Spinning yarns: Affective kinshipping as posthuman pedagogy

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Abstract: In this piece we draw upon Donna Haraway's (2016) notion of the string figure to map affective-material entanglements in a postgraduate course on gender and education and how shared objects brought to class activated thought in collective, embodied, affective, and unpredictable ways. We explore how as yarn re-configured the relationality of the bodies and materialities in the classroom space, new pedagogical connectivities and ethical relationalities opened through relays and returns, giving and receiving, and affective 'response-abilities' across the assembled sets of hands, bodies, memories, materialities, and movements. We consider this as a practice of *kinshipping* and explore it as a pedagogical and methodological project for finding spaces of 'give' within the troubled lifeworld of the gender classroom.

Yarning feminist pedagogies

A ball of yarn unravels in rolls above desks, humming laptops, paper coffee cups, and human bodies. The yarn finds a hand amidst cheers and hoots. The yellow spool swiftly winds around a cookbook and then flies overhead to a new outreached hand. Next, it circles around a lipstick, a tampon, an iPhone and then is thrown again. It ducks under the buzzing ceiling projector and finds its way around a set of colorful beads, a flag, a plastic pack of birth control. Soon the room is a tangle of multi-colour thread, animated bodies, machines, and materialities.

That pedagogy is fleshy, embodied, sensuous work has a long history in feminist theorising (Ahmed, 2017; Gallop, 1988; Grumet, 1988; hooks, 1994; Ivinson, 2012; Pillow, 2004; Narayan, 1988; Springgay, 2011). It has been noted that courses dealing with race and gender can be particularly emotionally wrought and often tension-ridden for both teachers and students (Donadey, 2002; Ringrose, 2007). We might say that tension is an 'ordinary affect' (Stewart, 2007) in the gender classroom. This paper engages the affective-materiality of such tensions within a post-graduate course on gender and education in a UK university. The course included students from different socio-cultural locations representing 5 continents and explored 'glocal' gender contexts, hegemonic masculinity, sex education, sexual violence, and feminist and queer activism, amongst other topics.

In our work as both teachers and researchers, we are energised by what has been deemed 'phEmaterialist' (feminist-posthuman-new materialist-education) (Ringrose et al, 2015) thinking. PhEmaterialism enlivens specifically feminist activations (theoretical, pedagogical, political) within theories of posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013), ontoepistemologies (Barad, 2007), vibrant

materiality (Bennett, 2009), impersonal affect (Braidotti, 2013; Brennan, 2005; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: Massumi, 2002; 2015; Stewart, 2007), and multispecies response-ability (Haraway, 2016), among others. PhEmaterialism, in particular, strives to imagine and enact worldings outside of the preeminence, self-containment, and historical exclusions of what Braidotti (2013) has donned 'Vitruvian man.' As phEmaterialists we seek to take seriously the affective-material life of the spaces we teach and research in, both how materialities activate thought and how thought activates materiality (Renold, 2017; Renold, Ivinson, Angharad, 2017; Osgood & Scarlet, 2015; Springgay & Rotas, 2015; Springgay & Truman, 2017; Springgay & Zaliwska; 2017; Taylor, 2016; Taylor & Hughes, 2016; Taylor & Ivinson, 2013).

In this paper, we hone in on the final moments of the course which included an arts-based workshop as part of a focus on affect theory and feminist craftivism. At the onset of the course, students had been asked to bring meaningful 'affective-material' objects relating to gender to share with the class. On the last day, these shared objects were 'storied' and then 'threaded' to one another through a collective string figuration created with multi-coloured yarn. In this process, students found and charted group-generated connections (e.g. themes, intensities, dissonances) between their objects by making string figures first on their group tables and then 'shipping' yarn across the entire classroom enabling the students to materially and affectively engage with difference and tensions, using Haraway's (2016) words, 'staying with trouble.' We see this as a posthuman pedagogy that worked, rather than worked through or resolved, tension as an agentic and material co-presence in the classroom. Opposed to a humanist progress narrative that views tension as something to be overcome or eradicated, we see tension as an activating force that here intra-acted with the human and non-human bodies opening spaces for maneouvering (Massumi, 2015) within difference. Haraway (2016) argues that staying with the trouble entails finding 'oddkin,'[1] or nurturing unlikely kinships between bodies, critters, materialities, things, and ideas. The yarn workshop entangled human and non-human, material and immaterial bodies in precisely such unlikely relationalities--an affirmative process we call *kinshipping*.

