

Queen of the Academy:
Academic Drag as Pedagogy and Praxis

by

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Examining Committee Membership

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examining Committee is by majority vote.

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Direct stories from and pedagogical representations of equity-denied and oppressed bodies remain largely missing from and kept out of the academy. And scholarship and scholarly gate-keepers across the academy – and especially in fields (like English Language and Literature) who claim to have pedagogy, social justice, and humanity at their hearts – continue to police and punish these bodies, questioning, if not mocking, the legitimacy and rigour of our methods, theories, and voices. In this dissertation, I ask: *How can we intervene in, interfere with, and interrupt this ongoing, active equity-denial of diverse voices and diverse scholarly experiences from across the academy?* More pointedly, I ask myself: *What happens when I force the gaze of the academy to see me, to see and contend with all of me, with all of my intersections of privileges and oppressions as the whole person, the whole scholar, the whole body I am?* And I answer both questions through what I call *academic drag*. Using counterstory and teaching queer as method and genre in this dissertation, I set up academic drag *as pedagogy* in three capacities – as visual pedagogy; as performative pedagogy; and as decolonial and anti-racist pedagogy – before I embody and demonstrate academic drag *as praxis* by literally trying on new ways of empowered and empowering teaching in the classroom and as generic interventions into the hallowed halls of dissertation gatekeeping. This looks like: first, revisiting some of my earlier Transgender Visual Culture teaching that I taught in a “shitty white way” seven years ago to try on teaching queer to re-teach more racially responsively today; and second, collating transcripts of some of my public scholarship talks on “Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect” into a counterstory novella imagining myself as a participant learning, unlearning, and relearning from myself as academic drag queen pedagogue. Through my academic drag as pedagogy and praxis modelled in this dissertation, I show how I enter into the academic space created by equity-denied scholars before me and join them in pushing further from the dominant centre toward the margins, widening the grounds of what is scholarly research and whose voices can be there and can belong there. Academic drag is part transgender visibility, part queer phenomenology and teaching queer, part visual performance and pedagogy, and all critical race counternarrativity toward decolonizing pedagogies and praxes. And through my synecdochic figuration of myself as an academic drag queen, I conclude this dissertation with a call that all of our pedagogies and praxes become dragged up to create meaningful, sustainable, and powerful change.

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Dedication

This dissertation is for my dear friend Dr. Jennifer Winters Ward (*kokum*) and for Tommy and my baby boy, Sam Bourque-Mayberry (or *mosôm*, as *kokum* called him, because he was so old and earned every moment of his doggy retirement in Beaver Hills House). I lost each of you on my journey just months (Jen) and days (Sam) before I finished writing, and I still cannot quite believe that I won't be able to hug either of you and celebrate with you that I am finally, finally done. But I honour you, I remember you, I love you, and your fingerprints, Jen, and your pawprints, Sam, are all over this dissertation. And all over my heart. This one's for you two.

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“The dissertation should be written in academic style. It’s understandable not to want to be straitjacketed by formality. But on the other hand, academic style not only functions to help establish your scholarly authority and reasonableness, but it also helps you to *be* scholarly and reasonable...And when writing about pop culture or making daring claims, it is all the more important to establish scholarly authority through style, as part of establishing the academic value of your subject matter and approach, and to avoid giving sceptical readers an easy excuse not to take your work seriously because it doesn’t deploy the appropriate discourse”

– feedback on my first dissertation unallowed to proceed to defense (italics original)

“You must learn the rules first before you throw them out, and then by all means throw them out...The freedom of drag allows [you] to break the rules and have [it all] at once.”

– RuPaul (*Workin’ it!* xiv; 72)

“[D]rag is the art form of the queer imagination[, and d]rag queens have always been the keepers of our queer history. We make it, we tell it, we remember it, we misremember it, and we love it.”

– Sasha Velour (“Meet the Queens”; “Grand Finale”)

Prologue

If I Dream, and If I Time-Travel: Or, What Would I Say to Little Tommy?

“Welcome back, ladies,” RuPaul says, coming back from commercial break and smiling at the four of us standing side-by-side on the main stage of *RuPaul’s Drag Race: Canada*. Brooke Lynn Hytes and Michelle Visage are to the right and left of her, respectively, completing this season’s Judges’ Panel. “I gotta say, you know,” Ru continues, and an instrumental version of her song “If I Dream” starts to play softly in the studio, “whenever we do the final four, I always get very emotional because I know, I know the struggle. I know what you all had to do to get here, not just in this competition, but in your lives. You should be very, very proud of yourselves. You really should.” She pauses here and looks at each one of us on the main stage in turn, locking eyes with us one by one.

“Ladies, here at *RuPaul’s Drag Race*,” she starts again, “we” – and she verbally emphasizes the word *we* – “have the luxury of celebrating who we are, but we must never forget that even today, there are little boys and girls who feel they don’t fit in. And this show is like a GPS system for many of our young viewers as they try to navigate their lives. So queens, to share your wisdom and experience, especially with our young viewers around the world, it’s become a *Drag Race* tradition for me to ask you this question.”

RuPaul reaches below the table of the physical Judges’ Panel and pulls out a large picture frame with the glass facing her and its back facing us.

“So Tommy Mayberry,” she says in her iconic quick-drawl as if my name were one word with no syllables, and she flips the frame around to face us. In the photo is a little boy absolutely beaming at the camera. It’s a school photo from years ago, and for Picture Day that day, I’m wearing a red-and-white striped shirt. My hair is that classic buzz cut from the ’90s. *It could have been the*

classic mushroom cut from the '90s, I think to myself, very happy that Ru and the Producers didn't choose that one!

Everyone *Awwws*, and Ru continues, "This is you at seven years old. Now if you could time travel, what would you have to say to Little Tommy?"

I look at RuPaul, and she smiles softly at me, and out of the corner of my eyes on either side, I can see Michelle and Brooke smiling warmly at me, too. I look at seven-year-old me, just beaming, and I close my eyes.

Introduction

Teaching Can Be a Real Drag (Show): Or, Move Over, Sage! That Stage is Mine!

I once auditioned for *RuPaul's Drag Race*. (Many, many years ago, before it became mainstream, and before I had even completed my first full year as a drag queen.) The audition process and audition tape itself were key pieces of my thesis project from my unfinished-MFA (Master of Fine Arts) degree at the University of Windsor (Windsor, Ontario, Canada), and I am very proud both of the experience and of the audio-visual artifact I have left. This twelve-minute audition tape, unchanged from my unfortunately unsuccessful application to the fifth season of *Drag Race* in 2012, is now an audio-visual autoethnographic essay in itself, and represents an early foray into theorizing the self, the body, and the body's potential pedagogically in practice and process – see Artifact 1: “*RuPaul's Drag Race* Season Five Audition Tape.”

My dissertation, *Queen of the Academy: Academic Drag as Pedagogy and Praxis* (2022), conceptualizes my pedagogy and praxis as *academic drag*, from its roots in my studio art graduate work and continuing today as my social, racial, and health justice educational development career, work, and leadership. This dissertation began as a riff on Bryant K. Alexander's “buy in” to “the literal project of making case studies out of our own pedagogical practices” (53). Alexander theorizes “the classroom as an ethnographic site” (42n1) in which “pedagogical engagements [are] active performances...that not only orient people to information, but orient them to each other in a space that is always and already an engaged, staged, and audienced performance” (53). As such, “the processes of teaching and learning become,” Alexander argues, “actualized performative events, not rehearsals for some future performance in that fantasized space called *the real world*” (53 – italics

original). In this dissertation, I simultaneously share and explore how my own teaching body¹ de-links institutional conceptions of pedagogy from colonial Ivory Tower sensibilities to consider what pedagogy is and what pedagogies can be(come) when we re-metaphorize the space of the traditional classroom so that we can re-place the sage, and not yeet the stage, to present plural truths of our own selves as teachers. And in this dissertation's totality – its academic writing in tandem with, at times even in collusion with, its accompanying/embedded artifacts (video, photography, life writing), its teaching queer, and its counterstories – this dissertation is a harmony of academic and drag cultures, traditional teaching and dragged up pedagogies.

Academic drag is part transgender visibility, part queer phenomenology and teaching queer, part visual performance and pedagogy, and all counternarrativity toward breaking the system, as Ava DuVernay says, “that’s not broken [but] was built to be this way...It was built to oppress. It was built to control. It was built to shape our culture in a specific way that ke[eps] some people [down low] and some people [up high].” And as a *white* academic drag queen, as a queer and transfeminine person who walks (yes, *walks*: I am able-bodied) through and across this world with the protection of being raced-white, a protection that can even, at times, forgive my queerness and/or my transness, as someone whose intersections of oppressions and privileges is at the nexus of my whiteness, I am divergently equity-denied in the academy as well as equality-granted. As an academic drag queen, I use my pedagogy and praxis to elevate the educational enterprise of the Ivory Tower to the entrepreneurial status of the drag club, ballroom, scene, and screen. As my dear, dear friend Jennifer

¹ I follow Stacey Waite in their *Teaching Queer: Radical Possibilities for Writing and Knowing* (2017) by using the term “teaching body” to mean “this body that shows up vulnerable in a first day of class. A teaching body will always be waited for, looked at, put on its front-of-the-room stage as the first kind of student knowledge, the first body of knowledge” (23). I also enjoy this phrase’s punning potential as with the title of Jonathan Safran Foer’s non-fiction book on factory farming *Eating Animals* (2009) and – spoiler alert! – Judith Hamera’s work with performative pedagogies.

Winters Ward (or *kokum*, as I called her) once said, and said to me on the very day that our two paths first crossed: “Keep calm, and decolonize” (EDC 2018 Keynote, Victoria).

And so this dissertation is about me, to be sure. “Oh yes, Gawwd” it is, to quote Alyssa Edwards (“RuPaul Roast”), a sister drag queen who teaches...and one who even bestowed upon herself a PhD in Drag! And by unambiguously being about me, my dissertation is about more than me. As Vershawn Ashanti Young writes in his *Your Average Nigga: Performing Race, Literacy, and Masculinity* (2007), “It’s true I’m writing about my own racial performance, but it certainly isn’t true that what I’m writing concerns only me” (3). Aja Martinez, in her *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory* (2020), notes on Young here and toward her theorizing and presenting of counterstory as method and genre that “the personal can represent the collective” (91) – and even more powerfully, that “this collective voice can speak for a group but can also represent varying/diverse/divergent viewpoints within groups” (91). Neither Young nor Martinez are using this term, but each of them are arguing via the rhetorical device and power of the synecdoche – commonly, part-for-whole exemplifying, but definitionally “[s]ubstitution of part for whole, genus for species, or *vice versa*,” or stronger and more apt still, “Experience is described in terms of other experience, but at a *different level of magnification*” (Lanham 148 – emphases added). And this synecdochic figuration, as I will argue with and through my academic drag in this dissertation, for equity-denied bodies and historically-and-contemporarily-oppressed bodies, can and does have folks seeing themselves (and sometimes seeing themselves for the very first times) in the direct stories and pedagogical representations that are missing from and passively, if not actively, kept out of the academy.

In this Introduction, “Teaching Can Be a Real Drag (Show): Or, Move Over, Sage! That Stage is Mine!” to my dissertation *Queen of the Academy: Academic Drag as Pedagogy and Praxis*, I

am going to set up and unpack academic drag *as pedagogy* in three capacities (as visual pedagogy; as performative pedagogy; and as decolonial and anti-racist pedagogy) before providing an overview of the heart of my dissertation, the academic drag *as praxis* part, which is counterstory and teaching queer. The three *as pedagogy* parts of this Introduction function as mini-essays separately and together to stake out my original arguments and claims as a young academic as well as to ground the *as praxis* part that follows them in this dissertation, which is my intervention into teaching as knowledge and power and into writing as knowledge and power. My project with this dissertation is synecdochally two-fold: half of this dissertation argues for decolonizing pedagogy through academic drag, through queer and trans- representational embodiment and “trying on” new ways of empowered and empowering teaching in the classroom; and the other half of this dissertation argues for decolonizing the dissertation itself by demonstrating, by quite literally *trying on*, teaching queer and counterstory as generic interventions into the hallowed halls of dissertation gatekeeping – those hallowed halls holding hard to who knows what, who gets to know what, and who gets to say that what, and how. As Martinez powerfully and poignantly puts it: “It’s high time that the gatekeepers of this profession get out of the way so we as counterstorytellers can get on with the business of writing and sharing our stories without having to repeatedly rationalize the legitimacy of our theoretical and methodological choices” (31).

In retrospect, the very first drag queen I ever saw I saw when I was about six years old. And she was Robin Williams in Mrs. Doubtfire. While both Robin and fabulous old Euphemia would curiously stick with me throughout my formative years (and, indeed, continue to right up to this day), it was not until I met RuPaul as a special guest star on an episode of Sabrina the Teenage Witch about five years after meeting Mrs. Doubtfire that I really discovered the magic of cross-dressing. (Although, it

would take about another decade still for it consciously to manifest itself.) RuPaul, perhaps the most famous drag queen in the world, once proclaimed, “At the heart of every great drag queen is a great performer. Someone with an irrepressible talent that can steal the spotlight...even when she’s just the third girl from the left.”² She has also said, “[B]ehind [drag queens’] fabulous faces and fierce façades, there’s a whole lot of heart and soul you’ve never seen before.”³ This whole-lotta-heart-’n’-soul is exactly what I want to share with my students, and with the world.

Taking My First Steps: Academic Drag as Visual Pedagogy

For me, Visual Pedagogy absolutely is an embodied and embodying practice and process as a teacher with my students, and as an academic drag queen, my practices and processes are visually grounded. I am an academic drag queen, university instructor, and pedagogical leader, and my work and life are entirely visual vis-à-vis embodiment. My understanding of the visual, thus, does not essentialize it from the other senses but rather takes into account how sensory intelligences are intertwined. *Visual essentialism*, Mieke Bal identifies, “proclaims the visual ‘difference’ – read ‘purity’ – of images, or expresses a desire to stake out the turf of visibility against other media or semiotic systems” (6). But, she importantly argues, “[t]he act of looking is profoundly ‘impure’” since, fundamentally, “vision itself is inherently *synaesthetic*” (9 – italics original). Brian Goldfarb, in his book *Visual Pedagogy: Media Cultures in and Beyond the Classroom* (2002), rightly points out that when it comes to pedagogical practices, “[t]o focus exclusively on language literacy and speech is to overlook the visual and graphic means of knowledge production and reproduction” that also play a major role (2), but the visual is so much more than just representational, and so to focus exclusively

² (“Girl Groups”)

³ (“Extra Special Edition”)

on media cultures as the visual is to overlook the embodied visuality, or presentational aspects, of our subjectivities as teaching bodies (and those of our students' binarily as learning bodies) in our classrooms. "We don't just teach or study bodies," Judith Hamera writes in her essay "Exposing the Pedagogical Body: Protocols and Tactics": "We teach and study *as* bodies" (63 – italics original). And "the material body and embodiment," Stacey Waite notes in their *Teaching Queer: Radical Possibilities for Writing and Knowing* (2017), is "[o]ne of the things [that] queer pedagogies and queer theory itself have been called to more fully contend with" (66).

"Most of us do not want to talk about our bodies," Waite also notes, "at least not here in the brainy mindspace of academic discourse, and especially when it comes to teaching and students" (18). "Part shame, part fear, part binary of body and mind, this hesitancy can be particularly amplified for queer bodies, or bodies like mine," for "[t]he queer body always calls attention to what the body knows" (18). Or, as RuPaul might put, "You're born naked and the rest is drag" (*Workin' it!* ix). Here, Waite and RuPaul each approach the visual presentations of bodies as countered to notions of disembodiment or bodiless approaches/understandings of being and knowing and doing in the world. "Bodies do matter," Waite declares, and "[a] body of knowledge has everything to do with bodies" (19). With Hamera's correctly clocking, via the inferred pun of "teaching bodies" (i.e., *teaching* as adjective and as verb; *bodies* as self, as subject matter, and as learners), these three thinkers together position the body itself as actively embodied, and visually so. "Whatever you put on after you get out of the shower is your drag," RuPaul continues to say (ix), and Waite continues to say that "our bodies are with us always. We cannot, as it were, teach without them" (34). And since I do, indeed, put on (a variety of) somethings after I get out the shower and prior to teaching with my body, I am guided in my visual pedagogy by bell hooks and her call in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994) "to imagine ways that teaching and the learning experience could be different"

(5). For me, imagining – and actualizing – a different teaching and learning experience is about getting back onto that stage we as educators have been kicked off for lecturing on and activating the space of the classroom in my visual (and multisensory, syn-aesthetic) body as an academic drag queen who identifies under the trans- banner.

I will briefly diverge from the theme here to position some key concepts. As Bal significantly declares, it is by no means obvious that the visual can be set apart from let alone consist only of images, for “the object domain consists of things we can see or whose existence is motivated by their visibility; things that have a particular *visibility* or visual quality that addresses the social constituencies interacting with them” (8 – italics original). Drag is this: drag’s object domain consists of things we can see and whose existence is motivated by their visibility. And drag does this: it is through this power of the visual quality of drag and through drag’s very visibility as not unambiguously a transgender project that drag addresses social constituencies interacting with it. As such, a clarification of key terms and concepts of and within “trans-” are needed.

Trans-, to be sure, is an incredibly slippery term. Trish Salah’s entry for *transgender* in Lorraine Code’s *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* (2000) presents various meanings:

[R]apidly evolving and highly contested. Commonly[,] transgender functions either as a name employed by individuals at odds with their physical sex, and/or, as an umbrella term for all those whose gender does not follow directly from their apparent sex or the sex to which they were assigned at birth. (475)

Salah adds: “In this second sense, transgender may include: intersexuals, female-to-male (FTM) transsexuals and male-to-female (MTF) transsexuals, butches, femmes, *drag queens and kings*, cross dressers, nellies, transgenderists” (475 – emphasis added)⁴. My personal understanding as a drag

⁴ For the term *intersexuality*, Salah defines it as “the clinical designation for the condition popularly termed hermaphroditism” (475) and points out that “[s]ome intersex activists have made common cause with transsexual and transgender activists; indeed, some intersexuals self-identify as transgender” (475). And on

queen is of identification with *transgender* very much as the transgender activists' argument that "transgender is a continuum of gender-transgressive behaviour in which all gendered beings participate, to a greater or lesser degree" (475). I use the hyphen with the prefix "trans-" – without pronouncing it (following Fred Wah's "dynamics of compounding" (177) where it is the hyphen's "conceptual profile, its literalness, [that] is provocative of the large question of 'inbetweenness'" (179) – and Jack Halberstam uses the asterisk – "trans*" – which he pronounces as "trans-asterisk" ("Trans*"). For Halberstam, "[t]he term 'trans*' uses the asterisk to hold open the many histories of variant bodies and the many ways in which those histories have been deployed" (*Trans** 51-2). "[T]he term 'trans*'," he also states, "puts pressure on all modes of gendered embodiment and refuses to choose between the identitarian and the contingent forms of trans identity" (xiii). Regardless of hyphen or asterisk (and there is considerable debate and no consensus), the activation of my drag/trans- body on the stages of my classrooms most definitely invokes practices of looking, yes, but also presents practices of being looked *at*.

As evidence of the importance of visual pedagogy as I am outlining and arguing with and through my drag/trans- body, I offer here, as well as unpack throughout my dissertation, key moments from my career where teaching in drag and as the academic drag queen I am has had individual, curricular, and even institutional transformative impacts. When I taught "Transgender Visual Culture" at the University of Waterloo (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada) in 2015, the number of my students who chose to do their final project as a visual-performative research-creation endeavour over a traditional essay was astounding. And after my "Gender Pronouns and Teaching" talk in June 2019 at the

transsexuality/gender dysphoria, to be definitive, Salah writes that it is "an experience of strong conflict between one's sense of self as a gendered and sexed being, and one's anatomical sex" (476) and that "transsexuals desire to bring the body into congruity with the self through a variety of technologies" (476).

University of Guelph (Guelph, Ontario, Canada – see Artifact 2: “Poster, Slide, and Photo for June 28th, 2019 ‘Gender Pronouns and Teaching’”), a staff member from the Alumni Affairs and Development Office asked me to consult on the Latin suffix system educational institutions continue to use to (perhaps unwittingly) gender their graduates within the binary. (For more on these two examples of my academic drag *as praxis*, please see Chapters 2 and 3 respectively, “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Or, (Re)Visiting and (Re)Embodying My Teaching,” and “Gender Pronouns, Teaching and Learning, and Cultures of Respect: A Counterstory Novella.”)

I will return here to the theme of scholarly, authoritative discussions and precedents of Visual Pedagogy and of Visual Culture. Goldfarb opens his *Visual Pedagogy* (the first monograph in the field of visual pedagogy) by highlighting the “burgeoning visual culture” (1) in which we find ourselves as global citizens. He outlines as the scope of his book “the role of the visual and media in the broader cultures of education and pedagogy during the late twentieth century” (2), and he sets up his framework as the “critical and feminist pedagogy” in the 1980s and 1990s (2) but also via “taking the story back to the 1950s and forward to the digital revolution of the 1990s” (5). His book very much is the product of its time, being published just two years into the new millennium and looking back on the half-centennial immediately before it. It decidedly does not look at the post-millennium moment nor its post-millennium potential, especially when it comes to pedagogy and practices of teaching and learning. In so (not) doing, the discipline of Visual Pedagogy, for and through Goldfarb, associates exclusively “visual culture” *as* “media culture,” and thus as technologically-mediated culture. But visual culture itself is so much more than just media culture.

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, in their *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (2009) define *visual culture* as “the shared practices of a group, community, or society through which meanings are made out of the visual, aural, and textual world of representations and

the ways that looking practices are engaged in symbolic and communicative activities” (3). Interestingly, and importantly, they do not use the word *media* once in their definition of *visual culture* but instead link together visuality, aurality, and textuality as a network of socially symbolic signifiers that represent and guide our collective practices of looking. For Goldfarb, “visual” and “media” are near-synonyms at the outset of his *Visual Pedagogy*, but he unfortunately slips into privileging media over visual (and falsely equates the visual to the media) as he writes instead about “media pedagogy” and “the computerized classroom” (69) as seemingly totalizing of the shared practices of meaning making from pedagogical artifacts that would otherwise encompass visual culture. *Media pedagogy*, then, is a more apt and accurate theme for Goldfarb than *visual pedagogy*, for Goldfarb’s early foray into the areas of “visuality” and the visual are a starting point in media studies for what has now been shown to be a vital area of investigation and theory building. Classrooms with computers, and computers for teaching and learning, seems to be what he is most interested in and talking about/theorizing and exploring. In fact, he especially notes, in situating visual culture within and under media culture, that “[t]he question of media pedagogy’s future is a crucial one as media, and visual culture generally, increasingly are the means through which we experience and interpret our world” (83). While this may sound like it rhymes sensically with Sturken and Cartwright’s definition of *visual culture*, Goldfarb is parenthetically gesturing to “visual culture” as subordinate to media. But the visual and visuality are so much more than just media and mediated. “Visual Pedagogy,” thus – or, for me, “Visual Pedagogies” in the plural to not create/perpetuate another new monolithic, totalizing structural adjectival-pedagogy in the academy and for academic discourse – is an excellent and important (new) discipline and faction within teaching and learning.

At their very definitional levels, each of *visual* and of *pedagogy* should be readily recognizable and easy to marry into one conjoined concept. *Pedagogy*, of course, is a noun that means

“[t]he art, occupation, or practice of teaching. Also: the theory or principles of education; a method of teaching based on such a theory” (*OED*). *Visual*, now, can be both a noun and an adjective, and while its noun definition perhaps is where Goldfarb leaves the broader visual behind in exchange for the more specific media – visual, n. 3.a: “A visual image or display, a picture; *spec.* the visual element of a film or television production” (*OED*) – the adjectival form (and adjectives function in language to modify and describe nouns, which is the true function of *visual* in front of *pedagogy* – i.e., to modify and describe it) of *visual* means, “Pertaining or relating to, concerned or connected with, sight or vision” (*OED*). “Sight or vision,” to be sure, as Sturken and Cartwright situated it, are ways of looking. When I think of and use the term *visual pedagogies*, then, I mean discrete methodological practices in teaching and learning of embodying processes and protocols concerned with vision and with ways of looking in our roles and identities as educators.

As drag artist Nina Flowers tells us, “Mothers are very influential in drag queens...[s]o she’s a big part of [my work]. I...honor her in [my drag].”⁵ My own mother, too, very Freudianly, is someone without whom I could never have become a drag queen, and she is there with me every step of the way, too. For me, the most moving part of my mother and my connection is that when my mom looks at me in drag, she tells me that I constantly remind her of herself when she was my age. And I always hold this special moment for a few wonderful seconds before ruining it by replying with something such as, “Thank you...or I’m really sorry!” Of course, wittiness aside, I am my mother’s biological offspring, and with the familial and genetic resemblances between us, temporary cosmetic revisions

⁵ (“Absolut Drag Ball”)

to my face, head, and body can fetch a certain type of new (re)semblance between us so that I can, even if just for a moment, become my own mother's daughter.

