22: multi-

November 2021-2022

Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue is a multidisciplinary academic journal founded in 2003 as a forum for trans-disciplinary discussion, analysis, and critique. *Junctures* is published by Otago Polytechnic Press. Otago Polytechnic Ltd is a subsidiary of Te Pūkenga - New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology.

Junctures encourages discussion across boundaries, whether these are disciplinary, geographic, cultural, social or economic. *Junctures* embraces the long established fields of the humanities, arts, science, law, medicine and philosophy, as well as engaging with the challenges of more recent disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. Each issue of *Junctures* is organised as a site of encounter around a theme. This allows us to highlight the resonances and disturbances of dialogue. With New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region as a backdrop, but not its only stage, *Junctures* seeks to address the matters which concern us all as we negotiate the contemporary environment.

Junctures is fully blind peer reviewed and catalogued on the Ulrichs Periodicals OneSearch directory, EBSCO Academic Search, and Thomson Reuters databases: Academic OneFile, Literature Resource Center and Expanded Academic.

ISSN: 1176-5119 (print)

ISSN: 1179-8912 (online)

Send items for review to:
Junctures Editor: junctures@op.ac.nz

Editor: Federico Freschi and Ron Bull
Editorial Assistant: Pam McKinlay
Design and Typesetting: Joanna Wernham
Printing: Dunedin Print, Dunedin

Cover Image:
Zhi Zulu, The Spiritual Adventures of Nandipha: Protector of the Zulu Kingdom, 2019.
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FEDERICO FRESCHI

Editorial: 'multi-'

After a hiatus caused by the successive lockdowns of the Covid pandemic in 2020, *Junctures* 22 returns with a full issue that amply lives up to the journal's mission of encouraging discussion across boundaries, whether disciplinary, geographic, cultural, social, or economic. The call for submissions invited contributors to reflect on how the notion of 'multi-' could prompt the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to reveal new truths that are hidden in plain sight, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions. This invitation was prompted by the assertion that as the world around us becomes increasingly complex and as the tensions between technological advancement and environmental degradation increase, solutions for a sustainable future are only going to be found through collaborative approaches that are open to paradigms and knowledge systems that are other than those that have sustained the status quo.

As may be expected from such a wide-ranging theme, the call yielded critical reflections on various forms of creative practice, to discussions of cultural identity, to the interface between art and science, as well as the role of multidisciplinary science in geopolitics. The geographic scope of the contributions covers much of the globe, from Aotearoa New Zealand to Canada, South Africa, Malaysia, and the Transpacific region more generally.

Bruce Russell's *"I contain multi-tudes" – a meditation on the need for rough and rowdy ways"* uses Bob Dylan's lyrics as a point of departure to set up a radical argument for an approach to creative practice that embraces failure and mis-competence as alternate strategies for finding meaning that is multi-versed as opposed to binary. In keeping with the notion of 'rough and rowdy' Russell suggests alternatives to conventional methods of analysis, arguing for multiple simultaneous viewpoints that suggest a multiplicity of interpretive possibilities. As he puts it, by adopting a multi-versed approach, he has "done apparently impossible things simply by refusing to think of them as impossible."

Also focusing on creative practice, Maggie Buxton's *"Portals, parallel realities and transdisciplinary place practice"* argues for multi-dimensional investigation and inter-disciplinary research and practice. Proceeding from a reflective, autoethnographic approach to her own creative practice, Buxton addresses the key theme of interdisciplinary study and arts and ecological responsibility. She notes that much her practice has "involved working at flax-roots level with mana whenua in Aotearoa (and indigenous peoples in other nations)" that sit outside of traditional academic settings. As such, her approach is one of multidimensional transdisciplinarity, operating at a level of community that is "unconfined by disciplinary or faculty boundaries." Drawing on her own projects, she argues that such an approach enables productive ways of opening portals to parallel realities and new points of view.

Extending this view of multiple knowledges in enabling an approach to ecological challenges, Joe Citizen's *"Navigating knowledge frameworks at the intercultural interface"* draws on collaborative research to reflect on the intersections of knowledge between Western science and mātauranga Māori (Māori worldview and perspectives). Citizen counterposes rationalist Western ontological and epistemological traditions with the relational ontology and epistemology of Indigenous Knowledge systems and worldview. He shows how these positions lead to different goals and understanding of what is significant in research, and links this to actual research with a rōpū (collective) working on knowledge about Te Maramataka (the Māori lunar calendar). Such an approach, he argues, "enables a better understanding of how mātauranga Māori is location-specific, complex, and interwoven with te taiao [the earth or natural world], and therefore has much to offer Western science in learning how to be more ecocentric rather than humancentric."

In a further exploration of the value of a multidisciplinary approach to ecological crisis, Pam McKinlay's *"Transdisciplinarity in the Dunedin Art and Science Project"* gives an account of an ongoing set of collaborations, beginning in 2013, between artists and scientists from the Dunedin School of Art and the University of Otago aimed at establishing positive activism around climate emergency. She shows how this multidisciplinary approach displaces didactic protest with a more successful opening of the conversation through an affective connection and engagement with human and non-human subjects. The resultant 'hybrid space' enables sensory encounters that enable an affective relationship with the hard facts of data measurement and the lived experience of communities. "For those that are overwhelmed with the sense that we are standing on a precipice," she argues, "art has a certain capacity to engage with the affect of climate change, that is, the embodied experiences of uncertainty, fear and hope."

