Rhizomes
# Table of Contents

Introduction ..................................................................................................... vii  
Nathalie Ramière and Rachel Varshney

**Keynote Addresses**

Interdisciplinarity in Rhizome Minor: On Avoiding *Rigor Mortis* through a Rigorous Approach to Jazz, Metal, Wasps, Orchids and Other Strange Couplings  
Dr Greg Hainge ....................................................................................................2

Interdisciplinarity and Connecting Research to the “Real World”  
Dr Kayoko Hashimoto .......................................................................................13

**Part I: Rethinking Dichotomies**

Colliding Languages: Student Representations of L1 Use in Foreign Language Assessment  
Rachel Varshney ................................................................................................18

Violence versus Silence: Symbiosis and Exploding Binaries in *Hana-Bi*  
Luke Stickels ......................................................................................................35

**Part II: Promoting the Periphery**

They’re Not Hidden Dragons: Women in the Chinese Film Industry, 1925-1978  
Lara Vanderstaay ...............................................................................................52

A Postmodern Analysis of Dating Manuals for Heterosexual Women  
Yvette Rowe ........................................................................................................65

Disguised as “One of the Guys”? The Contribution of Terri Clark to an American Country Music Women’s Tradition  
Carol Wical ........................................................................................................80
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Writing Homeland, Writing New Aboriginality in Taiwanese Aboriginal Literature  
Shuhwa Shirley Wu ...........................................................................................98

## Part III: Highlighting Points of Connectivity

Yanagi Sōetsu and Korean Material Culture: Towards a Postcolonialist Reading  
Penny Bailey ....................................................................................................118

The Tree of Life Motif as Renaissance Cultural Rhizome: An Interdisciplinary Mapping of Arboreal Imagery in Biblical Text, Early European Visual Culture and Dramatic Text  
(Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*)  
Victoria Bladen .................................................................133

Code-Switching in Islamic Religious Discourse: A Sociolinguistic Approach  
Djoko Susanto .........................................................................................155

## Part IV: Recreating and Transforming

The Invention and Development of 她 (Feminine ta) and 它/牠 (Neuter ta) as Third-Person Pronouns in Modern Written Chinese: The Europeanised Chinese Grammar Revisited  
Clara Ho Yan Chan ................................................................................178

Cinema: A “Thing” of Transformation  
Julie Guihot..............................................................................................195

Crossing the Great Divide: Rooting Out East and West  
Roslyn Joy Ricci ......................................................................................212

Contributors .....................................................................................................231

Index ................................................................................................................234
INTRODUCTION

The essays presented in this volume reflect the diversity and creativity of research projects currently underway in the areas of language and culture studies in Australia (as well as in other parts of the world). It provides, more particularly, a forum for interdisciplinary discussion and reveals varied approaches to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary work within the Humanities and Social Sciences—an innovative research paradigm that is increasingly recognised by the academic community.

The articles in this collection originate from presentations given at the conference held on 12 February 2005 at the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Queensland, Australia. This conference, which provided early career researchers with opportunities for exchange, brought together postgraduate students and academics from a variety of disciplines in universities across Australia and beyond, with a shared interest in languages and cultures.

Although the research projects on which the papers are based are at varying stages of progress, the richness and originality of the ideas contained therein demonstrate the dynamic nature of interdisciplinary work being currently undertaken in language and culture studies.

The rhizome

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb ‘to be,’ but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and…and…and’. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 25)

In order to emphasise the principles of non-hierarchical connectivity across the broad spectrum of disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences, Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “the rhizome” was chosen as a metaphor for multi- and interdisciplinarity. Just as a rhizomic plant grows from multiple roots and offshoots extending in all directions, interdisciplinary work is constantly redefining its structure and proposes new and original ways of carrying out research—it is “multilinear in organisation,” as Dr Greg Hainge puts it in his keynote speech included in this volume. As the conference intended to showcase research within the fields of languages, literatures and cultures,
participants were encouraged to submit papers exploring ways in which interdisciplinary analysis might be conducted by drawing on concepts and methodologies from areas such as art, gender, genre, history, media, language, literature, translation, amongst many others.

“Multidisciplinarity” and “interdisciplinarity” may be considered by some as the latest “buzzwords” of academic discourse, likely to sink back into oblivion as soon as the next “fashionable” concept appears. It is our belief, however, that these terms signal an important and tangible evolution of the way that academic research is undertaken in the new millennium: dominant disciplinary organisation is challenged as issues falling across several disciplines become the focus of interest and can only be examined in a truly collaborative framework. This research paradigm aims to subvert “mainstream” approaches, promote “the periphery”, rethink accepted models, as well as propose more complex frameworks and methodologies. In our view, this volume offers a snapshot of the current state of interdisciplinary research in language studies, revealing its richness, diversity and innovative nature.

Keynote speakers

The keynote speakers for the conference were chosen amongst the current staff at the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. Dr Greg Hainge, Head of the French Program, and Dr Kayoko Hashimoto, Lecturer in Japanese, were selected because of their commitment to interdisciplinary approaches in their own research.