Finding My Strut: Academic Drag as Performative Pedagogy

Halberstam, whose “goal has long been to try to understand the visual protocols for representing the trans* body, trans* experience, and trans* identity[⁶]” (85), would call this “transgender visibility” (87). And by “transgender visibility,” he means that we can and should think about transgender “as an altered relation to seeing and being seen” (87) that “constitutes radically new knowledge about the experience of being in a body and [that] can be the basis for very different ways of seeing the world” (87). Halberstam here is not drawing upon hooks before him, but to me, the “very different ways of seeing the world” – and of being seen in the world – presented by these diverse scholars are how I enter my visual pedagogy as an academic drag queen to image-in/imagine into existence these ways that teaching and learning could look different and be different.

To ensure that our teaching and learning looks and is different, we need to know where we have come from with it. This is exactly what Bal means when she says that “critical self-reflection is an inherent element in any innovative, progressive academic endeavour” (6). Feminist writer and independent scholar Sara Ahmed, too, writes in her book *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006) that

⁶ Halberstam does not mean here a set of protocols that are the official system of rules governing transgender representation but instead, quite the opposite: as he writes about the purpose of his visual archives of transgender bodies, “I want to chart the undoing of certain logics of embodiment” (xii). “When logic that fixes bodily form to social practice comes undone,” he says, “when narratives of sex, gender, and embodiment loosen up and become less fixed in relation to truth, authenticity, originality, and identity, then we have the space and the time to imagine bodies otherwise” (xii). Halberstam’s project is a re-image-ening project, and one built powerfully on the fact that “[t]oday, young people who cross-identify are able to imagine themselves into other bodies, bodies that feel more true to who they are” (2).

[i]t is usually with the benefit of “hindsight” that we reflect on such moments, where a fork in the road before us opens up and we have to decide what to do, even if the moment does not present itself as a demand for a decision. The “hind” does not always give us a different point of view, yet it does allow those moments to be revisited, to be reinhabited, as moments when we change course. (19)

What Ahmed so importantly is getting at here is that reflection – self-reflection; critical self-reflection – invites us to practice looking inwardly at crossroads in our pasts that may or may not have been critical at the time of conscious or subconscious decision-making but that opened a path and foreclosed at least one other. And while she is not decidedly writing on pedagogy disciplinarily here, her insights on hindsight here have visual pedagogical dimensions via the looking (and the necessity of re-looking) at these moments of juncture when we change course. By re-*viewing* my own past moments of juncture, I understand how I *have* changed my course. Looking back on my first steps into academic drag and what I did not know then was the start of my trajectory into the practices and processes of my own visual pedagogy, I am struck by something in my audition tape. “For me,” I say, “drag is about showing the world an invisible side of me. Making it visible through all those wonderful tools that allow queens to become their fabulous, fierce selves.” This strikes me because, as I reflect on the fork in the road from my MFA to my PhD, as I revisit and reinhabit this moment when I changed course (I wanted more theoretical, methodological framing for my academic drag project in teaching, and thus I left my terminal MFA unfinished to pursue my doctoral studies in this area), I see myself seeing myself. Halberstam says that “the visibility of transgender must be seen as part of a larger shift in habits and customs around classification, naming, and inhabiting of the human body” (17-18). As Hamera so perfectly put it, “We don’t just teach or study bodies. We teach and study *as* bodies” (63 – italics original).

As bodies that are teaching, we are also bodies that are visually performing, and this idea of teachers as performers, hooks says, “is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become

more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning” (11). We are performing, all as sages and guides on all the stages and sides of our classrooms – “the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (hooks 12). And our students are watching and learning *precisely because* they are looking. “Knowledge,” Bal says, “is constituted, or rather, *performed*, in the same acts of looking that it describes, analyses and critiques” (11 – italics original). Citing Foucault, she states that “in the simplest formulation, knowledge directs and contours the gaze, thereby making visible those aspects of objects that otherwise remain invisible” but that it is “also the other way around: far from being a feature of the object seen, visibility is also a practice, even a strategy, of selection that determines what other aspects or even objects remain invisible” (11). In my synaesthetic visual pedagogy as an academic drag queen, my “innovative, progressive academic endeavour,” as Bal might say, my classrooms hold and activate so much radical possibility because, as I reflect on the reflection in my audition tape, I make an invisible side of me visible in the space of my classrooms – as well as all the spaces and places in which I activate teaching and learning as a pedagogical leader. My visual pedagogy as an academic drag queen is a strategic practice of selection that determines which aspects I make visible and invisible across the visibility of my teaching body. And as Bal argues, “visibility as an object of study requires that we focus on the *relationship* between the seen and the seer” (14 – italics original). In my visual pedagogy, the seen and the seer are reciprocally my self and my students – we see each other seeing each other – through the Halberstamian transgender visibility of my drag body. And drag bodies are powerful bodies. RuPaul even says, “With great power comes great responsibility” (“It Takes Two”), and Ahmed notes that “[o]rientations...are about the intimacy of bodies and their dwelling places” (8). For me, this intimacy of my body and its dwelling is as ideological as it is locational: the space and place of the classroom.

Ahmed, in her queer phenomenology, notes that “[i]t is not always obvious which places are the ones where we can feel at home” (10). Indeed, it is also not always obvious which places are the ones that we can call “home,” either. My “home” as an academic drag queen, is and always will be the space and place of the classroom. But that is not a comfortable or easy home – in fact, as Elise Pineau notes of “performance-centered approach[es] to education,” classrooms are “inherently, and exhilaratingly, countercultural at both the pedagogical and theoretical levels” (“Teaching Is Performance” 21). “Whenever we step out from behind the instructor’s lectern or the director’s chair,” she argues, “we enter that liminal space where our own identities as ‘experts’ become tenuous” (21). She is writing, of course, decidedly of scholars and teachers of performance and neither of scholars/teachers in general nor of visual pedagogues; but as an academic drag queen, this rhetoric fits like pantyhose and tucking tape, especially in “welcoming students to join [me] in that uncertain, magical space of personal and communal transformation” (21). For hooks, this would also be in kind with her engaged pedagogy, one that “emphasizes well-being” (15), which “means that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students” (15).

In her iconic 1994 essay, “Teaching Is Performance: Reconceptualizing a Problematic Metaphor,” Pineau notes that “[t]he claim that teaching is a performance is at once self-evident and oxymoronic” (3). This claim is also, I would add, somewhat of an empty signifier: to claim that “teaching is a performance” – and, indeed, to discuss “teaching *as* (a) performance,” too – can mean everything and nothing simultaneously. An entire subfield of the scholarship of teaching and learning dedicated to it, or a throw-away phrase, even, perhaps, when not nuanced powerfully or pedagogically. And this powerful and pedagogical nuancing is something I am working to do with and through my academic drag.

Pineau continues, “As a colloquial expression, the performance metaphor is readily acknowledged by seasoned educators who recognize that effective teaching often relies upon ‘theatrical’ techniques of rehearsal, scripting, improvisation, characterization, timing, stage presence, and critical reviews” (3). All of these aspects of the theatre and of theatricality are, of course, inherent in drag performance, too (“rehearsal, scripting, improvisation, characterization, timing, stage presence, and critical reviews”), but what drag more consciously brings to the fore with “the performance metaphor” when connected to teaching and learning is clothing (at times, costuming), gender (often beyond the binary), and identity. Specifically, *embodied identity*.⁷ And while this isn’t

⁷ By “embodied identity” here, I mean exactly that: how drag centralizes the body as a tool or technique of performance and in doing so contours the gaze onto the physical and the material effects of the physical body and signifies the identity in/of that body. In their article “Drag Pedagogy: The Playful Practice of Queer Imagination in Early Childhood,” Harper Keenan and Lil Miss Hot Mess examine the recent (mostly North American) cultural phenomenon of public library programming for young children called Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH) and, while looking specifically at early childhood education (not post-secondary adult education), they argue that “[d]rag reminds us that our imaginations need not be limited by embodiment, but that we can all make over our own image to shape how others see us” (449). Shaping how others see us, they say; literally contouring (and directing) the gaze, as I through Bal through Foucault say. And Keenan and Hot Mess further argue that “[w]ithin the context of DQSH, the visual style of the queen serves as a provocation that invites inquiry into normative fashion and embodiment” (450). “Glitter, sequins, wigs, and heels,” they continue, “all serve as pedagogical tools, inviting questions like *why and how is drag made unusual in this environment?* In other words, while verbal communication is a crucial element of DQSH, even if the queen said nothing, we argue that her mere aesthetic presence would be generative” (450 – italics original).

To demonstrate and connect these notions of *drag pedagogy* back to me, to my embodied identity, and to what I call *academic drag*, I offer this anecdote from my doctoral studies with my comprehensive exams: At the University of Waterloo in the Department of English Language and Literature in 2014, doctoral students wrote their comprehensive exams, both Primary Field and Secondary Field, in the basement computer lab of the Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology (PAS) building on main campus, and it was a four-hour timed exercise (starting at 8:00am sharp) of the qualifying cohort silently typing away (save for the clacking of their respective keyboards) with the English Graduate Coordinator invigilating. For each of my two written comprehensive exams, I got up three hours earlier each day to get into full drag, wig to heels, to literally sit silently and type out my exam essay answers. Two silent drag performances to very, very few people – and let’s be honest, to essentially no audience...we were all looking only at our screens – and yet still generative. I could not only reference my embodied identity to buttress my essay answers for my comps (and have my cohort and the Grad Coordinator be able to confirm that I was, indeed, typing in drag in the basement computer lab), but writing my comps in my authentic body and embodied as my authentic self, I could generate more and powerful scholarly responses to my exam questions. (My) drag was made *very* unusual in this environment, and even though this queen did *audibly* say nothing, my aesthetic, embodied presence together with my written essays most certainly said a lot.

what Pineau is specifically referring to in 1994 when she writes that “[p]erformance...still holds a largely pejorative meaning for the cultural psyche” because, as she expounds, “[b]y its very nature it is suspect, associated with pretense, artifice, deception, affectation, and entertainment” (3) – think here of that awful portmanteau *edutainment*... – as Alexander, Anderson, and Gallegos note, “performance and performativity are intricately interwoven practices in education” (9). And they are, I would extend, so interwoven to the point that we do not see the strings, the threads, the braidings, and the taken-for-granted-ness, even uncritically so. So much so that it can be and even is seen as “at once self-evident and oxymoronic,” as Pineau said, or as emptily signifying everything and nothing, as I said. Yet drag shows these strings, threads, and braids, and specifically academic drag makes them evident in the classroom and in education.

Pineau does connect performance to embodiment and perhaps close to identity and even toward embodied identity in her earlier work on the teaching-is/as-performance metaphor – she argues that “[p]erformance combines full body engagement with critical reflexivity; information must be engaged somatically as well as intellectually. It is the dialectical process of doing and reflecting, experiencing and interpreting that distinguishes performance methodology from simply ‘acting out’” (17). And in her later work on decidedly “Performative Pedagogy” (2002), she argues further that “[a]s performance heightens our attention to our own bodies, it provides a way for breaking down and breaking through the habits we take for granted” (51). Because, as she states, “performance [also] enables an imaginative leap into other kinds of bodies, other ways of being in the world, and in so doing, it opens up concrete and embodied possibilities for resistance, reform and renewal” (51). Building off Pineau’s work, Hamera rightly points out that “[c]ritical scholars in education, theatre, and performance studies have repeatedly addressed the embodied aspects of pedagogy using notions of performance and the performative [but that] there is still relatively little attention given to how the

social, pedagogical body is actually produced, ‘normalized,’ and performed” (64). Hamera further discusses “the pedagogical body as a site of critique and intervention through performance theory and literal classroom performance” (64), and she identifies “the body as a site of knowing and as an object of practice in students’, and faculties’, daily pedagogical lives” (70) – and as she specifically argues, the roles of “‘student’ and ‘teacher’ are physicalities as well as discursive roles” (70).

They both are also *visualities*, engaged in that syn-aesthetic visuality as I discussed above, and, as I am discussing here, bringing with them as physical roles, as discursive roles, and as visual roles the *core* theatricalities (as Pineau outlined) and the added ones I outlined – namely, clothing, gender, and identity. Halberstam talks about “how gender shifts and changes through all bodies” (*Trans** xiii) and how “identities and modes of embodiment shift in meaning and form as people cross boundaries and find themselves subject to new and different kinds of regulation” (42). When we focus on and consider gender as part of (as Hamera’s project with performative pedagogy is) exposing the pedagogical body toward securing protocols and tactics as well as toward (as Pineau’s project with performative pedagogy is) breaking down and breaking through the habits we take for granted (habits taken for granted such as dressing and our clothing, perhaps?), we can begin to see deeper and more powerful nuances to performative pedagogies with our bodies and our identities together with the bodies and identities of our students as well.

“Because we tend to need proof,” as Halberstam declares, “that tectonic shifts have occurred before we declare the end or start of a new paradigm, we are drawn to bodies that seem new or different in ways that are visualizable and verifiable” (29). “In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,” Halberstam exemplifies,

masculine women and male dandies provided visual markers of irreversible shifts in the meanings of the gendered body within new forms of capitalism. The dandy and the aristocratic butch both modeled new investments in bodily comportment, style,

and wealth, and in the process they flouted the limits of gender norms even as they depended on new practices of consumer capitalism to do so. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, the transgender body performs a similar function—whether it manifests in the circulation and use of hormones or in new narratives of selfhood, the figure of transgender embodiment is central to numerous emergent narratives of self and other, being and becoming. (29-30)

Drag bodies as not unambiguous (as I noted above) figures of transgender embodiment, to borrow Halberstam's language here, and my academic drag body synecdochally, can be central to emergent narratives of self and other, of being and becoming, in classrooms and pedagogies. My academic drag body participates in and exemplifies "visual language that captures queerness, transitivity, and trans* identities across variable understandings of time and space" (Halberstam 86), and my academic drag as literal, i.e., *not* metaphorical, teaching as/is performance, participates in and exemplifies "the fabulous, inventive, dis-identificatory processes by which and through which trans* people dream themselves into the world and remake the world in the process" (44). And I do this not only for myself as a survival mechanism but as a representational mechanism for my students' survival – as Waite says powerfully of their own queer methodologies, "I advocate for queer methodologies because I am queer, because queer teenagers all over the world are killing themselves at horrifying rates, because if oppression is really going to change, it's our civic duty to think in queerer ways, to come up with queer kinds of knowledge-making so that we might know truths that are non-normative, and contradictory, and strange" (187). And like Waite, too, I do this for decolonizing the academy and the academic spaces and places I and my students navigate in our bodies, individually and collectively.

In her timeless quotation on teaching and empowerment that guides me as an academic drag queen in my visual, performative pedagogy, Black feminist writer and thinker Toni Morrison says:

I tell my students, "When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody

else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.” (2003)

Morrison here invokes some performative dimensions via the colonizing “grab-bag candy game” signifying metaphor for power, and she also invokes performative remembering – recollection, *reflection*, hindsight (*à la* Ahmed) – and, thus, most certainly does involve the visual via looking, via seeing. And as Bal says, “because seeing is an act of interpreting, interpretation can influence ways of seeing, hence, of imagining possibilities of change” (2003, p. 21). By activating the rhetoric and parapedagogical script of games, seriously and colonizingly, Morrison hints at a questioning of the rules, even perhaps toward a changing of the rules. But what if games, gaming, gamifications, etc. are just red herrings here? This is, after all, *not*, Morrison explicitly says here, a game. The decolonizing, then, of these “grab-bag candy games” is the imagining of change – and, as Halberstam would say, of *image-ining* that change into existence. And the image (of change) I posit is a lighted candle extending its flame to a potentially infinite number of yet-to-be-lighted candles, never losing its total-sum (like in food metaphors for privilege) and with the very real likelihood that any one or more now-lighted candles’ flames could burn brighter and stronger and longer than the source.

I had never thought of myself as a “risk-taking” academic nor as a daredevil pedagogue, but my very first “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” presentation and discussion was on December 6th, 2018 – the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Montréal Massacre in Montréal, Quebec, Canada during which a male shooter executed fourteen female Engineering students at l’École Polytechnique de Montréal⁸. About halfway through my presentation, as has become a staple of it even since this first

⁸ In Canada, every December 6th, we remember these fourteen women: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Annie Turcotte, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, and Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz. We also commemorate on this day the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, as well as murdered transwomen and each and every woman and female-identifying person in our

one in 2018, is a slide with my name, my lived pronouns, and a double-photo of me in and out of drag that is surrounded by a cluster of visually- and invisibly-identified intercharacteristics of my identity – embodying what Martinez might call “the importance of subjective transparency and forthrightness regarding the intersections of our oppressions and privileges” (68). My syn-aesthetic, plural truths of who I am as a person, as an academic, as a teacher – see Artifact 3: “‘Gender Pronouns and Teaching’ slide: ‘Tommy Mayberry (he/she/they)’.” Following this first-ever presentation and discussion, the Associate Director of my then-unit and I debriefed, and he shared with me the fear and anxiety he felt on my behalf when I put up that slide and asked the audience of nearly 100 people my signature question (but with a twist): “What can I clarify...*about myself?*”⁹

As I mentioned earlier, individually, curricularly, and institutionally, I have had transformative impacts towards image-ining change into existence and extending my flame through

provinces, throughout our nation, and across the world for whom gender-based violence harms and/or destroys their lives.

⁹ I include this microanecdote here, as well as the following microreflection in this footnote, with permission from Dr. Dale Lackeyram, Associate Director of the Office of Teaching and Learning at the University of Guelph during my time there (and now Director for the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Queen’s University). In many, many conversations since that debrief one on December 6th, 2018, I have learned more about Dale as a whole person, including some of his social location as an immigrant/new Canadian, as a cisman of colour, as a queer person, and as an activist and ally of all those intersections and more. In revisiting this microanecdote – and specifically in reinhabiting it, as Ahmed might say – I am struck by how little I paid attention to/was even aware of those nuances of Dale’s intersections of oppressions and privileges, especially when engaging in a debrief about fears and anxieties and power and privilege and anti-oppression work in the academy. Dale, my superior hierarchically as Associate Director to my then-Educational Developer role plus academically as *Dr.* Dale Lackeyram to my Tommy-Mayberry-comma-ABD-PhD, shared with me that afternoon on the 6th how he felt seeing me put myself so vulnerably on that stage as the whole person who I am at a university like Guelph’s where Dale in his body has walked for many years. I know now that I wasn’t listening properly or respectfully or responsively to Dale then, and while I will not say that I *now know* but that I am now coming into knowing more, into thinking more critically and more deeply, and that I am committed to continuing always to do so, I am *beginning to know* more about where some of that fear and anxiety may have come from and how, as a raced-white settler scholar, I don’t hold those intersections of oppression and of being equity-denied and so wasn’t paying attention to them this very first conversation. But I am looking, and I am listening, and I am working every day to keep looking and to keep listening toward stronger and increasing sites and possibilities of resistance in teaching and learning.

visual, performative pedagogies in my classrooms. For another example, one of my students whose final project was a research-creation life-writing piece about coming of age and learning that they are Indigenous and how reconnecting with that missing part of their identity helped them situate and reflect on their childhood trauma with Western gender roles as they came to know themselves as Two-Spirit. Their story recounted how having me as their professor and witnessing my teaching in my authentic body, powerfully on and across campus, helped them feel at home in their own body for the first time, finding comfort and strength in who they are. Their piece included a pencil sketch on the final page of a self-portrait of how they truly saw themselves. I was the first person they shared this with, both their story and their drawing image-izing themselves into existence. I held out my candle, my flame, and my student held out theirs to me. I am not Indigenous, and I cannot embody or (re)present Two-Spirit with my queerness and transness as a raced-white settler. And I am critically and crucially *not* saying that I am or that I can. Synecdochally, and as Martinez notes on the personal having the power and privilege to be able to “represent varying/diverse/divergent viewpoints within groups,” my lighted candle with my visual, performative pedagogical academic drag queen teaching body empowered my student to enflame their own candle. So not part-for-whole synecdochally (although, perhaps, acronymically with 2SLGBTQIA+ the case could be made as such, though that is decidedly not the case I am making here), but definitionally synecdochic of describing experience “in terms of other experience, but at a different level of magnification.” A different level of magnification that I hope, deeply hope, burns brighter, stronger, and longer, yes, and that critically and crucially lights many more candles, burning hotter and hotter, individually and collectively.

I will make another turn here to set up an argument rooted in Goldfarb’s *Visual Pedagogy* that actualizes my academic drag queen visual, performative pedagogy as being imagined into existence. For all my perhaps scathing critique of Goldfarb that opens this Introduction and my

dissertation, his is a product of its time over two decades ago, yet interestingly (and unavoidably) for my work, project, and arguments, Goldfarb *does*, in fact, talk about drag culture, drag queens, and drag teaching in his *Visual Pedagogy*. And he does so through media-based pedagogical games for adult sex education. And games, importantly, *à la* Morrison above, inferentially have the power to (de)colonize.

Discussing as a case study the 1993 interactive computer game *Brothers Dating Game* – which Goldfarb describes as “no ordinary arcade game, but a program created by and for gay, bisexual, and transgendered^[10] African American men and intended to generate dialogue about safer-sex practices (128-9) – he identifies “the teacherly superego” in the game as a drag queen and argues that the game writers and creators “subvert the stereotype of the teacher as authoritarian man or straight woman” so that “Authority is internalized in the form of a figure whose status vis-à-vis power is both off center and in defiance of codes of authenticity” (92). “[T]o embody the pedagogical voice in one’s peer,” Goldfarb notes, “or to parody the role of authority, is to defuse the disciplinary function...or at least to make self-discipline reciprocally peer based and fun” (92). Now, Goldfarb, to be sure (and to be fair) is writing about an adult sex ed game on “laser disc and computer interface

¹⁰ Again, as a product of its time, Goldfarb, unfortunately, gets several things wrong in his handling of queer and trans- issues. I will play nice, however, but I will ethically correct here Goldfarb’s representational inaccuracies.

Most immediately, as I connected this footnote to the word *transgendered*, is the contemporary ethos that “transgender” is an adjective describing a person and not a verb in the past-participle as something done to a person – i.e., one is a transgender person, not a person who has been transgendered. (Halberstam, academically, uses *transgender* as a verb in his public talk on the “visual archives of the transgendered body” because, as he explores with his visual archive, important icons such as a Max(ine) Feldman who were almost lost to history have been, (retro)actively, “transgendered” in their inclusion in the trans* visual archives.) The acceptable parlance of today is adjective over verb, however. Secondly, Goldfarb refers to the safer-sex diva in the game named Jealousy as a “transgendered [B]lack man” whereas she, fictional though she may be, would more ethically be a transwoman – transgender[] men would be, simply put, men assigned female at birth (whereas Jealousy, evident by her picture that Goldfarb includes as a Figure in this chapter) is demonstrably female-presenting and, thus, more likely to be a transgender[] [B]lack *woman*, if we’re sticking to the binary.

designed to be installed in freestanding kiosks in gay bars and in clinics, to be accessed at no cost to the user” (129) and most certainly *not* about academic drag nor an academic drag queen’s visual, performative pedagogy activated in the halls and classrooms of contemporary post-secondary institutions. There are incredible differences between these; yet, as a product of its time and, as I mentioned earlier, in responsibly being able to ensure that our teaching and learning looks and is different, we need to know where we have come from with it, and Goldfarb does unpack, via visual, performative pedagogical domains, gay rights and teaching.

“To be openly gay and a teacher,” Goldfarb explains, “was to be selling one’s sexual identity to one’s students” via “a pedagogical performance insofar as it ‘teaches’ sexual behaviour” (99). He is writing, of course, on California state senator John Briggs’s referendum in 1978 in opposition to gay rights. Goldfarb goes on to tell us, picking up the thesis of visual pedagogy, “What the Briggs initiative implied was that any public signifying of, or participation in, gay culture (within or outside the classroom, explicitly sexual or not) constituted pedagogical ‘advocacy,’ ‘solicitation,’ or even ‘imposition’ of gay culture in the classroom and beyond” (99). Taking up my almost synaesthetic argument of visual, performative pedagogy, Goldfarb recounts that this era subscribed to “fantasies that a gay educator might be so powerfully seductive that students would be recruited into gay culture through his or her presence alone” (101). This is fearmongering, of course – hate-filled and heterosexist – yet this dreaded magnetism of the pre-millennium zeitgeist the parents of today’s neo-Fascists spewed is today a badge of honour. (One of the pillars of my Educational Developer’s Philosophy Statement is, for instance, “my charisma.”) And I *hope* to seduce and recruit my students and learners into active and allied social, racial, and health justice cultures.¹¹

¹¹ This has always been important, and especially more prominently since the Briggs 1978 watershed moment, but it certainly has not been isolated to that nor gone away. For a contemporary British drag/trans- reference,

“Progressive professors,” hooks writes, “working to transform the curriculum so that it does not reflect biases or reinforce systems of domination are most often the individuals willing to take risks that engaged pedagogy requires and to make their teaching practices a site of resistance” (21). “Resistance,” Chandra Talpade Mohanty affirms, “lies in self-conscious engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations and in the active creation of oppositional analytic and cultural spaces” (185). “Resistance,” she says, “that is random and isolated is clearly not as effective as that which is mobilized through systematic politicized practices of teaching and learning” (185).

