

## **Eras Journal - Editorial, Edition Eight**

### **Editorial**

Welcome to the eighth edition of *Eras*, the journal produced by postgraduates in the School of Historical Studies at Monash University. The aim of our journal is to publish articles and reviews from the fields of History, Archaeology, Religion and Theology, and Jewish Civilisation - as well as encouraging cross-disciplinary approaches to these fields - by current and recently-completed postgraduate students. Once again, *Eras* showcases a fascinating and highly diverse selection of postgraduate and early-career research from Australia and around the world.

In this edition, and for the first time in its short history, *Eras* is made available in Adobe® PDF format. This new style was adopted in order to enable easier viewing of the journal's contents, as readers may now print out the full text of our articles and reviews for later perusal, or continue to read the contributions on-screen as with previous editions. It is envisaged that in time, the contents of editions one to seven of *Eras* will also be transferred to the new format, to bring our journal further into line with other outstanding online publications. We welcome any comments our readers may have regarding this change, and suggestions as to how we may continue to improve in future editions.

For postgraduates in the current academic climate - in which a premium is placed upon the publication of work 'early and often' - journals such as *Eras* are only growing in importance. Postgraduate and early-career researchers in competition for academic advancement often face difficulties in publishing their work in the more prestigious and long-running journals (both in print and online); and it is thus essential that student-run journals continue to offer the opportunity to present work to an international audience, in a form as accessible as the electronic medium. With this in mind, this year it was decided to open the journal even more widely to scholars from outside the strict confines of 'Historical Studies' and enable papers with significant historical content (from fields such as economics, comparative literature, and cultural studies) as prominent a showing as they deserve. While the atmosphere of *Eras* may thus be less bound by convention, and be more open to the innovative methods and means of the coming generation of scholars, we nevertheless maintain exacting standards in our editing and refereeing procedures. Our double-blind referee process exposes the authors of articles for *Eras* to the scrutiny of world-class scholars, and so authors published in *Eras* may be confident both of the validity of their research, and the excellence of their scholarship.

In keeping with our greater emphasis on encouraging contributions from other disciplines, our new edition is opened by Thomas Bamforth's article exploring the complexities of 'Democratisation, Economic Reform and Human Rights in Poland'. The paper examines aspects of Polish economic history in the post-Communist period, with a view to exploring the very real difficulties faced by a nation attempting to reorient itself towards the West, and the powerhouse of the European Union. For

those who have heard little regarding the nations of the former Soviet sphere, this paper helps us to understand that history in Eastern Europe certainly did not 'end' in 1989, but rather a new phase of socio-economic change and upheaval was inaugurated, in which Poland in particular struggles to locate itself in the world of the free market economy, with all its attendant complications.

Continuing the theme of inter-disciplinary endeavour, Geoff Berry presents us with an innovative and intellectually-engaging examination of one of the truly astonishing cultural phenomena of our age: Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*. Geoff's background in comparative literature allows him to view the novel through the lens of the historical corpus of Grail mythology, and thus expose the promise, and the ultimate failure of Dan Brown to provide something truly new in his tale of a knight errant, his lady, and the quest for ultimate truth.

Michelle Burns' contribution explores the ways in which the troubled, Apartheid-era history of South Africa has been normalised by the ANC government and its supporters, in the decade since democratisation. Michelle's chosen area of investigation is the process of enshrining national memory in memorials, and the manner in which both new memorials are constructed to perpetuate particular values and narratives, but also the way older memorials - seemingly 'loaded' with unpalatable political associations - nevertheless form an integral part of the physical and theoretical landscape of the 'Rainbow Nation'. Connected to the physical monuments are ideas and myths in constant flux, and Michelle illustrates the way in which memories of the past are invoked selectively to help generate new foundation myths for the 'new' South Africa.

Following on from Michelle Burns, Jemima Mowbray offers a fascinating insight into the process of memorialisation of pioneer women in Australia - a process imbued with just as many convolutions and complexities as Burns' South African examples. Changing ideas about gender, race and nationhood form the bedrock upon which Jemima builds her examination of past and present images of the 'Pioneer Woman', and she explores an impressive range of issues and examples in seeking to examine which histories have been remembered and which forgotten in the course of memorialising the experience of (white) settler women in Australia.

Representing the field of archaeology in this edition *Eras*, Ben Suelzle has contributed a thorough investigation of two theories regarding one of the most iconic and enigmatic artefacts of antiquity: the Narmer Palette. Ben argues that in order to more fully appreciate the significance of the palette, one must examine its imagery in tandem with other key artefacts of the same epoch, and seeks to address the convergences discernable in the work of Alan R. Schulman and Jan Assman on the palette. Ben's article will be of interest both to trained archaeologists and those who possess an interest in the methods of the deconstruction of imagery (as well as to those with an abiding fascination for the history and culture of Ancient Egypt).