Dr Hainge’s doctoral research used Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical framework to examine connectivities between various issues in Céline’s work (Dr Hainge has published, in particular, a monograph entitled Capitalism and Schizophrenia in the Later Novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline: D’un ... l’autre (2001)). His current research also explores rhizomatic structures found at the margins of traditional academic research: conceptions of the body, pop and experimental music, cultural manifestations of noise, etc. In the paper included in this volume, Dr Hainge adopts a self-reflective approach to academic writing practices in an attempt to shed an original light on the doctoral process and the necessity of a rigorous academic method. The article uses, in particular, the concept of the rhizome to look into the nature of true “interdisciplinary” approaches, questioning the assumption that all interdisciplinary work is necessarily “rhizomatic” by nature. Dr Hainge draws examples from his current research on experimental musical forms to explore the extent to which these might be qualified as properly rhizomatic.
In her doctoral dissertation, Dr Hashimoto examined the influence of Japanese government policies on the teaching of English as a foreign language and used feminist theories to analyse the mechanism of power framing international language teaching in Japan. Her paper featured in this volume takes a different approach to the traditional keynote address and reflects a desire to provide postgraduate students with pragmatic advice about conducting research within an academic setting. The article highlights the importance of linking research to real-world experiences and the significance of maintaining enthusiasm throughout the life of the project. Dr Hashimoto’s current research, which examines the intersection of language policies, education systems, national and individual identities, and society, is also interdisciplinary in nature. Moreover, her experience within a number of different research settings (in particular, the Australian Defence Force School of Languages in Melbourne) suggests, in itself, another form of rhizomatic structure in the way that professional experience can develop.

**Structure of the volume**

Following Deleuze and Guattari’s image of the rhizome, the structure of this volume reflects the many metaphoric parallels between a rhizomic plant and interdisciplinary research. Paradoxically, the rhizome metaphor itself is at odds with the idea of organisation or hierarchy, thus making it difficult to group together various essays under one heading. Although papers were grouped in one particular section in the light of their major argument or methodological approach, it is evident (and consistent with the concept of the rhizome, which rejects all organisation) that some essays may also work well within other categories. This, again, highlights the common thread amongst all of these papers and the fact that they cannot be categorised into single disciplines—that they, in fact, extend across traditional boundaries. Just as the rhizomatic structure offers “multiple entryways” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 12), readers are thus encouraged to look beyond the ordinary linear approach and seek alternative ways of exploring this collection.

Four general themes emerge amongst the essays, reflecting the different ways that a rhizomic plant system can illustrate figuratively various aspects of interdisciplinary work:

1) A rhizomic plant is a decentered system with multiple offshoots, proliferating randomly in every direction and with no beginning or end—no ordering. This is echoed in research that rejects static binary models.
2) A rhizome is a plant with no hierarchy, no “parent plant”, but instead many small offshoots. This is reflected in research topics that explore marginal areas and promote the “periphery”.

3) It is a plant whose many roots and offshoots come together to create a whole plant, as is illustrated in projects bringing together different languages, media, art forms, but also perspectives, research models and traditions, and finding points of connectivity between them.

4) Finally, a rhizome is a plant that keeps growing in every direction, that ceaselessly produces new roots and offshoots—the way that some projects examine constant recreation(s) and transformation(s) in languages and cultures, working with the past to move into the future.

1. Rethinking dichotomies

The two articles under this heading revisit traditional binary approaches that have proven to be too restrictive in their respective fields, and propose instead more complex analytical models.

The first article challenges the traditional binary model of the first (L1) vs second language (L2) use in the language classroom. Rachel Varshney’s paper explores student representations of strategic first language uses in foreign language acquisition, particularly in the area of language assessment, thus pursuing the debate concerning communicative teaching approaches in the language classroom. The paper examines the traditional language classroom research but from the perspective of the student, looking beyond the teachers’ point of view to explore students’ perceptions and attitudes in terms of language use during the language acquisition process. This paper, which originates from a wider study considering diverse strategic uses of the L1 in the foreign language classroom, focuses here particularly on how L1 use is perceived by students in assessment. The study uncovers that, while students generally maintain a balanced view with respect to L1 and L2 use within the classroom, reference to assessment draws some particularly strong attitudes for exclusive strategic use of L1, calling into question the traditionally viewed dichotomy between L1/L2 in the foreign language classroom context. Instead of this binary model, the author advocates a plurilingual view of foreign language classrooms and proposes that understanding students’ attitudes could facilitate a more informed discussion of L1 use in the current second language acquisition literature.

Luke Stickels’ paper is anchored in cinema studies and also aims to revisit a traditional binary notion—the opposition between image and sound in film—by drawing on the work of Japanese director Kitano Takeshi and, in particular, his 1997 film, *Hana Bi* [Fireworks]. Instead of considering sound and image
separately, Stickels proposes a symbiotic model highlighting the complex formal and semiotic interrelations between the soundtrack, image-track and narrative, as illustrated in Takeshi’s film. Drawing from various theoretical frameworks such as semiotics, poststructuralism and musicology, the author attempts to reformulate critical approaches to film, in particular film sound theory. Takeshi’s minimalist film, with its sharp contrasts and numerous “experiments”, offers a multitude of opportunities to revisit the traditional opposition of noise vs silence by showing how the two are intricately connected to each other as well as to visual elements and narrative devices. Some interesting questions raised by the author include: in what ways can sound be expressed visually? how might silence be expressed paradoxically through noise, or through character agency and performance?

