

❖ Volume 4, Issue 1: 2010

Editorial

GMJ/AU is pleased to release **Volume 4 #1 issue for 2010 –Of Human Bondage: Interest, Habit, Love, Obsession, Addiction.**

Editor

Welcome to GMJ/AU Issue 4.1 for 2010. I am pleased to introduce this issue with its special focus on *Obsessions and Addictions* as played out in media contexts and social circumstances. The sense of urgency surrounding this theme is underscored by the strong response to the call for the papers and the sense of commitment that marks the contributions to this issue of GMJ/AU. The issue is guest-edited by Dr. Milissa Deitz, lecturer in communication and writing in the School of Communication Arts, whose hard work and diligence has ensured its success. In working with this theme, we have marked a departure in how we construct the thematic skeins of scholarship in communication and media studies and opened the journal to interdisciplinary conversations about addiction, obsessions, secrecy, medical cultures, and contemporary subjectivity that includes scholars in cultural studies, film and media studies, gaming, cultural psychology and journalism.

Comments and responses are welcomed within our recently added comments facility.

Thanks to the editorial and production teams who worked on this issue with a particular thanks to Lisa Kaufmann, recently appointed editorial assistant.

Hart Cohen

Guest Editor: Dr. Milissa Deitz

This special issue of GMJ/AU 4.1, *Of Human Bondage: Interest, Habit, Love, Obsession, Addiction*, explores the contradictions inherent in relation to those hallmarks of modern society: obsession and addiction. Readers of Susan Sontag will be familiar with the idea of disease as metaphor and while obsession may be a phenomenon of modern existence, it can also be much more than excessive interest or preoccupation. It is also a pathology.

In his book *Obsession: A History* (reviewed in this issue), US scholar Lennard Davis argues that, as a medical problem and both a product and a symptom of modernity, mental illness needs to be considered in a "bio-cultural" way. In an interview on

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu> he states:

We are increasingly surrounded by a world that demands obsessive behaviour. We now can check our emails addictively with our iPhones and PDAs. We can watch the elections with an obsessive attention that we didn't have before with instant checks on the Internet, and a TV industry geared to create a panic at a moment's notice ... In our careers, we are required to spend inordinate amounts of time devoted to doing one thing, and that itself is both the cause and the symptom of OCD – doing or thinking about one thing too much.

Davis' main thesis is that one cannot understand obsession without considering its corresponding social, cultural, historical, anthropological and political circumstances. As a cultural historian, he argues that a bio-cultural perspective may yield "a greater trove of knowledge than a more narrow, clinical one".

Together, the papers in this issue attempt to reconceptualise the relationship between obsession, addiction and agency. Amongst them, we have a paper on the memoirs of the American novelist Augusten Burroughs in which addiction is used as a frame through which to begin an examination of Burroughs' representations of subjectivity in contemporary culture. Another covers recent innovations in video game addiction research and theory and reflects critically on key research questions within the psychological field of video game addiction as well as the broader question of whether contemporary anxieties about high levels of computer technology use are justified. The increased portrayal of drug abuse on the big screen prompted another paper, which looks at heroin addiction in the films *Christiane F.* and *Drifter*.

Also in this issue: general essays, postgraduate essays, Media Monitors and book reviews. This is just a taste: please read on.

Milissa Deitz 2010

Global Media Journal © 2010