Knowledge beyond colour lines

Towards repurposing
knowledge generation in
South African Higher Education

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STAYING STUCK ... DIFFRACTING CO-CREATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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In the beginning

Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse (Barad, 2007:185).

Over the last few years, South African higher education institutions have witnessed a number of disruptive incidents. One was the student protest movements of #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) and #FeesMustFall (#FMF) from 2015-2017. While this may have created instability at the time, there was a momentarily opening, a possibility for something new to emerge, but higher education in 2019 seemed to have gone 'back to normal' (although changed by the Covid-19 health crisis). In this chapter, we revisit a disruptive project of co-curriculum on which we embarked in 2018. Despite the student protests in which the call for a decolonised education rang loud and clear, we strongly felt that higher education institutions had remained relatively unchanged. Students might have succeeded in their quest for free education, but access had been granted to spaces in which knowledge and knowledge-making practices maintained old institutional habits, cultures, and epistemological traditions (Heleta, 2016).

Thinking with Barad (2007), we know that the past, the present, and the future are entangled, and we are haunted by everything that has been. Leibowitz and Naidoo (2017:149) refer to this entanglement with the past as a "general political fractiousness and awareness of social and material inequality ... this uneasiness has included a strong calling into question of the settled norms and epistemologies". The frustration and alienation experienced by students at higher education institutions were palpable. Students found themselves located in spaces Lange (2017:32) aptly describes as being "stuck in a colonial frame both intellectually and aesthetically". Through the #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) and #FeesMustFall (#FMF) protest movements, students called on universities to recognise the diversity of the student body, especially black students, along with the need to revisit Eurocentric thinking, the prioritising

of Western thought, and links to space, pedagogies, and curriculum (Godsell & Chikane, 2016). In short, a need to decolonise.

While decolonisation is not a new concept in higher education, there was a resurgence of the discussion due to the student protests. This call opened up spaces for broader discourse and engagement; we are reminded by Mackinlay and Barney (2014:55) that decolonisation is dependent on time and context, and therefore will be interpreted and understood differently in different contexts and at different moments. As an ideal, they describe decolonisation as “the end of empire ... a way of knowing that resists the [Eurocentrism] of the West”. However, changing the curriculum alone is not enough: rethinking the processes involved in decolonisation is critical. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986:105), for example, writes that decolonisation of knowledge “calls for more than choice of materials”; while critical pedagogues such as Watkins (1994:205) are concerned about the process of decolonising minds as a powerful move to “militantly confront and change the devastating psychological consequences of internalized racism”. Perhaps most important, Tuck and Yang (2012:1) remind us that “decolonisation is not a metaphor” but always has to address the issue of the material – in their case, the land. So, it is in the interplay of knowledge, subjectivity, socio-material structures, relationships, and ethical considerations framing the process that decolonising practice must reside. Leibowitz and Naidoo (2017:150) challenge the boundary-making fixities between nature and culture that see “individuals and groups of individuals as fixed or at least as pre-cast ... time as linear, moving from the past to the present to the future” and “researchers as analytic interpreters, external to the situation being researched”. In this sense, decolonisation means focusing on the in-between of lecturer and student as beings, past, present, and future, places, and spaces, allowing for the fluidity of ‘timespacemattering’ (Barad, 2007). It also means moving away from a limiting ontology of binaries and absolute boundaries to a relational ontology of becoming with-each-other as both human and non-human matter and allowing our lives’ colours and experiences to intersect, like colours of a spectrum, as we will explain later in the chapter.

In this chapter, we re-turn to our experiences of participating in a project attempting to decolonise curriculum development at a university of technology in the Western Cape, South Africa, through a process of co-creation. For a year, we, a collective (of two discipline-based lecturers, two academic staff developers focusing on innovation in teaching and learning, and two postgraduate students) embarked on a deeply unsettling journey of trying to uncover the dynamics of co-creating curricula in an attempt to disrupt traditional academic knowledge-making practices. The #RMF and #FMF movements provided the impetus to rethink pedagogic practices and epistemic injustice and violence (Fricker, 2013) in the form of continued prejudice, unequal power, and scarcity of resources, which continue to plague higher education institutions. We challenged ourselves as a collective to find new ways of being and doing. Inspired by St Pierre (1997:175), we attempted to “produce different

knowledge and produce knowledge differently” by exploring how lecturers and students relate to each other, questioning the traditional assumptions about lecturer-student identity and relationship by working together to co-create curricula. At first, the project was framed by critical theory (Freire, 1970; Watkins, 1994), where we looked at how traditional power structures operate, intending to create more democratic spaces for collaboration. Through this process, the aim was to develop a course that would allow lecturers and students to engage with issues of power and difference issues – to address a gap we had identified during our conversations with students and lecturers during the #RMF and #FMF protests.