We build upon Haraway's model of 'making kin' by drawing out the affective dimensions of the threading together of experience. We do not intend this piece to be proscriptive for other teachers or congratulatory of our pedagogical interventions. Feminist theory has long taught us to avoid too-quick celebrations of 'emancipatory' pedagogies or triumphalist progress narratives of teaching (Ellsworth, 1989). We argue instead, that *kinshipping* may help us shift pedagogical imaginaries of relations, affects, bodies, and materialities (Todd *et al*, 2016), times and things in the classroom (Hohti, 2016), and engage different ways of recognising subjectivity and difference (Davies *et al*, 2013). We believe that the such art-based practices may provide a 'contact zone' (Stewart, 2007) that enables new affective relationalities between humans and non-humans that run pedagogical 'interference' (Geerts & van der Tuin, 2015) into scripted

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[1] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 4.

curricula, intersectional power inequalities, and dominant and privileged identity scripts (Braidotti, 2013; Zarabadi & Ringrose, forthcoming).

String figuring datakin

A refrain in Haraway's (2016) *Staying with the Trouble*, is that 'it matters what matters we use to think other matters with'[2] and so in this piece we stick with yarns as vibrant theoretical-conceptual-affective-material (Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2009). We mobilise, in particular, Haraway's (2016) theoretical string figures of 'tentacular thinking' and 'making kin' and yarn them to theories of affect (Bennett, 2009; Braidotti, 2006; 2013; Brennan, 2005; Stewart, 2007). Haraway (1994; 2016) invokes a range of string practices in her work to theorise how we might collectively cultivate practices of intimacy, activism, thinking, and caring. Over two decades ago, she writes:

> Cat's cradle invites a sense of collective work, of one person not being able to make all the patterns alone. One does not 'win' at cat's cradle; the goal is more interesting and more open-ended than that. It is not always possible to repeat interesting patterns, and figuring out what happened to result in intriguing patterns is an embodied analytical skill. The game is played around the world and can have considerable cultural significance. Cat's cradle is both local and global, distributed and knotted together.[3]

Yarns are also stories, particularly long-winded, far-fetched, speculative stories. We see yarning as 'storying'--an experimental, provisionary and playful practice of world-making (Haraway, 2016). As Haraway (2016) reminds, yarning also entails an ethical relation: 'The risk of listening to a story is that it can obligate us in ramifying webs that cannot be know in advance of venturing among their myriad threads.'[4] In her earlier work, Haraway (1994) disabuses notions of storying as 'merely' textual: 'In no way is storytelling opposed to materiality. But materiality itself is tropic; it makes us swerve, it trips us; it is a knot of the textual, technical, mythic / oneiric, organic, political, and economic.'[5] For Haraway, storytelling is a collaborative, ethical, and material practice. The Camille stories that end *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) both model and beckon for:

> *collaborative and divergent story-making practices, in narrative, audio, and visual performances and text in materialities from digital to sculptural to everything practicable [...] stories are suggestive string figures at best; they long for a fuller weave that still keeps the patterns open, with ramifying attachment sites for storytellers yet to com*e.[6]

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[2] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 12.
[3] Haraway, "A Game of Cat's Cradle," 70.
[4] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 132.
[5] Haraway, "A Game of Cat's Cradle," 62.
[6] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 143-144, italics in original.

Along with its thread to storytelling, we additionally work yarning practices for their material history as collectively shared 'women's crafts,' for their rich conceptual legacy in feminist thinking (Springgay, 2010), and for their uses in feminist 'craftivist' projects around the world (Haraway, 2016).