2. Promoting the periphery

Several articles in this volume look to the margins and focus their attention on marginalised and often less well-known areas of research. Of interest, four of these articles look not only at “peripheral” research areas but combine this with a focus on the role of women (who have also been traditionally marginalised) in these various domains.

**Lara Vanderstaay** examines women’s involvement in the Chinese film industry from 1925 to 1978. Although traditional research has focused mainly on the role played by men (as exemplified by the attention given to Academy Award nominee Zhang Yimou, for instance), Vanderstaay argues that women’s impact on Chinese cinema has been both persistent and significant. More particularly, the author explores the history of women’s filmmaking over two important periods in China, early cinema (before 1949) and socialist cinema (1949-78). She argues that the women active in film during those periods have been just as influential as men, especially for later generations of Chinese women directors. To illustrate the way that femininity is expressed in the films produced during those eras, Vanderstaay examines three feature films in more depth: Wang Ping’s *The Story of Liubao Village* (1957) as well as Dong Kena’s *A Blade of Grass on the Kunlun Mountains* (1962) and *Eagle on Tianshan Grasslands* (1964).

**Yvette Rowe** also deals with an issue that has not received much critical attention. Her article proposes a look at an original product of popular culture—dating manuals—from a feminist theoretical perspective, and asks to what extent those manuals question, or conform to, stereotypical models of femininity in the construction of identity. Through an in-depth textual analysis of two dating manuals, the author examines the relevance of Butler’s notion of
performativity of gender and Gergen’s theory of the saturated self to those texts. The research project undertaken by Rowe interestingly underlines the challenges of examining a product of popular culture which was, for a long time, relegated to the periphery of what was considered “proper” research.

Carol Wical’s essay also explores a marginalised area of academic research: American country music. It proposes close textual analysis of some of the lyrics and visual codes (such as those found on album covers, posters etc.) used by American women country singers to reveal their construction of identity and, in particular, authenticity. The author argues, indeed, that most of the signs used in country music (projected persona through the use of hats, boots, accents, and so on) are gendered, and that male/female stereotypes are constantly being reappropriated and revisited. Of particular interest to Wical are the song narratives and projected persona chosen by Nashville-based, Canadian country music performer, Terri Clark. According to the author, Clark uses and subverts masculine stereotypes to create her own image, which suggests that women’s tradition of innovation in country music is beginning to emerge from the margins of the male-dominant discourse.

Finally, Shirley Wu similarly focuses her attention to a somewhat overlooked yet extremely vibrant literary tradition: Taiwanese aboriginal literature. Because of a long tradition of oral storytelling, written forms of literary creation in Taiwan have taken a long time to emerge and be recognised. Crossing the boundary in much the same way the authors she is examining have done, Wu looks beyond the traditional readings of their work and explores the intricacies of identity building and diaspora themes in this literature. She brings in issues from diaspora writing and identity construction found in other literary traditions to shed a new light on Taiwanese aboriginal literature, therefore decentring literary research and bringing the focus to “the periphery”.

3. Highlighting points of connectivity

The third section brings together articles which attempt not only to connect different languages, cultures or art forms, but also various disciplines and theoretical frameworks that are traditionally considered separately.

Penny Bailey re-evaluates the influence of Korean material culture on Japanese art at the beginning of the 20th century, after the invasion of the peninsula by Japan in 1910. As Bailey demonstrates, the resurgence of interest in Korean Yi dynasty ceramics, in particular, was precipitated by the Japanese art critic Yanagi Sōetsu, who founded the Mingei Folk Craft Movement in the 1920s. Adopting a postcolonial perspective and connecting historical, political and aesthetic issues, the author argues that, through the promotion of Korean
artefacts, Yanagi became involved in the colonial discourse of the time in an ambiguous way: he managed to express his anti-colonialist views while, at the same time, confirming Japan’s imperial desire to revalue the Orient.

Victoria Bladen’s paper also looks at productive interactions, this time between English Renaissance literature and visual imagery, particularly with respect to the Tree of Life motif, which was a significant motif present in literary and visual forms in the Bible, as well as in texts from the medieval and early modern periods. Of interest to Bladen in this paper are several episodes in the work of William Shakespeare, most particularly in *Titus Andronicus*. The author’s argument resonates particularly well with the theme chosen for this volume of essays as it shows points of connectivity between literature, the visual arts, and various social, political and theological issues. This, Bladen argues, justifies the relevance of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the Tree of Life motif.

The last article of this section reports the results of a research project carried out by Djoko Susanto on code-switching among Javanese-Indonesian-Arabic trilinguals in the context of Islamic religious meetings in East Java. Susanto is particularly interested in the reasons behind code-switching. In order to gain an insight into the motivations determining language choices in a religious context, the study uses a triangulation method involving observations, questionnaires and interviews. The originality of the project consists in bringing together not two but three languages (plus other variations) in the study of code-switching, and in exploring the code-switching practices of multilingual speakers in a context that is particularly difficult to gain access to, showing points of connectivity within a linguistically diverse group.

