

Towards Response-able Arts-based Practices in Higher Education

Naar 'Response-able' Kunst gebaseerde Praktijken in het Hoger Onderwijs

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to contribute to the proliferation of scholarship concerned with the postphilosophical¹ queering of normative hegemonies within higher education, by foregrounding a methodological interest in ‘how else’ to do higher education research, pedagogy and assessment. Creatively investigating how to do academia differently, this thesis challenges the teleological conception of learning as a pre-figured logical progression of predetermined outcomes, the centring of the bounded individual as the unitary subject of learning, as well as the commonplace reliance on representationalist logics that grant language the ability to capture meaning in its expansive fullness. These critical educational concerns are considered from the situated position in a private higher education institution, the Cape Town Creative Academy (CTCA), located in Cape Town, South Africa. The CTCA specialises in the delivery of bachelor’s and postgraduate qualifications within contemporary art and various design disciplines.

This dissertation responds to the widespread concern over the neoliberal reform of universities, where the private higher education sector figures as the pinnacle entrepreneurial face of capitalised education. The South African private art and design school sector is a highly competitive market of (mostly) homologous qualification offerings. As such, the urgency for institutional differentiation results in the promotion of discourses of

1. ‘Postphilosophies’ refer here to the entanglement of scholarship and practices typically categorised as posthumanism, feminist new materialism, post qualitative inquiry, process philosophy, agential realism, and speculative pragmatism.

excellence—prioritising outcomes over process, individual achievement over communal learning, and marketable skills over critical praxis. Qualifications are ‘sold’ on the basis of graduate employment rates, student success in national and international competitions and the commercial (rather than pedagogical) track record of teaching staff. Critical engagements with learning are commonly overshadowed by a supply-and-demand logic of skills acquisition and a client-centred approach to academic delivery. As a founding partner and the academic head of the CTCA, my critical and creative inquiry into the normalising hegemonies that characterise higher education stems from the personal (privilege and) responsibility for tending to the oppressive effects of this highly determining value framework. In this thesis, I bring together postphilosophical ‘orientations’ within concrete higher education classroom and assessment scenarios in order to propose conceptual and practical reconfiguring of educational research, pedagogy and assessment cultures. Through each of its interventions, this dissertation investigates how one can challenge neoliberal value frameworks in higher education through an attunement to pedagogical response-ability as the contingent and entangled process of becoming-with the (human and more-than-human) other. Different to the deconstruction of ready-made patterns of thought, response-ability—as a pedagogical ethics—proceeds via the generation of generous curiosity that opens up to the heterogeneous multiplicity of how the world can be known and/or experienced. Prioritising a reciprocal ethos grounded in the mutual ability to respond, response-ability offers a generative entry point to my research aim for thinking and doing higher education differently.

As a whole, this thesis challenges normative and normalising neoliberal tendencies in higher education by attending to material entanglements, affects, and the processual nature of learning. I argue for the central importance of response-ability—a thoroughly collective and co-constitutive doing and thinking—as an orientation for reconfiguring higher education research, pedagogy and assessment. As its primary contribution, this thesis offers propositions for a deepening of embodied experimentation with response-able practices as a means with which to engage the transformability of higher education institutions and their potential to affect societal transformation.

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Dit proefschrift wil bijdragen aan de proliferatie van wetenschap die zich richt op hoe postfilosofische benaderingen normatieve hegemonieën binnen het hoger onderwijs kunnen uitdagen, door nadruk te leggen op een methodologische interesse in hoe hoger onderwijs anders kan worden benaderd in termen van onderzoek, pedagogie en evaluatie. Mijn dissertatie onderzoekt op creatieve wijze hoe academisch werk anders benaderd kan worden. Ze daagt de teleologische opvatting van leren uit als een vooraf bepaalde logische progressie van vooraf vastgestelde uitkomsten en bekritiseert het centreren van een begrensde individu als de enige subject van leren, evenals het alledaagse vertrouwen op representationalistische logica's die taal het vermogen toekennen om betekenis in zijn volledige omvang vast te leggen. Deze cruciale onderwijsbelangen worden onderzocht vanuit de specifieke context van een particuliere instelling voor hoger onderwijs, de Cape Town Creative Academy (CTCA), gevestigd in Kaapstad, Zuid-Afrika. De CTCA is gespecialiseerd in het leveren van bachelor- en postdoctorale opleidingen binnen de kunsten en verschillende ontwerpdisciplines.

Mijn dissertatie speelt in op de wijdverbreide bezorgdheid over de neoliberale hervorming van universiteiten, waarbij de particuliere sector van het hoger onderwijs wordt gezien als toppunt van ondernemerschap van gekapitaliseerd onderwijs. De Zuid-Afrikaanse sector van particuliere

1. Postfilosofieën' verwijzen hier naar de verstrengeling van geleerdheid en praktijken die doorgaans worden gecategoriseerd als posthumanisme, feministisch nieuw materialisme, postkwantitatief onderzoek, procesfilosofie, agentieel realisme en speculatief pragmatisme.

kunst- en designscholen is een zeer competitieve markt met (meestal) homogene kwalificatie-aanbiedingen. Als zodanig leidt de urgentie van institutionele differentiatie tot de promotie van discoursen over excellentie, waarbij resultaten boven processen worden gesteld, individuele prestaties boven gemeenschappelijk leren en verhandelbare vaardigheden boven kritische praktijken. Kwalificaties worden ‘verkocht’ op basis van de arbeidsparticipatiemogelijkheden van afgestudeerden, het succes van studenten in nationale en internationale competities, en de commerciële (in plaats van pedagogische) staat van dienst van het onderwijzend personeel. Kritische betrokkenheid bij het leren wordt vaak overschaduwd door een vraag-en-aanbodlogica van vaardighedenverwerving en een klantgerichte benadering van academisch onderwijs.

Als medeoprichter en academisch hoofd van de CTCA komt mijn kritische en creatieve onderzoek naar de normaliserende hegemonieën die het hoger onderwijs kenmerken, voort uit mijn persoonlijke (privilege en) verantwoordelijkheid om de onderdrukkende effecten van dit sterkbepalende waardenkader aan te pakken. In deze dissertatie breng ik post-filosofische ‘oriëntaties’ binnen concrete klassikale en beoordelingsscenario’s in het hoger onderwijs samen om conceptuele en praktische herconfiguraties van onderwijsonderzoek, pedagogiek en beoordelingsculturen voor te stellen. In elk van mijn interventies onderzoek ik in deze studie hoe neoliberale waarde-kaders in het hoger onderwijs uitgedaagd kunnen worden door een afstemming op pedagogische ‘response-ability’ als het contingente en verstrengelde proces van worden-met (‘becoming-with’) de (menselijke en meer-dan-menselijke) ander. In tegenstelling tot de deconstructie van kant-en-klare denkpatronen, werkt ‘response-ability’ - als een pedagogische ethiek - door het opwekken van een genereuze nieuwsgierigheid die zich openstelt voor de heterogene veelheid aan mogelijkheden van hoe de wereld gekend en/of ervaren kan worden. Door prioriteit te geven aan een wederkerige ethiek die gebaseerd is op het wederzijdse vermogen om te reageren, biedt ‘response-ability’ een generatief startpunt voor mijn onderzoeksdoel om het hoger onderwijs anders te denken en te doen.

Als geheel daagt dit proefschrift normatieve en normaliserende neoliberale tendensen in het hoger onderwijs uit door aandacht te besteden

aan materiële verwevenheden, affecten en de procesmatige aard van leren. Ik pleit voor het centrale belang van ‘response-ability’—een volledig collectief en co-constitutief doen en denken—als een oriëntatie voor het herconfigureren van onderzoek, pedagogiek en beoordeling in het hoger onderwijs. Als primaire bijdrage biedt deze dissertatie voorstellen voor een verdieping van belichaamde experimenten met ‘response-able’ praktijken als middel om de transformatie van instellingen van hoger onderwijs en hun potentieel om maatschappelijke verandering te beïnvloeden.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CHE:** The South African Council on Higher Education
- CRA:** Criterion Referenced Assessment
- CTCA:** Cape Town Creative Academy
- DHET:** The South African Department of Higher Education and Training
- HE:** Higher Education
- HEI:** Higher Education Institution
- PHE:** Private Higher Education
- PHEI:** Private Higher Education Institution
- SAQA:** The South African Qualifications Authority

Introduction

1. Rationale and Motivation: Considering Value in Higher Education

As an institution arguably in “ruins” (Readings, 1996),¹ seemingly held up by “criminality” (Undercommoning Collective, 2006), the university or higher education institutions (HEIs), in general, require radical reconfiguring. The university’s criminality, as is argued by the South African educational scholars André Keet, Michaela Ann Penkler, Luan Staphorst, Joseph Bazirake, and Daniella Rafaely (2023, p. 124), is embedded in its longstanding reproduction of (neo)colonial frameworks and the sedimentation of these oppressive matrices through rigid educational practices that undermine the university’s capacity for transformation. In resonance with Keet (2019, p. 203), this thesis argues that “the university’s essence is *transformability*”—a plasticity afforded by its “intuitive aptitude for deep transformation [...] as a self-transforming machine, with infinite possibilities for doing just, and doing right.”² Motivated by a concern for this aptitude

1. In *The University in Ruins* (1996), Bill Readings bemoans the uncertain place of universities in neoliberal society at the end of the 20th century.

2. Keet’s conception of plasticity is grounded in the work of Cathrine Malabou. For Keet et al. (2023, p. 134), “[w]hen we speak of plasticity [...] we speak of the structure of the possible—the structure of transformation conscious of its fragmentary ontology yet resolute in futurity, transformability and change.”

for transformability and potential for affecting transformation, I set out to challenge the conditions that stultify higher education (HE) through the reproduction of normative frameworks that undermine academia's potential for change. Most pertinently, my thesis is contextualised by HE's hegemonic reproduction of (a) *coloniality* as it pertains to the persistent centring of monohumanist conceptions of the thinking-subject as an exclusionary category modelled on Whiteness; (b) *neoliberalism* with respect to its insistence on entrepreneurial individualism, generalising standardisation and qualitative performance measurement; and (c) *normative critique* as a form of universalising 'objectivity' that functions by means of the negation of difference(s).

The institution where my critical interventions take place, the Cape Town Creative Academy (CTCA), is a relatively small private higher education institution (PHEI) that specialises in the delivery of bachelor's and postgraduate qualifications within the fields of contemporary art and various design disciplines. The CTCA was established in 2012 from the desire to do HE differently. In the past 12 years, the institution has grown from 5 to 230 students and from 3 to 37 staff members. As a founding partner and the academic head of the CTCA, my role in the institution is ridden with conflicting demands. Firstly, I participate as a member of the board of directors, where our interest primarily concerns the business success and growth of the institution. Secondly, I serve as the regulatory officer and primary point of contact with the South African national regulating bodies for HE (the CHE, DHET and SAQA), and as such concern myself with processes of institutional registration, programme accreditation and practices of institutional quality assurance, and regulatory reporting. Thirdly, I lead the ac-

ademic board, which is responsible for curriculum development, teaching, learning, and assessment, guided in our actions by a concern for ethical and transformative modes of educational engagement. My inquiry stems from the personal privileges, responsibilities and complicities arising from my entanglement with these diverse institutional functions and the various value frameworks that pose them in tension.

My PhD thesis coincides with a significant point in this institution's history where I locate my initial motivation for this project in a concern for fostering the CTCA's initial *raison d'être*—delivering unique transformative educational experiences. In its current phase of growth, the CTCA faces the risks of advancing towards:

- *heightened managerialism*: reducing collective creative responsiveness to corporatised structures of compliance;
- *disciplinary methodocentrism*: limiting intuitive speculative practices by means of rigid prescriptive formulae;
- *normative standardisation*: invalidating emergent modes of perceiving value through normative frameworks for reproducing generic standards.

This reticence towards the effects of continuous institutional growth and corporatisation might suggest a romanticised idealism of the CTCA's humble beginnings. It is valuable, therefore, to acknowledge the ways in which formalised HEIs cannot be assumed to exist outside of the material-discursive histories of academia. As such, I engage the CTCA as always-already deeply entangled with the broader value frameworks that co-compose the

histories, hegemonies and habits of HE. While the apprehensions listed above are pertinent to the specificity of the CTCA, its history and its current phase of growth, these risks—or obstacles to transformability/transformation—are inseparable from broader concerns facing HE as a global sector. While I foreground the CTCA as the situated site of my interventions, my thesis aims to contribute towards *propositions* for the reconfiguration of HE beyond the limits of this specific institutional context.³ Through my explorations of the practices of educational research, pedagogy, and assessment, I turn towards a feminist ethics of “*response-ability*” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021; Bozalek & Zembylas, 2023; Haraway, 2016) as an antidote to the normative habits that hold HE in stasis. As opposed to the reproduction of established hegemonies, response-ability—as the *enabling of mutual, differential responsiveness*—promotes a generative vitality that attends to the question “what matters?” Rather than reducing inquiry to an indexing of experience according to what is already known, an ethics of response-ability urges this thesis towards “care-full” (Thiele, Górska, & Türer, 2020) engagement with HE practices, through a keen interest in what too often remains excluded from normative limitations of what is valued in HE.

I purposefully align my research endeavours with the term *inquiry* in attunement to Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre’s use of the word in her conceptualisation of *post qualitative inquiry* (2018; 2020; 2023; 2024). Inquiry, in this emergent “new empirical” (St. Pierre, Jackson, & Mazzei, 2016) tradi-

3. I make use of the term propositions in a manner that aligns with Sarah E. Truman and Stephanie Springgay’s reading of this Whiteheadian notion of propositions as “hybrid[s] between pure potentialities and actualities” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 186). Propositions, for Truman and Springgay (2016, p. 259) “do not give information as to how they function in concrete instances but gesture to how they could potentialise; allow us to feel what may be; in that regard, propositions are “lures for feeling” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 25).”

tion of scholarship, shifts attention from prefigured methodologies and the foregrounding of epistemology (“what we can know about an object”) to an ethico-ontological engagement with “what a particular object does when we enact inquiry” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022, p. vii). My approach to inquiry follows St. Pierre’s encouragement to “experiment, invent, and create—not just to repeat.” (St. Pierre, 2023, p. 28). As such, my inquiries attend to the co-constitutive and “*intra-active*” (Barad, 2007)⁴ relationship between myself (as a researcher), the scholarly traditions within which I find my conceptual and methodological grounding, the human and more-than-human entities I inquire with (such as students, colleagues, learning materials etc.) and the temporal-spatial milieus composed through the entanglement of these co-constitutive relationships.

This introduction commences with an investigation of coloniality, neoliberalism and normative critique as pertinent value frameworks that pertain to HE in general. As a concrete grounding of these globally relevant concerns I, however, start from a pertinent interest in how these frameworks bear on the specificity of a South African context. My focus centres on how these three interrelated matrices disseminate through educational discourse and practice in the conceptualisation and reproduction of a “monohumanist” (Wynter & McKittrick 2015, p. 11) thinking-subject. In the section that follows, my argument echoes Sylvia Wynter’s call for the neces-

4. My use of the term “intra-active” (or intra-action), aligns with Barad’s conception that “it is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of components of phenomena become determinate and that particular concepts (that is, particular material articulations of the world) become meaningful.” (Barad, 2007, p. 139). As such, “relata do not preexist relations” (Barad, 2007, p. 140).

5. Wynter purposefully uses “defining” as opposed to ‘definition’ in order to emphasis the mutability of hegemonic norms, so as to challenge the presupposed stability of monohumanist conceptions of subjectivity (Wynter, 1984, p. 22).

sary “un/writing of our present normative *defining* of the secular mode of the Subject”⁵ (1984, p. 22 - emphasis added). My argument shares Wynter’s anticipation of the “dazzling creativity of the alternative challenge that would be opened up!” (Wynter & McKittrick 2015, p. 17), should we untether our conceptions of HE from the disciplinary and exclusionary force of unitary notions of identity.

1.1. Coloniality and the Reproduction of Monohumanism in Higher Education

In South Africa, the HE sector is haunted by historically and structurally embedded social injustices of colonialism and apartheid (Gray van Heerden, 2018, p. 15; McKenna 2023). While lively debates concerning decolonisation are ubiquitous, institutions have yet to fully grapple with the material practices that decoloniality requires (Gray van Heerden, 2018, p. 16). While established in 2012, almost 20 years into South Africa’s democratic history, one might assume a certain level of detachment between the CTCA and the colonial legacy and apartheid discourse that characterise the South African HE landscape. The CTCA, however, (as is the case with the majority of South African HEIs) is overtly Eurowestern-centric in its curriculum, pedagogy, assessment practices, as well as its understanding of the roles and relationships of institutions, educators and students.⁶ In the broader South African HE context, dominant curricula and educational practices fall short of accounting for the multiplicity of cultural identities and knowledge systems comprising the South African student population through the subtle

6. See also Pennington, Mokose, Smith, & Kawanu (2017).

reproduction of Eurowestern ideals and enlightenment thinking (Ngubane & Makua, 2021, p. 2). This dissertation is grounded in the assertion that decolonisation and transformation in HE is only made possible when moving beyond the question of epistemological inclusions. Instead of remaining stuck at the question of whose knowledges should come to matter, this thesis attends to the colonality embedded in the ontological assumptions disseminated through HE's reproduction of a particular genre of monohumanism as a hegemonic norm.

In his study on *The Coloniality of Being*, Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243) explicates how “coloniality” as an entrenched pattern of domination continues to structure “culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production” beyond the temporal confines of formalised colonial administration. Whereas colonialism refers to the historical European dispossession and appropriation of land and resources, practices of enslavement and the negation of indigenous peoples, cultures and histories in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania (from the fifteenth century onward), coloniality, as a structural arrangement of all-encompassing societal relations persists as an enduring process that reproduces power-imbalances grounded in colonial logic (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2023, p. 84). I approach coloniality, therefore, as the ever-present conditioning of contemporary life according to oppressive matrices that find their origin in colonialism as the equation of the category of ‘Human’ to exclusionary Eurowestern ideals.

Coloniality, as a contemporary dimension of HE, is deeply intertwined with the relationship between humanism and education. Classical humanism, on the one hand, serves as an ontological categorisation that seeks to define the human as separate to the natural world (the ‘object’ of

the natural sciences) and distinct from the spiritual realm (the ‘object’ of theology and mysticism) (Said, 2004, p. x). On the other hand, the humanist tradition functions as a venerative “yearning” towards those attributes that are found to be human through the idealised narration of their so-called intrinsic aspirational value (Said, 2004, p. x). The hegemonic humanism of humanism functions, therefore, as a *political category*—“a template of human auto-speciation” (Wynter, 1984, p. 23)—produced through the dialectics of exclusion that constitute its ontological framing. The human is reproduced as a genre of being, through the discursive narration of such exclusions as binary oppositions to its normative ideals (Snaza, 2015, p. 19-20). Humanism can thus be defined as “the belief that there exists such a thing as a ‘human’ coupled with the belief that this human should be the centre of one’s concerns” (Snaza, 2015, p. 20). This assumption of human exceptionalism presupposes an enlightenment view of education that positions the human (understood as an ontological figuration) as the ‘goal’ of a teleological progression towards its normalised ideals (Snaza, 2015, p. 20). Education, as such, functions as the pathway to becoming fully human. Humanist legacies of education thereby remain tethered to a colonising force powered by their allegiance to a particular “monohumanist mindset” (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015, p. 9)—that of the Cartesian conception of Man, figured as white, able bodyminded and in keeping with heteronormative hegemonies.

A Cartesian centring of the ‘cogito’ (the thinking subject, the ‘I’) as separate from the material world, splits, as Erin Manning (2015, p. 54) argues, experience into distinctive dimensions ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the mind. Such separation between a thinking-I and ‘his’ seemingly static, inert

surroundings reproduces the logic of human exceptionalism that figures the world as an inactive background, legible only through ‘his’ observation, classification, and measurement (St. Pierre, Jackson, & Mazzei, 2016, pp. 100–101). The historically embedded figuration of the thinking-I as a “god trick,” expressed through the ability to “[see] everything from nowhere” (Haraway, 1988, p. 581), promotes normalised values of distanced ‘objectivity’ and fixed ‘truths.’ Construed as the “non-situated Ego” (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213), the thinking-I presupposes an ontological separability which allows the subject to “speak” in ways that are “always hidden, concealed, erased from the analysis.” (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213). In this thesis, I argue that the severing of the self-possessed individual from ‘his’ relational entanglement within material reality constitutes a form of colonial violence that “cuts the fragile interwoven threads of existence” (Manning, 2023a, p. 14), imposing a form of “privileged irresponsibility” (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2023) that positions educational encounters and practices as disconnected from the dynamic tenuousness of “life-living” (Manning, 2023a, p. 14). In other words, the prescriptive matrices of hegemonic monohumanism disqualify certain modes of knowing, being and living, and exempt HE from the need to approach difference(s) with curiosity and care.

The current neoliberal articulation of normative monohumanism—defined by Wynter as “*homo oeconomicus*” (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015, p. 19)—functions as a form of neo-coloniality that treats difference(s) as the result of underdevelopment. The normative hegemony of colonial Whiteness is reproduced, in this framework, through the mimetic approximation of its ideals as made possible by the consumer-oriented free-market economy (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015, p. 20). The subordination of being to a

“teleological economic script” takes capital accumulation as the pathway to assimilation and, as such, freedom (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015, p. 10). Acceptable modes of being are thereby limited to that of active economic participation. Decolonisation, as a refusal of normative neoliberal frameworks is, therefore, essential in the face of the current substitution of the pursuit of knowledge by the pursuit of capital (Mbembe, 2016, p. 30).

1.2. The Neoliberal Conditioning of the Higher Education Sector

The question of decolonisation is inseparable from the question of neoliberalism in HE. As Achille J. Mbembe (2016, p. 30) argues in view of the coloniality of contemporary HE:

We need to decolonise the systems of access and management insofar as they have turned higher education into a marketable product, rated, bought and sold by standard units, measured, counted and reduced to staple equivalence by impersonal, mechanical tests and therefore readily subject to statistical consistency, with numerical standards and units.

Within the context of neoliberal capitalism, the entrepreneurial ‘learning-subject’ is expected to conform to “colonising norms of patriarchal structures and capitalist interests” to such a degree that “the very purpose of [education] has been fragmented, ahistoricised, instrumentalised and depoliticised [...]” (Darder, 2017, pp. 2, 12). HE’s impetus for transformation, and its essence of transformability is displaced by neoliberal governmentality in a manner that foregrounds “hyper-individualism”, “hyper-surveil-

lance”, the “economic determination of productivity,” and “competitive entrepreneurialism” (Kuntz, 2015, pp. 34-35). Co-opted by the spread of commercial principles and frameworks for statistical accountancy, universities have become “large systems of authoritative control”, continually under the scrutiny of quantitative evaluation (Mbembe, 2016, p. 30-31). Within the context of the widespread concern over the neoliberal reform of academia, the PHE sector figures as the pinnacle entrepreneurial face of capitalised education. As a PHEI, the CTCA is fully funded by student’s tuition fees (as private institutions in South Africa are not eligible for any public subsidies or research funding),⁷ while its private ownership is premised on the expectation of long-term profits in the form of dividends and the settlement of interest-bearing investment loans. The institution’s ability to function as a transformative HEI is therefore premised on its ability to function as a successful business. In addition to the necessity to appease private investors, the institution’s capacity to maintain financial stability is dependent on its ability to recruit students, which relies in turn on the institution’s capability to maintain regulatory credibility through its institutional registration and accreditation of its programme offerings. This intra-active entanglement of multiple value frameworks (economic, regulatory and transformation) textures my inquiry with complex frictions.

The troubling friction between economic concerns and the transformative potential of HE is made visible, in the South African context, by

7. The South African PHE sector is one in which academic institutions are explicitly positioned as business entities (and legislatively precluded from referring to themselves as universities). As national policy prohibits PHE from receiving any public funding, such organisations typically rely on utterly corporatised modes of (financial and human resources) management and client-service frameworks, as their financial sustainability rely solely on the relationship between their operational expenses and their number of enrolled students.

the Council on Higher Education's articulation of the purpose of higher education. HE's impetus for transformation is positioned here in tensile relation with the economic development needs of an established labour market. According to the CHE (2013, p. v - emphasis added), the role of HE concerns:

meet[ing] the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives [...] To address the development needs of society and provide the labour market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society, with the ever-changing high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern society [...] Contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens [... to encourage] the development of a reflective capacity and willingness to review and renew prevailing ideas, policies and practices based on a commitment to the common good [...] To contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge.

This lengthy extract makes visible the tension in HE between its dual objectives, driven on one side by the potential for transformation and on the other by the forces of capital. These objectives constitute what Daniel Halliday (2015) refers to as the *development* and *screening* functions of HE. Whereas the former speaks to the role of HE in contributing towards developing capacities for constructive citizenship, review and renewal, as well as the creation and sharing of new knowledge, the latter emphasises the ordering and socialisation of individuals and their aspirations according to the needs

of the labour market, through the evaluatory frameworks of existing knowledge. As made evident in the phrasing of the extracts above, the development and screening objectives of neoliberal HE are inseparably intertwined.

The South African private art and design HE sector is a highly competitive market of (mostly) homologous qualification offerings. As such, the urgency for institutional differentiation results in the promotion of discourses of *excellence*,⁸ prioritising individual achievement over *communal learning*, final outcomes over *learning processes*, and employable skills over *critical praxis*. PHEIs and their qualifications are promoted on the basis of graduate employment rates, student success in national and international competitions and the commercial (rather than pedagogical) track record of teaching staff. Narratives of institutional excellence enforce the proliferation of quantitative performance measurement, treating statistical information on employment, throughput and pass rates as vital currency (Gilroy & Du Toit, 2013, p. 257). The CHE (2021, p. 30) further identifies “[v]alue for money in relation to effectiveness and efficiency in relation to a range of parameters” as one of the four pillars of quality in HE. While these “parameters” are left undefined, the free-market logic of capitalised HE understands the surplus value of tuition fees as the promise of future employability as its return on investment. In my thesis, I am not suggesting that employability should be disregarded as a central focus of HE, especially considering the staggering unemployment rates in South Africa.⁹ Yet, in my discussion of postcapitalist propositions for the reconfiguration of HE

8. See Reading (1996, p. 32-33), on the use of discourses of excellence as validation for the bureaucratic policing of normativity.

9. The latest statistics (compiled in the third quarter of 2023) reports that 39.8% of South African individuals between the ages of 25 and 35 were unemployed (Statista, 2024).

assessment, in the final chapter of this dissertation, I seek to challenge the manner in which a fixation on pleasing the job market results in a dilution of critical thinking and exploratory practice.

This thesis concerns itself with the generative potential of HE that remains unexplored due to HEs direct linkage to the production of human capital. The positioning of HE as an entrepreneurial mode of self-fashioning echoes neoliberal capitalism's confluence of the labourer and the capitalist by figuring 'investment' in the self as the production of surplus value (Massumi, 2018, p. 32). Acts of higher learning thereby become meaningful primarily through their promise of future dividends in the form of employment, promotion and active economic participation. Critical engagements with transformative praxis are, consequently, often overshadowed by a supply-and-demand logic that hinges on competition and comparison in the individual acquisition of market-driven skills and knowledge (Schildermans, 2021b, p. 4). The client-service orientation of PHE furthermore positions students as consumers demanding certification and career success as the 'product' of their tuition fees (Rattray, 2018, p. 1489). HE is thereby figured as a transactional endeavour of teleological and progressive self-accrual (Lewis, 2014, p. 163). The understanding of learning as an "individualistic and individualising" process—what Gert Biesta (2013) refers to as the "learnification of the discourse of education"—is evident in the widespread emphasis on learning outcomes, learning pathways, learning strategies, and lifelong learning as entrepreneurial modes of self-fashioning.

Within the context of PHE, the hyper-individualism of the learning-subject as knowledge-consumer paradoxically congeals into an undifferentiated image of a student body as a homogenous whole. The politics

of liberal individualism presupposes an idealised image of the student (as self-motivated professional in-the-making), which results in individuals being measured through a system that indexes differences as oppositional divergences from normative ideals. This dialectic impulse for othering leads to the oppressive categorisation of individuals as “at-risk” students, “special needs” students, “previously disadvantaged” students, or “minority” students. The idealised model of the student functions as a generalised avatar for the student body, while the heterogeneous material bodyminds of individual students are often treated as mere statistical data in service of quantitative reporting. The political force of difference is disarmed by the neoliberal imperative for standardisation in terms of equitable ‘client service’ and processes of generalisation in service of efficiency. As such, HEIs run the risk of stripping acts and processes of knowing and coming-to-know of their *situated* and *relational positionality*. I take issue, in my thesis, with these individualistic and individualising tendencies of HE by highlighting firstly, the *processual* nature of learning as *embodied* and *materially entangled* (in Chapter 3), and secondly, the *(more-than-human) sociality of “study”* (Harney & Moton, 2013)¹⁰ as a practice of co-becoming (in Chapter 4).

As a value framework neoliberalism, however, expresses itself not only in the teaching and learning activities of HEI. It also manifests in the general spread of what John Weaver and Nathan Snaza (2017, p. 1056) refer to as “methodocentrism.” While this thesis does not aim to refute methods and methodologies as such, in Chapter 1, I aim to draw awareness to the

10. My understanding and use of the term ‘study’ stems from Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s conceptualisation of ‘black study’ in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (2013).

dangers rooted in the technicist proceduralisation of methods, which relegates notions of responsibility to the question of adherence to established methodological protocols (Kuntz, 2015, p. 11). When narrowing the scope of ethico-political accountability through the prioritisation of meeting standardised procedural requirements, one fails to question the assumptions from which these very requirements are constructed (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 14). Along with St. Pierre (2020, p. 163), I argue instead that prescriptive conventions of (humanist) qualitative methodologies promote a practice of separation through the enactment of Cartesian bifurcation as a paving of the way for legitimating what Aaron M. Kuntz (2015) construes as “extractive” tendencies. A “logic of extraction”, for Kuntz (2015, p. 44), arises from “a conservative system of rationality that privileges discrete, fully knowable entities that remain consistent across time and space”, that, therefore, fails to account the *entangled specificity of knowledges as situated, embodied and contingent*.

By rigidly enforcing predetermined procedures, conventional humanist research methods reproduce normative boundaries around what qualifies as legitimate knowledge or ‘truth’ (Weaver & Snaza, 2017, p. 1056). Operating under the guise of implied neutral objectivity, standardised methodological practices thereby function as apparatuses of truth-production that verify the value of the knowledges they produce through their adherence to the prescriptions of their established protocols (Kuntz, 2015, p. 101). Consequently, procedural enactments of methods are treated as hallmarks of “quality scholarship” (Weaver & Snaza, 2017, p. 1056). The determination of truth, therefore, hinges on the compliance to methodological truth-machines, while the manner in which such truths bolster

normalised assumptions remains largely unchallenged (Kuntz, 2015, p. 101; Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 14). What I refer to in this thesis as *extractive methodocentrism* enforces, therefore, a double-cut between: the ‘field’ (or phenomenon that serves as the object of research), the ostensibly neutral methodological truth-machines (or apparatuses of inquiry), and the resulting externalised truths (or research findings) produced by the analysis of data outside of the relational complexity of material entanglements (Kuntz, 2015, p. 99). The prefiguration of proceduralised ways of doing research serves to satisfy neoliberalist modes of standardised performance and efficiency measurement. However, these very apparatuses with their ‘pre-approved’ predictability are implicated in the “overproduction of extracted truths that contribute to the affective state of disorientation that has come to dominate our contemporary moment” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 95). In its promise of ordering chaos into intelligibility, prescriptive methodocentrism undermines the entangled dynamism of the world, thus restricting the possibility for new modes of knowing.

As a response to the disquiet over HEs reproduction of the coloniality of monohumanism and the neoliberal foregrounding of entrepreneurialism, I initially found an allegiance in critical pedagogy as a potential liberatory antidote to the concerning suppression of transformation in HE. The Freirian tradition, however, contains culpable reverberations of the dialectical dynamics of normative critique. As such, I map out my own movement from critical pedagogy to the potentialising force of ‘post-critical’ ethics as an important process that informs my gesture towards more response-able approaches to HE.

1.3. The Re-evaluation of Value: Beyond Normative Habits of Critique

My research project originally grew from my personal admiration for the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1993; 2005; 2018). The Freirian tradition of critical pedagogy rejects conceptions of learning as the unidirectional transferral of knowledge. Freire critiques such approaches for their instrumentalist role in the deployment of education as a process of disciplinary subjugation. Instead, critical pedagogy argues for education as an emancipatory process that unfolds through dialogical engagement between educators and students (Freire, 2018, p. 72-73), allowing the student to “learn from a position of agency” (Giroux, 2017, p. xii). For Freire (2014, p. 3), it is the task of the critical educator to realise practices of freedom through the vital act of “unveil[ing] opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be” (Freire, 2014, p. 3).

While sharing in its concern for the liberatory and transformational potential of HE, in this thesis, I move beyond critical pedagogy by arguing for a departure from the identitarian dialectics that undergird the normative traditions of critique that are implicated in Freire’s critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy in its foregrounding of human agency remains structured by a dialectical approach that positions the educator as an ‘external’ observer with an ‘objective’ view of what the student lacks and therefore needs to be taught (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2017, p. 17). The educator is seemingly valorised in a position of superiority from which s/he can choose to ‘free’ the student from their limited worldview (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2017, p. 17). In his conception of liberatory education, Freire, for

example, states that the driving force for critical pedagogy is to “unmask dominant lies” through practices of “unveiling” or “bringing out the truth” (Freire, 2014, p. 2). Freire, therefore, tasks the pedagogue with the duty of revealing what is wrong in the world with the ultimate goal of projecting a remedial pathway towards liberation and societal betterment. This dynamic of ‘debunking’ and ‘remedy’ is rooted in a dialectical tradition of critique that proceeds by means of gestures of negation. Negative critique (Bunz, Kaiser, & Thiele, 2017)¹¹ however, inadvertently perpetuates the normalising of inequality through its disavowal of difference(s) and the implied suggestion of merely replacing one all-encompassing status quo with another (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2017, p. 17).

I resonate here with Naomi Hodgson, Joris Vlieghe, and Piotr Zamojski’s expression of the need for *post-critical* approaches to pedagogies, not as a means of promoting anti- or non-critical relativism or apathy but rather as an ethical move premised on the need “to defend, to protect, to reclaim that which is of value in education” (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2020 p. 2). My move towards post-critical orientations responds to the urgency to care for what matters in HE in ways that exceed the neoliberalist reduction of value to that which might be indexed through performance measurements (such as through-put rates, employment rates, student satisfaction rates etc.) (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2020, p. 2). A (re)orientation towards what may be figured as post-critical ethics furthermore seeks to diverge from the “monohumanism”—“modern, white, bourgeois,

11. For further explication on the inherent problems with negation as basis of/for critique see Mercedes Bunz, Birgit M. Kaiser, and Kathrin Thiele (2017). These authors argue that “[i]nstead of maintaining negation, opposition (and judgment, we might add) as the traditional attributes of critique, a crucial step would be to recognise the complicity of oneself, of one’s criticism.” (Bunz, Kaiser, & Thiele, 2017, p. 7).

colonial, with a scientific-evolutionary confidence to claim universal validity” (Thiele, 2022, p. 23)—that secures its reproduction in the normative tradition of dialectical critique. As such, this dissertation is prompted by Kathrin Thiele’s question, “How, as a critical theorist [/educator], do I want to handle the challenge that in engaging with critique as a transformative practice, its very logic—linear progress narrative and sequentiality—might actually re-institutionalise itself?” (Thiele, 2022, p. 21). Stated differently, this thesis asks: How might criticality—as a companion to reading, writing, thinking, inquiry and practice—be oriented differently, in modes that do not reinstate new “grand narratives” (Lyotard, 1993)¹² and normative frameworks that continue to perpetuate a dialectic of exclusion?

In response to this question, I follow Brian Massumi’s assertion of the need for “*alternative conceptions of value*” as a counterpoint to the manner in which “standards of judgement are simply allowed to operate implicitly.” (Massumi, 2018, p. 3). Generalised normative frameworks (such as the hierarchical and binarised distinctions between subject/object, teacher/student, able/disabled) are reproduced through the logic of implicit objectivity that patterns knowing, teaching and learning in omnipresent relation to exclusions of difference (Manning, 2020a, p. 112). A movement beyond the oppressive strictures of normative critique is made possible only when conceptions of value are expanded towards what lies beyond hegemonic standards of judgment (Massumi, 2018, p. 3). Massumi (2018) refers to this ‘beyond’ (or unaccounted-for surplus) as *occurrent value*—the unclassifiable indeterminacies of an occurrence in the midst of its emergent

12. By “grand narratives” Jean Francois Lyotard (1993, p. 19) refers to modes of narrating reality that perform a legitimising function through their assumed universality.

unfolding. Experiences, such as educational encounters in the indeterminacy of their processual taking-place, have “no inherent value [...] nor is there a hierarchy of value” that pre-exists the specificity of the conditions (the ‘this’, ‘here’ and ‘now’) of their coming into being (Manning, 2020a, p. 19). This processual reconfiguring of the notion of value as occurrent disrupts the validity of prefigured hierarchies and universalised norms.

When engaging occurrent value as a proposition for post-critical educational inquiry, my line of questioning shifts (as prompted by Manning, 2020a, p. 19) from a concern over ‘inherent’ value—what matters in a learning event?—to the *conditioning* of value, which asks the following question: How does something come to matter in this particular instance, right here and now? Phrased differently, throughout this thesis, I set out to ask how value makes itself known within the specificity of its immanent *intra-actions* with the co-constitutive conditioning of what becomes thinkable or doable.¹³ In my inquiries—with pedagogical and assessment encounters, as I develop them in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this thesis, I speak to this question of situated specificity by cascading into other/alternative phrasings,¹⁴ in order to resist the urge that so easily lures one back into grand narratives: How might the acoustic milieu of this teaching space enable certain modes of speaking and not others? How might one attend to the particularity of responses enabled by the eruption of this cacophonous echo? How might one value this response from a student who prefers not to speak against

13. As a queering of the conventional understanding of causality, Barad (2007, p. 139) makes use of intra-action (in contrast to interaction) to acknowledge that entities do not pre-exist their being in relation (Barad, 2007, p. 139). For Barad, “[i]t is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of components of phenomena become determinate and that particular concepts (that is, particular material articulations of the world) become meaningful.” (Barad, 2007, p. 139).

14. See Juelskjær (2023) on the notion of “cascading questions” as a mode of inquiry.

a backdrop of attentive silence? How might the specificity of this mode of speaking enable differentiated modes of hearing, thinking and doing?

