Researching in prison education spaces: Thinking and feeling-with Posthuman, Post-Qualitative, Feminist (New) Materialism 'beings' to disentangle methodology

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Abstract

In this process-article, I have considered what complexities might *affect* research of prison education when using Posthuman, Post Qualitative, Feminist (New) Materialism thinking. Through an imagined conversation with these 3 concepts as abstract 'beings', I have answered provocative questions about my research methods, apparatus, and ethics. Working at the intersections of abstractness (imagined conversations) and materialisms (creative, stitched outcomes and physical prison spaces), *we* think and feel-through the use of walking interviews, a visual matrix, and diffractive analysis to research the experiences of teachers working in prisons. Research of prison education is messy, and in embracing the discomfort, this process-article will enable others to traverse the knots using creative, affective approaches to research in prisons. In being-*with* these concepts, I trace the influences of philosophers and theorists in these practices, including the work of Deleuze & Guattari, Braidotti, Barad, Haraway, Manning, St. Pierre, Springgay, Truman, and others. The outcomes are unknown except for the benefit of opening new ways of thinking and feeling with inquiry and the writing of that process.

1. Introduction

I invite you to allow your feelings, thoughts, and body to stay with the textures of this process-article which is bound by real and metaphorical strings (Haraway, 2016); between differing humans, non-humans, theories, philosophies, agendas, policies, affects and more.[1] I think and feel with theoretical concepts, recognising this as part of my 'empirical' research undertakings (Truman, 2019).

The topic of education in prisons is a well-researched phenomenon, but my philosophical underpinnings and transdisciplinary approach may enable a richer exploration of the complexities tied up in prison education research. This work is at the

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[1] The term process-article comes from the ontology of becoming, the ideas and concepts emerge as I write and as you read. The paper, writer, reader, words, ideas are becoming together as an assemblage.

intersection of many different subject disciplines including but not limited to prison education, criminology, carceral geography, sociology, philosophy, and textiles.

The intention here, now, is to feel through the entanglements of different threads in this research; the structural hierarchies of prison education and the post-structural philosophies informing the inquiry. I am pushing against normative structures in academia, which reflects the restrictive norms of prison spaces. Both equally constraining, with perceived boundaries that should not be crossed, hegemonic foundations and patriarchal expectations of rule-following and oppression. I am therefore becoming-activist during the writing, working with and against these boundaries, pulling threads of entangled knots, leaving some loose, some tense and some unravelled in an act of erasure.

My background in textiles is central to this experience; using language and image I visualise the process for the reader, weaving disparate entities that are brought together in this fold. The writing here is layered and textured with a multitude of affects, these layers are enmeshed through this writing, where knots get tangled further as they would on the back of an embroidery, or further still felting the threads so they can no longer be undone. I represent this through drawings and textile pieces, created in response to the feeling of being both inside and outside of prison and academic borderlines.

I firstly outline the very 'human' context of why I am undertaking this research and the premise of this process-article. I then delve into the domain of Posthumanism, Post-Qualitative inquiry, and Feminist (New) Materialisms to explore how these concepts are entangled and to rationalise the research intentions. I do not intend to find answers here, but I invite the reader to feel-through these knots with me, (an early career researcher), at the start of this research journey; hopefully, the outcomes will

diffract and emerge for you – and me – as we read and untangle, becoming-together.

2. Context

The English government insist that education is crucial in the rehabilitation of prisoners but there is concern that the quality of the education in prisons is not adequate (Coates, 2016; Prison Strategy White paper, 2021). Whilst there have been many studies exploring the experiences of prisoners in prison education, the consideration of teacher experiences in this field have largely been ignored. Wright (2005) recognises the conflict between teachers in a caring profession, working within a space that is designed to objectify and punish people. He looked at the 'culture shock' of novice teacher experiences in prisons and concluded that prison teachers will forever live out their professional lives in a space of liminality, within the in-between or 'borderlands' of these opposed spaces, which I suggest can feel like a 'third space' for these teachers (Soja, 1998).

A recent report entitled *Hidden Voices: the experiences of teachers working in prisons* by the Union of Colleges and Universities (UCU) & Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA, 2021) has attempted to advocate for these teachers by gathering questionnaire responses regarding experience. Of those teachers surveyed for the report (412 responses), 70% stated that they intended to leave the profession in the next 5 years. Almost half of the respondents believed that feeling safer *in* the prison would make it more likely for them to stay in their role.

The findings highlighted the complexities of prison teaching, taking on board the need to understand 'jail craft'.[2] The recommendations suggested that the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) work with teacher education providers to create prison teacher specific modules or courses. The research I propose here may contribute to the discussions of this and aligns with the MOJ (2020) areas of research interest which includes

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[2] 'Jail craft' a term that is multi-layered is linked to dialogue, body language and other discourse practices. It is mentioned frequently by teachers (and officers) as a tacit practice that utilises empathy and affective approaches to

'deal' with the changing and complex demands of working in a prison setting (Peacock et. al. 2017). The use of the term craft further links with my exploration of stitch and textiles in this weave.

themes of 'Space and place'; how space affects interactions (p. 230).

Vorhaus (2014) looked at prison education through the lens of Kant, recognising prisoners as moral agents and asking, 'Is prison education compatible with respect for the status of the prisoner as a moral, autonomous human being?' Taking this into account, and that this research takes a more-than-human approach, it raises the question:[3]

'Can research of prison education respect the status of **all** that exists *within* prisons as agents?'

The removal of the word autonomous here is significant as the prison space can strip individuals of their autonomy; it is this knot that I seek to explore, whilst traversing various other entanglements as part of the research. I seek to ensure that *all* within a prison are given agency in this research design, yet in trying to encompass all, there are exclusions that cannot be avoided. Prisoners are not participants, yet, they *make* the prison space, giving life to its structure and so, are entangled in this web with their omni-presence. Their relationship along with all the non-human elements of the prison are emergent in the research and so are already there.

Therefore, this process-article diffractively feels-through these knots, bringing the teacher voice to the fore, acknowledging that the prison education space, the human and non-human participants and all that this encompasses is and always was there, but also that it is (k)not there or is yet to be.