4. Recreating and transforming

The final section deals with recreation(s) and transformation(s): one characteristic of rhizomic plants is, indeed, that they constantly produce new offshoots, which grow in unexpected directions, thus “transforming” the original plant.

Clara Ho Yan Chan’s paper examines the evolution and transformation of the Chinese language by focusing on the introduction and characteristics of 她 (feminine ta) and 它/牠 (neuter ta) third person pronouns in modern written Chinese, which are imitations of the English she and it—an innovation that transformed the gender-free Chinese third-person pronoun system into a three-gender one. Analysing the similarities of usage between these English pronouns and the new Chinese pronouns, the article reveals that the Chinese third-person pronouns have acquired new scopes of reference which fall outside the
dictionary definitions and prescriptive grammatical statements on their “proper” usage. Chan concludes that languages do indeed evolve free of normative rules and that grammatical borrowing is a particular form of innovation.

Julie Guihot focuses her attention on film and sheds new light on the evolution of this art form (especially through emerging technologies in cinema) as well as on film theory itself. She explores how film (as an artefact) and film theory intersect and re-create themselves and each other. Guihot demonstrates how approaches to film theory, especially the critical practices that have dominated the study of science fiction films, have evolved over time. To illustrate her point, the author chooses John Carpenter’s The Thing (1976) as a symbol of cinema as “art” as well as a metaphor for the constant expansion and transformation of both technologies and theories.

Finally, Roslyn Joy Ricci’s paper also explores recreations and uses the rhizome metaphor throughout her essay to reveal the endless potential connections between different forms of art. Ricci examines, in particular, Chinese poetry re-created in English as an illustration of what she calls “transcultural poetry”—poetry that crosses boundaries and re-emerges in other forms. The author looks at the (re)creation of classical Chinese poetry, which she considers to be rhizomatic, since, as she puts it, “its beginnings cannot be traced and its end is not in sight.” Besides its recreation as English poetry, classical Chinese poetry has re-emerged in musical pieces, audiovisual experimental art as well as in the unexpected context of an Indonesian court, which suggests, once again, the blurring of boundaries in contemporary art and society.

Acknowledgements

In closing this introduction, we would like to acknowledge the assistance that we have received throughout the conference and the compilation of this volume: staff at the School of Languages and Comparative Studies (especially Dr Larry Duffy and Dr Morris Low, who assisted us in the preliminary stages of the conference, the staff who agreed to chair individual sessions, and Associate Professor Helen Creese for her informed help with the publication process), the Head of the School (Associate Professor Nanette Gottlieb) as well as the administrative staff, who, with tireless patience, helped us with the different stages of the conference’s organisation. We are also grateful to our two invited speakers, who enthusiastically agreed to give the keynote addresses, the conference delegates for the insight offered into their fascinating research projects, as well as the anonymous referees for providing their young peers with invaluable feedback and guidance. We would also like to acknowledge the financial support provided to the conference by various bodies of the University
of Queensland: the Graduate School, the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies and the Student Union. But our thanks go most particularly to all our fellow postgraduate students who were involved in the organisation of the conference: Penny Bailey, Shirin Jamarani, Sue Monk, Annie Pohlman, Sol Rojas-Lizana, Annabel Temple-Smith, Lara Vanderstaay, and everyone else involved.

We hope that you will enjoy discovering (or rediscovering) the work of young researchers included in this volume and will look for the buds of what are likely to become beautiful and prolific plants in the future.

University of Queensland, Australia. December 2005
Nathalie Ramière and Rachel Varshney,
Editors
(emails: nathalie.ramiere@lycos.com; Rachel.Varshney@ling.mq.edu.au)

Works Cited


KEYNOTE ADDRESSES
The intention of this paper, or, perhaps to state it better, its process, is, as it
must be given the nature of the concept that we are all gathered here to question,
self-reflexive in nature, which is to say that it begins in the middle, knowing
itself to have no originary point which determines in advance everything that it
can be, nor a final destination to which it must inexorably head and towards
which all preceding points on our trajectory must aim, and being without this
genealogy, this origin and this finality and only ever existing in the very space
that it creates anew at every turn, a space which is nonetheless situated in a
historical context, a multiplicity of historical and textual antecedents, which
constitute the poles that it is always between, being without these points of
departure and destination, this space, this text has, like the rhizome as Deleuze
and Guattari state, “neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which
it grows and which it overspills” (1987, 21) and this is precisely why it is, in the
first of our self-reflexive strategies, that this very sentence finds it nigh
impossible to arrive at a full-stop, a final destination, but instead keeps adding
subordinate clauses with the aid of commas, those points of break and rupture
which signify continuity, a new start but not a totally fresh start at ground zero
for the comma can only ever be situated in the middle, like the subordinate
clause that it marks off and which is, precisely as its name implies, subordinate,
ever believing itself to be self-sufficient, reliant on the main or majoritarian
clause in which it is situated and yet capable of destabilising the self-assured
centeredness of the latter by introducing a contrast or an example invested with
a differential power capable of deterritorialisation even when its function is
intended as explicative, commas, then, that can perform the function also of that
other linguistic strategy that enables the proliferation of this very sentence and
that is also for Deleuze and Guattari the very fabric of the rhizome, “the

