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Selfies, Relfies and Phallic tagging: Posthuman part-icipations in teen digital sexuality assemblages

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Abstract

Inspired by posthuman feminist theory (Braidotti, 2006; 2013) this paper explores young people's entanglement with the bio-technological landscape of image creation and exchange in young networked peer cultures. We suggest that we are seeing new formations of sexual objectification when the more-than-human is foregrounded and the blurry ontological divide between human (flesh) and machine (digital) are enlivened through queer and feminist materialism analyses. Drawing upon multi-modal qualitative data generated with teen boys and girls living in urban inner London and semi-rural Wales (UK) we map how the digital affordances of Facebook 'tagging' can operate as a form of coercive 'phallic touch' in ways that shore up and transgress normative territories of dis/embodyed gender, sexuality and age. We conclude by arguing that we need creative approaches that can open up spaces for a posthuman accounting of the material intra-actions through which phallic power relations part-icipate in predictable and unpredictable ways.

Introduction: girls, over-embodiment and the cyber relationship cultures of young sexualities

"The body is transformed, on the one hand, into an assemblage of detachable parts, on the other, a threshold of transcendence of the subject. This paradoxical

mixture of loss of unity and multiplications of discourses constitutes the core of contemporary body politics” (Braidotti 2011: 63)

These are challenging socio-political times for educational researchers exploring the sexual cyber cultures of teen girls in an era where everyday lives are technologically mediated to unprecedented degrees of intimacy and intrusion (Braidotti, 2013: 89). Fear and fetish dominate representations of the contemporary sexual landscape for girls, in what we have theorized elsewhere as the phallogentric stolen becomings of the sexual girl-child (Renold and Ringrose 2013). Anxiety and fear manifest over the premature hyper-sexualisation of girls (Egan, 2013, Renold, Ringrose and Egan 2015) and in the contemporary and historical sexual abuse scandals via an omnipotent predatory man/becoming-man (fleshed and digital) who traverses past, present and future (Campbell 2016; Jewkes and Wykes 2012). These fears are escorted by the fetishization of the DIY (do-it-yourself) body beautiful that demands, commodifies and celebrates constant modification to an ever-morphing ideal type (Lazar, 2011). As predicted by Valerie Walkerdine (1997, 1999) the over-embodied, over-exposed girl has come of age (Driscoll 2002), and nowhere is her sacrificial ontology to the phallic symbolic more marked than in her entanglement with the scopic bio-technological landscape of image creation and exchange in young networked peer cultures in the era of the sexy ‘selfie’ (Sastre, 2014; Albury 2015; Senft and Baym, 2015; Warfield, 2015). In a globalized era, where the female body remains a focal point of advertising campaigns and reality make-over television underage girls who self-produce ‘sexually explicit’ images of their bodies are caught up in a complex set of moral, legal and protectionist debates (Karaian, 2014, Ringrose et. al, 2013; Ringrose and Harvey, 2014, Hassinof and Shepherd 2014, Gill and Elias 2014; Albury, forthcoming). Girls and women negotiate new ‘technologies of sexiness’ in these postfeminist media contexts in ways that greatly complicate neo-liberal notions of rational consent or individual humanist agency (Evans and Riley, 2014). Moreover, femininity operates not only as a series of body parts - cut, cropped and cast out across cyber-socialities, but each body part *part-icipates* in localized global phallogentric networks, that require on-going transformations to be capitalizable.

Directing our feminist gaze to understanding the invasive force relations of contemporary digital corporeal culture in young people's everyday lives we wish to explore how phallogentric power relations work, through mapping three territorializing phallic tagging assemblages that teen girls and boys are caught up in and captured by. The first two assemblages, "*digital tagging as phallic touch*" and "*compulsory coupledness*" map a series of coercive digital tagging practices that we see as exerting phallic force relations from the profane (i.e. requests for, or the creation of, photos of girls' bodies) to the mundane (i.e. the repetitive tagging of a heterosexual 'relfie' – a relationship selfie). The final assemblage, "*Jak's breasts*" explores the distribution of dis/embodied body parts (i.e. selfies of an older girls' cleavage) and maps their tagged participation through Facebook comment exchanges that trouble heteronormative and generational territories of gender, sexuality and age. We explore the affective potentialities and blockages inside and across our phallic assemblages so as to avoid the Oedipal plot of phallogentric theory (Irigaray and Deleuze and Guattari in Lorraine, 2008) which has everything tied up in ways that straight jacket our intellectual endeavors to map the messy and complex realities of living mediated lives and extended relational selves.