3. Inquiry Methods

This process-article or *meshwork is* informed by Tim Ingold's (2011, 2016) use of meshwork as a metaphor for life being lived along lines of *becoming*. Ingold speaks of entanglements to mean literal interwoven lines that don't just cross in a network but materially grow and move together (Ingold, 2011). Furthermore, entanglement as described by Barad in (Murris, 2022) is not merely when two separate entities become intwined together, but by becoming

entangled, they lose their separate identities, their autonomy, and become part of the same knot. With this view, I am not able to separate all that I am from the research, or all that the teachers or prisoners are, we are all entangled in this becoming-together.

This then further entangles Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) ideas relating to the rhizome; here I see the teachers, prisoners, and everything else that matters, as a rhizome together. As illustrated in figure 1 (below), this can create new lines of flight that are still emmeshed with all that influence it.
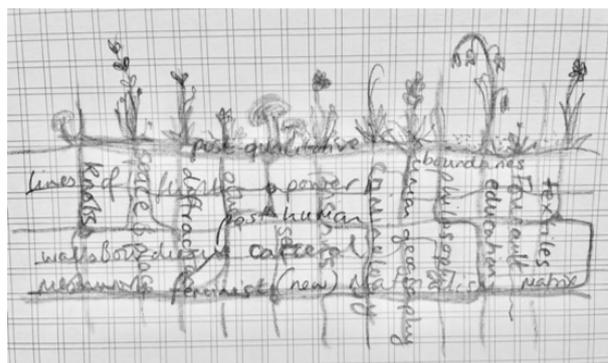

Figure 1: Rhizome of entanglements, authors drawing recognising influences on the research design.

The terms Post-Qualitative, Post Human, Feminist (New) Materialisms are ambiguous and abstract concepts that relate to methods-becoming; they are therefore difficult to hold down and evade a single clear definition or explanation. However, below I set-out to describe my interpretations of the concepts and my reasons for using them.

I am using a post-qualitative or 'more than qualitative' approach in this process-article to enact meaning making (Introna, 2018); sharing this research method in such a way leaves me vulnerable, as I share my raw thinking. Post-qualitative enquiry has a responsibility to not only observe the practice but also to be part of transforming it; pushing methodological boundaries, it challenges the status quo offering 'more than' data collection and analysis. As Truman (2018, in Gunnarsson, 2018) describes it: 'We need to shift from thinking about methods as

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[3] In posthuman writings the term 'more-than-human' is used to represent a greater range of relations between humans and non-humans, society, nature and all the 'forces, bonds, attractions, and interactions' in between

(Whatmore, 2002). 'It challenges the idea that humans are separable from their worlds, or that society is separable from nature' (Noorani & Brigstocke, 2018).

processes of gathering data toward methods as a becoming entangled in relations' (p. 204).

The posthuman element in this process-article enables me to think and feel-with many different material threads to de-centre the human, considering '*objects, things, animals, elements, and theories*' (Ulmer, 2017, p. 10). Ulmer suggests that in doing this new way of thinking in our research, 'the research might become more than itself' (p. 10).

Feminist (New) Materialism is a term used with its own entanglements. The use of the word 'new' as part of this concept contains the potential to dismiss prior ontological thoughts and associations (Dupuis et al, 2022). However, there is a turn in recognising materialisms from a feminist perspective. If we erase the 'feminism' (which implies consideration of race, gender, sexuality, and ability) there is concern that humanism and whiteness is centred (Truman, 2018). The term *Feminist (New) Materialism* is therefore used here as a provocation to foreground ethics and politics as part of my inquiries.

To give definitive definitions for Post-Qualitative, Posthuman, and Feminist (New) Materialstm is beyond the scope of this article – furthermore, such an expectation would align with what Murris terms an objectivist, positivist paradigm (Murris, 2022a); and, to a large extent would operate as an antithesis to these concepts. Barad, (2007) a key thinker in this field insists that concepts cannot 'be' without the material influence of those who interact with them to make them understandable. And, so, I attempt to do that here, through and with the writing.

I am using an imagined conversation with these 3 concepts as embodied abstract 'beings.' They pose provocative questions for me to answer about the research methods, apparatus, and ethics.

4. Meeting with Posthuman, Post-Qualitative and Feminist (New) Materialism Concepts as beings

Within my imagination, I enter a cosy pub, off a farmland lane in the countryside of England. Inside, I have asked three friends to meet me, I am late to the party, but they are already present. Chatting loudly, they call me over to join in with their conversation. I fear I have interrupted a lively debate, but they reassure me, grab me a drink and invite me to think and feel-through the research ideas with them.

These trans-corporeal friends have connected from different places and spaces in time, to support and coach me through these research entanglements. They are each experienced scholars, academics, artists, philosophers, writers, theorists, and thinkers. They don't assume they know the answers but are happy to guide me through with the right questions. As a collective '*we*' (Braidotti, 2019) there is interrogation of the methodological choices when undertaking Posthuman, Post Qualitative, Feminist (New) Materialism enquiry into the experiences of teachers in prison education in England. This process-article sits at an intersection of materiality, (using stitched creations and drawing to make-meaning) and abstractness (through the imagined conversations).

These concepts as imagined beings are interrelated, fluid and porous, moving between states and understandings of one another; like the terms themselves, these imaginaries are characters who are entangled. There is no truth or untruth, when we look at philosophy, ethics and materialisms through Spinoza's thinking, the unreal merges with the real, we are all part of the same flux, our imagination therefore is also truth (Dolphijn, 2021).

I am not quite sure if these 'beings' are within me and / or *of* me.[4] I am also unsure of how much the dialogue is my re-presentation of them and how much is not mine (I'm not quite sure that it matters).

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[4] Hyphens/interstice: I admit that this process-article has an excessive use of the hyphen. However, each is considered and justified. Truman (2021) discusses the hyphen as a 'forced milieu' where two entities, (equal in importance) are brought together to create a third, new entity which invokes different thinking. Truman acknowledges that this must be done with consideration, and responsibility ensuring not to bring whiteness to spaces where it is not welcomed and invites us to:

> 'Affirm some hyphens
> And/or
> Refuse some hyphens.' (Truman, 2021. p. 159).