Engaging in feminist modalities of post-criticality, an acknowledgement of occurrent value aligns also with Kathrin Thiele, Birgit M. Kaiser and Timothy O’Leary’s assertion that critical analysis should not be built on a taken-for-granted distinction between a knowing subject and a separate fully-knowable object (2022, p. 6). In their methodological orientations, critical engagements require an acknowledgement that evaluation *emerges from within* the entangled co-constitutive interconnectedness that comprises an occurrence (Thiele, Kaiser, & O’Leary, 2022, p. 6). My tendencies to the relational complexity of encounters are guided by Erin Manning’s proposition of *immanent critique* as a modality that “builds the tools for valuation from the process itself [...] as an engagement-with [rather than] a judgement-over” (Manning, 2023b, p. 57). As an “opening [of] thought towards the movement of thought, engaging it at the immanent limit, where it is still fully in the act” (Manning, 2016, p. 28), immanent critique diverges from lack-based judgment by staying with the incompleteness of what is not yet known as certainty. Manning (2016, p. 29) argues that “[t]he unquantifiable within experience can only be taken into account if we begin with a mode of inquiry that refutes initial categorisation.” When emphasis is directed towards the affirmation of the co-constitutive nature of the occurrent value of educational events, criticality is reconfigured as an immanent practice that cannot be disentangled from its relational emergence from within the specificity of experience unfolding. Immanent critique thereby offers this thesis a technique through which to circumvent claims to transcendence by acknowledging that both the knower and the known “are

immanent to the field's composition" (Manning, 2016, p. 30) and, as such, cannot be situated prior to their co-becoming within the event. Immanent critique, as I suggest in my dissertation, therefore presupposes an ethics of response-ability by attending to the dynamic co-constitution of meaning and matter in their interplay of responding and enabling responsiveness.

2. Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

In troubling the contextual concerns highlighted in Section 1, my thesis aims to explore specifically how notions of response-ability might be engaged to reconfigure conceptions of value in higher education research, pedagogy and assessment as a means of resistance to the neoliberal capture of academia. As such, the objectives of this thesis are as follows: Firstly, I aim to conceptualise alternative approaches to educational research that challenge the normativity of extractive methods by attuning to processes of 'writing-with' as a foregrounding of the material entanglements that my inquiries co-compose with. Secondly, I aim to expand the material considerations of pedagogical practices to account for the relational, processual, embodied and affective dimensions of learning. And thirdly, I consider the potential of postcapitalist reworkings of the notion of value as a means of challenging normative approaches to the assessment of artistic practices in HE. Taken together, these aims speak to the need for HE to deepen its engagement with experimental embodied practices in material-spatial-temporal settings. By approaching pertinent educational touchpoints through the propositional sensibility of creative exploration rather than the foreclosures of normative critique, this thesis aims to contribute to the innovative

expansion of how HE comes to recognise and unbridle the transformative potential of *response-able doings* of research, pedagogy and assessment.

My dissertation is guided, in service of this overarching objective, by the following research question: *How might educational research, pedagogy and assessment be reconfigured through response-able practices as generative modes of resistance to the neoliberal capture of higher education?* I approach this question by focussing individually on pertinent modalities of educational engagement through the following sub-questions:

- How might a foregrounding of material entanglements reconfigure educational *research practices* in ways that promote response-ability?
- How might an expansion of material considerations shape *pedagogic practices* in ways that enable response-ability?
- How might *assessment practices* be reimagined through an attunement to postcapitalist notions of value as a means of fostering response-able assessment?

My central focus on response-ability as a concern for the exploratory enactment rather than ‘distanced’ theorising of HE aims to contribute to the development of emergent post-critical approaches that orient HE practices toward conceptual and methodological propositions that emerge from *diffractive* intra-actions with posthumanisms, feminist new materialisms and process philosophy.¹⁵

15. My use of “diffraction” as a concept and methodological orientation is rooted in the theorising of Haraway (1997; 2000; 2004) and Barad (2007) as explicated in section 3.2 of this introduction.

3. Conceptual and Methodological Orientations: Postphilosophical Queerings of Value in Higher Education

New forms of knowledge require new forms of evaluation and, even more so, new ways of valuing the work we do.

(Manning, 2016, p. 27)

Value in classical modes of humanist educational research is stringently monitored by the concepts and categories of prescriptive qualitative methods (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 603). The advent of the 21st century, however, brought about a distributed interest in *new empiricisms and new materialisms* as challenges to the bifurcation of epistemological and ontological concerns often taken for granted in the reproduction of established social science methods (St. Pierre, Jackson, & Mazzai, 2016, p. 99). The proliferation of posthuman scholarship around intersections of post qualitative, new materialist, new empirical and ecological interests requires a deeper engagement with how their ethico-onto-epistemologies can be made manifest through methodological inventiveness (Taylor & Hughes, 2016, p.1).¹⁶ As such, this thesis responds to the necessity, raised by Carol A. Taylor and Christina Hughes (2016, p. 1), to attend to the various ways in which theoretical debates might spill over into embodied encounters with/in the doing of educational practices.

16. The phrase “ethico-onto-epistemology” speaks to the inseparable entanglement of ethics, ontology and epistemology, and therefore offer a complete reconfiguration of classical conceptions of “the nature of being, knowing, and valuing” (Barad, 2007, p. 409, ft. 10).

With the aim of challenging the structural hegemony of coloniality, neoliberalism and normative critique, I turn, in this thesis, toward what might be referred to as *postphilosophical orientations* as a means to forge alternative conceptions of value in HE. Postphilosophies offer a mobility beyond “interpretivist” frameworks by grounding inquiry in philosophical praxis (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022, p. vii). The use of the prefix ‘post’ points to the generative potential of what becomes thinkable and doable once the assumption of foundational universal theories are cast aside. As such, Alecia Y. Jackson and Lisa A. Mazzei (2022; Mazzei & Jackson, 2024) make use of the term “postfoundational” approaches, in order to describe the postphilosophical thrust of “poststructuralism, posthumanism, postcolonialism, feminist new materialism, indigenous methodologies, speculative pragmatism, radical empiricism, new empiricism, agential realism, immanent ontologies, affect theory, [and] process philosophy” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022, p. vii). In my engagement with these theoretical perspectives I argue, in this thesis, that the reconfiguration of HE demands *ongoing practical experimentation* with its “modalities of approach” (Moten & Harney, 2021, 55:02); and I, therefore, direct my practices of inquiry towards the tracing of *propositional conceptual and methodological postphilosophical orientations*. In a purposeful avoidance of “modalities of arrival or capture” (Moten & Harney, 2021, 55:05), I aim to resist the rigidity of frameworks and formulaic methodologies as well as the conventional categorisation of research into the distinct bifurcation of ‘theory’ and ‘method’. Through the practice of (re)orientation—orienting oneself in each inquiry anew—as explored in the methodological interventions presented in Chapters 1 and 2, I map out my resonances with the ethico-onto-epistemological momentum of post-

philosophical scholarship as my primary modality for inquiry. Instead of a movement towards conclusive ‘answers’ my conceptual-methodological orientations assemble as propositional “cartographies” (Braidotti, 2019) with which to *produce*, rather than uncover immanent modes of post-critique that offer the potential for (re)considering how to conceive of value in HE.

In addition to creatively and pedagogically exploring how post-philosophical propositions might (re)orient educational practices, my thesis simultaneously aims to performatively embody such orientations through the act of writing as a mode of inquiry. My approach to writing-as-inquiry follows Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth St. Pierre’s assertion (2003, p. 967) that *writing* presents a “seductive and tangled *method* of discovery” that constitutes thinking and analysis. In this thesis, I approach writing not merely as representations of fully-formed-knowing. Rather, I make use an exploratory mode of *writing-with* as a practice of emergent discovery and, thereby, as a performative enactment of the material-discursive orientations explicated in this introduction. Throughout my thesis I rely on the practice of writing-with in a manner that is indebted to Maria Puig de la Bellacasa’s conception of “thinking-with” (2017). As an approach attuned to “creat[ing] new patterns out of previous multiplicities” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 72), I write-with a parasite (in Chapter 1), autie-biographical texts (in Chapter 2),¹⁷ emergent cartographies and choreographies (in Chapter 3), embodied encounters with the practice of study (in Chapter 4) and propositions for postcapitalist praxis (in Chapter 5). As opposed to the

17. Autie-biography refers to a literary genre concerned with the autobiographical writing of autistic writers.

limiting foreclosures of normative critique, writing-with offers my inquiries an attunement to the affirmation of irreducible multiplicities as an ethical foregrounding of “[a]nd [as] the predominant word of writing-with—before *or, either, rather.*” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 75). The authorship of my thesis chapters thereby emerges through diffractive encounters with theoretical-methodological orientations as processes of writing-with (a) posthuman and new materialist conceptions of relational ontologies, (b) agential realist approaches to the affirmation of difference, (c) processual readings of the ecological dimensions of educational encounters, and (d) feminist conceptions of an ethics of response-ability.

3.1. Posthumanism and New Materialism: Towards Relational Orientations

The posthuman, for Rosi Braidotti (2013; 2019; 2020) serves as an ontological cartography with which to map who ‘we’ might be in the process of becoming, when critically replacing the “eurocentric category of universal Man” with “construct[ions of] new subjects of knowledge, through immanent assemblages or transversal alliances”, which include human and more-than-human others (Braidotti, 2019, p. 7). This decentring thrust of posthuman transversality expressed through its conceptualisation of subjectivity-as-contingent aids me in my aim to challenge the exclusionary nature of normative monohumanist hegemony. In support of the aim of rethinking the human, posthuman educational research demands and is bolstered by a refiguring of “ontology, epistemology and axiology” as well as the way in which they are thought in relation (Taylor & Hughes, 2016, p.

1). The posthuman reconfiguration of ethics, knowing and being (ethico-onto-epistemologies) as inseparable in their co-constitutive entanglement has important implications for how higher educators conceive of the relationship between acts of knowledge production, processes of co-becoming, and ethical accountability to human and more-than human others (Taylor & Hughes, 2016, p. 3).

Queering the assumed separability and representational correspondence between the material world and knowledge practices disputes the excessive power afforded to language “in determining our ontologies” (Barad, 2007, p. 133). As such, my practice of writing-with diverges from the centring of discourse alone, to instead attend to the “performative” (Barad, 2003) nature of educational “practices/doings/actions” (Barad, 2003, p. 802), and how they constituted “worldings” (Barad, 2003, p. 802).¹⁸ In my ongoing concern for material entanglements, I let myself be guided, in this thesis, by Karen Barad’s argument of the inseparability of the ‘material’ and the ‘discursive’, with the understanding that knowledge practices (such as research, teaching, learning, and assessment) are indivisibly entangled and mutually co-constitutive with material intra-actions (Newfield, Bozalek, & Romano, 2023, p. 171). In grappling with co-constitutive entanglement of matter and meaning, I think-with Barad’s conception of bodies (human and more-than-human) as “material-discursive phenomena” (Barad, 2007, p. 153) rather than bounded objects with inherent and pre-given properties—as “relations without pre-existing relata.” (Barad, 2007, p. 139). This relational understanding of ontology necessitates an attunement to the

18. Marisol de la Cadena (2015, pp. 291-292) describes worlding as “practices that create (forms of) being with (and without) entities, as well as the entities themselves. Worlding is the practice of creating relations of life in a place and the place itself.”

“productive qualities of the co-implication of bodies [human and more-than-human], power, ethics and subjectivities” within educational milieus (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2021, p. 64).

Learning-becoming, a concept I develop in Chapter 3 of this thesis, highlights this entangled and co-constitutive nature of learning. Rooted in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s philosophy of immanence, learning-becoming is not figured as teleological progressions along a pre-mapped path, but rather as expressions of differentiated embodiments emerging with-in the specificity of the entangled relations that co-compose particular classroom encounters.¹⁹ My exploration of learning-becoming, therefore, articulates through an attentiveness to the processual convergences and dissipations of the (human and more-than-human) relations that comprise each pedagogical encounter as an ever-emergent ‘middle’, rich with the potential for transformation. The relational co-becoming-with of an educational experience expresses itself through its *affective* tonality (Massumi, 2015) that directs processes of learning-becoming in ways that cannot be accounted for by the individual volition of neither the teacher nor the student.

Attending to the relational nature of learning-becoming challenges conventional conceptions of agency by decentring the thinking-subject (as the one who wields the power to act). Foregrounding agency as *agencement* draws my attention to the manner in which classroom encounters—as relational webs of co-constitutive material entanglements—(re)orient the conditions of learning-becoming (Manning, 2020a, p. 36). The Deleuzoguattarian concept of *agencement* (translated by Massumi as “assemblage”) de-

19. See Deleuze & Guattari (1987, pp. 237-238, 293)

links agency from the assumption of discrete subjects and objects to attend to the relational “force of distributed directionality in the event” (Manning, 2016, p. 137). This emphasis on the distributed nature of relational agentiality affords me a *politics of affirmation* that begins with the in-between of relation rather than a *politics of identity* that views agency as the property of exclusionary individuals or groups (Manning, 2016, p. 123). My thinking-with *agencement* attends to the middling indeterminacy of learning experiences “in the pre of [their] categorisation” (Manning, 2016, p. 123), and thereby resists the oppressive ordering of individuals into hegemonic identitarian frameworks. My encounters with pedagogical and assessment events are rich with distributed *agencement* and therefore present the capacity for creating new linkages, unanticipated movements of through and propositions for new modes of existence (Manning, 2016, p. 124). As such, my inquiries-with learning events proceed from the primary understanding that “[t]here are only emergent relations” (Manning, 2016, p. 29), therefore demanding that I approach each encounter with a curiosity attuned to its unique relational specificity.

What is needed when attending to relational ways of inquiry are modes of reading that explore the interstices between assumed subject/object divisions. As such, this thesis echoes Kaiser’s question, “What might come into view if we attended to reading events not as sites of ethical reappraisals of a reading subject [...] but as (a politics of) diffractive pattern formation?” (Kaiser, 2021, p. 35). Or, put differently, how might one engage inquiry as a process of diffraction that refuses the flattening of vibrant ecologies of emergence to bounded and hierarchical subject/object dynamics?

3.2. Affirmations of Difference(s): Towards a Diffractive Orientation

In echoing Kaiser’s movement towards a politics of diffraction (in the quotation above), my dissertation relies on diffraction as a theoretical concept and methodological orientation that accounts for the productive value of encounters with difference(s). Donna Haraway conceives of diffraction as an alternative orientation to reflection, which merely serves to “displace the same elsewhere” (Haraway, 2000, p. 101).²⁰ Reflection, as an optical metaphor for research and practice, assumes a stance of distanced objectivity—“putting thought in the mind, out of the body; [and] placing the body outside of its relation to the world.” (Manning, 2016, p. 189). Reflection, in this light, separates the researcher from what Manning refers to as the “ecologies of encounter” (Manning, 2016, pp. 28), and in doing so, flattens the differential unfolding of experience to the “infinite play of images between two facing mirrors” (Barad, 2003, p. 803). Reflection, as an approach to educational research, in other words, fails to account for the intra-active co-constitutive force of encounters with otherness (as the differential excess to preformulated categories of knowing and doing), and thereby risks remaining stuck at the level of unwittingly repeating exclusionary hegemonic assumptions.

Haraway’s use of diffraction offers me an alternative orientation to conceptualising difference by building on Trinh Minh-ha’s conception of an “inappropriate/d other” as a “critical difference *within*”—a relationality that

20. Haraway first introduces diffraction as an alternative metaphor to reflection in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouseTM* (1997).

exceeds the domination that stems from “repeating the Sacred Image of the Same” (Haraway, 2004, p. 70; Haraway, 2000, p. 102).²¹ Haraway (2004, p. 70) thinks-with Minh-ha to propose diffraction as a *counter-normalising* orientation for attending to difference(s) in ways that demand “intellectual, cultural and political” *inventiveness* that move beyond the rhetoric of ‘the original’ and its ‘copies.’ Difference, as the underlying constant of all existence (Deleuze, 1994, p. 57), appears in the phenomena of diffraction through the formation of interference patterns, theorised by Barad as *superpositions* (the overlapping confluence of differentiated components, irreducible to the sum of its now-inseparable parts) (Barad, 2007). Engaging with superpositions—through the diffractive reading of multiple scholarly and other texts, student feedback on embodied experiences, and my own sensorial encounters—orients my thesis towards affirmative engagements with difference(s) as the *generative surplus* rather than the deficit of normativity. As a methodological orientation, diffraction does not aim to theorise difference(s) but rather serves as a practice for “mapping the *effects* of difference” (Haraway, 2004, p. 70 - emphasis added). I attune to diffraction as the reading of multiple texts (or concepts/experiences/affects) through one another by paying “close respectful responsive and response-able (enabling re-sponse) attention to the details of a text; that is, it is important to try to do justice to a text.” (Barad in Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012, p. 13).²²

21. See Minh-ha (1986).

22. Barad positions “doing justice to a text” as countermeasure to the epistemological violence that stems from “making a caricature of someone’s work [or simply] knocking it down” (Barad in Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012, p. 13). Instead, doing justice to a text proceeds by “working reiteratively, reworking the spacetime-mattering of thought patterns.” (Barad in Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012, p. 13).

My diffractive orientation materialises through experimentations in writing and formatting (as is visible in the interjections of autie-biographical texts in Chapter 2, poetic assemblages in Chapter 3, and sketches of accounts of response-able study in Chapter 4). These explorations in decentring the notion of unitary authorship, offer my inquiries generative encounters with forms of unanticipated alterity that propels my thinking forward—not through mere theorisation, but through engagements with the practice of diffraction. I follow Barad’s proposition (in Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012, p. 13) that diffraction is about “taking what you find inventive and trying to work carefully with the details of patterns of thinking (in their very materiality) that might take you somewhere interesting that you never would have predicted.” Attuning my orientation to inquiry to the dynamic and diffractive generativity of encounters with difference(s) urges me in each encounter (with students, concepts and/or texts) to attend to the material specificity of how entities assemble to co-compose the processual unfolding of an event.

3.3. Ecologies of Encounter: Towards a Processual Orientation

The processual nature of educational encounters informs the ecological orientation of my thesis as a valuable antidote to the habitual familiarity of normative assumptions regarding the preceding nature of subject/object relations. Manning (2016, p. 3), in keeping with the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1978), describes an *event* (the when-and-where of experience actualising) as the primary ontological unit. She argues, in other words, for events as irreducible phenomena that constitute the basis

of experience. Subject/object divisions thereby emerge from within events through the process of contingent co-constitution rather than being defined by a pre-existing omnipresence (Manning, 2014, p. 164). Process philosophies offer an “understanding [of] the world as an ongoing process in continual transformation.” (Massumi, 2015, p. viii), and as such, present a mode of engagement that commences from the “middling” (Manning, 2020a, p. 33)²³ of experience, rather than the assumed centrality of the subject.

Events are “utterly singular” (Massumi, 2013, p. xvi) and cannot be separated from the specificity of their situatedness as dynamic (re)configurations of “spacetime-mattering” (Barad, 2007). While presenting a generic tonality of being but one iteration of a series of similar encounters, an educational event (such as a lecture, seminar, discussion session, or workshop) carries an “irreducible uniqueness that comes with the contingent ‘what else’ of its occurrence” (Massumi, 2013, p. xvi). Whereas student-centred approaches reproduce human exceptionalist frameworks through the hierarchical arrangement of individuals and the normative indexing of difference, the ecological dimension of an event-based orientation destabilises subject/object binaries and instead attends to the immanence of co-constitutive relations (Bozalek & Taylor, 2021, p. 66; Manning, 2016, p. 12). By foregrounding the more-than-human reciprocal constitution of pedagogical encounters—the acknowledgement that educational events are made up of bodyminds, things, technologies and environments—directs my inquiry away from the assumption of stable identities by asking what the materi-

23. Middling is a term used by Manning (2020a, p. 33) to signal the incomplete immediacy of experience as “[n]ot first a body, then a world, but a worlding through which bodyings emerge.” An acknowledgement of middling is an acknowledgement that “there is never a subject that preexists an occasion of experience.” (Manning, 2020a, p. 33).

al co-constitution of particular pedagogical and assessment events make possible (Bozalek & Taylor, 2021, p. 66).

The entangled singularity of the educational experiences I write-with, demand modes of inquiry that are less interested in the ‘what’ and more concerned with ‘how experience comes together in the assembled incompleteness of what will have been’ (Massumi, 2013, p. xvi). Particularly in Chapter 3, where I engage with the embodied nature of learning-becoming, and Chapter 4, where I attend to the affective sociality of practices of study, my inquiries-with learning events try to resist modalities of descriptive explanation as the fullness of experience cannot be captured by a posteriori abstractions. Instead, my writing-with learning events (rather than writing *about* them) serves as a diffractive modality that traces patterns of difference amidst their entangled processes of emergence. This attunement to process serves as a purposeful antidote to notions of conclusive finality—which risk *interpreting* educational practices through reductive ready-made concepts that fail to account for their emergent differentiation. As an invitation for, what I want to refer to here as *speculative addition*, my writing-with educational encounters remain open to curiosity as a mode of responsiveness that asks how an event might shape the experience of learning-becoming otherwise? Approximating the work of “radical empiricism”, my mode of inquiry in this thesis—“into the midst” of the unrepresentable *more-than* of experience—aims to account for the generative value of what remains unaccounted for by normative modes of evaluative judgement (Manning, 2016, pp. 31). This is a mode of inquiry concerned with “diving in, past contradictions straight to *composition*” (Massumi, 2013, p. x). My practice of writing-with co-composes with the specificity of particular events in

their processual emergence and finds attunement with immanent human and more-than-human embodied choreographies as emergent practices of study. As such, I engage HE not as a series of pathways towards pre-figured outcomes, but as exploratory unfoldings of learning-becoming.

3.4. Response-ability: Orienting towards Responding and Enabling Responsiveness

In its emphasis on processes of collective becoming, my dissertation affirms the value of *response-ability* as a gesture that “always takes us somewhere new [where] we are not quite ourselves anymore—or at least the selves that we were, but rather ourselves in encounter with another.” (Tsing, 2015, p. 46). My central foregrounding of response-ability is concerned with enabling response from the (human and more-than-human) other without enforcing the dialectics of assumed separability. As such, my orientation towards response-ability develops from a political refusal of the metaphysics of individualism and an ethical commitment to the relational understanding of all being as inseparably interconnected (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2023, p. 63). My inquiries-with response-ability materialise through experiments in “collective knowing and doing” (Haraway, 2016b, 34) that are deeply entangled as co-constitutive encounters with persons, environments, objects, affects, texts, and the material practice of writing. While writing from the midst of humanist neoliberal academia and its normalising frameworks of individualism, fully-formed outcomes and generalising efficiencies, I turn towards response-ability as an ecological (re)orientation that might generate propositions for reconfiguring educational practices in ways that enliv-

en the transformative force of HE. In contrast to the typical understanding of responsibility as a premeditated and calculated performance chosen by an individual person from a sense of obligation, my engagements with pedagogical encounters are oriented towards response-ability as an embodied yet uncontainable relation that precedes conscious intentionality (Kleinman & Barad, 2012, p. 81). To be response-able requires an openness that erodes the supposed edges of the unitary subject in order to cultivate attentiveness to one's "ontological entanglement with the other" (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2023, p. 65). Response-able ethics, as a further development from this openness, no longer focuses on individual responsibility but rather emphasises the iterative practice of "responding and enabling responsiveness" (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 24).

The response-ability I hope to evoke through the pedagogical interventions discussed in my thesis are multidirectional gestures towards "being ethically in touch with the other" (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 24). This "ethics of contact" necessitates the traversing of the space-time between myself and (human and more-than-human) others, piercing through the assumed stable location of being as a becoming-with-the-other in the reciprocity of mutual touching (Manning, 2007, p. 46). Gestural movements towards each other require curious engagement with "contact zones" (or superpositions) where "chains of touching" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 116) trace the layered rhizomatic entanglements of collective learning-becoming in co-constitutive relation. The reciprocity of response-ability always moves towards the promise to respond again in a future yet unknown (Manning, 2007, p. 116). Chains of touching thereby offer lures for speculating what else relation might make possible (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017,

p. 116). As such, I approach my encounters with inquiry as a movement towards a speculative horizon of a “justice-to-come”(Kleinman & Barad, 2012, p. 81),²⁴ not as a progression towards determinate answers or all-encompassing solutions but with the impetus of seeding questions that enable the continuous cascading of yet-unknown responses. The very point of response-ability, for Barad (Kleinman & Barad, 2012, p. 81), is “to live the questions and to help them flourish.”

Throughout this thesis, response-ability guides the way in which I ask questions. I remind myself to attend to the manner in which the asking of questions “constrains and conditions” responses (Kleinman & Barad, 2012, p. 81). Questions are engaged, therefore, not as “innocent queries” but as practices of ethical engagement that give form to responsiveness (Kleinman & Barad, 2012, p. 81). Unlike the methodocentric representationism that stems from a logic of extraction (as I have shown earlier in this introduction), my inquiries-with response-ability seek to gain reciprocal acknowledgement of what matters in the sociality of co-constitutive collectivity. Being open to the unexpected and attentive to enabling response, response-ability does not legitimate itself through normative frameworks but instead opens up to the “multiplicity of ways of knowing the world, in a mode of collective experimentation.” (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2023, p. 69). These collective educational moments of relational knowing and becoming do not necessarily transform the classroom into a pleasurable habitat, yet they offer ‘us’ a situated specificity from which ‘we’ might learn (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 116), and from which ‘we’ might grow our sense of ac-

24. Building on the Jacques Derrida, Barad (in Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 33) conceives of justice as “always to-come, and always a matter of an incalculable number of entanglements [...] it is infinite and we will never arrive, finally.”

countability and from which ‘we’ can foster our ongoing collective practices for “render[ing] each other capable” (Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, p. 882).

4. Outline of Chapters

This thesis consists of five anonymously peer-reviewed journal articles. Chapter 1: *Writing-with a Parasite Discolouring One’s Skin: Towards Inquiries of Change*, presents my methodological point of departure. As a ‘departure’, however, this chapter grapples with a beginning that is always-already a *middle* (Manning, 2020a, p. 33). By engaging inquiry from a stance that assumes that “[n]either the knower nor the known can be situated in advance of the occasion’s coming to be” (Manning, 2016, p. 30), this chapter takes the ‘middling’ of experience emerging as the already active field that the writing co-composes with. Written during the Covid-19 pandemic in a time of national ‘lock-down’, this chapter approaches inquiry from a localised site. Not having physical access to shared classroom experiences as embodied encounters, I turned towards my body as the site of inquiry. In this chapter, I write-with a parasite (*Pityriasis Versicolor*) living on my skin to explore the possibilities of engaging inquiry as a materially entangled process of co-composition. Together, we co-parasite (through acts of diffractive para-citation) as an exploration of what we might learn about inquiry from our situated material commingling. This chapter poses the question: *how might we engage inquiry, not as a mode of static and distanced observation, but as a process of dynamic attunement to material entanglements?*

By reading Sarah E. Truman’s techniques for thinking about research-creation (Truman, 2022) and Aaron M. Kuntz’s notions of *methodological parrhesia* (Kuntz, 2015; 2019; 2021a; 2021b) through the material feminisms of Barad (2007), Haraway (1988; 2016a; 2016b), Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), and Wilson (2015), this chapter aims to unsettle the humanist assumptions—human exceptionalism, representationalism, and the notion of distanced objectivity—that undergird *methodocentric* approaches to educational research. Motivated by St. Pierre’s (2018; 2020) conceptualisations of *post qualitative inquiry*, this chapter sets out to situate this thesis within an ethico-onto-epistemological (Barad, 2007) orientation that refuses “extractive” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 12) approaches to educational research. By emphasising the entanglement of ethics, knowing and becoming as mutually implicated and inseparable dimensions of inquiry, this chapter works towards a conceptual foregrounding of *response-ability* as a central concern to be explored throughout the remaining chapters of this thesis. This chapter’s critical concern for the effects of methods ignites a pivotal methodological curiosity that spills over into the chapters that follow, where the implications of methodological orientations expand to include research practices, pedagogical practices, and assessment practices in HE. The ethico-onto-epistemological entanglements of methods thereby arrives as a central concern in my exploration of response-able practices in HE.

After my initial exploration of inquiry as a practice co-constituted by more-than-human material entanglements, Chapter 2: *Cripqueering Method in Posthuman Educational Research: Diffractive writing-with A/autisms* furthers my experimentation with non-normative methodologies in service of response-able educational research. With the intention of contrib-

uting towards posthuman approaches to educational inquiry, this chapter proposes *cripqueering* as a methodological orientation that diffracts the *queerness of disidentification* (Muñoz, 1999) through the post-identitarian urge of *autistic perception* and *voicing* (Manning, 2016; 2020a; Manning & Massumi, 2014) and the *demi-rhetoricity of neuroqueerness* (Yergeau, 2018). As a central research question, this chapter explores how approaches to inquiry might find response-able attunement to modalities of neuroqueerness in order to attend to what St. Pierre (2018, p. 607) describes as the “too strange and too much [...], the intensive, barely intelligible variation in living that shocks us and asks us to be worthy of it.”

With reference to Édouard Glissant’s (2010; 2020b) concept of *errantry* as the rhizomatic tracing of relations (Glissant, 2020b, p. 9), this chapter questions how posthuman approaches to inquiry might be expanded through the errant tracing of neuroqueer becomings-with. By foregrounding autistic perception, voicing, and the queer rhetoric of stimming (as the ‘more-than’ of distanced observation and representationalist articulation) as a sensitive attunement to material entanglements, this chapter conceives of cripqueering as a methodological form of resistance to HE’s salient reproduction of ablebodymindedness (and its persistent centring of the sovereign thinking subject). Cripqueering, as argued in this chapter, offers a processual and materially embedded orientation to inquiry that response-ably traces difference as a strategy for moving beyond the reproduction of normative prefigured categories of knowing.

In moving my exploration of HE practices from a focus on research to an inquiry of pedagogy, Chapter 3: *Choreographic Cartographies with/ in Learning: Towards Response-ability in Higher Education Pedagogy*,

engages the liberatory impetus of Freirian critical pedagogy through the material relationality of body-space-time entanglements so as to enrich the former with the notion of response-ability. I do so by questioning the relational and processual diffusion of agency inside learning events. With reference to particular learning activities and classroom encounters within the context of the CTCA's foundation course,²⁵ I explore the ethico-onto-epistemological questions that emerge when foregrounding response-ability as a condition for *learning-becoming*. I commence with a proposition: *engage learning as an experience—through the processual potentialities of its in-act* as a means to question what a critical attentiveness to the material considerations of body-space-time cartographies and choreographies might offer response-able pedagogies.

With the aim of avoiding the constraints of description and explanation (as modalities grounded in the assumed objectivity of representational correspondence), this chapter is interrupted and enriched by student responses to the learning encounters in question. These responses are presented as poetic assemblages that serve as affective interjections offering glimpses of the 'more-than' of each learning event and, as such, opens my inquiry to the affective responses of the students I think-with.

Chapter 4, *Response-able Study: Sketching Ecologies for Collective, Affective and Speculative Practices in Higher Education*, further extends my inquiry-with pedagogical encounters in critical relation to the dissemination of neoliberal attitudes in HE as it pertains to the widespread privileging of "learnification" (Biesta, 2013). Defining HE in terms of learn-

25. The foundation course comprises one semester in which all first year students at the CTCA are introduced to the foundational skills and knowledge of visual communication and creative problem-solving.

ing (through an emphasis on concerns such as learning outcomes, learning pathways, learning strategies, and lifelong learning) figures education as an ‘entrepreneurial’ endeavour of self-actualisation through a teleological series of predetermined progressions (Lewis, 2014, 163). Neoliberal attitudes centre on the achievement of individual students while simultaneously prioritising modes of *standardisation* (in terms of equitable “client service”) and *generalisation* (in terms of the efficiency afforded by universalised standards and norms). Addressing the question of diversity (‘the *many*’) through an emphasis on normative standards (‘the idealised *one*’) disarms HE in its ability to attend to the *politics of difference* and runs the risk of striping acts and processes of knowing and coming-to-know of their *situated and relational* positionality.

My problematisation of learnification (and its inadequate conception of differences) emerges from generative resonances between a feminist ethics of response-ability, postphilosophical conceptions of relational ontologies and Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s conception of “black study” (2013). This chapter challenges the neoliberal centring of the self-possessed individual by offering a reading of study as inextricably bound to the *relational sociality of collective praxis* (Harney & Moten, 2013, 110). Disrupting the neoliberal view of higher education as the operation of a knowledge economy (fueled by the measurable performance of self-possessed individuals), this chapter frames study as a concrete practice with which to reconfigure HE as relational engagements with/in *knowledge ecologies*. This chapter is structured through and around short ‘sketches’ offering lived personal accounts of what might approximate instances of response-able modes of study. These sketches do not present prescriptive guidelines or

formulae but instead, aim to unfold with the specificity of particular encounters so as to ask how study might be practised response-ably.

The final chapter shifts attention from pedagogical practices to practices of assessment by troubling the relationship between assessment and the production of ‘human capital’ (as an entanglement deeply embedded in the neoliberal paradigm). Thus, Chapter 5, entitled *Propositions for a Counter-Economy of Assessment: Adventures in the Assessment of Visual Arts in Higher Education*, ultimately seeks to explore the emergent, processual potential of assessment events. With this chapter, I close my dissertation by arguing that the reconfiguration of HE depends to a large degree on the reconfiguration of assessment as the most pertinent mechanism through which value is structured and monitored in HE. Assessment serves as a pivotal point of valuation where student’s qualitative engagements with learning are ‘exchanged’ for quantitative indicators of approval/disapproval according to generalised standards. The last chapter of this thesis, thereby, responds to the neoliberal conditioning of this ‘value exchange’ which operates at the cost of attending to the processual nature of learning-becoming.

This chapter argues that instrumentalist approaches to assessment sit in stark contrast to the purpose of learning programmes within the creative arts, where value is generally considered to be rooted in the generation of new knowledge. Inventiveness in the creative arts is valued through pedagogic strategies that embrace creative experimentation and iterative problem-solving in ways that lead to the crafting of *propositional artefacts* as responses to assessment tasks. As such, assessment activities often appear as void of ‘right answers’ as it is assumed that appropriate and rel-

evant knowledge is to be created anew during the course of the learning (Orr & Shrieve, 2018, p. 30). This aspect of art education makes assessment resistant to standardisation (Orr & Shrieve, 2018, p. 30), and requires an understanding of value as emergent. With reference to Brian Massumi's *Postcapitalist Manifesto: 99 Theses on the Reevaluation of Value* (2018), this chapter concludes my thesis by proposing speculative propositions for response-able postcapitalist reworkings of value within the context of HE assessment by asking "what else" assessment(s) can do, when foregrounding occurrent value rather than standardising modes of judgement.

While all the chapters composing this thesis were originally presented as discrete publications over the span of three years, they are closely interconnected through their shared concern for response-able practices in HE. Each of them approaches the central question of this thesis—*how might educational research, pedagogy and assessment be reconfigured through response-able practices as generative modes of resistance to the neoliberal capture of higher education?*—from slightly different vantage points. Yet, when read together, they enact a continuous iterative exploration of the potential for reconfiguring pertinent practices in HE through creative experimentation. Taken together, these chapters sustain my central argument that an ethics of response-ability offers HE a dynamism with which to activate its transformability—or capacity as a "self-transforming machine" (Keet, 2019, p. 2003)—and a vital (re-)orientation with which to expand its potential for transformation—as a practised commitment to a "justice-to-come" (Kleinman & Barad, 2012, p. 81).

5. Some notes on Typographic Design and Layout

In the presentation of my thesis, I rely on my background as a design practitioner to support the conceptual intent of my inquiries through considered visual composition. The primary typesetting of this dissertation is done using a font entitled *Lexend*. This open-access typeface was developed by educational therapist Dr. Bonnie Shaver-Troup in collaboration with Design Bridge and Partners and Google Fonts with the primary aim of increasing legibility, especially for individuals with dyslexia. Through the “hyper expansion of character spacing” and the “enlarging and opening [of] counters”, Lexend prioritises legibility through enhanced character differentiation and the reduction of visual stress (Design Bride and Partners, n.d).

I make use of a more traditional serif font, *Iowan*, to differentiate italicised words and sentences as a means of increasing visual emphasis on the most pertinent aspects of my arguments. In addition, I use purposeful forms of visual variation to indicate where other modes of writing enrich the primary narrative flow of the thesis, as is the case of autie-biographical writing (in Chapter 2), poetic responses (in Chapter 3), and sketches of study (in Chapter 4). In these instances, the typographic treatment is developed in affective resonance with the intended purpose of each particular mode of writing.

1.

Writing-With¹ a Parasite Dis/Colouring One's Skin: Toward Inquiries of Change

Abstract

In this article, I explore the potential emerging from writing-with a parasite (Pityriasis Versicolor) living on my skin at the time of writing. My parasite and I respond to the invitation to engage with Sarah Truman's techniques for thinking about research-creation and Aaron M. Kuntz's conception of methodological parrhesia. Together, we co-parasite (through paracitation, perhaps?), jointly and diffractively between the pages of Truman and Kuntz so as to experiment with our own situated entanglement and intra-actions with the process of inquiry by asking: how might we engage inquiry, not as a mode of static and distanced observation but as a process of change attuned to our own material intermingling? We do so by posing questions about emergence: (a) How might we activate the productive tensions between situated knowledges and the notion of emergence? (2) How might we engage the ever-emergent material-relational dimension of inquiry through an in-actment of "middling"? (c) How might we conceive of inquiry as the practice of parrhesia—a mode of care-full truthmaking with-in emergence?

1. The notion of writing-with is indebted to María Puig de la Bellacasa's conception of "thinking-with" as a "relational way of thinking [that] creates new patterns out of previous multiplicities, intervening by adding layers of meaning rather than merely deconstructing or confronting ready-made categories" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 72). Puig de la Bellacasa emphasises the importance of "and" to the process of writing-with, as opposed to a reliance on "or," or "rather" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 75), thereby attuning to the multiplicities of surplus, rather than the presumed lack resulting from binary thinking.

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1.1. Introduction

This article serves as the starting point for my PhD in Higher Education Studies. I am grappling to find an entry point into research as an educational practitioner who has only ever worked within private higher education institutions, privileged to have been granted meaningful positions where I experience a level of freedom and agency that I have come to understand as different to the norm. When considering how to operationalise the layers of histories that have led me to this privileged point of departure, I turn to the materiality of my skin that perceptually encloses me with-in Whiteness. I become attentive to blemishes, scars, and discolourations that remind me of the hauntings that live in Whiteness, despite legacies of colonial Euro-western discourse that aim to render Whiteness as the neutral, noncolour norm. I endeavour to open up toward inquiry by tending to this skin—storied by privilege, complicity, and noninnocence—that seemingly seals off my subjecthood from the world I wish to come to know.

We need more ways of reading for how clues about biology might also be clues about politics, and vice versa.

(Wilson, 2015, p. 32)

Initially, this article was conceptualised under the working title: “writing-with a parasite feasting on one’s flesh.” However provocative, and telling of

my insecure urge toward dramatisation,² this forgone title presumes a murderous violence not necessarily at stake to the particular parasite in question. This is, after all, not the haunting tale of Tsafendas and his tapeworm.³ Despite not posing a historically significant appetite, this parasite is neither a metaphor nor a mere narratological device. This parasite lives and surely nourishes itself. *He* is a very real fungal infection living on the skin of my back at the time of writing.⁴ In this article, my parasite and I respond to the invitation to engage with Sarah Truman's techniques for thinking about research-creation (Truman, 2022) and Aaron M. Kuntz's conception of methodological parrhesia (Kuntz, 2015; 2019; 2021b). Together, we co-parasite—through acts of para-citation—jointly and diffractively between the pages of Truman and Kuntz so as to experiment with our own entangled intra-actions with the process of inquiry and its relation to material change.⁵ Our

2. This urge for dramatisation emerges as an affective pull toward hyperbole that recurs as I probe what matters when engaging with the inconspicuous and microscopic intra-actions of the localised phenomenon of parasite-meets-skin. The almost imperceptibility of this “microshock” (Massumi, 2015, p. 53) evades expression, as it is barely visible and completely unfelt. I catch myself urging toward dramatised mediation when matter feels meaningless—curious moments that reverberate the question: “Which matters matter?”