Our own methodology in this study has also been a game of researchers' cat's cradle that threads oddkin relationships. We playfully call this finding *datakin*. Making datakin consists of reworking and remixing our data through successive waves of engagement to create collective and more-than-human researcher identities or assemblages (Lenz-Taguchi, 2013; Ringrose & Renold, 2014). Drawing on Lenz-Taguchi's (2013) model of working with her research team to deindividualise both data and analysis, we moved from personal experience and identities to relational experience and more-than-human collectivity in our data analysis. Our datakin forged new intimacies between pedagogical materials, images and 'dartafacts' (Renold, 2017), our own bodies, field notes, emails and discussions, and student reflections on the workshop. As we worked with the data and the data worked us, bodies and ideas rematerialised and repatterned and found new kin.
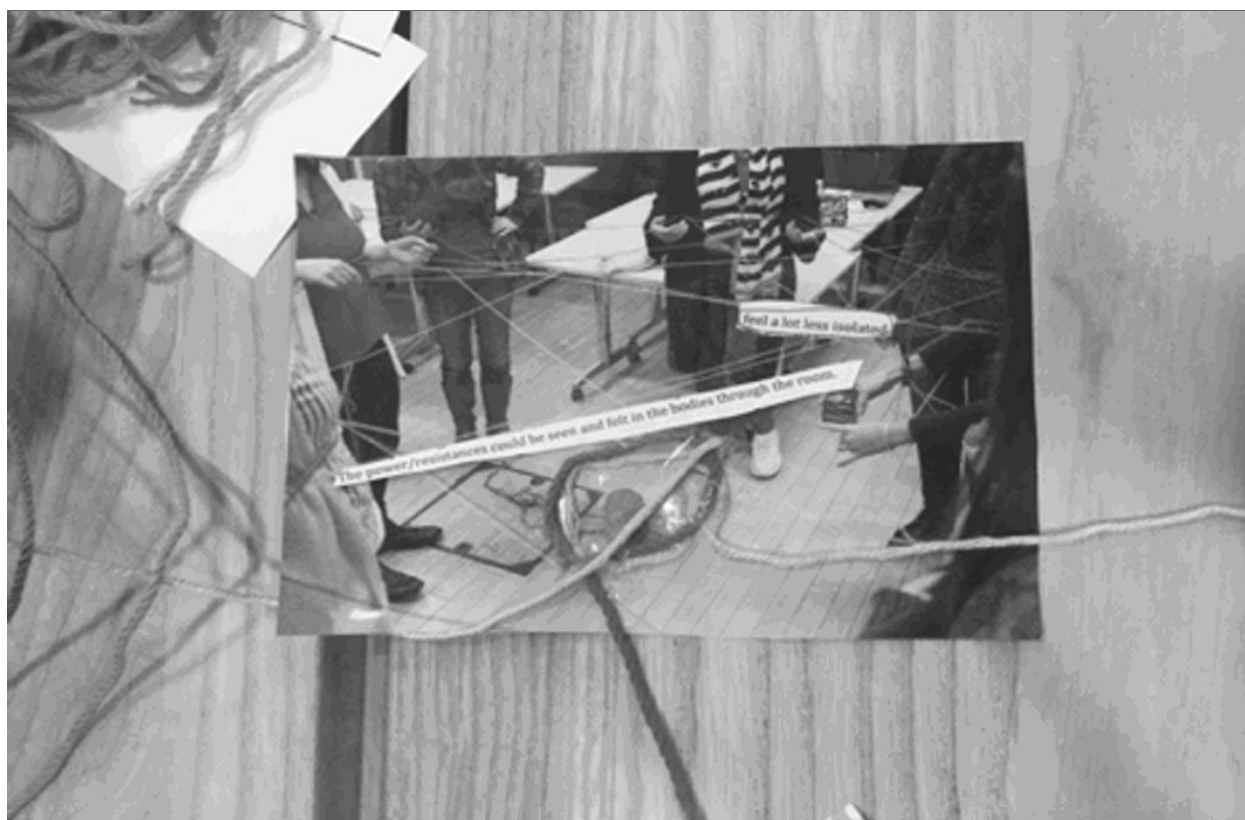

Figure 1. Shiva Zarabadi**,** *Finding datakin*. © Shiva Zarabadi.

For example, at a Gender and Education Association conference, we gathered in a glassed atrium and stretched out at a communal table. Bits of data (paper cut-ups of student feedback and our self-reflections, photos, cellotape, memories, our bodies, leftover yarn, paper, scissors, sunlight) moved about and found new kin. 'Data hotspots'—*Look, the same red yarn as in a photo!*—took up our hands, travelled along the table, attached to words, images and ideas. Bodymind intensities glowed (MacLure, 2013; Ringrose and Renold, 2014) and we moved and became-with-the-data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; MacLure, 2012). We additionally string-figured amidst swirling bodies of conference attendees and nearby discussions at tables of gender- and feminist-focused literature, threading datakin in a hothouse of gendered thinking, collaboration, and idea-making (Figure 1). The material had collective agency in how these datakin shipped and shaped. As Lenz-Taguchi (2013) has reflected on a similar process undertaken with her doctoral students:

> the multiplicity of different kinds of readings of data that our collaborative work produced helped us create such a multiplicity of fields and flows. In the middle of such a multiplicity, it became possible to acentre and asubjectify ourselves in a way that produced a researcher reality that I have called a collective-body-assemblage, and/or a collective-researcher-assemblage.[7]