And perhaps this was indeed the only way to finish this sentence, not with
the finality of a full-stop but with the same intensified into a multiplicity of
stops, points de suspension, as the French call them, stops suspended between
two points and always coming, then, in the middle, always in the middle and
never at the end… And perhaps also this is how our sentences must always now
begin, with an “and” that marks them as always in-between, always adding to
that which has come before and always therefore leading somewhere else,
finishing with …

To continue in this manner would, of course, be possible, indeed it is in
many respects precisely what Louis-Ferdinand Céline did in an ever-more
intensified form as his career progressed, further deterritorialising conventional
literary and grammatical constructions and conventions, sending the French
literary lexicon on lines of flight into forbidden, or entirely new, lands, and
simultaneously breaking all semblance of syntactical coherence with an ever
intensifying proliferation of points de suspension.

And yet to continue in this manner is also in many respects impossible for us
here because of the nature of what we are doing, which is not what Céline was
doing. This is not to say that the academic enterprise must be entirely uncreative
and distanced from the creative arts, Deleuze and Guattari are surely proof of
that; it is to say, however, that whilst the task of both art and academic work is
essentially to do nothing but communicate, it is generally expected, especially of
the PhD student, that academic writing will leave us with a clear impression of
what has been argued so that we may leave it with the sense of having accrued
some new knowledge—a supreme irony of course since our new knowledge
cannot then be truly new in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari understand this
term, since our knowledge in its exposition must always conform to the truth of
its own premise or thesis, it must at all times be an exact copy of the pre-
existing knowledge that it wishes to communicate, and this is perhaps the
difference between what we do and what art does since the latter can create
precepts, aspects perceived by the reader or viewer that send us back to the
world with a new vision and ability to see the world differently and anew. This,
of course, is also the power of Deleuze and Guattari’s thought, which is
precisely why we can say that, in a sense, it is not academic—and this is no
doubt why so many in the groves of academe’s more majoritarian disciplines
can be so hostile towards it. So, whilst I could continue to write page-long
sentences that stylistically reinforce the primary goal of my paper, which is, of
course, to say something about rhizomes, the end result may well be from your point of view, dear reader, very unsatisfactory because, and let us add that this is a frustration for many with Deleuze and Guattari themselves, the rhizome “brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states” (1987, 21).

To put this another way, precisely because the rhizome is a model or mode of organisation that refuses to abide by a hierarchical structure, deploying itself in a multilinear fashion that verges on the chaotic as opposed to an arborescent fashion where every part of the whole branches off from, and is dependent on, the stable central structure, because of this, the rhizome is, as a model of organisation, perhaps particularly unsuited to academic discourse that aims to communicate new knowledge to an audience. Indeed, think for a moment about the document which constitutes the rite of passage of any wishing to enter the groves of academe, the PhD thesis. Is the PhD thesis not itself explicitly based upon an arborescent model? Do we not consistently tell our PhD students that their main task in their thesis is precisely to uphold a central thesis and to relate all parts of their argument back to that central thesis, problematic or question?

And yet, as the conference that gave rise to this paper and this collection recognised in its very title and brief, the rhizome does seem applicable as a model or structure for certain kinds of academic inquiry, and notably for interdisciplinary studies which, by their very nature, are multilinear in organisation. Nonetheless, it is, I think, perhaps a lure to try and claim that interdisciplinary work necessarily is, must be, or can but be, rhizomatic. Indeed, many interdisciplinary works that may seem rhizomatic because of the number of different lines that they follow are, perhaps, not rhizomatic at all, they are not texts which produce machinic assemblages, which is to say texts in which all of the original fields are altered in their meeting so that they no longer obey their own terms and instead produce an entirely new and fleeting event, which is to say not an object but a happening that is itself dependent on a new machinic assemblage with its viewer or reader or listener in the field of reality (the world). Such a text, a truly rhizomatic text, will necessarily be a singularity, which is to say that it will present a set of propositions which are infinitely variable, it will be a text which, whilst situated on a plane of consistency, will never be the same twice, always apprehended at a different level of intensity and bringing into being a new machinic assemblage. It could of course be argued and surely should be argued that no text is ever the same twice, even when read by the same person a second time. This argument, however, is a lure that may distract us from that which would constitute a rhizomatic text, from the differential power that such a text would constantly deploy in all of its inconsistencies and conjugations of different pre-formed systems, conjugations which would always be performed in such a way as to bring about a disarticulation between them.
Many seemingly rhizomatic interdisciplinary works do not, I think, behave in this manner, do not conjugate their fields in order to arrive at a new singularity, but proceed rather by juxtaposition and, perhaps at best, synthesis. A rhizomatic interdisciplinary work, however, is not one in which there is merely a kind of intensified Hegelian dialectics. A rhizomatic structure, as Deleuze and Guattari state,

connects any point to any other point […]. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five, etc. It is not a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added \((n + 1)\). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills. It constitutes linear multiplicities with \(n\) dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted \((n – 1)\). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis. (1987, 21)

In order to try and see, or rather hear, precisely what kind of text may present a truly rhizomatic structure, then, I will, for the rest of this paper, attempt to ascertain what a rhizomatic structure would sound like by examining musical forms which appear to present a rhizomatic structure. And this will be the second of my self-reflexive moves, for in choosing an object of study which can only ever be insufficiently described by the medium in which I am describing it, I wish to perform a disarticulation of genres and thus introduce into this paper the instability and self-insufficiency which inhabits all rhizomes. The first piece I will consider is Mr Bungle’s “Air-Conditioned Nightmare”.