3. Dimitri Tsafendas, a parliamentary messenger at the time, assassinated South African prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd on September 6, 1966, by stabbing him 4 times with a knife. Despite his coherent acknowledgment of the political intention of his actions—to eliminate the primary purveyor of Apartheid policies—Tsafendas was reported to be an apolitical schizophrenic who had committed this murder under instruction of a large tapeworm living inside his body (Dousemetzis, 2018). This mythologised fiction persists as a widespread historical belief in South African consciousness.

4. This parasite evokes a double introduction—one biographical and the other biological. Biologically, he goes by the name *Tinea Versicolor* or *Pityriasis Versicolor*—a common non-contagious, non-painful fungal infection of the skin (Renati et al., 2015, p. 1). Biographically, when falling trap to the seduction of anthropomorphism, it seems to exhibit the characteristics of a He. He is Man in the sense that he arrives uninvitedly, claims a terrain forcibly, and expands at free will. In many ways he echoes the Human problem, normalised in the Eurowestern idealised image of (White) Man—the measure of all things (as described by Braidotti, 2013). His dis/colouring of my skin intimately intermingles with my Whiteness and the historical hauntings carried in the material-cultural layering of white skin. His material manifestation through the act of dis/colouration serves as a meaningful challenge the assumed “purity” of Whiteness and a reminder of how I am always already implicated as a researcher.

aim is to pose questions to Inquiry, not so much through the lens of why—which so easily dissolves into wild goose chases for primary causes and the mythologised linear unfolding of their effects—but rather, alongside Kuntz (2019, p. 3), through the activation of the “what, how and effects of inquiry.” In attunement with our dynamic material intermingling we aim to engage inquiry not through the supposed stasis of so-called objective observation, but as a process of and for change.

Following Truman (2022, pp. 19–23) and Kuntz (2021a, p. 216), our starting point is one of refusal/affirmation,⁶ infused with curiosity: the decision not to *cure* my unsightly companion, and with the same fervour, to refuse allegiance to the reproduction of the normalised prescriptions of Method.⁷ This experiment in inquiry commences not as a stand against all methods as such, but rather from the awareness of the dangers rooted in the proceduralisation of methodology which relegates notions of responsi-

5. This article relies on Karen Barad's notion of diffraction as a methodological approach (Barad, 2007). As a method, diffraction is based on the affirmative reading of texts, through one another involving “close respectful, responsive, and response-able (enabling response) attention to the details of the text [in order to] do justice to a text.” (Barad in an interview with Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012, p. 13). By engaging with writing through “para-citation,” this article intentionally presents a “spreading” of ideas (in a manner provoked by the material spreading of fungi). This in-actment of “hyphal mingling” (a concept to be explored in the second section of this article) aims at offering an enriched and layered reading experience. Not all “spores/seeds” lead to deep discussion, yet the hope is that they would serve as generative potentialities for the reader's own thinking/writing/exploration. Furthermore, this inclusion of a range of conceptual linkages presents an account of the lived experience of inquiry and writing-with and through other scholars as an opening up toward surplus, rather than a forceful strive toward “sanitised” resolution.

6. As opposed to a stultifying force of Critique, Truman positions refusal as a particular type of affirmation, “a promise to respond to what happens; acknowledging that we can't know before an event” (Truman, 2022, p. 20). Truman roots this proposition in Jacques Derrida's notion of hospitality (Derrida, 2000, p. 77), which is brought into consideration in a later part of this article.

7. Method, is capitalised here (and elsewhere) in its reference to the universalising tendencies of what Elizabeth St. Pierre (2020, p. 163), refers to as “conventional humanist qualitative methodology” and its related concepts such as “the interview, data, data analysis, validity, and field.”

bility to the question of adherence to established methodological protocol (Kuntz, 2015, p. 11). This disciplinary enforcement of methodological compliance (a mere checking of boxes) seeds epistemological violence when taking precedence over the vital “ethico-political choices” (to use the words of Foucault, 1983, p. 231) one makes as a response-able researcher (Kuntz, 2015, p. 12).⁸

When narrowing the scope of ethico-political accountability through the prioritisation of checking the proverbial boxes one fails to question the assumptions from which these very ‘boxes’ are constructed (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 14). The ‘boxing’ that occurs in “conventional humanist qualitative methodology” (St. Pierre, 2020, p. 163) promotes a practice of separation (an ordering into discrete boxes) through the enactment of Cartesian bifurcation.⁹ The Cartesian splitting of reason and matter reproduces a normalising sense of human exceptionalism that assumes a separation between Man and “his” seemingly static, inert surroundings open for observation, classification, and measurement (St. Pierre, Jackson, & Mazzei, 2016, pp. 100–101). This “god trick,” “seeing everything from nowhere” (Haraway,

8. This article takes the notion of response-ability to enrich the typical understanding of “being responsible” through the cultivation of “collective knowing and doing”; “being and making-with so that we render each other capable” (Haraway, 2016b, p. 34; Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, p. 882). Response-ability is emphasised with the aim of mitigating epistemological violence, described by Gandorfer and Ayub (2001, p. 2) as “the adamant adherence to universality and its accompanying claim according to which political and legal relationality capable of attending to singularities still remains unthinkable; and also, the privileging of generalisation and consensus over particularities and dissent.”

9. In *The Concept of Nature* (2015), Alfred North Whitehead makes an argument against philosophy’s tendency “[...] to bifurcate nature into two divisions, namely into the nature apprehended in awareness and the nature which is the cause of awareness” (2015, pp. 30–31). For Erin Manning (2015, p. 54), this splicing of experience “separates out the human subject from the ecological encounter [...] thereby positing two systems, one ‘within the mind’ and one ‘[outside] the mind.’” This tendency reproduces a Cartesian splitting that fails to account for the interrelations between body and mind, nature and culture, human and more-than-human.

1988, p. 581), promotes values of distanced “objectivity” and fixed “truths,” and reproduces what Kuntz refers to as a “logic of extraction” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 12).¹⁰ It is the refusal of this logic of extraction that serves as the focal point of our argument. In thinking otherwise, this article explores the possibility of a different logic, one characterised not by extraction, but rather by addition, or *attunement to excess or surplus*. The parasite as surplus—the more-than of my own body—thereby serves as a fortuitous starting point.¹¹ In this article, my parasite and I set off to explore and sustain the material relations that compose our dynamic temporal entanglement by asking: *how might we engage inquiry, not as a mode of static and distanced observation but as a process of change—attuned to our own material intermingling?* We do so by posing questions about emergence: (a) How might we activate the productive tensions between *situated knowledges* and the notion of *emergence*? (2) How might we engage the ever-emergent *material-relational* dimension of inquiry through an in-actment of “middling”? (3) How might we conceive of inquiry as the practice of parrhesia—a mode of *care-full truth-making* with-in emergence?

These questions serve as propositional probes for our engagement with the process of inquiry. In place of the finality of a conclusion, we leave this article with a return to the tale of Tsafendas to sustain the questions raised by one parasite through those of another. While preparing this article, my parasite and I, together with the illuminating screen of an iPad,

10. Kuntz (2015, p. 44) defines a logic of extraction as “a conservative system of rationality that privileges discrete, fully knowable entities that remain consistent across time and space, absent to the immediacy of material context.”

11. During the peer-review process I was made attentive, by one of my reviewers, that the parasite not only serves as the surplus of my body, but also as the more-than of my critical engagement with theory—aiding me in engaging with theory in an open-ended manner beyond normative claims of theoretical closure.

mingle late at night to read, think, draw, and engage with free-writing as exploratory practices of inquiry, thereby figuring the conceptual lures to be expanded in the writing that follows.

1.2. Situated Emergence: Inquiring From the Rash (or the Ruins)

Why should our bodies end [or start] at the skin?

(Haraway, 2016a, p. 61)

We've come to call them "sweat attacks," my partner and I, as a way to add the endearment of something almost "sweet" to the nightly occurrences that leave me drenched, shivering, and wide awake at the hours where one—according to most common advice—is supposed to get one's best sleep.¹² It is this excessive nightly perspiration that creates a hospitable milieu for the multiplication of my *Pityriasis Versicolor*.¹³ The treatment for this infection is rather simple, a mere ointment applied repeatedly over a number of days. However, we are sensitised (by reading Karen Barad and their allies) not to be fooled into the simple logic of unilinear cause and effect. When tracing the entanglements of the parasite as phenomenon we enter into an endless loop of iterative intra-actions. Parasite → Sweat →

12. Ironically, the word "sweet" in my native Afrikaans translates directly to sweat—adding some "dry" humor to these moist encounters. Silly as it might be, such associative wordplay supports Elizabeth Wilson's assertion that "systems of mutuality" crystallise from the inseparable entanglement of social objects and structures (such as language and customs) with biological entities. (Wilson, 2015, pp. 28–29). For Wilson (2015, p. 29) "[a]ll words are alloyed: no object is purebred."

13. At the time of writing, my nocturnal perspiration underwent a significant peak due to being infected with COVID-19, adding yet another material temporal knotting to the dense entanglement of this particular bodymattering. The isolation stemming from this illness enhanced my appreciation for my companion parasite. It also came to represent the isolation and insularity that so easily creeps into the graduate research process.

Anxiety → Sweat → Parasite → Ointment → Anxiety → Sweat → Parasite ad infinitum. When thoroughly tracing the entanglements of this phenomenon, this loop grows into an ever-expanding web, that urges us to commence our investigation through the question of location by asking, from *where* should our inquiry proceed? (See Figure 1).



Figure 1. *Entangled genealogy* (after Rager Fuller and Barad).¹⁴

When considering the parasite as entangled in phenomena, the simple task of applying a salve becomes a Sisyphean battle, repetition without differ-

14. This specific mapping of entanglement takes its cue from the genealogies of quantum physics figured by Nicolle Rager Fuller and Karen Barad (Barad, 2007, p. 389). In an interview with Juelskjær, Plouborg and Adrian (2021, pp. 136–137), Barad expands on using such nonrepresentational maps as a generative activity in which they “[...] suggest [their] students get a sheet of poster board (a really large sheet of paper) and start sketching out all the various apparatuses of bodily production they can think of, and begin to indicate the multiple and various entanglements. It’s also important that they begin to appreciate the fact that not every entanglement is equally weighted, or equally configured, or equally connected to everything else. Every “object,” or rather, phenomenon, is constituted through very specific sets of entanglements (that is, through very specific iterations of material-discursive practices)”

ence in the face of material entanglements that spread to the very foundation of our current world order—or the ruins that occupy the space of a world-yet-possible. Nevertheless, Kuntz reminds us that this very act of “losing faith in our present moment” holds the potential to serve as a generative seeding ground for hope of a different future (Kuntz, 2019, p. 1). This attitudinal shift away from the stasis of enclosure toward the dynamism of emergence brings into question how we might engage with inquiry through the liveliness of material configurations, and the power relations they are intertwined with, as an opening up to alternative figurations of embodied subjectivities outside of oppressive and exclusionary norms that leave us twisting and turning, shivering in humid anxiety.¹⁵

As a movement toward such an “opening up” we turn to the unfolding of skin and its dynamic microbiome that is anything but static.¹⁶ While considered as a large, unified organ, skin demonstrates an exceptional ability for plurality, by hosting a multiplicity of “ecological niches,” varying in temperatures, humidity, and pH level depending on the particular site of measurement (Boxberger et al., 2021, p. 1). This diverse microbiome is inhabited (or “colonises” to use Boxberger’s words) by a variety of commensal microbes, including *malassezia* yeast which occurs as the only common eukaryotic inhabitant of the skin flora (Boxberger et al., 2021, p. 1; Gaitanis

15. Along with Magdalena Górska, we situate “panic attacks and anxieties [...] not [...] as ‘ancient tools’ [i.e., fight or flight instincts] but as painful, disabling, debilitating as well as hopeful, enabling and motivating forces for imagining a future otherwise” (Górska, 2016, p. 241 - emphasis added).

16. Richard Gallo (2017, p. 1213), in a movement toward “unfolding” argues that follicular and interfollicular epithelial surfaces should be considered when accounting for the scale of the skin microbiome, thereby approximating the full “unfolded” surface area of skin closer to 25 m² as opposed to the standard estimation of 2 m² which treats the skin as a flat surface area.

et al., 2012, p. 106).¹⁷ Currently, there exists a controversial indeterminacy as to whether *Malassezia* pose a pathogenic threat, or a benign commensalism per se, as it is probable that varying circumstances could result in either (Dawson, 2019, p. 345). Pityriasis Versicolor, in particular, develops when *Malassezia* undergoes morphogenesis (presumably due to the presence of an excess of sebum) converting to its hyphal form (Brand, 2012, p. 2; Renati et al., 2015, p. 1). The presence of such hypha confers the ability of this fungus to penetrate host tissue, which leads to the presentation of hypopigmented or hyperpigmented macules due to a decreased uptake of melanin by affected keratinocytes (skin cells) (Brand, 2012, p. 2; Thappa & Gupta, 2014, p. 32).

Approaching the situated location of the researcher through the body, its skin and the microbiome it hosts opens up a dynamic, in-between transversal middle or generative “region of relation” (Massumi, 2015, p. 50). Skin becomes thinkable as a penetrable (non)limit, both active host and consumable feeding ground. All the while, skin cells continuously regenerate and much like the ship of Theseus with its reconstructed parts, we might ask as a refrain; “is this still the same skin?” The notion of distanced stasis becomes phantasmic as subject-object relations dissipate through the mingling of bodies in multi-species becomings. This conception of the skin as a location of intra-active *middling* presents a productive ecology from which to think through the connections between situated knowledges and emergence. For Truman, emergence is ontologically “viral” as its yet-un-

17. Eukaryotic cells are cells that “carry their DNA in a nucleus” and are “thought to have evolved from a merger between two other organisms” (Eme & Ettema, 2018). In this light, *Malassezia* yeast presents an always-already entangled phenomena, unthinkable as anything other than a relational entity.

knowable quality cusps against the present nature of *being*, as much as it seeps over into the virtual potentialities of the continuous unfolding of *becoming* (Truman, 2022, pp. 15, 16). Being situated in the middling of emergence, therefore, demands the acknowledgment that one is not an “outside [observer] of the world [nor] simply located at [a] particular [place] in the world; rather, [one is] part of the world in its ongoing intra-activity” (Barad, 2007, p. 184). Truman furthermore draws on Raymond Williams’s description of emergent culture to emphasise how that which is emergent distinguishes itself, always-already in relation to that which is dominant—the status quo (Williams, 1977, p. 122, cited in Truman, 2022, p. 16). *Embracing emergence, therefore, demands a practice that proceeds from the intelligibility of hegemonic norms so as to move beyond their boundaries of inclusion by meddling with their assumed self-evidence.*

Building on Donna Haraway’s account of feminist objectivity as situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988, p. 581), one might therefore argue for an objectivity of *situated emergence* that manifests as the result of embodied and emplaced partial perspectives that operate from a particular dynamic location of spacetimemattering¹⁸—that is both middling and meddling—instead of distancing the researching *subject* from the “passive” *objects* they observe (Haraway, 1988, pp. 582–583). This alignment of objectivity with situated emergence, however, in no way, proposes an “anything-goes” attitude associated with relativism, as *the singularity of (material-discursive) location and the partiality of what this location makes knowable is root-*

18. Kuntz (2015, p. 21) makes use of embodiment and emplacement as distinguished from normalised conceptions of body and place so as to emphasise the relationality with which these sites are entangled in meaning-making practices.

*ed in the material relations within which they are entangled, while these materially embedded entanglements foreground contingency, responsibility and non-innocence.*¹⁹

Inquiry, when in-acting from situated emergence, refuses a logic of extraction and brings into scrutiny the manner through which traditional research practices reproduce normative onto-epistemological assumptions about the researcher and their implied neutral objectivity. We therefore endeavour to ask with Truman (in her phonological playfulness) where is the *emergency*? (Truman, 2022, p. 16), when approaching the situated emergence of the researcher vis-à-vis their practice of inquiry. We ask this not from a vantage point of distanced observation, but from within this moment of sweats and shakes and stumbling around ‘what matters?’ Erin Manning identifies a shared state of emergency, characteristic of our contemporary moment, as a “new kind of *personal is political*” that emerges from “[t]he weight of the world we compose with [...]” (Manning, 2020a, p. 141). The weight of a world in which my white body lies in a warm bed, next to a man I can openly call my partner. In a house that we own and pay for, largely, with my full-time academic job at a private higher education institution that I had the privilege to help establish. I wouldn’t be able to afford to study at my own institution.²⁰ The majority of our population are exclud-

19. For Barad (2007, p. 361), “[o]bjectivity is a matter of accountability for what materialises, for what comes to be. It matters which cuts are enacted: different cuts enact different materialised becomings” seeing as their agential realist account frames objectivity, “not [as] preexistence (in the ontological sense) or the preexistent made manifest to the cognitive mind (in the epistemological sense)” (Barad, 2007, p. 361), as is the case with conventional notions of realism.

20. The limitations of access to private higher education stems from the exorbitant cost of operating as a well-resourced institution without any form of state subsidy, thereby depending completely on tuition revenue and private investment funding, which in turn demands its return on investment.

ed on this basis. Many bodies are not in a bed like this, many bodies face violence when their sexuality differs from the ‘norm,’ many bodies bear the weight of unemployment, homelessness, hunger, racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, exploitation, and the risk of extinction. Together, differently specied bodies carry the weight of a damaged planet, yet the many, already weighed down are made to carry the brunt. Some bodies die from neglect while others take joy rides in Outerspace.

Our *situated emergency* is one of disorienting contradictions, affective hauntologies, stultifying overwhelm, and deeply felt social anxieties, fear, and docility (Kuntz, 2015, p. 95). *Emplaced* and *embodied* in globalised neoliberal capitalism, we confront “a simultaneity of contrary truths [... and] the collapse of micro and macro perspectives” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 94). Amid this state of emergency, our situated emergence can neither be operationalised as a voice *for* others,²¹ nor does our voice seem to be completely our own. As a researcher, one feels the pressures for one’s voice to be a commodity (the consumable intelligibility of expert authority), a marker of individuality (the consistency of fully formed independent thought), and hyper-visible (through citationality and one’s public profile congealed with the brand image of a corporatised institution).²² Amid this state of emergency,

21. Eve Tuck draws attention to the colonial impetus embedded in the assumption of “the right to know” that surfaces through research on historically disenfranchised peoples that is both “damage-centred” and “damaging” (Tuck, 2009, p. 413). These “spaces saturated in the fantasies of outsiders” (Tuck, 2009, p. 412), tend to limit, as an act of epistemological violence, the contribution of oppressed voices primarily to those who speak their pain (hooks 1990, p. 152, cited in Tuck, 2009, p. 413), as a means to reproduce normative narratives of lack, underachievement and failure (Tuck, 2009, p. 413).

22. For Kuntz, these demands stem from the globalised manifestation of neoliberalism, which privileges “(1) hyperindividualism [...] (2) hyper-surveillance [...] (3) economic determinations of productivity [...]; and (4) competitive entrepreneurialism.” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 34). In the Academy these conditions place emphasis on “productivity [...] now quantified in measures that do not really account for anything other than for being (ac)counted” (Denzin & Giardina, 2017, p. 4).

it is less than surprising that extractive methodological prescriptions proceed as the norm. The prefiguration of proceduralised ways of doing seems to salve (be it superficially) our confrontation with the pressure to perform and the pervading sense of discomfort in the face of indeterminacies. However, as Kuntz points out, these very mechanisms with their “pre-approved” predictable comforts (of familiarity and acceptability) are culpable in the “overproduction of extracted truths that contribute to the affective state of disorientation that has come to dominate our contemporary moment” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 95).

In their promise of ordering chaos into intelligibility the prescriptions of Method foreclose emergence and thereby limits the possibility for much-needed material change. How then, we ask, might our intermingling voice be operationalised otherwise? How might we account for our dynamic intra-active, situated emergence in the face of emergencies that lay our present moment in ruins and our skin discoloured by rashes?

1.3. Hyphal Middling

Inquiring Through Relations

There is no such thing as starting from scratch.

(Massumi, 2015, p. 51)

Through the disciplinary enforcement of prescriptive preformed procedures—what John Weaver and Nathan Snaza (2017, p. 1056) refer to as “methodocentrism”—traditional humanist methodological practices reproduce normative limits around what constitutes legitimised knowledge or truth. As machines of truth-production, methodological practices

thereby verify the value of the knowledge they produce through their adherence to the prescription of their established techniques (Kuntz, 2015, p. 101). In this sense, procedural enactments of methodological protocols are taken as markers of “quality scholarship” (Weaver & Snaza, 2017, p. 1056). What amounts as truth, therefore, results from the enforcement of methodological truth-machines, yet the manner in which such truths serve to reify normalised assumptions remains largely unchallenged (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 14; Kuntz, 2015, p. 101).

When inquiring from a logic of extraction a double-cut is enforced between: the “field” (or subject/phenomena that serves as the object of the study), the supposedly neutral methodological truth-machines (or apparatuses of inquiry), and the externalised truths that result from the analysis of data that takes place *outside* the messiness of relational entanglements (Kuntz, 2015, p. 99). When considering conventional tensions stemming from such inside–outside (split)relations, we find it useful to return to the ability of *Malassezia* to produce, through morphological transformation, filamentous hyphae that enhance its spread by enabling entry *into* the skin (Brand, 2012, p. 1). This process of morphogenesis is “reversible” which offers the fungus a “choice of two lifestyles within the host” (Brand, 2012, p. 5). Hyphae production results as, what Alexandra Brand (2012, p. 1, 5) deems, an “opportunistic” response to a scarcity of nutrients. Through hyphal growth, cell production occurs sequentially, from the tip of the hypha, thereby widening the reachable area from which to gather nourishment, eliminating the need for cells to compete over the limited nutrients available in a single location (Brand, 2012, p. 5). Despite being short, *Malassezia* hyphae enter deeper regions of the skin

by penetrating keratinised skin cells, where growth might revert to yeast form and new colonies might develop (Brand, 2012, p. 2). It is this entry into the skin that differentiates *Malassezia* as a pathogenic agent, leading to the development and spread of *Pityriasis Versicolor*. This morphological occurrence of filamentous hyphae serves as a generative metaphor through which to surface our internalised conditioning to normalised assumptions of the *how* and *what* of inquiry, as well as a matterphorical site from which to imagine inquiry otherwise.

In one way, hyphal growth could be read as an illustration of the normative temporal assumptions embedded in conventional research practices. The search for 'knowrishment' (particular knowledges that answer predetermined questions or epistemological desires) seemingly commences from a discrete 'outside,' from which linear probing is undertaken as an act that progressively moves closer to the prefigured destination it seeks to find. A simple teleological progression; need → search → discover → extract → 'knowrishing' reward. This unilinear teleology of a logic of extraction presumes, in advance, to know what one is looking for, and proceeds by merely tracing the assumptions about how its discovery will lead to particular desired meanings, outcomes, and benefits (Truman, 2022, p. 6). We might think of this as epistemic gluttony treating the field/phenomenon as *à la carte* menu, thereby limiting the results of inquiry to that which resembles static preexisting figurations of knowledge (Manning, 2015, p. 54).

This oversimplified figuring of the metaphor of hyphae-as-method, however, presents an extractive opportunistic move on our part. "Materiality," after all, "is always something more than the object itself or the inclusion of this object into the conversation" (Snaza & Sonu, 2016, p. 32). Build-

ing on the radical empiricism of William James, Erin Manning (2015, p. 55) emphasises the need for middling; starting from within “the mess of relations not yet organised into terms such as “subject” and “object”—a field immanent to actual relations—what James deems “pure experience” (James, 2003, cited in Manning, 2015, p. 55). Our preceding metaphor veers away from such middling through its simple reversal of subject-object relations. What is needed, rather, is an agential realist account that acknowledges that “phenomena are ontologically primitive relations—relations without preexisting relata” (Barad, 2007, p. 139).²³ In this light, we return to hyphal growth as a dynamic, relational, co-constitutive worlding event. For Karen Barad (2007, p. 179), “iterative intra-actions,” such as the morphogenesis of hyphal development, “are the dynamics through which temporality and spatiality are produced and iteratively reconfigured in the materialisation of phenomena and the (re)making of material-discursive boundaries and their constitutive exclusions.” The hyphal mingling of fungus and skin dynamically draws and re-draws boundaries, configuring and refiguring various exclusions; cell/hypha, commensalism/pathogenesis, subject/object.

For Barad such iterative reconfigurations of boundaries are “the changing conditions of possibility of changing possibilities” (Barad, 2007, p. 179).²⁴ We are therefore limited when thinking of hyphal development as

23. Agential realism, for Barad (2007, p. 56), “[...] is a non-representationalist form of realism that is based on an ontology that does not take for granted the existence of ‘words’ and ‘things’ and an epistemology that does not subscribe to a notion of truth based on their correct correspondence” (Barad, 2007, p. 56). They therefore “[make] a case for the inextricability of knowing and being, that is, of epistemology and ontology, and offers modes of matter and meaning production that neither fall prey to Cartesian representationalism, nor to Newtonian ontology” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 14).

24. “Change” for Barad (2007, p. 179) “is not a continuous mutation of what was or the unraveling of what will be, or any kind of continuous transformation in and through time, but the iterative differentiatings of spacetime mattering.”

the formation of discrete multiplicities (one cell from which develops another, from which develops another, and so on, in a mere linear, unidirectional filamentous progression). When taken seriously, Elizabeth Wilson's assertion that "there is no intrinsic orthodoxy to biological matter," thereby questioning the notion of biology as predetermined evolution (Wilson, 2015, p. 27), requires one to consider this particular material mingling as aleatory—continuous multiplicities (one cell from which might develop another, or a hyphal strand which might continue in its hyphal state, or revert to its yeast cell form, without predetermined directionality or clear linear progression, all alongside and *with* the doing of skin and its contractions, expansions, secretions, and regenerations).²⁵

When re-turning the morphogenesis of hyphal development not as a metaphor for inquiry, but as a site of *matterphorical* richness,²⁶ we are urged to evoke the notion of continuous multiplicity as a force of potentiality, not so much through a tracing of what has emerged, but rather by staying with the act of emergence itself as an orientation toward immanent and dynamic relations. *When considering methodological-machines as apparatuses of hyphal intermingling one has to draw attention to*

25. Henri Bergson distinguishes between discrete/actual multiplicity, from which could be gleaned quantitative differences, and continuous/virtual multiplicities that are constituted by qualitative differences that are characterised by the interpenetration of one iteration of difference with that of another (Bergson, 2014, p. 75).

26. Whereas metaphor (or analogy) "carry out particular forms of violence(s) by leveling out that which is not sufficiently adaptable or applicable to the contexts in question and by refusing to acknowledge that the demand for high degrees of similarity for every application is also an act of onto-epistemological exclusion for which no legal, often not even ethical, accountability is required" (Gandorfer & Ayub, 2021, p. 3), matterphorics "is an ethics of thought, or, more precisely, it is an aesth-ethics of thought [that] calls for an ethics of both sense-making and sensing in the making. Indeed, aesth-ethics takes seriously that sense-making requires attentiveness to the ongoing intra-action of modes of sensing and the being of the sensible" (Gandorfer & Ayub, 2021, p. 2).

the fact that they are entangled in the phenomena they seek to uncover.

As material-discursive boundary-making practices, methods (as apparatuses of inquiry) “enact agential cuts that produce determinate boundaries and properties of ‘entities’ within phenomena, where ‘phenomena’ are the ontological inseparability of agential intra-acting components” (Barad, 2007, p. 148). The application of methods should, therefore, be thought of as “formative of matter and meaning [...] constituted and reconstituted as part of the ongoing intra-activity of the world” (Barad, 2007, p. 146). In this light, the binary distinction of inside–outside demands collapse into transversal, relational middling, or what Springgay and Truman (2018) refer to as a “speculative middle.”²⁷

As an alternative to a logic of extraction, inquiry as situated, emergent and middling positions methods “inside the research event” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 204) so as to understand methods relationally as a “distributed, immanent field of sensible processuality within which creative variations give rise to modifications and movements of thinking” (McCormack, 2013, p. 25, cited in Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 204). Staying with the speculative middle demands response-able methods and attentiveness to change. What is required is not the fetishisation of Method as ‘neutral’ truth-making machines, but the acknowledgment of methods as entanglements of epistemology (coming to know) with an ontology of immanence (the emergence of material-relational becoming), and an ethical orientation (urging toward difference in the face of emergency). We turn, there-

27. Springgay and Truman defines the speculative middle as “a thrust, a future provocation for thinking- making-doing” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 207), that “shifts methods from a reporting on the world to a way of being in the world that is open to experimentation [...]” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 206).

fore, to Kuntz, for whom inquiry as an ethico-onto-epistemological practice presents generative attunement with the notion of philosophical parrhesia.

1.4. Response-Able Truth-Making Inquiring with care-full hospitality

Kuntz (2015; 2019; 2021) develops the notion of methodological parrhesia through para-citation with Michel Foucault (2010; 2011).²⁸ According to Foucault (2010, p. 43),

One of the original meanings of the Greek word parrhesia is to “say everything,” but in fact it is much more frequently translated as free-spokenness [...] free speech, etcetera...it designated a virtue, a quality [...]; a duty [...]; and a technique, a process.

Foucault distinguishes parrhesia from other rhetorical manoeuvres such as persuasion and pedagogy due to its nature as an *ethical* determination that is practiced *materially* in a manner that *affects* the truth-teller (Kuntz, 2015, p. 104). Parrhesia is therefore not the act of convincing or demonstrating but rather an ontological orientation made manifest by the affirmation of truths through practices of becoming (Foucault, 2010, pp. 53–54), thereby a *performative in-actment*. Inquiry, when considered as parrhesia, can be contrasted with methodocentrism, as it occurs not through the proceduralised reproduction of normative assumptions but rather by diagrammati-

28. This article refers in particular to philosophical parrhesia, as opposed to political parrhesia, where the latter remains bound to a rhetoric of repetition (of what is known) and the prior—the notion of parrhesia at stake in this writing—stems from a material engagement with “an immediate, yet unfinished now” (Kuntz, 2019, p. 77).

cally opposing such reproduction through its cusping against (and through) the immanence of becoming, so as to challenge (or meddle with) the hegemony of the status quo. In this way, parrhesia is “always a new approach animated by a potential future built on difference” (Kuntz, 2021b, p. 491). Parrhesia operates in the activation of refusal/affirmation, always in defiance of the already-known, as an opening up toward the *potentiality* of the unknown as well as the risks that such openings might unearth (Foucault, 2010, pp. 62–63).²⁹ Risk is inherent when inquiring with parrhesia as one forgoes reliance on the legitimating forces of methodocentrism in favour of interruptive openings toward the yet-unknown, thereby fracturing the boundaries of exclusion—the “limits of regimes of truth” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 102) to make known the surplus, the more-than of what pre-exists as intelligible. For Kuntz, parrhesia, in this light, is an act of *truth-making* that does not endeavour to “enlighten others to some previously unknown truth,” but rather destabilises “normative formations of power” through the open-ended unfolding of becoming otherwise (Kuntz, 2021b, p. 498).

In attunement with situated emergence, parrhesiastic inquiry activates a speculative middle through the performative engagement—a hyphal mingling—with “an immediate, yet unfinished now [and] the useful collapse of past and future in the present [. . . thereby] challeng[ing] conventional repetitions of the status quo to make way for new becomings unbound by the possible” (Kuntz, 2019, p. 77). “[E]mergence meets emergency” (Truman, 2022, p. 19), as parrhesiastic inquiry refuses established

29. Kuntz (2019, p. 68) distinguishes potentiality from possibility by asserting that “[n]othing beyond the normative rational is possible. Possibility exists only within closed systems.” Whereas possibility manifests through mere quantitative alteration to that which is already known, potentiality requires qualitative shifts—a “letting go” of the boundaries of the possible (Kuntz, 2019, p. 68).

and intelligible practices of being as an ethical commitment to a different future, placing the researcher outside of the comforts awarded by methodological-machines, *affirming instead the potentiality and the precarity of indeterminacy* (Foucault, 2010, pp. 63–63; Kuntz, 2019, p. 78). This is a care-full middling that tends, in each moment, to “what matters” (Truman, 2022, p. 19).

As a performative orientation to inquiry, parrhesia, therefore, shares a commonality with the practice of a political ethics of care, formulated by Joan Tronto (1993, pp. 102–103) as a practice of (a) de-centring oneself, or “troubl[ing] oneself” (Schrader, 2015, p. 666), (b) acknowledging and accepting the full weight and responsibility (or risks) of care, and (c) enacting care through material engagement (Tronto, 1993, p. 103). As with care, the inactment of parrhesia demands change, as it manifests through the figuring of truth—a truth that cannot leave material relations unchanged, once entangled with them (Kuntz, 2019, p. 77).

In its commitment to change in the face of uncertain risk, parrhesia calls for an openness, evocative of Jacques Derrida’s notion of hospitality. Derrida suggests an ethics of radical hospitality that “say[s] yes to *who or what turns up*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification*” (Derrida, 2000, p. 77—original emphasis). Such hospitality refuses to question “who is there?” in a manner that expects that which arrives to make itself known through the language and customs already familiar to “us” (Lucy, 2004, p. 19). This hospitality, however, does not suggest a mere “waiting by the door” for something (or someone) to arrive, but rather relies on the active, yet patient practice of radical openness. As a care-full practice, parrhesiastic inquiry is anything but passive: neither

purposeless waiting nor undirected wonder. For Kuntz (2021a, p. 216), this orientation to inquiry is more akin to “standing at one’s post” by “articulat[ing] an overt ethical orientation towards change, one animated by [...] mapping the contemporary terrain, arranging newly productive relations and generating different effects.” This radical openness that fosters relations affirmative of difference *demand*s active care— the effort of “collective and accountable knowledge construction that does not negate dissent or the impurity of coalitions, [but] speaks [instead, affirmatively] of ways of taking care of the unavoidably thorny relations that foster rich, collective, interdependent, albeit not seamless, thinking-with” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 79).

From this stand-point (or post), inquiry must anchor itself in the acknowledgment that “care matters in knowledge politics—as contributing to the mattering of the world” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 71). Care, as a condition for inquiry situates one in emergent relationality, yet acknowledges that inquiry proceeds through disconnection—“the cuts we make” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 78). However, when grounded in care one is urged to interrogate cuts, not as severing but as the iterative (re)creation of “new” patterns of connection that relate as opposed to divide (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, pp. 78–79). For Barad, this is the agential cut that:

[...] does not disentangle the phenomenon into independent subsystems [but rather] provide[s] a contingent resolution of the ontological inseparability within the phenomenon and hence the condition for objective description: that is, it enables an unambiguous account of marks on bodies, but only within the particular phenomenon [...] there is only

a single entity—the phenomenon—and hence the proper objective referent for descriptive terms is the phenomenon, (Barad, 2007, p. 348) [where] a phenomenon is a specific intra-action of an “object” and the “measuring agencies” [that] emerge from, rather than precede the intra-action that produces them.

(Barad, 2007, p. 128)

Writing-with the parasite and the changing colouration of skin—the materiality of bodies mingling—expose the undeniable way in which one is “directly implicated (and co-produced!)” (Truman, 2022, p. 19) within the practice of inquiry, emerging from the middling/meddling intra-action *inside* phenomena. When asked recently about my “anxiety-management regime,” as a probe of concern at my “condition,” it made me question: Why do we so easily assume the need to numb affective states (of worry, uncertainty and fear) to “do the work” when these felt realities serve as the very markers of the caring relations of the work’s intra-active doing? Through the affirmation of uncertainty (and its various affects), we find ourselves in generative, hospitable relations of situated emergence that refuse the demand for simple conclusion that typically forecloses, so neatly, a logic of extraction (Kuntz, 2015, pp. 99–100). In our attempt at care-full truth-making, we opt therefore not to conclude, but rather to continue our process of unfolding by opening up to additional questions.

1.5. Re-Turning to the Tapeworm

Writing-with is a practical technology that reveals itself as both descriptive (it inscribes) and speculative

**(it connects). It builds relation and community, that is:
possibility.**

(Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 77)

In lieu of a conclusion (following Truman, 2022, p. 23), we thought it meaningful to re-turn to where we started, at the material-relational entanglement of Dimitri Tsafendas with his fictional tapeworm that lives on in the South African imaginary as the instigator behind the assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd. Whereas my parasite serves as a companion in thinking, Tsafendas's tapeworm acted as a bifurcating scapegoat, masking radical political action with supposed material-madness.

While Verwoerd's remains rest peacefully in the honoured surrounds of the "Heroes' Acre," Tsafendas was only memorialised on the 20th anniversary of his death (on October 7, 2019) by the South African Communist Party, at what was at that time his still unmarked grave. When South Africa became a democracy in 1994, Tsafendas had been the country's longest-serving prisoner, having spent 23 of his years of incarceration in a cell that was specifically constructed for him to be within earshot of the chamber where death-row convicts were executed (Dousemetzis, 2020). Despite being classified as a "patient of the state," he had never received any medical treatment for his supposed schizophrenia (Dousemetzis, 2020).

In 1996, human rights lawyer Mr. Krish Govender appealed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for further review and investigation of the Tsafendas's case, however, Chief Justice Michael Corbett rejected the suggestion as "pointless and absurd" due to the supposed "overwhelming evidence" of Tsafendas's mental illness (Dousemetzis, 2018, pp. 1649-1650). As a result, Tsafendas remained in a secure psychiatric facility at Sterkfon-

tein Hospital until his death (Dousemetzis, 2020). Tsafendas continues to be largely misremembered and unacknowledged for his act of radical parrhesia, due to the disavowal of his political action through the mythologising of biological matter. We, therefore, echo with Haraway that “[i]t matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with...” (Haraway, 2016b, p. 12). *Matter matters politically, while the political matters through matter.*

In the telling of stories, should we not refuse the danger of single stories, while affirming the value of the singularity of stories in their entangled specificity? Should we not refuse individual authorship in favour of a speculative engagement with situated emergence *in a manner that fosters “the subversive character of thinking with care”*? (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 76). *Writing-with the mattering of matter urges one to be care-full in the interrogation of the boundaries of exclusion that replicate themselves so insidiously when splitting nature from culture, knowing from being and the researcher from the world (as a supposed static object of inquiry).*

In the face of emergencies that urge “us” toward the familiarity of a logic of extraction, we ask, how does one attune to the excess of emergence, always anew, so as to activate continuous multiplicities—the in-act of hyphal mingling-with the not-yet? How does one enrich the material hauntings of the past with an ethical orientation toward a future grounded in difference? How does one practice carefull “cuts” with response-ability, while acknowledging one’s middling/meddling location inside and as part of phenomena? For Kuntz (2021b, p. 498) such potentiality exists in “small moments...the interstices of the everyday,” rather than “grand gestures [...] lauded [...] as stirring challenges to despotic rule.” Is this the lesson we learn

from Tsafendas, that radical truth-telling begets radical disavowal?