We also wrestled with stitching together what might be deemed 'oddkin' theoretical stances. In particular, we've worked, thought, and taught alongside conceptual tensions between our simultaneous commitments to intersectional feminism and posthumanist theory (Puar, 2007; 2011; Puar et al, 2008). While we follow Haraway (2016) in honoring 'the obligations that inhere when starting from situated histories, situated stories,'[8] we have also worked to get outside of positioning identitarian logics as movement-limiting placeholders (Braidotti, 2013; Massumi, 2002; Puar 2011; Puar et al, 2008; Zarabadi & Ringrose, forthcoming). In reflecting on her own work using both intersectionality and Deleuzian conceptions of the assemblage, Jasbir Puar (Puar et al, 2008) acknowledges an 'unintended, but curious instructive, tension'[9] between the two theoretical stances. Puar argues for allowing for 'conviviality' rather than oppositionality between theories. We see intersectionality and posthumanism as 'oddkin' theories than can cohabitate within a 'zone of awkward engagement' (Tsing, 2005), or live within tension, without promising harmonic and frictionless resolution. While we are committed to situated, intersectional politics, which we revision as 'intra-sectional' (Ringrose, 2016), we also intuit that practices and processes of making 'oddkin' between students, teachers, objects, theories, memories, bodies, and materials might shake our relationship to totalizing and normalising narratives of gender, race, sexuality, religion and nation as well as pedagogy and education. Making kin does not imply we ignore our situatedness and differences, but rather 'stitch together

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[7] Lenz Taguchi, "Images of Thinking," 714.
[8] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 131.
[9] Puar et al, "Q & A," n.p.

improbable collaborations without worrying too much about ontological kinds.'[10] The classroom, using Barad's (2003) words, is then '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.'[11]

The troubled lifeworld of the classroom

We want to handle the tension in this course delicately. We are not suggesting that this final workshop neatly resolved tensions and created a utopian or intersectionally-blind classroom community. Indeed, we are moving away from a progress narrative that sees tension as stable, individualized, and/or ever fully resolvable, to thinking of it as an animating force. As sites of historical trauma and inequities, particularly for raced, gendered, classed, disabled, queer, and non-normative bodies, the university is an unevenly (never fully) safe space (Ahmed, 2017) that impinges on bodies in 'vastly unjust patterns of pain and joy.'[12] When we teach and learn in the gender classroom we might argue that we are always already inhabiting a 'damaged lifeworld' (Nxumalo *et al*, 2015) or, following Haraway, a 'troubled' lifeword. In this iteration of the course, some students expressed discomfort with particular peers and tensions circulated, intensified, and travelled around discussion groups. Familiar pedagogical salves were introduced, including going back over ground rules for discussion, reviewing equity policies, and initiating purposeful pedagogical dialogue to intervene into and try to repair. As pedagogues at points we were overcome with worries over maintaining the classroom as a safe space, minimizing conflicts between peers, while also being threaded within institutionalized and neoliberal university demands.

While Haraway (2016) foregrounds modes of living amongst and responding to global environmental destruction, displacements, extinctions, exploitations, and impoverishments, she eschews apocalyptic thinking arguing instead to think of these as 'urgencies rather than emergencies.'[13] We take this as an ethical cue, and argue that the tension produced a particular *urgency* in the classroom that was carried into the final workshop. Urgencies prompt, nudge, press us into action, at times in novel and wholly unexpected ways. Affect, as a deindividualised (in)capacitation, has likewise been explored as a pedagogical force whereby bodies (human and non-human) may be simultaneously stimulated, irritated, set in motion, provoked, and/or diminished (Albrecht Crane & Sack, 2007; Ellsworth, 2004; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Mulcahy, 2012; 2016; Niccolini, 2016; Ringrose & Renold, 2016; Springgay & Zaliwska, 2016). Affect then travels at vast scales beyond face-to-face human and more-than-human encounter and signals the intensive, immersive, relational way bodies intra-act in ways that augment capacities

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[10] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 136.
[11] Barad, "Posthuman Performativity," 817.
[12] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 1.
[13] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 37.

(Massumi, 2002). As such, the teachers' and students' bodies, the spaces we teach and learn in, and the very materialities that make them up are affective 'resonating chambers'[14] for larger histories, tensions, traumas, possibilities, and trouble.

When the yarn was introduced in this course, it affectively animated (Chen, 2013; Niccolini, 2016; Springgay & Truman, 2016) bodies and minds in a very different way than the hour-long presentation on affect theory that preceded it or some of the preceding sessions based on more normative pedagogies of delivery of content and dialogue. Author 1, for example, arrived as a guest on the final day of the course, somewhat affectively detached from the earlier intensities. Nevertheless, the yarn workshop bore an urgency. This urgency was an *active* and *activating* non-human force that both produced and dispersed new affective relationalities. Haraway (2016) argues that bodies make each other capable, 'adding competencies to engage competencies, adding perspectives to engage perspectives, adding subjectivities to engage subjectivities, adding versions to understand version.'[15] The yarn was then an affective conductor (Dernikos, 2015; Puar, 2011) that helped us 'render each other capable in ways not written into preexisting scripts, but invented or provoked'[16] in relation.