I do, however, want to honour the concepts and their originators. I acknowledge that thinking and feeling-*with* these concepts the boundaries are blurred and that is how it should be. It can at times also be uncomfortable; a mêlée of knots unravelling. I am wanting to embody these affective feelings as material outcomes and have been stitching with the ideas as they form (see figure 2). Stitch and weave will therefore become-agent in the research.
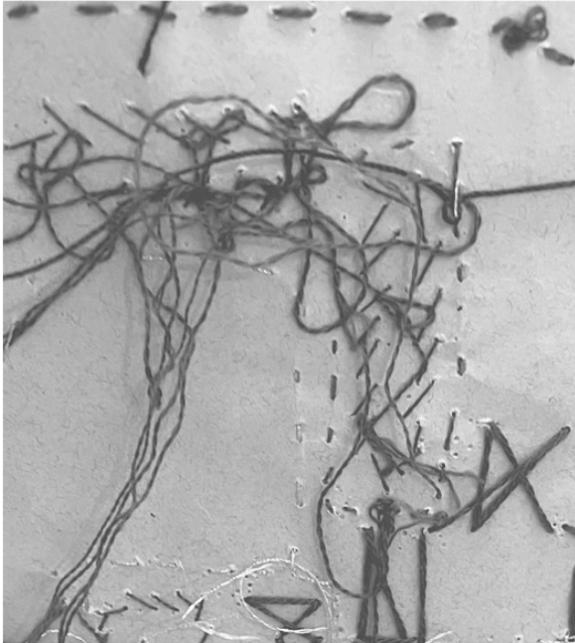

Figure 2: Close-up of my stitching on the prison map, encompassing knots, loose threads, and entanglements.

The aim of this process-article is to make the emergent meaning – associated with the complex methodological and conceptual framework (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988), an abstract, non-human and existential fold. As the 'beings' share their perspectives, they will inevitably draw-in the threads of others (Ettinger, 2015), and offer new ways to disentangle difficult concepts.

Encouraged by the work of Jackson & Mazzei (2012), I use Deleuze & Guattari's (1988) process of 'plugging in' to philosophical concepts, to think-with the theories and see what questions arise.

'*Our words… are never without the echoes of the voices of those whose difference we chose to write with*' (Manning & Massumi, 2016, viii).

Me: Hey, thank you so much for coming, I really appreciate you giving me this time.

PH (Post Humanism): It's our pleasure.

PQ (Post Qualitative): I'm excited to hear about your research ideas

FM (Feminist [New] Materialisms): Yes, please sit down, be-with us, share your thinking and feeling.

Me: Thank you, I want to use this approach to my methodology, but the study is situated within a prison and these, I fear, conflict.

PQ: Why do you think that?

Me: As an education professional working within a prison setting, the ability for me to enact my personal values are challenged daily. This has led me to struggle when designing the methodology for research of teacher experience in a prison education setting. I often witness the conflict between the prison regime and the ambitions of education. Whilst education has a 'pedagogy of hope' (Freire, 1992), the prison regime is focused on security with physical boundaries, gates and walls which enforce this. For prisoners, the impact of this oppression is part of their punishment for a crime, however the impact of this oppressive force on the prison teacher experience has not fully been explored, I want to know if this has an impact on their pedagogy and praxis.

The parallel here between this experience and that in academia is not lost. There are restrictions in the way I write, the way I research and present findings. Post-qualitative, posthuman and feminist (new) materialism as concepts, challenge these academic norms – not least, as part of this process-article, but also as part of my wider enquiries and considerations. Hopefully they can operate to release me from certain constraints that I feel both inside and outside of the prison.

PQ: Okay, start from the beginning. How are you going to approach the research of these teacher-participants and their non-human counterparts in the prison?

Me: Firstly, I want to use a mobile method of walking interviews inside the prison boundaries, as I believe this method creates an *embodied* experience

(Leigh & Brown, 2021) and enable the teacher-participants to move-with thought (Springgay & Truman, 2017). I'm asking participants to map their route beforehand, then, whilst walking together, the teacher-participants answer questions about their experiences as well as draw 'things' (considering thing-power from Bennett, 2004) along the route. These things may be part of the story that each teacher-participant wants to tell; or, they may unlock imaginaries in relation to their experience. The drawings are used in phase 2 of the research involving a Visual Matrix, essentially, a focus group with the collective visual stimulus to enable *affective* thought, akin to photo-elicitation.

Evans and Jones (2011) note the potential limitations of walking interviews, highlighting that walking could exclude some teachers with limited range of movement. This has been a concern for me as I do not want to have an ableist assumption that all can take part, that certainly does not align with this approach that foregrounds ethics. To alleviate this, I have given an alternative option to the walking interview should participants prefer that.

PQ: Do you think you are challenging the normative systems of academia enough, are you interrupting the patriarchal, hegemonic foundations? In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, are you tracing or mapping? (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988).

Me: The walking interview with drawing is a material movement around the prison, it is a way to connect the embodiment of the space and to follow the lines of others, yet it also pushes against the prison (and academia) as a space of confinement and restriction to a space of creativity and connection. Through this, we connect with the traces (see figure 3, traces of prisoners walking on the aerial view map) with the traces of the teachers at the centre of the enquiry, making new maps to redefine the prison space.

The initial walking interview is normative to some extent in its method, but it is the *intra*-action (Barad, 2007) as opposed to interaction that makes this different. Intra-action according to Barad (2007) recognises that agency is not owned by one single human but is an entanglement of other forces and

'things' which are always fluxing, changing, and diffracting. They are therefore inseparable from one another. In this way, there cannot be specific outcomes or measurements as these findings cannot be separated out from all that they are or will become.

There are 'minor gestures' (Manning, 2016) to move against the systems through taking these creative methods into the prison *space*. The visual and material outcomes of the enquiry are equally as important as the written ones; I take inspiration from Erin Manning and call on my intuition as a craft of research (Bell & Wilmott, 2020). I am using my textiles practice to further the creative play in the diffractive analysis of the phenomena creating something new on the map. The findings inform the creation of something visual, visceral, and new.