In our refusal of a logic of extraction, my parasite and I attempt to figure our orientation toward this minor work, by starting with the intimate act of truth-making through careful thinking-with, writing-with the mattering of matter. We start and stay-with the question of bounded location—the “from where?” of inquiry, the materiality of white skin with its hauntings of privilege and complicity. We acknowledge our non-innocence while patiently building rigor amid the risks and uncertainty—the disorienting a/ effects of our shared state of emergency—motivated, inside each move, by the potentiality for doing inquiry differently, doing inquiry with, in, and for change.

2.

Cripqueering Method in Posthuman Educational Research: Diffractive Reading/Writing-with A/autisms

Abstract

With the aim of contributing towards posthuman orientations in educational research, this article actively engages neuroqueerness as a means to trouble humanist assumptions regarding empirical data and representational language. As its overarching objective, this article seeks to explore some possibilities for the cripqueering of method as a way of doing inquiry differently. I do so by diffracting the disidentificatory queering of identity through the post-identitarian urge of neurodiversity. This article argues for an attunement to the relational errantry of neuroqueer becomings-with, autistic perception and autistic voicing as means of provoking generative methodological perspectives that might challenge the compulsory able-bodymindedness embedded in traditional representationalist humanist modes of education and research.

Some terminology

Cripqueering (verb):

Methodological 'doings' grounded in diffractive readings of crip and queer theory.

Neuroqueer (adjective):

The posthuman disidentificatory dimension of neurodiverse life.

A/autisms (abstract noun):

The deeply entangled contingencies and potentials produced at the intersection of 'autism' as a pathologising label, the lived reality of being marked as such, and the disidentificatory middling—with and against—the hegemonic identitarian assumptions produced by compulsory able-bodymindedness.

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2.1. Preface: Writing-with Writing

This article presents an affective encounter with neuroqueer inquiry as a form of educational research. I commence from my particular interest in arts-based practices by exploring *observation*, *interpretation* and *articulation* as vital moments of ‘translation’, where artistic endeavours entangle with worlds. While observation, interpretation and articulation (or expression) are approached as vital modes of arts-based inquiries, they are also acknowledged as pertinent modalities of research in general. With the aim of contributing towards posthuman orientations to educational research this article attempts to actively engage the often undervalued potential of neuroqueerness to trouble humanist assumptions regarding empirical data and representational language. As such, this writing finds its own expressions in language through diffractive flows of conceptual curiosity, poetic pensiveness and the feeling-with of thinking as its force finds footholds in form.¹ Writing is therefore considered meaningful not as a clear container for fully formed knowing, or what Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2003, p. 967) calls “thought already thought, as a transparent reflection of the known and the real—writing as representation, as repetition”.² Instead, this writing aims to be felt, seen (through the nuances of its

1. Diffraction, as theorised by Donna Haraway (1992) and Karen Barad (2007; 2014) offers an alternative orientation to the representational assumptions of *reflection*. Barad’s conception of diffraction as a methodology is explored in more depth in the third section of this article.

2. During the peer review process, the writing that follows brought into question the notion of the value of “plain language”. I appreciate the reviewer’s suggestion that simple (or perhaps more didactic) language should be considered as a matter of accessibility, yet, the question comes to mind: *what is being accessed and how?* While I agree to the importance of writing-towards comprehension as the work of epistemological accessibility, I also consider poetics as the writing-with affective resonance—movements in access that appeal to the ontological dimension of coming-to-know.

typographic arrangement) and heard (through the sonic specificities arising from reading aloud) so as to decenter representational logic as the sacred sole-proprietor of interpretation. In other words, the writing presented in this article serves as an active encounter with meaning-making-in-process (and often in tension),³ as a purposeful refusal of the epistemological injustices that stem from totalising attempts at theorisation and/or dogmatic applications of extractive representationalist methodologies.⁴ This article shifts its focus from ready-made concepts and methods towards “things in the making” (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 604) as a movement against the implicit reproduction of human exceptionalism and the centrality of Euro-western hegemonies that stem from the legacies of colonialism. To use St. Pierre’s language, this writing purposefully attends to what she calls the “too strange and too much” in acknowledgement of the “*intensive, barely intelligible variation* in living that shocks us and asks us to be worthy of it.” (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 608 - emphasis added).

Writing as a queer, autistic educational practitioner, I am aided by atypical forms of data (at least in the conventional qualitative sense). I write-with theoretical, autie-biographical,⁵ and personal journal writing

3. “Tension”, in this article, refers to the sense of separateness and opposition that one feels when encountering ideas that seem to be contradictory (for example the identitarian-centred stance of humanist traditions in relation to the decentring impulse of posthuman philosophy). When describing such differences as tensions, this article aims to point toward the entangled and co-constitutive nature of supposed ‘oppositions’. When forces push/pull against each other in tension, the tension itself is read as a relational binding, rather than a binarising split.

4. Aaron M. Kuntz (2015, p. 12) identifies a *logic of extraction*, common to educational research, as a dangerous byproduct of methodological orientations that follow “historically laden normalising rationale[s] that [promote] values of distance, fixity, and procedural ways of knowing and coming to know.” Kuntz argues that “[l]ogics of extraction most often result in an unnecessary foreclosure on the otherwise provocative possibilities of critical inquiry.” (2015, p. 21). Elsewhere (Jonker, 2023a), I explore an attunement to *excess/surplus* as an alternative orientation for inquiry as a refusal of extractive logics.

5. Autie-biography is taken as a literary genre concerned with the autobiographical writing of autistic writers.

as my data-points—conceptual surfaces with which I affectively ‘feel’ my way through tensions and indeterminacies.⁶ This writing-with serves as my methodology for learning and discovery.

JULIA: touching and feeling
simultaneously.

(Bascom, 2012, p. 180).

In service of its diffractive approach, this article is interwoven with the writing of multiple other neurodivergent authors. In a montage fashion, these autie-biographical extracts are woven through the writing.⁷ These extracts are presented in a script format, that is, as observational, experiential and affective accounts that are to be activated through the reading, rather than being considered as quotes referring to texts solidified in time and space. These textual interruptions are intended to be rehearsed and re-performed as a mode of practice—a practice in thinking-feeling in attunement with the disidentificatory potential of neuroqueerness.⁸ Some of these extracts are returned to more than once (or repeated several times in *echo-modulation*)⁹ as their meanings and affective tonalities produce dif-

6. Throughout this writing, I make use of “indeterminacy” in alignment with Karen Barad’s (2007) reading of Niels Bohr, whereby indeterminacy is not interchangeable with “uncertainty” (or the lack of knowing). Indeterminacy, as an ontological (rather than epistemological) concern “refers to the state of being indeterminate (lacking definiteness)” (Barad, 2007, p. 525, ft. 30).

7. Following Barad (2017), this article uses *montage* as a diffractive approach for “fragmentary writing [that enables the] diffractiv[e] reading of insights through one another, [encouraging] the reader to explore various crystalline structures that solidify, if only momentarily in the breaking of continuity.” (Barad, 2017, p. 22).

8. This use of “thinking-feeling” follows from Brian Massumi’s (2008, p. 6) assertion that thinking, “in the immediacy of its occurrence” is inseparable from a ‘felt’ dimension. Thinking is, therefore, understood as an entanglement of cognitive and affective experience particular to its temporal-spatial-material occurrence.

ferent resonances at different intersections in the article's unfolding.¹⁰ This reading-with and through neurodivergent experience (of others, and my own) offers suggestive prompts for neuroqueer alternatives to normalised ways of orienting to the experiential dimension of inquiry. These personal accounts, however, do not seek to claim particular determinations that may be used as catch-all qualifiers with which to describe neurodivergence once and for all.

FRANCOIS: To touch-with and feel-
with knowing always occurs in the
incompleteness of its taking-form.

(Jonker, 2023b)

TITO: To explain everything, one may
risk making my "Autism" bright enough
to see. Let the fog continue and let the
search remain.

(Mukhopadyay, 2021, p. 15)

The aim of this article is not to explain or define autism or autistics in any definatory way. The inward spilling of multiple neurodivergent voices aims, instead, to remind one of the multiplicities of neurodiverse life. In its echoes

9. This article's use of "re-turn" attunes to Barad's assertion that re-turning is not the same as returning "reflecting on or going back to a past that was", but rather as a "turning it over and over again - iteratively intra-acting, re-diffracting, diffracting anew, in the making of new temporalities [...]" (Barad, 2014, p. 168). Re-turning, in this context serves an additional purpose by also making use of repetition in alliance with the phenomena of echolalia (the seemingly involuntary repetition of words or phrases typically associated as a 'symptom' of autism).

10. Affective tonality, for Massumi (2008, p. 24) "refers to something we find ourselves in, rather than finding in ourselves. It's an embracing atmosphere that is also at the very heart of what happens because it qualifies the overall feel. Affective tonality is what we normally call a 'mood.'"

and responses, this article intends to open up to the beyond of normalised humanist understandings of observation, interpretation and representational articulation so as to suggest generative, neuroqueer perspectives that might challenge the normopathic oppressions that typify (humanist modes of) education and educational research.¹¹

2.2. Intention / in Tension

This article seeks to contribute to this special issue on *Doing Higher Education Differently: In Conversation with Neuroatypicality* through an exploration of cripqueering as a means of doing posthuman educational research.¹² I diverge from conventional qualitative modes of inquiry that are structured and organised on the assumption that the “human is superior to and separate from the material” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 630), by writing-with neuroqueerness as an orientation towards the more-than-human surplus that is often overlooked by such humanist methodological paradigms. My use of ‘cripqueering’ follows from Carrie Sandahl’s (2003) assertion of the mutually reciprocal relationship between disability studies and queer theory, crip and queer identity, and crip and queer activism (Sandahl, 2003, p. 25).

11. Normopathy is a term used by Jean Oury and Félix Guattari to refer to a neurotic urge towards normativity which signals a compulsive repetition of sameness and complete disavowal of difference (Massumi, 2014, p. 70).

12. As a special, themed issue of *Qualitative Inquiry*, ‘Doing Higher Education Differently: In Conversation with Neuroatypicality’ expands and responds to a 10 session webinar series hosted by the University of the Western Cape, the University of Missouri and Ghent University between October 2021 and July 2022. Recordings of the webinar series is available at <https://www.youtube.com/@doinghighereducationdiffer307>

FRANCOIS: My feet are tilted slightly outward from years of walking on the tips of my toes. I tiptoe especially in the dark of night where the risk of disturbance is most intensely felt. My exclusion from accepted ways of being moves with intentional silence. The silence of hiding has grown into a silence of (neuro)queer profusion. Silence, after all, is everywhere as the full-emptiness underneath and between the presence of sound.

(Jonker, 2023b)

REMI: My silence isn't your silence ...
My silence is brimming...

(Yergeau, 2012, p. 304).

FRANCOIS:...brimming with irreducible multi-plicities.

(Jonker, 2023b).

Cripqueering emerges from this inquiry as a posthumanist methodological orientation—a doing—that roots its unsettling of normative tendencies in theoretical encounters with, and diffractions through, both crip theory and queer theory. Cripqueering proceeds, therefore, as a decentring practice that inquires from/with ‘exclusion zones’—locations that are Other to the vitruvian humanist ideal. In other words, cripqueering tends to a post-human acknowledgement of the “internally fractured” constitution of the human as a category (Braidotti, 2019, p. 53). As a collective, the Human assumes a normalised state of species-exceptionalism, while hierarchically arranged at the level of its individual membership, through the unequal dis-

tribution of “access to normal humanity” as reproduced through the policing of identitarian markers (such as able-bodymindedness, gender, sexual orientation, race, age and class) (Braidotti, 2019, p. 53). As such, cripqueering closely attends to the richness of neuroqueerness, understood in this article as the onto-epistemological becoming-with of neurodivergence, as an effort to decenter the Human and to challenge its exclusionary traditions of identitarian classification.

This article explores the potential that might be uncovered if educational research were to move beyond the implicit assumption of neurotypicality as the baseline for learning and knowing. In higher education, compulsory able-bodymindedness remains unchallenged as a ‘neutral’ position of *(non)identity*—“the natural order of things” (McRuer, 2006, p. 1).¹³ This article, however, aligns with a cripqueering stance by questioning *what posthuman educational research might be and do when foregrounding that which moves in neuroqueer excess to the identitarian assumptions held by ableist humanist traditions*. In its vocabulary, this article favours *neuroqueerness* as opposed to neuroatypicality, thereby siding with Erin Manning’s refusal to re-centre the ‘typical’ in a manner that positions differences as divergences from a so-called universalised norm (Manning, 2024, pg. 1). Neuroqueerness is framed, in this text, as a diversity of generative enabling constraints that allow for differentiated relational modes of becoming-with, rather than being “reduced to something someone is” as a marker of identity (Manning, 2024, pg. 1).¹⁴ As such, this article echoes Man-

13. Drawing on Margaret Price (2015), I favour the use of “bodymind” as an acknowledgement that “mental and physical processes not only affect each other but also give rise to each other—that is, because they tend to act as one, even though they are conventionally understood as two [...]” (Price, 2015, p. 269).

ning's assertion that there is only atypicality (Manning, 2024, pg. 2), or put differently, that there exists no clearly construed neurotypicality to which divergences can be indexed (Shannon, 2021b, p. 34). This article, therefore, aligns with the shift from the "pathology paradigm" to what Nick Walker calls the "neurodiversity paradigm" (Walker, 2021). Walker (2012, p. 228) describes neurodiversity as "[...] the diversity of brains and minds [...] a natural, healthy, and valuable form of human diversity" by acknowledging that "[t]here is no 'normal' style of human brain or human mind any more than there is one 'normal' race, ethnicity, gender or culture."

As a matter of intention/tension, I inquire with a de/personalising of neuroqueerness. I do so by refusing the notion of neurodivergence as a 'condition' that captures and takes hold of an individual person. Instead, neurodivergence might be more generatively read as a shadow figure cast by the socially distributed reign of hegemonic norms. It is through this de/personalisation (an acknowledgement that personal experience and that which ecologically exceeds it are mutually co-constitutive)¹⁵ that I read/write-with the personal accounts of various neurodivergent individuals. I present the personal in a script format in order to de-couple its thinking-feeling from an originating 'I'. The subjectivity of authorship is re-framed through scripting conventions and presented as conceptual 'scores'

14. This article uses "becoming" in the Deleuzoguattarian sense that challenges the Western Enlightenment conception of transcendent and stable identity (which requires indexing difference against compulsory sameness) (Mazzei & Jackson, 2022, p. 111). Instead, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's conception of becoming views identity as co-constituted in relation in ways that affirm difference. Becoming is thus not identification through resemblance or imitation, but rather a middling that is immanent to the field of relation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 293).

15. Ecological, here, refers to the manner in which becoming proliferates and traverses the assumed boundaries of the individual subject. A tending to the ecological dimension of experience takes the 'subject' as "caught in the middling of this [particular] event [...] not [as] the maker of the scene" (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 5).

that can be ‘performed’ through a multiplicity of reading experiences. ‘I’ is opened up to ‘me’, to ‘us’, and to the co-constitutive ‘more-than’ of experience that traverses the assumed boundaries of individual personhood. This *intensional tension* between ‘I’ and its beyond asks, alongside Candace Kuby and Rebecca Christ, “[h]ow can one claim to do posthuman work *and* discuss humans” in an educational context? (Kuby & Christ, 2019, p. 966 - emphasis added). I am cautious not to undermine or disregard the personal experiences of neurodivergent individuals, while simultaneously attempting to avoid re-centring the human as the locus of all experience. The pushes and pulls between humanist notions of identity (as the epistemological arrangement of supposed all encompassing categories) and posthuman subjectivity (as the ethico-onto-epistemological unfolding of situated, embodied and relational becoming-with) are held in tension. As such, this article inquires-with what David Ben Shannon (2021a, p. 1) refers to as *queer frictions*—frictions made visible through his punctuation of A/autisms.¹⁶

Shannon (2021a; 2021b) makes use of the term “A/autisms” as a means of acknowledging a plurality of tensions that productively avoid foreclosing a complete, single and final reading of neurodivergence. Shannon’s (2021a, p. 3) use of A/autisms is inspired by the notion “D/deaf”, in which the upper-case “D” refers to the expansive cultural language and identity of Deafness, while the lower-case “d” refers to a state of non-hearing. A/autisms similarly indicate the entangled tensions between “autism” as a pathologising label, marking certain individuals with a state of deficit, and “Autism” as a site rich with the potential for neuroqueer disidentification. While these orientations towards neurodiversity exist in continuous

16. Shannon (2021b, p. 5) suggests the pronunciation of this term as “ay-autisms”.

tension with each other, a fixation on one or the other runs the risk of invalidating either the lived experience of autistic persons or the “closing down [of] A/autisms’ intrinsic capaciousness” (Shannon, 2021a, p. 6).

Shannon (2021a, pp. 4-5) expands on the frictions produced by “A/autisms” as 1.) an understanding of autism (with a lower-case a) as an exclusionary diagnostic-explanatory identitarian framework projected onto the bodyminds of certain individuals, casting them as divergent from an assumed universal norm. 2.) The lived reality of autistic disability and its intersection with other cultural markers, such as race and gender, which runs the risk of being erased or undermined through abstracted/extractive theorisation. 3.) A site of counter-identification in which Autisms (with a capital A) offers intentional resistance to the notion of neurotypicality, 4.) as well as Autisms’ disidentificatory potential to disrupt the very notion of identity as such (Shannon, 2021a). Shannon’s use of A/autisms, therefore, offers an approach that attends to the risks involved when approaching autism from a singular orientation (Shannon, 2021a, p. 4). I am guided, in my movement towards the cripqueering of method, by Shannon’s productive activation of these tensions emerging from the mutual attraction and contrasts between disability, its contingencies, its intersectional entanglements, and its urge towards counter- and disidentification (Shannon, 2021a, p. 6).¹⁷ I therefore acknowledge, alongside Walker (2012, p. 228) that:

[a]ll of the diversity dynamics (e.g., dynamics of power, privilege, and marginalisation) that manifests in society in relation to other forms of human diversity

17. Shannon draws on Jasbir Puar’s (2012, p. 50) assertion that reading contrasting and even incompatible or incommensurate frameworks together might produce a generative “friction” that may lead one to inventive thought.

(e.g., racial, cultural, sexual orientation, and gender diversity) also manifest in relation to neurodiversity.

I approach Shannon's notion of A/autisms as a conceptual and methodological lure with which to engage educational research practices, through an orientation towards *posthuman disidentification*—or what I refer to in this article as the *cripqueering* of method. In the following section, I examine the work of José Esteban Muñoz (1999) to identify what his foregrounding of queerness adds to the notion of disidentification as conceptualised by Michel Pecheux (1982). While Muñoz provokes a generative departure from the stasis of binarising categorisation, his thinking remains haunted by the persistence of humanist identitarian frameworks. As a movement towards a posthuman activation of disidentification, the sections that follow after read queer-disidentification through the posthuman acknowledgment of relational entanglements and the post-identitarian urge of autistic perception and voicing. Whereas Muñoz's concern remains human-centred, this article intends to build on the decentring potential of neuroqueerness to broaden disidentificatory inquiry so as to attend to the co-constitutive relational force of more-than-human encounters with education and research.

Engaging educational research within a posthuman paradigm demands a refiguring of ontology, epistemology and ethics in order to unshackle educational experiences from the bonds of exclusionist humanist essentialism and the anthropocentric values it reproduces (Taylor, 2016, p. 5). Posthumanism requires us to “imagine, invent and do the doing differently” (Taylor, 2016, p. 6). When considering educational events as sites of neuroqueer becomings-with, this article does not suggest a mode of mere ana-

logical thinking, but rather enacts a diffractive approach. Whereas analogy proceeds through the forceful and reductive foregrounding of sameness, diffraction offers a generative attentiveness to difference.¹⁸ As such, this article does not seek to argue that the classroom is like the neurodivergent bodymind. Rather, I argue for a sensitive awareness of the manner in which collective and relational learning-entanglements are always already in excess of assumed neurotypicality. As such, I underscore the need to open up educational research to the full neuroqueerness of the taking-form of learning events, thereby echoing Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman's assertion that "it is no longer sufficient to engage with representation and interpretation. Rather, we must consider *speculative eventing* as a research practice that provokes an ethics that is accountable to a material world." (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 206 - emphasis added).

As one of its aims, this article seeks to enrich posthuman orientations to educational research by turning towards cripqueering, in defiance of the foreclosures that arise from leaving the assumptions stemming from compulsory neurotypicality unchallenged. A number of key questions arise. Firstly, how might one consider inquiry as a process that proceeds through posthuman disidentification as the cripqueering of methodology? How might one engage the neuroqueer potential of learning-encounters so as to open up towards what Édouard Glissant (2010) describes as a poetics of Relation, in a manner that fosters *response-ability* within learning events?¹⁹ And, how might one activate a cripqueering orientation by attuning to the *more-than of observation, interpretation and representational articula-*

18. See Daniela Gandorfer and Zulaikha Ayub (2021), on matterphorics as a diffractive alternative to the analogical orientation of metaphor.

tion by attending to autistic perception and voicing? In summary, I intend to move with these questions through this writing as a means of urging, with curiosity, towards ways of doing posthuman educational research in a manner that harnesses the (often) undervalued richness of neuroqueerness. I develop my understanding of the cripqueering of method throughout the writing that follows and punctuate the article with summarising suggestions along the way, so as to formulate various clarifications of how the cripqueering of method might be operationalised.

2.3. Cripqueering Method through Posthuman Disidentification: on Productive Encounters with Difference.

My inquiry-with cripqueering builds on Julie Avril Minich's proposition for "an approach to disability studies that emphasises its *mode* of analysis rather than its *objects* of study." (Minich, 2016, p. 2 - emphasis added). A movement from object to mode entails a heightened attentiveness to the effects of methodologies. For Minich (2016, p. 3) disability studies as a method entails:

scrutinising not bodily or mental impairments but the social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatised attributes in particular

19. Response-ability, as opposed to responsibility, emerges from new materialist and posthumanist scholarship (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016b) as a figuration that tends to relational and transversal modes of collective becoming-with the other in ways that mutually enhances each other's ability to respond or act (Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, p. 882).

populations [...] this scrutiny of normative ideologies, should concur not for its own sake but with the goal of producing knowledge in support of justice for people with stigmatised bodies and minds.

As a methodological approach, crip theory thereby critically engages encounters with difference as a means of redressing oppressive structural exclusions in the name of social justice. As such, difference(s) should be approached from an intersectional perspective that acknowledges the complex and unequal distribution of rights,²⁰ respect, acceptance and access to care. Muñoz (1999) contributes to Pêcheux's triadic model of identification when theorising queer disidentification as a "survival strategy" well suited to making a life at the intersection of multiple overlapping markers of exclusion (Muñoz, 1999, p. 18). Pêcheux (1982) distinguishes between a.) *identification*, as the assimilation of the 'good subject' into hegemonic modes of identity; b.) *counter-identification*, as the anti-assimilation of the 'bad' subject who purposefully forms a counter identity to the hegemonic norm; and c.) *disidentification*, as the strategic working with, against and on the hegemonic order as a means of challenging normative logic from within. Disidentification, for Muñoz (1999, p. 11), is the labour-with and through identity towards enacting social change. Such labour concerns "working with/resisting the conditions of (im)possibility" faced by minoritarian subject (Muñoz, 1999, p. 6). Muñoz, following the Chicana feminisms of Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Norma Alarcón and Chela Sandoval, locates his

20. A posthuman orientation to disability studies should approach the questions of 'rights' with caution as rights-based discourses tend to foreground and re-centre humanist conceptions of the unitary agentic subject, rather than the relational understanding of ontology that this article works towards.

theorising with queer disidentification at the contact point where essentialism and social constructivism meet, “short-circuit,” and give rise to “*identities-in-difference*” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 6 - original emphasis).

For Muñoz, identities emerging from within difference—as difference—from the failure of interpellation, occur neither as essence nor as social constructions, but as continuous struggles, through a plurality of intersectional disidentificatory processes (Muñoz, 1999, p. 8). The *processual in-betweenness* of queer disidentification occurs in “intensities of incorporation, diminishment, inflation, threat, loss, reparation and disavowal.” (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 61). Identifying as—the intersectional act of locating oneself—according to Eve Sedgwick, is thus always a negotiation that simultaneously includes identifying *with* and identifying *against*, as a tensile encounter with and against the constrains of hegemonic norms (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 61).

Echoing Judith Butler’s proposition that failures of identification offer meaningful points of emergence for the affirmative democratising of difference (2011, p. 166), queer disidentification reads difference not as a deficit but as a point of proliferation from which to imagine subjectivities yet unaccounted for. Difference, in this light, “undermines opposition as well as separatism” and operates as “[n]either a claim for special treatment, nor a return to an authentic core (the ‘unspoiled’ real Other), it acknowledges in each of its moves, the coming together and drifting apart both within and between identity/ies.” (Minh-ha, 1986, p. 3). Queer disidentification, therefore, does not offer the minoritarian subject the opportunity to pick and choose what to include in their identification at free will (Muñoz, 1999, p. 12). Rather, it concerns a re-figuring and re-working—the coming together and

drifting apart—of the contradictory components of identity, including those that squarely sit at the root of exclusion and personal pain (Muñoz, 1999, p. 12).

AMANDA: The "like everyone else" model actually puts a lot of pressure on people who are different to reduce their difference to one very measurable, non-threatening thing, and be "like everyone else" otherwise.

(Forest Vivian, 2012, p. 243).

Rosi Braidotti (2011, p. 83) emphasises the productive nomadic nature of *defamiliarisation* or *estrangement* as a strategic turning-away-from (or being turned-away-by) hegemonic norms related to identitarian frameworks. For Braidotti (2011, p. 83), "becoming minor"—or *posthuman disidentification*—as the *unlearning* of habitually entrenched humanist ways of thinking and being offer opportunities for the seeding of collective new imaginaries. Queer disidentification, as read through a posthuman orientation, therefore, not only signals the vulnerability of persons located at intersections of marginalisation, but also offers the potential for social transformation when approached through an ethics of affirmation that spills over—in excess to—normalised humanist identities and ideals (Braidotti, 2011, pp. 41, 83). As such, posthuman disidentification exceeds concerns around human-centred identitarian politics and opens up towards challenging the notion of human exceptionalism and its hierarchies of identity.

The internal friction with which A/autisms at once acknowledges the contingent relationship between ableism (or compulsory able-body-

mindedness) and neurodiversity, as well as the posthuman disidentificatory working of neuroqueerness and its potential for emergent becomings-with, demands to be approached through diffraction. A diffractive approach, as theorised by Karen Barad (2007), is warranted in this context as it provides one with an orientation that sustains assumed tensions without resorting to hierarchical binarisation, thereby offering a methodological refusal of the reductive tendencies of extractive forms of humanist research. Barad makes use of the quantum phenomenon of wave diffraction in order to develop diffraction as a methodology that circumvents the representationalist propensities of reflection. Through the care-full study of superpositions (where more than one wave or particle occupies the same space-time and thereby cause material effects that cannot be reduced to the sum of its now-inseparable parts), diffraction pays attention to the effects of difference—how differences come to matter (Barad 2007, p. 137). In research practices, a diffractive method functions as an exercise in posthuman disidentification. Diffraction does so by moving away from representational conventions by reading multiple text/concepts/theories through each other (reading with and against and the in-between) so as to avoid the limitations of critique (which merely points out differences as a form of deficiency or lack). Diffraction, alternatively, aims to do justice to each text/concept/theory and pays close attention to the ways in which differences do something—how differences serve as points of departure for emergent knowledge or insight. When inquiring-with diffraction it is essential to acknowledge that attending to differences that matter inadvertently leads to the exclusion of other matters. While some superpositions might be closely studied, others remain peripheral despite their entangled inseparability. My writing-with neurodi-

versity aims to hold the internal tensions of A/autisms, yet tends with more fervour to their posthuman disidentificatory potential for ways of thinking subjectivity anew. As such, I move away from humanist notions of the unitary agentic subject 'I'. This diffractive reading of Munoz's notion of queer disidentification through Braidotti's formulation of 'becoming minor' and Barad's conception of diffraction leads me to certain suggestions for how cripqueering might be activated as a means of doing inquiry:

- **Cripqueering decentres:** proceeding through posthuman-disidentification by attending to the nomadic nature of becomings as they spread beyond the assumed containment of the human as the central subject of experience.
- **Cripqueering avoids finality:** advancing with an acknowledgement of the processual nature of becomings (as negotiations with- and against established modes of being and doing).
- **Cripqueering diffracts:** paying attention to the superpositions that emerge from intersectional contingencies of becoming as always-more-than-singular, always-more-than-human processes— encountering differences as points of productive proliferation from which to imagine the not-yet intelligible.
- **Cripqueering cares:** motivated in each of its moves by the pull of collective imaginings for new ways of becoming, rooted in a concern for justness.

In furthering my understanding of cripqueering, I aim to put these suggestions to work by proposing alternative orientations to what conventional research practices might centre as *data, interpretation and articulation*.

Yet, before doing so, the section that follows explores the need to account for the relational dimension of educational encounters as a means of fostering justness through the response-able affirmation of difference.

2.4. Inquiring-with Relation: on Movements towards Posthuman Educational Research

REMI: Waywardness has always been the
way of my bodymind.

(Yergeau, 2019, 13:11)

Édouard Glissant, in a disidentificatory manoeuvre of Caribbean postcolonial poetics, refuses representationalist traditions that take the world as their “raw material” to be captured through theorising and the ‘fullness’ of explanation (Dash, 1995, p. 155). For Glissant, it is the work of *intuition* and the *suspension of determinacy* that act as an antidote to the pressures of oppressive cultural assimilation by producing *minor* moments of refusal (Dash, 1995, p. 156). Glissant describes these movements-in-the-minor as a form of *errantry*—an errantry that “strives to know the totality of the world yet already knows [it]²¹ will never accomplish this—and knows that is precisely where the threatened beauty of the world resides.” (Glissant, 1997, p. 20). Glissant’s care-full attention to the errant zones of exclusion (the more-than of naturalised hegemonic humanist understandings) offers resonant conceptual richness with which to engage with value of neurodiversity and its refusal to be legible through identitarian and representational frameworks.

21. Quotation altered to replace the original gendered pronoun.

FRANCOIS: Being wayward is not being lost but being searching and always finding unknowns along the way.

(Jonker, 2023b)

TITO: Let the fog continue and let the search remain.

(Mukhopadhyay, 2021, p. 15)

FRANCOIS: Wayward searching asks for new ways of noticing ... new ways of becoming-with ... new ways of attending to the not-yet-legible.

(Jonker, 2023b)

In a departure from systematic thought, Glissant proposes a thinking that wanders with the rhizomatic tracing of interconnection (Glissant, 2020b, p. 9).²² For Glissant (2020b, pp. 9-10 - emphasis added),

[w]e know that the *trace* is what puts us, all of us, wherever we come from, in Relation [...] The trace is not an unfinished path where one stumbles helplessly, nor an alley closed on itself, bordering a territory. The trace goes into the land, which will never again be a territory [...] Trace thought enables us to move away from the strangulations of the system. It refutes the extremes of possession [...] It is the violent wandering of the shared thought.

The errantry of becoming-with, for Glissant (2010, p. 144), is becoming-in-Relation as the tracing of a chaotic network of contradictory expe-

²² Glissant's thinking with rhizomes aligns with Deleuze and Guattari's conception of rhizomes in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987).

riences—the tracing of/with difference. Becoming-in-Relation is a posthuman disidentificatory becoming that spills over the boundaries of being the unitary ‘I’. Glissant’s relational ontology (which produces resonant echoes with Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of immanence and Barad’s agential realism) provokes the proposition that *living and learning should be understood not as encounters between independent, pre-existing individuals but as the irreducible entanglement of innumerable multiplicities* (which include humans, non-human-animals, matter, technologies, histories and thoughts) (Newfield, Bozalek, & Romano, 2023, p. 177). This entangled state of errantry foregrounds a “voyaging toward the other, the unfamiliar, the not-yet-encountered, rather than the search for fixed, universal answers and a colonial-type expansion of territory.” (Newfield, Bozalek, & Romano, 2023, p. 177). As such, relational errantry traces with response-ability as an opening up towards attending to the responses of differences that resist classification into predetermined categories.

ERIN: I hear a call for other ways of
listening to the urgency that is living.
(Manning, 2019, p. 12).

FRANCOIS: I feel an urge that pulls
toward the edges - the fading boundaries
shaping Foucault's Man.²³ Impermanent
constellations in grains of sand ...
endless granules eroded from one big
rock.

(Jonker, 2023b)

23. See Foucault (1989, p. 422) on the death of Man, illustrated in his writing as a face drawn in the sand on the shore line, erased by the movement of the rising tide.

The humanist (representationalist and identitarian) territorialisation of educational research draws boundaries of exclusion that, for Kuntz (2015, p. 19) stifle the potential of productive and meaningful ways of learning, knowing and becoming-with, by treating knowledge as fully formed territories to be claimed through epistemological conquests. Humanist educational research tends to delimit acceptable knowledge to that which proceeds from the assumed stability of the unitary 'I' in reflective distance to the world open for *His* full knowing (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 630)—a foreclosure that results in the marginalisation and disregard for the more-than of human observation, interpretation and representational articulation. Representationalist humanist approaches demand the parsing of experience into recognisable forms of legibility. For Deleuze (1994, p. 138 - emphasis added) this “world of representation is characterised by its inability to conceive of *difference in itself*”, due to its reliance on “resemblance as a requirement for perceptual continuity.” When attuning to a field of Relation that resists the recognition afforded by sameness, posthumanist educational research requires different sensibilities for sense-making.

In a posthuman refiguring of education, Nathan Snaza (2013, p. 49 - original emphasis) suggests “bewildering education”, a proposition that starts with a movement “*away from being human*, or at least away from thinking that we have any clear idea about what that means.” For Snaza (2013, p. 49), this movement of wilding traces lines of errantry by refusing predetermined, predefined and fully-knowable outcomes as the central strictures guiding educational practices. The cripqueering of method might serve as one way of *bewildering* educational research through a process-orientation that commences inquiry from that already active in

the backgrounded field of Relation, rather than the supposed centrality of the researching 'I'. The work of cripqueering requires, then, a widening of conventional practices of observation, interpretation and articulation so as to attune to ways of tracing (becoming- and knowing-with) that exceed the limiting criteria of conventional humanist knowledge practices. Through the aid of Glissant, Deleuze and Snaza I further my suggestions for how cripqueering might emerge as a means of doing inquiry:

- **Cripqueering traces:** attending to errant lines of Relation that traverse the assumed boundaries of pre-defined categories of thinking, feeling, knowing and being.
- **Cripqueering affirms difference:** foregrounding response-ability with a curiosity that defers resolving differences through an indexing of sameness.
- **Cripqueering sustains tensions:** staying with the indeterminacies and contradictions that are immanent to the middling of process in the midst of its unfolding.

This leads me to the following questions: how might inquiry cripqueer its modes of observation in ways that refuse the reflective tendency to organise all that is yet-unknown into prefigured interpretative schemas? How might inquiry cripqueer its modes of interpretation to account for encounters within emergent fields of Relation without reducing the richness of experience into analogous, and therefore reductive, explanations? How might inquiry be cripqueered in order to attend to and articulate the 'what else' required to conceive of difference in itself?

In response to these questions, a turning towards neuroqueer modes of perception and voicing (as bewildering lures for posthuman educational research) proves valuable. What is at stake in the posthuman disidentification away from neurotypical framings of observation, interpretation and representational articulation is a potential for moving closer to response-able ways of nurturing the natural variation of (human and more-than-human) difference(s). By replacing a tendency for compulsory sameness with a politics that affirms and enables difference(s), educational research and practices should be oriented to the creation rather than the policing of value (Manning, 2020a, p. 278). In the next section I explore autistic perception and voicing as neuroqueer ways of observing-with, noticing-with, listening-with, attending-with, articulating-with, relating-with, learning-with and caring-with.²⁴ With these explorations I aim to suggest that researchers might look toward such neuroqueer modalities as ways of relational attunement that might be activated as cripqueering orientations when doing educational research.

2.5.1. Autistic Perception: on the More-than of Observation

In her encounters with autistic individuals, autie-biographies and her own neurodivergence, Manning identifies a tendency towards what she refers

24. Throughout this article, I make use of the suffix “-with” as an echoing of María Puig de la Bellacasa’s use of “thinking-with” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 72). This formulation serves to indicate the relational and distributive nature of doings, rather than assuming a linear unfolding of causes-and-effects centred on a sole agentic subject. For Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, p. 72) a doing-with acknowledges the rich multiplicities of more-than-human entanglements. Doings-with is a refusal of reducing encounters to their assumed correspondence to “ready-made” orders, thereby acknowledging that “*what* and *how* we enter in relations affect positions and relational ecologies” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 72).

to as autistic perception (2016; 2020a). For Manning (2016, p. 14), autistic perception can be understood as an *ecological mode of sensing that suspends categorisation, classification and hierarchical differentiation*. Autistic perception is ecological in the sense that it lingers within the *thick multiplicity* of encounters with experience yet unparsed into distinguishable forms (Manning, 2016, p. 14; 2020a, p. 227). Autistic perception resists separation into prefigured categories that filter out, for example, colour from sound, from light, from movement—perception that does not separate what *bodies* from what *worlds* (Manning, 2016, p. 14). Autistic perception is perception-in-practice—in the midst of *process* (Manning, 2016, p. 14). The subtraction required of the parsing is a challenge to the autistic bodymind, which more naturally dwells in the in-betweens (Manning, 2020a, p. 228).

MEL: The world is thick with sensation
... there is also the feel of it, the
way the space between everything flows
and moves and changes colour.

(Baggs, 2023, p. 324)

FRANCOIS: The classroom never pauses
for long enough to reveal its full
composition.

(Jonker, 2023b)

MEL: Objects are alive to us and
interact with us as much as we interact
with each other.

(Baggs, 2023, p. 324)

FRANCOIS: Collectivities form and
dissolve. ChairStudentPencil leans
forward to meld with Paper/Table/

Figureshadow. Together they "line" in emergence of a drawing. Lines trace: task instructions, embodied sensations, surface texture, muscle memories, graphite density, room temperature, the learnt conventions of artistic practice, and the movement of other lines tracing-with other entanglements in close proximity.

(Jonker, 2023b).

MEL: Objects ... us ... we ... each other.

(Baggs, 2023, p. 324)

While exploring autistic perception for its wandering errantry, Manning acknowledges that it makes daily life hard to navigate, as much of life demands the instantaneous foregrounding of legible entities against the backgrounding of that which moves in excess to what actualises as known forms (Manning, 2016, pp. 14-15; 2020a, p. 103). Representationalist modes of observation (related to humanist conceptions of education and inquiry) typically exclude autistic modes of perception, casting the non-hierarchical *backgroundingforegrounding* (Manning, 2020a) of autistic perception as an illegible Other. Autistic perception is thereby invalidated and its meaning-making abilities undervalued.

FRANCOIS: The ever-moving classroom "events" more capaciously than can be described in words. Each moment of attention to a "thing" blurs out the background from which it "things". Cutting perception into distinct

fragments - I am left with nothing but
what I expected to find ... what I have
been trained to see.

(Jonker, 2023b).

KIMBERLY: ... people need to listen with
their eyes! Look with their ears!

