

**Meandering as learning:
Co-creating care with Camissa Oceans in higher education**

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Headwater¹/Abstract

This paper meanders with students from the Centre for Creative Education to understand care and our relationship with Camissa². The authors explore Slow scholarship and research-creation frameworks that disrupt practices which remain entrenched in colonial, anthropocentric and patriarchal systems. Apartheid is felt by Black and Brown³ bodies through exclusions from the ocean and other spaces. This paper explores how enquiries and innovations open spaces for lost care practices to be re-membered.

Keywords: Care, Slow scholarship, Higher education, water, hydrocommons, justice

¹ The headwaters form the source of a river. Throughout this paper we reference the hydrological cycle and a river more specifically as a figure for learning and teaching in Higher Education. That is to say that the river flows from the headwaters to the ocean but the course may be disrupted along the way by human and more-than-human factors and the end destination is not necessarily the ocean. The hydrocommons are our natural water bodies – ocean, rivers and wetlands – which form part of the hydrological cycle and are in a continuous relationship with the atmosphere. Broadly speaking, the concept of the commons refers to any creations of nature or culture that we inherit jointly or freely; and furthermore, a common implies not only common use of a resource, but also common responsibility (Neimanis, 2009).

² Camissa, meaning 'place of sweet waters', was the Khoi people's name for Cape Town. The city once had seven rivers, including the Camissa River, and 36 springs, all of which were channelled underground and drained out to the sea as the city expanded.

³ We use the words Brown and Black bodies to distinguish them from Black Indigenous People of Colour because of the North American framing and how it has been imposed in a South African context. Biko's ideas of Black consciousness are more suitable and fitting for this work because we are situated in an African context. However, in the South African context specifically, we want to specify and name both Black and Brown bodies because Apartheid laws separated them purposefully and there are racial divides that exist amongst these groups today. This is significant as the majority of the students and authors are Brown.



Tributary⁴/Introduction

Fourth year Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase students from the Centre for Creative Education (CCE), meander alongside the authors⁵ as we learn from each other and co-become with the process of this watery body of work that refreshingly re-connects to the ocean and remembering our ancestry. Before we, the authors, begin at the tributary of this meandering river of collaborative meaning-making, we need to explain how and why we have written the paper the way we have. This will allow you, as the reader, to meander with us as we find our way with the students and the more-than-human entities we are entangled with, and as we reconfigure conventional scholarly practices in learning and teaching in Higher Education (HE). We use the figuration of a river and the hydrological cycle to describe how we work with the students and are led by what emerges from the events we as authors co-create with them.

The authors draw upon the concepts of Slow⁶ scholarship and embodied/convivial/generative research enquiries, such as painting, foraging, cooking, singing, and mending, as an entanglement of environmental and social justice. These embodied enquiries open space through which stories and experiences from the past that have been erased and forgotten can be revealed and brought to the surface. The binary of theory and practice is challenged and the paper intentionally begins with the practice and theory follows after to make the point that 'practice is in fact continuously and already doing and enacting educational theories.' (Lenz Taguchi, 2010: x). Additionally, footnotes are deliberately used as an act to draw the reader into the bottom of the river, the forgotten or erased space, by explaining more of the theory in the footnotes rather than in the main body of the paper where the focus is on the practice. The reader should also note how the authors use footnotes for Figures 1 and 2 to describe what the reader may not be seeing in the Figure. The footnote for each figure is a deliberate act because there are so many more stories or explanations for this figure than what is revealed here; the figure becomes an act of non-representation (Vannini, 2015). The paper is written in the present tense as a staying with present time and a re-minding that the past is

⁴ Throughout this paper the headings refer to phases of the hydrological cycle replacing traditional headings such as Abstract (Headwaters), Introduction (Tributary), Enquiries (Confluence), Discussion (Delta), and Conclusion (Ebb and Flow). The end goal is not necessarily the ocean for this river, because the river is part of the bigger hydrological cycle which is continuously in motion and this is a figure for the continuous learning with the authors as 'teachers' and the students as 'learners' and how they always learn with each other.

⁵ We deliberately introduce the authors later in this paper because we are disrupting the teacher/learner binary that exists in traditional learning and teaching environments. The authors (as teachers) and learners are learning from each other.

⁶ Slow scholarship sits within feminist new materialism and posthumanism and is based on ideas of process philosophers such Whitehead (1947). It is a proposal for alternative modes of doing academia and pedagogy in response to the current modus operandi of outcomes, managerialism and corporatisation of these spheres of life (Bozalek, 2021).

present in 'now' time, especially given our post-apartheid context, as well as the ghosts of the Bantu Education⁷ Act 1953 that haunts us today (Motala & Bozalek, 2022).

