wonderful image for this issue.