

## REIMAGINING PEDAGOGIES

### Nomadology: Radically transforming creative pedagogies or how to teach unlearning through unteaching

#### Mark Ingham

Mark Ingham is an educator, artist, and researcher. His creative pedagogical enquiries are entangled encounters with memory, rhizomatic learning theories, and fuzzy narratives. Reader in Critical and Nomadic Pedagogies, National Teaching Fellow. Co-Chair of UAL's Professoriate, and SHEFA, co-founder of UAL's Experimental Pedagogies Research Group.

#### Prologue

My contribution to the round table, *Reimagining Pedagogies*, asked the question: How do we reimagine the multiple relationships between the arts and education if we always start from what we already know and what we think is expected of us? In this paper I will propose, in some speculative semi-fictional stories, that we need to radically change the way we teach and learn in our creative universities. This can only be achieved by radically reimagining and deterritorialising our pedagogies. This means that if we want to unlearn then we also should know how to unteach.

I want to call for a future that includes assemblages I am calling 'Critical Creative Universities' (CCUs). Driven in part by the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, my proposed CCUs will embark on journeys that show what an innovative pedagogical model based on the principles of nomadology and rhizomatic thinking might look like. I will show how these institutions can reimagine their campuses as rhizomatic learning hubs. Each building, each room, even each individual can be seen as a node, ripe with potential for knowledge creation and transmission. No longer bound by the four walls of a classroom, learning happens everywhere and at all times, as students and faculty alike engage in a constant exchange of ideas and perspectives.

This learning paradigm is nomadic, taking inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari's ideas on nomadology from their joint 1980 book *A Thousand Plateaus*. They show how nomadology embraces the

notion of constant movement and fluidity, a stark contrast to the static nature of some of our conventional education. Students in this world are no longer tethered to a single field of study but are encouraged to traverse across disciplines, gathering knowledge as a nomad would gather resources. This nomadic, rhizomatic structure cultivates an education system teeming with hope, love and joy. Learning is an act of discovery and exploration, not rote memorisation and regurgitation. Instead of competition, collaboration thrives as everyone learns from and with each other. Knowledge is seen not as a scarce resource hoarded by the few, but as an abundant, shared wealth. In some parts of academia and beyond, these ideas are already blossoming and are starting to be put into practice. It is how we propagate these ideas, so they flourish and become a more creative and experimental way of teaching and learning, that this paper explores.

The imagined transformation to these Critical Creative Universities may seem revolutionary, a complete reimagining of what education could be, but I argue that this is one way forward so that we can liberate ourselves from the striated structures learners often have to endure. Their aim is to show us that the realm of knowledge is not neatly structured like a tree of wisdom but a wild, interconnected rhizome, not a territory to be conquered, but a nomadic landscape to be explored. In their pursuit of hopeful and joyful educational transformations, the CCUs dare to think differently, to become wildly nomadic, and in doing so, they sow the seeds of a future where learning is not a chore, but a celebration of the infinite potentialities of the human mind.

The texts below are a series of stories that imagine a world where education is freed from its external and internal constraints. Evolving from the 'striated' spaces it now often occupies to the 'smooth' spaces of a Rhizomatic University inhabited by Nomadic Learners. This all may seem utopian and a fantasy, but unless we can show that there are better ways of learning critically and creatively then there is no hope for change in our world. The same mistakes will be made. There will be rigidity rather than fluidity, exclusivity rather than inclusivity, acceptance rather than curiosity, despair rather than joy, hate rather than love. If we do not imagine a better future, we will always travel in the direction given to us. I try to start in the middle of things, as they are today, and go where the lines of flight might take us.

## **Speculative Magic Realist stories of the Possibility of Critical Creative Universities**

### **Scene 1 - Casting questions into networks as thrown stones ripple water**

In the heart of a city that sprawled like a living organism, there were places that crackled with a peculiar pulse. These were the Critical Creative Universities (CCU), realms where the architecture of learning was not constructed of bricks and mortar, but of connections and experiences, a space that existed in the potential of every moment. These CCUs were not found on any map; their coordinates were inscribed in the minds of those who sought it. They were places that eschewed the striated spaces of conventional institutions for the smooth, unbounded spaces of the rhizome. Here, corridors of thought wound through the air like vines, and ideas bloomed like wildflowers in an eternal spring.