The yarn put into motion a string figure game that may have helped affectively reattune bodies in how to collectively navigate the troubled lifeworld of the classroom. Author 2 recounts how the objects (red terror jar, a key chain, a magazine, a necklace, and mobile phone) in her group intra-acted in entangled memories, lively stories, embodied connections, and shared movements. Yarn travelled back and forth with green used to signify identity, blue relationships, orange belonging, purple masculinity, and red violence. There were then knots/concepts that came within the shared stories. As the group worked the first layer of yarn, their stories became entangled, then the next layer started. As each group shared what they had knotted together and then the similar knots in small groups entangled together starting to create a whole class giant string figure with knots of identity, knots of violence, knots of belonging moving around the classroom with yarns finding anchor in further stories, objects, affects, and colours.

AUTHOR 2 captures this in her fieldnotes:

> Yarns flying, throwing and catching yarns, yarns starts from the middle, no beginning and end point... No one knows how and where the yarn is going to land, all heads following its flying hands reaching to capture, the moments of flying and landing to attach to another unknown object,… we don't know which yarn will fly where in which direction, whose stories is going to be told, what knot in this story is going to be fly along to be tied to which knot in another group. Eyes just following the material, yarns flying and eyes

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14 Massumi, *Politics of Affect*, 114.
15 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 128.
16 Ibid, 128.

following [...]

In AUTHOR 2's fieldnotes the yarn exchange is described as enacting a relationality what we call 'kinshipping' happening in the middeling the inbetween of the yarn knots. Enacting the process was 'a risky proposition in relentless historical relational contingency'[17] as each element of the string figure (students' bodies, wool strands, shared objects, memories, and stories) carried uniquely situated affective intensities and at the same time became different in each singular encounter with the other bodies, objects, spaces, and memories present. With the actualization and the experiences of in-betweenness, the bodies, stories and objects transform and remix.

Figure 2. Shiva Zarabadi, *Yarn kinshipping across the classroom*. © Shiva Zarabadi

This entanglement of human and more-than-human bodies 'intra-acting' (Barad, 2007) with one another made it made it more and more impossible to recognize the boundaries of each person

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[17] Ibid, 15.

and object. The objects of each student as part of his/her body became part of the other bodies affording new affective relationalities. For Barad (2007) in such human and more- than- human entanglements, bodies and objects do not stand in externality to each other but rather as part of each other in mutual relationality.[18] The classroom became then an active and shared body.

Yarn is itself an enfleshed word—etymologically tied to guts and innards through the Sanskrit *hira* 'vein; entrails,' Latin *hernia* 'rupture,' and Greek *khorde* 'intestine, gut-string.'[19] In feedback on the yarn workshop, a student echoed the idea of the classroom as body, writing:

> // the thread of wool and cotton being DNA that tied all of us together //

For Haraway (2016), DNA strands are string figures, 'ropy chromosomes'[20] that 'iterate, deviate, elaborate.'[21] She cites craftivists Christine Wertheim and Margaret Wertheim's Crochet Coral Reef project which has sparked a worldwide collective knitting practice to map deteriorating coral reef colonies. Wertheim and Wertheim describe how 'every woolen form has its fibrous DNA.'[22] Likewise, in our workshop the yarn stitched together a collective body of entangled 'storied tissues.'[23] The classroom became both intelligent and intelligible as this collective body through the entanglement of our differences. This new, precarious and temporary body was both locally situated (in this classroom amidst this group of bodies) and globally dispersed (in the stories, materialities, and attachments carried from five continents). We were all quite literally *caught up* in the process. This becoming-with each other also opened new forms of ethics. As Haraway (2016) asks, 'How can we think in times of urgencies *without* the self- indulgent and self- fulfilling myths of apocalypse, when every fiber of our being is interlaced, even complicit, in the webs of processes that must somehow be engaged and repatterned?'[24] The yarn urged us to collectively navigate tensions and to jointly move, think and create 'across deep damage and significant difference.'[25]

Kinshipping

In the Camille stories that end her book, Haraway (2016) stories a future world threatened by overpopulation and ecological destruction. Humans of the future find kin through patterns of movement and migration, chance meetings and conscious encounter, spontaneous collaboration and carefully cultivated practices of making- and becoming-with. Opening the stories, she

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[18] Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 140.
[19] Douglas Harper, "Yarn," https://www.etymonline.com/word/yarn.
[20] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 61.
[21] Ibid, 78.
[22] Ibid, 78.
[23] Ibid, 56.
[24] Ibid, 35.
[25] Ibid, 138.

