

Editorial

**Introduction to CriSTaL Special Issue:
Thinking with ocean/s for reconceptualising scholarship in higher education**

There are growing moves in higher education to reconceptualise scholarship in contemporary contexts. Located in a wide body of critical work including feminist new materialism, posthumanism, decolonial and indigenous thinking, efforts to reimagine and reconfigure pedagogical and research practices in higher education are proliferating. Scholars are increasingly challenging the dominant colonial, patriarchal, eurowestern logics which neoliberal, corporatised academia has intensified.

The #Rhodesmustfall and #feesmustfall student decolonial protests from 2015 and the more recent COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated already existing inequalities in South African higher education, have amplified the urgency for transformation in the sector. Emphasis is increasingly directed towards more radical decolonial efforts to rethink the underlying logics and normative practices of local and globalised neoliberal higher education. This has raised important questions regarding knowledge production in and beyond the South African context, particularly in relation to the use and value of eurowestern theorists in local research, pedagogies and curricula. On the other hand, there are currently also many productive moves that employ alternative forms of academic scholarship – located in diverse thinking and approaches including feminist decolonial and indigenous approaches, queer theory, feminist new materialisms, critical posthumanism, as well as human geography, non-representationalist theory and the work of Deleuze and Guattari, amongst others. Using the latter theorists in particular, there has been a focus on cartography, schizoanalysis, corporeal theorising, rhizomatic learning, and nomadic thought in socially just pedagogical praxis.

These junctures and innovative genealogies and methodologies are directed towards more precise engagements with transformation toward accessible, Africanised and decolonised curricula, and research agendas and practices. Justice scholarship, which includes research and pedagogical practices, is increasingly engaging novel, creative, experimental ways of doing and making knowledge differently, that have catalysed the use of postqualitative, embodied, affective, and mobile methodologies. Such research and pedagogical practices trouble the taken-for-granted neoliberal capitalist and anthropocentric notion of individualised subjectivity. They also highlight the need for accountability and responsibility for others and the planetary condition (Braidotti, 2019).

Emerging methodologies such as Slow scholarship (Bozalek, 2017, 2021; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018; Martell, 2014; Mountz, et al., 2015), wild methodologies (Jickling, et al., 2018), walking methodologies (Arora, 2019; Goulding, 2019; Leane, 2019; Neimanis & Phillips, 2019; O'Neill & Einashe, 2019; Pratt & Johnston, 2019; Somerville, et al., 2019; Springgay & Truman, 2018, 2019) as well as indigenous healing walking practices (Wong, 2013), swimming and other



watery methodologies (Boon, et al., 2018; Ingersoll, 2016; Jue, 202, Probyn, 2016; Shefer, 2021; Shefer & Bozalek, 2022) and other embodied, affective methodologies, exemplify some of the many efforts towards reconceptualising and reconfiguring scholarly practices. Feminist, social justice, and other critical pedagogies are also proliferating in South African contexts, as they are globally, and are also located within these larger shifts in higher education that are directed towards change and justice. Indeed, many examples of such local and global initiatives have been documented in CRiSTaL (see for example, Agherdien, 2023; Apoifis, 2022; Bozalek & Romano, 2023; Carstens, 2020; Costandius, Brand & De Villiers, 2020; De Freitas, 2020; Lingis, 2022; Lorange & Brooks, 2022; Manning, 2020; Motala, 2020; Nomdo, 2023; Nxumalo, 2020; Romano, 2020; Shaughnessy, 2022; Taylor, et al., 2023; Zournazi, 2022; Zournazi & Hayles, 2022).

The papers in this special issue emanated from a colloquium entitled 'Thinking with ocean/s for reconceptualising scholarship in higher education' that took place on 21 October 2022, in Simonstown, Cape Town. The colloquium, hosted by CriSTaL, was geared towards a focus on thinking with water and oceans and specifically included researchers, teachers, activists, and artists who were thinking-with oceanic scholarly methodologies. As a journal, we had never before hosted a colloquium for possible papers in a special edition. The intention was to familiarise potential contributors with the focus and requirements of the writing and submission process for CriSTaL and to provide a sounding board for draft papers from the editors and fellow presenters.

The call for papers invited prospective authors to examine how the relationship between higher education pedagogies and thinking with ocean/s could expand and enliven the higher education landscape that we find ourselves in today. Focussing specifically on thinking-with oceanic scholarly methodologies in relation to higher education pedagogies, the call took its inspiration from the growing body of work, which we alluded to above, on Slow scholarship, post-qualitative, embodied, and mobile methodologies such as swimming, walking, and foraging (see Martin et al., this issue) as well as hydrofeminist thinking (Neimanis, 2012, 2013, 2017a, 2017b). A further intention was to provide opportunities to question and reconfigure conventional scholarly practices in teaching and learning in higher education (e.g., reading, writing, mentoring and supervising); new processual ways of doing pedagogy which includes epistemology (knowing), being/becoming (ontology) and ethics (what matters) in relation to the ocean.