Putting the posthuman phallic in assemblage theory

Our entry point to foregrounding and theorizing the phallus in this paper is to acknowledge yet move beyond psychoanalytic castration theories based on lack (Lacan, Freud). In traditional psychoanalytic readings, as Berlant (2012: 64) summarises, desire is heralded as *the* primary drive, and becomes an object to be possessed and pursued, either "by having it or not having it; being (bearing or symbolizing) it or not". In this paper we are inspired by the writings of Deleuze and Guattari (1984) where desiring-machines are everywhere. One of the central shifts from psychoanalytic thinking for Deleuze and Guattari, is that desire is not understood as lack and does not belong to the subject. Desire makes connections (hence their language of the machinic), but it is not oriented toward or directed by something (i.e. the Imaginary) and does not sit outside the social-

technological, in fantasy. Desire is productive, it produces the real in dynamic socio-material-semiotic affective assemblages. However, and central to this paper, desire still yields to and is captured by something that looks like a Lacanian phallogentric Oedipal complex, converting the flows, territorializing them and assigning them to molar categories of sexuality, gender, age, race and so on. It is these territorializing practices that we attend to in our analysis below, where we work creatively with our multi-modal qualitative research¹, forming sexuality assemblages (Fox and Alldred 2013) to glimpse and map the affective 'ontological intensities' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) of those often imperceptible micro-moments of (territorializing) forces and (de-territorialising) becomings (for further new educational materialist and posthuman methodological scholarship see; Coleman and Ringrose 2013; Ivinson and Taylor 2013; Fox and Alldred 2014; Snaza and Weaver 2015; Taylor and Hughes, 2016,).

In order to explore the complexities of the prosthetic self and the technologically-mediated body Deleuzo-Guattarian assemblage theory has been vital. Assemblage theory de-centres the subject, to show how it is made up of and criss-crossed by multiple external forces, of the non-human, inorganic and technological kind. It thus enables us to map the dynamic processes of an

¹ Jessica's data was generated from a project exploring digital sexual communication among economically and racially marginalised young people in London funded by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (see Ringrose et al., 2012). The project worked in-depth with a total of 35 young people aged 13-15 in two school communities in inner city, multicultural, London schools. Jessica Ringrose and Laura Harvey collected the online and in-person data discussed in this article. The methodology included conducting initial focus groups where we asked young people to 'walk us through' their online and mobile phone practices. Young people were then invited to 'friend' our Facebook research account. We conducted weekly observations of account activity on selected Facebook profiles for three months and conducted in-depth individual follow-up interviews with 22 young people.

Renold's data was generated across two intersecting pilot projects over a 2 month period. Working with a wider research team, including Victoria Edwards, Ian Thomas and Cat Turney, she explored young people's gender and sexual well-being through participatory and creative multi-media methods in rural and urban locales. Project 1 included facilitating weekly 'feminist lunch clubs' and Project 2 included mapping the experiences of digital sexual harassment in young peer cultures (both funded by Cardiff University). The data explored in this paper was generated in an unstructured friendship group 'interview' with 2 girls and one boy (white welsh, age 15) who lived in an ex-mining south wales' valleys town.

extended and "unfolding subjectivity outside the classical frame of the anthropocentric human subject, relocating it into becomings and fields of composition of forces and becomings" (Braidotti 2002:229). Assemblage theory also enables us to explore how "images, representations, and significations (as well as bodies) are aspects of ongoing practices of negotiation, reformation and encounter" (Bray and Colebrook 1998: 38) – practices that are always already intra-acting (as opposed to viewing bodies and images as separate entities, interacting). Our concept of 'part-icipation' draws attention to these intra-active process.

Indeed, our approach resonates with Braidotti's posthuman notion of '*organs without bodies*'. She stresses that organs (like an image of a breast) are not simply dislocated and split off from the female body, which is reminiscent of older feminist theories that critiqued the symbolic representations of objectified female body parts (Bordo, 2003, see also Bray and Colebrook 1998). Rather, Braidotti's '*organs without bodies*' are in a symbiotic relationship where there is no simple ontological divide between human and machine. Exploring the weighty materialisations of images and bodies entangled in digital time-space enables us to see new formations of more-than-human sexual objectification. This re-thinking of human embodiment via a posthuman lens helps us explore the affective arresting connections of the intra-acting (Barad 2007, Lenz-Taguchi and Palmer, 2013) force relations at play in the distribution, detachability and hybridisation of girls' bodies and body parts (i.e. girls' bodily part-icipations in sexuality assemblages). We explore these dynamics further below through the practices of digital 'tagging'.

