

EDITORIAL

In *Junctures* 1, Annemarie Jutel described the mission of this journal as seeking to establish “conversations and collaborations between people who do not necessarily already interact.” Peter Stearns confirmed the importance of this undertaking through his own discussion of interdisciplinarity and its role in the furthering of knowledge. Thus far, however, contributions to the journal seem to be multi-disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary, although the editors have uncovered “diagonal axes”¹ in both issues. Jutel identified “weight” and “otherness” as common sub-thematic threads within the first issue devoted to the body. This time around, with the second issue, I find traces of an “inter-semiotic”², which Julia Kristeva’s “Institutional Interdisciplinarity in Theory and in Practice”, published in 1998 as an interview with Alexia Defert in editors Alex Coles’ and Defert’s *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity*³, enables me to point out.

Kristeva speaks lyrically about being at the crossroads between disciplines, in “the very process of thinking caught in its unfolding”.⁴ But, she also points out that interdisciplinarity can be a “site where expressions of resistance are latent ...as specialists are often too protective of their own prerogatives”; or conversely, that it can become dangerous and even caricatural when people “think their specialization is interdisciplinarity itself, which is tantamount to saying that they have a limited amount of knowledge of various domains and only fragmentary competences!”⁵ She advocates for an interdisciplinarity which can avoid these extremes in four related ways:

Research should come from the base of a pyramid and work its way up, with researchers finding their own connections within their everyday practices, meeting with one another to learn “how to discuss both their competencies and the outcome of their interaction, and therefore contributing to the exposure of the risks of interdisciplinary practice.”⁶ *Junctures* strives for this ‘bottom-up’ trajectory by bringing researchers together and by inviting, amongst others, emergent researchers to engage with its themes.

Kristeva also argues for an interdisciplinarity which does not become reductive and thereby lose “scope” and “full dimension”.⁷ In this issue of *Junctures*, arguments for and through complexity theory (Cubitt); dynamical systems theory (Araújo & Davids); an acknowledgement of the ‘many’ and the ‘multitude’ sacrificed for the sake of industry (Dolan); an argument against rigid systems (Rewi); and strategies for countering systemic hegemony in discourses of technocracy (Williamson), form diagonal axes across contributions by researchers from divergent disciplines (Screen & Media Studies; Human Kinetics & Physical Education; Rhetoric & Creative Writing; Maōri Studies; and Information Technology).

The necessity “to see representation itself, but also the necessity to see that which is not represented”⁸ constitutes another register of Kristeva’s argument in relation to interdisciplinarity. In this issue of *Junctures*, painter Simon Ingram considers German systems

theorist Niklas Luhmann's notion of "second order observing", i.e. "that if an observer is to make observations that in any way 'see' the world – as opposed to imposing an *a priori* observational structure on the world – they must take into account the ways in which they see. This means the observing of observations...".⁹ In a book review included in this issue, photographer Di Halstead writes: "Our training to see the picturesque and the scenic as systems of representation in the landscape has determined the way we view the land...[and has made us aware of the] uses of the scenic and picturesque to sell, to colonise and commodify our land."

Kristeva emphasises the importance of integration between theory and practice: "The prime material must always be returned to; it must not be forgotten in favour of theory; on the contrary it must be enriched and explained in an unprecedented manner in order to take the theoretical text somewhere new...I value concrete experience."¹⁰ In this issue of *Junctures*, researchers from a variety of disciplines argue with Kristeva for engagement with "dimensions and materiality" (Cubitt from Screen and Media Studies); "tactile and textural experience" (Thompson from textile practice); and Margo Barton writes: "As a milliner I...love to create millinery that is real, to steam and stretch, to stiffen and wire, to use felt, straw, feathers and plastic"; while Ingram explores how painter Robert "Ryman's work manages to show us the ways in which things 'are things'; the ways a thing, in this case a painting became itself (the 'thing-ed-ness' of a thing)."

Junctures not only invites submissions from all disciplines but also engagement with and discussion concerning interdisciplinarity itself. It agrees with Steven D. Brown where he quotes Michel Serres and Bruno Latour and writes: "Reason is to be found across the entire fabric of the modern world: 'In a certain way reason is, of all things in the world, the most equally distributed. No domain can have a monopoly of reason, except via abuse.'¹¹ We find reason by looking to local practices, and particularly local languages. Every language has its own stockpile of wisdom. The problem is not the overcoming of such wisdom by a more superior form of...reason, but rather of learning how to 'speak all languages' such that one may develop a 'tolerant ethics, of third-instruction, a harmonious middle/milieu, a daughter of two banks, of scientific culture and of knowledge culled from the humanities, of expert erudition and of artistic narrative'."¹² *

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* Thank you to colleague Bridie Lonie for bringing this text to my attention.

- 1 Julia Kristeva uses this phrase repeatedly to discuss dynamic interaction between theory and practice and between disciplines (see endnote 3 for the full reference).
- 2 Kristeva argues for a grounded inter-semiotic in the making, a bridging between sets of signs, “as opposed to some kind of Esperanto, or some kind of abstract language originating from nowhere”, endnote 3, 16.
- 3 Alexia Defert’s interview with Julia Kristeva is published as “Institutional Interdisciplinarity in Theory and in Practice”, in A Coles and A Defert (eds), *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity*, (“de-, dis-, ex” , 2, London: Black Dog, 1998), 3-21.
- 4 Ibid., 3.
- 5 Ibid., 6.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., 6, 19, 20.
- 8 Ibid., 20.
- 9 N Luhmann, “The Modernity of Science”, in “Special Issue on Niklas Luhmann”, *New German Critique*, 61, Winter 1994, 28.
- 10 Kristeva, 9.
- 11 S D Brown, “Michel Serres: Science, Translation and the Logic of the Parasite”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 19 (3), 2002: 9, quoting M Serres and B Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time*, trans. R Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 112.
- 12 Brown quoting M Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*, trans. S F Glaser and W Paulsen (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1991), 164-65.