Figure 3: Aerial view of the prison site for walking interviews.

FM: Hmm, it sounds interesting, I love the idea of a textural approach. You have already pre-planned it all, won't you leave some room to enable the process to *become-with*?

Me: Perhaps, I need a sense of control, to know what is coming but also leaving some space to enable different 'lines of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988). I'll be drawing on the material influence of the prison as a place that is transitional, liminal and boundaried. This sensory and *corporeal* method of walking for research connects participants to place and allows greater communication related to the perception of the space (O'Neill & Hubbard, 2010). Conducting the interview within the prison, incites richer more

affective responses by being with-in the space or between spaces, perhaps the interruptions take us somewhere unplanned. The transcript of the walking interview, and the drawings then also, *become* agents in the assemblage (St. Pierre, 2004).

FM: Who or what are you interviewing then? If you are all entangled?

Me: There is agency in the assemblage. Although, I am only interviewing the teacher-participants, they share their experiences with me and in doing so, they share the texture of that assemblage, they are 'plugged into' all that is entangled inside and outside of the prison education rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), but the teacher-participant is just one knot within a multiplicity of k-nots. By recognising the minutiae, I am recognising *all* the participants, human and non-human, through the teacher-participants' accounts. The sharing of their interactions and associations allows me to see*,* what I can't witness alone in that space.

PQ: What if *we* reject the interview as a humanistic approach in this study, can you defend its inclusion? Is this intra-action then an intra-view?

Me: For me, I think it goes without saying, or perhaps it needs to be said that I would enable an *affective* approach to the interview and the walking method in some way does this. I'm not sure if it goes so far as to be an intra-view?[5] Teacher-participants receive the interview schedule beforehand to think-through the questions prior to the walk. There is a consideration of the space and of the body; ensuring the walking interview is outside of the education buildings but still with-in the grounds of the prison, whilst the focus group is off-site, and online, to enable a change in tacit experiences.

I am noting all the background noises, sounds, movements, and interruptions (Warfield, 2017) in a more-than-transcript. However, if I consider the suggestions of Kuntz & Presnall (2012) then I need to take this further to include considerations of material entangled with the ethico-onto-epistem-ological

underpinnings of the research (Barad, 2007). I find this particularly difficult when thinking of creating an interview schedule, for if I follow this suggestion, then there should not be a schedule at all, and further still no transcript (Denzin, 2003).

Both Barad (2007) and Haraway (2016) use the term diffraction in contrast to reflection. Diffraction in scientific terms, is when waves pass through an aperture, they bend and intra-act with each other. Diffraction therefore attends to difference rather than sameness; noticing what differences matter and consideration of what is excluded from the 'mattering' (Truman, 2019). The diffraction process enables a trans-corporeal attention using minutiae details of experience (Taguchi, 2012) and with using stitch to explore this, I am taking the '*diffraction-to surface*' (Hancock, 2020, p.100).

I am analysing the interviews and outcomes of the matrix through diffractive material methods, using textiles and imagery to make-meaning, but the power of holding a transcript, holding the words, is questionable, are the words mine to make meaning of? As Kuntz and Presnall (2012) suggest the findings are '*In the intra-action between language and materiality, words themselves can be understood as bodies, affected and affecting*' (p. 735).

FM: Have the restrictions in the prison impacted the choice of your research methods?

Me: There is restriction, and it is the feel of that restriction that has led me to explore how this impacts the teacher-participants. The security aspects are an accepted interruption to the teachers' daily classroom practice, but it is not known how this impacts their praxis. Paradoxically, the human-rights of the prisoners means that involving them in the research is regretfully too complex and time-consuming to gain ethical clearance and so this has also been an influence on the methods.

PH: Shouldn't you stay with the trouble (Barad, 2007) and embrace uncomfortableness? (Christ, et al, 2021)

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[5] The term intra-view has been used in posthuman, post qualitative and feminist materialism discussions (Barreiro & Vroegindeweij, 2020) after Barad's idea of intra-action

which considers entangled multiple agencies, it was first used by Nathalie Sinclair.

Me: I am not comfortable with leaving the prisoners out, but the emphasis of the study is on the experiences of teachers. To centre the prisoner voice, takes the foci away from the teacher. The prisoners are recognised as important agents in the research but not as actors.

PQ: Tell us more about the focus group that you have termed a 'Visual Matrix' how does that connect to this methodology?

Me: I trace here the work of Froggett, Manley, and Roy (2015) whose method entitled Visual Matrix, uses visual stimuli to explore shared experiences across different settings. It is termed an 'affect-rich' method; I am using selected imagery shown in the visual matrix to evoke emotional responses from participants. The method has a strict set of rules, by which the facilitator guides participants to share their 'imaginaries,' in this case in response to the collective drawings undertaken during the walking interviews.

Teacher-participants are spending time *being* with the matrix of images, forming their 'imaginaries' and taking turns to share their thinking. The term 'imaginaries' has flexible and evolving meaning here and has been used in social sciences to depict that society is not a given but exists because it is collectively imagined in that way (Nerlich, 2015). In the matrix, the *imaginaries* shared by the participants, encourages them to 'imagine' a visual response or a different reality to their experiences of *being* a teacher in prison education, creating a tacit outcome.

The originators of the method found that there were instances in the matrix where not all voices were heard. For this purpose, I have embedded the use of thinking environment values (Kline, 2015) to ensure there is equality and ease in the space and all voices are heard. However, there is also recognition that this is very much an act of 'feeling' alongside thinking and the aim is to gain an affective response.

PQ: Do you think this method goes far enough to be termed postqualitative?

Me: There cannot be a single definition of what a post-qualitative inquiry looks like, but Kuntz (2021) explains that it should challenge the status quo,

enabling difference and foregrounding ethical commitments. The space during the Visual Matrix is affirmative and equal, embracing textiles, drawing, theory, and philosophy. This method then *becomes* postqualitative.

FM: Why do you specifically want to explore the prison space and place in relation to teacher experience?