There were many motivations that informed the development of this module in a way that undo assumptions employed in HE that focus on learning to teach. In South Africa, many young education graduates are confronted with diverse socio-economic realities in schools. This means that education students should be supported and equipped with understanding their own journeys within the South African schooling system to become more attuned to the children in the classrooms. As authors we work to trouble the positioning of social and natural science, art, and literacy as separate, foregrounding relational⁸ approaches to understanding water and how we care for our environment.



Figure 1: A drawing of an *Alikreuke*⁹ mollusc or snail found on our False Bay coastline as a figuration for the Slow scholarship enquiry.

The snail shell shape in Figure 1 drawn by Dr Dylan McGarry¹⁰ denotes the non-linear way in which the enquiries continue to engage (in spiralling circles of iteration) with the students and the authors beyond the chronological Higher Education timetable. Furthermore, it is a reference

⁷ The education was aimed at training Black and Brown children for manual labour and menial jobs that the government deemed suitable for those of their race. It was explicitly intended to inculcate the idea that Black and Brown people were to accept being subservient to white South Africans (Bauer, 2018).

⁸ Relational approaches acknowledge posthumanist ontologies of already being connected, implicated and response-able. The role that materials and place plays is significant to how we relate to each other and our understanding of each other. These become clear in the events described later in the paper.

⁹ Aaniyah has since learnt from her friend Traci Kwaai who is engaged with the Kalk Bay fishing community (where the latter grew up) that it is also called a "gup". Reminder: The footnote for each figure in this paper is a deliberate act because there are so many more stories or explanations for this figure than what it reveals here.

¹⁰ Dr Dylan McGarry is Aaniyah's co-supervisor (doula) for her doctoral research who describes himself as a scholar activist-pracademic multimedia artist.

to slowness and Slow scholarship explained later in this paper. The blue treble clef music note is reminiscent of a meandering river and the importance of singing which emerges in the paper. These framings of care, response-ability (McGarry, 2013; Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017) and Slow pedagogies are woven into our accounts of practice, in the same way that the water flows in the river and finds its way to the ocean (which is not the end of the hydrological cycle), and is constantly changing shape and being affected by human and more-than-human entities.

There were three intra-active¹¹ events, namely painting, foraging and hydro-rugging, hosted by the authors as *response-able* participants with the students. The event in this case, is based on a relational ontology that holds that entities and individuals or their attributes do not pre-exist or are not prior to relationships but come into being through relationships (Manning, 2016). The event is seen as the primary unit of the real, making itself felt somehow in the immediacy of the moment and that creates an emergent ecology, 'a something doing' (Massumi, 2015: 152), which is not limited to human doing (Bozalek & Taylor, 2022: 66). This means that we cannot know in advance what an event can do, because we cannot predict how the bodies within the event will respond. The event is a worlding of which we (the authors and students) are part, and that takes us along with it and co-composes and creates conditions for potential openings and creativity (Bozalek & Taylor, 2022; Manning 2016). *Response-ability* refers to the ability or capacity to respond and listen (Barad, 2007; McGarry, 2013; Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017). Response-ability is elaborated upon later in the paper and put to work in the events with the students.

The painting event introduced the students to how our human earthly survival is dependent on the health of our oceans and other species – every second breath we take comes from healthy oceans (Tsing, 2015; Terranova, 2016; World Economic Forum, 2019). The event takes us through a deep dive using breath to reiterate how healthy oceans ensure that we are able to survive. Together with our breath we inhale and exhale with painting rhythmic strokes of blue to penetrate our subconscious and think with water. We beckon images and figures that evoke feelings of the ocean for us and our connection with it. Breathing is one of the organic processes that we can control or moderate through slowing down the breath. It is an involuntary process; however, breathing is connected to the force of life within each of us. Related to ideas of drowning and survival, the breathing exercise is a meditative staying with the breath and its meaning for human survival. The awareness that healthy oceans enable our ongoing survival is the focus of the practice and is an embodied experiential pedagogy. These 'Watery letters to our subconscious' are the artefacts of this event and were exhibited at the Elephant in the Zoom

¹¹ Barad (2007) constructed the neologism intra-action to indicate its difference from interaction. Interaction assumes the prior existence of determinately bounded and propertied entities, which come into contact with each other. Intra-action indicates ontological inseparability of phenomena where relata exist as a result of relations—'relata-within-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions' (Barad, 2007: 140).

(EITZ) Zero gallery, in Camissa, as part of a wider exhibition and radical anarchiving¹² project entitled: “Our Ocean is Sacred, you Can’t Mine Heaven”.