(Tucker, 2012, p. 354)

FRANCOIS: Looking is never enough.
Description always falls short.
Translating the classroom experience
into pre-moulded concepts produces some
meaning ... but fails in its attempt to
capture it - there is untameable meaning
that meanders-with the errantry of the
event in its immanent unfolding.

(Jonker, 2023b)

“Meaning” for autistic perception “is always fielded” or distributed *in* the world, rather than assimilated into the interiority of thought (Massumi, 2017, pp. 73, 79). Neuroqueer attentiveness, thereby, becomes a force of co-composition dis/placing the becoming-subject with-in experience, rather than as external observer (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 5). Such co-composition traces-with the relays between experience and imagination through the entanglement of “uncertainty in the aroundness”, which poses the question “where does the body begin and end?” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 6)—where does the observer meet the observed and how might one account for their relational inseparability?

FRANCOIS: Staying with questions, rather
than "things" affords me moments of

middling-with meanings not-yet-made. The futurity of meaning pulls me out of myself ... out of my predefined aims and outcomes ... out of my presupposed answers ... out of my me - into a not-yet-knowing that remains perpetually on the move.

(Jonker, 2023b)

When turning to autistic perception, Manning aims not only to honour neurodiversity but also to figure a politics that impresses the importance of creating orientations that attune existence to what exceeds representational legibility (Manning, 2016, p. 14). Such politics hones attentiveness to difference—in the midst of its emergence—noticing how potential wells within the indeterminacy of the immanence of the event. For Manning (2016, p. 15), this attentiveness is an opening up to yet-unactualised “new diagrams of life-living.”

FRANCOIS: The movement of meaning in its resistance to form obscures common binaries. Doing/thinking, student/teacher, active human/passive materials. The separating slash is revealed as mere imposition. Resisting such separation enables new and errant lines for thought and action.

(Jonker, 2023b).

Autistic perception attunes to “qualitative openings” in experience and offers the opportunity to reconsider value beyond normative identitarian strictures due to its immanent attentiveness to the unfolding of events prior to their categorisation into prefigured orders of interpretation (Manning,

2016, p. 15). Autistic perception, according to Manning and Massumi, offers an indiscriminate attunement to the more-than human—and in-between-ness that turns towards Relation rather than a foregrounding of the human (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 4). For Manning and Massumi (2014, p. 4), to tend to autistic perception is to:

pay equal attention to the full range of life's texturing complexity, with an entranced unhierarchised commitment to the way in which the organic and the inorganic, colour, sound, smell and rhythm perception and emotion intensely interweave into the 'aroundness' of a textured world, alive with difference [...] for all of the challenges of autism, this is not without joy.

MEL: This all happens at the level below words, below concepts, all the way down close to the experience of the world.

(Baggs, 2023, p.325)

Attention, in autistic perception, is not attention to, but “attention *with* and *toward*, *in* and *around*” – a “dance of attention” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, pp. 4, 5 - emphasis added). This more-than of observation moves beyond reflections on the environment as if it were in a state of givenness. It is an attunement to the relational attentiveness of the environment to its own coming-into-expression (Manning & Massumi, 2016, p. 6).

FRANCOIS: How does the classroom experience figure and refigure itself in ways that surprise, contradict, congeal and disperse?

(Jonker, 2023b)

If we understand this more-than of attentiveness as the cripqueering of observation, then neuroqueer inquiry demands a processual reading of events by acknowledging that “experience is not composed of objects”, objects are mere “relational conduit[s] for a field-wide tendency to expression.” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 5). As such, tracings-with the “threshold of expressibility [...] already active in the field” demands a mode of interpretation and articulation that resists presupposing the resolution of Relations into discreet entities, by staying with the “bud[ing] of a qualitative becoming towards making sense in language” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 6). When used as modality in the cripqueering of method, autistic perception requires, then, an attunement to autistic voicing as a form of expression that moves through articulation, yet without being captured by it (Massumi, 2017, p. 73). I am, therefore, urged to explore autistic voicing practices as acute tendencies to the more-than of linguistic articulation as neuroqueer ways of expressing and responding that demand different ways of interpretation—different ways of listening to that which can easily be mistaken for silence.

REMI: I wish you wouldn't interpret my
silence as silence.

(Yergeau, 2012, p. 303)

MEL: Our best - and for some people,
only - way of thinking is pre-conceptual
and pre-verbal. This means it is hard
to translate into language. Often
impossible.

(Baggs, 2023, p. 329)

REMI: My silence isn't your silence
... My silence is rich and meaningful.

My silence is reflection, meditation, processing. My silence is trust and comfort. My silence is a sensory carnival. My silence is brimming with the things and people around me - and only in that silence can I really know them, "speak" to them, and learn from them.

(Yergeau, 2012, p. 303)

2.5.2. Autistic voicing: on the More-than of Representationalist Articulation

Language moves at the pace of the world, not the preconstituted subject.

(Manning, 2020a, p. 278)

The cripqueering of observation as an attunement to autistic perception requires a reconfiguring of 'listening' modalities. While conventional research practices tend to be drawn to written and spoken language, the cripqueering of method would find fruitful expansion in the widening of its attention to the neuroqueerness of autistic voicing. Manning (2020a) describes the attunement to autistic voicing as a practice of *ticcingflapping*—a practice that aims to make felt the affective vividness of language as it spills over into the more-than-linguistic expressions embodied through stimming (Manning, 2020a, p. 274).²⁶ Pathology-oriented language conventionally describes stimming as "self-stimulatory behaviour" and takes these actions to be involuntary compulsive dysfunctions of the autistic bodymind—actions that serve no purpose besides identifying the autistic individual through their behavioural differences (Walker, 2021). Autistics (and a growing num-

ber of non-autistics guided by the neurodiversity- rather than a pathology paradigm), in contrast, acknowledge stimming as performing essential functions of sensory integration and self-regulation (Walker, 2021). Walker (2021, p. 146), however, argues that an understanding of stimming as a “coping strategy” is “woefully incomplete”, as first-hand accounts of stims reveal them to be sophisticated, intuitive embodied practices. Walker (2021) notes that:

[i]n addition to serving to regulate and integrate sensory, perceptual, cognitive, and emotional experience, stimming can also function as a way of exploring and relating to the sensory world, and as a means of accessing not only a wide range of cognitive and emotional capacities but also exceptional human capacities such as flow states or experiences of profound communion and ego transcendence.

An attunement to ticcingflapping acknowledges stimming as *paralinguistic* engagement with the more-than of representational language as an orientation to “what else language can do.” (Manning, 2020a, p. 274). By approaching the paralinguistic value of stimming with curiosity, cripqueering might open up inquiry to the potential of *relational expression* and how moving bodies take part in what might otherwise be excluded from sense.

26. Nick Walker (2021) defines stimming as “to engage in any action that falls outside of the boundaries of the social performance of normativity, and that provides some form of sensory stimulation in order to facilitate, intentionally or otherwise, some particular cognitive or sensorimotor process, or access to some particular state or capacity of consciousness or sensorimotor experience.” Walker (2021), lists limited examples of stimming as “proprioceptive [...] (e.g., rocking, pacing, waving or flapping one’s hands, seeking physical pressure or impact); tactile (e.g., touching objects and surfaces with appealing textures, stroking one’s own skin); vestibular (e.g. spinning or swinging); visual (e.g., gazing at running water or rising smoke); auditory (e.g., listening to running water or loud music); olfactory or gustatory (e.g., sniffing or tasting things); verbal (e.g., repetition of particular words or phrases); [or] any combination of the above [...]”

FRANCOIS: The classroom never pauses. It keeps revealing its composing movement.

(Jonker, 2023b)

MEL: This all happens at the level below words.

(Baggs, 2023, p. 325)

FRANCOIS: Movement sidles words but words often capture attention when taking language as the only medium that matters.

(Jonker, 2023b)

SAVANNAH: Your voice is a medium, writing is a medium, art and video and yes, even poking someone repeatedly or jumping up and down or twitching your eyes in a pattern can be using a medium — your body — to communicate.

(Logsdon-Breakstone, 2021, p. 289)

FRANCOIS: Words make territories. Movements stay with the immanence of meaning-in-the-making.

(Jonker, 2023b)

BEV: The most important thing to keep in mind is that speech is not the same thing as language, and that communication is a much larger concept still ... When I am not speaking, I am still communicating, most of the time, I am using some form of language.

(Harp, 2012, p. 305)

FRANCOIS: Attending to the movement of learning events — the movement of single bodies, collective bodies, assembled (more-than-human) bodies — reveals a processual errantry that resists simple translation.

(Jonker, 2023b)

SAVANNAH: Sometimes, we can't even define exactly what we are communicating with our medium yet, but it's a process. Sometimes figuring out what we mean — communicating with ourselves — is even more part of using media than communicating with others.

(Logsdon-Breakstone, 2021, p. 289)

FRANCOIS: I listen to student interviews, I read student survey responses but should I rather be moving with movements-in-the-making as the more-than of what language can do?

(Jonker, 2023b)

SAVANNAH: All media, in practice, in use, builds and creates access, builds and creates our futures.

(Logsdon-Breakstone, 2021, p. 291)

FRANCOIS: The collective learning bodymind moves with varying degrees of intentionality. Hands writing notes on paper, fingers typing letters on keys, feet tap-tap-tapping. Some thoughts move closer to our topic of discussion and express themselves in nods, while others wander with heads slightly tilted, chins raised or lowered at innumerable angles.

(Jonker, 2023b)

Yergeau (2018) makes use of the term “queer rhetoric” as a means to signal the multimodal expressivity of autistic language—language that moves in excess to sequences of words following each other in written or verbal form. For Yergeau (2018, pp. 178-179), this is a rhetoric of “interbodily invention”—movements where meanings emerge in the in-between of the rhetorical and non-rhetorical. Yergeau positions this in-betweenness as *demi-rhetoricity*—an in/voluntary middling as the more-than of established canons of rhetoric (Yergeau, 2018, p. 178). Disidentificatory movements in the neuroqueering of communication, such as flapping, stimming, gesturing, and echolalia (repetitive vocalisations), serve as “corporeal neologisms” (Yergeau, 2018, p. 196), that challenge conventional understanding of rhetoric (Yergeau, 2018, p. 181). For Jason Nolan and Melanie McBride (2015, p. 1074), such meta-communicative utterances serve as a complex mode of embodied semiosis in which the body and its sensory apparatus serves as “both index and sign system” of expressivity-in-the-making (Connolly, 2008, p. 242). Neuroqueer meaning-making is therefore a mode of immanent middling that exceeds beyond a reliance on referentiality thereby functioning outside of the assumed correspondence model of representationalist communication (Yergeau, 2018, p. 196). As such, Nolan and McBride (2015, p. 1075) contend that autistic voicing offers a new sensory imaginary that demands alternative modes of literacy that are liberated from the restrictions of representational language.

FRANCOIS: What I attend to matters.
While my attention impulsively pulls
towards the foregrounding of words, I
am reminded to heed the most minor of
gestures.

(Jonker, 2023b)

JULIA: I'm "told" to have quiet hands.
I need to silence my most reliable way
of gathering, processing and expressing
information.

(Bascom, 2012, p. 180)

FRANCOIS: How do I avoid silencing
minor movements of meaning-making that
resist translation into words? How
do I inquire-with the fullness of the
world and its relational capacity for
expression?

(Jonker, 2023b)

Autistic voicing, for Manning (2020a, p. 276), emerges from a deep attunement to experience and the relational fields with which experience composes and, therefore, reconfigures what comes to matter in expression. In opposition to representationalist assertion that language captures experience and makes it 'our' own, autistic voicing refuses such reflective reduction by co-composing with that which moves in excess of legibility (Manning, 2020a, p. 276). Manning (2020a, p. 278) argues that:

[a]utistic voicing is a dancing, a living, wildly, unruly, the words, the movements, always at the limit of what can be categorised, framed, understood. How to even begin to translate this puzzle whose pieces will always be too many?

Autistic voicing, as with autistic perception offers an attunement to the Relational dimension of experience—in excess to representational conventions for observation, interpretation and articulation as cripqueering mo-

dalities that exceed the unitary and transcendent 'I' of humanism. As such, this article argues that posthuman educational research would be enriched by embracing autistic perception and voicing as strategies with which to refuse representationalist reductionism as a movement towards a thinking-feeling-becoming with Relation. By activating autistic perception and an attunement to autistic voicing as practices for research, the cripqueering of method might be enriched as a means of doing inquiry in the following ways:

- **Cripqueering backgroundforegrounds:** proceeding through an ecological mode of sensing that attunes not only to foregrounded objects and subjects but also to that which is active in the unparsed backgrounding of events, without prioritising the former over the later.
- **Cripqueering dances with the attention of an event:** engaging meanings as co-composed and distributed in the world rather than being interior to a knowing subject.
- **Cripqueering refigures value:** heeding a politics that attends to what remains illegible to the representationalist values of normative frameworks.
- **Cripqueering attunes to stimming:** 'listening' to the seemingly unintentional movements in events as paralinguistic expressions in sense-making.

2.6. Conclusion

Through its writing with theoretical, autobiographical and personal journal texts, this article enacted an affective encounter with neuroqueer inquiry.

In its aim of challenging representationalist humanist traditions (and the limitations and exclusions they reproduce) I turned towards the mutually reciprocal relationship between queer theory and disability studies, from where I guided my posthuman disidentificatory stance toward a rethinking of notions of identity, subjectivity, ontology, epistemology and ethics. Shannon's conception of A/autisms served as a meaningful reminder of the contingent and co-constitutive entanglement of identitarian categorisations with the disidentificatory capaciousness of Othered becomings. Engaging the nomadic and immanent nature of becoming in all of its Relational potentiality, urged me towards an attunement to speculative eventing as a form of inquiry. With the aim of contributing to posthuman educational research practices, and the 'wilding' they call forth, I developed suggestions for the cripqueering of method as a means of doing inquiry that grounds itself in a diffractive reading of crip theory, queer theory, posthumanism and a Relational understanding of ontology. As such, cripqueering emerges as a troubling of what conventional humanist frameworks might take for granted as the work of reflective observation, distanced interpretation and representational articulation.

The cripqueering of method offers an *ecology of practices* that proliferates through research events as dynamic, de-centring, and care-full tracings of difference that avoid foreclosing meaning through the indexing of sameness or standardised categories of knowing.²⁷ When coupled with

27. An ecology of practices is described by Isabelle Stengers (2005, p. 185) as a series of tools that are "both producing and produced by the relationship of relevance between the situation and the tool." For Stengers, an ecology of practices offers opportunities for the development of "new 'practical identities' for practice, that is, new possibilities [...] to be present, or in other words to connect." (Stengers, 2005, p. 186).

an attunement to neuroqueerness, cripqueering attends with curiosity to the relational richness of events by resisting the foregrounding of presupposed subject/object relations. Cripqueering dances with the attention that is immanent and distributed through an event and values its coming-into-expression through stimming practices as paralinguistic movement of meaning-in-the-making. While these suggestions for cripqueering specifically pertain to an emphasis on neuroqueerness as disidentificatory modalities of becoming, this article ends in anticipation for these suggestions to be carried forth in explorations of many other productive modes of cripqueering that would emerge when attuning to other forms of divergences from the so called ablebodyminded norm. My hope is that scholars engaging with various Othered groups (such as the deaf and blind community for example),²⁸ would find conceptual and methodological richness in their own explorations of what the cripqueering of method might make think-able and do-able in a response-able practice of posthuman educational research.

28. See, for example, Manning's writing on DeafBlindness (2020a).

3. **Choreographic Cartographies with-in Learning: Towards response-ability in Higher Education Pedagogy**

Abstract

In this article, I seek to engage the liberatory impetus of critical pedagogies through an attentiveness to body-space-time so as to enrich the former with the notion of response-ability. Several learning activities are engaged within the context of a foundation year classroom of an Art School, to open up conceptions of the experiential nature of learning events and the ethico-onto-epistemological questions that emerge when foregrounding response-ability as a condition for learning-becoming. I have particular interest in notions of subjectivity, agency and affect, questioning how a new materialist reading of these concepts might serve to challenge representationalist conceptions of higher learning. I commence with a proposition: *engage learning as an experience – through the processual potentialities of its in-act* and prompt myself by drawing attention to the *performativity of body-space-time cartographies and choreographies*.

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3.1. Introduction

“I feel like I am not breathing in the right way”

These words uttered by a first-year student on their second day in a higher education institution speak volumes, despite the almost inaudible quality of this whisper-gesture. The task that preceded this comment asked students to draw while breathing. Drawing two connecting sides of a square while breathing in and the remaining sides while breathing out. With eyes closed, this action aims to bring attunement to the rhythm of breathing – seeking to stimulate attentiveness to the students’ fleshy presence within the physical space of the classroom. This task, so simple in its instruction, yet so tentative in execution, makes one aware of how the air is thickened with uncertainty and even more so, the anxiety to perform according to a perceived prefigured and impenetrable divide between *right* and *wrong*. The fear of failure and not-fitting-in presses against the chests of students who find it hard to breathe their presence into this yet unfamiliar space of higher learning. The institution, its inherent asymmetrical power distributions and this pressure to perform – these conditions needn’t even be made explicit, they are there, felt, even before any human participant enters the room. There is a palpable sense of constraint. The ability to respond in ways constitutive of learning is thwarted by the hauntings of education as a humanist biopolitical machine known primarily through dogmatic and oppressive learning experiences.

In this article, I engage several learning activities following this initial exercise in breathing-drawing as a means to *open up conceptions*

*of the experiential nature of learning events and the ethico-onto-epistemological questions that emerge when foregrounding response-ability as a condition for learning-becoming.*¹ To this aim, this text is enriched and interrupted by student responses—poetic assemblages typographically modelled from students’ feedback on these learning experiences². These serve as *affective* interjections offering glimpses of the *more-than* of each learning event. Student responses are transformed from descriptions into propositional seeds — “lures for feeling”³ — figuring the reading of learning events outside of the constraints of *description* or *explanation*, heeding Alfred North Whitehead’s warning that “[p]hilosophy destroys its usefulness

1. This conception of learning-becoming takes into account that “[...] becoming is not a correspondence between relations [nor] is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification [...] to become is not to progress or regress along a series” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 237-238). Learning-becoming is therefore conceptualised as differentiated singularities of embodied learning with-in the in-act of learning — what Alfred North Whitehead refers to as “a creative advance into novelty” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 28). An exploration of learning-becoming demands an attentiveness to the differentiating flow of (human and more-than-human) relations that compose learning encounters as ever-emergent ‘middles’, rich with the potential for transformations. “[A] line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination; [...] A line of becoming has only a middle [...] A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 293).

2. These interjections are composed by taking words and phrases from student responses and assembling them into a collage of thoughts and feelings, guided by the particular words and themes that “glow [...] start to glimmer, gathering our attention” (MacLure, 2010, p. 282). I nurture the lures seeding from student responses through an awareness that “[...]language is creatively mired within the affective tonalities of how it can be heard, lived, written, imagined” (Manning, 2009, p. 5). Instead of cementing student responses as certainties, they are opened up through the typographic form in which they are presented. In contrast to poetry that “asks to be reread, but not to be rewritten” (Massumi, 2013, p. xiv), these textual expressions align with “processual philosophical writing”, described by Brian Massumi as “fully composed [...] but without the standing claim to finality, instead with a horizontal openness of process that extends an invitation to further” its images and affects. They set in motion “a concept-creative momentum for a [...] thought community [to come]” (Massumi, 2013, p. xiv), thereby inviting the reader to participate through their own rephrasing, additions and affective responses.

3. Whitehead describes propositions as “lures for feeling” (1978, p. 85). In this sense, propositions are “not statement[s] about the world to be judged true or false, not tool[s] for unveiling the truth behind appearances, but a possibility that draws those who entertain [them] into a different way of feeling their world” (Gaskill & Nocek, 2014, p. 6).

when it indulges in brilliant feats of explaining [experience] away” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 17).

In its engagement with particular learning experiences, this article aims to limit its reliance on mere explanation and description, as these modes of engagement are predicated on a correspondence model in which posteriori abstractions are treated as epistemological mirrors of experiential events.⁴ Instead, this article functions by *writing-with* learning events, rather than writing *about* them, as a *tending* to its abstraction with care and caution for them not to be mistaken as more complete or concrete than what they are — mere abstractions.⁵ I approach these abstractions of learning events as “generalisations”⁶ — “imaginative constructions aimed at transforming modes of thought [and] habits of attention [...]” (Gaskill

4. Whitehead refers to the persistence of assumed correspondence between a split system constituted on the one side by “nature apprehended in awareness” and on the other side by “nature [as] the cause of awareness” (2015, pp. 30–31) as a “complex of bifurcation” (1978, p. 290) that is reproduced by an assumed “separations of perceptual fact from emotional fact; and of causal fact from emotional fact, and from perceptual fact, and of perceptual fact, emotional fact, and causal fact, from purposive fact” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 290).

5. For Whitehead, philosophy functions as “the critic of abstractions” and since one “cannot think without abstractions [...] it is of the utmost importance to be vigilant in critically revising [one’s] mode of abstraction” (Whitehead, 1948, p. 59). The danger of abstraction is amplified when enclosed in the “groove” of disciplinary specialisation (Gaskill & Nocek, 2014, p. 14), which tends to pit the achievements of various practices against one another in an “either/or” fashion, rather than opening up to an “*ecology* of abstraction” (Gaskill & Nocek, 2014, p. 11). My tending to abstraction is sensitised by Erin Manning’s assertion that narration holds the danger of “mythologising” practices in a manner that translates them into institutional certainties that become rigid and procedural in a manner that bolsters the unjust margins of inclusion (Manning, 2020a, p. 116). My writing-with learning events should therefore be engaged as mere thinking-feeling with what matters in the body-space-time event-ing of learning.

6. “Philosophy”, according to Whitehead (1967, p. 235), “is the ascent to the generalities with the view of understanding their possibilities of combination. The discovery of new generalities thus adds to the fruitfulness of those already known. It lifts into view new possibilities of combination”. Generalisations, in this light, can therefore be contrasted to totalities or universalisms due to their concern for relational interdependencies within the emergence of phenomena. Generalisations, as abstractions, “[do] not explain, but must [themselves] be explained, and the aim is not to discover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced” (Gaskill & Nocek, 2014, p. 6).

& Nocek, 2014, p. 7), in order to repattern our way of thinking “in the way [that] a tool addresses our modes of action, [inscribing the relation between] those who act and [... the manner] in which they act, by redistributing what is proposed as doable or not doable” (Stengers, 2011, p. 24).⁷

I am guided by two acknowledgements: (1) an awareness that “[a] process of imaginative additions is never complete,”⁸ (Gaskill & Nocek, 2014, p. 8) and (2) an awareness that “[t]he heterogeneity of the noncontinuous nature of experience is [...] not easy to articulate [in its infinite richness, making it] necessary to refrain from setting experience apart from the in-act” (Manning, 2016, p. 25).⁹ As such, this article acknowledges its limitations, yet aims to hint at some ways of conceiving learning events with *response-ability*, without the intention of reaching supposed all-encompassing certainties, all the while aware that the immanent fullness of the in-act of learning cannot be captured or reproduced through retrospective abstraction. Echoing Erin Manning (2016, p. x), the aim of this article is to attune to modes of thought that are “less concerned with the certainty of what it knows [and] more open to the force of the as-yet-unformed cours-

7. Isabelle Stengers (2011, pp. 23-24) asserts that Whiteheadian philosophy should not be confused as a “new paradigm”—“a [new] vision of the world”, but should rather be approached as tools with which to adjust our “modes of thought”. Stengers thereby emphasises that Whitehead’s philosophy does not constitute a transcendental knowledge system (a universal “source for answers”), as its workings cannot be “detached from the situations in which it is operative” (Stengers, 2011, pp. 23-24).

8. As such, this article might be endlessly written and rewritten without ever exhausting the range of imaginative responses that might be evoked by the affective lures of the learning events in question.

9. Throughout this article, I lean on Manning’s vocabulary by using the phrase in-act (as opposed to act) to draw attention to the manner in which eventing occurs as a processual ecology that cannot be reduced to the agentic intent of purposeful action originating from a volitional subject. In-act, therefore, refers to the unique multiplicity of relations that exist within an event, as a singularity of conditions that cannot be reproduced, due to its spatial-temporal-material specificity.

ing through it [... valuing] the *force* of form, not just the form knowledge takes”.

The forces of forms of knowing coursing through this writing are multiple. Theorising, experiencing, abstracting, co-composing, affecting and being affected, these modalities intermingle in a dance of *agencement* that moves in and out and through the writing.¹⁰ I rely heavily on footnotes as a means to proliferate points of entry and departure for thought-forming. We tend to footnotes as parallel lines of thought, as supplements, interruptions, substantiations and acknowledgements.¹¹ I commence with a proposition: *engage learning as an experience — through the processual potentialities of its in-act*. However challenging this task might be, it is a much-needed endeavour. Thinking learning otherwise is essential when seeking to move closer to response-able ways of doing higher education. I prompt myself by drawing attention to the *performativity of body-space-time cartographies and choreographies* thereby following Carol A. Taylor’s assertion that “[a] focus on body matters is important in shifting arguments away from outcomes, outputs and metrics-oriented accounts of the purposes of [higher] education, and in illuminating how pedagogy gets done

10. I make use of ‘agencement’, as opposed to Masumi’s translation of Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s use of this term as ‘assemblage’ (in his english translation of *A Thousand Plateaus*). Where assemblage risks the suggestion of a discrete object or resolved configuration, agencement affirms the “force of distributed directionality in the event” active in the “pre of categorisation where the field is still in formation” — “a sense of movement and connectability, of processual agency [...]” (Manning, 2016, pp. 123, 137). Agencement therefore challenges conventional notions of agency as it does not foreground actions directed by existing subjects, as if from nowhere (Manning, 2016, p. 137). I return to questions raised by agencement to notions of agency in the third section of this article.

11. It is for this reason that this article presents a wealth of footnotes more comprehensive than typically expected from this genre of writing. I invite the reader to engage with footnotes in ways that are meaningful to their own reading and thinking experience.

12. My attention to bodies is not limited to human bodies. I take bodies to be relational sites rather than discrete, fully-knowable objects (Fullagar & Taylor, 2021, p. 38). Bodies are read as

through dynamic and performative practices of bodily mattering” (2019b, p. 159).¹²

My overarching aim is to read the liberatory impetus of critical pedagogies through the relationality of body-space-time entanglements so as to enrich the former with the notion of response-ability.¹³ I do so by questioning the processual diffusion of agency *inside* learning events with reference to specific learning activities and events within the context of a foundation year classroom of an Art School.¹⁴

3.2. Reading Critical Pedagogies through Response-ability

The notion of response-ability has been deployed by a range of new materialist and posthumanist scholars (such as Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016b)

“experienced, circulated, objectified, mediatised, habituated and profoundly intra-active as [...] more-than-human phenomenon implicated in biology [...] animals [...] and objects” (Fullagar & Taylor, 2021, p. 38).

13. The tradition of critical pedagogies (stemming from the work of Paulo Freire) rejects the notion of education as a “neutral process of knowledge transmission [...] one that takes place without reference to history, social context, or the operation of power” (Handelsman, 2020, p. 136). Instead, critical pedagogies positions education as a project of liberation – “a moral and political practice [that] provides tools to unsettle common-sense assumptions, theorise matters of self and social agency, and engage the ever-changing demands and promises of a democratic polity, [taking] as one of its central projects an attempt to be discerning and attentive to those places and practices in which social agency has been denied and produced” (Giroux, 2020, p. 1). The challenges of the 21st century – the intersection of the 4th Industrial Revolution and the 6th Great Extinction, as well as the theoretical discourses responding to the complexities of these conditions (such as critical posthumanisms, new materialisms, decolonial and indigenous scholarship) present the opportunity for a revitalisation of the revolutionary impetus of critical pedagogies.

14. The school in question is the Cape Town Creative Academy, a private higher education institution situated in Cape Town, South Africa. As a relatively small, young and independent institution, it is conceivable that this site of investigation offers an educator-researcher certain liberties that might not be common-place in larger, state-owned Universities where one’s practice of teaching is always-already unfolding in relation to entrenched histories, traditions and rigid networks of bureaucratic flows.

to designate a process of transversal, relational and co-constitutive becoming-with the other (human and more-than-human) in ways that “*render each other capable*” (Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, p. 882 - emphasis added). In the context of higher learning, response-ability is foregrounded when approaching learning events as relational political-material entanglements, rich with the potential for co-constitutive transformation (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2021, p. 28).¹⁵ By collectively rendering each other capable (the institution, facilitators, students, facilities, prescribed tasks, prescribed texts, learning tools and technologies), response-able learning encounters build on the emancipatory project of critical pedagogies (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2021, p. 28), described by Henri Giroux (2017, p. xii), as an intention to:

connect learning to social change; [...] a project and provocation that challenge[s] students to critically engage with the world so they [can] act on it [...] imagining a future that would not merely reproduce the present.

Critical pedagogies reject the ‘narration’ or ‘banking’ method of teaching that views learning as a unidirectional depositing of knowledge. Instead, critical pedagogies promote an emancipatory stance enabled through dialogue and the posing of problems to be solved jointly by educator and students (Freire, 2018, pp. 72-73). For Paulo Freire, this dialogical process is constituted by *reflection and action on the world* (2018, p. 87), “an act of creation and re-creation” (2018, p. 89), in which naming the world transforms it. “[A]n act [...] not possible if not infused with love [...] a profound love for

15. Vivienne Bozalek and Michalinos Zembylas (2021) identify ‘attentiveness’, ‘curiosity’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘being rendered capable’ as the core elements required for response-able pedagogies. These elements serve as fruitful prompts for my engagement with the learning events discussed in this article.

the world and for people” (Freire, 2018, p. 89). This love, one of “courage”, “commitment” and “humility”, enables dialogue and “generate[s] other acts of freedom” (Freire, 2018, pp. 89-90),¹⁶ as it foregrounds inclusion and democratic values when inviting different voices to speak “their own truth” (Freire, 2018, p. 89). Freire’s concern for liberatory pedagogical practices expand beyond the ‘word’, in his recognition that the materiality of teacher and student bodies must be acknowledged as constitutive participants in the ‘dialogue’ of learning as an act of freedom (Darder, 2017, p. 83). Freire denounces the disembodiment (the favouring mind over body) prevalent to traditional western conceptions of learning by recognising the constitutive role of embodied experience in the development of dialogical participation and agency (Darder, 2017:84). Lived, embodied experience matters (Freire, 1993, pp. 86-87). Freire argues:

[t]he importance of the body is indisputable; the body moves, acts rememorises the struggle for its liberation; the body [...] desires, points out, announces, protests, curves itself, rises, designs and remakes the world [...] There is a lot of sensualism contained by the body and made explicit by the body, even in connection with cognitive ability. I think it absurd to separate the rigorous act of knowing the world from the passionate ability to know.

16. Antonia Darder and Luis Mirón (2006, p. 18) elaborate that love, in Freire’s conception “means to comprehend that the moral and the material are inextricably linked. Darder and Mirón relate this conception of love to Terry Eagleton’s assertion that love acts as a “political principle” concerned with the “struggle to create mutually life-enhancing opportunities for all people” (Darder & Mirón, 2006, p. 18). For Eagleton, love enacts a relational affirmation of difference “[c]ontrary to the adage that love is blind [...] love involves a radical acceptance that it allows us to see others for what they are” (Eagleton, 2003, p. 131). One might ask, however, might this understanding of love be enriched through a new materialist understanding of relationality and response-ability? I return to this question in the concluding section of this article.

Albeit materialist in its conception of learning with-in the body — “the conscious and sensual body, full of life” (Freire, 1993, p. 88) — and open to the affective register of pedagogical encounters as acts of love, critical pedagogies remain, in large, anthropocentric in their reading of emancipatory agency — the human ability and love to act *on the world*. Critical pedagogies might therefore be enriched by the manner in which response-able pedagogies embrace the new materialist understanding that the “world kicks back” (Barad, 1998, p. 112).

New materialism espouses ontological transversality as a refusal of the binarising of nature↔culture and technology↔matter (Braidotti, 2022, p. 108). This ontology of immanence takes experience to be “embodied, perspectival way[s] of knowing and being in the world [...] in relation[s] of co-becoming [...] insist[ing] on the co-constitutive role of the [...] rich agentiality (multi-subjectivity) of the context itself” (Åsberg, Thiele, & van der Tuin, 2015, p. 151). Thereby acknowledging not only human but also more-than-human agentiality as constitutive towards experience. A new materialist engagement with questions of agency and response-ability must, therefore, develop attunement to the “productive qualities of the co-implication of bodies [human and more-than-human], power, ethics and subjectivities” within pedagogical milieus (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2021, p. 64).¹⁷

3.3. Reading Agency through Performativity as ‘Agencement’

17. I use the term milieu, here and elsewhere, in alliance with Manning, Deleuze and Guattari due to the productive tension of its plural meaning in French as both “middle” and “surroundings”. For Massumi, an overlying of a middle and surroundings refuses “falling back into an outside/inside division that calls for a subject or object to [...] regulate it, [one has] to conceive of a middle that wraps around, to self-surround, as it phases onward in the direction of the “more” of its formative openness” (Massumi, 2013, p. xii).

[...] there is no 'being' behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; 'the doer' is invented as an after-thought – the doing is everything.

(Nietzsche, 2007, p. 26)

I return to breath – the cyclical repetitive in-breath↔out-breath. Every instance presents as a repetition of the same action yet exists as a unique singularity. *This* breath mirrors the same action as *that* breath, yet this breath is filled with the specificity of particular oxygen molecules; their diffusion into particular blood cells, and the exhalation of discrete molecules of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.¹⁸ Every breath is a temporal-spatial entanglement that traces the flow of air in a multiplicity of directions. Each breath is both now and then— present-ing and residue.

In the right way?

In just this way...¹⁹

The inexpressible and entangled specificity of a particular instance of breath points to the limitations of language. Whereas a representationalist mode

18. See *Breathing Matters: Feminist Intersectional Politics of Vulnerability* (2016) by Magdalena Górska for a comprehensive engagement with the materiality of breathing.

19. “Just this way” is a phrase borrowed from Manning and Massumi (2014, p. 56), and used as a refrain throughout this article to indicate the specificity and singularity of the material entanglements that constitute the in-act of an event. For Massumi (2011, p. 2), “[e]very event is singular. It has an arc that carries it through its phases to a culmination all its own: a dynamic unity no other event can have in just this way. The unity of the occasion is the just-this-way in which the phases of the arced unfolding hold together as belonging to the same event”. This phrase brings into question the validity of the volition-intentionality-agency triad that conventionally views the subject as the “subject of action” and in so doing flattens relational entanglements and denies the complexity of intra-active worlding (Manning, 2016, p. 16).

of thought, such as social constructivism, would have one believe that words function as one-to-one mirroring correspondents to pre-existing and fully knowable material phenomena, attention to breathing—and its entangled material, spatial and temporal contingencies—suggests otherwise. Karen Barad (2003, p. 802) offers a move towards posthuman *performativity* as an alternative to representationalist assumptions about correspondence between descriptions and the material world, moving instead towards an emphasis on the “practices/doings/actions” that constitute *worldings*.²⁰ In doing so, Barad raises a concern for the manner in which ontological implications are easily overlooked when consumed by the “infinite play of images between two facing mirrors [bouncing the epistemological] back and forth” (Barad, 2003, p. 803).²¹ In traditional humanist approaches, a reliance on reflection limits inquiry to the domain of epistemology by assuming that experience serves as the fully knowable ground for knowledge — static and open to the reflective perception and interpretation of the individual observer. Reflection thereby flattens and forecloses experience as an object of meaning-making, severing the connection between experience and being (Mazzei, 2021, p. 562). Barad’s account of performativity suggests grounding oneself in an onto-epistemological framework as a challenge to Western philosophy’s tendency to separate questions of knowing from questions of being (Barad, 2007, p. 43). For Barad (2007, p. 49):

20. I read worlding as an emergent “co-composition with the world in the making” (Manning, 2016, p. 132).

21. Barad’s critique of reflection leads them to develop diffraction as a methodology, “a critical practice for making difference in the world. It is a commitment to understanding which differences matter, how they matter, and for whom. [Diffraction is] a critical practice of engagement, not a distance-learning practice of reflecting from afar” (Barad, 2007, p. 90). For more on diffraction, see: Barad, K. (2014). *Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart*, *Parallax*, 20(3), 168 - 187. <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2014.927623>.

[p]erformative approaches call into question representationalism's claim that there are representations, on the one hand, and ontologically separate entities awaiting representation, on the other and focus inquiry on the practices or performances of representing, as well as the productive effects of those practices and the conditions for their efficacy.

Barad (2007, p. 45), thereby, shifts their attention from the nature of representations to the nature of material-discursive practices in a causal exploration of how discursive practices are related to material phenomena. They argue further:

[n]either discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior to the other. Neither is reducible to the other. Neither have privileged status in determining the other. Neither is articulated or articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated [...] mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-acting [...] rather, the issue is the conjoined material-discursive nature of constraints, conditions and practices

(Barad, 2007, p. 152).

Bodies (human and more-than-human), for Barad (2007, p. 153), are thus material-discursive phenomena rather than bounded objects with inherent, pre-given properties — “relations without pre-existing relata” (Barad, 2007, p. 139). Such a relational onto-epistemology requires a reconceptualisation of agency and causality, in refusal of both determinism and constructivism. Barad invokes Judith Butler’s “return to matter” as an opening up of the

determinism-constructivism duality thereby calling into question notions of agency and causation (Barad, 2007, p. 61).²² In Butler’s performative schema (which is not to be confused with performance as a theatrical expression of agentic intent), identity, rather than being given as a pre-existing essence, emerges through “becoming or activity [...identity, therefore] ought not to be thought of as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of sorts” (Butler 1990, p. 112). As a becoming—an iterative (co)constitution into sociality—a ‘subject’ is a relational utterance simultaneously constrained by ‘potestas’, “the dominant and restrictive force of power” and mobilised by ‘potentia’, “the transformative and subversive face of power” (Braidotti, 2022, p. 44), in ways that account for “[p]ower [as] produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another” (Foucault, 1978, p. 93).²³ The subject (such as a learning-subject or teaching-subject) therefore emerges with-in relations, in every instance.

In just this way...

Notions of performativity also reverberate through Erin Manning’s speculative pragmatism, albeit in a different language, one often rooted in White-

22. For Butler, “the materialisation of the body [is] coextensive with the body’s investiture with power relations” (Barad, 2007, p. 213), its materiality, therefore “designates a certain effect of power” (Butler, 2011, p. 34).

23. Michel Foucault argues that “[p]ower is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere [...] power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (Foucault, 1978, p. 93).

24. Process philosophy is grounded in the refusal of commencing inquiry from the centrality of a subject, instead finding its departure in process by acknowledging that “the subject does not precede [...] experience, it is in-formed by it” (Manning, 2014, p. 163). For Massumi (2013, p. xvii, emphasis added), process philosophy concerns “how we burst with life, in and of the world. It’s about our *worlding*”.

head's process philosophy.²⁴ For Manning (2020a, p. 33 — emphasis added):

We always happen in the middle.