Me: A prison 'is a space that differs – physically, temporally and emotionally' (Jewkes & Laws, 2021, p. 395). The importance of place came to the fore when I moved from teaching in 'mainstream' further education to marginalised prison education. The architecture and spatial environment inevitably affects prisoners but there has not been any extensive exploration of this effect on teachers.

The prison education space is a place of multiplicity. There are many complexities and contradictions within this. West (2022) as a teacher of philosophy in prisons, talks of the 'absence of the general public' in the prison space, as if they are 'looking in the other direction' (p. 5). He felt that prisons can often feel abandoned and neglected spaces, a place that is built for security not for education. Yet for a prisoner, education spaces within prison can be seen as 'free-places' that are non-judgemental and free from the power structures imposed by uniformed officers (Jewkes & Laws, 2021).

Furthermore, I have considered the impact of the prison space as a 'total institution' (Goffman, 1961) which cannot escape the force and structure of the prison regime. Foucault's (1995) post structural perspectives on prisons as oppressors of docile bodies and his writing on the panoptical gaze is layered within the study. I am interested to know if teachers 'feel' this oppression from the constant surveillance within the prison, or if this becomes 'ordinary'. These two perspectives enable me to see prison education spaces as third space (Soja, 1998) However, there is trepidation from a feminist perspective to wholly rely on these theories, they nevertheless be utilised in the diffractive analysis of the findings.

For a prison teacher, education can feel out-of-place in prison regimes 'The role of education within

the prison regime is at best peripheral' (Forster, 1998). The space therefore is transitional, with contradictory feelings. Spaces may never be neutral, always relational and imbued with power (Massey, 2005), therefore, the prison education space can never be a neutral ground.

There is also the material, aesthetical aspect of this. The aerial photograph of the prison intrigues me, with over 1000 men being in that space and yet the image is empty (see figure 3), it brings to the fore the impact of human interruptions on the land, with evident traces of bodies walking. This vast structure is nestled amongst the landscape, purposefully concealed from human view by the surrounding walls and trees. Humans then become the minutiae detail, become minoritarian, in relation to the land. It suggests Zylinska's (2014) ideas of minimal ethics for the Anthropocene.

In stitching with this ghostly image, I am adding to its narrative, sharing my story of experience from my first week inside This process maps the walking from one wing to another, exploring the territory as I learn jail-craft, it entangles with my morals and tests my values.

'And the jail itself feels like a kind of limbo, a state of in-between, as during shift change when everyone freezes in place. You wonder how the birds skittering at the edges of hallways enter and exit these windowless spaces' (Cohen & Dalke, 2019, p. 48)*.*

PH: Are prisons more Anthropocentric than other sites? How does this impact your posthuman methodologies?

Me: There are multiple paradoxes at play here, in the one sense a prison can be humanistic; encouraging education for rehabilitation, a human-centred approach, using this expanse of land for the purposes of improving both the prisoner life and that of the community on the outside. In this way it is the epitome of our current epoch in the Anthropocene.

Humans always seek tranquillity, and the prison enables the public to carry on believing that the risk is managed through the high security environment. However, contradictions continue within the prison space. There is an assumption that prisoners are in

this space because of their own doing, not because of societal problems, injustices, racial disparities, or mental health (Jolliffe & Haque, 2017).
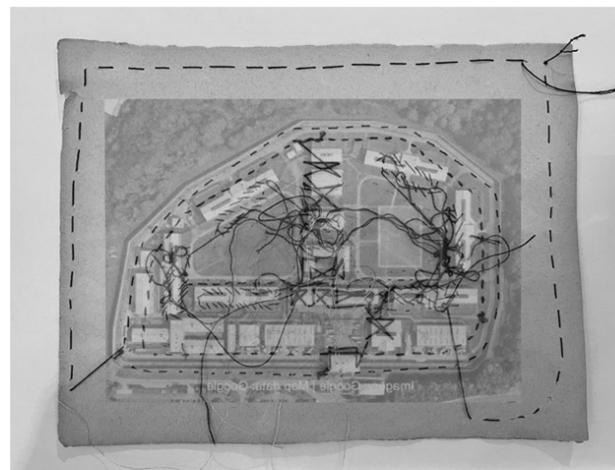

Figure 4: My stitched piece documenting walking around the prison in the first week of employment (2021).

An additional complexity is that this is a local prison; where some men are on remand, yet to be sentenced. There is therefore a complex population including a range of lesser to serious convictions. There are also 'vulnerable prisoners', men who are further categorised and 'marginalised from the margins' (Maguire, 2021).

The juxtaposition of security and care has been noted by Hamilton (2013) when exploring the etymology of the word *securitas*:

'The word is transparent enough, featuring three distinct components: the prefix sē– (apart, aside, away from); the noun cura (care, concern, attention, worry); and the suffix-tas (denoting a condition or state of being). Securitas, therefore, denotes a condition of being separated from care, a state wherein concerns, and worries have been put off to the side' (Hamilton, 2013, p. 5).

The prison then, can also be seen as inhumane, with humans being stripped of their autonomy and agency, categorised, and monitored 24/7. I could consider uncomfortable concepts here of criminals being called 'animals' or 'cold-blooded' in the media, essentially dehumanising them (Young, 2020).

Prisoners then, are part of the complex prison space, they are always, already present (Ulmer,

2017), bringing into that educational space all that they are entangled with, inside the prison and outside, past, present, and future, their families, their prior educational experiences, their feelings, and emotions, all imbricated.

PQ: Is the study then rhizomatic?

Me: Yes, I love this analogy from Deleuze and Guattari, the roots of the prison go deep, in every sense, the roots of prisoners' connections, the professional relationships with teachers, the links to the outside/inside, building relationships, that are complex but encourage prisoners to seek their 'lines of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988).

PH: Lines of flight bullshit again, I need another drink.

FM: It is a complex and complicated assemblage; it is not as simple as the binaries of inside / outside, human / non-human, nature / culture, abstract / concrete, or matter / mind (Koro-Ljungberg, et al. 2018).

PH: The lines of flight analogy may be represented in nature but the roots you are talking about here, they are human, you are putting the human prisoner and teacher experiences at the fore, what about the *others?*

Me: The teacher-participants are drawing non-human objects and 'things' that may represent their experiences as prison teachers. The transcripts and memos note *other* agents and consider the impact of them on their experiences. Is that not enough?