Our collective journey produced a range of academic outputs, such as conference presentations, a book chapter, workshops offered locally and internationally, and a set of guidelines for more equitable co-creation practices in and beyond higher education (Ngoasheng, Cupido, Oyekola, Gachago, Mpofu & Mbekela, 2019). Our experiences culminated in a co-created and co-taught short course offered through the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) on ‘Co-creating curricula across difference’ in the second term of 2019. While this was an exciting project (and, judging by the academic outputs, successful), we were left with many unanswered questions, many moments of discomfort, and realisations that, in the end, we had not changed that much. On the contrary, the more we tried to create more equitable spaces, the more we faced our inability to step out of our habits and assumptions and the material structures and discursive practices that reconstituted unequal encounters. This materialised, particularly in the academic practices in which we engaged and the academic products we were creating along the way. Material-discursive practices acted upon us, such as ordering a cappuccino in a coffee shop during a project meeting, writing an abstract for a book, or sourcing funding to attend a conference, including some, excluding others. Rather than democratising space, we had re-enacted hierarchies. What had gone wrong?

Re-turning

A year has passed. We re-turn to this project with fresh eyes: a ‘re-turning’, not the same as simply returning to the past “but re-turning as in turning it over and over again” (Barad, 2014:168). In this chapter, we revisit our experiences of working through a set of our writings and transcriptions of focused discussions diffracted with readings on posthumanism. Through this process, we begin to think differently as new questions emerge about the nature and culture of higher education relations (Leibowitz & Naidoo, 2017). In this process, we think with Barad and her suggestion that the “practice of knowing and being are not isolable, they are mutually implicated”. Here Barad (2003:185) refers to the inseparability of the self from the world and the world being inseparable from the self. We discover that our being, our continuous becoming, cannot be separated from our knowledge-making

practices. Becoming and knowledge-making remain entangled. Barad refers to the process as onto-epistemology, so the world and self are constantly in the processes of becoming.

This understanding leads us to unpack our own experience. In the words of Derrida (1997:162): “We must begin *wherever we are* ... in a text where we already believe ourselves to be”. Deleuze (1988:123) supports this idea and writes that “one never commences; one never has a tabula rasa; one slips in, enters in the middle; one takes up or lays down rhythms”. So, we begin with our own story. We bring ourselves into this process, our history, spaces, places, bodies, identities, and material and discursive practices. Through the process of diffraction (Barad, 2007), which we will explain in more detail, we attempt to move beyond an ‘Either-Or’ to an ‘And-And’ orientation, acknowledging the becoming of our collective in collaborative knowledge-making. Encouraged to recognise the insights generated through boundary-making practices, we hope to incite further interest in co-creation practices in higher education, teaching and learning, or in research. We write this chapter for curriculum developers, academic developers, and teaching and learning practitioners by exploring alternatives to reflexive practices, “accounting for how practices matter” (Barad, 2007:88) in the context of South African higher education. We take this opportunity to diffract on the political and how it shapes the way we frame, stage, and engage in teaching and learning, curriculum, academic development, and research with the hope of creating something different. We think with posthumanist authors to make sense of how our understanding has shifted in this process of re-turning in relation to knowledge-making practices, identity, and ‘stuckness’.

Entering in the middle: What are we doing when we engage in knowledge-making?

The struggle for me is constantly moving my prior experience and knowledge into the background and being open to listen actively and carefully to others and to myself. I need to challenge the status quo of common terminology and meaning, which constantly contaminates my thinking and possibly pre-determines the direction I take.

This comment was captured from the diary kept throughout the project by one of the academic developers. While we challenged ourselves to keep open minds in this project and to allow new structures to emerge, we still started from the premise that there was a certain knowledge that we could discover in the process. We were looking out to find something – to take note of what happened, to reach for something that seemed continuously to elude us, that we could just not grasp. Something was always missing and left us deeply frustrated.