Meandering as tributaries do, we continue the watery journey immersing ourselves in the ocean and harvesting kelp at Cape Point Nature Reserve¹³. Our bodies move with whales cruising nearby, gully sharks darting along the shoreline catching unbroken waves, baboons foraging on the beach with ostriches roaming alongside them, and eland and bontebok grazing on the dunes above us. We meander along the beach with the species of the reserve and collect discarded human materials. The materials we gather are for a collaborative social process and a tactile map: entitled the “hydro-rug” mending event. The question – *If the ocean could say something to you, what would it say?* – loops¹⁴ thoughts through listening, stitching, mending, and responding. The hydro-rug absorbs the relations with the ocean, ways of knowing and memories and is a collaborative art-making and research-creation event that becomes a connective aesthetic map. Red thread joins the pieces as a figurative¹⁵ gesture that tells the story that the “sea is in our blood¹⁶” and it serves to re-member and mend fragmented and violent dismembered histories. Convivial practices such as singing, dancing, and making kelp lasagne with Roushanna Gray at the Veld & Sea¹⁷ glasshouse was a luxurious treat infused with the

¹² An anarchiver’s supplemental, excessive nature means that it is never contained in any particular archive or documentation element contained in an archive. It is never contained in an object. The anarchiver is made of the formative movements going into and coming out of the archive, for which the objects contained in the archive serve as springboards (*The 3ecologies Project*, no date).

¹³ The first written records or knowledge of Cape Point can be traced to the European search for a sea route to the East, instigated by Prince Henry the Navigator. Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias was the first to round the Cape Peninsula in 1488. A decade later, Vasco da Gama navigated the same route and sailed down the coast of Africa, successfully opening a new trading route for Europe with India and the Far East. None of these accounts consider the Indigenous people and their presence before colonisation. Nor do these accounts acknowledge how the Point was demarcated and only certain areas were accessible for Brown and Black bodies during Apartheid law. Prior to 1994, most of the students’ forebears would not have been able to access this particular beach where we sang, cleaned and immersed ourselves in the sea (Cape Point, no date).

¹⁴ Martin (forthcoming) refers to strand-looping. “I have hyphenated the word here specifically to emphasise the looping component of the word, which means walking in Afrikaans but here I also want to lean into the English word looping which for me links to re-mapping, re-turning and re-memembering the hydrological cycle.”

¹⁵ For Rosi Braidotti, figurations are conceptual beings which do not define the human condition, instead they offer an indeterminate, complex, and ongoing process of subject formation (2019: 36).

¹⁶ A phrase echoed by fishers brought to the Cape as slaves from the East in the 1600s which restorative storyteller Traci Kwaai has amplified through her work with the *Fisherchild Projekt*.

¹⁷ Roushanna Gray is a wild food innovator and avid forager who teaches adults and children alike about indigenous edible food. Roushanna is the Founder of *Veld and Sea*.

flavours of a ceremonial ritual. We share stories of conservation and reciprocity¹⁸ and in which ways that relates to care.

Confluence¹⁹/Enquiries

The Tributary/Introduction above briefly introduces the events with the students and this section of the paper will focus on the painting and hydro-rugging events only as a means to re-conceptualise scholarship in HE in South Africa and particularly in a post-apartheid context. The design of the students' course, context, research enquiries, techniques, students, and authors converge in this section of the paper as tributaries confluence into a wider stream. We follow on by explaining how Slow scholarship, research-creation and response-able pedagogies, the theoretical influences of our enquiries, located more broadly in feminist new materialism, inform the process and understandings of learning collaboratively in HE in South Africa. Finally, we discuss how co-learning allows and opens opportunities for learning and teaching that is more inclusive in HE. Worth noting is the fluid way in which developing and creating the points of enquiry were devised - in much the same way as this paper has been presented. This research was led by the authors' embodied experiences rather than by discursive theory alone. Although the authors led the events and processes, they were learning as much from the learners as the learners were learning from the authors. This is supported by Lenz-Taguchi who attests to learning being understood in terms of different matter, both the human and more-than-human making themselves intelligible to each other and seeking to go 'beyond the theory/practice divide will offer multiple possibilities of understanding and knowing' (2010: 6).

As authors of this paper, we come to this research from different tributaries of life experiences and it is this confluence of knowing, being and creative pedagogies that meander through enquiries with the students. Joanne is the Head of Academics at CCE, PhD researcher and has been working in HE and public-school spaces in South Africa. Theresa is a postqualitative researcher of settler origin whose Slow art practice and experience in art education merges with her commitment to 'communities of enquiry' as response-able (posthuman) pedagogical practices. Aaniyah is an intersectional environmentalist who has worked in marine conservation for 19 years and is currently a doctoral student in Education at Rhodes University. These research interests drew Aaniyah into the CCE because of her relationship with Joanne as fellow doctoral student and the opportunity to work with students.

¹⁸ Simpson (2017) states that our nationhood is based on the idea that the earth gives and sustains life, that 'natural resources' are not natural resources at all, but gifts from Aki, the land. 'Our nationhood is based on the foundational concept that we should give up what we can to support the integrity of our homelands for the coming generations. We should give more than we take' (Simpson, 2017:8).