PH: THEIR experiences, you are privileging the human again. I just don't think humans can change their viewpoint.

Me: I see, so how can I de-centre the human in my thinking?

PQ: Perhaps you need to 'cut into the center' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). You shouldn't be thinking of these as separate, they are all an agentic assemblage (Jackson and Mazzei, 2016). 'Posthumanism doesn't presume the separateness of any-'thing,' let alone the alleged spatial, onto-logical, and epistemological distinction that sets humans apart' (Barad, 2007, p. 136).

Me: Okay, so I already appreciate that when I walk with the participants, I am also walking with *all* the other entanglements, both human and non. It is a meshwork (Ingold, 2011).

PH: Yes! The experiences *you* have had in the prison, the fact that you have chosen these methods, the philosophy, artistic and material influences, the participants (all of them, human and not) of course, and every minutiae aspect of that walk will be entangled and equally important. *'The studies phenomenon is thus not something that exists "in itself" but arises or is created in an uninterrupted relationship to the constructed research apparatus'* (Gunnarsson and Bodén, 2021, p. 18, my translation).

Me: I agree, the minutiae are important to me, those experiences in the margins, in the periphery, the walks between education and the wings, the background noises, the climate, the cold touch of metal, the glances, they are all equally important to the study. This is what Duchamp (in de Duve, 1991) calls the *infrathin,* which is concerned with the 'backgrounded' objects, sounds, feelings, or encounters which still have an impact.

FM: How will you re-present this in your research approach?

Me: The French term for knot is *nœud,* using language and writing as thinking; the term in French further exemplifies the meaning. The French pronunciation mimics the English word 'new', reemphasising a newness and the œ ligature, of the two letters linked together substantiates denotation.

Using my neologism, the information I collect becomes **da-*nœud*-ta** rather than data. A knot has multiplicity; it can be tangled or stuck unintentionally, or it can have functional intentionality, holding objects together. In this context the da-*nœud*-ta can have this same multiplicity. 'It matters what knots knot knots' (Haraway, 2016. p. 2).

FM: Why do you think knots feature in your work so prominently?

Me: Knots are the visual and material representation of the complexities I face here. My leaning towards material, textural outcomes is connected to my textiles background and when

exploring these ideas, the term appears again and again, in the 'String Figures' of Barad (2007), Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) *nodes* of a rhizome, the concept of 'and, and, and' or 'et, et, et' in French, using the ampersand in replace of this, also forms multiple knots; &, &, &.

Guyotte, et al. (2022) use language and writing to explore nots and (k)nots. The elements that are 'not' in the research yet are still entangled. For this study it includes teachers and prisoners *not* having agency, prisoners *not* wanting to engage, the prison regime *not* working for education aims. Additionally, I can think of the research as *not* being about gender, *not* being about race and *not* being about the prisoners, but of course it is all these *things*, (k)notted within. Ringrose, et al. (2018) reference the knot when discussing evidence of a shift in educational research to a *Phe*materialist perspective.

'Each article is not a unit but rather a knot or a partial exploration, which unearths a unique entanglement' (Ringrose, et al. 2018, p. 4).

I am using knots to embody the findings as material affective textures or diffractive knots / *nœud*s. The entanglement is part of its beauty, the da-*nœud*-ta form is only created because of the messiness.

PH: Do you think anyone is missing from this conversation about your proposed research and approaches?

Me: Whilst I am not undertaking a participatory approach, to 'do' this research is to include all that are involved, and so, yes, perhaps teacher-participants should also be in this discussion. I have asked *you* to be here, but there are many *other* concepts that are also in this matrix of thinking, artists such as Ettinger and Manning, other philosophers and thinkers that don't fall neatly into the posthuman fold. The readers, reading this now. But where do I stop? If I am to include all that are involved, do I include the thoughts of other agents and the non-human '*things*' (Bennett, 2004) in this discussion?
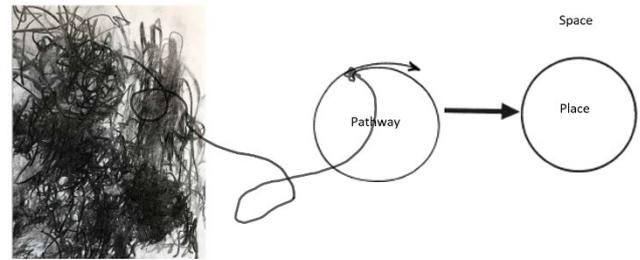

Figure 5 (left): *Walking with charcoal 'Staying with the Bird-trace' (Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, et al. 2020. Ingold's (2011, p. 148) illustration of wayfaring.* *Figure 6 (right):* *Ingold's (2011, p. 148) illustration of wayfaring.*

FM: You want to decentre humanism and whiteness, ensuring ethical consideration of indigenous and intersectional communities. How are you planning to achieve this in your research?

Me: This is difficult as the prison is such a white male dominated space and I, as researcher am white, in a position of privilege. But I must stay with that difficulty, to acknowledge my position.

The citations here already intentionally foreground female perspectives but need to go further to move beyond dichotomies of 'Western' thought without it being an 'inclusionary gesture' (Springgay & Truman, 2019). There must be consideration of materialisms used in the research such as land, maps, lines, walking, and textiles, all of which first appeared in indigenous philosophical thinking, where messiness is embraced (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020).

It is not enough to simply say I am using Feminist (New) Materialism without enacting it. The absence of Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) representation in the teacher-participants becomes an agent itself within the research (Springgay & Truman, 2019).

I am already trying to resist 'normative' Eurocentric writing approaches, which favour text above illustration or craft. I am taking this further in the research praxis, respecting and recognising the indigenous wisdom of more-than human agency, that has existed for thousands of years prior to contemporary philosophy (Rosiek, et al., 2020). It can be uncomfortable to open ourselves to a wider range of knowledges that do not follow the usual ways of knowing, but to 'be' with these concepts is to stay

with the discomfort and acknowledge 'others' who have been dismissed.