The anthropologist Martin Manalansan similarly depicts the uses of drag within contemporary gay Filipino communities in New York City, noting that “for diasporic Filipino gay men, drag is inextricably intertwined with nostalgia, evoking ‘the image and memory of the Filipino homeland while at the same time acknowledging being settled in a “new home” here in the U.S.’”¹² This “nostalgic homesickness,” as Gayatri Gopinath calls it,¹³ could find a remedy in a

drag queen Divina De Campo (competing queen and first runner-up on the premiere season of *RuPaul’s Drag Race: UK*) shared on the show, “Growing up was really hard. Like, growing up for everybody is hard, but then you add on being gay, and it’s *just* a whole other level – particularly for the time that I grew up in” (“Girl Group Battle Royale” – emphasis original). Divina was born in 1984, and she says that Section 28, which “Maggie [Margaret Thatcher] put in,” “did a lot of damage to people like me” because “it meant that, you know, a lot of teachers felt like they couldn’t step in [when bullying occurred].” “Section 28,” Divina explains in a talking head interview on the show, “enacted 1988 up to about 2000, it stops the *promotion* of homosexuality. Now, for most teachers, that meant it could not even be spoken about, so it just erases gay people completely. There was no discussion around it, so you have no understanding as a gay person that there can be a different way of living because you never get told that. That never happens. Whereas for a straight person, you are constantly fed ‘You are correct, you are right, you are valid.’ You don’t get that as a gay person” (emphasis original).

Contemporaneously to 2022 today, we are seeing an eerily similar political project back in the United States with Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” bill and now law that forbids curricular instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity. So yes, I hope to seduce and recruit my students and learners into active and allied social, racial, and health justice cultures – Divina powerfully states, “Whether you believe something or not does not stop the fact that I am here. I live” (“Girl Group Battle Royale”).

¹² (Gopinath 174)

¹³ (177)

claiming/reclaiming, in a creating/recreating, of the drag body of one's youth, and this is precisely what happened with me: it took leaving my home in the ultra-conservative Christian/Mennonite town of Elmira, Ontario, Canada for the larger and much more culturally-diverse Hamilton, Ontario, Canada to realize that my childhood fascination with dressing up Barbies and my Halloween costumes of my youth as the Pink Power Ranger, as Posh Spice, and as Britney Spears could return to me as my embodied identity as a drag queen.

Extending My Shantay: Academic Drag as Decolonial and Anti-Racist Pedagogy

I want to return here to the peer-based model that Goldfarb touches upon in his case study of *Brothers Dating Game* with the safer-sex diva drag queen as the visual pedagogue. There *is* a peer-based pedagogical dimension in my academic drag queen work that has also radically shifted for me since auditioning for *RuPaul's Drag Race* in 2012. My academic drag has transformed from the meek but mighty mirror I was holding up for marginalized, disenfranchised, and equity-denied students in my classrooms as a visible signifier of the plural truths of my own self into a pseudo-/paracelebrity marker of autoethnographic engagement with *Drag Race* and my lived experiences as a raced-white, queer and trans-, able-bodied settler academic. Perhaps in my earlier years, I was, with hindsight, engaging in teaching and learning as Goldfarb notes of the digital drag queen in *Brothers Dating Game* “in defiance of codes of authenticity” and “subvert[ing] the stereotypes of the teacher,”¹⁴ but

¹⁴ For a scholarly example outside of my classroom teaching, I delivered in full drag a paper on *RuPaul's Drag Race* and pedagogy at the 2019 Northeast Modern Language Association (NeMLA) Convention in Washington DC, and one of my co-panelists *after* the panel said to me that they thought it was cool I presented in drag. Seven years prior in 2012 – the year of my audition tape – I presented my first-ever conference paper in full drag (a paper on drag queens and uncanny bodies) at Stony Brook University's Philosophy and Art Conference and Exhibition, and I was accused by a professor during the Discussion following my paper of making fun of the seriousness of academic conferences in the post-secondary education landscape for dressing up for my paper.

when I look into my own mirror in drag, I see me. Unambiguously and without any doubt, I recognize the woman staring back at me as me. As I say in my audition tape just before the music rolls for RuPaul's song "The Beginning" that is my lip-sync audition for the show, "For me, drag started as an academic practice in school, but then it quickly became my life. And since my life is academic, it kinda worked out for me: I get to be a queen and a scholar and a fabulous, scholarly queen." This is why, in my social justice and educational development work, my academic drag has transcended the traditional classroom of undergraduate education. To walk across campus, as I did, on June 28th, 2019, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, in full drag and deliver my Faculty Development presentation and discussion "Gender Pronouns and Teaching" to a full room of my peers, my students, my superiors, and my community, was everything. This is me. This truly is me.

And I am a human enough to admit that as I acknowledged, with respect, that I was a white settler-scholar working at the University of Guelph, which is situated on the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit and on the ancestral lands of the Attawandaron people, as I admitted that their historical relationships with the land continue to this day, and as I called out the significance of June 28th as the evening on which, fifty years ago, Marsh P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera – two transwomen of colour who were drag queens and LGBTQ+ activists – threw the first brick and first bottle (respectively) at the police that ignited the Stonewall Riots, and that the morning of June 29th, 1969, they, with their peers, marched on city hall in New York in the first-ever Pride Parade, June 29th, which is the same day that I was born nineteen years later, June, which is why we celebrate Pride Month this month every year, well, I am human enough to admit that I got choked up,

and, in front of over one hundred people, cried before I even changed the title slide of my PowerPoint deck. This is me. This truly is me.¹⁵

bell hooks did say that in order “[t]o create a culturally diverse academy we must commit ourselves fully” (33). And “[t]o commit ourselves to the work of transforming the academy so that it will be a place where cultural diversity informs every aspect of our learning, we must embrace struggle and sacrifice. We cannot be easily discouraged. We cannot despair when there is conflict” (33). The central thesis that Peter McLaren identifies for *Performance Theories in Education* (2005) is the offering of “concepts and categories and theoretical approaches that expand our analytical vocabulary, heighten our investigative capabilities, and push our conceptualizations in the direction of identifying new concepts and features of what occurs when we are in the process of schooling and being schooled” (xviii). If I were to write a manifesto on my academic drag as a visual, performative pedagogical project (which this dissertation Introduction kind of is), this would be my driving motive, too. “[P]leasure, desire, and power,” McLaren writes, “work both at the surface of pedagogical texts, as well as in the muscles and sinews of the deep economy of the classroom and surrounding community” (xviii), and it is “through our [syn-aesthetic] performances as educators [that] we must reach out beyond the representational and rational and create identifications with passions and commitments that undermine the libidinal economy of the authoritarian/imperialist state” (xviii).

“[T]here is not nearly enough practical discussion of ways classroom settings can be transformed so that the learning experience is inclusive,” hooks says (35). So what if, I posit, we followed RuPaul’s coy sentiment that “[W]hatever you put on after you get out of the shower is your drag” – what if we all, as educators, embraced the fact that our very teaching bodies in any

¹⁵ Again, please see Chapter 3 for how my “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” talk and work have evolved more racially-responsively since December 6th, 2018 and June 28th, 2019.

pedagogical environment (re)present plural truths of our own selves as teachers? I won't list marginalized intersections of human identity here, but I will wish, similar to Halberstam's partner's son's wish¹⁶, that one day, in an opening address to the public, the (probably) white and (most likely) cis het, able-bodied male President of a university will open with both an unscripted, genuine land story of his place and his institution's placement on the local Indigenous lands and traditional territories as well as with an open, honest sharing that (probably and most likely) he is a raced-white, settler-scholar whose lived pronouns are "he/him/his." I do not think this dream is too far off, for "[w]hen we, as educators, allow our pedagogy to be radically changed by our recognition of a multicultural world, we can give students the education they desire and deserve" (hooks 44).

And this, ultimately, is the pedagogical impact on our students: the giving to them of the education they both desire and deserve. "Teaching is a collaborative occasion," Alexander et al. write (4), and they note, too, that "[t]he classroom, with teachers and students engaged in the processes of education establishes culture. It becomes a practiced place; a site in which diverse beings come together in order to engage and negotiate knowledge, systems of understanding, and ways of being, seeing, knowing, and doing" (3). My academic drag as visual, performative pedagogy with its visual, performative aspects literalizes "the often aestheticized engagement of bodily activity with the intent of knowing through doing and showing" (1). And as Boris Traue et al. powerfully clock, in their "Visibilities and Visual Discourses: Rethinking the Social with the Image," "Visibility consists of acts and technologies of showing, or pointing out, and their effects" (5). This, in the end, is also the visual, performative pedagogical effect of drag – all mainstream, countercultural, and, yes, academic. And while this autoethnographic mirror I hold up here certainly has an emancipatory effect for myself

¹⁶ Halberstam tells us, "I wish more people would behave like my partner's son and simply ask, politely and without judgment, what pronoun an individual prefers" (154).

as the visual, performative pedagogue, in my classrooms, with and for my students, my learners, and my participants and learners of all kinds, the very visibility and performativity of my academic drag queen pedagogy and praxis shows, points out, the potential for radical changes to pedagogy as we commit ourselves fully to creating a culturally diverse academy in responsible recognition of our multicultural world.

For, as Pineau (like hooks) argued in the early 1990s, “although the classroom creates an illusion of shared time and space, and although we may struggle to inhabit that space democratically, our performing bodies [as teachers] inevitably carry the inscription of differentiated status” (21). “We cannot,” Pineau continues, “enter our classrooms as learners, nor can we empower our students to experience themselves as teachers until we more fully understand the ways in which educational institutions have already politicized our bodies” (21). While I disagree with the former part of Pineau’s assertion here – we *can* and we *must* enter our classrooms as learners, as whole people on real journeys who have not yet and never will, if we’re being honest, be able to arrive at a state of consummate learning-completion: we are all learning, as well as unlearning and relearning, as we go, grow, and, yes, teach, and especially when it comes to social, racial, and health justice in education and beyond (though I would also argue for this in terms of disciplinary *content mastery* over time and across generations, too), this is more paramount than ever – while I do disagree with Pineau in the former part, I do whole-heartedly agree with her in the latter. We cannot empower our students reciprocally to teach us until we more fully understand how the colonial and colonizing system of education has politicized our bodies, differently empowering and disempowering all bodies individually and collectively. As DuVernay said, oppressing, controlling, and shaping our culture in specific ways to keep some people down low and some people up high.

So while Alexander may be right that “[t]he classroom is a nexus of desire and disdain for those who enter with competing intentions and lived experiences” (42) and that “the identities and lived experiences of students and teachers mediate the flow of knowledge [and] make[] teaching and learning a social act of negotiating cultural ways of knowing and acting” when he argues that through this mediation and negotiation “[t]he classroom becomes a particular site of cultural performance” (42), situated cultural performance in the classroom is not enough to decolonize the classroom. *If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else*, as Morrison said. “Regardless of whether one wishes to grant paradigmatic status to performance,” Pineau says, “a quick glance across academe supports the emergence of performance as both explanatory metaphor and qualitative research method” (4). Explanatory metaphor, yes – I have more than aptly demonstrated this in my Introduction so far, taking the figural logic of metaphoricity even further to the point of synecdoche – but what Pineau is so powerfully getting at in 1994 is that we, as educators, as (visual) performative pedagogues, must do something more than just explain. *This is not just a grab-bag candy game*. We must question the rules of game. We must change the rules of the game. We must qualitatively research our (visual) performative pedagogies as method. Decolonize the researching *as well as* the teaching. Decolonize the researching *toward* the teaching. Following *kokum* as I always will, “Keep calm, and decolonize.”

Perhaps one of my most heart-warming memories of my mother and I and my queer roots in/to drag is with these very occasions. When I first started doing drag as drag – and not just as gender-b(l)ending and androgynous Blakean characters and character-types as were my performative pieces in my BAs and my MA – I was studying for my MFA at the University of Windsor (Windsor, Ontario) but had come home for Christmas. It was December 17th, 2011; I remember the exact day. Mom and

I were sitting at the kitchen table late after everyone else had gone to bed, and we were chatting about my school and (new) life. She was having somewhat of a difficult time understanding my self-translation into drag queendom, although she was amazingly and entirely supportive even in her innocence, and after listening to me talk about the magic of it all and the fantasy-made-reality of being able to embrace fully and to see me entirely as me in the mirror, she told me that she caught in my eye just then a look that she had not seen there since I was a little kid and had spent so much of my playtime dressing up dolls and asking her to dress me up, too. This was an instance when she helped me to understand myself a little more, for she helped me realize – if not remember – that I had, indeed, always had this curious fascination and drive. She asked me that night, “So, is it like when you were little and dressed up your Barbies and made sure their clothes were perfect and so was their hair except that now you do it on yourself?” to which I replied, after a moment, after that look again, and after a small smile sneaking through, “Yeah, I guess I can be my own Barbie now.”

Perfecting My Sashay: Academic Drag as Counterstory and Teaching Queer

Goldfarb outlines that “[a] conservative fear voiced in the 1990s was that the move to incorporate visual art and popular visual media across the curriculum was tantamount to asking, Why use books at all?” (58). He continues to note that “[f]or this constituency, to question the place of books was to attack the very foundation of academic knowledge” (58) because “[t]he idea that media might migrate from extracurricular activity to the center of the curriculum posed a fundamental challenge to tradition education” (58). If my academic drag – visual, performative, decolonial and anti-racist pedagogy as it is as I’ve outlined it – can participate in this migrating to the centre of extracurricular activities that pose a fundamental challenge to tradition education, then let me threaten away. And threaten away, as Patricia Hill Collins argues and outlines in her *Black Feminist Thought*:

Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (2000), with not just alternative *knowledge claims*, which “in and of themselves are rarely threatening to conventional knowledge” (being, as they are, “routinely ignored, discredited, or simply absorbed and marginalized in existing paradigms”), but with an alternative *epistemology* – “[m]uch more threatening...to the basic process used by the powerful to legitimate their knowledge claims” (219). Part of “the richness of the performance metaphor” Pineau outlines (7) is that “performative pedagogy [is] exemplified [through] the use of narrative and metaphor” (13) so that “the acknowledgement that teaching is performance is less an observation about instructional style than it is a generative metaphor for educational research” (22). And it is this generative metaphor for educational research that, as I see it and embody it, leads through (perhaps ignorable) alternative knowledge claims to a very real (very threatening and destabilizing) alternative epistemology.

“As a pedagogical method,” Pineau argues, “performative play privileges full body involvement – literally, learning from the inside – combined with keen self-reflection on the nature and implications of one’s actions” (14) because, as she declares, “performance [i]s a research process in itself” and specifically “a qualitative research method for examining aesthetic communication” (16). Written in 1994, Pineau sounds uncannily anticipatory of Aja Martinez’s work with counterstory “as a rhetorical research methodology *and* method [...with] pedagogical implications” (2 -3 – italics original). What is missing from Pineau in 1994 is the decided focus not just on the *whole* body but on *whose* body – i.e., the *majoritarian* body, as Martinez might say (22), that “privilege whites, men, and the middle and/or upper class, heterosexuals, and the able-bodied by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference” (23) toward “the norms such stories [and bodies] reproduce” (23). The “academic gatekeepers,” Martinez might say (2), not “minoritized folk” (1) or, as I say, equity-denied folks.

“[C]ritical race counterstory,” as Martinez outlines (2), involves “counterstory as methodology [being] the verb, the process, the critical race theory-informed justification for the work...whereas counterstory as method is the noun, the genre, the research tool” (2). “As a methodology,” Martinez notes, “critical race counterstory is a theoretically grounded research approach with interdisciplinary roots in ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history, legal studies, and the humanities” that “challenge[s] ‘majoritarian’ stories or ‘master narratives’ of white privilege” and that “rejects notions of ‘neutral’ research or ‘objective’ research and exposes research that silences and distorts epistemologies of people of color” (3). Very specifically, “[c]ounterstory is methodology that functions through methods that empower the minoritized through the formation of stories that disrupt the erasures embedded in standardized majoritarian methodologies” (Martinez 3).

I felt incredibly “seen” (in a very real life, embodied meme kind of way) just by holding a physical copy of Aja Martinez’s *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory* book in my hands and (pre)viewing the paratextual materials. Can paratextual materials be scholastic? They are, by their very Gennettian existence, analogous to the main/core text and decidedly then not main/core themselves; and by not having page numbers, can you even cite them in MLA? If they themselves were, authorially and/or editorially, transferred to the *paratexts*, running parallel but not centred or centric but centrifugal, rhetorically and scholastically relegated to the margins in a very real academic publishing way, can I bring them into my writing as main, core, central and centric? Never have I ever been so validated and so, as I said, *seen* by an Author Bio, by Epigraphs, and by a Table of Contents, separately and together, so my answers to these nested questions above in this paragraph are: yes, yes, and oh yes.

One of Martinez’s Epigraphs is from Derrick Bell: “Critical race theory writing and lecturing is characterized by frequent use of the first person, storytelling, narrative, allegory, interdisciplinary

treatment of law, *and the unapologetic use of creativity*” (emphasis Martinez’s). Reading this, I asked myself, “Can a *white* scholar do this, too? Even with any other number of intersections of equity-denied identities, they are still white...now CRT doesn’t say *which* race, so if the white scholar is *critical of their own racial whiteness*, does this change things/to what extent can it or might it?” (Being paratextual and barely having opened Martinez’s book, I, of course, had not yet come to Martinez’s important note within that “[w]hites (*when critically self-reflective of their whiteness*) can and do tell counterstories” (23 – emphasis added).) Glancing next over Martinez’s Table of Contents, I noticed that each chapter has a counterstory built into it – and from a quick peek at them before decidedly reading to and through them, I noticed that they seemed to be *creative* in orientations. Perhaps even *unapologetically so*. I had used creative writing storytelling before decidedly to wrap and frame my scholarly writing (my forthcoming chapter in the edited collection *Visual Pedagogies*, for example; and my co-authored article on Dissertation Pedagogy with Sarah Gibbons in the *Canadian Journal for Studies in Discourse and Writing/Rédactologie*, for another). And I noticed that Martinez included syllabi as Appendices – and four of them! So not just writing and publishing creatively in/as method/genre but also pedagogically in/as relics and artifacts of teaching.

And then thinking to myself, *Who is this Aja Martinez and why on earth did I not start with their Author Bio at the back of the book?*, I went to Martinez’s Author Page. (Which actually, paratextual as it is/might be, *does* have a page number, so I *can* cite it formally.) Written in the third-person as Author Bios are, I learned that “Martinez’s work argues specifically that counterstory provides opportunities for other(ed) perspectives to contribute to conversations about narrative, dominant ideology, and their intersecting influence on curricular standards and institutional practices” (201). “Voices from the margins can become voices of authority,” Martinez’ Bio continues, “through the formation of counterstories—stories that examine, document, and expose the persistence of racial

oppression and other forms of subordination” because “[c]ounterstory serves as a natural extension of inquiry for theorists whose research recognizes and incorporates lived and embodied experiences of marginalized peoples both in the United States and abroad” (201). (Just as I had not yet read within that whites can and do tell counterstories, I also hadn’t yet read within that “[t]he keepers and tellers of either majoritarian (stock) stories or counterstories reveal the intersections of social location of the storyteller as dominant or nondominant, and [that] these locations are always racialized, classed, and gendered” (23).) But I could tell immediately that counterstory was the method and genre I did not know that I was looking for and needing in order to not only validate but legitimate my scholarship and scholarly voice *as* scholarship and scholarly voice.¹⁷

¹⁷ Dear reader, two things you might have noticed thus far in reading and engaging with my dissertation are (1) that I epigraphed my dissertation with directly-quoted feedback I received from my former dissertation supervisors (explaining to me their decision to not allow my dissertation to proceed to defense) that I then buttressed with insights from RuPaul and from Sasha Velour (Fulbright Scholar, MFA, and winner of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* season 9) about drag’s rule-breaking irreverence, and (2) that I have been using footnotes in, let’s say, unconventional ways thus far in my Introduction. In *rule-breaking and irreverent ways*, even. This is most definitely part of my arguments with and throughout my dissertation. The same former-supervisors whom I quote in my epigraphs to this dissertation on my (lack of) scholarly voice and “[in]appropriate discourse” in my first dissertation also noted on one of my footnotes in that first dissertation: “This fn should be refined and imported into the main text - not just because you can’t seriously have a fn this long.” So, dear reader, I submit to you and firmly commit that yes, yes I can seriously have footnotes “this long” (and even longer!) and that they can, even should, *not* be “refined and imported” into the so-called/so-assumed “main” text. They can thrive and push-back in and from the margins (literal margins of the manuscript document and template, and metaphorical margins, marginalizations, and disenfranchisements of equity-denied people and populations). And I do so to transgress and to practice freedom (as hooks might say) and as a decolonizing intervention into gatekeeping *appropriate discourse* conventions and policing (as Martinez might say), especially at the level of dissertation writing and generic communication.

And this certainly isn’t without precedence in linguistic justice historical conversations in the field of composition and communication. In early 1980s, and from conversations and colonial challenges in NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) and CCCC (Conference on College Composition and Communication) in the late 1970s, James Sledd uses footnotes – especially *long* footnotes – as a mode of resistance in his *College English* article, “In Defense of the *Students’ Right*”: not only does Sledd put (back) in deletions to his manuscript that would have been required for publication of this essay in *College Composition and Communication* (the official journal of CCCC), but he does so in a six-paragraph mini-essay footnote footnoted on the very title of his article as it appears in *College English*! And he there opens by stating, “The history of this essay illustrates one of its main theses, that English teachers should oppose their professional bureaucracy” (667n1). “We as receivers of our students’ English,” Sledd declares near the close of the published essay, “are abusing the language by frustrating its main function of communication when we join or

“[C]ritical race counterstory,” Martinez declares, “[i]s a necessary and legitimate methodology of critical inquiry for minoritized scholars” (22). And through embodying “CRT’s nuance of explicitly blurring the boundary between theory and method” (21), “[c]ounterstory functions as both methodology and method for minoritized people to intervene in research methods that would form ‘master narratives’ based on ignorance and assumptions about minoritized people” (21) so that “voices spoken over and buried by racist methods and methodologies become the voices of authority in the researching and relating of our own experiences” (21). And when, as Martinez notes, whites are critically self-reflective of their whiteness, we white people can and do tell counterstories, too. In her essay, “Teaching While Black: Witnessing and Countering Disciplinary Whiteness, Racial Violence, and University Race-Management,” Carmen Kynard shares, “I have not worked at any single institution, to date [March 2015], where I have found as many as even three other colleagues who notice, much less speak out, against...everyday racist microaggressions...despite everyone’s seeming incessant discussion of critical theories from postcolonialism/decolonization to intersectionality” (2). Kynard powerfully clocks that these theories thus “become merely the stage for an academic performance, not a way of engaging the world and oppression in it” (2). I do incessantly discuss decolonization and intersectionality as not just critical theories but critical, creative, and affective frameworks every day in my work as a scholar and as the Executive Director of a centre for teaching and learning at a U15 institution in Canada, and what I am doing with and in this dissertation is staging an academic performance, yes, but not a mere or empty

even tolerate the linguistic bully-boys who shout ‘Standard English, and the hell with anything else!’” (674). So, I offer as part of my decolonizing the genre of the dissertation argument that runs through my dissertation in form and function, *the hell* with careful-and-only-as-absolutely-needed footnotes, *the hell* with short footnotes, and *the hell* with discouraging and disapproving of footnotes of any length because they’re distracting, digressive, and dilettante. Don’t bring those margins to the centre, I say (and do); relocate the centre to the power and empowerment of the margins.

one. Mine is a mirrorful one (see what I did there? *mere-or-empty-one* to *mirrorful-one* as robust aural paronomasia?) that inverts, or as Martinez might say, intervenes in, via my visual, performative pedagogy to critically engage the world and oppression in it as a raced-white academic drag queen with my lived experiences, my narratives, and my stories that are counter to the master and majoritarian.

And so, if Martinez's work with counterstory is, as I see it, anticipated in the work of performative pedagogy by Pineau, I see Alexander, Anderson, and Gallegos' work with performative pedagogy anticipating Waite's work with teaching queer. "Teaching is a *performance event*," Alexander, Anderson, and Gallegos outline, "as well as being *a performative event* – the difference and link is that teaching is 'doing,' but it is also the repetitive act of doing that manifests its existential and practical presence" (4 – italics original) because, as they specifically argue, "performance as it relates to cultural practice and the materiality of bodies" is "a displayed enactment of ideology and *enfleshed knowledge*" (2 – emphasis added). Waite outlines their work in *Teaching Queer* with queer pedagogies that the "exploration of where queer pedagogies might be or begin, like my own body, refuses linear formations, refuses the category of discipline. The investigations are narrative, theoretical, fluid, a series of constant movements between gender studies, queer theory, pedagogy, and composition theory" and that "I both argue *for* an approach to teaching *and* try to invite my reader to embody that approach – self-conscious, weblike, and fragmentary" (15 – italics original). Very powerfully and very specifically (and sounding very like Martinez, too), Waite states, "I do not believe the story of my scholarship is separate from the story of my life or the body I live" (15).

"Rather than positioning queerness as connected only to queer texts or queer teachers/students," Waite notes, "I offer writing and teaching as already queer practices, and I

contend that if we honor the overlaps between queer theory and composition, we encounter complex and evolving possibilities for teaching writing” (6). “[T]eaching queer...[i]s an act of resistance,” Waite says (7), and “I argue for and employ what I call ‘queer forms’—non-normative and category-resistant forms of writing that move between the critical and the creative, the theoretical and the practical, the rhetorical and the poetic, the queer and the often invisible normative functions of classrooms” (6). While Waite *does* explicitly outline and engage with performative pedagogies as so named and framed in their book, they do *not* explicitly name and frame *visual* pedagogies, though they do explicitly connect narrativity to representation and then representation to teaching. Waite writes: “I do not think scholarship in teaching can pretend to separate itself from the teachers and students who are its subjects. I cannot convince myself (and have no wish to convince readers) that there is some objective distance between the stories of the lives of teachers and that narratives of their teaching” (8). “But narrative almost always raises complicated questions about representation,” they continue (13), and “[s]o I decided that I might raise some questions about my own teaching story...to offer a moment when both narrative possibilities and pedagogical possibilities intersect” because “I am also interested in asking questions about what narratives make visible” (14).