Posthumanism challenges the idea that knowledge can be discovered; that knowledge is external, given, pre-existing, pre-given. Rather, it focuses on knowledge-making practices. It sees humans and non-humans as entangled in practices that make this world – ‘worlding’.

as Haraway (1988) terms it – where the knower and the known cannot be separated. Humans can never step out of these knowledge-making practices but are part of them, complicit, situated as “the knowing subjects ... immanent to the very conditions they are trying to understand, change or resist”, as Braidotti (2019:154) explains. As opposed to transcendental beliefs, there is no outside power that affects us. Knowledge-making practices are constitutive and performative. They bring subjects, things, and phenomena into being. Drawing from quantum mechanics, Barad (2007) explains that there are no separate or bounded entities in nature but that entities come into existence by making agential cuts that institute boundaries and bring things together in new relations (Taylor, 2019).¹ Barad (2007) defines this as a process where cuts, although violent, can open up and rework the conditions for agential possibilities. We experienced this violence, as what we know and how we do things in different disciplines, such as the sciences and humanities, collided and brought into perspective how the discourse-material impacts how we talk about, how we do, and whom we are when engaged in knowledge-making practices. Agential cuts do not mark some absolute separation but a cutting together/apart, a “holding together” of the disparate itself (Barad, 2012:46). Individuals do not exist on their own but are brought into being in intra-actions with each other, in relationship with each other, through these agential cuts. Therefore, ‘agency’ also does not reside in the individual but is enacted in the relationship between human matter and non-human matter.

Following on, knowledge-making practices are world-making powers and practices that acquire ethical agency and responsibility. This world-making is not neutral or innocent, as things are brought into being through practices that privilege certain entities and exclude their ‘binary others’ (humans/non-humans, male/female, white/black, abled/disabled, as examples); and, as such, “we make the world in morally and politically consequential ways”, as Mauthner (2019:680) warns us. So, what happened in these knowledge-making practices in which we were and still are entangled? The next section journeys onward with this question by looking at our academic practices differently within a relational ontology.

And then – Who are we, and how are we rendering each other capable?

Another diary entry speaks to growing discomfort about the categories we assign each other:

To be aware of my own identity and the power that it assumes and sometimes unfairly imposes. Navigating this new space is difficult ... taking the lead, not taking the lead. Taking ownership of terms, such as identity researcher, teacher means encountering constructs that traditionally convey very specific meanings. In actual fact, the more I

¹ See, for example, Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne, 2015, which explains how light can be both a wave and a particle, depending on how one looks at it, and on what apparatus one uses to look at light.

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do this and the more I write, the more I begin to realise that we have boxed ourselves in. Are we capable of free thought?

As we learn from Barad (2007), the entanglement of lecturers, academic staff developers, and students in a co-creation process comes into focus when we look at our knowledge-making practices differently. We explore our knowledge-making using a methodology referred to as ‘diffraction’, grounded in a relational ontology, which Barad (2007) terms ‘agential realism’. Ceder (2018) describes diffraction as interactions, interferences, and differences. In doing this, diffractive patterns that had not previously been noted started to emerge, hitting us hard when we re-turned to something one of the students participating in the project had said. Here the student shared his thoughts about his experiences when working on a supposedly co-created abstract for a book chapter which we had been invited to submit after attending a conference where we offered a workshop based on first findings from our process of co-creating curricula:

No, the thing is, when it comes to the book chapter let’s be honest, I know we are co-authors ... but to some extent, we don’t have much of a contribution because it’s already done. You know, you read it. The terminology is kicking or the language is kicking ... that I can follow but the thing is there’s nothing much that I can contribute to something that’s already made. So I was happy with the abstract from the word go. I didn’t find anything that was amiss or anything that I could add onto it.