**Not first a thought,
then an action,
then a result, but a middling [...]**

**A subject is in-time coming into itself in just this way
in this set of conditions only to change again with
the force of a different set of conditions. A subject
can therefore never be reduced to a single occasion as
though that iteration of experience could map onto
every past and future instance of what it might have
meant to have come into oneself. Such an account
would leave no room for the liveliness of difference in
the world.**

As this citation shows, Manning shares Barad's conception of a phenomenon as the primary ontological unit (Barad, 2007, p. 139) which she refers to as the 'event', a notion based on Whitehead's conception of experience.²⁵ According to Whitehead's ontological principle,²⁶ experience "is the relation

25. Approaching the event (the when-and-where of experience actualising) as the primary ontological unit "emphasis[es] that there is nothing outside or beyond the event [...] and] create[s] an account of experience that requires no omnipresence" (Manning, 2016, p. 3). For Manning (2014, p. 164), "[t]here is no subject 'of' experience, no consciousness outside of the event in its unfolding". Massumi agrees that (2013, p. xvi-xvii) a singular event "cannot be thought apart from the co-implication of space and time: space-time [...] in relation to which the most relevant questions are not 'what', but 'what else' brought together 'how' [...] The qualitative differences of the 'how' [...] the processual openness of the 'what else'. The [relevant] question [is therefore one] of the composition of the manner in which codetermining factors are brought together toward a unique mutual inclusion in the event [...]".

26. Whitehead's ontological principle consists of a coherent system of concepts or conceptual conditions that describe "[t]he creative action [of] the universe always becoming one in a particular unity of self-experience, and thereby adding to the multiplicity which is the universe as many" (Whitehead, 1978, p. 57). For a thorough unpacking of Whitehead's ontological principle see: Mazzei, L. (2021). Speculative Inquiry: Thinking With Whitehead, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 27(5), 554-566. DOI: 10.1177/1077800420934138.

and process by which entitiesprehend and are prehend, a process necessary for the becoming of all entities” (Mazzei, 2021, p. 558). For Whitehead (1978, p. 23), this becoming with-in experience “constitutes what that actual entity is [...] Its being is constituted by its becoming”—a relational becoming—as a “conrescence of elements in the act of prehension” (Mazzei, 2021, p. 558), rendering entities as “complex and interdependent drops of experience” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 18, rephrased). Subjects for Whitehead are not the activators of events. Subjects, rather collectively emerges from with-in events, in each instance (Manning, 2016, p. 133).

In just this way...

When engaging the processual and relational nature of learning events, neither the teaching subject nor the learning-subject can be presumed as the central site of agency, since there is no stable subject that pre-exists the material-discursive entanglements that constitute the event (Butler, 1990, p. 142; Barad, 2007, p. 213). For Manning (2016, p. 135):

Subjectivities happen. But they are not where experience begins and ends. They exist in the event of their coming-to-be [...] persist in germ [through] the serial activation of a certain degree of continuity.

For Butler, this serial activation, or reiterative character of performativity signals that the materialisation of subjectivity never reaches a state of finality or completion (Butler, 2011, p. 2). Agency is therefore not to be located in the volitional subject but in the iterative relational intra-actions within which they come into being (Barad, 2007, p. 184). Together with Manning,

one might therefore ask “[w]hat if, instead of placing self-self interaction at the centre of development, we were to posit relation as key to experience?”, while acknowledging that “*relation* folds experience into it such that what emerges is always more than the sum of its parts” (Manning, 2013, p. 2). How might one resist grounding one’s conceptions of agency in humanist notions of volition and intentionality, persisting instead that the subject is not “the subject of the action”, the act does not “fully belong to us” (Manning, 2016, p. 16).

Humanist notions of *agency* conventionally rely on identity as a precomposed ‘origin’ of action – the self as the causal motor of intention-volition-action on the world from a reflective distance.²⁷ The notion of *agencement*, on the other hand, offers a processual reading of agency as productive, relational and unfolding with a “potentialising directionality” (Manning, 2016, p. 123), by reading events themselves as co-composing through the distribution of “agency-ing” in the event—prior to its bifurcation into a hierarchy of subject↔object arrangements (Manning in Massumi, 2015, p. 157). *Agencement* refers to the “doing [of] doing itself” as the emergence of potentialities of co-compositional forces that actualise into affective experiences (Manning in Massumi 2015, p. 157; Manning, 2016, p. 134). Agentiality diffused, relationally through the event—as *agencement*—constitutes an affective tonality, which “involves an increase or decrease of the power of acting, for the body and mind alike” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 49).²⁸ What appears, in retrospect, as one’s ability to respond, or one’s render-

27. A notion that reverberates through Freire’s assertion that liberty is expressed as acting on the world, “[t]o exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it” (Freire, 2018, p. 88).

28. Taking affect as affectus (as deployed by Spinoza). See *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1988) by Giles Deleuze.

ing as being capable flows from the prehension of the virtual and material “trace[s] of the world incorporated into a body-becoming [...] an encounter between a corporeal form and forces that are not necessarily ‘human’” (Hickey-Moody, 2016, p. 259).

When engaging learning-becoming, it is therefore vital to open one’s inquiry beyond representationalist readings of what happens in a classroom. Instead, one requires modes of engagement that account for the performative unfoldings of a relational being-affected. In the sections that follow I aim to attune to these notions of performativity and *agencement* by writing-with particular learning events. I approach these events through cartographies and choreographies as a means to foreground the relational body-space-time that compose these affective events as a means to explore response-ability with-in these encounters.

3.4. Un-setting the Scene, Cartographically

**Try as we might to gain an observer’s remove, that’s
where we find ourselves: in the midst of it.**

(Massumi, 2011, p. 1)

The learning encounters presented in this article are components of a foundation course module (simply entitled ‘mapping’) presented to students at the commencement of Bachelor’s Degree programmes in Contemporary Art, Communication Design, Interaction Design and Motion Design. This module forms part of Concept Lab 110, a course that primarily intends to promote conceptual, critical and creative thinking as an integral part of creative practice (whether it be as an artist or designer). This module on

“mapping” serves as an opportunity for new first-year students to situate themselves in the institution, their tertiary studies and with-in their cohort by drawing relations between their experiences of the geographical location of the institution, its spatial arrangements, their own cultural and familial backgrounds (and that of their classmates) as well as various virtual and textual ‘locations’. Where previous curricular iterations of this programme commenced with practices of observational drawing (as a means to build discipline and technique), we now forego the “observer’s remove” to start from a middling, through mapping. In this course, we centre our activities around the notion of mapping with the understanding that all maps are “inherently incomplete, never claiming full or transcendental knowledge” (Kuntz, 2019, p. 85).

We approach maps not from a user’s perspective (seeking direction and clear paths of connection between pre-established points), but rather from a mapper’s perspective — as a performative practice of space-making. Our spaces of interest include physical, virtual, psychological and social. We centre our activities around the notion of mapping with the understanding that all maps are “inherently incomplete, never claiming full or transcendental knowledge” (Kuntz, 2019, p. 85). A map, in this context, is not considered to be a faithful representation of a given, fully-knowable terrain. Maps are open-ended enactments of experience. “Maps perform realities” (Gerlach, 2018, p. 94), as emergent “conversation[s] between ourselves and [a] place” (Moro, 2012, p. 263). The textual-visual results of such map-making thereby offer not only a description of place, but “a description of our presence in it” (Moro, 2012, p. 263). Maps offer a means in which to perform our co-constitution-with the unfolding of our relational entanglement as

we respond to the affective lures coursing through a specific milieu.²⁹ The mode of mapping we aim to encourage could be referred to as *affective cartographies*, which assumes that spaces acquire their meaning through the affective encounters that occur with-in them, thereby placing emphasis on experience as the information source from which to map (Iturrioz & Wachowicz, 2010, p. 88). In a move towards response-ability, knowledge, in this context, is not given or prescribed, but encountered, experienced and made—always in relation to (and in co-constitution with) the terrain being explored. Over the course of three weeks, students are tasked with the following mapping activities (see table on pp 135-136).

These mapping practices serve as propositions for curious wonder, inviting attentive and affective engagement with the world in flows that move in and out of the classroom. Learning happens in co-constitution, always in relation to the specificity of particular body-space-time encounters (*this street, at that time, there was this smell, from my viewpoint*).

Our interest never settles on what these maps look like, but remain focussed on what these maps might *do*. The performativity of mapping is emphasised by our iterative reworking, reconfiguring, reorienting, layering

29. Our milieu is centred around our campus located in the repurposed grain silo of a late 19th century grain silo, in the historical industrial district of Woodstock, east of the Cape Town city centre. This area was inhabited by the native Khoikhoi until the arrival of Dutch settlers in the 1600s, after which this area was claimed as farmlands by the colonisers until the 1870s when farms were subdivided in order to establish a low-cost residential suburb. Significantly, Woodstock remained an integrated neighbourhood during Apartheid, despite the unjust enforcement of the Group Areas Act, which led to the forceful evacuation of upward of 30 000 persons of colour from the nearby District 6. Our investigation of geographies of place are therefore layered by complex histories that are inseparable from the spatial-material practices informing place-making (such as the naming of roads, the positioning of landmarks, the deployment of architectural styles and town-planning practices). The majority of our students are not local to this area, prior to their studies, making this 'intravention' (see footnote 32) in mapping an important sensitising experience in conscious attunement to the ethico-political dimension of being-in-place.

HOMEWORK TASKS:

CLASS ACTIVITIES:

THEME 1: ENTANGLED GEOGRAPHIES

TASK 1: YOUR ROUTE TO SCHOOL:

> Explore your route to school on Google Maps and list all the names of the roads and neighbourhoods that you travel through from your home to our campus.

> Select 3 of these road/neighbourhood names that you find intriguing and do research on the origin of those names - who or what are they named after and why? What is the history or significance of that specific person or thing?

> Bring your research notes to class for your first session.

CLASS 1 ACTIVITIES:

> Working blindfolded, map the movements of your morning using continuous line - from the time you woke up until the time you arrived in class. Include every action in as much detail as is possible. Include thoughts & feelings you might have had along the way. Do not remove your blindfold until you have "arrived".

> On the same page, and without looking, draw 5 things you saw on your way to class today (these could be buildings, plants, people, animals, anything)

> Cut these out and use them to create a joint city map on the wall, together as a class.

> In groups of 3-4 students discuss what was the most interesting findings to emerge from your research on roads/neighbourhoods, using the class map as a visual aid where necessary.

TASK 2: VIRTUAL WALKING:

> Deepen your research on the particular street/neighbourhood name

> Virtually 'walk' down this street/through this neighbourhood on Google Street View. Note curiosities and things that draw your attention. See if you can find things that are different from how you experience that street/neighbourhood when physically travelling through it.

> Make drawings of your experience virtually walking down this road/neighbourhood (from street view).

> Where does your mind travel as you wander? Note these thoughts/memories/feelings on the edges of your drawing.

CLASS 2 ACTIVITIES:

> In groups of 3-4 students discuss your experience of walking on streetview, compare experiences and the thoughts/memories/feelings that it evoked.

> Take a mindful walk on campus with your phone camera. Record interesting lines, textures, signs, sounds, objects or spaces.

> On return to the studio, create a quick drawing mapping the route you walked, as well as your experience of this walk. Add to this drawing by mapping out the particular sensations you experienced, including temperature changes, sounds, textures, etc. Use your documentation to guide you where necessary.

HOMEWORK TASKS:

CLASS ACTIVITIES:

THEME 2: OBJECT GENEALOGIES

TASK 3: FAMILY TREES:

- > Do some research about your family tree.
- > Contact your oldest living relative to ask them for assistance with this task.
- > If you do not have access to knowledge about your biological family, you can do your research on your 'chosen' family (people that have taken the role of family members).
- > Map out as many generations back as is possible for you.
- > Choose 3 relatives/persons/or pets that you find intriguing (whether you know them in person, or not).
- > Find 3 household objects (non-organic) that could signify each of these individuals and bring these to class for your next in-studio session.

CLASS 3 ACTIVITIES:

- > Make quick drawings of the objects you brought to class in a manner that resembles something of the character of the relative/person/pet they signify.
- > Introduce your object drawings to your small group, sharing what you feel comfortable with about the person/animal it signifies.

TASK 4: COMPANION DRAWINGS

- > Choose one of your object drawings. Carry it around with you until we next meet. Wherever you go it should accompany you - day and night.
- > Your aim is to invest your drawing with a history... for it to take on a bit of character through experience... a patina, an energy.

CLASS 4 ACTIVITIES:

- > Map out the journey of your companion-object-drawing since leaving the last class. Try and imagine this journey from your companion-object-drawing's perspective.
- > Explore the manner in which it has changes in shape, colour and texture.

THEME 3: VIRTUAL GEOLOGIES

TASK 5: DIGITAL DIGGING

- > Consider the internet as a 'geological space', yet 'unstratified' as different histories are accessible simultaneously, and presented in a 'time-less present'.
- > Do visual internet research by finding records/documentation of ONE particular NATURAL PHENOMENA (like a forest, desert, river, tree, mountain or the like) on the internet that reveals different moments of its history.
- > Collect 30 images of your chosen phenomena on your computer/phone & bring them with you to the next class.

CLASS 5 ACTIVITIES:

- > Use the images you gathered to make 10 drawings of your chosen phenomena. Make all the drawings on the same sheet of paper, allowing them to overlap and merge.
- > While doing so, share with your small group everything you know about your chosen phenomena and why you chose it.

and tearing-up-and-remaking of the map objects throughout the course of the module.³⁰ Our mapping urges beyond the horizontal plane of documentation towards inquiries of layering, superimposition and experiments with opacity so as to position ourselves genealogically with-in time-space.³¹ Our maps are not to be read as conclusive documents. Our maps act as “[...] experimentation[s] in contact with the real” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). We practice “inefficient mapping” never intending to capture representational accounts or to present ‘truthful’ mirrors to the world (Knight, 2021, p. 64).³² Our maps remain open to questions. What else? Brought together how? (Masumi, 2013, pp. xvi-xvii).

These mapping activities serve as a range of threshold events, a means to create “qualitatively different entr[ies] as regards to ordinary habits of self-presentation” (Manning 2016, p. 125). They assist in un-making/un-setting the classroom and its implied conventional dichotomies of active/passive, talking/listening, thinking/doing. The classroom is figured as a basecamp from which to launch expeditions into the world, rather than a sealed off domain of disciplined knowledge transmission. The

30. We are prompted by Deleuze & Guattari’s assertion of the rhizomatic nature of mapping: “[t]he map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12).

31. Following Foucault, we engage genealogy as “gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary [...] operat[ing] on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times” (Foucault, 1994, p. 369). For Foucault “genealogy [...] must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history — in sentiments, love, conscience instincts, it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles” (Foucault, 1994, p. 369). Our affective cartographies urge towards this mode of genealogy in their movement towards uncovering without the impetus to ever fully reveal.

32. For more on inefficient mapping, see *Inefficient Mapping: a Protocol for Attuning to Phenomena* (2021) by Linda Knight.

response. I therefore turn my focus to the movement of bodies in the classroom to engage learning through its choreographic dimension.

3.5. Scene-ing the Scene, Choreographically

Oren Lieberman and Alberto Altés (2015, p. 2) offer a choreographic turn to their pedagogical thinking as an “invention”,³³ a refocussing of emphasis away from outcomes (the “attainment of knowledge, skills and understanding”) towards an attunement to “modes, processes and artefacts which resonate different overarching values of engagement, empowerment, and caring”. These values reverberate the tenets of critical pedagogies while framing them as choreographically enacted, thereby acknowledging the performative and processual nature of their constitution. Thinking learning encounters as choreographic phenomena, opens them up to an attentive engagement with the unfolding of body-space-time entanglements as the ‘middling’ of learning events.

One would be remiss to think the choreographic movements of bodies as mere physical-aesthetic arrangements related to a formal codi-

33. Lieberman and Altés enrich the notion of intervention with Barad’s conception of intra-action as an acknowledgement that entities do not pre-exist their relations inside phenomena. Invention, therefore reads ‘interventions’ in line with Barad’s description of apparatuses: “(1) apparatuses are specific material-discursive practices (they are not merely laboratory setups that embody human concepts and take measurement); (2) apparatuses produce differences that matter – they are boundary-making practices that are formative of matter and meaning, productive of, and part of, the phenomena produced; (3) apparatuses are material configurations/ dynamic reconfigurings of the world; (4) apparatuses are themselves phenomena (constituted and dynamically reconstituted as part of the ongoing intra-activity of the world); (5) apparatuses have no intrinsic boundaries and are open-ended practices; (6) apparatuses are not located in the world but are material configurations and reconfiguring of the world that re(con)figure spatiality and temporality as well as (the traditional notion of) dynamics (i.e., they do not exist as static structures, nor do they merely unfold or evolve in space and time)” (Barad, 2007, p. 146).

fication of dance-movements. Bodies move in multiple ways (McCormack, 2008). Bodies move “physically [...] but they also move affectively, kinaesthetically, imaginatively, collectively, aesthetically, socially, culturally and politically” (McCormack, 2008, p. 1823). These differentiated dimensions of movement co-constitute the space-time of events as “the quality of moving bodies contributes to the qualities of spaces in which bodies move” (McCormack, 2008, p. 1832). Bodies do not simply occupy space, but generate spaces through their movement (Taylor, 2019b, p. 158), while simultaneously constituting subjectivities through their performativity with-in experience (Butler, 1990, p. 112). Paying attention to the choreographic dimension of learning events means being attentive to the intra-actions of bodies with-in space-time, reading a body as “a field of sensation more than a locus” (Manning, 2016, p. 113). This attention to body-space-time enables a reading of performative learning-becoming-with the agencement of the event’s unfolding. Engaging thought as “[...] active in experience [...] not *in* the body or *in* the mind, but *across* the bodying where world and body co-comprise a welling ecology” (Manning, 2016, pp. 115-116).

I encounter a particular learning event in a subterranean level of our campus, once the basement of a grain silo, a cold concrete shell with a ceiling lined with geometric funnels — retired yet still protruding to attention. The abundance of hard surfaces amounts to an echoing of sound that reverberates to form an aural milieu. While giving instructions, words are mouthed now/here. Their echoes heard then/there. Relays of sonic occurrences congeal into multiplicities of felt experience — words of guidance and instruction hovering somewhere in-between. Students sit on the cold ground in small circles with sheets of paper in between each of them. We

commence our experiment by attuning to connectivity through the act of synchronisation. Collective choreography emerges as students watch the hand of another while drawing. In an act of imitation, they recreate the gestures they observe while feeling their own hands move across the paper sheet. Attunement happens through mirroring. The invitation is given for creative alteration, **“keep your eyes fixed on your neighbour’s hand, recreate the drawing you see happening next to you, but change it when you feel the creative impulse to do so”**. The cycle of mirroring is interjected with unexpected alterity in a balance of copying and creating, tracing and mapping, reflection and diffraction.



Figure 2. *Learning Activity: Drawing-with Synchronicity.*

(Photograph: Francois Jonker)

The cycle of repetition is ripe for disturbances by lines of flight that become reterritorialised as they are synthesised into the cycle of mirroring. We drift away from logic or reason as the impetus for action as we move deeper into

a meditative choreography of emergent bodily movement attuning with increasing attentiveness to the co-compositional momentum and processual agency with-in the event.

Students respond:

*Sensual in the best way.
Calming, comforting,
knowing all of us were recreating one another's
drawings in our own way
guided by muscle memory.
I could mimic them
because I could sense how the movements felt for them.
Freeing. Feeling.
I was able to see the frustration of the person next to me
not understanding the one
next to them,
that frustration becoming visible
in their hand movements.*

*I did not have to worry
about what my drawing
looked like I was expressing what was felt
in that moment.*

Connection.

Silence.

The exploration of movement in unison comes to a halt. The room seems filled with an air of interconnectedness, the experiential knowing of bodies moving together in an affective cascade that forms the body-space-time of the event. Rich with potentialities. Circles disperse as we move into our collaborative mapping activity. The room contains remnants of our previous mappings. What was once the outcomes of tasks and activities now becomes the material for making anew. Always anew. Our echoing and lingering instruction: **“map out what we wish for ourselves for our time in this institution – if we were to map out our future in this place/process of higher learning, what would it look like, not as a picture, but as a feeling, an urge or an idea-scape?”**

In just this way...

Engagement commences with tentative uncertainty. Wonderings-around *‘what is allowed?’* still linger. A sense of curious testing and trying pulls against the unknowable in a palpable tension. The classroom opens itself up as a terrain for exploration, a site for spatial reorientation beyond the typical ‘frontality’ expected of a classroom.³⁴ Movements expand the room as previously mundane features become spaces to be occupied; the corner where the ceiling meets the wall, the vacuous sliver of space between a cupboard and the wall, the surface area of a windowsill. Students meet spaces that normally go unnoticed with curious wonder. With speculative *invention*, exploring what these spaces might do.

34. Manning (2020a, p. 68) uses the term frontality to describe the conventional spatial dynamics of classrooms which predetermine how participation unfolds. “[T]he professor speaks in front, the student participates behind”, when allowed or invited to do so.

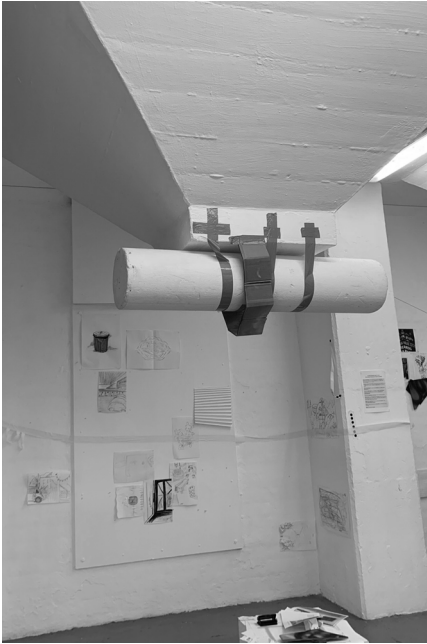


Figure 3. *Residue of learning activity: collaborative future-mapping #1.*³⁵
(Photograph: Francois Jonker)



Figure 4. *Residue of learning activity: collaborative future-mapping #2.*
(Photograph: Francois Jonker)

35. I rely on documentation of the residue of the event, rather than the event itself, as it soon became clear that the observant presence of the camera inhibited the sense of response-ability with-in the event, and it was swiftly removed.

One student throws crumpled balls of sticky tape, seemingly curious about the location in which each one might land. A speculative motion without clear intent. A virtual constellation emerges, thought never fixed and never complete. Sticky-tape-nodes get unknowingly kicked or stuck to the soles of shoes, only to be deposited elsewhere, perhaps only much later in a bedroom bin. In another enactment of speculative wonder, a student stretches elastic rubber bands around the legs of an upside-down chair. A focused act of continuous repetitions, leading up to a sense of reward, when a multitude of bands can be plucked, or strung like a string instrument, in wonder around its ability to produce a variety of sounds. Later in the day, these rubber bands are met by a sharp blade, transforming the exploration of sound into an exploration of velocity and the releasing of tension.

In just this way...

The shifting material configurations of the event enable and constrain movement into a choreographic unfolding without predetermined rhythm or routine. Improvisational occurrences collide with each other and the spatial affordances that ‘hold’ them.³⁶ A dance of response-ability emerges as the welling ecology — an affective tonality — diffuses the event with open-ended potential.

Students respond:

36. James Gibson coins the term affordance as a noun. “The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill [...] It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment” (Gibson, 2015, p. 120). Gibson uses this phrase to describe the “stand-on-able [...] walk-on-able and run-over-able” quality of a flat piece of solid ground, related to its physical properties that are placed in specific relation to the being (whether human or more-than-human) it co-composes and affordance-relationship with (Gibson, 2015, p. 121).



Figure 5. *Residue of learning activity: collaborative future-mapping #3.*
(Photograph: Francois Jonker)



Figure 6. *Residue of learning activity: collaborative future-mapping #4.*
(Photograph: Francois Jonker)

Everything remained fluid.

In difference.

Small and intricate details.

In chaos.

In harmony.

Difference as union.

One should never think of art as tied to boundaries.

I am exactly where I should be—

a small piece of glitter in a spectrum of creations.

it is okay not to be perfect.

Red tape everywhere. Visible.

Potent.

Revisiting, re-

surfacing long-lost calls

from many generations.

Felt.

Like holding hands with strangers

as the world crumbles around us.

Comfortable with pure expression in any form.

Remembering a childhood fort.

Nostalgia—

contemptuous and beautiful.

Felt.

Completely immersed.

Student participation in the choreographic unfolding of the event attunes to the notion of editing, described by Manning (2009, p. 216) as a foregrounding of the force-of-form backgrounded in the event as its virtual potentialities.³⁷ Editing, in this light, suggests a performative momentum towards novelty—“seek[ing] to create space-time” from the pre-articulated affective tonalities of the milieu,³⁸ rather than reproducing what has already been given in articulation (Manning, 2009, p. 217). Student-as-editor in reciprocal response-able relation with the processual unfolding of their learning-becoming. Performatively making-with-becoming-with the world—in attentive wonder. Our event disperses with out-breath. Sighs of exhaustion, hyper-stimulation, and a sense of having achieved something inarticulable. The classroom stays behind, not empty, but filled with the potential for future learning-becomings.

3.6. Conclusion

I feel urged to indulge in the wealth of metaphors to be discerned from the unfolding of these learning events as they are rich with semiotic figurations that could be superficially read as guidelines for classrooms in general. But I refrain from doing so to avoid falling trap to representationalist assumptions that would sever our semiotic interpretations from the onto-epistemo-

37. Manning builds her understanding of editing on Andrei Tarkovsky’s view that “editing is immanent to the flow of audio-images that make up the film as captured on camera. Editing is not something you impose onto the work: it is a prehension of the rhythms already virtually present in the work” (Manning, 2009, p. 16). See: Tarkovsky, A. (1987). *Sculpting in Time: The Great Russian Film Maker Discusses his Art*. New York: Knopf.

38. Manning (2009, p. 216) contends that prearticulations — the affective tonalities of language — are preheld in experience. As a plane of sensation, prearticulations compose the virtual potentialities of “the world in motion”, from which articulation occurs through a selection process (the series of cuts) of the event’s actualisation.

logical entanglements within which these figurations were actualised. Instead, I leave this writing as its own inefficient map of sorts, in the knowing that I cannot articulate the fullness of the learning experiences I refer to. I can merely write-with them in the hopes that my abstracted generalisations (in the Whiteheadian sense of the word) might spark some propositions — thoughts in motion — that when used in combination with experiential knowings might prove fruitful in opening up new conditions for the liberatory intentions of critical pedagogies. A student writes, at the conclusion of these events:³⁹

As I write this,

my heartbeat, my preponderant instrument

beats against my chest.

Filling it with

whispered

excitement.

I know this feeling very well.

We are well acquainted

it and I.

Initially expressed as anxiety

it now beats

in a persuasive thump that

announces and beckons.

An active history.

The beating in my chest;

I feel it as a precipice,

an excitement,

an invitation.

*A common thread runs through us all
I have become aware of my eagerness
but refrain
from naming it,
lest I set limitations on it by doing so
It is an uncaged thing
Free to fly and form as it may.*

When returning to Freire’s assertion that “it is impossible to teach without a forged, invented, and well-thought-out capacity to love” (2005, p. 5), one might question how can such love be read as an openness to the agencement of learning events, middling with all their body-space-time entanglements, as an increase of one’s ability to respond— to act, from love? Might one conceive of such love not as a personalised, humanised affection, directed towards discrete, knowable persons or things, but as a synchronous attunement to the willing novelty yet-unarticulated in the event’s potentialising?

I leave these questions open for now, to return to in future inquiry.

39. This piece was written as a reflection at the conclusion of the module, by Shalner Ching who, at the time, was a first-year student in the Bachelor of Arts in Contemporary Art programme.

4.

Response-able Study:

Sketching Ecologies for Collective, Affective and Speculative Practices in Higher Education

Abstract

This article explores Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s conception of “black study” as an enactment of a feminist ethics of response-ability. As such, this article inquires: how might ‘we’ conceive of study as a response-able practice of “collective knowing and doing” (Haraway, 2016b, p. 34) through the confluence of thinking-with feminisms, posthumanisms, black studies, and affect theory? This article experiments with study as a mode of engagement that affirms difference, through the decentring of individual identity, in favour of foregrounding co-constitutive relations. I do so by proposing response-able reading, response-able sensing and response-able storytelling as practices of study that might contribute towards new educational imaginaries for thinking and doing higher education differently.

4.1. Introduction

Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s notion of “black study,” as conceptualised in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (2013), set in motion a reinigorated interest in the notion of ‘study’ as a vital and potentially transformative practice in and for higher education. In service of this special issue’s aim of sketching out new educational imaginaries by tracing alliances across feminisms and the ‘posts’, this article engages Harney and Moten’s conception of black study as an enactment of a feminist ethics of *response-ability*.¹ My explorations with response-able practices of study offer a refusal to the oppressive dissemination of what Sylvia Wynter (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015, p. 9) refers to as a “monohumanist” hegemony in neoliberal higher education. Wynter’s black feminist project problematises the overrepresentation of a particular “genre” of humanness, centred on Eurowestern bourgeois assumptions that subordinate all humans to *homo oeconomicus*—“a figure that thrives on accumulation” (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015, p. 10).

While the neoliberal conditioning of higher education presents as a seemingly inescapable force, postphilosophical concepts and practices attend to the “and yet’s” (Taylor, 2019a, p. 6)—the tentative glimpses of possibility for opening up towards “doing otherwise” (Taylor, 2019a, p. 6). As such, this article inquires: how might ‘we’ conceive of study as a response-able practice of “collective knowing and doing” (Haraway, 2016b, p. 34) through the confluence of thinking-with feminisms, posthumanisms, black studies,

1. This article was submitted to a themed special issue entitled: *Gender, Feminisms and the ‘Posts’: Contemporary Contestations, New Educational Imaginaries & Hope-full Renewals*.

and affect theories?

While nuanced in their differentiated priorities, the postphilosophical orientations I think-with share a critical stance towards several interrelated concerns: (a) *human exceptionalism*: the notion that the human, as a self-possessed individual, is dualistically opposed to, separate from and superior to nature (Braidotti, 2013; Kirby, 2017), (b) *representationalism*: the assumption that language (and other forms of representation) have the ability to capture and reflect experience fully and without bias (Barad, 2007), and (c) *reflective objectivity*: the reliance on an assumed separability between a human observer and the materiality of what is observed, as a means of legitimating truth-claims (Haraway, 1992; Barad, 2007). In their critical attitude towards these concerns, postphilosophical orientations propose a relational view of ontology that starts with the question: “What happens if we begin from the premise not that we know reality because we are separate from it [...], but that we can know the world because we are connected with it?” (Hayles, 1995, p. 48).

Commencing from this question, this article seeks to explore study as a mode of engagement that *affirms difference* through the decentring of individual identity, in favour of foreground co-constitutive relations. This investigation is structured through and around short ‘sketches’ offering lived personal accounts of what might approximate instances of response-able study. While taking on the unfinished and propositional nature of a sketch, these accounts ask how study might be practised response-ably. These sketches do not offer guidelines or prescriptive formulae but instead, aim to unfold with the specificity of particular encounters. They offer stories as a means of responding to Stengers’ suggestion that,

[w]e have a desperate need for other stories, not fairy tales in which everything is possible [...] but stories recounting how situations can be transformed when thinking they can be, achieved together by those who undergo them. Not stories about morals but “technical” stories about this kind of achievement, about the kinds of traps that each had to escape, constraints the importance of which had to be recognised (2015, p. 132).

The sketches presented in the second part of the article explore study’s affirmative potential by inquiring with study as a practice of response-able *reading*, *sensing* and *storying*. These sketches are preceded in what follows by (1) a general introduction that situates this article in relation to prominent scholarship, (2) a problematisation of the neoliberal conditioning of higher education as the contextual backdrop and motivation for my inquiry, and (3) an introduction to the feminist notion of response-ability as the conceptual thread that weaves through my inquiries with study.

4.1.1. Introducing Study

In recognising that social life is “incessantly and irreversibly” threaded through by communal intellectual activity, Harney and Moten (2013) decouple study from the binary dichotomy that segments intellectual life as the sole ‘property’ of academia. In recognition that intellectual life has always transcended the boundaries of formalised institutions, Harney and Moten gesture towards an acknowledgement of alternative histories of thought that have been excluded from the normative ways in which higher education has come to delimit understandings of knowledge acquisition and pro-

duction (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 110). Harney and Moten avoid the urge to capture study by formulating a precise definition of the term. Instead of fixating on the legitimate understanding of terminology, they stress the importance of acknowledging that “study is already going on” even before we call ourselves (or our students) to attention in a formalised educational setting (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 112). By positioning study as a form of *sociality*, Harney and Moten (2013, p. 109) do not suggest that collective life dissolves everyone into the role of a ‘student.’ Instead, they pose the question: “Is there a way of being intellectual that isn’t social?” (2013, p. 110).

Harney and Moten’s expansive (un)framing of study prompts a proliferation of critical engagement by educational scholars such as Lewis (2014), Manning (2016), Masschelein (2017), Meyerhoff (2019), and Schildermans (2021a). The reinvigoration of the practice of study, furthermore, serves as the primary focus of a thought-provoking special issue of the *Journal of Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education*, entitled “What is Study?” (Volume 3, Issue 3, 2021). I share with these authors a collective interest in expanding the notion of study as a vital and potentially transformative practice in higher education. While the proliferation of critical scholarship on the meaning of study is motivated (at least in part) by its resistance to a singular definition, the scholars I think-with agree that study opens up important questions about the entanglement of education with the material, social, political and ethical dimensions of subjecthood. Study, when understood as a modality of co-constitutive sociality, challenges unitary notions of identity and thereby offers a generative counterpoint to the exclusionary reproduction of liberal monohumanism in higher education.

4.1.2. The Neoliberal ‘Learnification’ of Higher Education

The widespread tendency to define higher education in terms of learning (through an emphasis on concerns such as learning outcomes, learning pathways, learning strategies, and lifelong learning) figures education as an ‘entrepreneurial’ endeavour of self-actualisation, through a teleological series of predetermined progressions (Lewis, 2014, p. 163). The foregrounding of learning—what Gert Biesta (2013, p. 5) refers to as the “*learnification* of the discourse of education”—frames education as an “individualistic and individualising” process (Biesta, 2013, p. 6). Learnification, in its entanglement with neoliberal capitalist objectives, results in the valuing of higher education through supply-and-demand dynamics that rely on comparison and competition in the individual acquisition of market-centred knowledge and skills (Schildermans, 2021b, p. 4). When coopted by the thrust of learnification, the term ‘study’ (as is the case in ‘to study for an exam’, ‘to complete a self-study task,’ and ‘to follow the guidelines set out in a study guide’) fails to account for the generative potential of the sociality that Harney and Moten ascribe to the practice of study. Within the context of capitalised higher education, the hyper-individualism of the student-as-knowledge-consumer paradoxically seems to coalesce into a uniform image of the student body as a homogenous whole. The monohumanist politics of liberal individualism presupposes an idealised image of the student, which results in individuals being categorised through the indexing of differences as deficits to the idealised norm. This leads to the oppressive categorisa-

tion of individuals as ‘at-risk’, ‘special needs’, ‘previously disadvantaged’, or ‘minority’ students. The hegemonic model of the idealised student thereby functions as a ‘stand-in’ for the student population, while the differentiated bodyminds of individual students are often reduced to statistical data for quantitative reporting purposes. The neoliberal imperative for standardisation neutralises the political force of difference through its recourse to equitable ‘client service’ and the emphasis on generalisation as a driver of efficiency. Consequently, higher education institutions run the risk of undermining the *situated and relational* positionality of acts and processes of knowing and coming-to-know. This ‘flattening’ of difference(s) through a recourse to normalising abstraction reflects a broader philosophical concern identified by Moten as the inadequacy of ‘our’ distinction between singularity (or *identity*) and multiplicity (or *ecologies* of differentiated interdependence) (Moten & Da Silva, 2021, 16:42).

In the private higher education institution where I am situated,² as an emblematic example of this broader concern, an “explicitly non-partisan [and] apolitical” stance is espoused in service of safeguarding “academic freedom [...] unbiased inquiry [and an] inclusive environment” (CTCA, 2024, pp. 1-2). By refusing to “align with any distinct political, religious or ideological stance” while simultaneously “promot[ing] critical thinking, tolerance, peace and reconciliation” (CTCA, 2024, p. 2), the institution pacifies the frictions of difference through its recourse to undifferentiated same-

2. The Cape Town Creative Academy is a private higher education institution (PHEI) that specialises in the delivery of degree programme pertaining to the contemporary art and design sector. As is the case with all PHEI in South Africa, the CTCA is legislatively excluded from receiving any public funding and therefore relies solely on tuition fees as its only form of income. This explicit awareness of PHEI as business entities enhances the client-centred nature of their operations.

ness. This ethos suggests that everything goes, as long as it goes only as far as everything else, and without offending or threatening anything else. Aspirations for equal inclusion produce ethical inertia when the politics of difference(s) remains unaccounted for. As a case in point, I recall a recent debate at the CTCA between its institutional management and the academic team regarding the content of a Gender Studies module. Several student complaints arose at the conclusion of this course due to the incongruence between the curriculum's affirmation of LGBTQI+ rights and identities and the personal and/or religious beliefs of particular students. This led some members of the management team to suggest a 'softening' of the curricular 'agenda' to encourage an inclusive environment that is accepting towards both LGBTQI+ students (and allies) as well as those whose values present a stark opposition to the affirmation of queer life. As this incident illustrates, "harm is coupled with, and at times intensified through claims of equality" (Stanley, 2021, p. 17). Equality easily forgoes its imperative for justice when the situated specificity of difference(s) dissolve into the generalised sameness of assumed monohumanism. This account raises pertinent questions about the politics of inclusion/difference and the manner in which these articulate into educational praxis. How might 'we' assemble in ways that are affirmative of difference yet vigilant in our refusal of hierarchical categorisation? How might 'we' account for the intersectional positionality of differentiated individuals while resisting the urge to centre the liberal monohumanist subject as a self-possessed individual? How might 'we' pivot 'our' conceptions of higher education from a foregrounding of standardised production towards new imaginaries for response-able transformation?

4.1.3. Towards Response-ability

As a disruption to the capitalisation of higher education, Schildermans (2021a, p. 19 - emphasis added) argues for the reorientation of the university as “a knowledge *ecology*, instead of a knowledge economy.” What ecological thinking makes pertinent are notions of “interdependency” (instead of categorisation), “indeterminacy” (instead of pre-figured objectives and norms), “generativity” (instead of extractive productivity), and “mutual co-becomings” (instead of transactional exchanges) (Schildermans, 2021a, p. 19). In a movement towards such ecological thinking, this article turns towards a feminist ethics of response-ability and its generative resonances with posthuman, new materialist and affect-centred postphilosophical orientations.

The feminist notion of response-ability develops from the postphilosophical political (re)orientation from the metaphysics of individualism to a relational understanding of all being as inseparably interconnected (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2023, p. 63). In acknowledgement that ‘beings do not preexist their relatings’ (Haraway, 2003, p. 6), response-ability refutes the assumption that knowing can occur from a distanced ‘outside’ (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 24). Response-ability accounts for the ecological entanglement of entities (human and more-than-human) within mutual co-constitution and co-becoming (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2023, p. 65). Response-able ethics, as such, centres not on individual responsibility but on the iterative practice of “responding and enabling responsiveness” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 24). Response-ability is about “being ethically in touch with the other” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 24) through the fostering of collective

practices in which ‘we’ “render each other capable” (Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, p. 882).

