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Towards the end of 1994, I finished my formal association with *Continuum* as it passed out of Tom O’Regan’s editorial hands and moved on to Brian Shoesmith and others at Edith Cowan, eventually to become an international journal published, first, by Carfax and later (as now) by Taylor and Francis. So most of this memoir of loose coalitions will be about those years, 1987-1994 when the journal was very much an in-house project at Murdoch University. That is, I’m trying to get to at least some of the core of what happened between volumes 1:1 and 8:2. Just for the record, those volumes were as follows:

1:1 Australian Film in the 1950s (ed. Tom O’Regan, 1987)
1:2 Film, TV and the Popular (ed. Philip Bell & Kari Hanet, 1988)
2:1 Asian Cinema (ed. Tom O’Regan & Brian Shoesmith, 1988/89)
2:2 Performance, Theory, Australia (ed. Alec McHoul & Brian Shoesmith, 1989)
3:1 Space, Meaning, Politics (ed. Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, 1990)
3:2 Communication & Tradition: Essays after Eric Michaels (ed. Tom O’Regan, 1990)
4:2 Television and ... (ed. John Hartley, 1991)
5:2 Film — Matters of Style (ed. Adrian Martin, 1992)
6:1 Radio — Sound (ed. Toby Miller, 1992)
6:2 Photogenic Papers (ed. John Richardson, 1993)
7:2 Screening Cultural Studies (ed. Tom O’Regan & Toby Miller, 1994)
8:1 Electronic Arts in Australia (ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg, 1994)
8:2 Critical Multiculturalism (ed. Tom O’Regan, 1994)

I take this list from the first part of an index to those volumes I compiled in 1994 and which was distributed to subscribers with issue 8:2. The index began with a cover-verso titled ‘About Continuum’ which bears rehearsal here. In fact, it does most of the work of this memoir in its own right:

*Continuum*’s first issue appeared in 1987. Two issues per volume are published. This index covers the journal’s first sixteen issues. Funding for these issues principally came from the Australian Film Commission with minor assistance from Perth’s Murdoch University. The Centre for Research in
Culture and Communication at Murdoch University was the journal’s base for most of these issues. *Continuum* is a thematically based cultural studies journal. The primary focus of the journal is upon screen media; but our understanding of ‘media’ also includes publishing, broadcasting and public exhibitionary media such as museums and sites. Journal editors are particularly interested in:

1. the history and practice of screen media in Australasia and Asia and
2. the connections between such media (particularly between film, TV, publishing, visual arts and exhibitionary sites).

Each issue is devoted to the exploration of a particular cultural site. Sites have included indigenous media, television, Asian cinema, media discourse, film style, publishing, photography, radio, ‘Screening Cultural Studies’, electronic arts in Australia and ‘Critical Multiculturalism’. The journal is committed to articulating the energies, fragmentations, and loose coalitions that attend such cultural sites. The journal promotes an interventionist strategy by announcing areas of work in cultural and screen studies in Australia that need to be covered, and then sets about covering these through its special issues. In this way our aim is to help set the agenda for cultural and screen studies in Australia. In order to facilitate these objectives the journal has guest editors.

Tom O’Regan, Alec McHoul & Toby Miller
(Editorial Collective)

I’d only been at Murdoch University a short while when Tom O’Regan mentioned that he was in advanced stages of negotiation with a number of people – especially Brian Shoesmith at WACAE (later Edith Cowan University) and the AFC – to try to get an Australian film journal off the ground. The first few issues would be experimental, just to see how the idea floated with the Australian film studies community.

It was clear from the start, though, that Tom wanted to move to a ‘special issues’ style of production, with guest editors focussing on themes, so that each issue could eventually be sold across the bookshop counters like any other edited collection. Before long the project was up and going and the first issue was out: ‘Australian Film in the 1950s’, edited by Tom, we all felt, to set the pace. The cast he’d assembled for this first issue was typically representative of his ambition for the journal. It included Stuart Cunningham, Sam Rhodie, Barbara Creed, Albert Moran, Ross Gibson, Sue Dermody and Liz Jacka.

I wasn’t really on board at this time. Not so much a citizen of the *Continuum* community; more like a flying buttress, supporting it from the outside. (I’m over-generously credited with some proof reading in 1:1). The writing was on the wall,
though, already so early in the piece. The journal’s subtitle was still ‘An Australian Journal of the Media’. The Australian thematic was retained, but film was now simply one medium. And this was reflected in issue 1:2, ‘Film, TV and the Popular’ (produced with the assistance of the AFC, Murdoch and WACAE). John Fiske’s article was to herald the Viewers’ Liberation Movement. Sadly forgotten today, it is still perhaps worth revisiting. His final paragraph has resonances that could be kept in mind for us all now:

Far from being the agent of the dominant classes, it [mass-mediated popular art] is the prime site where the dominant have to recognise the insecurity of their power, where they have to encourage cultural difference with all the threat to their own position this implies.

I started to come more definitely on board as part of the production team with issue 2:1 which, interestingly enough, kept the cinematic emphasis but moved offshore, as it were. Tom and Brian edited 2:1: ‘Asian Cinema’. And this is where, for me, the going started to get tougher. This was the first time that we sent out the production of the page proofs to a local expert, Charlie McKenzie. Charlie lived in Northbridge and he had a serious command of DTP. We learned a great deal from him in the issues to come. He took us right up to 4:1 and set up a good template for the cover that could well be revisited: serious, academic and still typographically interesting.