'*Dislodging anthropocentric vortexes of 'human-as-the-reference-point' and acknowledging the dynamic and complex relationality of posthuman and indigenist ways of knowing*' (Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, et al., 2020, p. 106).

I am acknowledging that these ways of knowing have been around long before any of these theories and taking the time to recognise *space* from an indigenous perspective. Yunkaporta (2019) explains that 'time and place are usually the same word in Aboriginal languages — the two are indivisible' (p. 66), this is an interesting concept to apply within a prison context.

Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, et al. (2020) use 'tracing-with' as a walking method, they hold charcoal to the page as they walk to trace the 'theory knot' staying-with a bird trace, they follow a **magpie** (see figure 5).

PQ: There is a thread running through this research, where has this come from?

Me: Threads, paths, traces, these are the common features of this story, the use of the walking interviews, and the corresponding maps have brought the feature of lines into this work. Ingold's (2016) history of lines brings these concepts together, he discusses how lines can be boundaries in which we are contained but also paths connected to *places*, that cannot exist without the paths for people to come and go (entangled in figure 6).

'*Proceeding along a path, every inhabitant lays a trail. Where inhabitants meet, trails are entwined, as the life of each becomes bound up with the other. Every entwining is a knot, and the more that lifelines are entwined, the greater the density of the knot*' (Ingold, 2011)

The grid is another visual metaphor here that features lines, margins, and peripheries. The visual manifestation of the story has both order and disorder, with boundaries, walls and gutters on the surface and rhizomes, threads, and knots beneath. The layers of this story, the knots that the teachers experience in prisons cannot be articulated just

through dialogue or the written word, but can perhaps be re-presented through craft and art.

PH: Who else is in your entanglement, outside of philosophy and the education-prison fold?

Me: I have been influenced by the work of Georges Perec (1999) and his 1974 book 'Species of Spaces and Other pieces', in the book, he describes his surroundings, starting with the smallest of spaces and working outwards, noticing the minutiae detail of the mundane and everyday world. I want to explore this within the more-than transcript. I am noticing the details of the walking interviews and focus group. In a similar vein to posthumanism, Perec (1999) asks us to notice 'com-mon things [...] from the dross in which they remain mired', and to animate them to 'speak of what is, of what we are' (p. 210).

It is through Perec's geographies that I am embodying the walking interview whilst noticing and drawing 'things' that we encounter, recognising their 'thing-power' (Bennett, 2004). Chosen by the teacher-participant, these textures of the prison landscape then *speaks* about the place. It will be interesting to see if the participants notice the same objects/subjects and if they view the prison from thsame plane. Also, if this activity enables the participants to *see* the place 'anew' to reduce the habitual and defamiliarize.

Joanne Lee (in Forsdick et al, 2019) takes Perec's instructions to her daily commute in Sheffield, taking black and white photographs to 'see more flatly' the infra-ordinary of her 12-minute journey (see figure 7).

I also take influence from Perec in developing the interview 'schedule', reminding teacher-participants to re-notice, think-through and talk-through all the matterings.

Figure 7: Joanne Lee (2019) documenting the 'unremarkable' space on her 12-minute commute

'*Make an effort to exhaust the subject, even if that seems grotesque, or pointless, or stupid. You still haven't looked at anything, you've merely picked out what you long ago picked out*' (Perec, 1999. p. 50).

FM: How are geographies part of this meshwork?

I am interested in a geographical sub-discipline named carceral geography which explores places and spaces of incarceration (Moran, 2013; Turner, 2016).

'*The prison, put simply, is a technique of bordering- of creating a defined pocket of space-set out by the state*' (Turner, 2016, p. 31).

This discipline recognises that boundaries and borders can be variable, exploring liminal spaces *between* inside and outside. By looking at prisons through a geographical lens, we are making visible that which is normally cloaked, questioning the notion of binaries such as inside/outside, and recognising that a carceral space has 'boundary traffic' (Moran, 2013) which could include teachers who can transgress the space.

PH: What other agents do you think are entangled in your space/time/matter (Barad, 2007)?

Me: There are certain 'things' that I want to give agency to in this research; there are also so many subjects and objects present inside and out of the prison that should also be considered as agents (Bennett, 2004).

> The prisoners,
> their convictions,
> the locks
> the gates
> the birds of prey held captive at the prison,
> the birds that fly free overhead,
> the bees in the prison hives,
> the absence of technology,
> conditioning,
> time,
> the absence of mothers,
> childhood memories,
> teachers as matriarchy,
> patriarchal order,
> segregation,
> Covid,
> violence,

> injustice,
> government policy,
> privilege,
> oppression,
> roots/routes,
> utterances,
> prison officers,
> the words that the teacher-participants
> don't say,
> &, &, &.
> How can I think for them all?

PH: It is not your privilege to give these things agency, they were 'always-already present' (Ulmer, 2017) and entangled in this inquiry and so by being so, they have agency (Barad, 2007). If you were to anthropomorphise these non-human entities and 'things', what do you think they would tell you about the experiences of teachers in prisons?

Me: Of course, it is important for me to remember that agency exists before me. There are so many *things* that are entangled, I want to ensure their voices are heard and I feel the way to do that is to speak and listen with the teacher-participants, who can tell me their interpretation of experiences, to give me a greater sense of the entire place*,* and the vibrancy of matter (Springgay & Truman, 2017).

PH: It seems that these 'things' can be considered then as 'serious agents and co-constructers' (Braidotti, 2019, p. 111) of your thinking, so, what would they *tell* you about the place?

Me: They would tell me that the sky is blue, and the wind is cold.

FM: How will you analyse your da-*nœud*-ta compiled from the walking interviews and the visual matrix?

Me: This is a challenge, to resist the normative expectations of analysis, and still create something acceptable as empirical evidence. Afterall the philosophical concepts I draw on here from Foucault and Deleuze Guattarian thinking, resist method, they are deliberately 'anti-method' (St Pierre, 2021) it is difficult to know what is the 'right' or good thing to do.

