



## Cultural Studies Review

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# The Final Issue Cultural Studies Review

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Looking back, it feels both that things deteriorated in ways which were unexpectedly rapid, and that keeping *UTS Review* and *Cultural Studies Review* alive always required persistence. Only a couple of years ago, proud of becoming a ‘Diamond’ Open Access e-journal published under a Creative Commons license we wrote to our Editorial Board members;

Generally, the Journal is going from strength to strength. We continue to publish two high-quality open-access issues per year featuring excellent essays, new writing and, thanks to Lee Wallace’s work over the last few years, superb reviews. The book series, CSR books, is set to publish another volume this year. Our readership continues to expand, as shown in the rise of our readership from 23,441 in 2012 to 92,951 in 2016. These figures do not include those readers (26,191 in 2016) who browse or read online without downloading a specific article. We’ve also recently received strong endorsement from SCOPUS accepting our inclusion in their abstract and citation database:

‘This is an impressive journal that appears to be in rude health, from the editorial policy to the production schedule and online access. Articles are being well-cited, which is an indication of the importance of the journal in its research field. For these reasons, it merits inclusion in SCOPUS.’

But a brief glance over the ‘publication’ credits at the end of this introduction will remind you that the Journal has had four different publishers in a quarter of a century and one of us can recall a couple of occasions when funds from their personal research account were siphoned off by a School Manager impatient with the Journal’s account heading deeper into debt.

The immediate causes for this being the final issue of *Cultural Studies Review* are clear enough. For some time now our financial position has become increasingly unviable as most of the institutions that have traditionally provided financial support have been unable or unwilling to continue to do so. Over the last few years, we have lost the financial support of the University of Technology (UTS) Humanities and Social Sciences, Curtin University and Sydney University. That left only the School of Culture and Communication at The University of Melbourne and the Faculty of Law at UTS as our current financial backers. Because that funding is not

sufficient, over the last little while, we sought financial support from Western Sydney University, the University of Western Australia, the University of Queensland, The University of Wollongong and a prestigious university in our region. Despite strong endorsement from Editorial Board members at those institutions, support for which we're very grateful, we have not been able to secure adequate, new sources of financial support. We also pursued the option of continuing to publish as an Open Access journal but with a North American university press but, again, we were unable to secure the funds necessary to guarantee such an arrangement. Failing those options, it seemed to us that the only alternatives were either to continue to publish without adequate financial support or to take the Journal to a commercial publisher. We have decided to pursue neither of those options.

It would, no doubt, have been possible to continue to publish the Journal without the level of financial support that we have enjoyed for the last 15 years or so. However, those funds have enabled us to employ a succession of outstanding managing editors who have ensured that ours has been a high-quality and professionally edited journal well-connected to a vital community of scholars through board membership, advice, submissions, refereeing and a growing readership. Without that support, the editorial work falling to the academic editors would have been punishing, particularly as editing a journal is rarely seen as essential work or even an officially recognised aspect of academic workloads. Perhaps we, as the current editors, could have done this but, in our view the Journal also needs a sustained editorial reinvigoration. We were not willing to hand over the reins of *Cultural Studies Review* to new editors if all we could offer them was a journal in a state of penury or reliant on Kickstarter-type generosity. The option of moving the Journal away from Open Access to a paywalled and/or for-profit publisher was equally unattractive to us as that publishing model is clearly on the way out.

Our inability to secure a future for *Cultural Studies Review* is personally disappointing for both of us. Yet we're also aware of the factors in the higher-education sector which have exacerbated our predicament. It has been a source of enormous frustration to us that while high-quality journal articles continue to be one of the key measures of academic productivity and success, **how** high-quality journal articles are funded is poorly understood by far too many in the humanities and social sciences. By contrast, our colleagues in medicine and the sciences have engaged much more fully with the political economy of journal publishing. They have driven the move away from the small coterie of for-profit academic-journal publishers, a move that is now being bolstered by dynamic Open Access initiatives and public research-funding agencies worldwide insisting that they will not pay twice for research. Meanwhile academics in the humanities and social sciences often believe that they do not pay for journal publication because the costs are not distributed at the department or program level but hidden in central library budgets.

These issues are part of a complex raft of changes in the publishing eco-system. As we've been working on this issue, 'major changes' to presses of the University of Western Australia and Stanford University have been foreshadowed. At UWA Press, the changes mean that current staff, including the outstanding Director Terri-ann White, have been deemed 'surplus to requirements', while at Stanford it was proposed that a very modest subsidy be withdrawn. In both cases it seems as if the decision have been initiated by people who have either, never known or have forgotten what universities are for. However, turning to the very first editorial of *The UTS Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1995, Meaghan Morris and Stephen Muecke remind us that the vicissitudes of publishing are not of recent invention:

Despite the growing use of 'cultural studies' as a handy advertising slogan for diverse curricular reforms, the fact is that there are fewer places for those practitioners to publish now than there were ten years ago. It is becoming hard even for established writers to

publish their serious work in this country; it is very hard for young academics to get a start ... Australia is not the only country where writers working in English face these problems ... only the US now has a domestic market large enough to sustain and export what would elsewhere be deemed parochial ... In the past, journals have often managed to find ways around the blockages and the scrupulous dullness that afflict Australian publishing. Even to initiate a journal at the moment may be a quixotic gesture. pp. 1—2.