Unambiguously citing “queering as [a] method” throughout their *Teaching Queer* (Waite 99, 124), Waite is “working, in some sense, in a tradition in composition of using the personal narrative or the materials of experience in or for scholarship[and] hope[s] to stretch and push on that tradition, opening up new possibilities for what counts as scholarship—blurring the creative and the critical, the linear and the nonlinear, the personal and the public, the theoretical and the ‘practical’” (16). Waite’s *Teaching Queer* predates Martinez’s *Counterstory* (2017 and 2020, respectively), yet “*blurring* the boundary between theory and method” is precisely Martinez’s project, too (21 – emphasis added), and while neither cites the other (ignoring, of course, chronology, if you will), both cite Frankie

Condon's *I Hope I Join the Band: Narrative, Affiliation, and Antiracist Rhetoric* (2012) as an earlier precursor of, as Waite says, "scholars who have disrupted notions of the academic and the personal" (16), and of, as Martinez says, "work [that] narrativizes embodied whiteness and individual responsibility as a white ally" (23). And linking to the visual as well as to the performative again, Waite notes that "[t]eachers' bodies, our raced, sexed, classed, spiritualized, clothed bodies, when they become visible, or are made visible to students, complicate our pedagogies whether or not we choose to acknowledge how" (48). "[T]he teaching body" Waite says, "this body that shows up vulnerable in a first day of class," is a body that "will always be waited for, looked at, put on its front-of-the-room stage as the first kind of student knowledge, the first body of knowledge" (23). "There is[, thus,] no bodiless pedagogy, no disembodied scholarship to represent disembodied students and teaching" (Waite 23), and Waite "wonder[s] what would happen if we stopped pretending there were, if we considered the meaning our bodies make, if we showed up (mortal, subjective, messy, and vulnerable as bodies are)" (23). Again, as Hamera so perfectly put it, "We don't just teach or study bodies. We teach and study *as* bodies."

And so as a teaching and studying body teaching and studying bodies (and just look at *that* phrase go!), Waite is teaching and writing "in more creative *and* critically conscious ways" (141 – italics original). And teaching queer as method is "about a constant experimenting with and reinventing the 'canon of methods' [Waite has] used as a teacher" (180) – beautifully put, Waite even says, "I teach in the spirit of disorientation; I write in that same spirit" (180). I, with and as my academic drag, am disorienting canons of methods and genres, too – as I noted, part transgender visibility, part queer phenomenology and teaching queer, part visual performance and pedagogy, and all critical race counternarrativity. hooks once said that "[t]he first paradigm that shaped [her] pedagogy was the idea that the classroom should be an exciting place, never boring" (7) and that "if

boredom should prevail, then pedagogical strategies were needed that would intervene, alter, even disrupt the atmosphere” (7). Intervene, alter, disrupt...disorient. And “[c]ritical reflection,” hooks continues, “on my experience as a student in unexciting classrooms enabled me not only to imagine that the classroom could be exciting but that this excitement could co-exist with and even stimulate serious intellectual and/or academic engagement” (7). Or as Susan Stryker once said to me in an e-mail conversation on my academic drag work: “YES! to dragging at academic conferences, and in the classroom. I always say academia should be a cocktail party with papers, and I’ve never seen a party yet that wasn’t livened up by a good drag queen.”

My dissertation is this, then. “A cocktail party with papers.” “[P]edagogical strategies...that would intervene, alter, even disrupt the atmosphere.” “[C]onstant experimenting with and reinventing the ‘canon of methods’...in the spirit of disorientation.” Or, in a more *seriously intellectual and/or academically engaging* way to perhaps put it: my dissertation is counterstory and teaching queer in two generically decolonized chapters. Two generically decolonized dissertation chapters that respectively (though not exclusively) have me entering into the discourses and projects iconically (though not exclusively) of Aja Martinez and of Stacey Waite. Entering into to push further toward the margins from the dominant centre each of them have pushed on and against themselves, widening the hallowed grounds of what is scholarly research and whose voices can be there and can belong there. And I hope, I desperately and sincerely hope, that my dissertation, too, can do this for further and future young scholars. In coming into existence from the new space and place available to find a scholastic and scholarly home on and to feel and to be at home in from Martinez’s and Waite’s work, my work from within the circle but not near the centre of it pushes from the centre through this new

now-not-margins towards these still-margins to widen and bring into more and more voices, more and more perspectives, more and more stories *as* more and more scholarship.

Every fibre of my writerly being wants to continue to use land metaphors here (starting, as I did, with *ground* and *home* above – potentially continuing with the likes of *camping; paving the way for; ploughing* and *seeding* and *harvesting; dis-covering new lands and new possibilities*, etc.), but ableist and settler-colonialist the lot of them. And very, very white – and whitely, to borrow that phrase from Condon. So I'll borrow again here, and I'll bring in Waite's visual metaphor of water and fluidity for identity but now for the academy. Waite argues that “[o]ur former understandings [of identity] will never, ultimately, disappear, but when they become liquid and fluid as opposed to solid, it makes them movable; it makes them open to evaporation (which is *not* a disappearance but a change in form)” (134-35 – italics original). The academy, colloquially called at times the Ivory Tower, is a cold, frozen, stable ice sculpture. Stable, but not, as Waite's visual metaphor alludes to, immutable. Martinez's work with counterstory and Waite's work with teaching queer are melting this academic ice sculpture, warming it up, and in the still-cool but no longer sub-zero temperatured water now expanding out, trickling out, slowly, slowly, slowly but surely reaching more folks than the ice-white ones securely in and atop the ice-white *Ivory* Tower, I visually perform, and I play. I play in this water, not-yet ankle deep as it is, and I bring more warmth to continue the melting – and not just to continue the melting but *to add to it, too*: I am adding to the melting, I am increasing the warmth, increasing the pressure and amplifying, magnifying as my lighted candle does, the heat – toward widening *and* deepening this watery, fluid community. I hold up my yet-to-be-lighted candle to Aja's and Stacey's lighted ones, and together, we play.

As Pineau noted in 1994, “The concept of play, with its attendant implications of experimentation, innovation, critique, and subversion, breaks open conventionalized classroom

practices” (15), and “[a]s a theoretical construct, performative play promotes a critique of instructional norms and traditions” (15). “Performance privileges that fluid, ongoing, often contradictory features of human experience that resist reification and closure,” and “[i]t acknowledges that identities are always multiple, overlapping ensembles of real and possible selves who enact themselves in direct relation to the context and communities in which they perform” (15). “The act of writing is a liquid act,” Waite states, “a fluid act. [And q]ueer pedagogies have the potential to address and enact this very fluidity” (135) toward “goals of teaching embodied, reflexive, complicated, nuanced, and fluid writers” (143). So my dissertation is this, then. Embodied, reflexive, complicated, nuanced, and, yes, fluid. And my dissertation chapters themselves (this Introduction/Chapter 1 included) take the fluid forms of, as Waite also argues and employs, those “non-normative and category-resistant forms of writing.”

Chapter 1 is this Introduction that you are currently reading, “Teaching Can Be a Real Drag (Show): Or, Move Over, Sage! That Stage is Mine!” (Congratulations, you’ve just about finished Chapter 1 already!) This first chapter simultaneously opens and introduces my dissertation as well as, as I noted, set up and unpacked academic drag *as pedagogy* in three capacities (first, as visual pedagogy; second, as performative pedagogy; and third, as decolonial and anti-racist pedagogy) before it moved into setting up and providing an overview of the heart of my dissertation, which is the academic drag *as praxis* part, as counterstory and as teaching queer. Those three *as pedagogy* parts of this Introduction/Chapter 1 function as mini-essays separately and together that stake out my original arguments and claims as a young academic building up my stamina and courage as demonstrative scholarship readying me to face my full Committee at my Dissertation Defense. And they also, as I also noted, ground what follows them in this dissertation, which is the *as praxis* part where I “try on”

new ways of empowered and empowering teaching in the classroom by quite literally *trying on* teaching queer and counterstory as generic interventions both as method and genre.

Chapter 2, “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Or, (Re)Visiting and (Re)Embodying My Teaching,” is my trying on iconically of Stacey Waite’s teaching queer as method. Taking to heart, as Waite says, “[Jack] Halberstam’s call for a ‘scavenger methodology^[18]’” to “try to push on notions of disciplinary, bodily, pedagogical, writerly, and scholarly coherence” (8), Waite outlines that “I make use of literature, science, personal narrative, and individual experience. I recall my own education; I describe the fragments and fissures of my own life alongside [a plethora of] ruminations [that] all become narrative threads with and against which my students and I can be read and interpreted” (8). Waite “present[s] the theory, autobiography, teaching materials, and personal reflections *as* scholarship, as a kind of research—a looking again—into the teaching of writing” (17 – italics original). Taking to heart Waite’s teaching queer a method and scope for this second chapter of my dissertation, I literally “look again” at my lesson planning, course design, and teaching from seven years ago, and in particular at one moment that recently haunted me and forced me to look again, to re-search, to (as I subtitle this second chapter) re-visit and re-embody my teaching from 2015. Suspicious that I may have taught the 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning* in “a shitty white way” (as I like to say of contemporary institutional acronymic “EDI” work) after having revisited hooks’ essay “Is Paris Burning?” shortly after her passing in December 2021, I asked myself, “How would I teach *Paris is Burning* today if I were to teach it again as the academic drag queen I am now?” Spoiler

¹⁸ Waite notes before this, “Jack Halberstam, in the introduction to *Female Masculinity*, writes that a ‘queer methodology is [...] a scavenger methodology, that uses different methods to collect and produce information’ and that “Halberstam argues that ‘queer methodology attempts to combine methods that are often cast as being at odds with each other, and it refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence’” (8-9). (Halberstam quotations within Waite’s here are from page 13 of *Female Masculinity*, Duke UP, 1998.)

alert: I wouldn't! I would teach hooks *on* the documentary – hence, “The Real Paris on Fire,” a quotation I title-cased from hooks’ essay – to forefront and to never lose sight of the racial responsiveness so often *not* present in teaching and in conversations of the 1990 documentary. “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Or, (Re)Visiting and (Re)Embodying My Teaching” is a systematic exploration and documentation of my living work with answering that question *How would I teach Paris is Burning today?* that presents the “new”/2022 version of this lesson plan as well as the “old”/2015 relics and artifacts¹⁹ of what I actually did in my lesson planning, in my classroom teaching, and in my assessing of my students in 2015 when I assigned, screened, and lectured on *Paris is Burning*.

Chapter 3, “Gender Pronouns, Teaching and Learning, and Cultures of Respect: A Counterstory Novella,” is my trying on iconically of Aja Martinez’s counterstory as method. Martinez opens her work declaring that “story is theory and method” and that for equity-denied, marginalized, and historically-and-still-contemporaneously-oppressed peoples, storytelling is in our “blood and bones” (xxiii). She sets up “the role of ancestors” for the power of stories (xxv) – or, for me, as Halberstam calls ours, our “trancestors” (“Trans*”) – and brings to the fore the further power and empowerment of “imagined alter-egos and hyperrealities” (Martinez xxv) all in, across, from, and for “other narratives, counternarratives to the overarching master tropes” (xxviii) and especially “alternative narratives” (xxix). And after she sets up counterstory as method and genre, she discusses more deeply four “counterstory methods/genres,” as she calls them, and exemplifies carefully each

¹⁹ In and throughout my dissertation, I use both Artifacts *and* Appendices – “Artifacts” are the things I have made at some point in time that are supplementing my arguments and dissertation and are most definitely integral to my argumentation, documentation, and the overall readerly flow of my dissertation; “Appendices” are true Appendix materials that are tacked on and tagged on at the end, very much appended to the dissertation and functioning as such.

one of the four in turn “of narrated dialogue, fantasy/allegory, autobiographic reflection, and dialogic epistolary” (30). My counterstory novella as the third chapter of my dissertation is a direct response to these four methods/genres, hybridizing them together in one sustained counterstory that is also, in a way, a re-looking at my teaching, though much more recently than 2015. Whereas Martinez embodies and performs these four methods/genres individually and separately across four respective chapters of her book, I merge them all into one larger counterstory that weaves the four together – similarly to my second chapter and my iconic trying on of Waite’s teaching queer, I find the extension of the melting academic ice Martinez fluidly leaves, and I play in it. Taking transcripts of my three most recent 2021 talks of my “Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect” public scholarship work – one academic, one corporate, and one community-based²⁰ – I imagine into existence travelling back in time to my very first “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” talk that I did in drag so that I can sit in on it as the person I am today and witness my work from the outside in. As discussed above with two key dates – December 6th, 2018, my first offering ever; and June 28th, 2019, my first offering ever in drag – my work has further evolved from Faculty Development workshops and sessions into public scholarship, and that has in turn further evolved into embodying counterstory pedagogically to bring my public scholarship more CRT responsively (back) to writing – and transmodally, so.

My counterstory novella embraces and tries on Martinez’s four methods/genres in the following ways: it is *narrated dialogue* by taking and merging the transcribed scripts of my actual talks into a composite narrative that includes narrated question-and-answer moments instructionally

²⁰ All hosted, held, and recorded on video conferencing platforms because of the pandemic, these three talks, all titled “Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect,” in chronological order across 2021 are: a community-based public lecture from the Registrar’s Office at St. Jerome’s University (April 28); an inclusive “Learning InDay” corporate training session with LinkedIn head offices (October 15); and a guest lesson for the HBA Communications courses at the Ivey Business School at Western University (November 23).

throughout; it is *fantasy/allegory* by using the time-traveling trope to re-visit 2019 for the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewalls Riots when I did my talk in full drag on campus; it is *autobiographic reflection* by the very nature of my public scholarship already embodying autobiographic reflection as part of my facilitative praxis but also by, via the Time-Travelling Tommy tropic character, meta-discursively reflecting critically on (my) whiteness and musing extra-textually on further autobiographical moments (such as stories from my Mom and Dad of my struggles and survival of high school); and it is *dialogic epistolary* in a very loose interpretative sense of *epistles* as *letters* and of “Gender Pronouns, Teaching and Learning, and Cultures of Respect: A Counterstory Novella” very much being a love letter to my seven-year-old self. My seven-year-old self who is the little boy who grew up loving make-up and playing dress-up and who I have come to learn I forgot, repressed, in order to survive my adolescence but who, through this counterstory and my teaching queer work, I have found again after re-searching (for) him, re-memembering him, and reflecting him in my own mirror that I hold up even to myself to know that while I may have accidentally and even for a just little while forgotten Little Tommy, I never left him behind.

The very first time that I dressed up in drag, my mother, in seeing me, remarked on how very much I reminded her of her childhood self. Since that moment, drag, for me, has always been this special, intimate project that seems to transcend everything. To be a son, and to be able to connect with your mother in such a profound way that you can both literally and figuratively share one body, well, there really might be few bonds more complete. And like me, my mother is white; and like most children, my mother is my first model of femininity and of womanhood. In Shyam Selvadurai’s Funny Boy, Arjie looks up to and models not white femininity and white womanhood but “the goddesses of

*the Sinhalese and Tamil cinemas*²¹ through his mother and watching his mother get ready with makeup and clothing in her mirror – “a self magnified...larger than life.”²² My mother and my mother alone reminds me of my Female self, but my transcestors for me in drag are Marsha, Sylvia, and Stormé. None of whom are white.

²¹ (Selvadurai 5)

²² (Selvadurai 5)

Chapter 2

The Real Paris on Fire Project: Or, (Re)Visiting and (Re)Embodying My Teaching

Introduction

When I sat down in the summer of 2021 – just after having signed my job offer to take up my position as Executive Director of the teaching centre at the University of Alberta – to re-envision my “new” dissertation (what I could salvage from my failed one, the one unallowed to proceed to defense; what I could shelter from my turned-peer-reviewed-publications of wisps of my “failed”/“unallowed-to-defend” dissertation writing; what I could actually now, too, do in my position with my scholarship and as a scholar), well, I knew that I was going to be revisiting bell hooks’ *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992) collection. For a few reasons: if I were to be situating and anchoring this “new” dissertation in my visual pedagogies scholarship, writing, and theory-making, “representation” was going to be so important; and if I am, as I claim in my *Visual Pedagogies* peer-reviewed chapter, “imagin[ing] myself into existence...as a social justice visual pedagogue [writing and theorizing] with the energy of a manifesto on anti-imperialist inclusive education,” then I knew I would now need to be more critical of my whiteness, more amplifying of scholastic voices of colour, and more critically pedagogical in my secondary scholarship. Hence hooks; hence *Black Looks*.

I hadn’t sat down with *Black Looks* properly since my first Master’s work in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in 2010 – where I was, I will never forget, while not feeling Imposter Syndrome exactly, feeling a touch, a skosh, if you will, out of my element in only having the “English [Literature]” undergraduate studies’ background and not the “Cultural Studies” pieces for this Master’s degree with my cohort name-dropping, as baby Grad students so classically do, the

likes of Bhabha, Žižek, Deleuze and Guattari, and, yes, hooks – but when I was teaching my “Transgender Visual Culture” course in 2015, screening *Paris is Burning* was a must canonically, and that meant assigning and teaching with hooks’ “Is Paris Burning?” was also a must. Also canonically. 2015 isn’t all that long ago now (seven years back from Fall 2022 exactly, since I was teaching “Transgender Visual Culture,” or “TVC” as I called it, in the Fall 2015 term), and 2010 isn’t all that long ago from TVC; but when I sat down over the summer of 2021 to re-envision my “new” dissertation and centre hooks’ work specifically, I made a PostIt Note to start (back) into hooks’ body of work with re-visiting *Black Looks* before revisiting *Teaching to Transgress* (my proper introduction to hooks as critical pedagogue) and then move through hooks’ other key pieces for a project on visual pedagogies (*Art on My Mind; Writing Beyond Race; Pedagogy of Hope*; etc.). *Black Looks* would be important as a white teaching body doing critical pedagogy work, as a white academic drag queen doing performative pedagogy work, and as a white scholar doing Critical Race Theory and counterstory.

I started re-reading *Black Looks* from hooks’ Introduction onward in Fall 2021, and the morning of Tuesday, December 21st, 2021 – just shy of a complete week since bell hooks’ passing away on December 15th, 2021 – I got to Chapter 9, “Is Paris Burning?”, and legs tucked snugly under me on the couch in our new living room in Edmonton, the Christmas tree turned on and our 16+ year-old Pekingese-Chihuahua Sam snoring gently in his bed beside the couch, I started re-reading “Is Paris Burning?” in unmarked pages of a physical copy of *Black Looks*. (I found this particular copy in one of those birdhouse Little Lending Libraries around my old neighbourhood in Waterloo once upon a time; at McMaster and in teaching TVC, I had coursepack photocopies of hooks’ essay.)

When I tell you I was excited to re-read this particular essay....*girl*. This essay is about drag queens, about drag culture, about the groundbreaking and oh-so-important documentary *Paris is Burning* that shaped generations and unambiguously launched and still informs the behemoth reality TV show international juggernaut *RuPaul's Drag Race*. This essay was and is Black Studies, Queer Theory, Cultural Studies, Criticism, Visual Culture, Film Studies, and maybe even, with a keen eye, some Critical Pedagogy sneaking in there, too. So yes, when I tell you I was excited to re-read this particular essay, I tell you because I remembered this essay is and has everything. Well, let me also tell you that my whiteness on that couch that Tuesday morning was *not* front-and-centre but that my queerness and my transness were. And even though I have taught – like literally *taught* (assigned as core reading and viewing to undergrad students; lectured on in physical lecture halls; assessed formative quizzes and summative assignments on...yeah, *that* kind of literal teaching) – even though I have literally taught *Paris is Burning* and bell-hooks-on-*Paris-is-Burning*, I was not ready for the 2021 Executive Director Of A Teaching Centre Me to read this essay and feel, understand, get hit straight-up in the face with it that I had never *really* read it before. I was seen – and not in the good meme way kind of seen – by hooks, six days gone from this world; and in the midst of re-reading/reading-for-the-actual-first-time “Is Paris Burning?”, two phrases of hooks’ hit me so hard I near physically felt them:

Watching the film with a [B]lack woman friend, we were disturbed by the extent to which white folks around us were “entertained” and “pleasured” by scenes we viewed as sad and at times tragic. Often individuals laughed at personal testimony about hardship, pain, loneliness... [and *t*he laughter was never innocent. (154 – emphasis added)

Indeed it is the very “pleasure” that so many *white viewers with class privilege* experience when watching this film that has acted to censor dissenting voices who find the film and its reception critically problematic. (149-150 – emphasis added)

I am a white viewer. I am a white viewer who is – note here the present tense, not the past tense – is entertained and yes, pleased by many scenes in the film and, I would say, the film overall. I am a white viewer who laughs during the film – and my laughter, I am coming to realize and to know, to critically think through, is not innocent and never was. I am a white viewer with class privilege whose experience when watching the film, I am sure, has acted to censor (and to silence, and to diminish) dissenting voices who find the film and its reception critically problematic. And I am sure my white, class privileged viewership has infected my teaching of *Paris is Burning*. To what extent has – note here the open-ended question root, not a close-ended one like “Does...?” – to what extent has my white, class privileged viewership censored and silenced and diminished *my students’* dissenting voices when they find the film and its reception (and my reception of it) critically problematic? And for my students who perhaps did not/had not found the film and its reception critically problematic, to what extent has my white, class privileged viewership foreclosed their ability and potential to (be able to) dissent?

Before I had even finished (re)reading hooks’ essay – I had maybe three or four pages left to go – I ferociously jotted down five yellow PostIt Notes’ worth of critically reflective *To Do’s* with my teaching and my learning, unlearning, and relearning about *Paris is Burning* and how to ethically, responsibly, and responsively teach it. Channeling my inner Aja Martinez, Frankie Condon, and Stacey Waite – and guided by their groundbreaking, accessible, and warm prose and projects with counterstory, critical reflection, and teaching (queer; but also racialized), I have come up with the following “mini dissertation project” to powerfully honour hooks, problematic as she may be/is becoming,²³ but also to revisit my past (my past teaching; my past research; my past self...past

²³ Please see Endnote I (with its own footnotes therein!) for some extended discussion on how bell hooks may be/is becoming problematic.

researching-and-teaching self, and past whole self) as my today-self, and to see what I can clock, what I can uncover, what I can now bring to *Paris is Burning* and hooks and academic drag that I couldn't – and, yes, let's be honest, *didn't* – in 2015 when I was given the power and privilege to teach Transgender Visual Culture and when I – and I would bet money on it (not having revisited my old binders and files just yet as of this introductory part of my writing of Chapter 2 here) – when I mis-taught, mis-represented, and even (although I hope not too harmfully) mis-assessed my students and, as hooks would say, censored and, as I would say, foreclosed dissent and truly critical reception.

Here are those five yellow PostIt Notes I quickly scribbled out before I had finished re-reading “Is Paris Burning?”, transcribed here verbatim (and I can produce photographic documentation of them, too, if you'd like!):

[PostIt Note #1:]

How would you teach this essay (and PiB) today?

→ make THIS lesson plan and Key Quotation handout *before* you review how you did it in 2015 with TVC...and THEN compare, contrast, and critically reflect...and write!

[PostIt Note #2:]

WRITE FIRST – your notes, thoughts, suspicions, etc. and set up how you're going to do this activity for critical reflection...and then do it!!!

[PostIt Note #3:]

DEFINITELY compare your notes and teaching of hooks on PiB then and now...you don't remember hooks being SO critical (unpositively) of PiB, so how did you read/teach it in 2015?

[PostIt Note #4:]

*and then write about this! Reflectively and discursively write about this and how you approach the text – and the film! – now!

[PostIt Note #5:]

*did any students write on PiB at all and did you uphold whiteness in marking/commenting on their work?

*GO BACK THROUGH IT ALL!

These PostIt Notes are from December 2021; the above reflective prose opening Chapter 2 of my dissertation here is from across January 2022 as I began to formally re-envision how I would teach bell hooks on *Paris is Burning* today. What follows next, then, are momentary touchdown points on in-progress reflective writing as I moved to and through this re-envisioned lesson planning and, ultimately, to going back to 2015 with my notes, binders, and teaching artifacts from “Transgender Visual Culture” in Fall 2015 that did, I am so happy to report, make their way with me from Waterloo, Ontario to Edmonton, Alberta in the big move. (I have not yet, as of this writing and typing, gone back into them just yet; I will note definitively by date when I do. Can’t un-ring that bell, so to speak.)²⁴

[writing on February 7th, 2022 as you keep working here:]

So, to start doing this critical reflection and re-visioning lesson re-planning activity, and knowing that you are wanting, needing, to centre hooks and not Livingston, you started by typing up your “notes and quotes” (as you call them) for hooks’ “Is Paris Burning?” chapter of *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. And from there, you drafted some Learning Outcomes for the re-imagined lesson of how you would teach hooks-on-*Paris-is-Burning* today:

Working Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this lesson/unit/subunit, we should be able to...