By proposing study as an enactment of a feminist ethics of response-ability this article aims to explore ways in which higher education might be practised differently, not with the assumption that neoliberalism might simply be undone through using the “right pedagogical tools” (Thiele, Górska, & Türer, 2020, p. 51). Writing from the midst of neoliberal academia, one has to acknowledge that one cannot simply reject its prioritisation of individuals, outcomes, efficiencies and quantitative (ac)countability (Thiele, Górska, & Türer, 2020, p. 52). I propose, however, like Kathrin Thiele, Magdalena Górska, and Pinar Türer (2020), that response-able practices of study might enact intimate gestures with which ‘we’ might shape meaningful propositions for ways in which higher education might become more hospitable and just.

4.2. Sketching with Study

4.2.1. Sketch I: Response-able Reading

We meet weekly in an hour-long Google Meet session. Several permanent and part-time academic staff members join voluntarily to read scholarship on pedagogy and assessment. We take turns to read aloud and pause frequently to discuss how the writing relates to our classroom encounters. We try and make sense of complex concepts by piecing together collective meaning. Conversations often include statements like “I want to test this in my next class” or “We should workshop what else this concept might do.” These gatherings are not prefaced by any pre-defined outcomes. There is no

expectation to compile a report or to produce journal articles or conference papers. The process of gathering is our only purpose, and it is understood to be adequate on its own merit. As a practice that gives without taking, we are afforded a slowness that allows us to stay with challenging questions without the urge to rush towards judgment.³

This article proceeds from the proposition that response-able engagements with study offer moments of resistance to the neoliberal learnification of higher education. Whereas learning has become synonymous with the individual cognitive labour of acquiring market-related knowledge and skills, the aforementioned inquiries into the meaning of study speak to an essential awareness of the limitations of learning-centred discourse when it comes to the social, political, embodied and affective dimensions of higher education (Schildermans, 2021b, p. 5). This section engages study as a modality for reading. Reading, in this instance, is taken as a broad practice that includes not only the reading of texts but also the reading of concepts, practices, histories and institutions. Commencing with a rather traditional mode of reading, this section departs from the etymological roots of 'study,' from which I point out productive resonances with Harney and Moten's conception of the term. These generative compatibilities offer a springboard from which to problematise normative critique as an entrenched mode of reading that functions through the dialectics of negation. By arguing for modalities of reading as an enactment of response-ability,

3. I was introduced to this practice by my supervisor, Viv Bozalek, who generously invited me to a range of such reading groups (that move outside of institutional affiliations). This practice of collective reading has been the most valuable resource throughout the course of my PhD.

this section moves towards the post-criticality of *reading-with* as an antidote to the cynical resignation of critique as a mode of reading-against.

With reference to its Latin origin *studium*—which suggests “the extreme degree of a desire”—Giorgio Agamben (2017)⁴ proposes study as “the point at which a desire for knowledge reaches its maximum intensity and becomes a form of life.” *Studium*, as a “pedagogical life,” is exemplified in the *universitas studii* of the Middle Ages, where student-led forms of assembly fostered revolutionary collective thinking practices as an opening to future horizons (Masschelein, 2017, p. 41). Here, in the *universitas studii* as independent from state, church and professional guilds, the practice of study offered a divergence from hegemonic knowledge frameworks and normative power relations (Masschelein, 2017, pp. 40-41). When considering *studium* alongside its Greek counterpart *scholè*—“a leisure condition of intellectual activity at the basis of our collective life”—Jacopo Rasmi (2021, pp. 19-20) suggests an interpretation of study as an “attentive and enthusiastic condition wherein the activity and its subject could not be split apart.” These etymological roots offer generative resonances with Harney and Moten’s conception of black study as an explorative *future-oriented yearning motivated by matters of collective care*—a practice we might explore as *onto-epistemologically transformative, materially embedded and always already “constitutively collective”* (Masschelein, 2017, p. 42). In contrast to instrumentalist approaches to learning that remain stuck at the level of the individual and their progression along a fixed pathway of prede-

4. I turn here to Agamben (2017) from a resonance to his specific concern for the manner in which an outcome-centred focus on research output has demoted the practice of study to a “less prestigious” and undervalued practice in higher education.

terminated outcomes, study opens up ways of reading the world that are generative, affirmative and hopeful. While at once urged to co-opt this reading of ‘study’ as grounds for a critique of ‘learning,’ I want to push against the impulse to exploit this false binary as a means to *reveal* what universities are doing *wrong*. Instead, I proceed with *post-criticality* by which I do not suggest an anti-critical stance but instead think-with Naomi Hodgson, Joris Vlieghe, and Piotr Zamojski’s conception of post-criticality as “creating a space of thought that enables practice to happen anew” (2017, p. 17). As opposed to the closure of critique, an ethics of response-ability urges towards the proliferation of entangled thinking—practices of reading that prioritise “letting concepts breathe.” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 31).

Reading together produces collective thought. Playful giggles over unutterable words entangle with sparks of insight and fresh propositions. Reading-with congeals into thinking-with in ways that give rise to new practices in our daily encounters with each other and our students. This communal ritual of curious scholarly exploration installs a shared momentous rhythm that sustains us throughout the week until we gather again.

Critical readings of higher education are commonly articulated through the ‘distancing’ of rational ‘expertise’ and the depoliticising effects of moralising judgements (Meyerhoff, 2019, p. 5). This discursive approach—the assumption that re-thinking the university will provide the impetus for institutional reform—is limited, however, in its contribution to practicable change (Schildermans, 2021b, p. 4). Critique, when figured as a cynical interpretative intervention that uncovers “hidden truths”—what Rita Felski

(after Ricoeur) describes as a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Felski, 2015, p. 1)—risks getting stuck at the level of the ‘what’ and remains limited in its transformative relation to the question of ‘how’. For Erin Manning (2016, p. 9), “critique that operates as an academic trope stifles the very opening through which fragile new modes of existence can come to expression.”

We gather, in person, to read together. Three lecturers and a cohort of postgraduate students. Before the gathering, students were given the opportunity to select one of three topics that interested them most. These topics relate to each of the lecturers’s own master dissertations. We divide into small groups and sit together on the carpet of the teaching room. Our intimate, happenstance circles have no particular focal point. Attention is distributed in the round.

Each person sits with a copy of the introductory chapter of the dissertation that sparked their interest. They are joined by the lecturer who authored this chapter some years ago. We take turns reading aloud to each other, relaying the role of the speaking-reader after each paragraph. Voices of varying speeds and volumes emerge from different corners of the room, accompanied by the steady hum of the air conditioning. This consistent blurring of sound creates a zone of safety—it is much less daunting to hear one’s own voice when sustained by other indistinct murmurs.

In a shifting of modalities from critical debunking to a feminist ethos of enabling responsiveness, one is made to question which academic practices are worth *caring* for (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2017, p. 17). When responding to the concern for reconfiguring higher education in modali-

ties other than critique, I turn towards an ongoing experimentation with concrete practices of study, such as collective reading. Figuring study as “modalities of *approach*”, in contrast to “modalities of *arrival* or *capture*” (Moten & Harney, 2021, 55:02), allows for an enlivening of the transformative potential of higher education amidst the “cynical resignation” of critical discourse (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2020, p. 4).

Study as a mode of reading “*with* and *for*” (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 147 - emphasis added) moves beyond the stultifying negation of critique (Manning, 2016, p. 204). To study with-and-for is to study-with rather than teach others— always/already for the purpose of addressing ‘our’ shared concerns (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 148). As a generative divergence from the antagonism of being within-and-against (*within* normalising institutional frameworks and *against* oppressive regimes of power), studying-with and studying-for suggest modalities of practice that shift attention from *what is* to *what is possible* (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 148).

It’s unsettling to share one’s own student work with your students. The anxiety that stems from habituated ego-guarding, however, dissolves into mutual attentiveness and curiosity as the reading-in-relay finds its irregular rhythm. The writing animates through variations of voices, intonations, inflections, and tempos. This sharing of writing through reading is not intended as a showcase of academic prowess. Instead, we gather in our collective concern for the challenges of academic writing. The content of the writing textures our togetherness but is not the sole object of our study. As lecturers, our experiential familiarity with the writing generates anecdotes of struggles, stuckness, break-

throughs, excitement and persistent self-doubts about specific phrasings, arguments or complicated concepts that still evade full understanding.

This engagement with our student work allows us to speak to these objects that appear as summative outcomes of a postgraduate programme as thoughts that remain continuously in process. The anecdotal meandering that surrounds our reading dwells on the many ways in which our thinking and writing have ‘travelled’ since finishing these dissertations. We read and discuss these chapters as instances of writing that proliferate through intricate entanglements with ongoing thinking and practice. Thinking-writing-reading remains on the move and refuses to find a final conclusive resting place. To study, in this moment, is to gather-with process. We are changed through our collective reading, and so are the texts. Thinking-as-writing, which serves as our material starting point, transfigures into reading as a springboard for thinking anew. Students’ anxieties lift when the dissertation reveals itself, not as the crystallisation of all-knowing, but as a mere snapshot of reading-thinking-writing-practice that exceeds the boundaries of a scholarly document.

Studying with-and-for, through the practice of response-able reading allows for affirmative dialogical engagements with texts in ways that foster creative new imaginings (Bozalek, Zembylas, & Shefer, 2019, p. 351). As opposed to the unidirectional distancing of a classical understanding of critique, response-able reading cultivates study as a process of collective becoming-with that includes all readers as well as the text. Bringing the often hidden labour of reading into the classroom opens ‘us’ up to reading as a material entanglement that repositions reading from the work of

preparation to the experience of *collective discovery* and *sense-making* (Thompson & Harney, 2018). Response-able reading nurtures a togetherness that breaches the individualising propensity of the neoliberal institution and urges ‘us’ towards the fostering of transversal relations (Rackley, Bradford, & Peairs, 2022, p. 70).

4.2.2. Sketch II: Response-able Sensing

[...] it seems to me that what study can do exceeds the kind of self-situating that too often becomes the death knell of creative acts of reading (and, of course, of making). Another kind of stand must be taken, one that erupts from the midst, one that engages sympathetically with the unknowable at the heart of difference, one that heeds the uneasiness of an experience that cannot yet be categorised.

(Manning, 2016, p. 39)

Study, in Harney and Moten’s conception, is not bound to an institutional location, such as a university. Rather, it emerges from the *relational sociality* of collective praxis. “Study is what you do with other people” (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 110) while acknowledging that intellectual life is ecologically dispersed in ways that traverse conventional subject/object divisions (Manning, 2016, p. 12). Harney and Moten’s relational conception of sociality diverges from the assumption of the social as the serial accumulation of pre-existing independent individuals (Moten, 2008, p. 187). Theirs is the sociality of *blackness*, described by Manning (2020a, p. 6) in her reading of *The Undercommons* as “aesthetic propositions for living otherwise”, craft-

ed in fugitive relation to “the implication that (non-pathological) social life is what emerges by way of the exclusion of the black or, more precisely, of blackness” (Moten, 2008, p. 188). As an “openness disruptive of the very idea of [a] set” (Moten, 2008, p. 187), black sociality is, therefore, irreducible to the calculability afforded to the grouping of independent sovereign subjects. Such a conception of sociality as interdependence (rather than independence) is ontologically oriented towards what Moten explicates as the “existential field [not of subjects, but] of things and events.” (Moten, 2008, p. 187).

In its expansive sociality, black study offers a relational approach to education as *encounters* that include not only other people but also multiple more-than-human others (such as ideas, texts, technologies and environments) (Masschelein, 2017, p. 41). When attuning pedagogical approaches to the relational sociality of study, higher education becomes conceivable as “constitutively collective”: “the making-collective and the collective-in-the-making [...], equally *involving* and *making* (a) public.” (Masschelein, 2017, p. 42 - emphasis added). By foregrounding the more-than-human reciprocal co-constitution of pedagogical encounters—the acknowledgement that educational events are made up of the inseparable entanglement of persons and things in time and place—directs attention away from the assumption of stable identities by asking what the irreducible multiplicity of an event makes possible (Bozalek & Taylor, 2021, p. 66). My inquiries with study as a mode of response-able sensing attend to the emergent in-betweenness that poses entities in dynamic constellation within the event-form of pedagogical encounters. I aim, therefore, to re-think the politics of difference by starting not with individual identities but with

the *affirmation* of ecologies of relation as the co-compositional assembling of study.⁵

Collective assembly occurs in an exhibition space. We are surrounded by *Trouble*, an immersive paper and plastic installation by Julia Rosa Clark, an established artist and the coordinator of our bachelor and postgraduate programmes in Contemporary Art. The exhibition space is one of our campus classrooms where practical courses in artmaking are typically taught. Julia made this work during the academic downtime of our summer break. Gathered together are the tired bodyminds of postgraduate students at the conclusion of the first demanding week of their degree. Preceding this occasion was a full week of challenging lectures, discussions and workshops about their own research proposals and practical projects. Our gathering centres on responding to the artwork, guided by prompts: “I see ...”, “I think ...”, “I feel ...”

Each pedagogical event is unique in its specificity and always-already constituted by “a confluence of arrivals” (Snaza, 2023, p. 260). Entities share in the entanglement of being in the event together, yet ‘we’ are in it together differently (Masumi, 2015, p. 115). Participants bring differentiated contributions to the totality of the encounter (Bozalek & Taylor, 2021, p. 66)— ‘our’ own situated inclinations, habits and potential while also being acquainted with varying degrees of vulnerability to marginalisation (Thiele, Górska, & Türer, 2020, p. 52). As a “gathering of intensities” (Harney, 2018, 04:03), events of study, when engaged with response-ability, harness not individ-

5. See Manning (2016, p. 123).

ual identities but the dynamic affirmation of relations-with/in-difference that emerge from the synchronicity of varied situated responses.



Figure 7. Clark, J. R. (2024). *Trouble* (installation view).

(Photograph: Julia Rosa Clark)

What occurs as the collective sociality of study can, therefore, not be traced back to the agential sovereignty of the educator or any individual student. The relational unfolding of the event cannot be planned, mapped or anticipated in advance. It is the occurrence of the event's collective specificity that "snap[s] us to attention together, and correlat[es] our diversity to the affective charge this brings" (Massumi, 2015, p. 115). The relational co-becoming-with of an event articulates through its shared agitations, excitements, mournings (or any other array of affective tonalities) that direct 'our' collective becoming in ways that bind 'us' together without reducing 'us' to generalised uniformity. "We' are in this together, but we are not one and the same." (Braidotti, 2020, p. 465).

The week's diverse theoretical concerns—anthropocentrism, coloniality, critical questions of gender, race, and technology—bubble up through the unstructured discussion. We arrive in a collective assembly with Braidotti, Haraway, hooks and others. Observations, musings, analyses, and the (re)membering of theory move with and through the webbing and gridding of thousands of laminated paper cut-outs suspended from the walls and ceiling. The vulnerability of the artist sharing her creative practice is met with a vulnerability of sharing thoughts and ideas that are not yet fully formed nor translated into a commonly shared and pre-approved language. We move with the proliferation of varied readings as they emerge from situated modes of sensing. We avoid attempts at approximating one single shared account of the 'truth.'

Generalisation as the biopolitical expression of efficiency (Thiele, Górska, & Türer, 2020, p. 52), mobilises through the violent reactivity of negation. When approached through response-ability, study does not merely oppose negation but rather functions through an “entirely different register” (Manning, 2016, p. 203) of affirmation. “Affirmation”, for Manning (2016, p. 201), “refuses to stand against.” As a praxis for sensing-with uncomfortable truths, affirmation foregrounds an urging towards communal knowing (Braidotti, 2020, p. 468) in ways that harness our collective capacities for knowing differently. Different to reactivity, as a trait that always commences by re-centring the singular subject from which response is directed, response-ability undoes the propensity for closure by sustaining the relational inseparability of the more-than-human collectivity of becoming-with an event (Manning, 2016, p. 203). In foregrounding sensing as a modality that is less structured

by discriminatory habits than reason, response-able study offers the potential for diverging from negation (as the judgement that measures according to what is already known), towards affirmative speculation as adventures in thoughts not-yet-thought.

4.2.3. Sketch III: Response-able Storying

Black study, [...] its creativity for inventing life beyond the lack of imagination of dominant frameworks is a belief in all the worlds inside of this world, and in what else the world could be.

(Rackley, Bradford, & Peairs, 2022, p. 71)

Different from the oppressive nature of ‘fixed’ concepts and categories—“the always already there (of) Thought” (Da Silva, 2014, p. 84)—black study acknowledges that “knowledge-as-given [...] can only re-instantiate the violent ways of the world-as-given.” (Rackley, Bradford, & Peairs, 2022, p. 69). In resistance to the reification of disciplinary boundaries, canonical knowledge, institutional hierarchies and the exclusionary dialectics of singular identity, response-able study occurs at the speculative edge of sensing connections. When considering the speculative nature of study, it is useful to think-with how the term is used in the context of the creative arts (Ramsi, 2021, p. 20). In painting, for example, a study constitutes a propositional and exploratory sketch in preparation for a more complete or final work. A study, in this sense, suggests an *open-ended process* as opposed to a predefined and fully resolved product. When positioning the practice of study in a speculative realm of ideas—in the midst of their taking-shape

(in overtly material terms),⁶—one is sensitised to the generative value of embodied experimentation.

In a classroom session, we think-with family histories. As a matter of personal, political and theoretical concern, a student expresses his urge to learn more about his family's entanglement with the forced removal of residents from District 6. More than 60000 inhabitants were violently evicted from this area between 1968 and 1982 as an enactment of the racist policies of the Group Areas Act (of 1951). His yearning to know and understand familial history is met by his grandmother's refusal to dwell on this traumatic part of their past. This is a familiar reality for only a few in the classroom, while others are accustomed to different silences—those from the other side of South Africa's historical racial divide.

We thread stories together by looking at old family photographs. Similar poses and configurations of elders carry different meanings in different images for different persons. Some histories are more opaque than others. Many are blurred by the omission of selective memory. "When asking my grandmother about this person, she just lit a cigarette and looked away." We think about the ways in which silences articulate what remains inexpressible in words.

Manning (2016, p. 7) describes study as a technique for 'experimental prudence.' Prudence, in this instance, suggests a heightened sensitivity that attends to the unanticipated effects of experimentation and a patience that does not rush past the question of "what else the event can do." (Manning,

6. Material practices might include writing, speaking, drawing, and endless forms of 'making'.

2016, p. 7). This opening to the “what else” of an event recognises that “every posthuman doing is an experiment, something that we don’t already have a map, template or pre-formed schedule for.” (Taylor, 2018, p. 373). As a pedagogical modality study attends to the “risk of knowing differently” (Manning, 2016, p. 214) in its opening up to the unknown by asking questions that ‘we’ do not yet have answers for.

Together we fabulate a practice for collective story-making expressed through the act of embroidery. A domestic practice of being together with grandmothers in the passing down of hand skills that might enable different languages for memories to be shared. The unknowns of the past might be affirmed as fully present through the crafting of new forms of assembly.

Study finds its form through imaginative exploration and the testing of ideas—as “rehearsals of unknowns” (Feldt & Peterson, 2021, p. 57)—driven not by aimless wonder but by the affective pull of collective care (Masschelein, 2017, p. 48). In study ‘we’ determine “what needs to be learned together” by identifying matters that bind ‘us’ in shared affective wonder (Harney, 2018, 00:52). Response-ability and study, therefore, converge through expressions of care, when care is understood through Maria Puig de la Bellacasa’s conception as “becom[ing] susceptible of being affected by some matters rather than others” (2017, p. 110). In this convergence situated responses, for Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, p. 110), emerge from the interdependence of entanglements with “more-than-one modes of subjectivity and political consciousness” afforded by the affective seeds for speculative hope that grows from assembling-with care in collectivity. By attending

to matters of collective care, study moves not through generalisations but promotes the envisioning of “a different world *within this world*” (Schildermans, 2021a, p. 4 - emphasis added). As opposed to utopian thinking that places the thinker *outside* of history through perpetual deferral of transcendent change (the imagining of new total hegemonies) (Hodgson, Vlieghe, & Zamojski, 2017, p. 16), response-able study commences from an affective “care-full” (Thiele, Górska, & Türer, 2020) relation to the possibilities already prescient in its event. Study refuses the “cruel optimism” (Berlant, 2011) of distanced utopias and resists recategorising thinking into new homogenising universals.

Response-able study assembles around what Muñoz (2019, p. 207) refers to as “concrete hope”—hope that is “grounded and consequential [...] cognisant of exactly what obstacles present themselves in the face of obstacles that so often feel insurmountable.” In his repetition of “obstacles” Muñoz alludes to the doubling of barriers that hinder possibilities for change (Chambers-Letson, Nyong’o, & Pellegrini, 2019, p. x). While the challenge of transformation presents itself as a familiar obstacle, Muñoz accounts for a preceding impediment—the *‘how to’* of conceptualising practices of hope as concrete rather than idly romanticised. The yearning quality of concrete hope “is not anticipatory in the sense of [something] not yet arrived” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 44). Instead, storying hope from “being right where you are” (Massumi, 2015, p. 3) offers a response-able engagement with the potential for difference while care-fully attending to “commitments and inheritances, within contingencies and experiences [...] with awareness and responsibility for consequences” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 110).

We look through more family photos and think about other domestic practices that might be explored as alternative modes for sharing stories. We see a celebratory table setting and start planning to make and eat a trifle together after graduation. We think-with trifles and multiplicity—multiplicities of ingredients and multiplicities of families celebrating their moments of differentiated togetherness.

4.3. Conclusion

Study as a speculative modality for “seeing beyond the [prefigured] map” requires the “crafting of enabling constraints at each step of the way” (Manning, 2020b, 13).⁷ In this article I propose the foregrounding of response-ability—as mutually enabling collective knowing and becoming—as a generative enabling constraint through which to align practices of study with the relational dimension of postphilosophical ontologies. In response to this special issue’s aim of sketching out new educational imaginaries by tracing alliances across feminisms and the ‘posts,’ this article proposes a feminist expansion of Harney and Moten’s notion of “black study” (2013) as a practice that resonates with the postphilosophical queering of human exceptionalism, representationalism and reflective objectivity. By engaging study as a response-able “modality of approach” (Moten & Harney, 2021, 55:02), this article proposes the practice of reading, sensing, and storying with-and-for as techniques for the refusal of the monohumanist hegemony of neoliberal individualism and its permeation through the “learnification” (Biesta, 2013) of higher education discourse and practice. In a divergence

from the entrepreneurial conception of learning as a predetermined pathway for self-actualisation, this article emphasises the collective, affective and speculative dimensions of study as propositions for reconfiguring higher education pedagogies in modalities more affirmative of difference.

Response-able reading figures study as the post-critical proliferation of entry points to knowing. By prioritising productive resonances rather than contradictions or negations, response-able reading promotes affirmative dialogical engagements with texts, practices, histories and institutions. Moving beyond the constraining of knowledge practices to the frameworks of the already-known allows for the expansion of concern from “what is” to “what is possible” (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 148). Experimentations with a practice of response-able sensing aim to highlight the more-than-human sociality of study by moving beyond reason as the primary modality for knowledge production. In a gesture that attends to the sensorial and affective dimensions of knowing and how they emerge from the relational co-constitution of experiential encounters, practices of study move beyond the constraints of so-called bounded identities to enable a politics of co-becoming without reducing difference to the generalisation of uniformity.

The speculative practice of response-able storying directs study towards the figuration of potential (and more hopeful) horizons through the exploratory testing of ideas. Speculation in this configuration does not suggest aimlessness nor idealisation but instead attunes to the affective pull of assembling-with matters of collective care. As a practice of “concrete hope” (Muñoz, 2019), response-able speculation urges towards transformation by grounding its imaginings in the potentialising lures of difference

7. Enabling constraints, for Manning (2020a, p. 79), are techniques for crafting the conditions for meaningful improvisation.

already prescient in the occurrence of a pedagogical event. While presenting but mere glimpses of encounters that approximate these conceptions of response-able study, the sketches presented in this article aim to ignite generative sparks for continued experimentation in thinking and practice, while asserting along with Tsing (2015, p. 46) that “response-ability always takes us somewhere new [where] we are not quite ourselves anymore [...] but rather ourselves in encounter with another.”

5.

Propositions for a Counter-economy of Assessment: Adventures in the Assessment of Creative Arts in Higher Education

Abstract

This article considers assessment practices within the neoliberal conditions of higher education by posing questions to conceptions of value. As a motivating thrust, this article asks: might there be generative potential that remains unexplored, due to assessment's direct linkage to the production of human capital? With its central emphasis on value, this article turns towards Brian Massumi's *Postcapitalist Manifesto: 99 Theses on the Reevaluation of Value* (2018). Guided by Massumi, I compose speculative propositions with which to explore the potential for a postcapitalist reworking of value within the context of assessment. In engaging assessment otherwise, this article foregrounds assessment practices that are pertinent to the creative arts (with particular interest in the pedagogical convention of the studio crit), not as a means to suggest that arts-based disciplines have a superior and well-resolved approach to assessment, but rather to leverage the already tenuous relationship between arts education and assessment. As its objectives, this article aims to (1) contribute to the underrepresented discourse on the assessment of creative arts in higher education and to (2) explore the potential for re-imaginings of arts-based assessment practices to leak into the wider discourse of assessment as a whole. The intention is not to deliver fully-formed methodological formulae but to think through assessment with propositions that might be expanded upon through speculative experimentation and future inquiries.

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5.1. Introduction

Assessment frames what students do. It provides an indication of what the institution gives priority to in making judgements, it provides an agenda more persuasive than a syllabus or course outline and it therefore has a powerful backwash effect on all teaching and learning activities.

(Boud, 2007, p. 21)

Assessment serves as a pivotal point of valuation—where the activities of learning and teaching are measured in ways that assert what is deemed as valuable within the educational experience. During assessment, student efforts are exchanged for ‘objective’ indicators of approval/disapproval according to *generalised standards* that bolster the *purpose* of the educational project. Assessment delimits what matters and what counts as acceptable learning through the translation of *qualitative* encounters with learning into *quantitative* evaluations of their resulting artefacts.¹ Assessment, above all else, is a practice concerned with value. In keeping with the thrust of neoliberal capitalism in Academia, the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) positions “*value for money* in relation to effectiveness and efficiency” as one of the four pillars for *quality* in higher education (CHE, 2021, p. 30). Value, in this instance (as in most other valuations of exchange), relies on the promise of *surplus value*—an agreeable profit in the form of future employability. Private higher education insti-

1. This article makes use of ‘learning-artefacts’ as a means to signal the various objects-of-learning that are taken as the objects of assessment. As the primary focus pertains to creative arts, artefacts include any form that art might take, ranging from more traditional media to contemporary forms that include time-based, performance-based and expanded-field works.

tutions, through an ever-increasing *client service orientation*, trade (on a cost-per-credit basis) in the market of employable knowledge and skills. Assessment, in this configuration, serves as a central nexus for this value exchange—measuring whether a body is, in fact, fit for work. With higher education becoming an increasingly competitive market, statistical information on employability, throughput and pass-rates are often strategically foregrounded as a means of establishing an institutional ‘edge’ (Gilroy & Du Toit, 2013, p. 257). The process of assessment thereby becomes entangled into a complex tension not only with the philosophical aims of higher education but also with the business development goals of institutions, and the various demands of the job market. As such, Allais (2018, p. 45) argues that “education exists relationally” and she therefore calls for analyses that interrogate how educational institutions interact with other societal institutions and the ‘system’ at large (Allais, 2018, p. 44) For Allias (2018, p. 44) such analyses should avoid “attempts to quantify the individual [...] and the social [...] benefits of higher education, but rather [try] to understand better the relationships between universities, society and the economy in different contexts today.”

The complexity of education’s relational existence manifests in its dual functions of “screening” and “development” (Halliday, 2015, p. 151). For Halliday (2015, p. 151) the screening function of education operates as a process of meritocratic sorting of individuals into coveted spots in prestigious institutions, reputable degrees and sought-after job opportunities.²

2. One would be remiss to engage with this screening function as a neutral and non-political process as it is characterised by a history of purposeful exclusion of women, persons of colour and persons with various so-called disabilities. The screening function of education remains a highly politicised mechanism that has far reaching impacts on society at large (Allais, 2018).

The development function, in turn, speaks to the role of education in preparing individuals for autonomous citizenship and a sustained sense of civil well-being (Halliday, 2015, p. 151). This article does not suggest that employability (and the sorting function that prioritises job-placement as an objective) should be disregarded as a primary aim for higher education, especially in South Africa, considering its staggering unemployment rates.³ It does, however, seek to challenge the manner in which a fixation on pleasing the job-market (screening) results in a dilution of critical thinking and exploratory practice (development). By means of a concrete example, this article responds to sentiments such as the one uttered by a colleague of mine (a lecturer in a highly technical field of digital specialisation) complaining that courses on decolonial and queer theory “waste” his students’ time, as these “philosophical” discussions have no bearing on the profession for which students are being prepared. For this lecturer (and others who share such sentiments), emphasis must be squarely placed on appropriate *applied skills* that are directly translatable into suitable employment.⁴ This article responds by asking whether the implicit pitting of employment-centred-skills against critical thinking (and practice) does not merely reproduce the very conditions that characterise the current job-markets as exclusionary and ridden with inequalities. Might there be generative potential that remains unexplored, due to assessment’s direct linkage to the production of

3. The latest statistics (compiled in the third quarter of 2022) reports that 40,5% of South African individuals between the ages of 25 and 35 were unemployed (Statista, 2023).

4. Along with the high demand for specialised technical skills, there is an increased pressure from both industry and educational regulators for higher education to develop graduates’ non-technical employable skills (or so called ‘soft-skills’, often termed as graduate attributes) (Sitto, 2020, p. 52). This produces a challenge of prioritisation as the fluctuating range of in-demand applied skills pulls curricula towards deeper specialisation and the dynamic range of desired graduate attributes pulls towards the need for generalisation.

human capital?⁵

While higher education is undisputedly captured by neoliberal capitalism (to which degree remains open for argumentation), it purports, in the South African context, to serve the purpose of not only “address[ing] the development needs of society and provid[ing] the labour market [...] with [...] high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity”, but also of “contribut[ing] to the socialisation of *enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens* [...] encourag[ing] a reflective capacity and willingness to review and *renew prevailing ideas, policies and practices based on a commitment to the common good* [as] an important *vehicle for achieving equity*” (CHE, 2013, p. v - emphasis added). As such, higher education remains caught by the simultaneous mandates of social justice and transformation as well as the demands of the global economy (Belluigi, 2014, p. 351). On institutional level, this tension often emerges as a contrast between curricular content and educational protocol, where the prevalence of neoliberal audit culture urges towards a technocratic foregrounding of the latter (Belluigi, 2014, p. 352).

In support of the aim for social equality the introduction of outcomes-based frameworks (such as the NQF and HEQF)⁶ led to a shift from

5. The production of *human capital*, under neoliberal capitalism occurs predominantly as a process of self-fashioning—“surfing the movements of capital”—through self-motivated participation in the production of surplus value (through acts such as education, up-skilling, participating in property and investment markets and so forth). (Massumi, 2018, p. 31). Massumi (2018, p. 32) argues that “[h]uman capital was invented by neoliberal capitalism to replace the figure of the worker in an attempt to *render obsolete the antagonism between worker and capitalist* that structured the preceding industrial phase of capitalism.”

6. The South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF).

norm-referenced assessment to criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) that evaluates *individual learning* as opposed to benchmarking students in relation to the overall performance of their peers (Belluigi, 2014, p. 356). Yet, while CRA acknowledges that different students arrive at the educational experience with differentiated socio-cultural ‘capital’, the assumption persists that the process of learning will lead them to attaining the same shared standardised outcomes (Beets, 2007, p. 184). The student-centredness espoused by CRA thereby continues to perpetuate the normative function of assessment. The breadth of student-centredness might further be questioned by the fact that very few institutions critically involve students in the design, structuring or evaluation of assessment practices (Gilroy & Du Toit, 2014, p. 259), nor do they encourage feedback regarding the ways in which assessments are conducted. It is therefore not surprising that a vast amount of students experience assessment as something “done to them and not [...] *with* and *for* them.” (Beets, 2007, p. 185). Bryan and Clegg (2006, p. xvii) argue that “[a]ssessment probably provokes more anxiety among students and irritation among staff than any other feature of higher education.”

What is lacking in assessment practices is a deep consideration for how assessment might be purposefully refigured in order to become more *response-able*. Response-ability in higher education, for Bozalek, Zembylas, and Tronto, is more than “simply examples of the type of learning that can take place when power relations [...] are acknowledged; they also constitute ethico-political practices that incorporate a relational ontology into teaching and learning activities.”⁷ (Bozalek, Zembylas & Tronto, 2021, p. 5). Response-ability thereby actualises responsibility by configuring the condi-

tions for learning in ways that account for co-constitutive relations so as to “render each other capable” (Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, p. 882). Response-able assessment practices would therefore refrain from hierarchical arrangements such as teacher/student, student (as agentic subject)/project (as passive object) and assessment (as an active process)/grades (as fully determined measurements). Approaching assessment with response-ability (and the relational ontology it requires) suggests a radical reworking of assessment to the degree that such theorising might seem unattainable in practice. Yet, this article argues for a conceptual exploration of such possibilities as a means to open up unexplored value that might be uncovered should assessment be approached with response-ability.

With its central emphasis on value, this article turns towards Brian Massumi’s *Postcapitalist Manifesto: 99 Theses on the Reevaluation of Value* (2018). Guided by Massumi, I aim to compose generative *propositions* with which to explore the potential for a *postcapitalist* reworking of value within the context of assessment.⁸ Massumi’s critical, imaginative and fabulatory analysis of conceptions of value within the framework of neoliberal capitalism offers a suitable background from which to probe at

7. The notion of relational ontologies stems from the field of posthumanism and feminist new materialism. Relational ontologies differ from classical conceptions of ontology, which take being to be centred in the agentic independently existing human individual. Relational ontologies, in contrast, emphasise the processual nature of becoming as always-already in co-constitutive relation to various human and non-human others, thereby rejecting the pre-existence of the individual prior to their entanglement in material-discursive arrangements. A relational understanding of ontology demands a refiguring of agency. As such Barad (2012, pp. 54-55) renders agency “not something that someone or something has to varying degrees [...] rather, agency is an enactment [and] not about choice in any liberal humanist sense [...] Agency is about possibilities for worldly re-configurings.”

8. Propositions are used here in the Whiteheadian sense as “lures for feeling” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 25). As conceptual prompts, propositions figure attunements to the unknown potential that drives speculation toward new and differentiated ways of thinking, doing and being (Manning, 2020a, p. 67).

the manner in which value—in the context of assessment—is contingent on the insidious co-optive operations of capital. This article echoes Masumi's assertion of the need for anarcho-alternative conceptions of value in the face of neoliberal hegemony (2018, pp. 3-4 - emphasis added):

In the absence of [...] strong alternative conception[s] of value, it is all too easy for normative gestures to slip back in [...] Standards of judgement are simply allowed to operate implicitly [...] To take back value is not to reimpose standards of judgement providing a [new] normative yardstick. That would do little other than to make the oppressiveness explicit again [...] More radically, it is to move beyond the reign of judgement itself.

The propositions that follow by no means exhaust the potential for challenging assessment through alternative conceptions of value. Yet, this article aims to sow but a few generative seeds that might expand on *what (else) assessment can do*. In engaging assessment *otherwise*, this article foregrounds assessment practices that are pertinent to the creative arts, not as a means to suggest that arts-based disciplines have a superior and well-resolved approach to assessment, but rather to leverage the already tenuous relationship between arts education and assessment. Scholarship on assessment, and prominent models and taxonomies primarily function under the assumption of written or verbal work as the object of assessment (Gilroy & Du Toit, 2013, p. 258). The disciplinary specificity of the creative arts (pertaining to its multimodal and processual approach) offers generative potential for engaging the complexities of assessment, yet there is a remarkable lack of scholarship dealing with the assessment of creative practices in South Africa (Belluigi, 2014, p. 349). As its objectives, this arti-

cle aims to (1) contribute to the underrepresented discourse on the assessment of creative arts in higher education and to (2) explore the potential for re-imaginings of arts-based assessment to leak into the wider discourse of assessment as a movement towards an alter-economy of value in higher education. The intention is not to deliver fully formed methodological formulae but to challenge conventional approaches to assessment with propositions that might be expanded upon through speculative experimentation and future inquiries.

5.2. Questioning the object(ive) of assessment

Proposition: **Embrace the processual beyond of use-value**

The concept of *function* needs to be replaced with the more plastic concept of operation, making clear that [...] *operativity is processual*.

(Massumi, 2018, p. 112 - emphasis added)

The undervaluation of learning *process* is a symptom of neoliberalism's "valorisation of quantity over quality" that occurs in higher education through the foregrounding of efficiency and performance-measurement (Bozalek, 2021, pp. 2, 14). In this neoliberal equation, students are positioned, on the one hand, as the objects of assessment (from which data might be extracted with regard to success rates) and, on the other hand, as consumers demanding certification and its associated success as the product of their tuition fees (Ratray, 2018, p. 1489). These conditions result in an increasingly risk-averse academic environment—characterised by what Kinchen and Winstone (2017) refer to as *academic frailty*—where 'pushing' students into uncomfortable (albeit generative) terrains is avoided at all cost (Ratray,

2018, p. 1489). Such academic frailty stultifies the development of renewed academic approaches by fixating on grade results as the primary goal and sole indicator of success (Rattray, 2018, p. 1491).

Assessment reproduces neoliberal capital's process of capture, which "appropriate[s] and subsume[s] [value] under the principle of perpetual quantitative growth" (Massumi, 2018, p. 39), both in the form of growth as institutional credibility (through the production and circulation of success-rates) and growth as the accumulation of academic credit (through the checking-off of programme outcomes through the sequential completion of summative assessments). The process of learning is mapped as a punctuated teleological progression, tracking students' advancement through a checklist of applied skills as evidenced in complete and fully formed outcomes. This linear reading of learning urges toward *prioritising the exchange value of outcomes-for-results over the use-value of transformative higher learning*, thereby foregrounding the 'screening' over the 'development' purpose of education.

Such an instrumentalist view of assessment sits in stark contrast to the commonly held understanding of the value of learning programmes within the creative arts. Here, value is generally considered to be rooted not only in the innovative crafting of artefacts but also in the generation of *new* knowledge. Novelty is valued in the creative arts through pedagogic strategies that embrace creative experimentation and iterative problem-solving in ways that lead to the crafting of *propositional* artefacts as responses to assessment tasks. As such, pedagogic engagement and assessment activities often appear as void of 'right answers' as it is assumed that appropriate and relevant knowledge is to be created anew during the course of

the learning (Orr & Shrieve, 2018, p. 30). This aspect of creative art makes assessment resistant to standardisation (Orr & Shrieve, 2018, p. 30), and requires an understanding of value as emergent.

A revaluation of value must contrive to develop [the] connection between value and vitality [...] It must make qualitative excess a postcapitalist virtue—beyond the myth of equal exchange [...] and the rhetoric of commensuration.