It’s probably not common knowledge today but, back then, absolutely everything had to be done in-house. From 1:1, right through to 8:2, Tom and a small gang of postgraduate and other helpers, ran the journal in its entirety. We’d work up themes, invite guest editors (or else do it ourselves), receive submissions, send them out to referees, get authors to re-write, make corrections, etc., decide on the final running order, set the type from submitted floppy disks, have the original made on high g/sm paper, commission the cover (or else do it ourselves), take the whole thing over by dilapidated Ford Falcon to the printers in East Perth, collect cardboard boxes of copies, do the mail out to the subscription list (which we also kept) and sit back and wait.

For me, the typesetting was the most interesting part because it was newest to me. I’d never done it before and, as some back copies clearly show, I didn’t have much idea of the process. We started off by trying to run the thing through an early incarnation of Aldus Pagemaker for the Mac. Unfortunately, the Mac we had was sans-hard-disk. We spent most of our time feeding software and data disks into its (then-considered advanced) dual floppy drive. The process was excruciating to say the least. Despite all of this, we still managed to bring out our first book as such: Ian Douglas’s Film and Meaning. Ian had sadly passed away after near completion of his PhD and Horst Ruthrof edited the work into a book. By then, I was so fed up with the typesetting process that I did the whole thing in a DOS-based wordprocessing program. At the
time it looked professional. Today, it looks a mess. But the content is so good that it should see the light of day once again with a new editor.

With 3:1, we moved to a slightly new look. It was still a journal as such, with the volume and issue numbers on the spine. But Janusz Jusko had been brought in to make up a new look for the cover. He started with Charlie’s horizontal-line pattern (3:1) but set an artwork into the centre. By 3:2 the pattern had gone and the artwork remained. We were setting a course for 5:2; no journal name or number on the spine, artwork on the cover and a blatant attempt to make each issue look like book in its own right.

After the incredible successes of the Eric Michaels issue (3.2) and John Hartley’s ‘TV and...’ (4.2) — both sell-outs — it seemed to be time to acknowledge that, even though Tom had started with film as the theme, and this had been broadened to media more generally, we now needed spread even further. *Continuum* was a journal with an increasingly national coverage and its themes had now taken in not only film but performance, theory, the whole problematics of cultural space, and publishing. We needed to cease being a cottage industry and to approach national publishers. I tried this — with no success whatsoever. Australian publishers, at least at the time, refused to take on local journals because, in their words, ‘you need a stable of journals to be viable’.

So, we had to persist with internal processes of editing, production and distribution. And did so gladly, because we believed in a distinctly Australian journal of ‘Media and Culture’, as the subtitle now rendered it. Overlooking my own personal editorial flop (5:1 ‘Media/Discourse’), we then brought out Adrian Martin’s edited collection called ‘Film — Matters of Style’ (5.2) with fabulous over art by Maria Kozic. This is now a rare classic in its own right and much sought-after on Gary Gillard’s complete web archive of 1.1 to 8.2 <http://wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/>. My memory of editing this issue is limited to the following rather trivial observation. Adrian was the editor and he wanted to include work by Alain Masson which I duly co-translated with native French-speaker, Anne-Marie Metcalf. How did we sign the footnotes? AM (the editor?), AM (either of the translators?), AM (the author?). May such difficulties be visited on *Continuum* editors of the future!

Maybe it’s still *Continuum* because we all continued on under these circumstances until 1994. In fact, I have severe doubts that the journal would still be with us without that daily, nightly, joyful and serious physical effort that was its initial impetus: a genuine delight in bringing published media and cultural exchanges to those who happened to care.

My own care came in John Richardson’s edited volume ‘Photogenic Papers’ (6:2) where John let me have free rein to express my feelings along with my (less capable)
analytic side. It was a wonderful experience and I won’t forget it. It started with a presentation in what was our School’s long-forgotten preview room. I showed photographic slides of the fire in York Cathedral and talked to them via my own disaster of the time; all the way trying to say something about the very peculiar process of writing with light. If this shows the spirit of *Continuum*, then I shall be proud to have contributed in any way.

In the end, our in-house policy was beyond its use-by date. Things had moved on from DTP to newer modes of publishing. The journal simply had to go out to an international publishing house; or fold. After the successes of ‘Screening Cultural Studies’ (7:2) and (the sadly late) Nick Zurbrugg’s ‘Electronic Arts’ (8:1) — one of the hardest things ever typeset by a human being! — and the interestingly late re-wrapping of Tom’s controversial ‘Critical Multiculturalism’ (8:2), the stakes were too high for in-house any more.¹ The Murdoch team passed the journal on in several senses, not all of them happy, when it came to future dealings.

The irony, today, of course is that Tom’s original vision for the journal still stands now that *Continuum* has, as it were, migrated and taken on other agendas. Look back to the opening of this short piece and the description of *Continuum* there. Why should we not have a local journal concerned with (1) the history and practice of screen media in Australasia and Asia and (2) the connections between such media (particularly between film, TV, publishing, visual arts and exhibitionary sites)? Or a journal that promotes an interventionist strategy by announcing areas of work in cultural and screen studies in *Australia* that need to be covered, and then sets about covering these through its special issues? In this way the aim would be to help set the agenda for cultural and screen studies in Australia.

Perhaps it would just be too much work all over again.

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¹ How may people, I wonder, spotted the typo that led to the addition of a jacket to that issue?