- critically reflect on whiteness and its relationship to the documentary *Paris is Burning*
- affectively reflect on our own emotions and reactions to the documentary *Paris is Burning*

²⁴ Dear reader, please note the use of the second-person present tense directive point of view here in what follows. I wrote these intermittent reflections both as brainstorming-planning *and* as conversations with myself as I worked and kept working here, and I preserve this voice in my dissertation to showcase and honour that process as well to, as I explore meta-rhetorically and meta-cognitively in my Gender Pronouns counterstory (see Chapter 3), play with and trouble writing conventions and, largely, the *serious scholarly voice* of the dissertation as colonial and colonizing generic writing.

- creatively reflect on audience expectations of the documentary *Paris is Burning*
- define and discuss *ritual* and *spectacle* in visual cultures as well as in literary cultures
- *something about heteropatriarchy and intersectionality with Black male comedians and/in drag - ?*
- *something about critiquing progress in white Western cultures and our assumptions of progressiveness - ?*
- *something about storytelling through documentary as media/genre and the non-neutrality of the documentary filmmaker - ?*

And you started mapping out and visioning what this might look like. Two key tenets of your teaching – often, but not always, captured and clocked in Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UDLEs) – are *critical thinking* and *creative thinking*, and from typing up your notes and quotes on hooks’ “Is Paris Burning?” essay, you noticed how present and prescient emotion is. How present and prescient affect is. Especially dark(er) affect (from a white readerly perspective re-visiting hooks’ essay but also) with how hooks feels and reacts and responds, both as herself as a Black woman viewer in her own body watching the documentary *and* as a Black woman viewer in her own body watching the documentary alongside white folks in the theatre watching, reacting, and just plain acting to the documentary. So you knew that affect was a key element to hooks-on-*Paris-is-Burning* that might not have been (and you haven’t checked yet as of typing this on February 7th, 2022!) in how you taught this and her in 2015. Critical, creative, *and affective* thinking and reflection, then, made their way into your draft learning outcomes, and this element of “affective reflection,” seeing it clocked and captured there, really inspired the Pause-and-Reflect Activity and helped you imagine that into (drafty) existence. [More on this “Pause-and-Reflect” Activity below and throughout.]

[writing on February 9th, 2022 as you keep working here:]

Working from your notes and quotes in typing up hooks’ “Is Paris Burning?” chapter, you roughly outlined from the drafty LOs an imagined activity tentatively called, “Affective Reflection (or,

“Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity” to begin getting down some of the sequence on pre-class, in-class, and homework activities for students as well as instructional notes for yourself on how you would see teaching this. Since this is an imagined-as-of-yet (and probably as of compiling the dissertation, too), teaching and learning project and lesson – and because you need to imagine the How-Would-I-Teach-This-Today before digging up your TVC notes, comparing with what you *did* do and teach in 2015 to what you re-envisioned/re-planned now, it is a bit wonky. Also: you are leaving for yourself instructional notes channeling the energy of your educational development Lesson Planning and Course Design facilitation and scholarship: *Create your lesson plan with enough detail so that a peer in your field could teach your lesson for you as you imagined it in the event you cannot teach it.*

In getting the sequence down and such, and dreaming up the “Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity,” it became clear that you would need to do the activity yourself for the purposes of this re-planning activity for your diss as well as do it yourself authentically and vulnerably *with* your students alongside them in the actual teaching of this in the new lesson plan and execution. So, having done that, you now have your notes and quotes on hooks’ essay as well as freshly watched – and affectively reflected on – *Paris is Burning*, and you can keep going with designing the re-planned lesson. And let’s get to the “authentic” document creation “for students” of the assignment outline and such to help you get this into reality and real focus! (You always have found that there is nothing like the formal-looking heading and PDF-ready appeal of a good assignment outline to make it real and make it work!)

[writing on February 16th, 2022 as you keep working here:]

Last week, you created and finished – and near-polished! – your student-facing materials for the activities and assignments for them with the critical, creative, and affective reflection, watching, and

writing on *Paris is Burning*, and today you are working on the instructor-facing pieces. (Since, as you'll see in your sequence outline, you will be lecturing on hooks' essay in class as they are working on their The Real Paris on Fire project pieces both in class and out of class.) So, get to it with the instructor-facing notes by getting out your BOPPPS Lesson Planning model and beginning to fill it in!

[A Note to My Dear Dissertation Reader: For the rest of February 2022, I switched back to working on my Gender Pronouns counterstory novella so that I could formally and fully submit that to my dissertation supervisor, which took me until the end of March 2022, but I did it! My parents flew to Edmonton from Elmira, Ontario (well, from Toronto Pearson, actually, but they still live in the house that I grew up in in Elmira, so it was a home-to-home visit for me!) the first weekend in April to visit Tommy and I – our first family visitors on my side of our family...and Mom and Dad's first time ever on a plane! And then through early April and a couple vacation days from CTL to wrap the extra-long long weekend...Alberta has the Friday and Monday of this holiday off!...I finished the instructor-facing notes of my BOPPPS Lesson Planning for my mini-lectures on hooks' "Is Paris Burning?", and now, in what follows, is my bringing together critically reflectively of this re-envisioned lesson plan...re-envisioned to the point of being a module, really: I think, if I am remembering correctly, that I devoted one class (two at best) to Paris is Burning in Fall 2015 "Transgender Visual Culture," and what I have re-imagined here is over four weeks of instructional programming for me and my students. Without any further ado, I give you...The Real Paris on Fire Project!]

Methods and Materials

Naturally – or *unnaturally*, given that this is an English Language and Literature dissertation and not one in the Physical or Life Sciences – an outlining of my “Methods and Materials” seems the most apropos way to continue here since I have, above, introduced by way of an Introduction and am now, then, on the cusp of presenting my Results and moving into my Discussion, so to speak. “On the cusp of,” though, because my journal-entry-like moments above, while they begin to set up and identify my *methods and materials*, do not give a full picture of my process, though they do record

processual aspects in their reflective genre of writing. And I deliberately preserved them above as such.

Adhering a bit here to the IMRaD model of Science Communication pedagogies and publishing, it strikes me that it felt (notice the past tense: *felt*) aptly appropriate at this moment in compiling and writing here to subhead this next section as “Results,” since I have completed the creation of the lesson planning package for my re-envisioned teaching of bell hooks on *Paris is Burning*, or, The Real Paris on Fire Project. Cognizant of Science Communication all from my Educational Development work across the disciplines, my STEM-based SoTL (Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) projects and partnerships, as well my teaching first-year composition courses in Science Communication, I am differently aware (and perhaps better so for it) of the formal/official and needed-and-should-be-there Methods and Materials step that I almost missed. Now, getting into the ins-and-outs of Science Communication pedagogies is beyond the scope of this dissertation on academic drag – while I have taught Science Communication and have taught it as the whole person whom I am, which encompasses my embodiment as an academic drag queen, my academic drag is not front-and-centre in my STEM-based SoTL work, nor was it the focus of my “Communication in the Life Sciences” section in Fall 2019 at the University Waterloo as it was in my “Transgender Visual Culture” course in Fall 2015...though it strikes me that I *did* teach Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) as core to SciComm, which I also assigned and taught as a core to TVC²⁵...and I *did* use my own 3-Minute Thesis YouTube videos, where I

²⁵ In 2015 for “Transgender Visual Culture,” I assigned as required reading the specific Broadview Press edition of Mary Shelley’s 1818 text, and I had chosen this one for its affordability, its scholarship and scholarly focus/appeal, and its Canadianness/“buy local” vibes as from a press based in Peterborough, Ontario; in 2019 for my section of “Communication in the Life Sciences,” I assigned as required reading the specific MIT Press edition of Mary Shelley’s 1818 text that is, as its subtitle declares, *Annotated for Scientists, Engineers, and Creators of All Kinds*, and I had chosen this one because of that subtitle (hedging my bets a bit that teaching a

competed in drag (though was disqualified for “wearing a costume”²⁶), as part of my SciComm oral communication sub-unit...hmmm, perhaps my SciComm teaching actually *is*, then, part of my academic drag project writ large! (Stay tuned for that in my post-PhD book project!)

Asides aside, though, however on fleek they may be, bringing in a gesture to IMRaD from Science Communication pedagogies is definitely a conscious move in my dissertation, here and now, as part of the decolonizing arguments and embodiments of the dissertation genre and of my own dissertation as intervening anti-colonially – as Sarah Gibbons and I argue and explore in our Dissertation Pedagogy work (2020; 2021), thesis advisors and dissertation supervisors across the academy can learn some powerful tips, tricks, and strategies with and from each other on how to approach and improve their own supervisory practices (for their work and for their students’ growth and time-to-completion), and we use the research lab-based model as an illustrative example (one supervisor of four-to-six supervisees who rotate on weekly bases sharing their research and writing to receive peer and supervisor feedback orally in addition to written at the end of each semester, which may look un-Arts-like in operation, but, as we share, just take a glance over to the *Fine Arts* with the terminal MFA model, and they are uncannily similar...). So, bringing in IMRaD here, however loosely and incompletely if not bastardizedly, brings an element of STEM-informed pedagogies and

classic English Lit novel that is over 200 years old in a required first-year communications course to twenty-five BioChem students wasn’t bound to go over all that well on the face of it) but also because it is freely available as open access and is edited and annotated in an incredibly accessible and no-less-scholarly way for wider-than-English-Lit-classroom and popular use. And it *didn’t* go over as poorly as I thought it might have! I include this footnote here (instead of saving it for the post-PhD book project on my academic drag!) because that one textbook choice alone as required reading across four years of teaching shows a cognizance and growth in who I was and am becoming as a teacher, and I wasn’t expecting to go to the level of open access textbooks in course design and delivery for more inclusive and accessible classrooms and pedagogies in this dissertation or this “mini dissertation project,” but I am glad it is in here.

²⁶ 3MT rules still state, “No additional props (e.g. costumes, musical instruments, laboratory equipment) are permitted,” and while I have not competed and won’t/would not since 2015 because of this, I do not know where each panel of judges sits on drag/trans- embodiment as “costume” for embodied Arts and Humanities scholarly teaching and research (“Rules and Eligibility”).

specifically STEM composition pedagogies to my embodied dissertation. And as University of Waterloo English Language and Literature Graduate Chair Dr. John Savarese even specifically said to me when I was deep in the throes of having a failed/unallowed-to-proceed-to-defense dissertation and in the weeds toward salvaging my degree, and salvaging myself: “Already it’s [my Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect public scholarship] a dissertation research output. You just never wrote it up as a dissertation chapter. This is research you’ve completed, so you just need to write up *the [R]esults*” (emphasis added).

In the IMRaD spirit, then, of outlining my methods and materials in clear, precise language so that another researcher could replicate my processes toward testing them and getting the same results,²⁷ this entire dissertation chapter on The Real Paris on Fire Project is, at its methodic heart, a critical, creative, and affective response to Stacey Waite’s work with and in *Teaching Queer: Radical Possibilities for Writing and Knowing* (2017). Not having had (the scholarly teaching foresight to have) scribes in my “Transgender Visual Culture” classroom in 2015 as Waite did in their first-year writing class toward/for *Teaching Queer*, I became my own scribe today for my dissertation via with my own metacognitive approaches and perspectives to lesson planning from my educational development work and leadership. Here’s how I did this: I journaled and left myself notes (some of them captured above with date stamps and/or as transcribed PostIt Notes in this section’s IMRaD

²⁷ Or rather, as my students and I in our section of ENGL 193 (Fall 2019) collaboratively wrote for the rubric on their final reports, this section: “Provides sufficient details and references in the Materials and Methods section; Describes the experimental/study approach used to arrive at your conclusions; Relates important details such as materials and methodological approaches in a narrative – i.e., tells a story, including why you did something, how you did it, what materials you used, and so forth; Covers all of the Materials, Subjects, Design, and Procedures (see Hofmann 2019: 122); Defines materials and methods as precisely as possible; Uses the appropriate voice– i.e., passive voice over active voice in Materials and Methods; and Uses the appropriate tense – i.e., past tense for reporting completed actions and present tense for statement of general validity, for those whose information is still true, and referring to data, tables, figures, etc.”

Introduction); I used templates and design documents from my own educational developer's traincase; and I mapped, I started drafting, writing, and (re)planning, and I leaned into the wonkiness of authentically planning a lesson without an authentic class cohort on my horizon. And I did this knowing that I was planning my authentic teaching self into clearer existence. Guided by what I consciously thought was my central question, *How would I teach Paris is Burning today?*²⁸, I knew that I had to really start this whole re-planning project with actually doing the Affective Reflection (or, "Pause-and-Reflect") Activity myself.

There are two reasons for starting with actually doing the "Pause-and-Reflect" Activity myself: first, affect was and is so present and prescient to me now in hooks' essay that I knew that that was going to be key to teaching hooks-on-*Paris-is-Burning* in more meaningful, more respectful, more responsible and more responsive ways today; and second, guided by hooks herself in game-changing rhetoric for me that has since grounded and girded my entire teaching philosophy, educational development philosophy, and leadership philosophy – and I quote at length here because the entire paragraph is powerful and on point and, as I said, girds, guides, grounds, and even goads – hooks says:

When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be

²⁸ See PostIt Note #1 above – specifically, "How would you teach this essay (and PiB) today?" Already there, in that first of the five PostIt Notes I had jotted down *before I had even finished re-reading hooks' "Is Paris Burning?" in December 2021*, I had parenthetically subordinated *Paris is Burning* to the hooks' essay as primary text. Consciously, I had thought that my central question was, *How would I teach Paris is Burning today?* But subconsciously, I had already made the decision that I would *not* teach the documentary today as the primary cultural text but instead would teach bell hooks *on* the documentary...and so my real question should have been, *How would I teach that today?*

coercive. In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material. But most professors must practice being vulnerable in the classroom, wholly present in mind, body, and spirit. (*Transgress* 21)

“Progressive professors,” hooks continues, “working to transform the curriculum so that it does not reflect biases or reinforce systems of domination are most often the individuals willing to take the risks that engaged pedagogy requires and to make their teaching practices a site of resistance” (21). I would have said, in 2015 with my “Transgender Visual Culture” course and teaching, that my teaching practices as an academic drag queen were already a site of resistance. And perhaps they were. But they also, as I felt suspiciously of them sitting on the couch that December 2021 morning (re)reading “Is Paris Burning?”, reflect(ed) biases and reinforce(d) systems of domination. With actually doing the Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity myself as part of/start of this whole lesson re-planning project, my students (imagined/anticipated) very literally are not the only ones I am asking to share, to take risks, to confess, to bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions. I take the first risk. And I confess.²⁹

Artifact 4, then, “The Real Paris on Fire Project: My Affective Reflection Notes and Writing (Re-Watching *Paris is Burning*),” compiles and presents as well as preserves my affective reflective writing and notes (semi-tszujed, not fully raw; though not edited-as-censored but edited for reader-

²⁹ I should be the first to take risks, confess that risk, and bring narratives of my own experience into classroom discussions because my body – my white, queer, trans body – is a body with them and amongst them and a body with power and privilege. And when I make this body visible to my students via my academic drag, via my visual, performative pedagogy, I am colloquially “breaking the ice,” yes, but more so, de- and anti-colonially, I am melting the Ivory Tower. And I am playing in its waters. I can’t not take that risk when teaching as my authentic, whole self. And by taking that risk, and confessing it so and doing it first, I melt that Ivory Tower just a little bit more and invite my students to join me by bringing their warmth and their fires, too.

readiness as well as embracing subsequent additional reflections, insights, connections, and power points). They are, and I present and include them here in this dissertation consciously as such, decidedly *not* a traditional, academic essay nor a formal scholarly chapter on the 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*. They could be, they absolutely could be – i.e., they could be turned into this genre; or, to use the active voice here, *I* could turn them into this genre – but they are not, and I have not. Again, decidedly (are/have) not. And this is, also, for two reasons.

Firstly, an integral part of my own reflective argument here with my teaching and revisiting of my teaching of the documentary *Paris is Burning* in 2015 is *to no longer teach the documentary* but instead to teach bell hooks *on* the documentary. Therefore, this dissertation chapter, Chapter 2, “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Or, (Re)Visiting and (Re)Embodying My Teaching,” likewise is *not* a chapter on *Paris is Burning* and can’t and shouldn’t be. Secondly, there is a hooksian vulnerability here in tandem with a de- and anti-coloniality here in presenting these discussions reactive to (note: not “on”; *reactive to*) reactive to *Paris is Burning* in this fragmented and fragmentary way, and that is also part of my larger dissertation project. I am, very literally, consciously, deliberately, and liberatorily, “linking [my] confessional narratives,” as hooks would say, to academic discussions to show how my experiences, my own experiential learning in doing, in performing, in embodying the Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity myself, “can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material.” (The “our” here, for me, here and now in this dissertation and together with my imagined and anticipated students, with the Dissertating Tommy and the Teaching Tommy, with the Whole Person Tommy, being empowered collectives.)

So, yes, a *circa* 15,500-word, *circa* 50-page *chunk* of my dissertation “on”/from a critical, affective close-viewing and -reading of Jennie Livingston’s 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning* in a Department of English Language and Literature by a doctoral candidate with a Secondary Field Area

comprehensively in Discourse and Text Analysis perhaps could/should be writing a formal dissertation chapter academically and scholarly on *Paris is Burning* as object text, but I am not. I am decidedly not. (And yes, I did also decidedly write that honker of a sentence just now with all those excessive prepositional phrases, too, yes. I did that.)

These reflective writing fragments are complete *in/as* their incompleteness, then. And they are so because, of course, they cannot and will not be complete(d) until they are part of the authentic engagement and in-class discussion activity with students as part of The Real Paris on Fire Project. So, this affective reflective fragmentary writing exercise isn't, can't, won't, and shouldn't be an essay but is essayistic in scope, drive, and function. "That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks." In The Real Paris on Fire Project, I am moving toward empowering my students, and through and to this, I am "expect[ing my] students to share confessional narratives"; and I am not myself unwilling to share my own. And so, please spend some time with my affective reflection notes and writing from re-watching *Paris is Burning* as part of my lesson re-planning project's Methods and Materials here where I *take the first risk* by doing the four things I will ask my students to do themselves, too: first, pausing the documentary whenever I laugh, whenever I cry, whenever I cringe, scoff, snap, feel offended, squeamish, empowered, overjoyed, overwhelmed, etc.; second, jotting down the scene/moment as well as the emotion I'm feeling/reaction I'm having; third, asking myself, "Why do I think that I am feeling this emotion or having this reaction at this scene/moment in the documentary?"; and fourth, writing what I am thinking/what comes to mind when I ask myself this question about the emotion/reaction I am experiencing at this scene/moment (Artifact 4).

[Dramatic pause here while the dissertation reader spends time with Artifact 4]

Having started this whole re-planning project with actually doing the Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity myself, then – and now that my dissertation reader has spent time with Artifact 4: “The Real Paris on Fire Project: My Affective Reflection Notes and Writing (Re-Watching *Paris is Burning*)” – the next part of my process here under my Methods and Materials was, as alluded to above in the Introductory parts to this second dissertation chapter, the creation of the “authentic” documents that comprise the student-facing elements of this lesson re-plan. (And part of my teacherly process here with instructional design has always been amplified and motivated so powerfully by, as I noted above, working in the formal-looking heading and PDF-ready appeal of assignment outline, to make it real and to make it work!) Altogether, then, this package of student-facing materials is:

- The Real Paris on Fire Project overview/cover sheet
- The Real Paris on Fire Project: Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity handout
- The Real Paris on Fire Project: Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment handout
- The Real Paris on Fire Project: Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Rubric handout
- The Real Paris on Fire Project: Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment handout
- The Real Paris on Fire Project: Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) – Self-Assessment handout

This package of student-facing materials (see them in their full PDF-ready appeal in my Results section to this second dissertation chapter) met and developed the first three Working Learning Outcomes I had furiously and roughly jotted down at the outset of this lesson re-planning process for how I would teach bell hooks on *Paris is Burning* today – and this was largely the *reflective* aspects

of what I am wanting and hoping to get up to with my students, all critical, creative, and affective reflection.³⁰

Building off the affective reflection and subsequent in-class discussions of the Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) activity, I wanted to keep my students writing and writing more formally now and then multimodally. The Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment has them diving deeper into one scene from *Paris is Burning* that really affected them and stayed with them past our in-class discussions to explore in more structured writing how (and why) they now might understand and engage with this particular chosen scene differently now than in their initial watching and reflecting. And the Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment has them trying on authentic writing (*à la* John Bean and authentic assessments) with envisioning – and explaining in prose! – a new poster/cover image for the documentary *Paris is Burning* for a 2022 DVD/streaming platform release that embodies the energy and honesty of hooks from 1992 together with the energy, honesty, and vulnerability of our class discussions and affective, critical reflections.

With those student-facing pieces done, so to speak, I still needed to meet and develop the other roughly drafted outcomes, and those are instructional aspects with lecture as the predominant, though not the exclusive, teaching method of choice.

Above, I had captured these next four rough draft Learning Outcomes as:

By the end of this lesson/unit/subunit, we should be able to...

- define and discuss *ritual* and *spectacle* in visual cultures as well as in literary cultures

³⁰ For quick reference, these three were, that by the end of this lesson/unit/subunit, we should be able to...critically reflect on whiteness and its relationship to the documentary *Paris is Burning*; affectively reflect on our own emotions and reactions to the documentary *Paris is Burning*; and creatively reflect on audience expectations of the documentary *Paris is Burning*.

- *something about heteropatriarchy and intersectionality with Black male comedians and/in drag - ?*
- *something about critiquing progress in white Western cultures and our assumptions of progressiveness - ?*
- *something about storytelling through documentary as media/genre and the non-neutrality of the documentary filmmaker - ?*

You'll notice the italicized scripts and the questions marks of the bottom three drafty Learning Outcomes here: *very* drafty Learning Outcomes, indeed. But I knew that the hearts of those rough scopes that now stood out to me from re-reading hooks' "Is Paris Burning?" essay today were what called to me strongly to engage with my students in and to specifically and decidedly talk about in class with them. True to form as a good Educational Developer and ISW Network Facilitator and Trainer, I got out my trusty BOPPPS model lesson planning template – four of them, actually; one for each of the rough draft Learning Outcomes still left – and I started to work on filling them in.

Now, I do know that the practice of writing and incorporating “Intended Learning Outcomes” (“ILOs,” as they used to be called) in our post-secondary teaching does sometimes raise some folks’ eyebrows in suspicion. Feelings against ILOs can reach across the spectrum of tired laziness in having *yet another thing to do on top of all of our work* all the way to ILOs as colonizing tools and devices wielded by the aforementioned “academic gatekeepers” (as Dr. Aja would say). But in my work all as a university instructor, an ISW Network Facilitator and Trainer, and as the Executive Director of Centre for Teaching and Learning in a U15 research institution in this place now called Canada, I use learning outcomes proactively to guide my teaching and learning together with my students’ teaching and learning, and I use them *decolonially*. Learning outcomes, and teaching in general, require – just like drag in general, and just like academic drag more specifically – improv performances, meeting students/audiences where they are at, moving with them in their knowledges, expectations, objections, detours, *a-ha!* moments, etc., all of which require provisional, draft-stage

objectives. Road maps, if you will (for a common travelling/journeying metaphor...for a drag metaphor: face charts, outfit sketches, anticipated setlists/agendas, tour itinerary, etc., if you will).

And this *requirement* is actually (in my work, and what I hope to imbue through my work to scores of instructors) toward a hooksian *excitement* in the classroom. While the ISW Handbook notes plainly and clearly that “[l]earning outcomes are statements that articulate what a learner should know or be able to do by the end of a lesson” and that “[i]ncorporating outcomes into your lesson helps learners to direct their learning and monitor their own progress, signals what is important and valued in the lesson, and helps the instructor to select the content and activities that will best allow the learner to achieve the outcomes in the time allowed” (1.18), when we, in an ISW, get into the thick of the Workshop, we note further that “[m]otivation is built when learners know that the topic and learning outcomes are important to them” (2.2), and here is where I connect this ISW Handbook citing of *motivation* to *excitement* via bell hooks: “The first paradigm that shaped my pedagogy,” bell hooks says, and I share with my ISW participants, “was the idea that the classroom should be an exciting place, never boring” (7). “*Excitement* in higher education,” hooks continues, “was viewed as potentially disruptive of the atmosphere of seriousness assumed to be essential to the learning process. To enter classroom settings in colleges and universities with the will to share the desire to encourage excitement, was to transgress. Not only did it require movement beyond accepted boundaries, but excitement could not be generated without a full recognition of the fact that there could never be an absolute set agenda governing teaching practices. *Agendas had to be flexible, had to allow for spontaneous shifts in direction*” (7 – emphasis added). To allow for improv, detours, side-routes, delays, etc.

In their work on what they term *drag pedagogy* and use to examine the recent (mostly North American) cultural phenomenon of public library programming for young children called Drag Queen

Story Hour (DQSH), Harper Keenan and Lil Miss Hot Mess note that “[t]he incorporation of play and art in the classroom is regularly justified by [a] category of instrumentalist claims, including their potential to bolster ‘academic skill development’ through measurable outcomes” (449). But they turn this on its head a bit: “As an organization, DQSH may be incentivized to recite lines about alignment with curricular standards and social-emotional learning in order to be legible within public education and philanthropic institutions,” but drag itself, they continue, “ultimately does not take these utilitarian aims too seriously (but it is quite good at looking the part when necessary). Instead...it aims toward play without predetermined purpose” (449). Keenan and Hot Mess’ *drag pedagogy* is not quite my *academic drag*,³¹ so in post-secondary, adult education (and, indeed, in the Ivory Tower walls of the Academy itself), “predetermined purpose” doesn’t have to be, and desperately should never be, unyieldingly didactic. It should be, it needs to be, as hooks said, flexible and allowing for spontaneous shifts in direction. Direction and facilitation; directing and facilitating; direct and facilitate.