The digital affordances of phallic tagging

Digital social networking plugs individuals into a powerful techno-social-cultural 'relational affective assemblage' through a range of devices and platforms (Ringrose and Coleman, 2013: 133). Mobile digital technology devices and networks extend the affective capacities of the human body also dissolving the virtual/real digital/material and online/offline binaries (Clough, 2010; Van Doorn, 2011,). Thus it is not discrete human individuals plugged into digital

networks, but intra-acting cyborg-subjectivities plugged into dynamic and shifting assemblages where the phone, the digital applications, and human bodies are all actants (Haraway, 1991; Latour, 2005). Social networking sites are thus a set of non-human machinic force relations and architectures which mediate the performance of generalizable and particular visual cyber subjectivities in a digitally networked 'affective public' (Papacharissi, 2009, 2015).

dana boyd summarises how mobile digital media platforms are characterised by common elements of: 'Persistence: the durability of online expressions and content; Visibility: the potential audience who can bear witness; Spreadability: the ease with which content can be shared; and Searchability: the ability to find content' (boyd, 2014: 11). 'Tagging' (a feature of Facebook since 2009) is by now a ubiquitous digital affordance on social media. Tagging images or online posts enlivens all of the digital affordances discussed by boyd – it increases the visibility opening up the prospective audience of address and surveillance and it 'spreads' images to others enabling circulation around a network (Jenkins et al., 2013). Even though images can be un-tagged, the image can persist since the image can be taken through the tagging. Tagging also facilitates searchability because it can link information about someone to posts. Tagging of images happens in all sorts of banal ways where several individuals are linked to an image or onto posts and status updates on Facebook. It also, however, allows for the possibilities of linking oneself to others in ways that are coercive and for images to be potentially manipulated. Tagging is thus a mode of digital connectivity (van Djick, 2012) a way of linking ones online persona or profile to another's, mediating and extending the affectivity of the body (Clough, 2010).

Here we wish to consider the digital affordance of tagging in relation to young people's digital sexual cultures on social networks, where tagging was a primary way to connect others to conversations and images which referenced dominant or 'molar' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) representations of sex/y.

Exploring the circulating 'life' of online images entails understanding the digital mediation beyond conventional notions of humanist agency (Kembar and Zylinska, 2015). In particular we explore the production of sexy 'selfies' (see Albury, 2015, Senft and Baym, 2015) and relationship selfies or 'relfies', to re-think 'live' gender and sexual relations in teen peer groups. We apply Braidotti's anti-oedipal twist on the scopophilic production of bodies and subjectivity to consider how digital tagging can operate through formations of phallic force relations where touch is sexualised and unwanted. Indeed, we are beginning to conceptualise how tagging operates as a vector of *posthuman digital touch*. Lisa Blackman (2012) offers a very useful discussion of how technologies work as a form of affective touch; she argues communication technologies such as radio, the telegraph, cinema and the telephone were all historically understood to "transmit ideas beliefs and emotions through ... immaterial forms of contact, which were equated to a form of 'mental touch'" (2012: 65). Our interest is when digital touch in, through and beyond the screen (Warfield, forthcoming) operates as *phallic touch with potentially coercive impacts*². Below we show how cyber ontologies of machinic de-centred subjectivities enabled through digital tagging entangle across different territories with complex material effects for the young people in our research and their bodily part-icipations. Importantly, these intra-acting processes can also displace conventional boundaries, binaries and categories of sex/gender/sexuality, queering normative sexual regulation, as we explore.

Digital tagging as phallic touch: capture, currency and selfie 'exposure'

The first set of tagging episodes below emerge from data generated with young people in a school located in an economically deprived borough of South East London with high levels of immigrant populations. One fifth of the students at the school are white British, with the other major groupings being predominantly Black Caribbean and Black African. Almost half of the school population speak English as an additional language, and there is a higher than

² For further analysis of resistance to phallic touch and cybersexism through explorations of teen feminist "posthuman affect" see Renold and Ringrose (forthcoming) and Ringrose and Renold (2016).

average proportion of young people with additional learning needs. The neighbourhood had high levels of reported gang related activity, and young people discussed street violence, including being robbed as commonplace. Indeed the practices of tagging and digital capture so ubiquitous across young people's social networking sites needs to be situated within the physical and digital technologies of racialised surveillance built in to the material architectures of the school and wider community: from cameras in every corridor and street poised and ready to capture, identify and shame, through to the high metal fences topped with barbed wire that surround the school, and which positions young people as both 'at risk' and 'risky to others' (Silk, forthcoming) .

In previous analysis, we have explored how some boys were deploying the digital affordance of tagging as a means of investing in a classed and racialised culture of masculine performativity (Harvey et al, and 2013; Harvey and Ringrose, 2015). Image exchange and distribution of girls' body parts accrued value and became part of longer list of attributes, from muscularity and fighting competencies to owning branded clothing and consumer goods which seemingly enabled boys to gain accumulative ascendance in competitive masculine peer group hierarchies. We wish to develop this analysis to foreground the processual and more-than-human nature of boys' digital sexual exchange in ways that demonstrate the materiality of these practices which we theorise as coercive non-consensual phallic touch. We begin with the capture and distribution of girls' profile pics via 'friends-of-girl-friends' and 'ex-girl-friends' to images of hybrid constructions of the 'known-un-known' so as to flesh out the ways in which the distributed sexual subjectivities of girls via their sexualized body parts metamorphose across more-than-human digital social networks.