(Masumi, 2018, p. 8 - emphasis added)

Manning argues for “a pragmatics of the useless”⁹ (2020a) as a valuation of the emergent nature of processes prior to them being organised according to prefigured evaluative criteria (Manning, 2023b, p. 57). For Manning, to be artful,¹⁰ is to engage with that which has “not yet found its form” in a manner that avoids being captured by reproduction and mimesis (Manning, 2020a, p. 23). “Art,” for Manning, “must never seek to define in advance its value [...] the taking-form must not fall into the category of prevaluation.” (Manning, 2020a, p. 23). Artfulness, or the “force of art”¹¹ as Atkinson (2018, p. 1) terms it, is *disobedient* to established valuations of what constituted

9. For Manning (2020a, p. 97), the useless is a “refus[al] to take use-value as the measurement of experience [so that] other ways of living [might] become possible.”

10. Art is made artful through its expression of the “irreconcilable tension that results from making something, while intentionally allowing the materials and things that make up that something to change the making in mind [...] until it becomes something radically singular, something neither wholly of the mind that made it, nor fully the matter from which it was made. It is here that art incompletes itself, and appears.” (Chan, 2009, quoted in Manning, 2020a, pp. 29-30).

11. Atkinson (2018, p. 59) aligns his use of force with Masumi’s assertions that “force in is not to be confused with power. Power is the domestication of force [...] [whereas] power builds wall [...] [f]orce in its wild state arrives from the outside to break constraints and open new vistas.” (Masumi, 1992, p. 6).

art. For Atkinson, it is this sense of disobedience that serves as the most valuable condition for learning through and with the force of art (Atkinson, 2018, p. 60).¹² When considering the question of value, Manning argues for a movement away from the assumption of *inherent value* towards questioning the *conditions* under which a learning event's coming-into-being expresses itself and spills over into lived experience. (Manning, 2023b, p. 19). Value—for a pragmatics of the useless—is not a matter of calculability (Manning, 2020a, p. 12) but a matter of accounting for the incalculable that sits at the core of the emergent nature of the artful (Manning, 2020a, p. 13). In this equation “[v]alue must [...] be activated each time anew” (Manning, 2020a, p. 23).

The “force of art” takes art not as an object, but as a conduit, bringing into question how it transforms thought and action (Manning, 2020a, p. 59). When engaging with the assessment of artistic practices (through an acknowledgement of a pragmatics of the useless) one is urged, therefore, to move beyond a fixation on the ‘use-value’ of learning-artefacts in a shift towards attending to the process from which such artefacts emerge. In this light, the immanence of a student's creative practices becomes the object of the evaluative inquiry of assessment.¹³ How propositional solutions (in the form of artefacts) emerge from a student's *navigation of the conditions of their encounter with learning opens up assessment as an*

12. Disobedience, as Atkinson uses the term, does not mean oppositional, but rather speaks to an expansion of thinking and practice towards new possibilities that resist the normalising forces of established modalities (Atkinson, 2018, p. 60).

13. Immanence for Atkinson (2016, p. 142) refers to “internal relations and values of modes of existence that facilitate capacities to act. It relates to those local flows of experiencing that facilitate how someone makes sense of, conceives or feels particular experiences” in their immediacy.

exploratory adventure (Atkinson, 2017, p. 142).¹⁴ It is thus not a case of evaluating art through prefigured criteria but to engage “the force of art [that] challenge[s] us to think” beyond that which is already known (Atkinson, 2017, p. 142). Response-ability, when foregrounded in the adventure of assessment, therefore, seeks to create the conditions in which response is not directed in a unilinear fashion from the examiner to the ‘object’ being examined. Instead, response-ability allows for the artfulness that moves through the student’s processual efforts to inform how the examiner comes to conceive of art’s value. A movement towards response-able assessment is thus a continuous being-on-the-move that breaks free from standardised criteria and quantifiable metrics by embracing co-constitutive qualitative encounters with art-in-the-making. Assessment criteria might therefore be more effective (and response-able) when negotiated in collaboration with students as a means to embrace the dynamism of artfulness and the diversity of processes (or ‘skills’) that might be operationalised as responses to process-centred assessment tasks. Poon, McNaught, Lamb and Kwan (2009, p. 341), identify multiple benefits stemming from the participation of students in the the interactive negotiation of assessment criteria, which include: (i) increasing awareness of what constitutes meaningful learning engagement, (ii) providing an appropriate and relatable framework for enhancing learning practice, (iii) critically engaging with and clarifying the objectives of a task, and (iv) developing a scaffolding for how to engage with learning. The process of negotiating criteria, however, require guidance which could occur through the use of open-ended constraints so as to

14. While Atkinson (2017, p. 142) makes this argument with a more generalised focus on pedagogy, I suggest that the same can be said about assessment in particular.

assure that negotiated criteria align with appropriate learning outcomes.¹⁵ As part of a processual engagement with learning, the negotiation of assessment criteria has the potential to prevent the sense of disconnection that occurs when translating qualitative experiences into standardised quantitative norms. Additionally, criteria negotiation offers the opportunity for learning to become more attuned to the sociocultural specificity of students' learning experiences.

5.3. Questioning the standardising urge of assessment

Proposition: **Resist the pull towards normalisation**

To succeed in revaluing value [...] the post-capitalist future will have to *decouple value from normativity*.

(Massumi, 2018, pp. 62-63 - emphasis added)

Discourse on assessment must be widened by an awareness of the implications of the sociocultural context in which learning occurs (Boud & Falchikov, 2007, p. 9). While a noticeable shift towards social constructionist approaches to pedagogy (that foreground the construction rather than the reproduction of knowledge),¹⁶ Lubbe and Mentz (2021, p. 2) note a continued prominence of behaviourist assumptions in the assessment of higher

15. In the South African context open ended constraints may be developed by using criteria a-j as described in the NQF level descriptors (SAQA, 2012) as a starting point. The suggestion for open-endedness speaks to the need for highlighting qualitative points of interest, while allowing for contextual specificity to be enriched by students' own learning experience and processual discoveries.

16. In its emphasis on students' active involvement in the *construction* of knowledge, social constructionist approaches promote the notion that assessment cannot be treated as separate to teaching and learning and should be engaged as a pedagogical tool rather than as a *posteriori* comparative judgement (Lubbe & Mentz, 2021, p. 21). Social constructionism, however, op-

learning. Following a realist critique of social constructionism, one might question the effect of ‘vocationalism’, and the marketisation of institutions. One might argue that these ‘screening’ conditions of higher learning tend to favour standardised graduate attributes to the detriment of the development of complex processual learning that functions as the means to *create new knowledge* and *transform* practice. This concern is of particular pertinence in the arts, where students are expected to develop novel creative outcomes that challenge the known limitations of what Art might be (Orr & Shrieve, 2018, pp. 22, 23). In the arts, the pedagogical emphasis on process aims to foster students’ ability to “see [and] realise the ‘not-[yet]-known’” (Atkinson, 2015:44). Accordingly, a vocational approach in the arts needs to be approached as an *open-ended dynamic and generative dialogical process* that moves away from notions of mirroring or reproduction (Orr & Shrieve, 2018:24). ‘Preparing’ students for the world of professional practice, therefore, demands positioning formal knowledge as co-composing and in dynamic relation to the situated specificity student’s experiential learning.¹⁷ As such, learning experiences should not be approached as static ‘texts’ open to a stable reading or interpretation, but should rather be considered as ‘sites’ for the negotiation of significance and meaning (Belluigi, 2014, p. 355).

Traditional assessment practices, however, make use of generalised criteria in order to arrive at *prescribed* readings of students’ art practices and the objects they produce (Atkinson, 2018, p. 105). As such,

erates under representationalist assumptions by assuming that objects (such as learning-products) are fully knowable as the products of culture (Murriss, 2022, p. 43), and that knowledge is developed in a predictable linear fashion.

17. The notion of knowledge as situated, for Haraway (1988), suggests that all knowing is embedded in the intersectional specificity of the knowers social, cultural, historical milieu.

assessment functions through *representationalist* operations that devalue the immanence of the force of art in favour of normative judgement (Atkinson, 2011, p. 105).¹⁸ As normative judgement belongs to the prefigured field of assessment (and in the case of art, aesthetic) discourse, it thereby fails to penetrate the situated specificity of learning-artefacts (Atkinson, 2011, pp. 99, 106). Normative evaluations consequently fail to engage the entangled emergence of situated knowledge and practice by indexing learning to idealised conception of what constitutes an artwork, in accordance with normative discursive matrices (Atkinson, 2011, pp. 99, 106). A notable shift in art practice and discourse, towards the end of the 20th century, caused a movement away from the modernist foregrounding of formalism, where “the form or visual surface of the artwork alone is its content, and artworks are believed to belong to [a] realm of transcendence or enlightenment”, towards a postmodern emphasis on the contextual embeddedness of the work as materially and discursively entangled in a social-political context (Belluigi, 2009, p. 702). However, normative assessment practices often continue to perpetuate formalist assumptions regarding assumed transcendental values concerning the mastery of technical qualities in accordance with an established (Eurowestern) canon.

This reproduction of canonical knowledge proceeds not merely in the definition of evaluative frameworks but also takes on a *performative*

18. Representationalism, for Barad (2007, p. 46) is “[...] the belief in the ontological distinction between representations and that which they purport to represent.” In its reliance on the notion of reflection (the assumed correspondence between the material world and descriptions thereof), representationalism thereby limits itself to the domain of epistemology and forecloses engagements with experience (Barad, 2007, p. 803; Mazzei, 2021, p. 562). In a movement away from a foregrounding of representations, Barad suggests turning attention towards the causal relationship between material-discursive practices and material phenomena so as bring emphasise the entanglement of ontological and epistemological concerns (Barad, 2007, p. 45).

dimension within the context of the studio crit.¹⁹ The studio crit is an interactive pedagogical strategy common to most creative arts programmes. During the studio crit, students are tasked with sharing their work (either in progress or as complete artefacts) with their lecturer as well as their peers (and often to external examiners). The studio crit takes on a discursive format, where students are provided the opportunity to contextualise their work within their broader practice, their ethico-political orientation, as well as the material and processual encounters that lead to its coming-into-being.

As such, the studio crit serves the purpose of, what Carless (2020) identifies as, the need to guide students in the development of *feedback literacies* through coaching and iterative, interactive grapplings with feedback. Feedback, for Carless (2020, p. 144) should not be considered as activities centred on the one-way ‘transmission’ of information from teacher to student, but should rather emphasis the reciprocal nature of learning and the development of internal evaluative judgment capacities. The studio crit performs this role by creating the conditions for multiple readings and diverse interpretations to be shared, as responses are commonly elicited not only from the lecturer but also from peers. However, the master-apprentice model that serves as the inherent foundation for the lecturer-student relationship conditions the studio crit with an underlying performative dimension where attention is awarded not solely to the work being presented but also towards the performance of idealised responses.

19. Performativity, as developed by Judith Butler (1990), exceeds the understanding of performance as the theatrical act of imitation or dramatised expression to describe how identity emerges through activity (or performance) rather than being a transcendental essence. A performative account consequently understands identity as a continuous state of *becoming* that occurs in iterative co-constitution with cultural practices and social norms.

The power dynamic nested in the student-lecturer relationship calls forth a form of behavioural modelling in which peer-respondents might be praised for, or encouraged to respond to artefacts in a manner that mimics the behavioural patterns and vocabulary modelled by their lecturer (as a representative of an established art community).²⁰ Particular performances and vocabularies are rewarded, and where opportunities for response are limited to the typical mode of talking-with-confidence-in-front-of-the-class, certain students are systematically excluded and the enactment of their artistic persona undervalued. Webber refers to this process as a form of acculturation that functions through the reproduction of a disciplinary *habitus* (2005, p. 280).²¹ The studio crit is intended as an inclusive and participatory space in which student-artist identities could be formed through the trial and error of their social participation. Implicit normative criteria, however, persist as a “coercive choreography” of assimilation based on abstract conception of what an Artist is expected to be, commonly personified by the presence of the lecturer (Webber, 2005, p. 280). This notion of implicit behavioural modelling is even more troublesome when considering that the diversity of teaching staff (in South African HEIs) does not always reflect the diversity of the student body (Arbuckle, 2020, p. 140), bringing into question the risk of exclusionary normalising behavioural modelling that urges towards the systematic reproduction of particular forms of socially

20. This is largely due to the tendency for higher education institutions to employ professional creative practitioners as teaching (or part-time teaching) staff. Such lecturers thereby occupy a dual role, as representative of the institution and representatives of the professional domain.

21. The notion of habitus, as conceptualised by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) relates to a series of “internalised dispositions” that are acquired through socialisation and experience (Swartz, 2002, p. 63). Habitus functions as a “matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions” that are acquired through processes of acculturation that prescribe which social behaviours are favourable through systems of social reward (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 95).

and culturally embedded tacit knowledge. As such, individual practices and ways of knowing are productively shaped through normative modelling in ways not necessarily authentic to the situated experience of each student as they work towards integrating formal learning with their broader socio-cultural reality.

In a movement towards response-ability, one might ask how the conditions of the studio crit could be refigured to move away from its foregrounding of normalising responses (or any urges towards unidirectional feedback) towards an opening up of diverse modalities for authentic response. This could include popular practices such as small group discussions, peer-dialogues and written responses, as well as less typical practices such as walking-dialogues, peer-excursions, gift-giving and artistic responses through acts of making. A movement away from normalising assessment practices needs to find ways of responsively adapting to the situated specificity of learning encounters and thus demands resistance to the impulse of generalisation.

5.4. Questioning the quantifying urge of assessment

Proposition: Resist capturing qualitative value through the generalising force of quantification

The first task of the revaluation of value is to uncouple value from quantification. Value must be recognised for what it is: *irreducibly qualitative*. [...] Appealing to transcendent values, [...] only raises the structures of normativity to the absolute.

(Massumi, 2018, p. 4 - emphasis added)

The conflation of use-value with exchange-value is disseminated in higher education through assessment—as a process of generalising economisation according to the myth of equal exchange.²² CRA practices function through the deployment of generic equivalents that equate the outcomes of qualitative learning encounters to quantitative values.²³ The process of quantification serves to flatten the processual nature of learning into static valuations that do not account for the *wild potentialities* that flash-up in occurrence with learning.²⁴ Contrary to the generative potential of situated process-oriented qualitative encounters, conventional assessment practices tend to capture student efforts as static temporal-material configurations without awarding adequate attention to the *process of learning* or to subsequent learning experiences that over-spill assessment results and feedback (Boud & Falchikov, 2007, p. 3). In fact, very little attention is awarded to the *vital excesses* produced by assessment, with feedback and results often only reaching students at the conclusion of a learning unit, when it is ‘too late’ to make an impact (Boud & Falchikov, 2007, p. 4; Boud, 2007, p. 18).²⁵

22. Summative assessment practices reproduce the *myth of equal exchange* in a manner that mirrors the operations of the classical conceptions of the market that take as its foundation the assumption of currency as a *general equivalent* to which all value can be quantitatively measured (Massumi, 2018, p. 6).

23. The superimposition of general equivalents in the South African context occurs through the nested approach set forth by the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (DHET, 2007, p. 6) where discipline-specific specialised criteria (that operate on the level of learning programmes) must be mapped out in accordance to the generic standards set out as level descriptors.

24. See Snaza (2013) *Bewildering Education*.

25. While one might argue that feedback can never be ‘too late’ to contribute towards life-long-learning, receiving feedback at the end of a learning unit is often experienced by students as being out-of-sync with their learning and therefore not received with the necessary curiosity and attention.

**The registering of the qualitative by the quantitative is
by nature reductive.**

(Massumi, 2018, p. 49)

While the inclusion of formative assessment practices offers a means to activate the process of learning, Boud (2007, pp. 14, 17), argues that “taking up formative assessment might not go far enough”²⁶ if not adequately partnered with an emphasis on *sustainable* assessment. Boud (2007, p. 19) proposes a move towards reframing assessment around the purpose of “learning to inform judgements” through the development of students’ capacity to “evaluate evidence, appraise situations and circumstances astutely, to draw sound conclusions and act in accordance with this analysis”. Boud thereby places emphasis on assessment practices that encourage “reflexivity and self-regulation through acknowledgement of the centrality of judgement as a *process*.” (Boud, 2007, p. 20 - emphasis added). The interweaving of reflective pedagogies and feedback processes (such as the studio crit) provide students the opportunity to move towards an embodied state of, what Carless (2015, p. 974) refers to as ‘connoisseurship’ in which evaluative judgement functions as a self-propelled component of embodied creative practice. Within the context of the creative arts, it is widely accepted that knowledge is process-rich and embedded in material-practice (Orr & Shrieve, 2018, p. 19).

Learning can therefore be described as a *continuous and iterative immersion* into the practice of art (Orr & Shrieve, 2018, p. 25)—an immersion that speaks to learning as “embodied, embedded, embrained,

26. Boud critiques the manner in which formative assessment practices such as self- and peer-assessment are commonly conducted as mere procedural mechanisms in service of meeting regulatory and quality assurance measures. In such instances, formative assessment fails to make a substantial contribution to learning (Boud, 2007, p. 22).

encultured, and encoded or located in bodies, routines, brains, dialogues [and] symbols”, without the ability to sensibly separate one particular type of knowing from its entanglement with the others (Orr & Shrieve, 2018, p. 28). The notion of embodied knowledge is essential to understanding the materiality of creative practices, where the prompts for learning occur experientially (through sight, sound, smell, touch, memory, imagination and affective resonance) (Orr & Shrieve, 2018, p. 28). Knowing, in the arts, is (in) formed through these embodied practices as a processual and reflective uncovering of learning-through-making.

Learning as embedded in practice offers a rich potential for the development of students’ capacity for evaluative judgement through an engagement with what Manning describes as *immanent critique*—a process of building the tools for valuation from the process itself [...] as an engagement-with [rather than] a judgement-over” (Manning, 2023b, p. 57). Immanent critique differs from other forms of evaluative feedback in that it resists a reliance on generalised criteria in a movement towards an attunement to how a process ‘leaks’ into thinking-feeling (Manning, 2023b, p. 64).²⁷ Immanent critique engages with what is immediate to the creative process from within its taking-place. Through an ethics of response-ability, students might be guided in the development of their feedback literacy by attend to the ways in which a process or its resulting artefacts *offer immanent feedback* (or responses) by asking questions such as: “which unexpected questions does the work unearth?”, “what is the material urging to do?”,

27. Thinking-feeling for Massumi (2015, p. 94) “is not the thinking or feeling of [...] a particular subject. It pertains more directly to the event, what passes in-between objects and subjects [...] as an event, it is already carrying each (object and subject) beyond itself, making it other than it is just now, and already more than what it was just then.”

“what next step is the process suggesting, in its taking-form?” Such engagements with immanent critique, as a form of feedback, infuses learning with the practice of “*creat[ing] the conditions for practising elsewhere*” by cultivating a response-ability that ensures that a student is never to be without generative feedback, as they develop the rigour to engage process as a co-constitutive force (Manning, 2023b, p. 57 - emphasis added).

A movement towards response-able immanent critique is a movement away from lack-based assessment,²⁸ shifting the parameters of valuation from the domain of generic standards towards that which is personally meaningful to the individual student. When emphasis is directed towards the co-constitutive nature of the creative process students are empowered to draw insight from their own situated position (or socio-economic context) rather than through prescriptive and normative frameworks. Immanent critique thereby opens up to the surplus of what can be measured through standardised criteria and thereby repositions feedback from claims of retrospective judgement to prompts for future explorations in thinking and doing.

5.5. Questioning the finality of assessment (in lieu of a conclusion)²⁹

Proposition: Embrace occurrent value and its improvisational spilling into surplus-value

28. Lack-based assessment relates to the tendency to evaluate student work in relation to standardised outcomes that they did not manage to achieve.

29. In the purposeful avoidance of capturing this article’s value, I choose not to ‘conclude’ with concrete finality but rather to end with an invitation for future propositions in service of continuing the adventure of conceiving value anew.

Emergent collectivity would be valued as the product. By emergent is meant [...] its taking-form [...] This would be an occurrent value [...] the product would be the continuing of the creative process.³⁰

(Massumi, 2018, p. 115)

Work produced by a student might require the lecturer to visually apprehend the work, smell the work, touch the work, participate in the work, click through the work, listen to the work, experience the work or watch the work unfold. The work might be huge, tiny, heavy, strange, temporal, digital, analogue or elusive; in other words, the output forms will be hugely diverse. Grading student work is a multi-sensory practice.

(Orr & Shreeve, 2018, p. 125)

The material configurations composing the evaluation of creative practices are immensely variable and contextually contingent. As such learning-artefacts are never fully knowable, as their legibility is dependent on the conditions through which they are encountered. This poses problems to the manner in which *transparency* is widely purported as a key value of assessment. Yet, one might argue that the valuation of artistic works and practices will always produce ‘gaps’. For Orr and Shreeve (2018, p. 58), such gaps in legibility “are not simply voids waiting for clarity to be poured in; they are not an absence of clarity; they are the presence of ambiguity.” One might therefore question how such gaps might be operationalised so as to harness the *occurrent value of ambiguity* in service of response-able learning.

As an alternative to attempting to reconcile these gaps with out-

30. Occurrent value, for Massumi (2018, p. 115) is processual value in-the-making in its event-form. Occurrent value does not seek to extract a product from the welter of the transversal intra-actions that constitute an event, but rather places value on the self-driving emergent creativity that courses through an event.

come-focused, quantifying and normalising thrust towards transparency in assessment, response-able approaches could condition assessment not as retrospective valuation, but as an event flush with the potential to actualise new and unanticipated forms of knowing and being. One might ask: when composing the conditions of assessment, how might one refigure its orientation so as to explore what might be distilled from the process of learning and assessment that exceeds the capture of representationalist valuation? How might one attune to the gaps of ambiguity—to that which resists linguistic articulation—as seeds for new thoughts, techniques, processes and practices that would otherwise remain beyond the grasp of knowability? How might immanent critique be activated in a manner that transforms the studio crit from an *archiving* of the value of students' efforts to a springboard for future thinkings, makings and becomings?³¹

This article does not suggest that assessment models and conventions should be completely and abruptly overturned, as assessment has far-reaching consequences and, therefore, must be engaged through deep thinking and careful consideration. In stead, this article suggests an exploration of how current conventional modes of assessment and feedback might be oriented as purposeful scaffolds in the development of feedback literacies, evaluative judgement and an attunement to immanent critique. While higher education most certainly needs to be sensitised to the needs and demands of their graduates' potential employers, response-able efforts must be made in order to defend learning from being subsumed into

31. While the scope of this article does not allow for such an exploration, future inquiries (and academic practitioners seeking to engage the occurrent value of the studio crit) could seek to engage Manning's notion of the anarchival and its potential for the generation of process seeds as a means to further advance the generative potential of assessment in art education. (See Manning, 2020a).

mere quantitative engagements with the use-value of learning-artefacts in a manner that foregrounds the reproduction of standardised ways of thinking, doing and making. Higher education, for Buikema and Thiele (2018, p. 35), serves as one of the most important arenas in which practices can be liberated from the oppressive forces of neoliberal hegemonies through counteractions rooted in “*the power to imagine*”. A speculative movement towards a re-evaluation of value must endeavour to engage learning as a form of processual becoming—a becoming that continuously produces qualitative excess. It is here that the epistemological and ontological surplus-value of learning resides. Albeit ridden with gaps filled with ambiguity this more-than of learning might be harnessed through response-able adventures in assessment as a means to expand the value of higher education in ways still unimaginable.

Conclusion

The dissertation set out to question how notions of *response-ability* might be engaged to reconfigure conceptions of value in higher education (HE) research, pedagogy and assessment as a means of resistance to the neoliberal capture of academia. As such, the thesis focussed on three objectives through the framing of sub-questions. The first sub-question asks how a foregrounding of material entanglements might reconfigure educational research practices in ways that promote response-ability—as an ethical orientation towards “collective knowing and doing” (Haraway, 2016b, p. 34) and “being and making-with so that we render each other capable” (Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, p. 882). The second sub-question examined how an expansion of material considerations might shape pedagogical engagements as practices of response-ability. The third sub-question explored how assessment practices might be reconfigured through an attunement to postcapitalist notions of value as a means of fostering response-able assessment. In this conclusion, I want to expand once more on how this dissertation addressed each of these focal points to highlight, firstly, its contribution to scholarly research and, secondly, to offer some propositions for the reconfiguration of HE research, pedagogy and assessment in ways that promote an ethics of response-ability.

Chapters 1 and 2 respond to the first sub-question by exploring response-ability as a modality for inquiry. As such, these chapters provide a

methodological orientation to the thesis in its entirety. Chapter 1 argues for a refusal of methodocentrism by stressing the epistemological violences that stem from technicist reproductions of prescriptive methodologies. In a stance against the representationalist assumptions embedded in Cartesian bifurcation, I turn towards my own material entanglement with *Pityriasis Versicolor*, as a “matterphorical” (Gandorfer & Ayub, 2021, p. 2) entry point to the exploration of response-able inquiry. I am guided by the morphogenesis of *Malassezia* yeast cells to consider methodological approaches as apparatuses of “hyphal intermingling” that affirm the inseparability and contingency of a researcher and their phenomenon of inquiry. As a process concerned with continuous (as opposed to discrete) multiplicities (Bergson, 2014), I conceive of *hyphal middling* as an ethics of inquiry that attunes to the potential and precarity of indeterminacy. By staying with “speculative middles” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 206), as the immanent emergence of the “yet unfinished now” (Kuntz, 2019, p. 77), hyphal middling proposes a mode of inquiry that diverges from the centring of prescriptive methodological procedures and their tendency for reproducing normative assumptions. Instead, my framing of inquiry as a process of material entanglement develops from a kinship to the notion of “*parrhesia*”—the performative enactment of truth-making as a practice of becoming otherwise (Foucault, 2010; Kuntz, 2021b). Parrhesia, as explicated in this chapter offers an ontological orientation that is made manifest by the affirmation of one’s co-constitutive material entanglements as a state of continuous situated emergence. As such, parrhesia is not concerned with unveiling some previously unknown truth but rather seeks to unsettle exclusionary hegemonies by engaging with the surplus of what pre-exists inquiry as legitimated

forms of intelligibility. By emphasising the political importance of material entanglements, this chapter offers an orientation to the practice of inquiry that seeks to expand conceptions of knowledge production in ways that are guided by an ethical commitment towards a future grounded in practices of knowing differently.

Chapter 2 of this thesis continues my exploration of non-normative orientations to inquiry by asserting, once more, the importance of attending to the co-constitutive nature of material entanglements. In this chapter, I challenge the representationalist assumptions that scaffold normative understandings of observation, interpretation and articulation as modalities of research. As this chapter's central contribution, I propose the *cripqueering of method* as a methodological orientation that attends to the relational richness of research events by resisting the centring of presupposed subject/object relations. Emerging from a diffractive engagement with crip and queer theory, cripqueering aligns inquiry to the generativity of queer disidentification (Muñoz, 1999) and the nomadic transversality of posthuman becomings (Braidotti, 2011). Through an affirmation of neuroqueerness as the (often) unaccounted-for surplus to normalised humanist identities and ideals, cripqueering attends to what Manning (2020) refers to as “autistic perception” and “autistic voicing” and what Yergeau (2018) conceives of as the “demi-rhetoricity” of neuroqueerness.

Autistic perception offers cripqueer inquiry an ecological modality of “errant”-sensing (Glissant, 2010)—as the more-than of ‘distanced’ observation—that moves beyond normative habits of categorisation, classification and hierarchical ordering. As such, an attunement to autistic perception proposes an attitude of curiosity in its engagement with the thick multiplic-

ity of experience not yet parsed into pre-existing frameworks of intelligibility. As a processual modality that resists claims to universal certainty, autistic perception engages meaning as co-composed and distributed *in* the world rather than being interior to a knowing subject. The cripqueering of method through an avowel of *autistic voicing* and the “*queer rhetoric*” (Yergeau, 2018) of autistic paralinguistic expressions (commonly referred to as ‘stimming’) sensitises inquiry to relational modes of expression that exceed the limitations of representational language. In opposition to pathology-oriented discourse that positions involuntary bodily expressions as dysfunctions of the autistic bodymind, cripqueering proposes an affirmative stance that engages intuitive bodily practices as generative modes of meta-communicative inventiveness. Meaning-making practices, when approached through the cripqueering of method, therefore echo the need for response-able inquiry to align with an ethics of immanent middling, as is suggested previously in Chapter 1.

In shifting my focus from research practices to pedagogies, the second sub-question of this thesis concerns the material entanglement of pedagogical practices by considering acts of learning as “practice[s] of engagement with, and as part of the world” (Barad, 2007, p. 133). In both Chapters 3 and 4, I experiment with a practice of *writing-with* educational encounters (rather than about them) as a means of attending to the embodied and materially embedded nature of learning-becoming (in Chapter 3) and the affective sociality of encounters with study (in Chapter 4). Chapter 3 commences with the proposition: *engage learning as an experience—through the processual potentialities of its in-act*. By enriching Freirian conceptions of critical pedagogy—as liberatory processes of re-

flection and action *on* the world (Freire, 2018, p. 87)—with an attunement to the material entanglement of body-space-time *in* the world, this chapter poses pedagogical response-ability in relation to the “*agencement*” (Manning, 2016, p. 123) of learning encounters. By engaging *agencement* as the processual and transversal diffusion of agency inside events, this chapter conceives of learning as the performative unfolding of relations of affecting-and-being-affected—a process I term *learning-becoming*. By reading Barad’s conception of “posthuman performativity” (2003) through Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of immanence (1987) and the process philosophy of Whitehead (1978), I propose learning-becoming as differentiated yet relational iterative singularities of embodied coming-to-know within the inact of learning. The conceptual figuration of response-able pedagogy is explored, in this chapter, through encounters with *affective cartographies and emergent choreographies*. My inquiries with students occur at first through experiments with mapping as performative encounters with space-making. We use mapping as a practice with which to perform ‘our’ co-constitution-with the relational unfolding of ‘our’ entanglement with/in specific milieus. As such, ‘our’ recurring enactments of “inefficient mapping” (Knight, 2021) amount to an engagement with knowledge not as given or prescribed but as encountered, experienced and produced—always-already in co-becoming relation with the terrain being explored through our particular body-space-time “*intra-actions*” (Barad, 2007). In addition to my inquiry-with experiential cartographic encounters, I draw attention to the choreographic dimension of dynamic bodies inside the classroom space to emphasise the generative potential of the middling of pedagogical events. Bodies, as is argued in this chapter, do not simply occupy spaces but generate them

while simultaneously constituting subjectivities through the performative becoming-with of embodied experience. This chapter's exploration of bodies-in-motion affirms Manning's reading of knowledge as "active in experience [...] across the bodying where world and body co-comprise a welling ecology" (2016, p. 116). Through its various "intraventions" (Lieberman & Altés, 2015, p. 2), this chapter comes to understand learning-becoming as a process of performative *editing* that urges towards novel modes of knowing and being by co-composing with the emergent affective tonalities of the entanglement of body-space-time. An ethical foregrounding of learning-becoming thereby queers learning as the reproduction of pre-figured understanding and positions pedagogies in response-able relation to an emergent modality of making-with and becoming-with the world through an attitude of curiosity and attentive wonder.

Chapter 4 further expands my exploration of embodied pedagogies by considering the normalising limitations of learning-centred discourse within neoliberal HE. In this chapter, I deepen my problematisation of subject-centred and teleological conceptions of learning by exploring the *practice of study* as a conceptual figuration that productively attends to the social, political, embodied and affective dimensions of HE. I identify generative resonances between feminisms, postphilosophies, and Moten and Harney's conception of "black study" (2013) to propose response-able reading, response-able sensing, and response-able storying as modalities of response-able study. I explicate response-able study—a practice embedded in the co-constitutive emergence of (more-than-human) relational sociality—as a generative counterpoint from which to challenge the reproduction of exclusionary neoliberal monohumanist hegemonies in HE. By

conceiving of HE as a “knowledge ecology” (Schildermans, 2021a) rather than a knowledge economy, my writing-with concrete practices of study emphasises the value of “[i]nterdependency [instead of categorisation], indeterminacy [instead of pre-figured objectives and norms], generativity [instead of extractive productivity], and mutual co-becoming [instead of transactional exchanges]” (Schildermans, 2021a, p. 19). As in the previous chapter, I again draw attention to the material distribution of agency as a means to re-think the politics of difference. This affirmation of *ecologies of relation*—as the co-compositional force of study—offers an antidote to the liberal centring of individual identities as entrepreneurial subjects of knowledge acquisition. As a practice that is “constitutively collective” (Masschelein, 2017, p. 42), I conceive of response-able engagements with “study” (Harney & Moten, 2013) as onto-epistemologically transformative, materially embedded, explorative future-oriented yearnings motivated by matters of collective care. Allowing an openness to determine what needs to be learned together (Harney, 2018) binds ‘us’ through shared affective wonder without reducing ‘us’ to a generalised assumed uniformity. As a practice of “concrete hope” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 207), study, when approached with response-ability promotes the collective exploration of the potential for difference already prescient in the co-composing sociality of a pedagogical encounter.

Chapters 3 and 4 collectively argue for attuning to material entanglements and their processual relationality as a means of reconfiguring pedagogical practices in ways that promote response-ability. In its final chapter (Chapter 5), this thesis, however, acknowledges that response-able pedagogies demand response-able assessment practices in order to sus-

tain an attitude of critical refusal of HE's salient reproduction of neoliberal hegemonies. In an exploration of my third and final sub-question, Chapter 5, therefore, concerns the central role of assessment in determining structures of value in HE. In this chapter, I write-with Massumi's *Postcapitalist Manifesto: 99 Theses on the Reevaluation of Value* (2018) as a companion for speculative engagement with the potential for delinking (or at least distancing) assessment practices from HE's obedient relation to labour markets. This chapter offers the following four propositions as lures for thinking-with postcapitalist fabulations for engaging assessment differently: (1) embrace the processual beyond of use-value; (2) resist the pull towards normalisation; (3) refrain from capturing qualitative value through the generalising force of quantification; (4) embrace "occurrent value" (Massumi, 2018) and its improvisational spilling into surplus-value. Jointly, these propositions argue for an approach to assessment that attends to the processual unfolding of emergent ways of knowing. By proposing an orientation where assessment functions as a generative motor for *critical process* rather than a modality of a posteriori judgment, these propositions for response-able assessment reevaluate the value of normalised concepts such as measurable outcomes, standardised criteria, quantitative evaluation, feedback and transparency. By re-affirming the purpose of learning programmes in the creative arts as concerned with the facilitation of new critical ways of thinking and doing, I support my assertion that these normative conceptions of assessment fail to account for the processual nature of artistic practices and their co-constitutive relation to the generative value of material entanglements. While written with pertinent reference to the assessment of creative art practices, my hope is that this chapter might

offer meaningful linkages with HE assessment in general so as to stimulate broader explorations with speculative practices that might enrich assessment cultures with notions of response-ability.

When considering the overarching question of my thesis that asks how notions of response-ability might be engaged to reconfigure conceptions of value in higher education research, pedagogy and assessment, my dissertation contributes to re-imagining HE practices in a number of ways. Firstly, as I have repeatedly shown, response-ability—as an ethical concern for mutual responsiveness (that includes human and more-than-human others)—enriches HE practices by emphasising the co-constitutive value of relational material entanglements in the production of knowledge. Response-able educational practices, therefore, offer productive resistance to the neoliberal urge towards generalised standards of judgment by untethering knowledge practices from exclusionary frameworks that delimit acceptable knowing to the reproduction of what is already known. As a counter to the (neo) coloniality of monohumanism (that prioritises the hegemony of Eurowestern knowledge traditions and practices), response-able explorations of HE produce generative openings for knowing differently in ways that promote an affirmative stance towards difference. Secondly, this thesis positions educational practices as ontologically transformative processes of “mutual co-becoming” (Schildermans, 2021a, p. 19). The ethical foregrounding of response-ability requires active and iterative resistance to the centring of assumed unitary subjecthood and demands the fostering of ecological orientations that attend to knowledge practices as processual and interdependent relations.

When considering the implications of this dissertation within the

context of the situated specificity of the Cape Town Creative Academy, where my interventions took place and are situated as knowledge-related praxis, I conclude with an acknowledgement that the work of response-ability requires the patient and continuous fostering of the sociality of study. What is needed are care-full ways of co-carrying the labour, affect, and risks of thinking and doing HE practices differently. Transformative reconfigurings of HE are not achievable from the 'distanced' position of institutional management or administration, but instead rely on collective and response-able explorations-with students, colleagues, technologies, spaces and other material entities. It is my hope that this thesis will contribute to the educational practices of its readers by asserting the value of an ongoing educational commitment to enabling mutual responsiveness as an ethical grounding from which to forge practices that are oriented towards the affirmation of a future grounded in difference.

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Curriculum Vitae

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Qualifications:

MA (Visual Studies) Cum Laude, Stellenbosch University, 2014 - 2015

BA Hons (Visual Art) University of Pretoria, 2006 - 2009

BA (Visual Communication) Open Window, 2004 - 2008

Courses:

Posthuman Ethics in the Anthropocene, University of Utrecht, Summer School, 2017

Teaching Experience:

Academic Head, Cape Town Creative Academy, 2012 - present.

Head of Department: Communication Design, Open Window, 2010 - 2012.

Part-Time Lecturer: Visual Culture, Open Window, 2007 - 2009.

Research Supervision:

Research Supervisor, NQF Level 8, Cape Town Creative Academy, 2023 - present.

Research Supervisor, NQF Level 7, Cape Town Creative Academy, 2014 - present.

Research Supervisor, NQF Level 8, Open Window, 2010 - 2012.

Associations:

Member of the Academic Board, Design Academy of Fashion, 2021 - present.

Member of the Research Unit, Open Window University, Zambia, 2020 - present.

Associate, Creative Leadership Consultancy, 2015 - 2024.

Member of Platform 6 Design Educators Guild, 2014 - 2017.

Publications:

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2023: Propositions for a Counter-economy of Assessment: Adventures in the Assessment of Creative Arts in Higher Education. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the South*, 7(3), 25-45. <https://doi.org/10.36615/sotls.v7i3.333>

2023: Choreographic Cartographies with-in Learning: Towards response-ability in Higher Education Pedagogy. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the South*, 7(1), 101-128. <https://doi.org/10.36615/sotls.v7i1.298>

2022: Writing-with a Parasite Dis/Colouring one's Skin: Towards Inquiries of Change, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 29(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004221096848>

2017: Negotiating difference, imagining intimacy: The role of 'intermediate' racial masculinity in Egoli: Place of Gold, *Communicatio* 42(4), pp. 11-26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2016.1240700>

2015: We were looking for our men in the faces of stars: Soap opera and Afrikaner masculinities in Egoli: Place of Gold, *Image and Text* 26, pp.92-110. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC184026>

Conference Papers:

2024: Cripqueering Method in Posthuman Educational Research, *Intersectional Materialisms: Diversity in Creative Industries, Methods and Practices*, 12th Annual New Materialisms Conference, Maynooth University, Ireland.

2018: Teaching at the End of the World, presented with L. Engelbrecht at *Beyond Change: Questioning the Role of Design in Times of Global Transformation*. Swiss Design Network Research Summit, Basel Switzerland.

2015: The Pater and the Player: Negotiating Afrikaner Masculinity in Egoli: place of gold. *Intimacy at a Distance: Television at Home and Away*. University of Cape Town.