And so, with these two verbs so integral and intimate at the heart of my pedagogy and my academic drag, I got out my trusty BOPPPS model lesson planning template – **Bridge-in and Lesson Opening; Learning Outcomes (LOs); Pre-Assessment; Participatory/Interactive Learning; Post-Assessment; Summary and Closure** – and I started to work on filling them in.

I began with “Ritual and Storytelling” first because that rough draft Learning Outcome was the least drafty – and it probably was the least drafty because, having initially taught “Is Paris

³¹ Keenan and Hot Mess define their adjectival-pedagogy term *drag pedagogy* as “teaching and learning that extends beyond traditional approaches to LGBT curricular inclusion. The themes within drag pedagogy, applicable beyond the context of drag itself, move away from vocabulary lessons and the token inclusion of LGBT heroes to begin to engage deeper understandings of queer cultures and envision new modes of being together. We emphasize that drag pedagogy resists didactic instruction and is not prescriptive. Instead, it artfully invites children into building communities that are more hospitable to queer knowledge and experience” (443).

Burning?” in 2015 in a Transgender *Visual Culture* class, and from having done my graduate-level training in Cultural Studies (MA) and in Discourse and Text Analysis (PhD Comprehensive Exam), this crucial part of hooks’ essay still rung loudly and importantly in my head to teach and to ensure was part of the course learning outcomes and my students’ experiences and core disciplinary learning in my classroom. I also had almost pre-formed the scope of this mini lesson chunk: I knew I wanted to start with a “What comes to mind when you think of...?” opening brainstorming activity (one of my signature facilitative instructional moves!) for each of *ritual* and of *spectacle*; and then I knew I wanted to move definitionally through the theory and glossary perspectives of them to the rhetorical power of ritual as subordinated to spectacle in the Black and Latinx drag/trans- ballroom scenes, as hooks explores them; and I knew I wanted to end with Venus’ murder as heartbreakingly iconic of this from a critical whiteness perspective, as hooks hauntingly writes and argues, “The audience does not see Venus after the murder. There are no scenes of grief. To put it crassly, her dying is upstaged by spectacle” and “[h]aving served the purpose of ‘spectacle’ the film abandons [Venus³²]” (155). And so I already had this all mapped out in my mind for this Learning Outcome and just needed to capture it, refine the Learning Outcome based on the actual planned mini lesson instead of just the envisioned mini lesson, and then align it once the other three were also captured and existed.

³² I have put Venus’ name here citationally in brackets to signify that I have altered the original text of the quotation because I refuse to type into the prose-specific discursive pieces of my dissertation the transphobic binary-slashed-pronouns of hooks’ original text. Venus, as she herself makes abundantly clear of herself in and across the footage Livingston edits and keeps, and as she herself is popularly and powerfully remembered and honoured, is a woman, both a transwoman and a real woman. (I do include the original hooks quotation in the BOPPPS lesson plan because as part of teaching hooks on *Paris is Burning* more ethically, responsibly, and responsively today, I will have this discussion with my students as part of their and our critical, and yes, affective, readings and reflections.) See also Endnote I – Some Extended Discussion on How bell hooks May Be/Is Becoming Problematic.

Next, I worked on “Storytelling Through Documentary and the Non-Neutrality of the Documentary Filmmaker.” And I’ll admit: similarly to “Ritual and Spectacle,” I had a pre-formed idea of an anchoring activity for this mini lesson, and that was using clips from the sitcom *Community* where main character Abed – a pop culture enthusiast and experimental documentary filmmaker – makes some quick but profound references to, you guessed it, storytelling through documentary and the non-neutrality of the documentary filmmaker. Wrapping this mini lesson chunk in two different clips of Abed from *Community*, I knew that the hook’s heart of this part of the instructional aspects for The Real Paris on Fire Project was going to hit hard on what hooks hits hard on, which is Jennie Livingston’s place, voice, and authoritative decision making with producing this documentary. Especially, from a Critical Race Theory perspective, engaging with the telling moment (but perhaps not tellingly enough to me in 2015) when hooks quotes from a published interview someone else did with Livingston asking Livingston, “Didn’t the fact that you’re a white lesbian going into a world of Black queens and street kids make [the interview process] difficult?” to which Livingston replied, “If you know someone over a period of two years, and they still retain their sex and their race, you’ve got to be a pretty sexist, racist person” (qtd. in hooks 151). *If they retain their sex and their race to you, you are pretty sexist and racist.* I can literally hear Aja Martinez flipping her whole desk over, just tossing that shit right outta here, and I knew this would be crucial, as I said, to engage with in my teaching now, and to do so by bringing into my classroom Critical Race Theory and discussions of colourblind racism. By citing the interview with Livingston and bookending this mini lesson chunk with the Abed *Community* clips on documentary filmmaking, I could include a powerful in-class reflective writing activity here having my students imagining themselves as interviewing Livingston and, exhilaratingly, just what would they ask her?

It was here in my process, as I noted above, that I took about two months to the day “off” of The Real Paris of Fire Project and switched back to my Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect counterstory novella to finish that as a complete draft and get it to my supervisor, and so coming back to my mini lesson chunks here after two months, I had only two left to pick from to keep going with, and I re-started here then with “A Critique of Progress and of Play” leaving “Heteropatriarchy, Intersectionality, and the Black Male Comedian in Drag” to the end. (My reason: I know there is controversy and pain over anti-queer and anti-trans content with Dave Chappelle’s recent Netflix special that caused Netflix employees to walk off the job for Netflix not pulling the special from the platform, but I hadn’t seen it yet, and so I wanted to watch it to see whether/to what extent it might have contemporary manifestations of hooks’ critiques of Eddie Murphy as a cishet Black comedian in drag that I could extrapolate and connect.)

For the “A Critique of Progress and of Play” mini lesson, I was keenly interested in talking about how hooks opens her whole essay by remembering and sharing with her readers the empowerment she felt as a little girl and a younger woman crossdressing and activating a man’s space with her body via clothing. And being a transfeminine person and an academic drag queen, this experience of dragging upwardly in(to) power and privilege is not and never will be mine in terms of binary gendered misogyny. And I find that fascinating. I also have found instrumental in my own academic work and research – and, indeed, taught this essay in my “Transgender Visual Culture” course in 2015, too – Daphne Marlatt’s short essay “Self-Representation and Fictionalysis” where she discusses the power of clothing (both gendered and not) and specifically looks from a different perspective at upward and downward metaphorical directional indices when she talks about how “[c]hildren learn that dressing themselves is an achievement but dressing up is only play” because by “add[ing] that little word ‘up’ ...you add speciousness, you add a sneer” (14). And I wanted to

connect this with my students to hooks on play and on clothing and on dressing up, and I wanted to use this to launch a discussion of critiquing progress, too – because true to my roots and passions with popular culture and TV, another iconic recent-ish moment of trans-visibility that brought with it horribly transmisogynistic rhetoric was Netflix’s *Orange is the New Black* and that in season 1, episode 3 (the episode that focusses almost exclusively on trans actress and activist Laverne Cox’s character) that has the almost hidden sneer that “[being a transwoman is] like winning the lottery and giving the ticket back” (“Lesbian Request Denied”). So, great strides in some areas, and little to no or even backward momentum in others...especially when it comes to compounding intersections of being equity-denied in society with non-raced-whiteness as one of them.³³

For this mini lesson, I really wanted to get students to think about not just how far the erroneously-imagined “we” have come in society but how far each of them as individual and whole people on their own journeys have come, too. And as I note in the Pre-assessment, this could or could not involve cross-dressing play in their respective childhoods! We – and there’s that falsely-inclusive collective, so let’s clock it again as a whitely *we* – tend to think of progress as always and only forward moving, always and only a *being better than* our ancestors of any degree of recency. Yet “we” don’t all move together, and the system is built, as DuVernay said, to keep (and promote) some people up high and keep (and demote) some people down low. So how can we think of progress differently? And of play, too? That “actual practice,” as Marlatt says, “not factual but act-ual” (14).³⁴

³³ Not in the mini lesson here for “A Critique of Progress and of Play” but elsewhere in my dissertation – in Chapter 3, “Gender Pronouns, Teaching and Learning, and Cultures of Respect: A Counterstory Novella” – I discuss this lack of progress/progress only for some with the example of Sylvia Rivera getting booed off the stage at a Pride event in 1971, two years after the Stonewall Rebellion that she helped ignite, because she was trans, Latinx, and homeless. *Two years after Stonewall...* and many, many of us white queers today, over half a century out, think we’ve won and are done...

³⁴ Keenan and Hot Mess’ article is fully titled, “Drag Pedagogy: The Playful Practice of Queer Imagination in Early Childhood,” and in addition to examining Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH) library programming for

And how do we see that from (in the context of this course/larger lesson unit) the 1980s' ballroom scene in New York to today's globalized "ballroom" on our screens and in our living rooms? And how might students – and myself as an instructor always learning, unlearning, relearning, and growing – apply this microscopic activity macroscopically on the, as the Post-assessment says, "long, long ways [we still have] to go and keep going"? (I didn't know this at the time of planning this mini lesson chunk – as I noted, I worked on this one next after my "break" in switching back to my Gender Pronouns counterstory because I hadn't yet seen and sat with the controversial Chappelle Netflix special – but this mini lesson was going to be(come) the capstone mini lesson of the four. Critiquing progress and play would cinch like a corset, though hopefully not as torturously so, the three mini lessons before it and across them all to problematize the assumed inherency of opposition, revolution, and justice (social, but especially racial) in cultural practices like drag and cultural texts like *Drag Race*.³⁵)

young children, as their article title subtletarily so declares, they look at play. "Many elements of DQSH are common to early childhood schooling," they notes, "bright colours, music, art, and imaginative play. There is an adult teacher leading a classroom of young students. What is different, though, is that the teacher is a drag queen" (Keenan and Hot Mess 442). They further notes that this drag queen teacher "breaks the limiting stereotype of a teacher: she is loud, extravagant, and playful. She encourages children to think for themselves and even to break the rules" (442). "She is," as they so fabulously put it, "the exponential product of Ms. Frizzle and Bob [T]he Drag Queen" (442). Central to their arguments and explorations in this article is the guiding question, "What if we took play, defiance, and imagination seriously as forms of knowledge production?" (443), and they look at drag, at drag queens (and kings, and performers) pedagogically in DQSH to show that "[l]ike other forms of make-believe, drag functions as a uniquely queer form of embodied and unscripted play that invites creative world-building" (448) and that, importantly, "drag performers do not necessarily seek identification with an 'other,' but rather to experience different ways of embodying and expressing different aspects of themselves" (454). As Marlatt said, "[A]s children we know that play is not only easy, it is also absorbing and immensely serious, that play is the actual practice (not factual but act-ual) of who else we might be" (14).

³⁵ Keenan and Hot Mess say it quite well: "[W]hile drag may be implicitly transgressive, it is not inherently anti-oppressive" (447). And it can be quite damaging when we think, even believe, even more so mistakenly trust, that any drag that says it's drag is by its nominal nature as drag anti-oppressive. And this is similar with teachers and teaching: hooks says that the classroom is and remains "the most radical space of possibility in the academy" (12), but that does not mean that any teacher in any classroom is going to be radical nor activate that radicality for powerful and positive anti-oppressive education and change. But as Keenan and Hot Mess also

I worked on and finished “Heteropatriarchy, Intersectionality, and the Black Male Comedian in Drag” last because it was perhaps the heaviest, the least familiar to me, and – after watching the Dave Chappelle special on Netflix – the one from which I am the furthest removed from being able to speak about, argue about, teach about, ethically, respectfully, and responsibly. Chappelle did not do drag in his controversial Netflix special, and outside of one specific moment I remember that bordered on *linguistic* drag as transfeminine vocal/sonic impersonation, the connections I thought I might see from the 1980s with Eddie Murphy and hooks’ critiques there to today with Dave Chappelle didn’t imagine into existence for me a completed mini lesson chunk on the topics I had identified as needing to be a part of my whole project’s teaching and learning overall. But what *did* imagine itself into existence by not having the Chappelle connections were the *RuPaul’s Drag Race* connections where, in 2015 (ironically enough) RuPaul did a herstory lesson on drag as part of the Season 7 Grand Finale that included a celebratory mention of Flip Wilson – who hooks, like with Murphy, clocks powerfully not as “a laugh riot” (as RuPaul says when the image of Flip Wilson in drag is up on the screen) but portraying and perpetuating disempowering images to young Black

say, “The traditional role of the teacher, transformed into a loud and sparkling queen, becomes delightfully excessive. She is less interested in focus, discipline, achievement, or objectives than playful self-expression. Her pedagogy is rooted in pleasure and creativity borne, in part, from letting go of control” (451). They are, of course, writing specifically on DQSH and more widely on drag pedagogy in early childhood education (*not* academic drag in post-secondary adult education); so, for me, with academic drag for post-secondary, adult education, it is more so ‘The traditional role of the *instructor*, transformed into a loud and sparkling queen, that becomes delightfully *decolonial*. She is *more* interested in focus, discipline, achievement, *and* objectives than [just] playful self-expression. And her pedagogy is rooted in pleasure and creativity borne, in part, from *taking back* control[, anti-colonially].’

“[D]rag,” Keenan and Hot Mess say, “may help elucidate the arbitrariness of rules. By encouraging students to explore the boundaries of acceptability, drag offers a model for participating in a learning experience where axioms are meant to be challenged and authority is not given. In the school environment, of course, oppressive conditions are often produced by the institution itself, and many children who intuitively resist these conditions are punished” (452). And it is “[t]his embodied pedagogy [of the drag queen teachers that] teaches that, in unjust situations, people can use strategic tactics to push back against harmful actions” (Keenan and Hot Mess 452).

females in that these images “seemed to both allow [B]lack males to give public expression to a general misogyny, as well as to a more specific hatred and contempt toward [B]lack women” (146).

Taking my students through unpacking and leaning into hooks’ arguments here, I ultimately wanted to move them toward hooks’ near-hopeful challenge to Black men in drag – and I say “near-hopeful” here because hooks could not have possibly anticipated the likes of the *RuPaul’s Drag Race* international phenomenon when she was writing in the late ’80s and early ’90s, and so her critique isn’t really a call to do drag better in Black male communities but an emphatic statement that Black men doing drag will (at the time for hooks) always be “a sexist idealization of white womanhood” (147).³⁶ And yet, hooks further couldn’t possibly have anticipated the increasing number today of “Black males [who] take appearing in drag seriously” (to use hooks’ own words almost verbatim here, but with an empowered twist) who in fierce consciousness and confidence unambiguously

³⁶ Also relevant here is LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant’s work on Black cis het male actors in fat drag and critiquing “the donning of intricate fat suits by [B]lack men to parody [B]lack women” (57) in contemporary films of the first decade of the 21st century, such as Martin Lawrence in *Big Momma’s House* and its sequel (2000; 2006), Eddie Murphy in *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps* (2000) and *Norbit* (2007), and Tyler Perry in *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (2005), *Madea’s Family Reunion* (2006), *Meet the Browns* (2008), *Madea Goes to Jail* (2009), and *I Can Do Bad All By Myself* (2009). Manigault-Bryant argues that “[t]hese films reify the negative images that many [B]lack feminists and film critics have strived to delegitimize” and points out that “[t]hese movies reveal that certain historicized images [such as Saartjie Baartman] are not merely reproduced, but have mutated and adapted to current social moments and new production conditions” (59). That these films Manigault-Bryant is analyzing are in the filmic genre of Comedy means, she says, that “it may prove hard for the consumer to stop laughing and to realize the implications of their amusement—that they find stereotypical portrayals of fat [B]lack women amusing” (60). Manigault-Bryant situates the sapphimmibel (a composite figure of the sapphire, the mammy, and the jezebel stereotypes) as encompassing the stereotypical portrayals of Black women in these filmic “Black, Fat Drag Comedy-Films,” as she calls them (60). “As films such as these that feature sapphimmibel,” she notes, “continue to be produced and consumed within American culture, we must interrogate how they reproduce and seductively hybridize negative stereotypes of race, gender, and fatness” (66).

(This first decade of the 21st century (2000-2009) in which these films are produced and back on which Manigault-Bryant is looking, watching, and critiquing also pre-dates the start of the *RuPaul’s Drag Race* franchise, which began in 2009, and which throughout and across the years has included fat suits...most notably Shangela’s “Black, Fat Drag” in her *All Stars 3* Lip Sync for Your Legacy winning performance to RuPaul’s song “Freaky Money” featuring Big Freedia. RuPaul herself, too, in her 2004 music video “Looking Good, Feeling Gorgeous” (2004, right smack in the middle of this first decade of the 21st century) also dons “Black, Fat Drag” in stereotypical, and fatphobic, portrayal of a Black woman.)

channel, honour, and look up to not white women and white womanhood, but Black women and Black womanhood – Kendall Gender (*Canada’s Drag Race* Season 2), Symone (*RuPaul’s Drag Race* Season 13), and Shea Coullée (*RuPaul’s Drag Race: All Stars* Season 5). There *are* some really powerful and really beautiful leaps in progress we as a society are making, but it isn’t all leaps and bounds; a critique of progress (and of play!), then, is unambiguously essential, and while hooks’ essay on *Paris is Burning* does not take us there nor go there (not that, I believe, it could have), the fact that two of the above three queens won their seasons and all of them made the finales of their respective seasons, *that* says something.

With all four of my mini lesson chunks imagined into existence, then, and my BOPPPS templates full and near-complete, I had left to revisit and refine each of their respective Learning Outcomes for what I actually cover and get up to in each of them. These Learning Outcomes – individually met, developed, and aligned within their respective mini lesson plans – are now:

- “define and discuss *ritual* and *spectacle* in visual cultures as well as in literary cultures, and reflect on the rhetorical power of them, separately and together, in *Paris is Burning* and in contemporary culture”
- “discuss bell hooks’ argument and critique of heteropatriarchal intersectionality with Black male comedians in drag, and connect it to contemporary evolutions and representations of Black excellence in drag cultures”
- “reflect on play and power, empowerment, disempowerment, and patriarchy, and begin to critique progress in white Western cultures and white Western assumptions of progressiveness”
- “identify and discuss storytelling through documentary and the non-neutrality of the documentary filmmaker, and reflect on the impacts, impasses, and legacies of colour blind racism”³⁷

³⁷ For quick reference, these four were at the outset roughly drafted as, that by the end of this lesson/unit/subunit, we should be able to...define and discuss *ritual* and *spectacle* in visual cultures as well as in literary cultures; *something about heteropatriarchy and intersectionality with Black male comedians and/in drag - ?*; *something about critiquing progress in white Western cultures and our assumptions of progressiveness - ?*; and *something about storytelling through documentary as media/genre and the non-neutrality of the documentary filmmaker - ?*

And then all that was left to do was, as hinted above, the sequences and sequencing of all the aspects of the total teaching event.

Toward this end, I used the Spring 2022 term as an arbitrary, hypothetical term for my authentic lesson planning (because I was re-planning this lesson in Winter 2022 and so was ambitiously looking just ahead just over the horizon, apparently!), and I used a Tuesday-Thursday 80-minute each hypothetical class schedule to plan out and map out the total lesson planning experiential sequence. And this was for a few reasons: pedagogically, the Tuesday/Thursday split allowed me to focus on the important place of Mondays, Fridays, and weekends in the whole-person lived experiences of my imaginary and anticipated students and of the instructor (me) so as to balance and keep cognizant of pre-class, in-class, and out-of-class times and activities; practically, to avoid the double-step planning (especially in this imagined and anticipated lesson/module) of navigating statutory holidays and university closures; and personally, 80-minute classes twice a week are my own Goldilocks' sweet-spot for teaching, neither too short (50-minute classes, three times a week), neither too long (170-minute class, once a week), but juuust right.

To help me with my realizing and mapping of the lesson sequence pieces, I printed blank calendars of May, June, July, and August 2022 and hand-wrote little PostIt Notes that I could move where and how all the different parts and pieces could fit and flow. I used green little PostIts for the "Mini Lessons" components, pink little PostIts for the "Assessments" components, and orange little PostIts for the "Activities" components, and I created individual little PostIts of each colour and grouped them together on a sheet of paper in columns so that, as I planned and moved and re-moved, etc., I didn't forget anything nor lose sight of anything and could tell when I was "done" – i.e., when I had all the little PostIts from their columns all on the Spring 2022 calendars. Seeing all of these moving parts and pieces all together in their colour-coded columns was also a key indicator to me of

the vast (expected) differences between how I would teach bell hooks on *Paris is Burning* today and how I did teach *Paris is Burning* with bell hooks in 2015.

Then, always thinking carefully and responsibly about my students' learning and engagement needs and timelines and of my instructional needs and timelines as well – i.e., respectively, for actually spending time with and completing tasks for my course in tandem with balancing other courses, jobs, and life commitments, and for reviewing and providing feedback with enough time to meaningfully build on and keep going with in the total lesson sequence...as well as balancing other courses, jobs, and life commitments – I started playing around with my little PostIt notes, sequencing and resequencing, checking and rechecking my printed out (to have at the ready for this process) student-facing materials and my instructor-facing pieces, and always asking myself, *What else? What else am I missing? Who else? Who else am I missing?*

And I was, to be sure, indeed missing somethings and someones. I hadn't clocked scheduling for and anticipating for any extra time for key points not-got-to/*What else would we as a class like to discuss and talk about with bell hooks before we move on in the course?*; and I hadn't clocked scheduling and actually protecting time to debrief The Real Paris on Fire Project after its conclusion with/as the class. So, each needed a little PostIt of their own, too (one green, one orange, respectively), and their clocked awareness and now-physical presence as little PostIts in my process necessitated another round of moving and re-moving to make sure everything fit respectfully and responsibly. (And, dear reader, exactly the same as with my five yellow PostIts from re-reading hooks' "Is Paris Burning?" essay in December 2021, I can produce photographic documentation of the calendars, of little PostIts, and of these hands-on physical planning pieces, too, if you'd like!)

Finding myself satisfied that all little PostIts were present and accounted for, that I had provided myself and my students with enough time to meaningfully and responsibly engage with and

complete the interlocked activities and assessments, and that I could still see myself powerfully leading this lesson on hooks on *Paris is Burning* in a good way with my students, I turned my calendars, notes, and student-facing and instructor-facing pieces into my “Sequence of Lesson Events/Key Dates and Deliverables” tabular document with the Date, Instructor Activity, and Student Activity headingly mapped out and aligned for who is doing what where and when as well as why and how. Beginning hypothetically on Thursday, May 12th and continuing straight through the various activities, assessments, and mini lessons, The Real Paris on Fire Project, as I have (re)imagined it, takes five instructional weeks (ten teaching days), ending with the Class Debrief on Tuesday, June 14th. There are twelve instructional weeks at the University of Waterloo with twenty-four classes (by the 80-minute classes, twice a week model). What I thought I was imagining as a re-planned *lesson* has, powerfully I hope, become nearly half of an entire course. Half of an entire course on *what*, I don’t yet know (“Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics,” perhaps?); but this is how I would teach bell hooks on *Paris is Burning* as the instructor, leader, activist, and academic drag queen whom I am today.³⁸

Results

I present here as my Results a series of artifact materials that, while formally Artifacts in my dissertation, are attached pedagogically as key and core to and as my arguments, discussions, and theorizations.³⁹ This series of Artifacts that comprise the total instructional package of The Real Paris

³⁸ “Today” being the relative time of the 2022 calendar year, to be clear – I started imagining this lesson on the cusp of 2022; I largely built it out in Winter 2022; I finished, refined, and made it reader-ready in Spring 2022; and I will (fingers crossed!) be defending it as part of my whole dissertation in Fall 2022. So, 2022 is “today” here...I will revisit this again in another seven years, perhaps, to see how I would teach it then as whom I am then. (Just kidding! Annual cyclical review for quality assurance, please.)

³⁹ I have also attached as an Artifact to this dissertation chapter my affective reflective writing, which is also a kind of Results, too, even though not clocked in my Results section here as such, given its necessarily

on Fire Project, then, includes: the “Sequence of Lesson Events/Key Dates and Deliverables Document”; the student-facing materials; and the instructor-facing pieces. (The student-facing materials and the instructor-facing pieces also include my discursive “Notes to Dissertation Reader” footnoted throughout and across them – please note that while the “Notes to Dissertation Reader” are included here as part of my teaching queer method (*à la* Waite) and function as explanatory/exploratory and as theorizing of my own teaching and teaching practices, the package of student-facing materials (*sans* footnoted “Notes to Dissertation Reader”) is, as I see it, ready to hand out and to upload to the LMS for my imagined, anticipated students.)