This first example gets at tagged images of girls in boys' social networks (both on Facebook and BBM³) who are 'friends of friends' - so not known

³ Blackberry Messenger

through physical social interaction, rather solely through their digital social network. Ty (pseudonym) relates his own process of tagging 'sexy' images from girls' profile pics:

Ty (13): I can tag it if I like the picture I could tag myself in it and then it will come to my profile. I could make it my profile picture...it all leads to ratings because, 'he's got that girl on Facebook' and 'she's nice and how did he get her', they just want to find out, things like that.

Interviewer: And what do the girls think if you tag yourself in their pictures?

Ty: Nothing, sometimes they will un-tag you, if they don't want you to tag them. But by the time they get to know that you are tagged in it, you could have made it your profile picture already. They can un-tag you from it but then you have still got the picture.

Attaching oneself to a 'sexy' image of a girl via the process of 'tagging' oneself is a commonplace technologically mediated way of attempting to actualize rewards through 'ratings' for teen boys in their daily digital performances of heteronormative masculinities. Ty is "getting" a "nice (hetero-sexy) girl" and thus forming a non-consensual digital sexual union. For us, this practice gets at what we see as coercive non-consensual phallic touch as Ty's digital subjectivity intra-acts ("I can tag myself in it") with the girls' tagged image to accrue value and sexual social status. A more-than-human analysis would also enable us to trace the metamorphosing image that moves in and out of the human (subject) and non-human (object), from an "it" ("I can tag it") to "that girl" and "that picture" to a "her" ("how did he get her?") and in subject-object assemblages in which she/it has the potential to "know" and "un-tag". The force relations move swiftly through this phallic tagging assemblage in which digital affordances of the technology allow Ty to capture "it" ("come to me"), enter "it" (be "in it") and where resistance ("they don't want you") is futile because he produces and owns "it" ("you've made it your profile"). Moreover, any self(ie) agency on 'it'/'her' part is futile because he has now "got the girl/got the picture". The flow of

invasion, capture, merger, ownership and display are a powerful set of phallic force relations that trouble the human agentic self-contained subject in the production, ownership and distribution of the sexy 'selfie', as we explore in two further examples below.

The next assemblage is by now a classic and much media hyped version of sexual tagging as a form of 'revenge porn' (Salter, 2015)) where sexually explicit images sent privately to a partner are 'exposed' to a public audience online through processes of uploading images without consent and identifying the person possibly through the tagging mechanism. Here 15 year old teen girls discuss how 'naked' photos of an ex-girlfriend were distributed across Facebook when the relationship ended:

Carey: There were naked pictures of her on Facebook.

[...]

Indigo: She was in the year below us.

Alexandra: Yeah she was in year nine. I think she sent pictures to someone and then he exposed her on Facebook and then tagged his friends to her naked pictures.

Carey: She is talking about the person who moved schools...

Irina: She sent it to her boyfriend

Rebecca: And he showed his friends and they told everyone basically.

Interviewer: And so can you tell me why you think she would send a picture to her boyfriend?

Alexandra: He probably asked for it.

[...]

Interviewer: So what do you think goes through their mind when they ask you for a picture that is of you naked?

Irina: Obviously sex.

Interviewer: So they are thinking of sex?

Irina: Well obviously they are like show things and you know what boys do and what they are like and the next thing they will ask you for is sex.

(15 year old girls, all names are pseudonyms)

Here, we see similar coercive flows of possession and display through the capture and merger of a girls' naked image and how naked (with the intra-action of the interviewer) becomes-sex ("obviously sex"). A more-than-human sexual shaming materializes via the phallic tagging which the boyfriend disseminates to "his friends". No longer in-relationship, her body is no longer privately owned, but cast out and then broadcast for wider phallic consumption and public shaming via endless ritualized speculation (Salter, 2015). A posthuman lens foregrounds the material and affective dynamics which connect rather than disconnect the digital image from the embodied girl and the intra-action of her digital dispersal across cyberspace with her physical departure when she "moved schools".

The final assemblage in this section brings together both the tagging practices from the two examples above which explored the coercive capture of identity and body parts, to explore a related form of phallic tagging in which girls could again be 'exposed' through being tagged in images that are part-self(ie), part other:

Skylar: I look through my brother's phone a lot and in his pictures, like if the girl is rude or something or they have had an argument, he will expose her. Well he says he's going to but he don't normally. And they have this ...thing about asking girls to write their name

Mercedes: On their body somewhere, then take a picture. They don't say write on your privates whatever, they just say write it anywhere, but then girls do [...]

Cherelle: Yes, but obviously they expect them to write it on their/

Ashley: They are expecting it to be a dirty picture and then the best one gets to go as my display picture.

Jodie: But they don't show their face, they just their body part.

Interviewer: So does this happen at this school where somebody has put this up as a display picture, these kinds of photos?

Mercedes: Yeah, but we know who it is even if they don't show their face.