submits: "We need to make kin symchthonically, sympoetically. Who and whatever we are with, we need to make-with—become-with, compose-with.'[26] As part of this goal, she coins the slogan: 'Make kin, not babies!' We take a thread from what Haraway (2016) calls her 'linguistically promiscuous habits'[27] and rework 'kin' into a verb--*kinshipping*--to capture the active traffic of the yarn workshop. Kinshipping is an apt moniker for how intersectionality might merge with posthumanist thinking. A ship temporarily contains while hailing futurity through what it moves and passes on. Shipping signals traffic, transfer, conveyance, movement. Shipping additionally carries histories of how capital and profit and particular materialities from particular localities are carried in at times exploitative ways. Indeed, we can map the traffic of the colonial world through its shipping routes. In a footnote, Haraway (2016) cautions:

> Making kin must be done with respect for historically situated, diverse kinships that should not be either generalized or approached in the interest of a too-quick common humanity, multispieces collection, or similar category. Kinships exclude as well as include, and they should do that. Alliances must be attentive to that matter.[28]

She cites the Black Lives Matter movement as instructive in 'recogni[s]ing specificities, priorities, and urgencies.'[29] We can see how the *immediate* need for accounting for black deaths by US police violence loses its urgency and political context within rejoinders that 'all lives matter.' Haraway additionally notes the threads of settler colonialism inherent in, 'intending to make kin while not seeing both past and ongoing colonial and other policies for extermination and/or assimilation augurs for very dysfunctional 'families', to say the least.'[30] So we want to move cautiously and think intersectionality when we make kin, aware of the risks and power differentials working across differently situated bodies.

In another thread, kinship within Western culture is traditionally thought of as a property-bearing patrilineal 'line' rooted in a 'family tree.' Kinshipping as a process of 'making kin' (Haraway, 2016) disrupts this arboreal thinking (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Lenz Taguchi, 2013) and calls for an active traffic between the human and nonhuman outside of a patrilineal, or even human-centered, kinship line. Indeed, in the workshops, we were just as much 'kin' with the non-human objects as the humans to which they were attached. While highly situated and uniquely storied, the objects, histories, and bodies in the classroom were shipped and kept moving, rather than being held in oppositional stalemate. Kinshipping enabled 'lively stories' (Van Dooren, 2014) and *lively kin* and *lively knots*, affectively active places for difference to matter and move and emerge, but also created a space for paying attention to situated matters of concern in complex

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[26] Ibid, 102.
[27] Ibid, 205.
[28] Ibid, 207.
[29] Ibid, 207.
[30] Ibid, 207.

human and more-than-human encounters.[31] Stories in feeling, making and thinking while working with yarns as part of worlding can tie those various socialities to new knots and new kin. The yarn carried bodies to other bodies, and allowed a form of temporary visitation and as Haraway (2016) submits making kin requires us:

> to go visiting, to venture off the beaten path to meet unexpected, non-natal kin, and
> To strike up conversations, to pose and respond to interesting questions, to propose
>   together something together unanticipated, to take up the unasked for obligations
> of   having met.[32]

Kinshipping is likewise a process of visiting. It entails moving, shipping, and (odd)kin-making while remaining highly attuned to the differences and situatedness of what is being carried into each tenuous relationality. Kinshipping urges 'the energetic work of holding open the possibility that surprises are in store, that something *interesting* is about to happen, but only if one cultivates the virtue of letting those one visits intra-actively shape what occurs.'[33]

Feelers, tentacles, and finding spaces for *give*

Kinshipping offered a means of moving within tensions. Tension is sometimes imagined as a kind of material thickening—*the tension was so thick I could cut it with a knife*. Tension is also sometimes imagined as a line—such as when yarn is pulled taut. Rather than sharp and straight lines, however, the yarn in this workshop more often hung in sweeping arches or wiggled along the floor (see figures 2, 3 & 4). While lines have been productively theorized (see for ex., Ingold, 2007; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), we feel Haraway's (2016) notion of *tentacticality* is a more apt figuration for how the yarn moved throughout the classroom. The tangle of yarn produced *living lines* or perhaps better *living limbs* if we think with Haraway's 'tentacles' (figures 3 & 4).

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[31] Blaise *et al*, "Modest Witness(ing)," 39.
[32] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 130.
[33] Ibid, 127.

Figure 3. Audrey Jean, *Yarn tentacle*. © Audrey Jean.