St Pierre (2021) suggests that post-qualitative inquiry is 'immanent' it doesn't yet exist until it is created or invented by the researcher. I have chosen then to transcribe; although I worry that in doing this I am losing much of the *feeling* of the intra-action. I have thought then to make a more-than-transcript which includes all the minutiae, embedding audio clips of background noises which capture far more than a reductionist transcript can. I am *becoming-*with the transcript, using creative outcomes of memos, stitch, knots and weaving to tie up the loose threads.

This therefore adheres somewhat to academic norms and encapsulates the 'data' but still allowing for opportunity in a diffractive analytic approach (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997).

The theme of the matrix as a bounded, grided entity is a visual representation of the concepts here. The transcripts themselves are re-formed as art pieces, created with notes and memos in the margins, collating my thoughts, interruptions, and considerations. The teacher-participants are invited to add to these transcripts after the event. Once complete, they are worked over with stitch, particularly using knots and weaving to entangle the findings, taking inspiration from the drawings and maps of the walking interviews. These material interactions allow an embodied engagement, and a further intra-action (Barad, 2007) to create da-*nœud*-ta.

PH: How do you know where and when to make 'agential cuts?'

Me: I don't think I do know it, but I *feel* it. Recognising the agencies and bringing them to the fore, is a diffraction and a 'cut' together-with (Barad, 2007) and within the phenomena. It isn't me that 'wields the knife' it is the wider entanglement of the da-*nœud*-ta. The slicing of data for thematic analysis is in the same way can be seen as incarceration of the data, whilst I want to set it free. Not one single entity will take precedence over the other.[6]

'Agential cuts do not mark some absolute separation but a cutting together/apart – "holding together" of the disparate itself.' (Barad, 2012, p. 46)

PQ: How will you articulate this in normative academic language? Can you practice posthumanism research and break free from the humanistic, hegemonic, and Cartesian academic institutions you sit within?

Me: As discussed, I am keen to escape the normative structures of academia and the positivist, limiting binaries (St. Pierre, 1997) but there is fear here about rejection from the institutions I want to belong. I am drawn to my background in the arts and the concept of *'negative space'* which links with the erasure I mentioned earlier. The potential of what is not said in interviews, the in-and-between, this *space* is a crucial aesthetic requirement to balance out a picture and give whole meaning. I trace here the work of Koro-Ljungberg, et al. (2018) who explore the notion of data as a negative of typical data. Here the data will recognise the silences, intra-actions, the spaces in between. This performative act is then becoming-*with* the transcript, it becomes matter, a non-human agent in this entanglement and so, it begins again.

The use of the drawings in the Visual Matrix allows these images of non-human participants to enter the dialogue as metaphors. The imaginaries that follow this, further the enquiry beyond an interview process to an embodied experience that both analyses and creates new shared knowledge. The da-*nœud*-ta then becomes-with through the power of the researcher as agent.

I don't think I have to conform. It would be easier to follow neoliberal, logocentric expectations of academia. But, if I want to ensure this research reaches the people it may help, then I can be more creative in my output, I can ensure that the 'findings' can be accessed by more than just the 'elite few' (Strom, 2018).

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[6] Thank you to the reviewer for this enlightened idea and for your affirmative and supportive care in the review of this process-article, a process I feel we have been through together.

'It matters to destabilize worlds of thinking with other worlds of thinking. It matters to be less parochial' (Haraway, 2016).

FM: What are you fearful of?

Me: I think what I am coming to notice in this process-article is that I am fearful of making mistakes when representing this multifaceted approach but that the making of mistakes and trying of new phenomena is exactly what the approach is about. As Mazzei & McCoy (2010) state '*error becomes the limit*' (p. 505).

FM: Do you think you are right to take a 'creative' approach? Are you centering yourself and your textile practice here instead of the participant or research needs?

Me: I have felt fears of being egocentric throughout the design of this research. I have felt egocentric in the doing of a doctorate, and 'using' the prison, with me as a 'prison tourist' new to this space. However, in harnessing my textural-rich language to explore the phenomenon, I know I am staying true to my values and the greater consideration of all those involved. Perhaps I am centering myself here and I must ensure that whilst I am self-aware of my entanglements, I do not allow that to 'slip into self-absorption' (Jewkes, 2014).

PQ: What is making you uncomfortable about your research design?

Me: My privilege, my whiteness, my power and how to acknowledge those and invite others into the knots and folds without thinking for them. In fact, it is that I am not *uncomfortable* enough. I am concerned that whilst this approach does not follow standard academic norms, it may not push against the systems enough. Not just the academic system here but greater systems of the prison, the government, and public opinion. Ethical considerations that hugely impact my story and that of the teachers, and the prisoners but of which I am scared to break open. I draw from Braidotti here, '*The nomadic lines of flight of minor sciences cut across, reterritorialize and recompose the dominant knowledge production systems precisely through creating multiple missing links, opening generative cracks, and visiting marginal spaces*' (Braidotti, 2019, p. 127).

FM: Are you worried about opening the cracks?

Me: Yes, because then I am confronting my own fears, the worry of really recognising the entanglements. The knots that I am scared to unfurl. The unspoken entities of prison teaching; the acknowledgement of facing humanity and all it has to offer. If I open the cracks to these conversations with teachers, there are ethical concerns and emotional fragilities that I need to navigate.

5. Conclusion

The bell echoes for last orders and we take the empty glasses to the bar, we thank each other for an affirmative experience and dissipate into a '1000 tiny relations' (Lather, 2015).

I have shared with you my vulnerabilities within this messy research process as an early career researcher working in a prison space, on the periphery of academia. The article as a process has enabled many questions to arise about the research methodology and in doing so, it has *become* part of the approach itself. '*After all, the (k)not is not finished; we expect its boundaries cannot be known*' (Guyotte, et al, 2022, p. 21). I invite you to tie up some of these loose ends or unravel further in this shared space:

I am nervous at the difference of this process-article*,* of its rejection and its marginalisation. However, I can say that I was true to my intentions to create something new and to share that newness in the textures with other researchers who may be navigating similar complexities. I seek to find my

confidence in the words of St. Pierre (2021) who tells me:

'*It's your turn*, so dig in, go deep, get that expertise and confidence, and do outstanding work. *We'll be happy to help you*'.

6. Disclosure statement

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