Cherelle: Some people make it up and like we get tagged in school. Say like someone sent it to them and they like their skin colour is the same as someone else's they will say it is a different person and then they get tagged and called random names.

Interviewer: So they could get a naked photo from anywhere and they tag it as somebody who it isn't?

Skylar: As someone else, yeah.

Jodie: Because boys add random girls, they probably don't even know who it is their selves.

(13 year old girls, all names are pseudonyms)

Skylar describes how some boys ask for images of headless 'dirty' 'body parts' of girls with the boys' names written on them. These practices form part of the everyday digital power-plays of sexual exchange, ranking ('rating') and ownership ("the best one gets to go as my display picture"). She illuminates how girls' who comply and send an image of a sexual body part can then potentially be subject to the threat of 'exposure' and/or creation of a part-them/part-other sexual selfie if they are 'rude' or 'have had an argument' with the boy. What we want to draw attention to here is the affective gendered dynamics of 'exposure' in the production and distribution of these sexually explicit 'selfies', at once coercive and shift-able, since girls' identities can be connected to and potentially tagged in naked photos 'from anywhere'. We see these are bodily part-icipations circulating in ways that flow between the known (e.g. in which bits of bodies are identifiable as 'them') and unknown (e.g. bits of bodies from unidentified 'other' girls when 'boys add random girls'). This metamorphosis of becoming-random gets at the ways in which phallic touch can invade to erase, enhance and essentially f**k with girls' digital identities by skillfully merging them with the sexual body parts of other 'random' women and girls. Indeed, the capture and re-mastering of images seems to create a known-unknown hybrid cyborg selfie (or is it then a felfie or fake selfie⁴) of sexual sub/objectification par excellence – a

⁴ According to the Urban Dictionary, a "Felfie can quickly be summed up as a "fake selfie" or a photograph taken of ones self that is not actually of the person they say it is. It is commonly used by males and females who send photos out to a person (male or female) of themselves revealing parts of

phallic assemblage of collective currency for boys and a territorialization of girls' sexual becomings. However, see the third section of this paper for what (else) a headless sexual selfie can do!

Compulsory coupledness: Relfies and the time-slips of more-than-human unions

For our next phallic tagging assemblage we turn to the semi-rural postindustrial landscape of an economically deprived Welsh valleys' town. This is a community where gendered historical legacies loom large in what girls and women are expected to do and be (e.g. girlfriends, wives, mothers). The phallic image is thus not the sexually explicit detached body part that galvanizes 'sex' media moral panics (Hasinoff, 2015), but a relationship selfie or 'relfie'⁵ of a "smiley couple"; Callum (boy) and Cerys (girl). This relfie is tagged by another boy (Ryan), to Callum's Facebook profile, the male half of the 'smiley couple', repeatedly over three years. It attracts over "300 comments" including the colloquial penetrative statement, "get in there, Callum", which (hetero)sexualizes their togetherness. These digital "comments" create specific intensities that complicate the 'like economy' of Facebook (Gerlitz and Helmnd, 2013). Beyond mere 'like' valuation (or not) of the post, we see the qualitative thrust of the comments which repeatedly heterosexualize Callum and Cerys's friendship. The digital comments continually *re-vive*, create new 'liveliness' (Kember and Zylinska, 2013) via the digitally tagged connectivity of the posthuman relfie in the social media sexuality assemblage, as explained below.

This episode of relfie tagging emerged from a long interview between three friends, Cerys, Rees and Branwyn (age 15, all names are pseudonyms). These three were united in their abject status as working class 'high-achievers' in

their body in the hope that they may receive one in return. Felfies usually do not show the person's face as this would be a give away. They are generally used so that the person receiving the "felfie" will be aroused and think that the person sending the photo has a better body than they actually do." <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Felfie>

⁵ "A relfie...is a "relationship selfie," or when you take a selfie that includes a relationship partner or someone else you are close to" <http://www.scienceofrelationships.com/home/2014/6/23/what-does-your-relfie-say-about-your-relationship.html>

a 'low-achieving' school. The tagging discussion also followed lengthy and vivid descriptions of being subject to a range of physical gendered and sexual violence in school, including having stones thrown at them and yogurt smeared on their bags, and being routinely taunted as 'gay' and "sluts and slags" for being "stuck up" "swots" – practices that when disclosed to teachers were met with the response, "it's cos they fancy you". Indeed, the girls talked animatedly of how "past relationships" entangled with current relationships in problematic ways. Indeed, it is important to note that for these young people, resisting and refusing heterofamilial bonds in their school and community was risky, dangerous, and, ultimately, a rupturing of phallic belongings to heteronormative future imaginaries (Renold and Ivinson 2015).

The conversation below follows from talk on how girls' "relationships get brought up all the time" and how boyfriend-girlfriend relationships are regulated by their peers and in the wider community. It is here that the complexity and full force of the ways in which compulsory coupledness is intensified through digital networked cultures that the specific practices of tagging emerges:

Cerys: (...) they'll like bring up the photo of me and one of the boys up again, like from my past relationship (3 years ago)

Interviewer: What sort of photos?

