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# Letter from the Editors

**By Amber Shields and Eileen Rositzka**

One thing that we have enjoyed while working on *Frames* is the collaborative venues that a small online publication has allowed us to pursue. With no set agenda and a flexible frame of reference that is not hindered by traditions but is rather adept to exploring new ideas, we have had the opportunity to change between issues and be open to working with contributors who have approached us with ideas of subjects they would like to explore. This issue of *Frames* is one such example, and we could not go any further in our introduction letter without thanking Austin Fisher and Iain Robert Smith for their inspiring ideas and hard work that played a large part in the production of the issue.

Looking back, we saw how the act of collaboration had come to influence the shape of this issue in unforeseeable ways, reflecting not only its origins but its theme. Talking about labels cannot be a lone venture, as the labels we use are created and shaped by a larger collective that willingly or unwillingly perpetuates and yet also changes them through discourse. This is a process we saw enacted through the “Roundtable on Transnational Cinema” as compiled by Fisher and Smith, in which they questioned the use of the term “transnational” and invited others to contribute to this discussion. The dialogue, we can happily say, was as illuminating as it was thought-provoking: In their individual takes on the validity and definition of the label “transnational cinema”, ten international scholars largely agreed on the fact that fixing a core essence of the term would be counterproductive given its theoretical and practical potential. As a fruitful approach, “transnational” characterizes a global system of film production, distribution and reception as much as it influences and enhances teaching and academic thinking. It facilitates the conception of film as a cross-cultural medium, and of academia as its institutional agent in communicating and sharing experiences across borders—a strong point made by Dina Iordanova in her essay “Choosing the Transnational”. Reading through these diverse responses, the “transnational” label became not a closing off of dialogue imposed by rigid definitions, but rather a point of exchange that to us reflects not only the productions that fall under this label, but cinema in general as a collaborative art.

An endeavour similar to Smith and Fisher’s has been made with Dennis Hanlon’s collaborative piece, “Labelling a Shot”, for which he asked colleagues and students to come up with a name and a short definition for a specific type of film shot. What Hanlon’s experimental project shows is

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that anyone's attempt to describe a cinematic phenomenon within an academic framework both challenges and affirms their respective theoretical and methodological backgrounds. And what it exposes is the diversity of analytical perspectives as well as the extent to which we as media scholars are bound to existing theorems, even when we want to redefine or negate them. Not only does this concern the study of film but also the intrinsic connections between popular culture and media-political strategies: As Geli Mademli points out in her POV article, public discourse and media coverage of Greece's recent economic crisis have led to the questionable reputation of contemporary Greek cinema as a so-called "weird wave", a cinema of crisis.

Working *against* a label inevitably implies working *with* and *through* it—a situation artist and scholar Lynne Cameron also finds herself in, as she explains in her contribution on "the spaces between". Here she makes the point that a shift in perspective can enable us to see the unlabelled, negative spaces that in turn shape the labels we use. As such established categories, terms, and words lose their power, while the new labels we use to undo the old ones can develop a dynamic, positive force.

Through these discussions, we found this issue becoming one not just about labels, and less so about breaking them, but more about how and where they are created, discussed, and transformed. Above all, we were interested in the methods that inspire the conversation about terms we take for granted, using or dismissing them in our everyday contexts but no longer giving the time to reflect on the labels themselves and the changes happening within and around them.

This provoked new reflections for our team as we worked on this issue; not only did we debate how to discuss this topic, a point our contributors graciously answered themselves through their propositions of collaborative and POV pieces, but we also went through a period of self-reflection about our own label of *Frames*. As a young, free, online journal run by a group of enthusiastic PhD students, we have all the possibilities to explore new avenues of communication that this format can offer us. And yet at times we seem to hinder ourselves by seeking to fit into the recognized labels of the academic universe that we are a part of yet still apart from.

Perhaps the proposed title of our issue, "Breaking Labels", reflected our own frustration in feeling both the urge to fit into labels of what an academic journal should be and at the same time break those to find something new. And what we have found in our tenure as editors is that this impetus to do something new is perhaps the best prospect for our journal and for our hopes that it becomes a creative space where we can explore rather than follow. Which, in other words, is where we take a bow

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and entrust our journal to equally determined successors, but not without thanking our colleagues for their passionate work and support in the past two years, and not without expressing our gratitude to the Department of Film Studies at St Andrews for encouraging our bold ambitions as they grew with *Frames* (and so did we).

We do not know in what direction the journal will go, or what it will look like when we leave (alas, realizations of what one should do in a situation always seem to come at the end when there is finally time to pause and look back), but we are looking to open ourselves up to further opportunities of collaboration and critical inquiry—One pursuit we would like to follow is working with institutions within and beyond academia; responding in our own way to what we see as an interesting development in the increase of PhDs with practical components especially in the field of media and the arts. As changes like these bring about new conversations in academia, we hope to be at the forefront of these dialogues, bringing together scholars, practitioners, and students. Who knows if these hopes will be realized, but in order to make an omelette, one must break a few labels.