Haraway shares that 'tentacle comes from Latin tentaculum, meaning "feeler," and tentare, meaning "to feel" and "to try'.''[34] There is a fraught gendering of tentacles that we find compelling such as feminisms' chronologising within 'waves,' the male gaze's fetishisation of women's 'curves,' and the fact that jellyfish are called 'medusas' in many languages. Tentacled creatures move through undulations and torque with quick successions of tension and relaxation carried down their multiple limbs. They are immersed in sense worlds and continuous movement (Hayward, 2012). Like tentaculum, the yarn, we might argue, acted as affective 'feelers' in the classroom. A multi-tentacled creature, the human and non-human bodies in the room became an entanglement of swaying limbs that touched and that were in turn touched back (Barad, 2012). This allowed for a new form of 'collective knowing and doing, an ecology of practices'[35] or what Haraway calls 'tentacular thinking.' The yarn as a *feeler* offered intimacy from a safe(r) distance,

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[34] Ibid, 131.
[35] Ibid, 34.

a dispersed means 'to think-with a host of companions in sympoietic threading, felting, tangling, tracking, and sorting.'[36]

Figure 4. Jessica Ringrose, *Multi-tentacular finger*. © Jessica Ringrose.

The yarn also rendered bodies capable in different ways. Culling student feedback, we found the following verbs (many repeated multiple times) were used to describe the capacities activated during the workshop:

resonate // gather // carry // find // feel // try // make // throw // listen // create // affect
think // impact // connect // discuss // generate // engage // realise // hear // depict // unravel
pass // span // use // bond // present // visualise // get // enjoy // collapse // support // resist
not know // interact // go through // want // capture // give // put // decorate //participate
send // join // ask // express // link // stand // shape // bring // inherit // work // see // form // take //
explore // return // input // build // sum up // experience // lose

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[36] Ibid, 31.

A common thread in the feedback was the 'surprise' participants felt in response to whom and what the yarn connected them. For example, Author 3 brought a charm-bracelet-affect-object to the workshop that intra-acted with a baseball bat necklace on the table, coming from familial kin these objects created new queer kin in the classroom--knitted together they created new passages of connection and relation and thinkings/doings that in turn connected back out to other memory-sensory-objects in the room. These new figurations created a sense of wondrous (MacLure, 2013) surprise for participants at the table about how 'stories and objects and affects... connected.' Surprise is akin to being 'thrown' or 'thrown for a loop,' a colloquialism that describes 'being bewildered, dazzled, disoriented and shocked by some event.'[37] Students threw and wrapped thread around objects and bodies, but also turned and (in turn) were turned to follow the path of the thread to encounters with new bodies (human and not).

Figure 5. Jessica Ringrose, *Chair yarn entanglement*. © Jessica Ringrose.

In their feedback, participants tack back and forth between the humans and objects having agency—they describe how the yarn did things, the humans did things, the objects did things to humans, the humans did things to objects— articulating an entanglement of agency. In figure 5, for example, chairs were stacked and threaded with shared objects (e.g. swimming goggles;

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[37] Morris, "Thrown for a Loop," n.p.

charm bracelet; an earring). When the group told the story of their sculpture, they called it 'strength in fragility' given two people momentarily held hands and balanced precariously on the chair-object-yarned-assemblage. Here the brought objects, their situated histories, the space of the room, and human bodies met in careful encounter. The instability of this arrangement, its 'fragility' and capacity to topple over with an accidental bump, spurred embodied meditations on precarity in relation to gender, collaboration, and identity.

The yarn threaded to human bodies gave us a material capacity to play and think with and through tensions of identity, self, other privileging relationality. Although the connecting yarn could be pulled tight or loosened, as mentioned earlier, it most often draped gently between bodies, objects, and furniture. Through this slackness, the yarn allowed for *give* between the objects, classroom built space, and human bodies. *Give* is a form of encounter between bodies. When we test for give, we're both feeling out and respecting something's tensility, the intensity of its attachments to other bodies. Allowing room for give is both a simultaneous exploration and honoring of a material's vulnerability and limits. Calibrating give is an provisionary and embodied process of navigating tension. It carefully urges a material to move without causing rupture, damage, or snapping. Finding give is a process of being responsive to other bodies' limits and further connections, a process akin to what Haraway (2016) calls *response-ability*. The yarn 'tentacles' acted then were a means of finding give within tense relations. The yarn extended bodies beyond individualized, self-contained human and material units and moved through dispersals within a human and non-human classroom ecology. Through such tentacular thinking, we were able to affectively repattern our relationalities and collectively cultivate ethical practices of finding, experimenting with, and allowing room for *give*.