Cerys: Not like a photo like that (laughter) just like a normal photo like

Interviewer: Just like as a couple like?

Cerys: Yeah

INT: Yeah ok

Rees: They're on the carpet, just like (two tilted heads together smiling at the camera)

Cerys: It's like a normal it's like a normal photo

[...]

Rees: How many comments are on it, it's like 300 comments

Cerys: It's got like 300 comments on it because

Rees: Because they keep also

Cerys: Over the years they always keep/

Rees: *They keep bringing it up. Every 2 months, it's ... you just see the photo*

Interviewer: *What is there that .. why that photo?*

Cerys: *It's just me and Callum smiling it's like .. an old couple photo and now it's like, it gets brought up like every bunch of months and then Callum's just like 'oh Liv they've brought it up again Liv they've brought it up again, I've seen it again it's like' 'yeah I know'*

Interviewer: *So .. why what's going on there what what are the comments that are being attached to it every couple of months?*

Cerys: *It's just I don't know it's sort of it's a thing to wind up Callum it is*

Interviewer: *How's that work? How do you wind someone up by showing them a picture of them and their ex-girlfriend?*

Branwyn: *Because they're commenting on it. It's like everyone can see it then*

Cerys: *Yeah*

Branwyn: *When it comes like up on your newsfeed*

Cerys: *So like everybody that they're your friends like annoying friends and Callum's friends*

Branwyn: *It's like embarrassing the boy ... but it's like also bringing Cerys into it as well*

Cerys: *Yeah ... yeah and then it's like when he walks past me he goes oh Callum still likes you Callum still loves you and I just walk past and I go 'oh does he that's nice' and then Callum just laughs with me because he can see like the reaction that he's that .. cos like me and Callum have the same reaction every time when Ryan comments*

We begin to learn that it is Ryan and his mobile phone that has been doing all the tagging, pushing Callum and Cerys together, in a form of heterosexual harassment that needs to be situated in the wider context of how these girls, investing in school and future life beyond the valleys, are directly targeted:

Cerys: *The boys didn't like it that we had like other friends ... it's like all of us has had past relationships - all of us has had at least one relationship with people like those boys*

Branwyn: Yeah

Cerys: But only Ryan, only Ryan is the one ... only Ryan is the one that hasn't .. only Ryan has .. hasn't let it go

Branwyn: I think he'd like to control me now because when I tried to move on he was mailing me things like ... I think he was trying to scare me or something or like trying to make me realise that I want him back or something

Cerys: Yeah he tried that with Imogen

Ryan, we find out, uploads “hundreds of photos” of his current and ex-girlfriends that he re-tags over and over – a practice which Branwyn (ex-girlfriend of Ryan) describes as a form of “scary” coercive “control”. Indeed, so powerful perhaps is the desire to ‘couple-up’ and heterosexualise boy-girl friendships that images of past relationships are resurrected. Here we see the tagged selfie of an ‘old smiley couple’ with its appendage of additional sexualized comments being used to “wind up” not only the ‘couple’ Callum and Cerys, but any boy-girl relationships that queer heterosexualisation. We see this as a form of phallic tagging that re-winds and traverses linear space-time, in a community that refuses severed heterosexual unions (including abusive unions, see Renold and Ivinson 2015). The ‘smiley-couple’ selfie thus operates as a form of coercive posthuman phallic tagging where past relationships repeatedly pop up to penetrate and invade other attachments and non-(hetero)normative relationship cultures.

What (else) can tagged cleavages do?: Headless selfies, phallic ruptures and Jak’s breasts

“Do we have only one point of exit from the kingdom of the phallus? On the contrary ...” (Braidotti 1997: 53)

In this final section we interject with a final assemblage to dislodge and liquidate what Irigaray (1985: 107) might call “the mechanics of solids” in young people’s digital phallogocentric power plays. This section extends our theory of phallic tagging by focusing specifically on one of the rare moments (despite

media speculation) of one young women's (age 18 or 19) unsolicited tagging of her cleavage to another younger (age 15) boy's profile. Through this example, like Chen (2010) we are keen to stress the animated vitality and dynamicism of movement through mapping what (else) the phallus can do. We explore, taking inspiration from Johnson's words, "what now mocks and rocks the phallogocentric system" (Johnson 1995: 7) - that is, how might phallic tagging assemblages release and open up transgressions and transmorgifications of girls' (and boys') territorialized becomings.

As we described above, one of the ways that girls sought to minimise the possibility of identification of their sexual images in social networks was sending images that digitally edited out their heads, either through blurring techniques or cropping it off. These images were produced and circulated on social networks, including the BBM game where boys made a broadcast that proposition girls to send them images displaying the boys' name on a 'body part'.