In the call for papers, the following six entangled themes were identified for prospective authors to engage with:

- Thinking with material-affective encounters with water and ocean/s for justice scholarship;
- Engaging with sea and beach as a hydrofeminist, ethico-political and hauntological scholarship;
- Pedagogies of care in the hydrocommons to understand and address the injustices of the apartheid and colonial pasts and their continuities in the present;
- Transgressive pedagogies, research-creation and indigenous restorative storytelling through engagements with ocean/s;

- Oceanic methodologies as alternative embodied, affective scholarly practices within the larger project of reconceptualising knowledge;
- Experimental writing-thinking with oceanic swimming;
- Aesthetics, art-making and storytelling practices for alternative scholarship in and through ocean/s across temporalities, modalities and disciplines; and
- Walking, foraging and other disruptive, indigenous, activist and knowledge-making practices in the littoral spaces of beach.

In this special issue of *CriSTaL*, we include five of the papers that were presented at the Colloquium. What follows is a brief overview of each of them.

In a paper entitled 'An octo-aesthetic figuration for learning in times of crisis' Delphi Carstens responds to the call by thinking with the octopus as an octo-aesthetic figuration that reclaims 'vision' and 'objectivity' from the disembodied all-knowing gaze of 'Man'. To do this, he queers the central, and often unquestioned positions of privilege accorded to this viewpoint in humanist education systems and, using the eight independently thinking arms of the octopus as a guide, deploys eight interrelated conceptual thinking aids in order to outline the relevance of a multimodal aesthetics to higher education in times of individual, social and environmental crisis. The first tentacle, schizoanalysis (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), challenges long-standing reductionist paradigms that see learning and thought as something that involves only certain individualised human(ised) brains and bodies. Following on from this, the second deals with pedagogies of bewilderment (Snaza, 2013), that emphasise how other-than-human perspectives and agencies impact the ways we think, parse, or make sense of the world. Inspired by Deborah Bird Rose's (2022) notion of shimmer, the third arm expands on the importance of developing a capacity to see, experience and participate in nature's ancestral power, that brings forth experiential knowledge to the beholder. Felix Guattari's (2000) conceptualisation of ecosophy as a counter to the numbing effects of mass media and humanising educational systems finds expression in the octopus's fourth arm. Arguing for the cultivation of heterogenesis, Guattari calls for pedagogies that cultivate fluid subjects that do not succumb to the passivity and the entropic rise of anthropocentric hubris. Following this, the fifth arm thinks with Amanda Boetzkes' (2015: 272) and Maggie Mer Roberts' (2020) invitation to engage with ethico-aesthetic projects that expand our environmental affordances in ways that enact new forms of visuality and are mobilised around 'ecologicity' or 'environmental recognition'. The sixth arm thinks with Margulis's (1998) ethico-aesthetic figuration of the animal as holobiont that visualises the animal as a continually becoming assemblage comprising entangled, yet independently functioning parts nested within one another, each embroiled in diverse interspecies exchanges with other holobiont assemblages in perpetual proprioceptive ecosystem exchanges and flows (Haraway, 2017). The seventh attends to Stacy Alaimo's (2016) trans-corporeality that critiques anthropocentrism and its associated damaging effects, emphasising instead how humans are inextricably enmeshed with the material world, and how educators need to foreground this in curriculum design, classroom discussions and research practices (Kuznetski & Alaimo, 2020). Finally, the eighth arm of the

octo-aesthetic figuration introduces Elizabeth Povinelli's (2016) notion of geontology that troubles the life/non-life divide lying at the heart of liberal humanism and capitalism. Carstens argues that there is much to learn from octopuses' adaptability and survival of five mass extinctions.

Aaniyah Martin, Joanne Peers and Theresa Giorza's article 'Meandering as learning: Co-creating care with Camissa¹ Oceans in higher education' brings into conversation how Slow scholarship and research-creation pedagogical praxes might generatively disrupt scholarly practices which remain entrenched in and reproduce colonial, anthropocentric and patriarchal systems. Thinking with the hydrological cycle as a figure for learning and teaching in Higher Education, the paper tracks three pedagogical interventions in which the authors and Bachelor of Education students, seek to surface pedagogies which deal with global human and planetary injustices, issues of care and our relationship with the waters of Camissa and the world. The paper engages emergent and regenerative care practices that are culturally sensitive to how Black and Brown bodies were implicated in the history of dispossession, segregation and genocide. In foregrounding collaborative inquiry as a counter to settler heritage, that is predicated on extractive practice and individual gain, the authors and students meander and learn together as a response to the trauma of apartheid by opening up time, space and place for alternative ways of making and imparting meaning. They document numerous practices and processes that include painting, foraging, and baking kelp lasagne, as well as singing and dancing. They also participate in the co-creation and repair of a hydro-rug made from waste materials found in the ocean. The authors show how these Slow response-able pedagogies open possibilities for thinking, making, and learning differently in Higher Education.