Working within an Indigenous Knowledge framework in a student-centred project that spans Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada, Caroline McCaw and Louise St Pierre's *"Attentive and appreciative: designers connecting with more-than-human beings"* extends the notion of the multiverse to include the 'more-than-human world'. The article describes how students, working with local Māori and First Nation cultural advisors in Dunedin and Vancouver respectively, were challenged to become advocates for another (non-human) being by drawing upon multiple frames to learn about their being and in so doing conceive of possible different relationships. The outcomes were a variety of prototypes, designed to share this advocacy as experiences for others, and demonstrated "an extraordinary amount of humility, and a re-setting of presumed hierarchies. … [bringing] humans into the place, into an authentic relationship, one which is non-extractive and compassionate."

In *"Negotiating different worlds and diverse cultural legacies through applied creative practice in a situated learning project: Hlakanyana 2022"* Sarah Roberts also reflects on a multidisciplinary theatre design projects for students that deals with the complexities and contradictions of multiculturalism in post-apartheid South Africa. From the perspective of a participant observer, she contextualizes the multiple challenges confronting a diverse group of students from various design disciplines in arriving at a design concept and presentation for a new play *Hlakanyana*, which was based on the eponymous trickster of Nguni folklore. She describes the abundant multiplicities of the project and shows how designing the production required dealing with issues of cultural identity along with tensions between tradition and innovation. Amongst other positive outcomes of the multidisciplinary approach, she notes that, "The need to master an unfamiliar multi-modal challenge instilled [in the students] an appreciation of developing attentive listening skills and debate."

Pfunzo Sidogi's *"Multi-histories: Creative and narrative plurality in graphic novels exploring indigenous histories"* contrasts the approaches to the telling of the stories of the Zulu heroes King Shaka and his mother Queen Nandipha by two graphic novelists, Luke W Molver, a white male, and Zinhle (Zhi) Zulu, a black female. Using the notion of multiple histories, he argues that the authors' subjectivities apparent in the retelling in graphic form of these Zulu stories from "one of southern Africa's most storied indigenous nations" are "poignant artistic exemplars of how indigenous histories should always be re-told in the plural." Interpreting them through the lens of multi-history and multi-subjectivity ultimately allows graphic novels to "display a creative sincerity and commitment to multi-African histories and futures that transcend the classifications of gender and race."

In *"The soul of the masks: a journey in the Mah Meri indigenous carvings,"* Delas Santano and Harold Thwaites explore a multimodal approach to research undertaken in the digital archiving of traditional wood carvings amongst the Mah Meri communities in Malaysia. In discussing the intersection of digital technologies with the transmission of indigenous cultures in this particular community, Santano and Thwaites offer a perspective on how multimedia, digital technologies and techniques may support the retention of cultural practices.

Sabine Chaouche's *"Live Performance as a Multiverse: from the present moment to the transverse effect"* shifts the discussion to the realm of performance practice in theatre, positioning the actor as a creative participant in the complex intercourse of the theatre world. Chaouche argues that as a construct, performance is best negotiated with an evolving understanding of 'multi-' – particularly the notion of the multiverse – at the forefront. The multiverse, she argues, "is at play when art mobilises individuals working together towards a same goal: the performance of the play in a specific place, at a specific time and for a certain duration." She suggests further that a closer understanding of this multiverse system, how it operates in the context of performance and its cross-cutting effects can contribute to a better understanding "of cognitive functions and states of consciousness, and new philosophical views on the self, the phenomenology of acting and the philosophy of the mind."

While Tony McCaffrey's *"Different Light Theatre: multimodal practices in learning disabled theatre"* also deals with theatre practice, in this article the focus is on the ways in which multimodal approaches are used in the creation of self-devised performances produced by Different Light Theatre, a long-running company of learning-disabled artists in Christchurch, New Zealand. McCaffrey situates his

discussion within the experiences of the company members, calling attention to the ways in which they deal with the ableist bias of public spaces and institutions. At the same time, he prompts us to consider the implicit power dynamics of non-disabled facilitators working with learning-disabled artists. He notes that in engaging with different modes of performance, "the performers themselves changed the goalposts in myriad practical, technical, material, unimagined, and imaginative ways, shifting the paradigms, and sending us, the non-disabled facilitators, back to the drawing board to reconfigure what we collectively understood as theatre and as the assemblage that constituted the group." The multimodal approach that underscores the company's mode of working ultimately generates fundamental questions "about what is meant by ability, capacity, and virtuosity that have far-reaching implications for theatre and arts practice and research."

Leo Chu's *"Between democracy and technocracy: ecology as multidisciplinary science in the Transpacific Cold War"* concludes the journal and shifts the discussion of 'multi-' to the realm of ecology and geopolitics. From an overview of significant players in the development of ecological scientific work during the Cold War period of the latter half of the twentieth century, Chu moves to a discussion of technocratic approaches to ecological science and how these shifted from the United States to Southeast Asia. He shows how multidisciplinary approaches to ecology developed in parts of Southeast Asia and concludes that although such approaches are not without their problems – not least being apolitical, co-opted by multinationals and blind to structural effects on ecologies and communities – an inquiry into "the politics of apolitical ecology might also help to rediscover a collective imagination for alternative social and environmental relationships."

Individually, and in different ways, these essays provide compelling and provocative insights into the complexities, contradictions and coherences that emerge when we consider the possibilities of 'multi-'. Collectively, they invite us to view their core debates through a multiplicity of lenses, making timely and provocative contributions to rethinking the epistemological boundaries of disciplinarity.

Federico Freschi is Professor and Head of College Te Maru Pūmanawa | Creative Practice & Enterprise at the Otago Polytechnic.