In the earlier example the girls discussed their fears that they would be tagged in headless selfie images (fake selfies or 'felfies', see above) that were not of them. The headless images of body parts resonates with Braidotti's notion of the *organs without bodies*, where particular parts, for instance the breasts, operate as a prized organ - that is, breasts are over-invested in phallic bound energies, to the extent that the body becomes reducible to the organ as over-determined signifier of feminine sexual difference.

Two such images appeared on one of the 15 year old boys, Jak's Facebook page, in which an 'older girl' that Jak figured was "18 or 19" tagged him in. The first image is a headless photo with fingers opening up a sweatshirt to show an extreme close up of breast cleavage with 'Jak owns' written across the top of the breasts in black marker pen. The exchange, between Jak and his boy peers, that appears below the image reads as follows:

Loooooooooooool it's a fat man (boy 1)

lool cut dat non sence (Jak)

cut dat nigga talk lool (boy 1)

loooool karrrr (Jak)

The second headless image is similar, but taken from further away so that the breasts, waist and arms are visible. The vest top is gone and the hoody sweatshirt is unzipped to the maximum point without showing the bra. The breasts are pushed up in a very tight bra to maximize the cleavage, again with Jak written in black marker across the chest and top of the breasts. The comments below this image are:

Loooool went in Jak! (boy 2)

hahahahh ma lil goon on dis (boy 3)

Duknoooooo0 fam B-) (Jak)

Someones get gassed wid dis pic – comedy va (boy 4)

lool yee do a bakflipp (Jak)

lol (boy 4)

In previous writing (Ringrose and Harvey, 2015) about such images we explored how girls who posted or sent sexy selfies were constructed as ‘shameless’, ‘slaggy’ and lacking in ‘self-respect’ particularly if images were unsolicited. Our focus was on the sexual objectification and slut-shaming of girls who send sexually explicit photos, which contrasted with the value and capital accrued by boys and young men ‘owning’ these images, in a peer economy of lad culture ‘ratings’.

Considering this very same practice of the ‘headless’ cleavage selfie in the Canadian context, Lara Karaian (2014) argues that removing the head erases the identity and a picture becomes just a picture not a disciplinary tool. She argues that the girl posting the picture can be seen as claiming her right to the erotic in a culture where girls are denied their sexual agency. What we wish to contribute to these analyses is to go beyond the Foucauldian binary of discipline/resistance and a humanist approach to individual, rational agency, desire and rights. Instead we are interested in how a posthuman approach privileges attention to

the image of the cleavage, as material actant. Our focus here is on the agentic potentiality of the tagged cleavage in a multi-modal multi-directional assemblage of digitised skin, ink, symbol and text, which name, shame but perhaps also queer. We argue that this is an assemblage that produces a cleavage both materially tagged (on skin) and digitally tagged (on Jak's mobile phone screen, Facebook page and news feed). It is also a *tagging* of Jak (unsolicited and imposed) in ways that invade and rupture the normative participation of boy-solicited images of sexually explicit girl body parts. Indeed, we want to argue that this is no simple act of 'self-sexualisation' (Lamb, 2010) or expression of a 'phallic-girl' femininity (McRobbie, 2008), nor are girls simply rationally reclaiming their sexual 'rights' to 'resist' objectified and girl-shaming erotophobic culture (Karaian, 2014).

Much has been written about the historical association of the pen as a metaphorical penis and thus the material and symbolic phallogentrism of knowledge (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979). The use of the black marker pen(is) inking Jak's name across a semi-anonymous cleavage to create a digitized boy-tagged cleavage-selfie could in some ways operate as a 21st Century re-claiming of digital sexual agency. However, we would suggest something more-than-human is emerging when the materiality of the digital in its complex multi-modal assemblage is dissected. We want to create a further data assemblage that complicates the sexual shame versus agency dichotomy so prevalent in discussion of sexually explicit body part selfies.

We speculate that Jak's unease in this event is perhaps due to the unsolicited nature in which a digital image of a tagged cleavage appears on Jak's personal newsfeed. Medusa like, (Cixous 1976) this posthuman image (flesh-on-screen-digital) scores and permanently fixes Jak's name in ink without his consent and for others to view. Re-routing the directionality is certainly one central rupture in the phallogentric culture of the normative practices of boys' requesting girls' send them sexually explicit images. But what else might be going on here? If we take a de-centered and distributed approach to Jak's digital subjectivity, we also see space-time-body contractions as Jak-in-ink is reduced to

text and transported without his consent across a voluptuous digitized cleavage. Perhaps we are also seeing what could be described as Jak's becoming-breast, the materialization of his infantilisation (shrunk in text) *and* sexual capture and commodification (text on breast) for comedic value and exploitation (note the other boys comments, "someone's get gassed wid dis pic – comedy va"). He is also perhaps becoming-dildo, captured and used for sexual shame and pleasure. Indeed the intra-action between infant and sexual commodity in Jak's becoming-breast is reminiscent of the character Gulliver in Swift's 'Gulliver's Travels' (1726/2012) in Brobdingang. In this fictional land of the giants, Gulliver shrinks to the size of a pea in the land and is used and abused as an object of female consumption as he oscillates between reified baby-doll and human dildo (see Boucé 2001).