I now invite my reader to please spend some time with my instructional materials, which are (in recommended reading order):

Sequencing Document/Key Dates and Deliverables

- Artifact 5 – “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Sequence of Lesson Events/Key Dates and Deliverables”

Student-facing Materials

- Artifact 6 – “The Real Paris on Fire Project” overview/cover sheet
- Artifact 7 – “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity” handout
- Artifact 8 – “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment” handout
- Artifact 9 – “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Rubric” handout
- Artifact 10 – “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment” handout

incomplete nature until the lesson is live with students. So this is part of and extending my arguments with decolonizing the genre of the dissertation: as an Artifact instead of as an Appendix, this is a “thing I have made,” as I set up in the Introduction to my dissertation, and it is integral to my argumentation, documentation, and the overall readerly flow of my dissertation. My affective reflective writing is *not* an Appendix appended and does not function as such because it is key and core to arguments, discussions, and theorizations and is, thus, not supplementary to but inextricable from, unpolished as it intentionally is. As a teaching package of materials, though, for an instructor teaching this lesson as I have imagined it and/or using my Methods and Materials above to perform and engage in their own lesson re-planning, I present them, together with my affective reflective writing, as teaching relics here in spirit and in spite.

- Artifact 11 – “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) – Self-Assessment” handout

*Instructor-facing Pieces*⁴⁰

- Artifact 12 – Mini Lesson #1: “Storytelling Through Documentary and the Non-Neutrality of the Documentary Filmmaker”
- Artifact 13 – Mini Lesson #2: “Ritual and Spectacle”
- Artifact 14 – Mini Lesson #3: “Heteropatriarchy, Intersectionality, and the Black Male Comedian in Drag”
- Artifact 15 – Mini Lesson #4: “A Critique of Progress and of Play”

[Dramatic pause here again while the dissertation reader spends time with these eleven Artifacts]

Having finished this whole re-planning project, then – and now that my dissertation reader has spent time with the several-many Artifacts above that comprise the total package of this re-planned lesson project – I can now *ring the bell*, so to speak, of going back into my 2015 course materials and teaching relics from “Transgender Visual Culture” to revisit them, re-view them, and reflect on them with and against The Real Paris on Fire Project.⁴¹ I present these relics here as Artifacts, too, and I will (not surprisingly) *discuss* them below in my Discussion section to conclude this dissertation chapter and project.

- Artifact 16 – “Scans of Lecture Notes from “Transgender Visual Culture” (Fall 2015): November 5th” [16a to 16h—pages 1 to 8]

⁴⁰ In my Methods and Materials section, I discussed these four in order of creation and completion; here, I present them in order of sequential instruction, beginning with “Storytelling Through Documentary and the Non-Neutrality of the Documentary Filmmaker,” and continuing through “Ritual and Spectacle” and then “Heteropatriarchy, Intersectionality, and the Black Male Comedian in Drag,” to end/cap with “A Critique of Progress and of Play.”

⁴¹ I noted above parenthetically that “I have not yet, as of this writing and typing, gone back into them just yet; I will note definitively by date when I do. Can’t un-ring that bell, so to speak.” Today, when I am going back into them, is, ironically, May 11th, 2022...I start teaching tomorrow!

- Artifact 17 – “Scans of Lecture Notes from “Transgender Visual Culture” (Fall 2015): November 10th” [17a to 17f—pages 1 to 6]

Discussion

As you can see in the Artifacts above from “Transgender Visual Culture” in 2015 (Artifacts 16-17), I irresponsibly breezed through hooks’ “Is Paris Burning?” and did not spend nearly enough time with the documentary itself to meaningfully and powerfully engage with it and expound upon, nor did I ethically handle the oppressive aspects of it as a cultural artifact and object text. In 2015, I did, most certainly (as I had suspected) plan to teach and assigned to teach Jennie Livingston’s 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning* for two classes – two 80-minute classes (planned for November 3rd and 5th, 2015, inclusively). Revisiting specifically my TVC course’s syllabus, right after Thursday, October 27th, 2015 when I had scheduled the Midterm Test (in-class, take-the-whole-class, worth 15% of your final grade), I moved into TVC’s next unit that I called *Male Femininities* and that began on Tuesday, October 29th, 2015 (with two assigned readings for that day) before moving into a sub-unit of the *Male Femininities* unit that I had called, “Old School Drag” – Thursday, November 3rd, 2015, continuing to Tuesday, November 5th, 2015, and wrapping up on Thursday, November 10th (before moving to the next sub-unit of *Male Femininities*, “New School Drag”).

I had packaged for my course and on my syllabus the pre-class materials for the November 3rd and 5th classes with my usual *Come ready to class having already watched and already read as well as already having begun to think deeply about* the documentary *Paris is Burning* as well as two articles: bell hooks’ “Is Paris Burning?” (which, dear reader, you already knew I was going to say here), and Judith Butler’s “Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion” (which, dear reader, I had honestly forgotten I had assigned and taught alongside hooks and *Paris is Burning* – and I will unpack this more below in this Discussion that follows). Two other things of note from

revisiting my TVC syllabus before I get more in depth with my lesson planning for this here in 2015: I also screened *Paris is Burning* for my class and the wider campus community on the evening of Monday, October 28th (as I did regularly for the film and TV artifacts each week on the Monday evening before Tuesday's class); and I also had an assigned Reading Quiz formative assessment (the second of three in the course, each worth 5% of the final grade) for Thursday, November 5th's class.

Several many things strike me when I get to my *Lecture Notes* (as the divider tab in my TVC binder of instructional relics so reminds me I called them and thought of them as – i.e., not as “Lesson Plans” but as “Lecture Notes”), the first being that the dated notes for Tuesday, November 3rd, 2015 do not include any *Paris is Burning*. I was behind – of course I was! – in my teaching and following of the syllabus, and this is partly because of how much content I assigned and naively thought I could responsibly get to and through, but it is also that I had neglected to plan for in-class time together with my students to take-up and to debrief the Midterm Test as part of their learning...and as part of my teaching. (That happened Thursday, October 29th, 2015, which, see notes above in opening this Discussion section, was planned as the beginning of the *Male Femininities* unit with the sub-unit. And see above in Methods and Materials, too: I almost forgot again to include project debrief time with my students and me in The Real Paris on Fire Project, too.) So, already behind and struck that the dates themselves were not aligned with my course planning and expectations from (re)visiting the syllabus, the second thing that struck me was that these are, indeed, notes for lecturing on and not detailed or beautiful lesson plans at all. (Here, *lecture* as noun, not verb. As event, not teaching method.) Have a look yourself – Appendices 16-17.

I *literally* start with Madonna. (Well, I finished up lecturing on and having class discussions of Susan Stryker before getting to the “Old School Drag” sub-unit, but when I do, I start with this appropriative, binary–perpetuating picture of white femininity set to music and moves – “Strike a

pose, there's nothing to it," indeed!) And then I go right into conversations of cultural appropriation, too, drawing on Halberstam again (with Ira Livingston, from their Introduction to their *Posthuman Bodies* edited collection where they discuss drag, drag culture, and *Paris is Burning* and Madonna's appropriation, which I assigned as required reading Week 2 of TVC), and, as you can see in Appendix 16h above, I show a picture of Madonna on the cover of *Vogue* as part of my instructional mutlimodality – music, motion, and memorabilia! And I ask, as you can in see in Appendix 16c above, using my oh-so-helpful visual marker instructionally to myself of size 14 red font, “[I]s it fair to equate Madonna's appropriation with Livingston's documentary?” And then I layer on the Butler white-lesbian-on-white-lesbian defense of Livingston and critique of hooks (that “reverse colonization” comment⁴²) to elevate Butler's description and critique of *Paris is Burning* by not just demoting hooks' but (and I am very cringingly sorry to say this here and to see this in my 2015 notes) by openly mocking hooks and her critique – after setting up and lecturing on “Reading and Shade” as seen and taught in *Paris is Burning*, I rhetorically move back to the secondary literature of hooks and of Butler on the documentary by saying, “So, Butler then read[s] bell hooks to filth!”

And I, too, stumblingly attempt to *read bell hooks to filth* by countering hooks' quotation about “[t]oo many reviewers and interviewers” not raising “pressing critical questions about Livingston's film” but as “act[ing] as though she somehow did this marginalized [B]lack gay subculture a favor by bringing their experience to a wider public” (153) by having the ignorant recklessness to say, “I may get hate-mail for saying this, but didn't she? Look at Venus, for example: she is immortalized here in the film – and now digital medium – of Livingston's *Paris is Burning* and

⁴² See Artifact 16c where I indirectly misquote Butler in my lecture notes from 2015 as criticizing hooks for “reverse colonization” – Butler's actual words from “Gender Is Burning” are “a colonization in reverse” as she argues that radical feminists work to reinscribe heterosexual matrices via male homosexuality (and via male-to-female drag, as hooks discusses in “Is Paris Burning?”), as misogynistic (127).

we know her story, and mourn her loss, *solely because of Livingston's film*" (italics original). And I put a little asterisk underneath this in my notes to add, as if somehow doubling-down on my brilliant insight instead of doubling-down on my sheer and frank audacity, "I don't know about the rest of you, but this is SUPER important to me" (Appendix 16e – caps original). Now, to be fair to my past self, my 2015 self – because, yes, we *should* be fair to past selves, kind to our past selves, they who were on their own learning, unlearning, and relearning journeys themselves that make up and are pit stops on our living ones today, whether or not we saw and understood it as such; *fair*, but by no means *not critical*, and by no means *making excuses for* or *defending* past selves for poor choices – I don't know if I *said* this in my classroom. Not having captured *à la* Stacey Waite more robust records or even transcripts, I only have these teaching relics that made it to Edmonton with me, and they say I said this. So that is what I am going with. Whether or not I voiced this audibly in my classroom in 2015 (which, let's be honest, I highly likely did), these were my sentiments and understandings.

Compare, then, how I cite and hold up Venus and her story here – daring to say that the colonially “we” of the *Paris is Burning* viewership “mourn[s] her loss” – with how I would teach (teach, and hold up and cite) Venus and her story in my 2022 teaching of bell hooks on *Paris is Burning*. In my affective reflective writing (Artifact 4 – “Scene/Moment: Angie talking about Venus’ murder (time stamp: 1:08:40)”), I say,

the sentiment [that Angie’s telling us, telling Livingston, telling Livingston’s camera of Venus’ murder] ends on is “fact of life” for trans people in New York City, that being murdered and stuffed under a bed in a sleazy motel for four days before being found is “part of life” [...] Livingston is allowing this to be – and dangerously to become (as it has in the thirty years since this documentary) – the dominant narrative for New York City non-white transpeople...there isn’t time, as I think hooks says, to mourn Venus here without very literally pausing (the documentary) to mourn her and to remember her...and the voiceover of Angie over the B-roll footage of Venus and of Venus and Angie together also minimizes the violence and the murder here (just as the same editing strategy for Venus talking about her assault and escape earlier did,

too); and so it almost (or literally does) hide this violence from viewers...literally, we can't even look at it because Livingston doesn't let us/doesn't allow us to - !

We can't talk about *Paris is Burning* and about non-white drag queens and non-white transpeople – and we certainly cannot talk about Miss Venus Xtravaganza – without talking about and really sitting with, truly engaging with, the disproportionate rates of violence and especially rates of murder they face just being who and how they are in society. I didn't do this in 2015. I didn't make space for, and I didn't allow space and time for, mourning Venus – mourning Venus as herself, and mourning Venus as all synecdoche, metonymy, and index for Black drag queens and transpeople, for Indigenous drag queens and transpeople, and for drag queens and people of colour. But I make space and time for Venus and all of them in this dissertation, I force for room for it here, to remember, to honour, and to mourn. And I will in my future teaching of bell hooks on *Paris is Burning*.

A small handful of other things to point out from my 2015 lecture notes on *Paris is Burning* are, on the celebratory side, that I do go into and have discussions with my students on the documentary genre as (auto)biography/life writing and ethnography. And there is that Abed from *Community* sighting, too, for a charming Tommy-to-Tommy instructional reflection across time. I am happy to see that. I smiled a knowing smile with how I have now imagined pulling this out more properly into an actual mini lesson with decided outcomes, framing, sequence of sub-events, etc. than just a bunch of text on a printed Word document for my use. On the less-than-celebratory side, I am, while not embarrassed, not impressed with myself from 2015 for how I handled teaching this particular cultural text and some of the scholarship that surrounds it. Immediately I noticed that I included, shared, and elevated no visual images of Blackness – not even of hooks herself, which is something I do now in my teaching and instructional work because representation matters. In 2015, I

showed Madonna on the cover of *Vogue*, and I showed a meme-like image I made of Eddie Izzard and the quotation I paraphrased on him on clothes and clothing.

More harmfully, I think, I also mishandled to the point of misteaching and misrepresenting the important, needed, and crucial conversations around intersectionality, lived experiences, and power and privilege – especially from raced lenses and Critical Race Theory. And I brought my own biases not only into the classroom but into my framing of my teaching – i.e., *reading hooks to filth* – and into my assessments (which I will touch on momentarily). I have been thinking for a while now how much I do not want to teach Butler anymore nor lean on her and her scholarship for my work. As I argue, outline, and showcase in my own chapter in *RuPedagogies of Realness*, “‘And where is the body?’: Naked Drag and the Social Construction of Anatomy as Sexed and Gendered,” I use RuPaul (as argumentatively bolstered by Jeanne Fahnestock, Wendy McKenna and Suzanne Kessler, and Jack Halberstam) to understand and embody the gender performance and gender performativity “famous formulations” (Halberstam 59) and not Butler – and in my classroom teaching, I also use J.L. Austen on constative and performative utterances to further do this right and in a good way. Seeing how I pitted Butler against hooks (which Butler herself opened the door for and allowed by her own critiques of hooks), I eliminated race as equity-denied and as part of intersectionality by tacitly positioning whiteness and non-whiteness (specifically Blackness here, though as I now would teach hooks on *Paris is Burning*, Latinxness, too) as equal in their intersections of lived experience. I am so quick today in 2022 to clock laziness with the assumed synonymy of *equality* and *equity* that I had forgotten myself when on my own journey that I had not yet arrived (and still, of course, with more arriving to do) at stronger, more grounded, more justice-based perspectives.

I noted above that I had a scheduled Reading Quiz for the second of the two days on *Paris is Burning* in 2015 – according to the syllabus, not according to my lecture notes! – this quiz looked like this:

Reading Quiz #2: Jennie Livingston’s *Paris is Burning*; bell hooks’ “Is Paris Burning?”; and Judith Butler’s “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion”

Weight: 5% - open book

In their Introduction to *Posthuman Bodies* (1995), that we read in Week 2 of classes, Judith (now J. Jack Halberstam) and Ira Livingston write about *Paris is Burning* that “Madonna performs the real ‘whiteness’ that voguing exposes as drag in order to stabilize the categories and make her whiteness and realness work for her in a way that Venus never can. While Venus and the other queens imitate a whiteness they find in fashion magazines, Madonna imitates the imitation in order to reclaim and re-secure voguing for superstars. Madonna’s performance and her blond translation of voguing make her a real millionaire; Venus dies before the film project is completed, a murder victim” (7).

Considering the issues, ideas, concepts, and arguments raised in all **three** of Jennie Livingston’s documentary *Paris is Burning* (1990), bell hooks’ essay “Is Paris Burning?” and Judith Butler’s chapter “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion,” discuss how class, race, and ethnicity interconnect with trans- realness.

Perhaps not a bad, unethical, nor lazy Reading Quiz prompt – and the non-Pop-Quiz nature of it in tandem with the open-book-ness make me happy to see some seeds of accessibility and Universal Design for Learning in there...*seeds*, not fully bloomed, gorgeous plants yet: there is a lot I could and should discuss and unpack here in terms of assessment and course design but will in later projects beyond this dissertation. But how I *taught* “all **three** of Jennie Livingston’s documentary *Paris is Burning* (1990), bell hooks’ essay “Is Paris Burning?” and Judith Butler’s chapter “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion” has, I see now, foreclosed upon my students being able to access this prompt in a not-bad, not-unethical, and not-lazy way for their demonstrations of their knowledges, thoughts, and handlings of these three – as one student powerfully wrote in their Reading Quiz #2 (paraphrased by me here):

It is interesting that people of colour are outnumbered two-to-one in the three sources for this Reading Quiz and that Livingston's and Butler's whiteness affords them the ability and access to view and engage with this community more fully than bell hooks who, as Black woman, has experienced and endured more closely some of what the people of colour in the film have. It is a luxury to sit back and look at a completed painting when you yourself haven't held a brush to canvas for any of the strokes.

I have paraphrased my student from their handwritten Reading Quiz response here rather than directly quoted, since, while I photocopied all of my students' work for records and the one-day-potential of revisiting them myself on my instructional journey, I had not and have not asked for nor gained any of my students' permission to quote from their Reading Quiz assessments in the course. Not having permission to include the direct words my student used here in their brave writing on a piece of paper they knew was going to be collected by, read by, and marked by their raced-white instructor before being returned to them physically with my purple pen marks and circled grade out of 5 in the top, right corner, I do not feel it is appropriate or possible to unpack rhetorically and instructionally here – as Waite so powerfully and engagedly does in *Teaching Queer* with their students' writing, Waite having gained their students' permission to reproduce and reflect upon so – and so I will not.

What I will say is that my student is absolutely right: my prompt here does unfairly and unethically disadvantage the non-white voice I engaged with and asked my students to engage with by sheer percentage, and in doing, I would add, it centres, privileges, and upholds whiteness. I noted in my Introduction to this dissertation chapter that I would have bet money on it that, not having revisited my old binders and files just yet as of writing this chapter's Introduction, that in 2015 when I was given the power and privilege to teach Transgender Visual Culture I had I mis-taught, misrepresented, and even (although I hope not too harmfully) mis-assessed my students. And here I have a verifiable relic of my teaching where I embodied and performed just that. Not only did my instructional decision to allow the white voices to outnumber the voice of colour disadvantage the

non-white voice themselves in the prompt here, it unfairly and unethically disadvantaged my non-white students' voices as it (and via it, I) centred, privileged, and upheld whiteness as the dominant narrative and norm against which to measure and contend all others.

And I did this again, too, in the Final Exam for the course: Question #2 on TVC's final exam includes a black and white image of Madonna voguing and for 3 marks asks students to "[d]iscuss the transgender visual cultural significance of this image."⁴³ This is the only question on the 2015 TVC final exam that is "on" *Paris is Burning*, and not only does it not mention hooks (as is the entire impetus of my re-envisioning lesson plan mini dissertation project here!) but it doesn't show Venus (as I would perhaps most immediately swap out Madonna for if keeping the text of this question verbatim). It shows wealthy white femininity, and it shows it poorly and lazily.

One final thought to close this Discussion and conclude Chapter 2 of my dissertation here: I know I handle hooks in this chapter and throughout my *The Real Paris on Fire Project* as arguing back – arguing back to/against Butler; arguing back to/against Livingston; even (or especially) arguing back to/against my 2015 self teaching her and her essay. And this may rightfully be read as signifying a Black feminist theorist as anti-white-queer critique. But what I am really up to here, what I am really thinking through with this Project, with these imagined-and-anticipated mini-lessons and their larger overall pedagogical project, and with this chapter of my dissertation, *is* hooks as a vital countertext to the whiteness of *Paris is Burning* by racializing the documentary and creating anti-racist engagement with this particular documentary that is a somewhat immortal cultural text. That's

⁴³ I am not reproducing Question #2 here because doing so would image-in more whiteness into my dissertation. I am quite aware that I already have done so by reproducing my Lecture Notes from 2015, and Madonna on the cover of *Vogue* is already too much.

where this whole project and chapter started: with me noticing how much hooks is trying to racialize, and actually (when read and engaged with responsibly and respectfully) succeeding in racializing, this cultural moment that Jennie Livingston as a director completely whitewashes over and then that RuPaul and the *Drag Race* enterprise continually reference and each time so referencing further and further remove this cultural moment from the material realities of the Black and Latinx, gay and trans-, ballroom and voguing scene.

For The Real Paris on Fire project, I am doubling-down on how I am using hooks to racialize viewing and critically engaging with the documentary *Paris is Burning*, particularly in the classroom. And I'm specifically doing this because as a white instructor teaching Livingston's text, I am unambiguously adding more whiteness into my classroom. More whiteness from positions of power and authority – pedagogically, and culturally. And even more so as a white, queer and transfeminine, academic drag queen instructor. So for me, in my body, in my teaching body, and powerfully with and for my students – my students who, from their generations and demographics most likely are being introduced to *Paris is Burning* through *RuPaul's Drag Race* intertextuality, and thus are being introduced to the documentary uncritically and whitely – I think it's really important to make sure that we have an incredibly powerful Black voice racializing the text contemporaneously to its own moment in the early 1990s to connect to those moments where, today, gay Black men are actually doing what hooks said they don't. Not *won't*, nor that she *wishes they would one day*, but don't. *Do not do*. Which is honour Black women with their drag.⁴⁴ Again, hooks doesn't wish gay Black men in

⁴⁴ I mentioned and situated drag queens Kendall Gender, Symone, and Shea Couleé as honouring Black women with their drag in their respective times on *Drag Race* throughout this chapter and its mini-lesson artifacts, and chronologically since those powerful moments across *Drag Race*, the recent All-Winners season (*RuPaul's Drag Race: All Stars* season 7 – whose finale episode aired July 29th, 2022) has Season 12's winner Jaida Essence Hall walk her final *All Stars* All-Winners runway doing just the same. As Jaida walks, wearing a stunning diamond-studded and –fringed gown, diamond chandelier earrings, perfect pin-up makeup, and a tight,

drag did honour Black women or that one day they would honour Black women. She just says they do not.⁴⁵

And while the following isn't possible, I would love to know how hooks might react and respond to Jaida Essence Hall unambiguously declaring on the All-Winners' main stage of *RuPaul's Drag Race* that "Black Hollywood starlets...paved the way for [her] to be who [she is] today" ("Lip Sync LaLaPaRuza Smackdown"). Jaida Essence Hall, a 35-year-old Black queer cisman born Jared Johnson. *RuPaul's Drag Race*, for all its failings and for all RuPaul's uncritical, whitely citations of *Paris is Burning* without drawing on his own Black cisgay lived experiences in the New York City ballroom and voguing scene, does succeed (perhaps) in turning a 180-degree revolution from the legacy of Livingston's *Paris is Burning*. For contrary to what hooks was seeing through the white gaze of Livingston's camera in the early 1990s, Jaida Essence Hall, in July 2022, is embodying for the world that cisgay Black men in drag can and do have "idealized notion[s] of the female/feminine [that are *not*] really a sexist idealization of white womanhood" (hooks 147). Perhaps it can be(come) a thing of the past that "[t]hese televised images of [B]lack men in drag were never subversive [in that] they helped sustain sexism and racism" (hooks 146); today, what if televised images of Black cisgay men in drag *are* subversive, are radically feminist, and even more radically anti-racist?

short black 1950s-styled wig, she says, "I am so excited to walk the runway for the final time. This season has been all about the Legendary Legend status of all of us [previous *Drag Race* winners], and tonight, I am definitely paying tribute to all the Black Hollywood starlets that didn't get the shine that they deserved. They paved the way for me to be who I am today and stand on this stage right now" ("Lip Sync LaLaPaRuza Smackdown"). The legacy continues.

⁴⁵ And this is why I am keeping *Paris is Burning* as a cultural text to teach, but to teach as bell-hooks-on-*Paris-is-Burning* – and why I am teaching it as a text to counter and contest rather than not teaching it at all/avoid teaching it. Every time RuPaul launches each season's Reading Challenge with "In the great tradition of *Paris is Burning*...", he holds up Livingston's documentary for another and for future generations of viewers. This is what I mean when I say this documentary is a "somewhat immortal cultural text." And the fact that *Drag Race*'s viewership is now predominantly ciswhite women under 30...well, in my classrooms, I can and will foreclose on white feminist critiques of drag and trans cultures and bodies quick, fast, and in a hurry.

Halberstam, in his *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), opens by saying, “Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (2-3). Then fabulously, he continues, “Failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well; for queers failure can be a style...or a way of life” (3). Livingston, while queer, fails to capture a socially and racially just documentation of Black and Latinx queer and trans- life in New York City in the 1980s and '90s and perpetuates through her own white gaze and through the white gaze of her camera a racist narrative that has become canonized in culture. And as a young queer teacher in 2015, I failed to interrupt this racist narrative and perpetuated it myself for my students in our Transgender Visual Culture classroom.

In her essay, “Committing to Failure: Critical Pedagogy and Failure in Classroom Teaching,” Jeanette Lehn outlines that “the teaching of undergraduates occurs in a system that is organized, at least in part, by white people ill-equipped to address their own and their students’ racist speech” (149). And drawing on Eduardo Bonilla-Silva before her, she states that “social movements need ‘a large cohort of anti-racist whites to begin challenging whites [sic] color-blind nonsense from within,’ and that social movements need ‘whites willing to tell the world when whites do or say things that disadvantage minority group’” (149).⁴⁶ The former was me in 2015: a white person teaching undergraduates in system organized by (for the most part) more white people, ill-equipped to do the work of social and racial justice; the latter is whom I hope I am becoming today: part of the growing cohort of anti-racist whites challenging other whites’ colour-blind nonsense, in the classroom and in senior leadership administration. “Committing to critical pedagogy and social justice is a continual

⁴⁶ Lehn quotes Bonilla-Silva from his *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (2006; pp. 229-230).

process of resisting both comfort and complicity,” Lehn says, “with the understanding that we may fail, and yet must re-commit to the process” (149). In 2022, with my *The Real Paris on Fire Project*, I hereby am re-committing to the process. “[I]ncremental progress,” Julie Myatt says, “[is] failing but refusing to consider the failure final” (187).