¹⁹ The point where two or more rivers converge, forming another water-course or river. This section unpacks the methods of enquiry as Peers contests in her chapter 'Re-searching research' and how students are instructed 'theory first, methods after, analysis later' (2023: 94). In this paper we describe the methods first and then the theory to make the point that 'practice is in fact continuous and already doing and enacting educational theories.' (Lenz-Taguchi, 2010: x).



Figure 2: The fourthyear students with Joanne, fellow lecturer Carole Scott and Aaniyah at the Eitz Zero Gallery²⁰.

The hydro-rug, which the students flow into and create with waste materials, forms part of Aaniyah's doctoral project and was part of the exhibit at the EITZ Zero gallery (Figure 2)²¹. Another

²⁰ Not captured in the picture but what stands out for the authors is the conversation and re-membering of slave history and ancestry that was revealed through engaging with the Life Jackets soft sculpture exhibit by Cleo Droomer with one of the students. "It still lives within me, my great, great, great Grandparents arrived in Durban on a ship from India and were part of the first slaves working on the sugar cane farms in Durban. Today my granny has to carry water to her home because of the water shortages they are experiencing in Durban." She expresses how the water theme, being transported as slaves and now carrying water, are all entangled within her being; she feels hot and emotional as she shares this with us.

²¹ This Public Storytelling Project and radical an-archive, led by Dr. Dylan McGarry and Dr. Boudina McConnachie, collaboratively uncovers sacred ocean cultures through art, some of which was used as evidence in court interdicts in 2022 alongside fishers' testimonies. This exhibition expands ocean literacies beyond science into socio-cultural discourse and emphasises the transformative potential of tangible artworks in reshaping evidence hierarchies within judicial processes, thus constituting a living library of meaningful evidence for ocean decision making.

part of Aaniyah's doctoral project is *strandlooping*²² along the False Bay coastline from Cape Point Nature Reserve to Hangklip and engaging in citizen-led public storytelling around invisible histories and relationships local South Africans have with the ocean. Inviting the students to the gallery space was yet another means for them to feel that their stories matter and that they belong. We wanted to disrupt the notion of exclusivity and privatisation²³, and both Joanne and Aaniyah use the gallery space as a place to affirm, build and co-create education pedagogies with learners and citizens. This sense of belonging is fostered by bell hooks (2009) in her book entitled *belonging: a culture of place*; the gallery becomes the place for the students to experience a sense of belonging and community and to build onto the work we would do together which focuses on re-connection and care for and with the ocean, and re-membling²⁴ their ancestry.

The students feel deeply connected to Cleo Droomer's art piece entitled *(Life) Jackets* (Droomer & Beaton, 2023). These soft sculptures were created to honour his ancestors who were brought to the Cape as slaves in the 1600s. The cloth used in the life jackets are originally from his grandparents' clothing. This sculpture resonated with the students, as they identified powerfully with ancestral family lineages being brought to South Africa as slaves from Asia and Indonesia via treacherous trans-oceanic voyages.

Aaniyah facilitates a painting process entitled 'Watery letters to our subconscious'. The students cancel their choir lesson to create more time for our event, however collectively we decide that singing would be a beautiful way to begin the lesson whilst we prepare the painting stations. This was unplanned and as we meander along our learning journey, we all agree that singing becomes a key tributary to our learning process, which explains the treble note in Figure 1. Aaniyah guides the enquiry by prompting the students to use the paint and their breath as they make lines on the page, going from dark blue at the bottom to lighter blue at the top. Aaniyah asks the students to take note of what is emerging for them and to note if there are any stories, concerns, questions, or symbols that have arisen during the process.

We are called together through songs around the hydro-rug as we converge with ocean stories and weave them into the hydro-rug. Singing warms up the day with hands and voices enquiring together. All the materials are spread out on a table in a classroom at the CCE - beach litter, waste material, needles, thread, pairs of scissors, and an iron. During the process of creating

²² Translated from Afrikaans as beach walking.

²³ Certain spaces and places in South Africa still carry the stigma of the Group Areas Act of 1950 which legally forbid Brown and Black people from being in certain places because of their colour. Gallery spaces were and continue to carry this stigma in our post-apartheid era.

²⁴ This follows the thread that comes from Karen Barad's explanation of the difference between returning and re-turning through the metaphors of reflection and diffraction. Returning is associated with reflection and re-turning is about diffracting (Barad, 2014: 184-185). The latter involves always already being entangled with/in a world that is not at a distance. Re-membling is therefore an extension of this re-turning to self in much the same way as the hydrological cycle is the continuous re-turning/re-cycling of water in various forms.

the hydro-rug, the enquiry draws to a close through the writing of a poem. Each student writes a line in response to the question we put forward - *If the ocean could say something what would it say?* The sheet of paper meanders from one student to the next, contributions written and folding it over for the next student to add their piece. The poem²⁵ is produced through the movement of hands, stories, sharing, threading, folding and poetic voice.