At these CCUs, the traditional roles of teacher and student had dissolved into the collaborative identities of Nomadic Learners. All taught, all learned. These learners were a diverse tapestry of beings, not just humans but post human entities, AI tutors with empathy algorithms, cyborg scholars with libraries etched into their circuitry, and virtual reality classrooms that could simulate the birth of stars or the inner workings of a poem. Entangled with many messy experimental spaces that were forever evolving depending on who gathered in them and not governed by a set curriculum.

Nomadic Learners gathered in shifting assemblies that were called into being by mutual curiosity rather than timetables. A learner would cast a question into the network like a stone across water, and the ripples would draw others to the emerging conclave. Together, they would traverse disciplines, their paths tangling and untangling, as they unlearned just as much as they learned, shedding old skins of knowledge to find what lay beneath.

### **Scene 2 - Unseminars**

In the CCUs, such conclaves were called unseminars. It was here that learners gathered to unteach - to strip away the layers of preconceived notions and pedagogical dogma. The unseminars were held in spaces with walls that pulsed with a soft light, each pulse a question from the vast repository of more than human post-human inquiry. The physical and the digital entwined seamlessly. The distances between the learners were inconsequential. Learners would enter the unseminars with a willingness to be lost,

to wander the cognitive and vibrant mattered landscapes without a set destination. They became unguided and went through the art of problem-making, of seeing the world not as a matrix of answers but a horizon of mysteries. It was in one such unseminar that Akina, a young learner with a galaxy of ideas swirling in their eyes, proposed a journey through the concept of time. The walls shimmered, and the learners found themselves standing at the edge of a temporal river, its waters flowing in spirals and eddies. They dipped their hands into the stream, feeling the cool currents of past and future converge in the present.

As they journeyed, they encountered the philosophers of old, not as statues to be revered, but as fellow travellers with whom they could converse, critique and topple occasionally. They debated with bell hooks in a grove that grew from her own musings, danced with Bayo Akomolafe under a moon that laughed with joy, and sculpted with Louise Bourgeois in an art studio where matter vibrated the music of the spheres.

The unseminars did not end when the learners left the room; they merely dispersed into smaller nodes, each learner carrying a fragment of the experience, a seed of the rhizome that would sprout in unexpected places. The CCU was a testament to the boundless nature of minds, a place that celebrated the joy of learning as an act of creation. And so, the CCUs spun their stories, tapestries of speculative magic realism that wove together the possible and the imagined. It was an education in hope, in the belief that the act of learning could be as natural as breathing and as vital as a heartbeat.

### **Scene 3 - Maps to chart the constellations of thought**

In the CCUs, the future was not a destination but a creation, an ever-unfolding narrative that each Nomadic Learner co-authored, a story of a world that could be, if only we dared to unlearn the confines of the past and unteach the certainties that held us captive. It was a place of possibility, where education was not a service but a celebration, not an obligation but an adventure. And in this story, we are all invited to become the nomads of our own infinite learning.

At the CCUs, the arts and education danced in a delicate, ever-evolving symbiosis. Ceilings dripped with the vines of creativity, and walls pulsed with the vibrant colours of new ideas. Professors and students alike wandered, not lost but seeking, their minds alight with the fire of unlearning, of knowing that the path of knowledge

was a journey without end. These were places where classrooms had no doors, only thresholds of experiences, where the line between teacher and learner was not just blurred but erased. Learning was not confined to the ticking of a clock but was as boundless as the sky above, for the sky was their true canopy. In this land of intellectual nomads, the very concept of a curriculum was a relic; instead, learning was a living entity, wild and free.