This comment shows a pattern that emerged when students, academics, and an abstract collided, representing our intellectual and aesthetic colonial ‘stuckness’ (Lange, 2017:32). As lecturers, we maintained our positions of power as teachers/lecturers, giving students access to a process of abstract writing, but not changing the parameters under which we could work together in an equal manner. We were together in this project (paraphrasing Braidotti, 2019), but not in the same way. Through our assumed positions of power, we favoured dominant knowledge and dominant practices, so ‘played the academic game’, rather than focusing on what and who is usually missing from these conversations, the “real-life subjects whose knowledge never made it into any of the official cartographies or genealogies” (Braidotti, 2019:162). While something like abstract writing comes naturally to some, for others, “it was all already done”; and, in our attempt at co-creating, epistemological access was shut down and denied. What we experienced is captured by the words of Nuttall (2009:1):

Entanglement is a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted or ignored, or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness.

Our practice did not allow or create a space where all could engage equally. Diffracting, rather than reflecting, forced us to heighten the awareness of our entanglement and complicity in these knowledge-making practices, as well as the ethics concerning the effects of and

within these. Diffraction is a useful metaphor to understand what new emerges from our interdisciplinary intra-actions, the waves we make when our different worldviews collide, and how certain worldviews and practices are still favoured over others.

As Haraway and Barad encourage, we become attentive to how “differences get made and what the effects of these differences are” (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017:2) in the knowledge-making process. To realise this, we focus on the assumed roles in knowledge production and the impact this had on co-creation. The roles we assumed and the words we used to describe ourselves as teachers/lecturers and students were already embedded within a particular discursive and material structure. As Derrida (in St Pierre, 2018) explains, the use of concepts brings an entire structure in which it is thinkable. As lecturers, we were already situated in the middle, within the discursive and material structure of curriculum development, knowledge-making, and knowledge production (Guttorm, Hohti & Paakkari, 2015), with students traditionally situated on the periphery of these processes.

Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) challenge us to move toward response-able pedagogies to find new pathways that move beyond traditional understandings of critical pedagogies. They call for a relational materialist or a diffractive approach, attentive to relationality and material agency. Throughout the project, we focused on our own identities, on binaries, such as student/teachers, white/black, social sciences, and engineering, and remained stuck in those binaries when trying to co-create curricula. This meant that our pedagogical histories and experiences impacted our “relational responses of becoming-with and rendering each other capable” (Bozalek, Bayat, Gachago, Motala & Mitchell, 2018:98; Haraway, 2016). We forgot to focus on the patterns that emerged wherever and whenever we encountered each other, on the differences, interferences, and intra-actions that constituted our encounters (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017). We missed an opportunity to live a relational ontology and see how “matter and meaning were being co-constituted” (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017:65).

In recognising this, we are not trying to relegate our different positionalities, as we agree with Braidotti (2019:156) that locating ourselves is critical in understanding how we act upon and are acted upon in this world: “People [are] positioned in dramatically different power relations. Situated and immanent practices allow for sharper and ground analyses of the power differences”. However, we call on ourselves to cultivate a heightened attentiveness for what happens ‘in’ the moment; how we ‘become-with’; how we can render each other capable, rather than for who we already are and what we already do; to focus on the performativity of race, class, gender, of what these do, in their many combinations when humans and non-humans meet. This includes the becoming of new multiple identities and ways of being in the world (Bozalek et al., 2018) – beyond limiting labels such as ‘lecturers’ and ‘students’. The discourse that emerged from the student statement highlighted lecturer-student fixities and absolute boundaries preserved and maintained through our co-creation

process. We were still stuck in these absolute boundaries, thinking in black and white, rather diffracting the many colours around these boundaries. Thinking with Barad (2012), we came to realise that the fixities of our roles as academic developers, lecturers, and students held us captive; we needed to renegotiate and rethink our approach to co-creation in which we could render each other capable. We realised through this intra-action that ‘individuals’ do not pre-exist but materialise within phenomena in their “on-going iteratively intra-active reconfiguring” (Barad, 2012:77). Did we begin with this difference, or did this difference materialise/emerge within this phenomenon?

This intra-action also allowed us to see what happened ‘in’ the moment ‘as’ a knowledge-making practice. The realisations of discomfort, unease, feeling othered and marginalised by academic practices and our response were in themselves ‘knowledge-making’. That is where our focus should have stayed. As mentioned before, no knowledge-making practices are innocent, and we need to hold each other – and the practices themselves – accountable for what is brought into being through these practices, as well-intentioned as they are: “We become-with each other or not at all” (Haraway, 2016:4).