As we flow into the next section of the paper, we diffract the embodied practice with post-human theories, much like fresh/sweet water mixes with salty water at the delta of a river. The slash (for example, in fresh/sweet) is a deliberate move as explained by Barad (in Barad & Gandorfer, 2021: 42) to indicate a cutting-together-apart, rather than a sign of absolute separation. We are specifically interested in the theory/practice binary for learning and teaching in Higher Education for alternative scholarships.

Delta²⁶/Discussion

Ingold uses the river as a figuration to understand concepts of transitive and intransitive senses of production, by drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) 'lines of flight' and 'lines of becoming' (2011: 14). Ingold (2011) asks us to imagine a river flowing to explain the concept of 'lines of flight' along river banks on either side where the banks are connected by a bridge which allows us to cross from one location to another. The bridge establishes a transitive connection between the two locations, but the river running underneath the bridge does not connect anything to anything else in a material sense. Rather it flows without beginning or end; in a continuous cycle and in relationship with the banks on either side of it and the surrounding environment and atmosphere. This line of flight that runs along pulling away at points on either side of the river banks as it sweeps by exists in contrast to the bridge and its linear connector that goes across from point to point (Ingold, 2011). The bridge or point-to-point connector is transitive, taking us from an outline of an event plan to the completed results and outcomes of that event plan. The line of flight, in contrast, is intransitive - it continues and is iterative in much the same way as our learning and teaching practices, techniques, and enquiries with the students as described in this paper.

The painting lines of blue was an event and engagement with the students, and we use materials such as water colour paint, brushes, and paint to mark lines on a page with the movement of breath and brush stroke. However, the prompts throughout the process evoke

²⁵ Aaniyah is the Founder and director for The Beach Co-op and the work with the CCE students was included in the The Beach Co-op Annual Report (2023: 15).

²⁶ Where the mouth of a river splits into many channels, causing triangular shaped, muddy land forms. This is where we get messy in and with the mud, diffracting the enquiry with theory and proposing and analysing how meandering as learning creates an inclusive approach to learning and teaching in Higher Education. In retrospect, and whilst writing this paper and in the process of diffracting the enquiries with theory the authors have used the river as a figure for the practise of learning through enquiry. Aaniyah recalls that we encountered a river of freshwater on our beach stroll and litter collection at Buffels Bay, Cape Point Nature Reserve. The river was running across the dune into the ocean mixing fresh and salty water.

more than the paintings. Many of the students disclose that they initially focus on the lines being straight and perfect before relaxing into it. One student specifies that after the first six strokes and being prompted by Aaniyah to slow down, only then does she relax into it and focuses less on the output but rather the process. She went on to share that she made a vision board and envisions purchasing a violin. As she ascends through the painting and hues of blue, she could hear the violin and cello and the feeling of the strings being pulled through the motion of painting with the lines²⁷. For her, the image of sound waves and music emerged from doing this exercise.

Another student described how the movement of the painting exercise reminded her of how she trained for swimming competitions and how she practised timing her breath with her strokes as she swam. During the painting exercise she tried to compete with her breath, but she realised that it wasn't necessary. Overwhelming feelings of drowning and yet being able to survive were evoked through the movement of placing the brush strokes on the page.

The concepts of reflection and diffraction were also discussed in relation to the painting enquiry and thinking with water, through diffractive journaling enquiry that Joanne led. One student shared the awe of water being clear and still and its ability to reflect at you, however Joanne felt more connected to how water is able to move in currents, interrupting each other which brings development and growth by keeping things alive and turbulent. These aspects of water are both true, they both describe different ways of being with water as opposed to comparing them or only focusing on the differences and similarities. Instead, they are moving through each other, and this opens-up the differences. From both Haraway's and Barad's perspectives, reflexivity appears to be caught up in sameness because of its mirroring of fixed positions, whereas diffraction is seen as more attuned to patterning of difference which make a difference and their effects in knowledge-making practices (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017; Barad & Gandorfer, 2021). For example, one of the students expressed that she experiences the ocean and water as calming and whenever she feels angry or upset the water can calm and restore her. This is true for her; however, this may not be true for someone else. Joanne uses this example that was shared to express that diffraction for her is 'a political act' in response to the comfort that the student feels when immersing herself in water, Joanne has another response or vibration that is not the same. In other words, diffraction is understood by both Barad and Haraway as a process of being attentive to how differences get made and what the effects of these differences are by opening them up and aerating it to new ways of thinking (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017;

²⁷ This experience is beautifully reiterated by Ingold:

Thus in life as in music or painting, the movement of becoming – the growth of the plant from its seed, the issuing of the melody from the meeting of violin and bow, the motion of the brush and its trace – points are not joined so much as swept aside and rendered indiscernible by the current as it sweeps through. Life is open-ended: its impulse is not to reach a terminus but to keep on going. The plant, the musician or the painter, in keeping going, 'hazards an improvisation'. (Ingold, 2010: 343).