Learners, as everybody was called in these CCUs, were a kaleidoscope of cultures and ideas, who drifted from one learning experience to another, their paths crossing and recrossing, weaving a tapestry of shared knowledge. They delved into mathematics with the same fervour as philosophy, treating each equation as a poem, every philosophical argument as a theorem. Art was not merely to be created or critiqued but lived and breathed, its principles applied to every subject, turning each lesson into a line of flight. In the realm of the CCUs, knowledge was not a fortress to be besieged but a river to be navigated, its currents strong with the power of possibility. They drew maps not to define territories but to chart the constellations of thought that emerged from their collective minds. The university was not just an institution but a state of being, where learning was an act of becoming, an odyssey without a destination.

As suns set on this rhizomatic expanse, the students gathered, not to graduate, for there were no endings here, only new beginnings. They shared stories of their intellectual wanderings, their voices a chorus of hope and transformation. In the twilight of their gathering, they knew that they were not just part of a university but of a movement, a seismic shift in the very essence of education. The CCUs stood as a beacon, a radical departure from the linear paths of old. It was a testament to the untamed wilderness of the mind, a celebration of the nomadic spirit within us all, forever teaching the art of unteaching, forever learning the craft of unlearning.

### **Scene 4 - The wild frontiers of imagination**

Nomadology: Radically - Transforming Creative Pedagogies, or how to teach unlearning through unteaching. It unfolded with a mysterious puzzle - an enigmatic riddle left in the wake of the university's transformation. The riddle, a series of cryptic symbols and allusions, hinted at a radical shift in the paradigm of learning, a code that needed deciphering to unlock the full potential of this new educational model.

Enter our story the Nomadic Detective Agency-Assemblage (NDA-A), known for their unorthodox methods and keen detective

skills. The NDA-A was not your typical academic (there were at least 27 of them assembled at all times). They saw the university as an organism, a living entity that breathed knowledge through its network of learners. The riddle piqued their curiosity, and they knew that solving it could reveal the true essence of the CCU's post human approach. As the NDA-A delved into their investigation, they discovered that each symbol in the riddle corresponded to a different assemblage. The first symbol led them to an impromptu performance art piece in the park, where students expressed the raw emotions of human experience without words. The second took them to a biology lab, where synthetic life forms were created, blurring the lines between the organic and the artificial.

The riddle was not just a puzzle to be solved but a journey through the rhizomatic structure of the university. The NDA-A realised that the riddle was teaching them to think like the nomads of knowledge the CCU encouraged its students to become.

They traversed from assemblage to assemblage, unseminar to unseminar, their paths intertwining with those of the learners who were themselves embodiments of nomadology. Each clue unravelled a part of the CCU's philosophy, showing the NDA-A that learning was an act of connectivity, a series of encounters that broke down the walls of traditional pedagogies. They saw students not just learning about robotics, but collaborating with the machines they built, teaching and being taught in a reciprocal dance.

The NDA-A stood before the last symbol, which brought them to one intensity of the university. It was here that the riddle's solution lay bare, a holographic projection of the CCU's network, a dazzling constellation of knowledge points that represented every learner, every idea. The riddle, NDA-A understood, was the CCU itself, a testament to the journey of learning. It was an invitation to see education not as a destination but as a voyage without end. The CCU didn't impart knowledge; it was a space where ideas roamed free and where the mind could wander into the wild frontiers of imagination.

This story, *Nomadology: Radically - Transforming Creative Pedagogies* or how to teach unlearning through unteaching, is a detective tale unlike any other, where the mystery solved is not one of crime, but one of understanding. Its narrative encapsulates the CCU's daring challenge to reimagine what it means to learn, to teach, and to be a more-than-human post-human in a world where the only constant is change.

### **Epilogue**

In these speculative stories, the CCUs are microcosms of a world unshackled from the constraints of convention, a testament to what education could become when freed from the chains of the mundane. Here, learning is not just an accumulation of facts, but an act of becoming, an ever-evolving journey of self-discovery and communal growth.

As the sun set on this radical experiment, the golden light cast long shadows across the universities, mazes of potential, crucibles of creation. The learners and even the buildings themselves, pulsed with the vibrant energy of a new era. For in this world, the act of learning was a celebration, an exploration of the boundless landscapes of the mind. And as the stars emerged, shining like beacons in the night, they whispered of a future where education was a wild, joyous voyage across the nomadic terrain of more-than-human, post-human potential.