On staying stuck

Feeling disturbed/discomforted/challenged. Difficulty accepting this new process, doing things differently. A. Allowing newness to emerge. S. Struggling without a plan, milestones, next steps. The power/challenge of the unknown. Allowing whatever must happen to happen and emerge ...

Are we capable of navigating space, without a plan, map or GPS, so to speak? Are we able to allow what needs to emerge, to emerge fluently ... and are we able to be fluid about this process? It is scary ...

Over and over in our written pieces, we expressed feeling deeply uncomfortable with doing things differently (while we kept doing many things in our traditional ways, as shown). Being discomforted led us to explore avenues that would supposedly move us forward: “Being intentional by creating structures that disrupt the power dynamic ... for equal thinking”, as one of our research diaries reads. Instead of staying with the discomfort, we returned to the comfort of familiar structures. Using democratic methodologies, such as the ‘Time to Think’ activities (Kline, 1999), we tried to create spaces where equal thinking would become possible. In developing a course that would allow lecturers and students to engage together with issues of power and difference, we got stuck, stuck in the intention of reaching a goal, of discovering ways and practices of relating to each other differently.

Our attempt to become unstuck led us, for example, to create guidelines that would allow others in similar situations to be more successful at achieving democratic or equal thinking (Ngoasheng et al., 2019), or so we thought. The guidelines were based on certain

assumptions, such as that there were differences but that these differences could be worked with – as long as they were recognised and affirmed; and they could not only be worked with but somehow could be worked ‘away’. These guidelines rest on the assumption that humans have the agency to control spaces and create external structures – ‘guidelines’ – that, if followed, could create different spaces and experiences. By externalising our experiences, by writing them down, the assumption was that we could somehow extract ourselves from our entanglements, an assumption or an expectation that we could write ourselves into neatness, coherence, into becoming ‘unstuck’.

Nevertheless, there is also another way of looking at ‘stuckness’. Lather’s (1998) writing on ‘a praxis of stuck places’ suggests a different way of thinking. Drawing on Derrida, a praxis of stuck places requires that questions be constantly moving, undefined, never finishing, closing or defining or being sure, “situat[ing] the experience of the impossibility as an enabling site” for working through doubt and uncertainty (Mackinlay, 2016:10). Lather (2006:45) suggests that this praxis disrupts traditional practices by asking “what might be thought and done otherwise”, and she refers to this as the “between space” of current practice and meaning toward what might be. This is a respite from our need for neat endings, for closure, for successful project outcomes. Haraway (2016:1) tells us that there is no way out of trouble, that we need to “stay with the trouble”, and that, rather than looking for neat endings, we need to acknowledge that there are no easy ways out. We do not need endings that protect us from future harm, as Haraway (2016:1) continues to argue:

In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present.

So, while we share our guidelines proudly in certain contexts, we also need to acknowledge that guidelines can create a blockage because they give a semblance of neat packaging, a closure of the process. Yes, these guidelines do hold value; we are invested in them, and they can distract us from being in the present – from staying with the trouble.

What have we learnt (or not)?

What we learnt through this encounter, diffracting our writings and thoughts from last year with posthuman readings, follows Barad (2003:817):

that the world is a dynamic process of intra-activity in the ongoing reconfiguring of locally determinate causal structures with determinate boundaries, properties, meanings, and patterns of marks on bodies.

Being acutely aware of the inequalities which continue to plague higher education institutions and encounters, tensions emerged in our collective understanding, beliefs and

situated knowledges, along with an emerging insight into the structures in which we are all so deeply embedded as an entanglement of lecturers/students. Simultaneously we began to engage with the potential for thinking and doing differently. How have we changed? How does this difference manifest? Is this important? Does it matter? By problematising existing historical, structural, cultural, and social barriers, patterns of difference emerged that were already there but that, through our lack of attentiveness, had been made invisible.

In this project, we first and foremost grappled with the notion of identity, framing ourselves as teachers, lecturers, academics, students, researchers. Highlighting these identities, we reflected on our experiences, the power dynamics that exist, the pain experienced in relation to each other, structures and processes, the centrality of the human, the individual, and control. Thinking with Barad (2007), St Pierre (1997; 2018), Derrida (1997; 2018), and Lather (1998; 2006), we then discovered that we framed ourselves within a particular discourse and material structure with this language and identity. Rather than focusing on the patterns of difference that emerged in our knowledge-making practices, we looked for something else that we thought needed to be discovered.

