

# Introduction to the Conference Issue of *Humanity*: Making A Mark

When the organising committee sat down in February 2017 to nut out a theme for the NewMac conference to be held some months later, we sought to highlight the emergent and even altruistic nature of post-graduate scholarship. Despite the large range amongst committee members in terms of age and stage, we agreed that we share a desire to leave some kind of scholarly imprint on the academic world, and to contribute in order to leave these altered in some small way by our efforts. It was hardly surprising then that we settled unanimously on *Making a Mark* for Macquarie University's hosting of the 2017 conference at its North Ryde campus.

The idea of making a mark spans successfully across disciplinary boundaries and research styles, providing an effective thematic umbrella to unify those who attended the conference and guide their presentations. After all, a large part of the research agenda consists of proving the value of your work and communicating it effectively to others from varied disciplines and with differing research interests.

We believe that this theme contributed to the sense of optimism and energy that created a distinctly discernible 'buzz' throughout the entire conference—an energy and optimism that began when people arrived in the morning, and lasted well until after the last paper had been delivered and the furniture restored to its usual locations.

In this edition of *Humanity*, we present six of the finest papers presented on July 17, 2017. Their writers' disciplinary interests and subjects are nothing if not diverse. But what decidedly unites each writer is the desire to leave an imprint on their field in some way—to change opinions, present a different view regarding an established or less familiar scholarly concept, and to communicate ideas in a persuasive, cogent and engaging manner. We believe that each of the six writers presented here has achieved these goals in a particularly effective manner.

Based on ethnographic research with non-male Sydney residents who identify as both queer and feminine, Katherine Giunta explores both the limitations and possibilities for the category of 'woman.' In 'Including and Exceeding Women', Giunta asks how certain acts, activities and expressions become understood and constituted as 'feminine' amongst a particular group. As

an Anthropologist, Giunta adopts a queer anti-essentialist approach to gender research, an approach she contends can allow us to grasp more fully the diverse and dynamic ways in which gender is enacted and constituted across traditional binary conceptualisations of bodies, genders and sexualities. Drawing on the developing field of critical femininity studies, along with ongoing debates in queer theory and queer anthropology, Giunta challenges existing methodological assumptions and research frameworks commonly used to explore femininity. In doing so, her work reveals a distinctive and significant view of the Sydney LGBTQIA+ community.

Turning from Anthropology to Sociology and Social Policy but still focusing on the LGBTQIA+ community, Rhys Herden examines Australia's protracted struggle for marriage equality. In asking what this hard-won battle suggests about the relationship between power and agency, Herden argues that gender-diverse Australians have long been resigned to the fact of political struggle in their everyday lives. He concludes that intimacy offers a unique channel in which to experience and enact power. Herden overwhelmingly confirms the agency of LGBTIQ citizens as he writes on an issue that has forever changed contemporary perceptions of both the institution of marriage and notions of fairness.

Remaining with issues of fairness and equity, Adam Johnston's paper adds a valuable perspective to contemporary debate concerning the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). In 'The NDIS: The Mark of Pre-War or Post-War Public Policy Making?', legal scholar, Johnston, questions what the scheme has actually achieved since it came into being in 2013. Analysing essential services and presenting case studies of lived experience, Johnston asks just how significant a mark the NDIS has made on the lives of those it purports to benefit. He concludes that NDIS users continue to encounter many of the same problems they experienced before the scheme's introduction. Overall, Johnson argues that little has changed for people with disabilities, despite the claims of NDIS proponents that service delivery is significantly improved.

Reviewing a number of alternative approaches to the classic model of stage presence in the Performing Arts, interdisciplinary scholar Sarah Pini considers how actors engage an audience, striving to define and understand what has for many years been regarded as almost a magical quality. Pini suggests that a more useful stance is to broaden theoretical approaches to incorporate the ecological and ethnographic. Whilst seemingly esoteric, Pini highlights the

need to consider interdisciplinary theoretical collaborations as a means of enriching understandings and interpretations of long-established phenomena.

Moving from the world of theatre to the world of literature, Lixia Liu explores the writing of British novelist Julian Barnes, whose work offers new models of novelistic creation. Liu investigates the intricate intertextual relationship that Barnes established with Flaubert, in an intriguing challenge to existing postmodern interpretations of Barnes' work. Her analysis is complex, imaginative and contentious.

And finally, in , 'Why Nanjing 1937? Forgetting and Remembering of a Cultural Trauma', Jody Musgrove examines the place of the devastating Nanjing Massacre of 1937 in contemporary Chinese national remembering. Musgrove suggests, drawing on the work of sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander, that in an ongoing effort to stimulate patriotic fervour, contemporary Chinese leaders have deployed Nanjing in particular ways and to specific ends.

Each of these papers makes an impressive mark individually both inter- and intra-disciplinarily. Perhaps more notably, they make for a truly inspiring collection of work. We hope you enjoy delving into this collection as much as we have throughout the editorial process.

## ***Humanity* Editorial Team**

**Macquarie University 2017/18**

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