Mr. Bungle is one of the many projects of Mike Patton (formerly of Faith No More)—others include his solo vocal work, his compositional work and Fantômas. Mr. Bungle’s latest album, California (1999), is a forty-four-minute, genre-hopping, roller-coaster ride through the theme park hall of mirrors that the history of popular (and other) music becomes in their hands. It appears to be the intention of each song on California to throw multiple genres of post-WWII popular music into a blender along with a good dose of kitsch, finally pouring the monstrous hybrid concoction out into a 50’s diner milkshake glass adorned with a small paper umbrella. A prime example of this methodology can be found in the track from California entitled “Air-Conditioned Nightmare” which I have attempted to map out so that we might see both its refusal to adhere to any particular genre and its blatant contravention of the hierarchical and systematic verse/chorus/verse structure so prevalent in all of the genres that it draws upon.
0minutes:00seconds. Introductory Verse.
(0:00) Strings. (0:03) Falsetto Voice. (0:05) Flamenco percussion and claps. Timpani. 60’s twang guitar chords. (0:17) Laughing guitar (until 0:23).

0:27 Introduction: Choir Variation.
(0:27) Multiple-voice choir harmony behind falsetto voice. Tambourine. Tom toms.

0:40 Verse 1. Wap Wap.
(0:40) Gameboy synthesiser clown melody. Muppet barber shop voices. Shaker rhythms (done by voice). (0:45) 60’s Surf music voice harmony (until 0:50).

0:54 Technology Breakdown Interlude.
(0:54) Noise.

0:55.5 Chorus 1. Dwayne Eddy Meets Batman.
(0:55.5) Voice (spoken in style of B-movie villain). Synthesiser. Dwayne Eddy meets Batman surf guitars. (0:58) Lo-fi monotone voice (until 1:01).

1:04 Fairground Death Metal Interlude.

1:08 Bridge 1. Gameboy.
(1:08) Drum roll breakbeat. Gameboy synthesiser.

1:10 Verse 1. Wap Wap.

1:22 Tom Tom Interlude.
(1:22) 2 x lo-fi strikes of bass toms.

1:24 Chorus 1. Dwayne Eddy Meets Batman.

1:32 Fairground Death Metal Interlude.

1:37 Bridge 2. Bombora.
1:37 Bombora tribal surf drum rolls.

1:48 Cymbal Interlude.
1:48 Four-count on cymbal. Guitar from verse 2 sustain.

1:50 Verse 2. Dick Dale.

1:59 Backing vocal and cymbal from verse 2 sustain.

2:04 Verse 3. Hotel Lobby.

2:19 Verse 3a. Through the Hotel Lobby.

2:28 Voice and falsetto foil. Four Tops-style vocal backing harmonies with 4x4 instrumental accompaniment. Tambourine. All leading to resolution.

2:36 Verse 3/3a Hybrid.


2:56 Technology Breakdown Interlude / Bridge 2 Hybrid.


3:08 Cymbal Interlude.


3:23 Bridge 4. Riding into the Sunset.

3:45 Conclusion. Cheese surfing.

3:53 End.

The track could certainly be considered multilinear insofar as it references many different lines of musical history and, indeed, in sections, conflates some of them together. However, ultimately I wonder if it is rhizomatic, if, that is, it is possible for any point in it to connect to any other. Ultimately, I do not think that it is. Whilst all of the elements are transformed, especially through humorous and tongue-in-cheek ironic appropriation, to think of this piece as a machinic assemblage would, I think, be erroneous. What we have rather is a juxtaposition of disparities, a kind of postmodern collage which ultimately does create a new kind of whole but not a rhizomatic whole since, in order for the postmodern referencing of the piece to work, it is precisely necessary for the original elements not to be overly transformed so that they can still be recognised in their new context.

And so on to a kind of music that I think is truly rhizomatic insofar as it often approaches a state of white noise (or one of the other colour shadings attributed to various types of noise). I am talking about the genre loosely termed Japanese noise. More particularly for the purposes of the present study, however, I wish to turn my attention to the artist who is arguably one of this genre’s founding fathers, Masami Akita, aka Merzbow. Merzbow might be said to deterritorialise any kind of normative musical structure to such an extent that what remains is quite simply anti-music—just as the rhizome is an “antigenealogy” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 21). The walls of white noise and monolithic slabs of impenetrable scree that constitute the average Merzbow album have almost no punctual co-ordinates with which the listener can orient him/herself. It is nigh impossible to hum along to these tracks (being able to hum along to a part of a song being a characteristic, let us remember, of the refrain—that most musical of concepts for Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 311)). This is not to say that Merzbow’s songs are entirely devoid of structure or organisation. Structure is always present, but rather than being fixed it is constantly shifting, waiting to be found by the listener, and always transient, building up only to fall away again, either through design or simply because the structure found is merely an effect of the machinic assemblage created by the conjugation of sound with listener, a singular happening that arises through the combination of fields and intensities. Unlike the pop songs of our past whose
refrains always mnemonically return us to a time past and a corresponding emotion, a Merzbow track will never be the same twice: it pulses, throbs, annoys, delights, imposes itself or fades into the background depending on the attitude of the listener at every instant. Its cacophony can be cathartic, cataleptic or catalytic, allowing release, shocking the listener into inaction or inspiring creation. It can be a plane of consistency, a full body without organs, or induce a quasi-pathological state, converting the listener into an empty body without organs. It is in the true sense of the term rhizomatic.