We experienced what Barad (2007:33) describes as ‘intra-action’ representing the “mutual constitution of entangled agencies”. We are always ‘becoming’, intra-acting as assemblages of human and non-human matter. The past is actualised in the present, as Deleuze (1997) argues. There is no separation between knowing and becoming in this onto-epistemological phenomenon (Barad, 2007:89). So being part of this journey, we cannot look from the outside in, reflecting or discovering how we responded to each other, but we are inherently part of this entanglement of lecturers, teachers, abstracts, conference presentations, funding applications – human and non-human matter. Our becoming is always ‘in relation’ to someone or something else. What happens ‘in’ the moment, in the present, is what counts. Our discomfort, our unsettlement, needs to be the focus of our attention. This is hard work. As Braidotti (2019:1717) writes, staying with this discomfort, trying to understand the “interconnections between the self and a multitude of other forces ... requires labour so as to increase relational powers and to deal with complexity without being overburdened”.

While previously we would have seen these disruptions – what had gone wrong – as able to halt our project in its totality, as an excuse for extricating ourselves from the responsibility we have towards each other, we now see the last few months as a generative pause (Taylor & Ulmer, 2020:21). Taylor and Ulmer propose the “practice of pause” in academia to allow an “attentiveness to the granularity of materiality, power and place, in which we might tune into the uneven environmental impact of past and present capitalist configurations”.

In this pause, we can now see ourselves as always having and already being part of this entanglement, and we will continue to do so. We have found new responsibilities, new

people to collaborate with, new projects to write about, but in this, we were changed and still are being changed by each other – acting upon each other and acted upon. Our conversations continue, in real life, but also in our imaginary life (thinking beyond our thoughts) when we consider how some of us, for example, would respond to this writing.

What is important to see is that in our complicity, our responsibility for “how things take shape within their entangledness will in no way shrink, but instead is growing” (Thiele, 2017:46). Our task is ‘persistently’ to look for openings that enable us to map new pathways: to be hyper-attentive how matter (our roles and identities but also discursive practices, such as abstract writing and access to resources) matters; and how we in our intra-action with human and non-human matter stabilise and de-stabilise practices. The many ghosts of our history, educational experiences, structural power and colonial influences that haunt us force us to recognise our responsibility towards this world. This needs ‘endurance’, as Braidotti (2019:172) warns us, both in terms of temporal duration and spatial elements: “the ability to withstand and sustain changes and transformation” and brings both joy and recognition of hardship and physical pain. Disrupting academic practices and pressures, forcing us to publish or perish under tight deadlines, is critical when working across difference. Rendering each other capable, whether in engaging with difficult literature or writing an abstract, takes time. Allowing ourselves more generative pauses may be such an act of resistance. As academic developers, if our posthumanism journey has taught us anything, it is this: that uncertainty can be unsettling yet generative, and we encourage others to be open to the experience of co-creation. As higher education transitions through various crises, the encounters and entanglements that disrupt normative structures and processes can lead to creative experimentation and the realisation that no event can ever be the same (St Pierre, 2018). Movement and movement of thought – inquiry – is sparked through reading theory and philosophy. Haraway’s (1988) theory of situated knowledges challenges knowledge as universal, objective and value-free, and instead acknowledges that students are “situated knowers, who actively construct knowledge through their lived experience”. Our own experience, in which we started as separately inscribed lecturers and students, broadened through a process of co-creation and counter-creation (Braidotti, 2019). Via diffraction, we were able to recognise and challenge familiar and hierarchical ways of thinking and doing. Thinking with and through the various authors, we were reminded by the words of Barad (2012:46-47) that

accountability cannot be reduced to identifying individual causal factors and assigning blame for this or that cause Taking account entails being accountable, for all ac/countings are from within, not without.

As we continue to navigate this journey of posthumanism that allows for more questions than answers, we have come to realise the value of working through such seemingly impossible spaces. At the heart of this process is what Rajchman (2000:7) refers to as

“affirmative trust” that “something may come out, though one is not yet completely sure what”. For us, this journey continues.

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