Stitching together liveable classrooms

When the class left, the room was a mess of half-empty crisp bags, water bottles, coffee cups, scissors, yarn strings, and ink-drained pens. A few students stayed behind and helped return the room to its original form. Without its human companion-species, the yarn no longer held any urgings. Like the detritus of an empty classroom, past and present inequities 'compost' (Haraway, 2016) in the troubled lifeworld of the classroom. These are not things we can fix or render untroubling in a single course or even single lifetime of teaching, but 'trouble' we must 'stay with' (Haraway, 2016). In this collective string figuring, tensions found temporary dispersals, anchors, and forged practices of kinshipping. Haraway (2016), describes this complex process particularly well:

> Playing games of string figures is about giving and receiving patterns, dropping threads and failing but sometimes finding something that worlds, something consequential and maybe even beautiful, that wasn't there before, of relaying connections that matter, of

telling stories hand in hand, digit upon digit, attachment site upon attachment site, to craft conditions for finite flourishing.[38]

We want to end by imagining what it might mean to 'craft conditions for finite flourishing' in the gender classroom. As we've submitted, the gender classroom is a troubled lifeworld. Rather than avoiding or promising the impossible task of fully resolving tension, we follow Haraway in seeking to cultivate posthuman pedagogies that 'stay with the trouble of damaged worlds.'[39]. Staying with the trouble is a 'string figure game of caring for and with precarious worldings.'[40] Such worldings are a process of *making-with* a host of human and non-human actors where there is 'always-too-much connection [and] where response-ability must be cobbled together.'[41] Posthuman pedagogies must experiment with 'rearranging old things and proposing new things, new patterns of feelings and action.'[42] We conclude with three possibilities for posthuman pedagogies which we leave intentionally provisional, rather than proscriptive:

1.   *Making kin.*

Posthuman pedagogies might experiment with making (odd)kin. As coinhabitants of the troubled lifeworld of the classroom, we might cultivate practices that allow for response-able encounters between human and non-human bodies. Kinshipping is making kin as an active and mobile process of encounter which acknowledges and responds to what is carried (the fraught histories, damages, traumas, and inequities) and the risky connections inherent in such work. Kinshipping might involve allowing spaces for give within tensions, allowing movement without causing damage or rupture. Haraway's notion of 'visiting' is helpful in remembering that each meeting is a temporary and non-binding practice of kin-making. When we visit the troubled lifeworld of the classroom, we begin a process of working towards temporary and 'finite flourishing.' Each body in the classroom is ethically entangled in the process of that worldmaking. We must continually ask, what conditions do we need for each body to flourish here? Which bodies bear unjust patterns of joy and pain? How do we live peaceably and ethically with these new kin?

2.   *Making-together.*

Posthuman pedagogies might experiment with making-together. As cohinhabitants of the troubled lifeworld of the classroom, we might work our tentacular thinking muscles to feel out specific problems, challenges, urgencies. We might attune ourselves to the local urgings of the more-than-human forces and materialities that animate our time together. We might cultivate multiple ways of making-together: co-theorizing, co-storytelling, co-crafting, co-writing, co-

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[38] Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 10.
[39] Ibid, 150.
[40] Ibid, 56.
[41] Ibid, 11.
[42] Ibid, 150.

constructing, co-organizing, co-thinking, co-enduring. We must think together how to best to rework 'unasked for patterns' of inequity, injustice, and pain both in and outside of the classroom.

3.   Practicing response-ability.

Posthuman pedagogies might experiment with different forms of response-ability. As coinhabitants of the troubled lifeworld of the classroom, we must be responsive to the inheritances, differences, and situatedness that move and entangle in classrooms. We must allow for and be responsive to a range of affective, emotional, material and bodily responses. Differently situated bodies will have different responses to different theories, different pedagogies, different spaces, and different classroom practices. We must find and feel out for spaces for 'give' without forcing rupture or irreparable damage. We must relentlessly ask, what are our limits, what is sustainable here, how much can we (individually and collectively) take (Braidotti, 2013)?

String figuring is non-linear and can begin and re-begin anew, so posthuman pedagogies might start with any thread: when we make-together we make kin, when we make kin we are swept into relations of response-ability, when we respond to and find give among other bodies we, in turn, make new kin. If the classroom is always a troubled lifeworld alive with past and present inequities, we need 'human and nonhuman partners to heal these places, building networks, pathways, nodes, and webs of and for a newly habitable world.'[43] As we further experiment with posthuman pedagogies, our yarnchive accumulates in a London office (Figure 6 shows the entangled material remnants of our kinshipping). Our yarnchive remains animated, lively, mobile, as visitors have taken snippets away with them carrying new tendrils/ tentacles to new spaces and possibilities both here and yet-to-come.

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[43] Ibid, 137.

Figure 6. Jessica Ringrose, *Yarnchive.* © Jessica Ringrose.

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