It is so, firstly, because as it approaches a state of white noise it contains all frequencies cosimultaneously and can therefore connect any point of the audio spectrum with any other depending on the intensity that is contracted into greater perceptibility by the immanent terms of the machinic assemblage in operation (the acoustics of the room, the hearing capacity of the listener, the response capacity of the stereo being used for playback, etc.). But it is rhizomatic also because, like the rhizome, as we have seen, it “brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 21). Whilst the notion of meaning or signification in music is always a problematic issue, it is particularly so in a Merzbow track which communicates through intensities, not through any kind of musical meaning, either lyrical, melodic or percussive. A Merzbow piece has no obvious beginning or end, it begins in the middle and sustains itself until a point at which it cuts off and yet which never appears like a finality, a resolution.

And yet, to return to one of our original problematics (or problems, rather), it is for all of these reasons hard to know how any Merzbow composition could serve us as a model for a rhizomatic practice of writing, especially academic writing. Even my initial interminable sentence did not come anywhere close to resembling what a Merzbowian writing practice would be for it was too unilinear, too singular, it was not a swarm of multiplicities, a pure dimension. A Merzbow piece is, like the rhizome for Deleuze an Guattari, “an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states” (1987, 21). In many respects, this is perhaps an excellent description of precisely what Merzbow sounds like insofar as it is a description which gives us no idea whatsoever of what it sounds like except in the most abstract sense. Yet with its imprecision this sentence is also, perhaps, a very precise description of exactly what academic writing or discourse is not supposed to be.

This is not to say, however, that all is lost and that, in conceptualising the very notion of interdisciplinarity by using the rhizome, we are embarked upon an exercise in self-defeat. Indeed, how could we be when Deleuze and Guattari state that “a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic
chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (1987, 7)? As a last example, then, as an attempt to show you what a rhizomatic interdisciplinary practice might sound like, I would like to let you consider a piece by the Dillinger Escape Plan, an extreme hardcore unit from New York heavily influenced by free jazz structures and rhythms. Hardcore of the kind that the Dillinger Escape Plan play is itself already a kind of rhizomatic, hybrid entity that has taken multiple influences and fused them together in such a way that the original core elements are not really discernible—hence the endless discussion amongst fans as to whether or not certain hardcore bands are really punk or metal. Hardcore is also always in its inception a minority expression, evolving, like Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic language, “by subterranean stems and flows” (1987, 7).

In a footnote to another paper, I described Dillinger’s music as sounding like the noise of a high-speed train carrying Charlie Parker and Jaco Pastorias from New Orleans to New York at the very moment when, passing over a bridge, it jumps its rails and ploughs head-on into the lines of gridlocked commuter traffic below. (Hainge 2004, 52-3)

The more I listen to them, however, the more I realise that in some of their songs there is not only a moment of collision of different genres in their music but a fusion, or to put this better, a becoming that is born of a machinic assemblage in which each term deterritorialises the other to become something else entirely as they enter into relation with each other in series, pushing each other further along a rhizomatic line of flight that only intensifies the relation between them and draws them closer to each other as they move farther and farther from their genealogical roots. To put this another way, in the machinic assemblage of certain Dillinger tracks, jazz is to hardcore as the wasp is to the orchid. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid’s reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome. It could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.). […] At the same time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code, surplus value of code, an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp. Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series
on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying. (1987, 10)

Dillinger, in the artwork of their last album, *Miss Machine* (2004), seem fascinated by these unnatural couplings that produce machinic entities in which disparate terms modify each other in new couplings and conjugations to produce bastard, monstrous offspring. It is perhaps in the musical content of their first album, *Calculating Infinity* (1999) (the artwork for which already showed an almost fetishistic fascination with the machinic entities that are the very conditions of possibility for their music), however, that a truly rhizomatic expression is realised. Indeed, there is a sense in which (again) Deleuze and Guattari’s text is a far better description of the musical content of this album than the highly metaphorical terms I have employed previously in my attempts to render this music in words, and this is so perhaps precisely because the application of their thought to this object, the meeting of these two entities, like the becoming of the wasp and the orchid and the becoming of jazz and metal deployed in the music itself, is both fitting and yet at the same time entirely extraordinary.