Barad & Gandorfer, 2021). Both Joanne and the student have different responses to how they experience the ocean, and neither is right nor wrong, but together they produce a story of relational complexity. A diffractive practice reads insights through one another instead of against one another, emphasising many truths as opposed to creating binaries or placing one concept or idea above the other (Haraway, 1988, 1992, 1997). Haraway carved the way for diffraction and its critical and productive potential for conceptualising difference and for studying different configurations of difference (Haraway, 1988, 1992, 1997; Barad, 2014). By introducing diffraction in this way through multiplicity rather than comparison, she introduced diffraction as an alternative optical metaphor to 'reflection' (Juelskjær, et al., 2020: 11). This conceptual development of diffraction highlights feminist research, and activist/political ambition of enacting social change. The desire for social change opposes research that mainly reflects/mirrors existing inequalities, thus by and large contributing to the reproduction of those very same inequalities.

The hydro-rugging²⁸ event contributes to a politics of care through mending techniques that not only remove litter from the ocean as a rubbish dump in the material sense, but it also requires participants, in this case the students, to create hydro-rugs from waste factory material, thread, and beach plastic. Hydro-rugging re-creates a new material, by re-using waste material and transforming it into a new form, and embedded within this is the sharing of ocean stories and the healing from our past colonial and more recent South African Apartheid legacy through social justice pedagogy and thinking with the oceans as restorying colonised places (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017; Shefer, 2021).

We encourage the students to answer the question - *if the ocean could say something what would it say?* One student explains that the ocean would say 'I am God'. Another diffracts this thinking through her idea that the ocean for her is female, as opposed to God which is associated with the masculine figure. She goes on to say that because it's August and its women's month she feels we should honour women. She sees the ocean as a woman figure, constantly navigating our relationship between power and abuse by pretending that everything is okay, in much the same way as the litter we collect when we clean up only reveals a fraction of what lies much deeper in the ocean. The ocean, like the female figure, also covers up and removes the litter by transporting it back into the ocean and pretending that it is clean and healthy when in fact it is not. The ocean's voice and its resilience to continuously cover up is reaching its climax²⁹ as we face new levels of global anthropocentric capitalism which has adverse effects on humans and more-than-humans. She continues to say that the water is blue, and it looks clean, and we take this for granted and assume that it is clean. As we write this paper, citizens of Camissa have experienced beach closures because of the effluent that pours into our oceans because of load-shedding which affects our electricity; and hence the power stations that pump our sewage

²⁸ As mentioned earlier, the hydro-rug is an embodied technique that becomes the material object for public storytelling and sharing around invisible histories and relationships local South Africans have with the ocean. See Figure 2 - the hydro-rug is on the coffee table in the foreground.

²⁹ Tenors are usually the highest male human voices found in the world, and from a more-than-human sound pitch bats are unparalleled among mammals in the range of sound frequencies they can produce.

become blocked and overflow into the ocean³⁰. The sewage has no boundaries and leaks into the bay and affects beaches and tidal pools that are now open to everyone³¹.

The narrative of the ocean being smooth, reflective, blue, clear and a vast boundless void is awash as we dive deeper and notice the different hues of blue into the darkest recesses of the sea where there is a lack of light and blackness prevails. As we descend there are many life forms roaming the ocean, some of them known to us and others yet to be discovered, and it is no surprise that human waste has found its way to the deepest chasms and trenches too. Bennett (2018: 103) suggests that this blackness found at the bottom of the ocean serves as an occasion for thinking about blackness as a means of organising both human and more-than-human life within the oceanic realm. For in this void of darkness there is life - of the human and the more-than-human kind - and the colour line opens a way of thinking of how they are related rather than divided. Bennett (2018) notes the history of violent proximity between the people who are black and the more-than-human entities that roam the waves. He specifically hones in on sharks and their role and influence on slaves aboard a slave ship. Sharks become the figure for anti-blackness as well as the ongoing presence of black persistence and black fugitive possibility. Whilst the sharks are a threat of imminent death for the slaves at sea, they are also a figure of black resistance and survival on the open sea. The shiver of sharks and their ability to work collectively is diffracted with the slave community in the hold of the ship and how they as humans emulate the behaviour of the more-than-human sharks by becoming multiple too.

The students observed gulley sharks darting in the waves when we visited Cape Point Nature Reserve to harvest kelp and clean the beach for the hydro-rugging event. Thinking with the sea, and with sharks and its relationship with slave history, affords us the opportunity to think with the more-than-human. The fear of the sea by Black and Brown people today is deeply rooted in the hold of a slave ship and the fear of being eaten by sharks as they journeyed across oceans from their homelands to places unknown to them³².