In their paper, 'Thinking with/in surfing: Podcasting as public pedagogy and scholarship in/for the global South', authors Glen Thompson and Karen Graaff introduce their The Deep Duck Dive Podcast that engages with the oceanic turn and oceanic publics in the global South. As co-hosts of the podcast, Thompson and Graaff address the social, political and environmental issues that matter within surfing as a sport, lifestyle and culture. Presenting their approach to podcasting as a form of public pedagogy and public scholarship, they set out to increase the accessibility of scholarship and research on surfing and popularise it, by creating an alternative space for conversations with those outside of the academy, thus disrupting the model of the researcher as knowledge 'expert'. Their article tracks the process of conceptualisation to realisation of the podcast, as a thinking with/in surfing, and includes the transcript of the pilot episode of The Deep Duck Dive, in which they situate the podcast, and reflect on their positionalities as scholars and surfers. Their intention is to create dialogues with and contribute to the intellectual currents of hydrocolonialism, hydrofeminism and critical surf studies, and to open up their soundwork as an alternative public pedagogical practice within a justice-to-come public scholarship.

Abigail Wiese's article entitled '*Lalela uLwandle* (Listen to the Sea): Interdisciplinary approaches and embodied engagements in thinking with ocean/s' is a self-reflexive engagement on the performance, *Lalela uLwandle* (Listen to the Sea, 2019), an immersive theatre and public

¹Camissa, meaning 'place of sweet waters', was the Khoi people's name for Cape Town.

storytelling experience created by the South African collective, Empatheatre. Wiese explores the performance in an affective and embodied way, by noting and annotating her personal reflections on how the performance contributes to oceanic knowledge production designed to facilitate agentic engagements with pressing oceanic health issues. She focuses on the affective capacity of empathetheatre as methodology, indigenous storytelling, material aesthetics and research-creation, all of which encourages the audience to focus on certain feelings with greater attention and fellow feeling. Positioned in a circular arrangement together with the actors, audience members co-watch and co-experience the performance, opening a potential to see anew histories, people and the more-than-human in ways they might have previously been blind to, or failed to understand. Wiese shows how *Lalela uLwandle* establishes affective oceanic connections that provoke audiences to acknowledge their own precarious positions in relation to their historical entanglements with the ocean. She considers how the performative space is conducive to thinking about generative and agentic pedagogies and suggests that such spaces be used to support transformative teaching approaches, through affective-witnessing, dialogue, autobiography, and the positioning of vulnerable bodies in relation to each other. In 2021, Marion Stevens began her PhD journey, which coincided with her initiation into wild water swimming. In this experimental piece, entitled 'Diffractive swimming: learning through a Robben Island crossing', Stevens documents the slow process of preparing her mind and body through regular practice in preparation for the 7,5 cold open water swim from Robben Island to Big Bay, Bloubergstrand in Cape Town. She shows that while swimming and writing may be regarded as separate initiatives, her time in the sea enabled a deep, slow, focused and diffractive process in which her thoughts, connections, obstacles, engagements, relationships, memories and writing flowed with the human embodiment of oceanic watery swimming. Her subjective memories of lost friends and public figures, such as thoughts about political leaders who were imprisoned on the island she swam from, and other hauntologies awoken in South African oceans, provided insight and a comfort for her as she engaged with survival in this long and challenging crossing. Marion's piece also flags the power of thinking with water for particular scholarly projects as Marion found herself thinking differently about her research and long activist engagement with reproductive health and gender justice while swimming.

This collection of papers is a testament to the potential that experimental spaces that undo authoritative and pathologising presenting, reviewing and feedback processes – such as the colloquium held for this special issue – might provide prospective authors (Shefer, et al., 2023). The intention was to create an opportunity for the editors and prospective authors of this special issue, to meet face-to-face in a supportive environment 'in which the more-than of the shared encounter might augment the experience of writing' (Bozalek & Romano, 2023: 15). Prospective authors were able to read their draft papers, give and receive feedback on these and initiate scholarly communities around the common focus and concerns of the special issue. Care was taken to ensure that the reading and giving feedback on papers was conducted in a spirit of rendering each other capable, rather than critique. Importantly, the venue in Simonstown, close

to and with views of the ocean, was specifically chosen to thicken the experience of thinking together with oceanic swimming. As Bozalek and Romano note,

The venue's proximity to the ocean also allowed participants to think with ocean/s throughout the event which included sunrise and sunset plunges into the icy waters where thoughts were taken for a swim. The practice of swimming with ocean/s not only decentred the human subject, but foregrounded relational ethical entanglements of ocean and higher education. (2023: 15)

Colloquium participants reported appreciation for the process and we encourage editors of future special issues in this, and other journals, to host similar generative and caring events. It is not only the 'output' of the published article that contributes to reconceptualising scholarship, but also the entangled processes of relational engagements in the (re)making of justice scholarship that we value. We see this as being in line with CriSTaL's aims to 'provide a stimulating and challenging forum for contributors to theorise, trouble, reconfigure and re-imagine higher education teaching and learning practice [and] encourage authors to be creative, take risks, [and] think "otherwise"... framed by a sensibility towards social justice' .

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