In addition to the papers listed above, for the first time in this eighth edition, *Eras* has devoted a special section of its bandwidth to papers from a specific area of historical enquiry. In early 2006, I was privileged to be a part of the organising committee for 'Mateship: trust and Exclusion in Australian History', a cross-disciplinary conference held at Melbourne 's historic Trades Hall (16 th -17 th February, 2006). Convened by former *Eras* editors-in-chief Nick Dyrenfurth and Kate Murphy, the conference was a great success and, among the excellent papers presented, the contributions of postgraduate students were of particular note. Accordingly, the decision was taken to offer those contributors the opportunity of publication in *Eras* (subject of course to the same standards of editing and refereeing as other papers), and two of the best papers appear here in edition eight.

Madeline Hamilton presents a fascinating exploration of the pin-up girl in the formulation of ideas about Australian masculinity and mateship during the Second World War. Madeline examines the complex, and often contradictory, expectations surrounding Australian male culture, as individuals found themselves caught between the attractions of the hyper-masculine Anzac myth and those of the more domestic (but still safely masculine and heterosexual) sphere epitomised by the Australian versions of the 'girl next door' represented on their pin-ups. In her research, Madeline has drawn upon a series of letters written by Australian servicemen to two of their 'favourite' pin-ups - Linda Browne and Joyce Walter - giving an absorbing insight into the mindset both of the men themselves, and the outlook they possessed on issues of gender, class and nation during one of the formative periods of Australian mateship.

Linda Wade's article seeks to explore the problems encountered when one extends the supposedly peculiarly Australian concept of 'mateship' to relations between Australians and individuals from other societies. Linda seeks to explain why the very real bonds forged between servicemen of the Australian Imperial Force and the inhabitants of Villers-Bretonneux have been largely forgotten in favour of commemoration of Australians' relationship with other Australians whilst in pursuit of martial endeavour. A key focus of Linda's article is the school of Villers-Bretonneux, constructed by Australian ex-servicemen in the aftermath of the Great War, and the ambivalence of feeling which that enduring structure still holds in the Australian national consciousness, imbued as it supposedly is with a particularly nationalistic view of what 'mateship' can and should entail.

In addition to the scholarly articles, readers of edition eight will also find a number of reviews by postgraduates from the Monash University School of Historical Studies, on a range of recent publications. These are an integral part of the journal, and offer critical readings of some of the more important recent works of historical, political, religious and archaeological enquiry.

The continued success of *Eras* is entirely dependent upon the invaluable support of the postgraduate community in the School of Historical Studies and the members of the Editorial Committee. I would particularly like to thank my Reviews Editors,

Meighen Katz and Lachlan Grant, for their assistance throughout the year (and particularly in the last, hectic stages of the publication process). Thanks must also go to last year's editor-in-chief Nick Dyrenfurth, for his continued support and advice on the running of the journal; and to Simon Sleight; Rachel Stevens; Ben Suelzle and Selena Costa-Pinto, who have also worked hard to ensure the eighth edition matches the standard set by its predecessors. Ana Kailis also contributed significantly to the early stages of the journal's production; and Paul Kucera's advice on the development of PDF-based articles and reviews and on web design is also greatly appreciated. The value of the assistance and advice of former editor-in-chief Kate Murphy also cannot be understated. The support of the academic supervisors of the committee members, and the other academic staff also contributed greatly to the finished product, and our thanks go out to them. Rosemary Johnston and Barbara Caine are to be thanked for their continuing support both of the journal, and the students who devote so much valuable time to developing it each year.

The Editorial Committee are also thankful for the technical support of Arts IT, in particular Johnathon Blythe, Ken Blakey and Ian Coulter, without whom the new PDF version of the journal would not have got off the ground.

It would also be impossible to maintain the standard of the articles found in *Eras* without the contributions of the anonymous academic referees from within Australia and internationally. Their expert advice ensures the continued success of journals like ours, and their ongoing commitment demonstrates the healthy degree to which even the most respected and senior members of the academic profession are willing to assist students and early career researchers in attaining the best possible standards in their written work.

As always, the aim for *Eras* journal is not simply to present new research, but also to provoke vigorous and passionate discussion among postgraduates, the academic community, and the wider public. We therefore invite comments to be sent to us via email; and if they are so moved, readers are also invited to respond at length to the papers presented here. Any short, reasonable comments will be posted on the *Eras* discussion page, in the hope that they will provide stimulus for continued discussion.

We hope you enjoy *Eras* Edition Eight.

**Richard Scully**

(Editor-in-Chief, *Eras* Journal).