The motion³³ of a river flowing as described by Ingold above, and the students' memories resonate with theoretical frameworks that we draw on for this research. The frameworks include Slow scholarship, research-creation and response-able pedagogies which are located more broadly in feminist new materialism and posthumanism. Feminist new materialism and posthumanism are predicated on a relational ontology, which holds that people and entities

³⁰ Kretzmann published [this article](#) on the 13th January 2023, however Capetonians have continued to see beach closures as recently as March 2023.

³¹ The Group Areas Act (1950) restricted Brown and Black people from using certain stretches of coastline and accessing amenities such as certain tidal pools.

³² In this situated context we refer to Black and Brown bodies of this generation who are finally able to vocalise the oppression that apartheid has imposed upon us and our parents and their parents. This is what two of the three authors embody. We acknowledge the deep African ontologies linked to the ocean but for the purposes of this paper the more recent trauma of slavery is pertinent.

³³ Here we use motion instead of notion to emphasise the importance of constantly moving like a river and not remaining stagnant, even if the movement slows down, it is still moving or in motion.

come into being through relationships (much like the relationship the river has with the banks and its surrounding environment), rather than entities pre-existing relationships or having individually identified characteristics. Diffraction, as mentioned earlier in relation to thinking with water and the painting enquiry with the students, is also predicated on a relational ontology, an ongoing process in which matter and meaning are co-constituted.

The Slow movement was initiated by Carlo Petrini (2013), the originator of the Slow Food Movement, as a protest against McDonalds opening a restaurant in Rome (Bozalek, 2021). It is very important to realise that Slow does not only refer to slowness/speed or duration, as Petrini (2013) made explicit. Instead, the Slow Food movement extends into Slow scholarship shifting to a focus on the quality rather than quantity of living, depth of engagement and a willingness to engage across differences of discipline and ideas (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018; Bozalek, 2021). Slow scholarship is therefore a proposal for alternative modes of doing academia and pedagogy in response to the current and mainstream³⁴ modus operandi of outcomes, managerialism and corporatisation of these spheres of life (Stengers, 2011; Bozalek, 2021). Furthermore, Slow scholarship is described by Leibowitz and Bozalek as being about 'attentiveness, deliberation, thoughtfulness, open-ended enquiry, a receptive attitude, care-fullness, creativity, intensity, discernment, cultivating pleasure, and creating dialogues between the natural and social sciences' (2018: 983).

Bozalek (2021) argues that there are several academic practices and disciplines that have implemented and benefited from Slow scholarship. Manning and Massumi (2014) express this through research-creation and its emergence through transdisciplinarity. They refer to research-creation as being troubled from its birth which they took as their starting point. They ask "What if we started over? What if we took the hyphenation seriously, seeing it as an internal connection—a mutual interpenetration of processes rather than a communication of products?" (Manning & Massumi, 2014: 88-89). This is the approach we have taken with all our enquiries through the process of learning and teaching with the students.

The authors propose singing as Slow scholarship - Slow singing. Slow singing has been integral to the entire convivial enquiry with the students and was unplanned. The emergence of singing through the practice and introduction of techniques to prompt discussion around water and care reminds the authors of the concept of co-creation as the singing was led by the students themselves. Singing is a slowing down in that it demands controlling the breath in much the same way as the painting event slows down our breath. Measured breath and conscious breathing has the effect of slowing the heartbeat. The repetitions of the verses and refrains and the call and response patterns in some of the songs hold us in the present together (Kulundu, et al., 2020). Time moves in cycles and refrains from repeating and returning differently each time. These sung patterns are folded into the movement of the bodies in a line around the room,

³⁴ Here again the figuration of the river and exploring and meandering along other tributaries to reveal and understand the process rather than the outcomes of learning and teaching.

reaching the pot on the stove and dipping the kelp into the water³⁵. Bodies moving in rhythm, arms lifting and lowering, as we paint and as we place the kelp into the pot. This is the pattern of so many re-membered work songs. Arms and hands are dipping kelp and painting blue strokes but are haunted by so many other arms lifting and lowering oars into water or picks into the earth, as songs lead the pace and the rhythm of the joyless labour of enslaved bodies. A re-imagining of the miners as the song echoes through time.

Practice and enquiry are not separated or made possible through theory, instead theories and enquiry are in conversation with each other through diffraction. In this way, making is already “thinking-in-action”, and conceptualisation is a practice in its own right (Manning & Massumi, 2014: 89). This is keenly experienced and felt in the hydro-rugging and Watery letters. Like the hydrological cycle, which is open ended and in constant motion, research-creation also calls for this fluid way of being. The authors propose Slow singing, convivial story-telling and re-membering from the co-created events as innovative genealogies and techniques directed towards more precise engagements with transformation toward accessible, Africanised and decolonised curricula, and research agendas and practices. However, it must be noted that these techniques are specific to this context³⁶ and may not necessarily be applied elsewhere. Furthermore, the techniques challenge the dominant colonial, patriarchal, eurowestern logics which post-academic, neoliberal, corporatized academia has intensified.

