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Pixels, Paper, and Public Affairs: a comparative content census of print and online editions of the Melbourne Age newspaper

While online newspapers are structured in ways that give readers much more control of the news they access, this very feature might be cutting some readers off from public affairs information, a vital nutrient for the health of a democracy. Imbricated in this situation is the likelihood that public affairs coverage has decreased across all editions due to intensified competition leading to 'tabloidization'. After reviewing findings from international surveys on the relationship between presentation and consumption of online news and public affairs knowledge and civic engagement, we undertake a pilot study to conduct a census of news articles over the three days from 'Sorry' day, February 13th 2008, to determine the relative amounts and presentations of public affairs coverage in the online and print editions of the Melbourne Age newspaper.

James McARDLE

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Lost in the Bush

I propose to discuss research by Australian artists, including my own, into the resolution and representation of the ‘figure and the ground’ in this landscape. Overlapping temporal and spatial renderings within single photographic images convey the very human sensations of being on the ground, in the Central Victorian Goldfields. The eye of European traditions looks for vistas and views through bending bough and enframing foliage. Xavier Herbert describes a contrary vision of the bush, of “…seeing the stunted trees, the mulga and the wilga and the gimlet gum, doing a kind of dance, spinning past, seeming to swing away from the train to the horizon and race ahead, to come back to meet us and go waltzing past and round again, the same set of trees in endless gyration”. What prospect can be found amongst staves of spindly coppiced trunks and broken ground that leads off only into perplexity? Lost, we confront confusion and chaos here. Dance-like manual gestures of the camera discover, through a condensation of space by time, the visceral awareness of the environment; the scratching thorns as much as the soaring treetops. Arising from a connection between body and environment are signs of mind and attention.

Alissa MACOUN

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‘A Hobbesian Nightmare’: Interpreting the Intervention

In June 2007 the Howard Government announced a program of federal intervention into remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, claiming that reports of abuse of Indigenous children constituted a national emergency demanding urgent Commonwealth intervention. These measures would be in place until Aboriginal communities were “stable” and the situation was “normalised.” Debate about this intervention was explicitly situated within and in relation to a range of discourses about race relations in Australia, and about the nature, role, status, value and future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the Australian nation. The focus of this paper will be to examine the intervention as a moment in discourse about race, nation and aboriginality in Australia, and provide a preliminary analysis of some of the truth claims and