While the latter reading might be a creative diffraction (Barad 2007) too far, it does gesture towards how the symbolic and material might intra-act and unfold into endless possibilities which rupture (if only to be quickly re-territorialised) the phallic status quo. Indeed, the final rupture we want to pay attention to is in the queering of Jak's becoming-breast when we explore how the image intra-acts with his peers' comments that the image is of a "fat man". A new materialism reading would foreground not only the queer implications of a semiotic-textual union in which Jak has been tagged to what his friends suggest is a pair of 'man-boobs' and thus written across the chest/ sexually commodified by a man. It would also consider a reading which explores the direct relationality of the event itself – that Jak has been given a pair of 'boobs' with his name on – they are, very simply, Jak's breasts.

Conclusion: cartographic urges, utopian visions and polemics

When it comes to girls and sexuality, social science research finds itself increasingly caught up in territorialising representational regimes which stifle, obfuscate and silence critical scholarship that attempts to imagine girls' digital sexual cultures otherwise. It is an on-going struggle to communicate empirical research 'findings' that acknowledge yet deterritorialise the binary machines which posit Cartesian splits of mind and body, dichotomous offline-online social

worlds, risky 'victims' and abusive 'perpetrators', and heteronormative gender bifurcations which tether masculinity to boy bodies and femininity to girl bodies. It is thus perhaps no surprise that many researchers intellectually and affectively bathe in and are released by recent developments advanced through posthuman feminisms and are enticed by the provocations of new feminist materialism educational scholarship and practice (see Taylor and Hughes 2016).

In many ways our trajectory in this paper follows Braidotti's (1994: 56) triple manifesto for contemporary posthumanist scholarship, which suggests first that we *develop and hone our cartographic urges*. For us, this entails mapping the trapping effects of the patriarchal symbolic and phallogocentric regimes which criss-cross young people's peer cultures in ways that territorialise desire. In line with this task we mapped out how phallic tagging can operate by offering an analysis of entangled and intra-acting bodily participations in a series of sexuality assemblages. We drew on examples from the (hetero)sexually profane (the sexually explicit sexting nudes and headless selfies) to the (hetero)sexually mundane (the sexually implicit hetero selfie of a 'smiley couple'). We considered how young teens navigate multiple versions of posthuman networked digital relationalities through mapping how phallic force relations via digital tagging (or *phallic touch*) channeled energies back into familiar material manifestations of control and capture of girls' social networking images.

However, we also demonstrated how feminist inspired posthuman assemblage theory can illuminate the complex ambiguities of what else a digital affordance like tagging enables. The intra-acting complexities between the collective audience and profiles of the social network jointly create the value or parodied purchase of a post in ways that are unstable and shifting. The *tagging* cleavage as agentic actant *rather than* captured body part is a case in point. We can consider the cleavages and their capacities differently – they don't work in the expected ways – the cleavage becomes manly ('man-boobs'), they are funny (LOL) and Jak does not control their presence on his profile page nor the comments posted about the images from his friends. We see the possible cracks

where phallogentric flows are re-routed and over-thrown through the intra-action of image and comment in Jak's becoming-breast and becoming-dildo, despite Jak's attempts to recoup the tagged cleavage as proof of the girl as 'slaggy' and 'shameless' (see Ringrose and Harvey 2013).

Working at the in-between spaces of the often imperceptible micro-moments of rupture gives us tools to follow the *utopian drive* of Braidotti's second suggested goal of posthuman feminist scholarship. We see the space where Jak-and-the-cleavage becomes otherwise. Cartesian binaries fall away and interpretations that Jak and his friends as sexist; that the girl who tags her own breasts is a victim of a 'pornified' society; that girls are only valued for commodifying their body parts; OR alternatively, that cleavage-selfies are clear cut evidence of girls' individual sexual agency, all begin to break down. Mapping the multiplicities of what else the phallus can do, through Deleuzeo-Guattarian assemblage theory, keeps the potentialities of affective force relations in flow – potentialities that are often imperceptible through humanist phenomenological cartographies so prevalent in the social sciences.

Opening up space for a posthuman accounting of the material intra-actions through which phallic power relations shift and fold in on themselves follows Braidotti's third suggestion that feminist researchers cultivate their own *polemical touch*. What this means for us is that we cultivate the 'desire to get everyone talking' about these issues - not in the stale and taken for granted ways with which we are familiar, rather in a more dynamic accounting of how phallic assemblages might work in unknown unpredictable ways. Holding on to the uncertainties and the power of the not-yet (Manning 2013) is, for us, a necessity in the over-coded world of young sexualities.

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