The creative processes and techniques we used in relation to the theory do not end with this paper, rather they continue to cycle through into our work as authors and for the students and the more-than-human engagements involved in our work. Similarly, you as the reader of this paper may also diffract with your experience and what is expressed here. In other words, it invites you as the reader to float or evaporate with us in the continuous hydrologic cycle. As Massumi and Manning (2014) reiterate the kind of results aimed at would not be preprogrammed, they would be experimental, emergent effects of an ongoing process. Furthermore, Barad (in Barad & Gandorfer, 2021: 42) explains that They are trying to be in touch with the theory in the way it inhabits Them and that They are inhabiting it—“the way in which we inhabit each other in this strange topology, this material, embodied sense of sense-making”.

³⁵ Making the kelp lasagne with the students combined Slow Food with Slow scholarship in the convergence of cooking and singing together as part of our convivial learning process at Veld & Sea. As the kelp floats in the boiling pot on the stove it keeps softening as the kitchen is filled with the sound of song.

Hoya hoyo hoyo

Hoya ho

Vukani madoda ningangcangcazeli

Siye khona emgodeni

Translated from Zulu to English: Wake up men and do not shake [worry]; let us go to the mine. Also see Veld and Sea Instagram (IG) account shared with Aaniyah's IG account @contemporary_strandloper: https://www.instagram.com/p/ChePgh_KSe8/

³⁶ Two of the three authors are from Camissa and are Brown. The majority of the students are Brown and from Camissa too. There is a shared understanding and history with these Brown bodies and the post-apartheid legacy which we all carry with us and our ancestors.

In addition to the processual motion of Slow scholarship through research-creation, we also draw on response-able pedagogy. Response-ability refers to the ability or capacity to respond. In a South African context, the ability to respond as a Brown or Black person is contentious given the post-apartheid context and how Brown and Black bodies were and continue to be silenced and erased. In other words, legally not being allowed to respond or have the ability and or privilege to respond. Most of the students we worked with are Brown and are descendants of humans that experienced Apartheid and still experience prejudices. Despite new laws and legislation, we need to re-member the Apartheid context and understand the vulnerability of finding the courage to respond, especially for those humans that were denied this right. It follows that response-able pedagogies are not simply examples of the type of learning that can take place when power relations, materiality and entanglement are acknowledged; they also constitute ethico-political practices that incorporate a relational ontology into learning and teaching activities (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017). Choosing to work with water and our relationship with it and each other was done with sensitivity; and the knowledge that many Brown and Black bodies in a South African context have and continue to have less access to certain water bodies and are therefore not as familiar with water and swimming.

Ebb and Flow/Conclusion

Thinking with the water allows us to meander and opens up boundless experiences and stories that have been 'dammed'³⁷ by South Africa's recent post-apartheid narrative, glossing over continued trauma in our 'rainbow nation' and colonial history.

Embodied, convivial, sensory and affective encounters with water, through painting, immersion, walking, hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, singing or through forms of story-telling or imagery that transport us there, holds multiple ox-bow³⁸ lakes for rethinking the extractive and exploitative nature of our current pedagogy. As we flow, and in between and embedded within the various events, conviviality acts as a suspension in which the learning happens; as water is the suspension where life grows, regenerates, and flourishes. The enquiries meandered with in this paper do not only suggest alternative ways of making meaning and imparting it, but they also contribute to a politics of care, re-pairing³⁹, restorying, and restoring. Lenz-Taguchi explains that everything around us affects everything else, which makes 'everything change and be in a

³⁷ This is a play on the word dam and water being physically dammed.

³⁸ Oxbow lakes are the remains of the river water from the bend in the river that becomes cut-off to form stillwater lakes. This means that water does not flow into or out of them. There is no stream or spring feeding the lake, and it doesn't have a natural outlet. Oxbow lakes often become swamps or bogs, and they often dry up as their water evaporates.

³⁹ The word repair is derived from the Latin word *reparare* which means to restore. We have hyphenated the word here to emphasise the move away from the binary of a pair, even whilst learning and teaching in this way opens up care we acknowledge the past and the lack of care for certain humans that caused trauma and an inability to care.


continuous process of becoming – becoming different in itself – rather than being different in relation to another’ (2010: 15).


As we float and drown with the continuous process of becoming, there are key aspects of the enquiries with the students that hang in the mist – Slow scholarship, research-creation and events – and how working with these aspects and thinking with water surfaces new understandings of care for our hydrocommons. Each event emerged with sense-making related to care for water and the environment through ‘thinking-in-action’ (Manning & Massumi, 2014: 89) both personally and collectively. The collective and convivial nature of the enquiry has an important pedagogical influence in the practices of meandering as learning, and Slow Scholarship. The sharing surfaces deep wounds and the possibility of healing with ancient salty water remedies through listening and responding with each other, through Slow singing and dancing as we ebb and flow with our Apartheid legacy in Higher Education.


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