The question still remains, of course, as to how this musical becoming might be transposed into the realm in which we are currently operating, how we might write as Dillinger play (in much the same way Deleuze longed to teach as Bob Dylan organised songs (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 7-8)). The answer lies, I feel, in the doubly unexpected nature of this coupling; for not only is the very choice of texts or genres for the machinic assemblage to be created less than self-evident, the resulting expression emanating from this assemblage is necessarily unexpected also. Born of a new coupling, this expression can but enter into new territories, heading further and further down a rhizomatic path. And, whilst this may sound like a defence of the absolute erosion of cultural relativism bemoaned by traditionalists and other self-styled enemies of postmodern, poststructuralist, postcolonial or postanything thought, an argument in favour of the “anything goes” mentality that “they” accuse “us” of, nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari, the Dillinger Escape Plan and, more than any of them, the wasp and the orchid know well, in order for this rhizome not to veer out of control and dissipate itself in a pure line of destruction, a very deep respect for the original entities entering into a becoming is required, a constant process of reterritorialisation to recontain the deterritorialisation of the becoming at all points along its trajectory. So, in answer to our question as to what would constitute a rhizomatic academic practice, the answer is, on the one hand, entirely unexpected for it is to be found in the unexpected itself, the conjugation of apparently mismatched entities, but, on the other, the answer is wholly un-unexpected for it is what should always have characterised academic work: rigour. And this is perhaps ultimately no
different to what Deleuze and Guattari, Derrida, Foucault and others have been telling us all along, that in order to avoid the stagnation and rigor mortis that comes from the endless repetition of the accepted line, what is required is extreme rigour, a reading so meticulous in its attention to detail that it can produce new and unexpected expressions within the text itself.

**Works Cited**


INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND CONNECTING RESEARCH TO THE “REAL WORLD”

DR KAYOKO HASHIMOTO

Japanese Language Program
School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies,
The University of Queensland
(email: k.hashimoto@uq.edu.au)

One of the motivating reasons for the Rhizomes conference held on February 12, 2005 was for students and academics to share their expertise and experience. Whilst some postgraduates were just beginning their journey, others were in the middle, and a small number were lucky enough to have almost reached the finish line. Nonetheless, even those who have finished would agree that the journey can be a lonely and scary one. The aim of this paper is to share some of my experiences as a researcher and give some insight into how research can be seen as a part of our individual lives.

This paper will approach three important aspects of research: the relevance of an interdisciplinary approach towards a research project, the importance of being connected with the world outside academia, and lastly the fundamental necessity of maintaining excitement in the findings of a research project.

Firstly, I will address the issue of interdisciplinarity and its relevance to research. While it can be of importance for many researchers, there are equally as many who strongly resist such an approach. Rather than seeing interdisciplinarity as only a concept linked to certain disciplines, I see it instead as an attitude towards research. This approach has been termed by some as “critical thinking”. Many would say that critical thinking is an integral part of research and, while this is true, its essence is also envisaging the “bigger picture”—connecting the project with the real world. Interdisciplinary approaches can assist by shedding new light on the project and offering an original perspective. My PhD research presented a cultural analysis of Japanese government policies on foreign language teaching, and was based on feminist theories highlighting the mechanism of power in contemporary society. Although the project had little to do with gender differences, these feminist insights allowed me to take a different perspective on policies.
There is, of course, an argument to be made for retaining focus on a specialised area, for remaining in a research “comfort zone”. However, an interdisciplinary approach can be seen as an extension of our own individual differences. Many students within language disciplines speak languages other than English and have educational experiences within and outside of Australia. A number of these students have additionally studied in more than one disciplinary area and have experience in different institutions. By embracing interdisciplinary work, our varied backgrounds can inform our approach to research. In my own experience, my doctoral supervisor in Australia originally indicated that I should find a topic related to Japan. At first, I was opposed to the idea of focusing on Japan as I had travelled to Australia in order to gain new experiences. Eventually, however, I came to realise that, by taking full advantage of my Japanese background, I could write a thesis on something meaningful to me, with a perspective that differed from most ordinary Australians. My PhD project, by using theories from other disciplines, such as feminism, was able to explore the role of government authorities and their assumed values from an original perspective. This also had an impact on the way I have been looking at my experience, my past, and my identity.

When introducing the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to research, I indicated that one of the functions of research is to connect the project with “real life”. This begs the question “what is real life?” and leads us to consider “is academic life not real?” It is, I believe, important to remain connected to the world outside of academia. Before undertaking my current position at the University of Queensland, I was employed at the Australian Defence Force (ADF) School of Languages in Melbourne, training intelligence officers. In this role, I was the first Japanese woman to be employed as a full-time lecturer since World War II. It was almost unthinkable for a woman who was born and brought up in Japan to take up a position to train Australian military personnel. Thanks to this experience I now have a better understanding of terrorism and international conflicts, and I can personally share some of the values and commitment of young Australian men and women who choose to serve their country and the international community.

In the research project I undertook within the ADF, I initially wanted to look at the relationship between students, cultural awareness and their identity shifts in the process of language learning. I chose six languages from three regions: two Asian languages (Indonesian and Japanese), two European languages (French and Portuguese) and two Middle Eastern languages (Arabic and Persian). I conducted two surveys that examined the issues of cultural awareness and identity shifts over a four-week in-country training session: one before the training and one after. The outcome was fascinating as it offered great insight