We also think that there is something about the ‘Australian-ness’ of *Cultural Studies Review* that is in mix here. When we were in the process of exploring publishing options with a US university press, that press commissioned two reports on the Journal. When they came back, one was very positive, the other, not so much but it did include the following pearls;

The most recent issue ... exemplifies the strengths and weaknesses of the journal ... I think the journal is the Meghan [sic] Morris Motel. It has all the benefits of Morris’ iconic article, the openings to popular and working class [sic] culture, to being aslant [sic] to convention and authority, but also some of the limits. This is a very Astralian journal—very, very local even in its efforts to reach outwards. If I want to know what Australians are thinking about things, I would consult it. But in many ways it feels like a different planet than my own and I don’t think I would read it regularly ... This is an Australian journal. I had to sit down and ask myself, as someone who has run a Cultural Studies program, who considers herself to be in the field, what journals do I read regularly? ... What I don’t do is read regularly work in the journals that claim to offer research from cultural studies as a distinct field ... The question ... is what value there might be in bringing on a journal that is so closely connected to Australian scholars/writers (and presumably readers). Australia is a big country and there are really smart and interesting people who work there. But the journal has a very Australian profile.

The myopic arrogance of such an account is the uniquely parochial preserve of (some) American academics who would no doubt chastise the activists on the streets of Hong Kong and Beirut as indulging in very, very local activity of very, very limited value. The less we have to engage with such people, the better. Yet that approach doesn’t really prepare us for thinking about the ways in which national and international frames are valued within the sector, or the consequences of the internationalisation of Australian universities having been driven by such narrowly economic and opportunistic values, nor even for why professors of Australian literature might be important.

More broadly, there are, quite clearly, significant changes in the field of Australian cultural studies that have contributed to the Journal’s demise. This is not the only initiative of a ‘pioneering generation’ that has come to an end. While the intellectual creativity of cultural studies work in Australia continues apace, it’s more dispersed than it once was, finding new homes not only in those cognate fields where cultural studies has long had a presence but in science studies, in environmental studies, in Indigenous and other studies. While graduate and undergraduate students still flock to cultural studies subjects, programs and departments remain few in number. And those of us who are in continuing positions and successful in securing external grants in the field, acknowledge that there has been a major shift toward sessional rather than continuing work becoming the medium-term norm for many graduates and early career researchers.

This is a partial account of scholarly terrain that is both variable and varied. Still, it enables us to say that the initiation of this Journal was not quixotic. For a quarter of a century The *UTS Review/Cultural Studies Review* has recorded, reviewed, provoked, broken new ground and consolidated

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thinking across the broad cultural studies field. We believe that the Journal has pushed our academic colleagues to understand there is indeed an intellectual home for those who want to write the poetics of their work beyond academic formulae and a space to promulgate a politics of the extraordinary ordinary. Let us hope that we continue to see creative responses to these challenging topographies, perhaps in the space opened-up by the demise of *Cultural Studies Review*.

The contents of this final edition are as rich as ever; indeed, we are going out with a bumper issue. We have two general essays addressing modes of life in the contemporary world. Jamie Wang gathers together a set of more-than-human players to consider how ideas of public transport, 'nature' and the bridges between work in Singapore while Jocelyn Sakal Froese and Cameron Greensmith reconsider some of the organising discourses of youth suicide through an examination of popular texts. There are three special sections; papers presented at the Twentieth Anniversary Colloquium of the Communications and Cultural Studies Section of the Australian Academy of the Humanities (which is indeed the longest titled section we have had), Elemental Anthropocene and Cultural Review. We ask you to turn to Tony Bennett's excellent overview of the colloquium and Timothy Neale, Alex Zahara and Will Smith's nuanced introduction to elementary thinking within the Anthropocene. In 'Culture Review' you will find our own effort to gather diverse scholars and students from our board and from the larger cultural studies community as not only a showing of the persistence and diversity of cultural studies but also some of the nuanced thinking and formal experimentation of that that have been particularly encouraged by this Journal.

Our reviews are as excellent as ever; the queer romp through sexual celebrity and love is neatly complemented by an examination of the film archive of 'Dogs in Space'.

Our frustrations aside we would wish to make of this moment a sea of thanks to each of you and the many who have enabled the Journal to be a leading light in cultural studies thinking and writing. We shout out our respect for Lee Wallace who took our standards of book reviewing to new heights and acknowledge the work of Alex Dane, the last in fine line of Managing Editors who have helped sustain our high editorial standards. And before a closing note, some indulgent back slapping. Katrina would like to acknowledge and thank her co-editor Chris Healy. We are both serial offenders as editors, having worked with others and returned for more. In the face of institutional and personal challenges, Chris has been a source of support for both the journal and for me personally. His intellectual imagination and verve are so delightfully complemented by a sense of the absurd—who else would choose Perpetua as the font for a draft of a final editorial—and a proper idea of when we should get cranky. Chris would like to thank his co-editor, Katrina Schlunke. Katrina's intellectual creativity is a unique departure from the constraints of conformity, her every engagement with scholarship—and with all forms of life—is rooted in wonder, warm integrity and joy. I have adored the professional and personal connections with Katrina granted by our work on this Journal.

Finally, we would like to thank you, the readers and writers who have sustained this Journal. Editing, like much of teaching and supervising in academia, is a privilege both in the contemporary sense of 'checking your ...' and in the older sense of an honour. While we both would have written more and had more time to spend with our loved ones had we not edited *Cultural Studies Review*, we would also not have met you, your prose, your ideas and enthusiasm, your ways of rendering the world both strange and intelligible. For those privileges and for what comes next we say,

Thanks in anticipation,

Chris Healy & Katrina Schlunke

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 Melbourne University Publishing Ltd (Carlton Vic)  
 VOL. 8 NO. 1 2002 – VOL. 15 NO. 2 2009  
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#### CSR Books Series

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Thanks to Hugo Muecke for our cover image.

We hope that this Journal will continue, for some time at least, to be archived here at UTS ePress.'



The only existing image of all of the editors of *The UTS Review/Cultural Studies Review* (L to R): Stephen Muecke, Meaghan Morris, John Frow, Katrina Schlunke and Chris Healy, December 2012