So, in the spirit of refusing to consider my failure final, I want to give the final *final* words of Chapter 2 of my dissertation to bell hooks and set up Chapter 3 in the same breath. In another essay from *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (the essay immediately following “Is Paris Burning?” actually, and aptly titled, “Madonna” and subtitled, “Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?”), hooks engages specifically with Madonna and Madonna’s celebrity-cultural relationship not just to “many [B]lack gay men, especially queens/divas,” as she calls them (159) but to “many [B]lack women” also (159). “Like many [B]lack women,” hooks writes, “who have stood outside the culture’s fascination with the blonde beauty and who have only been able to reach it through imitation and artifice, Madonna often recalls that she was a working-class white-girl who saw herself as ugly, as outside the mainstream beauty standard” (159). “And indeed,” hooks declares, “what some of us like about her is the way she deconstructs the myth of ‘natural’ white girl beauty by exposing the extent to which it can be and is usually artificially constructed and maintained” (159). However, and “[t]ragically,” as hooks says, and then argues, “all that is transgressive and potentially empowering to feminist women and men about Madonna’s work may be undermined by all that it contains that is reactionary and in no way unconventional or new” (164). “Perhaps,” hooks concludes,⁴⁷ “when Madonna explores those memories of her white working-class childhood in a troubled family in a way that enables her to understand intimately the politics of exploitation, domination, and submission, she will have a deeper

⁴⁷ (And if, dear reader, you swap out “Madonna” for “Tommy Mayberry” in hooks’ following quotation, so sets up Chapter 3 of my dissertation.)

connection with oppositional [B]lack culture. If and when this *radical critical self-interrogation* takes places, she will have the power to create new and different cultural productions, work that will be truly transgressive—*acts of resistance that transform* rather than simply seduce” (164 – emphases added).

Endnotes

I – Some Extended Discussion on How bell hooks May Be/Is Becoming Problematic

While bell hooks most definitely is not and did not live her life (scholarly, personal, and public) as a TERF (trans-exclusionary radical feminist), she was a racial feminist and a critical theorist critical of everything. Including transgender visibility, particularly in and through the body of Black trans actor and activist, Laverne Cox. From their Public Dialogue together at The New School in October 2014, some of what is coming to be seen and clocked as transphobic rhetoric on hooks' part is making its way to the fore, particularly after hooks' death and the resurgence in (re)viewing the recording and public talk.

One particularly salient moment that is affective for trans- viewers of this talk (myself among them) is when hooks outright and openly clocks Cox's body and visual presentation as a transwoman from literal head to literal toe while speaking about Cox as an object rather than speaking to Cox as a person – hooks says,

I was thinking about those shoes she's wearing [Laverne is wearing a pair of iconically red-bottomed Louboutins], and her hair [straightened blond and highlighted wig with sheared bangs]. Because I mean, one of the issues, I think, that many people have with trans women is the sense of a traditional femininity being called out and revealed in, a femininity that many people, many feminist women, feel like, 'Oh, we've been trying to get away from that.' Can you talk about that a little bit?

Cox, visibly taken-aback, straightens her posture in her chair to sit up taller and strengthens herself by starting her response to hooks with "I love that you brought that up," and then powerfully says,

I think the important thing to remember, for me, is that a lot of trans women do not embrace this kind of femininity [gestures over herself and her own body], a lot of trans women, you know, don't wear high heels and don't wear makeup and feel oppressed by that. My choice is to wear, you know, all this [waves hand over her face], but some of this is just about what I find aesthetically pleasing for myself. You know, I've gone through lots of phases where I've had braids and where I've like,

you know, sort of be androgynous, I went through this very androgynous phase. And this is where I feel empowered, ironically, and comfortable. I think that it's important to note that all trans women are not embracing this [gestures over herself and her own body again], that *this* trans woman does, and *this* trans woman feels empowered by this. (emphases original)

Cox continues to say, both to hooks and the folks watching and listening to their conversation, that this is “something that I wrestle with, you know, having an understanding of your work [hooks’] and an understanding of patriarchy, and it’s like, ‘Am I, you know, sort of feeding into the patriarchal gaze with my blond wigs?’” and hooks interjects “Yes!” right after Cox says “patriarchal gaze” and before Cox can even finish “with my blond wigs,” and the audience breaks into laughter, and Cox looks taken-aback once more for a moment and then says, “I think that’s an issue.” “It’s the way I’ve found something that feels empowering,” she states, and goes on:

And I think the really honest answer is that I have not wanted to, I’ve sort of constructed myself in a way so that I don’t want to disappear. And I think so often there is an erasure – and I’d like to add to this a cisnormative, heteronormative, imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy – where there’s an erasure. Where there’s an erasure of certain bodies and certain identities. And I have not ever been interested in being invisible and being erased. And so a lot of how I’m, I guess, negotiating these systems of oppression in trying not to be erased is perhaps buying into or playing into some of some of these ideas, some of the patriarchal gaze, you know, the white supremacy.

Seeming almost to hear the life-threatening material aspects of Cox’s body and lived experiences that she is sharing, hooks says, “We can’t dismiss how certain representations allow us greater visibility within the existing social structure. And I hear Laverne honestly owning, ‘I want that greater visibility’.” Here, again, hooks speaks *about* Cox rather than *to* her, objectifying her in front of the audience, and hooks seems to be missing the honest and vulnerable part when Cox shared that she wants this “greater visibility” for her *own* self. To see, visibly see herself, and save herself, not let herself disappear. Not let herself become *invisible*.

Journalists and social media influencers, too, have been attentive to this Public Dialogue and some of the potentially-transphobic rhetoric of hooks on/against Cox. Cathy Reisenwitz, in her *Ravishly* article “Trans Women Don’t Need Radfems’ Gender Policing,” argues that “when hooks accuses Cox of ‘feeding into the patriarchal gaze,’ she’s transferring blame for what happens in other people’s heads onto Cox’s body” before specifically stating that “it’s not useful to transfer blame for patriarchy onto women’s bodies via their clothing or hair choices.” Samantha Riedel, in her *Them* article “Let’s Rewatch bell hooks and Laverne Cox Discuss Feminism,” writes just a few days after hooks’ passing that “the sparks really began to fly about a half hour in[to the Public Dialogue], when hooks brought up the question of feminine gender performance”: “If you’re cringing, we get it,” Riedel says, “In fact, some at the time framed hooks’ comments as ‘blasting’ Cox.”⁴⁸ And Samantha Mukhopadhyay of *Harper’s Bazaar*, in her article “The Life-Changing Curiosity of bell hooks” also published a few days after hooks’ passing, notes that hooks’ “views on femininity often reflected the regressive second-wave politics of a feminism that rejected femme or sexual presentation as inherently exploitative and oppressive” and brings (back) up hooks 1997 *PAPER* interview with Lil’ Kim where hooks took shots as sex workers by comparing Lil’ Kim’s visual presentations to “sleazy [B]lack porn magazines” and to “raggedy drag queens.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Riedel hyperlinks in her article to Nicholas Robinson’s October 2014 article in *RollingOut*, “Laverne Cox blasted by feminist icon, bell hooks,” that outlines the Public Dialogue as well as links to tweets and social media posts of other viewers of their talk and their reflections, responses, and reactions to bell hooks on/against Laverne Cox.

⁴⁹ This article is “Hardcore Honey: bell hooks Goes on the Down Low with Lil’ Kim” and was the May 1997 cover story for *PAPER* magazine written by hooks. *PAPER* is a particularly interesting and important (para)text in drag and trans cultures – in 1993, RuPaul was on the cover of *PAPER*, which is four years before hooks’ cover story on Lil’ Kim, sixteen years before the dawn of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, and just two years after the release of Livingston’s *Paris is Burning* and still in the heyday of the New York City ballroom and voguing scene of which RuPaul was a part. A cover story and photospread with *PAPER* had also been part of the winner’s prize package in earlier seasons of *Drag Race*, and many *Drag Race* alumni (winning and not) have been featured in *PAPER*’s pages and on its cover.

While I do not read (and/or perhaps do not want to believe) that this is *transphobic*, as a queer and trans person myself, hooks in this Public Dialogue – and elsewhere across her scholarship, as I footnote across Chapter 2 and some of Chapter 2’s Artifacts – does not appear particularly *transfriendly*. And as a teacher, especially as a white, transfeminine teacher, I need to be aware of how. Especially as I am centring hooks so in this re-visioned lesson plan for how I would teach bell hooks on *Paris is Burning* today. Because my students likely have not grown up with bell hooks, but they probably have with Laverne Cox. And there *is* something there with hooks – especially when, later in the Public Dialogue, Cox specifically brings up TERFs and asks hooks, as someone who has “written extensively about expanding our ideas of womanhood. What are some of your thoughts, as the feminist, in my opinion?” and hooks replies, “[T]ruthfully, I would probably get rid of all of these categories of trans and whatever, and we would just all be queer.” “I feel like I’m a trans ally myself,” hooks doubles-down, “but I don’t connect with any trans person that I meet.”

Chapter 3

Gender Pronouns, Teaching and Learning, and Cultures of Respect: A Counterstory Novella

Fabulis Personae⁵⁰

Drag Queen Tommy/The Teacher-Facilitator

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Description: This is the historical Tommy Mayberry (Educational Developer in the Office of Teaching and Learning at the University of Guelph, in Guelph, Ontario, Canada) performing her “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” Faculty Development Presentation and Discussion in the McLaughlin Library on Guelph main campus on June 28th, 2019 – the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. She does this talk in full drag (and it was the very first time she had done this talk in drag), and she is wearing a black wavy wig and a white, knee-length dress with a black belt with a gold buckle, black pleather tights, a teensy black bolero, and black pumps (the ones that her cousins Eddie and Linda gave her as a gift for MCing their wedding...and that she wore to dance with them at their wedding: this is also the Eddie and Linda to whom Lily will be born, four days after this talk and 3 months prematurely at 27 weeks, and they will ask Tommy to be one of Lily’s Godparents). Minimal jewelry today, like most days – as Coco Chanel says, *Take one thing off...* – so a gold bracelet, a white pearl and black tulle necklace, silver eaglefeather earrings, her one big signature silver hoop earring, and, of course, the labret stud that never leaves that space below their bottom lip

⁵⁰ A riff on the *Dramatis Personae* in stage drama, *fabulis personae* (from the Latin “fabula” meaning stories, fables, narrations, anecdotes and “personae” meaning persons) literally translates to “personal stories” but takes here, for me, the energy of counterstory over that of traditional dramatic works.

and above their chin.⁵¹ (At conferences, and on campus today in June 2019, this labret piercing gets remarked upon more than once as a centring point of trans/gender recognition.) Makeup today is day-drag for contouring (nose, cheeks, chin, and chest) and underdrawn lips for overdone eyes: big, beautiful smokey eyes with charcoal-smudge liner and a failed attempt at a Trans Pride eyeshadow (white, pink, blue) that is now a stunning bright-pink-to-sunset-purple blur. As Miz Cracker says, “I paint, but if it’s not going well, you just have to finish it. They’re not going to [your show to] see your makeup, they’re coming to see you” (qtd. in Martin 123).

Time-Travelling Tommy/The Learner-Observer

Pronouns: he/him/his

Description: This is the counterstory protagonist who is the fictionalized version of Dissertating Tommy (see below) and wearing his Executive Realness drag (see more on this in Chapter 2, “The Real Paris on Fire Project: Or, (Re)Visiting and (Re)Embodying My Teaching”) full with spiky, side-brushed rooster-comb wave of increasingly salt-and-pepper hair, graphic tee inside classic “old man sweater” with blue jeans, brown belt, and black Levis shoes. Minimal jewelry today like every day: just his Tommy-Peisha necklace and charm that was a Christmas gift from his Tommy their first Christmas in Edmonton together, those cheap not-diamond diamond stud earrings, and that labret piercing that ever-centres. Contact lenses in, not glasses on; and minimal makeup to go: oil-control primer, concealer, undereye highlighter, and tinted BB cream.

Dissertating Tommy/The Researcher-Reflector and Counterstoryteller

⁵¹ My switch to using the *they*-series of pronouns here in the latter part of the list is referring to me, Tommy, as a whole person, in and out of drag and across all of my polyptotonic visual representations. See “Dissertating Tommy” in the *Fabulis Personae* below for more on me.

Pronouns: I/me/my

Description: This is me as the Researcher and the Reflector who is the Counterstoryteller. The (auto)biographical me sitting at my computer typing the other two Tommies of this counterstory into fabulous existence...as well as typing the rest of my dissertation into fabulous existence. I don't show up too much in the prose of this counterstory, save for the explanatory footnotes or readerly signposting moments for this counterstory novella as part of the larger project that is my PhD dissertation; but I am here, too! And just for alignment with the above two Tommies' *Fabulis Personae* entries, here's how I usually visually present when I am dissertating: yesterday's spiked hair surviving best it can and with my comfiest of clothes (plaid pyjama pants and an oversized hoodie), socked feet, that labret piercing, my glasses on (not contact lenses), and no makeup (I have moisturized my face and applied my eye cream, though, fingers crossed).

I look at RuPaul, and she smiles softly at me, and out of the corner of my eyes on either side, I can see Michelle Visage and Brooke Lynn Hytes smiling warmly, too, at me from the Judges' Panel on the main stage of *RuPaul's Drag Race: Canada*. But now there are two more iconic queens joining them on my panel to make the five: I see Pythia and I see Alyssa smiling warmly at me, too. I look at seven-year-old me in framed photo Ru is holding, just beaming, and I close my eyes. *What would I have to say to Little Tommy?* I try to think back to being seven, and I can't. I can't go there. I try to think back to high school, and I can't. I won't go there. My mind goes to *kokum* and for a moment I am about to start my sharing of wisdom with telling my younger self to find *kokum*, and then almost hearing *kokum's* voice telling where and when to time travel to instead, I think back to that day, one of the days I remember as being one of the days that truly started my work and journey and trajectory. June 28th, 2019. One day before my 31st birthday, and fifty years to the day since the Stonewall Riots.

She takes a deep breath.

And she looks out into the crowded room. Some folks sitting on the floor at the edges of it; some folks standing, leaning, against the back and side walls; every chair filled. He finds himself sitting not quite front-and-centre but centrally for sure and about two rows from the front of chairs and tables assembled "classroom style" (as the room set up chart of the Whitelaw Room in the McLaughlin Library allows for). He looks around at the folks surrounding him, too, and smiles to himself at the oddness, but not uncomfortableness, of finding himself back here, back then. Back now.

She smiles, and begins.

“I’m Tommy Mayberry,” she says. Loudly, but not too loudly – he smirks to himself as he remembers the joke they usually make that they do not have an indoor voice, so their voice starts at this volume and only goes up from here – but hers is a strong voice today. Confident. She’s just said three words so far, two of which are their name, but there is so much power there. And fierceness. “And my pronouns are *he*, *she*, and *they*, so you can use any of those three series of pronouns to refer to me with respect.”

She pauses here for just a skosh of moment, glancing around the room, ping-ponging on nearly everyone’s eyes to gauge these immediate-immediate reactions. Her eyes ping-pong over to his eyes, too. He’s not taken aback, but he can tell she doesn’t blink, flinch, or register that he’s her and she him at all. He’s only ever seen himself teach in video recordings before, so this is an incredible experience to be catching a live Tommy Mayberry show. Strong, yes. Confident, yes. Powerful and fierce, oh hell yes.

“Now,” she continues, “if that is sounding a little weird or wonky,” and she gently tucks an about-to-be stray strand of wighair behind her left ear that he can almost, *almost*, feel, too, “or if you’ve heard someone say something like this before in introducing themselves or starting a talk but didn’t quite know what was going on, well don’t worry: that’s kind of exactly what we’re here today to talk about. Gender pronouns, teaching and learning, and cultures of respect.”

She glances down at her slide, still the very first slide, the title card, and glances back up and says, “I’m an Educational Developer in the Office of Teaching and Learning here at the University of Guelph, and my Twitter handle, at-tommy-mayberry, is on the slide here, so please do feel free to live-tweet, follow me or don’t follow me, and/or follow up with me after.” He smiles warmly at her, borderline beaming: he still has the same Twitter handle, but it’s been a minute since he’s been *an*

Educational Developer in the Office of Teaching and Learning here at the University of Guelph. That was a great gig, and an incredibly formative step on his career journey, and so part of what he's feeling at watching her now is thinking that in just over one year, she'll be opening her Keynote talk at the University of Alberta Centre for Teaching and Learning's Online Teaching Institute in 2020 saying, "I am the Manager of Outreach and Recruitment in the Registrar's Office at St. Jerome's University at the University of Waterloo," and then just one week shy of one year from that, they will be taking over as Executive Director of that CTL at the University of Alberta.

She clicks her slide advancer and pulls him back to attention, and four lines of text pop up at the bottom of her title card slide, almost (or exactly) like a footnote. And she reads aloud verbatim the text from there that he remembers is copied-and-pasted and only slightly modified, only slightly made personal and critically reflected on, from the University of Guelph's territorial acknowledgement:

"I acknowledge, with respect, that I am a white settler-scholar working at the University of Guelph, which is situated on the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit and on the ancestral lands of the Attawandaron people. Their historical relationships with the land continue to this day." ("Gender Pronouns and Teaching")

He knows she is going to say this momentarily (spoiler alert!), but yes to *learning, unlearning, and relearning*, and yes to *keep going and keep growing*. Two years isn't all that long of a time⁵², and yet, he thinks, how much they have grown as they've continued on their decolonizing and Indigenizing journey since this moment. And how much further they have to (keep) go(ing).

After reading aloud the above statement, she clicks her slide advancer again and brings up Slide #2, titled, "Pride, and the Stonewall Riots," which includes the sentence, "Today is the 50th

⁵² I would be remiss here if I didn't include this footnote identifying that I am continuing work on this counterstory, writing and revising it, in early March 2022 when flurries of memes and Memories on social media are abounding with various sentiments of *Two years ago this week was our last normal week and nobody knew it!*

anniversary of the Stonewall Riots” as well as two pictures: one of Marsha P. Johnson along with the dates of her birth and (very likely) murder (1945-1992), and one of Sylvia Rivera along with the dates of her birth and death to due cancer (1951-2002) (“Gender Pronouns and Teaching”). And she starts to tell the story of the Stonewall Inn, the Stonewall riots, that first brick and that first bottle thrown at the cops before that first Pride March, all that that all happened fifty-years ago today.

And as she’s telling this story, he takes a moment to pause and reflect because, as he noticed with her territorial acknowledgement, they open their public talks *very* differently now with their acknowledgements and their stories.

He closes his eyes and conjures up two pictures of two rivers that, while clearly different waters, have the same smooth, curving, meandering bend to them that is relaxing to take in, even without hearing them roar, rumble, or babble.

“To start us off,” he thinks about what they say to start off their Gender Pronouns public scholarship talks while living in the city now colonially known as Edmonton and working at the University of Alberta that sits there, “I want to share with you a little bit of a land story that has been continuing to, you know, grow and evolve with me as I learn about my place as a white settler-scholar in this nation we now call Canada. And it’s kind of a story and thinking-about that’s a story of river to river for me.

“I grew up in Elmira, Ontario and West Montrose, Ontario. The picture on the bottom right here” – and here they’d use their laser pointer on their slide advancer to circle vigorously with a red light that would pinken with speed as they do around the bottom right photo of a river – “is the Grand River taken from a bridge on Highway 86 outside of West Montrose. Maybe you can see that little red or burgundy rectangle kind of middle horizon line there” – again, their laser pointer light would circle

in here with a much tighter and much more focused pink circling – “and that’s the covered bridge in West Montrose which is, I think, the last covered bridge in Ontario that is still standing over the years. It has incredibly undergone a lot of different weight restrictions for what kind of vehicles are allowed to drive across it now, but it stays there as kind of a heritage landmark. And it has made a recent appearance in a Hollywood blockbuster movie, too, whose title also just happens to be a pronoun. Do you know it? Do you know *It*? That’s it, that’s the joke: the movie *It* based on Stephen King’s novel of the same name had some iconic scenes filmed at and through the West Montrose Covered Bridge.

“On the right bank of the Grand River here,” they’d continue, “is the West Montrose Family Campground, and that’s where I grew up. My parents still have a trailer there, not the same physical trailer I grew up in, I think it’s their third trailer now, but the exact same lot that I remember so well. And so, when I was a little kid, playing with my siblings and my friends before the pools would open up at the trailer, we’d put on our river shoes, as we called them, and our bathing suits, and we would play in the waters of the Grand River.”

He still has his eyes closed in the Whitelaw Room while she is still talking at the front of the room, and while he can hear their voice, he isn’t paying attention to the words coming out of her mouth because, at this moment, he’s thinking, remembering, of how recent in historical time that first time was that they shared out loud in their public scholarship work that they grew up in Elmira *and in West Montrose*. In a “family campground.” In a trailer. *In a trailer park*. It wasn’t this day at the close of June, the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots and the day before his thirty-first birthday. And he doesn’t think that they had really ever before been ashamed of growing up for almost their entire life between a small semi-house in Elmira (six to seven months of the year) and an actual, honest-to-goodness tin-metal trailer in a trailer park (the other five to six months of the year), but as a first-

generation University student for their undergraduate studies once upon a time, disclosing that first gen fact alone was enough of a gesture to belonging in academia as they had usually shared. But their land story, he thinks, and their own continuing journey and reflection as a white kid growing up on these lands, a white kid of European-Irish ancestry (seventh generation) on Dad's side⁵³ and European-Polish ancestry (fourth generation) on Mom's side⁵⁴, is intimately tied to the waters of the Grand River. Disclosure? Perhaps. Leaning into the discomfort, shame, and all those threatening-to-circle dark affects toward radical honesty and self-reflective praxis? ...also perhaps.

He continues eyes-closed-thinking about how, in their Gender Pronouns talks that exploded in popular, academic, corporate, and public demand due to the unprecedented digital accessibility and availability brought to the fore due to the Coronavirus pandemic, they would continue in their opening acknowledgements and stories by saying, "We would play in the banks and in the brush, and we would have imaginary stories and quests, and I grew up with this intense connection to this body

⁵³ According to Mayberry Family research (autobiographical and autoarchival), I am, indeed, seventh-generation Irish-Canadian patrilineally. Our Mayberry Family Patriarch is Oliver Mayberry who, with his only son Thomas Mayberry, immigrated to Canada in 1833 and settled near Ottawa on land *gifted* to them from the British Empire for services rendered during the war. Oliver and Thomas are both, thus, first-generation Irish-Canadian Mayberries, and I can trace our line down to me and my siblings and all my Mayberry first-cousins as seventh-generation, with my niece Zoey (my sister Erin's daughter) as part of the eighth generation of Oliver Mayberry settler-descendants in this nation now called Canada. (Three important things I didn't know about my family and myself before reading this family research: one, I didn't know we came here as settlers pre-Confederation; two, I didn't know my own name had a pre-settler familial legacy back to Ireland; and three, I didn't know – though I was increasingly becoming suspicious so – that the land we settled on was an imperial "gift.")

⁵⁴ My mom's maiden name is Nowak, and according to anecdotal Nowak Family research and memory, I am fourth-generation Polish-Canadian matrilineally. My mom's siblings (my maternal aunts and uncles) confirm that Walter Nowak (my grandpa's dad; so, my great-grandfather) immigrated to Canada and that Grandpa (Edward Nowak) was born in Canada. Inferentially, this makes my grandpa second-generation Polish-Canadian, and my mom and her siblings third-generation Polish-Canadians. My siblings and all my Nowak Family first-cousins are also fourth-generation, with my niece Zoey (my sister Erin's daughter) part of the fifth generation of Walter Nowak (settler-) descendants in this nation now called Canada.

of water, the Grand River, very much feeling that it was mine, that these were *my* stories and *my* experiences across the land.

“And then when I started working at the University of Waterloo, and we were responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada around acknowledging and reflecting on where our post-secondary institutions sit historically^[55], I was really shocked to see that this land was *not* mine and was never supposed to have been mine, because the land acknowledgement^[56] for the

⁵⁵ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission doesn't explicitly call on post-secondary institutions to do land/territorial acknowledgements, but their “Principles of Reconciliation” include that (#3) “Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms” (*Truth & Reconciliation* 8) as well as that (#10) “Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society” (10).

⁵⁶ Land acknowledgements, territorial acknowledgements, and land stories as intentional practice are a settler responsibility. And “settler responsibilities,” as Jennifer Ward, Cindy Gaudet, and Tricia McGuire-Adams state in their “The Privilege of Not Walking Away” article, “should be informed by Indigenous teaching and values” (14). Much of my work, thinking, and reflecting on my own settler responsibility with land stories and territorial acknowledgements as captured in my public-scholarship-turned-counterstory-dissertation-chapter here comes from my relational engagements and conversations with Indigenous colleagues, scholars, educational developers, friends, and loved ones across this nation now called Canada. I would be remiss, however, especially in a colonial genre like a dissertation that I am actively writing to decolonize via demonstration and argument, to not include peer-reviewed Indigenous teachings and values from the incredible amount of powerful published scholarship in this area...especially because, as Lila Asher, Joe Curnow, and Amil Davies note in their “The Limits of Settlers’ Territorial Acknowledgements” article, “territorial acknowledgements are often practiced merely because of a vague interest in supporting Indigenous groups, or even pressure to be politically correct” (318). And neither *a vague interest* nor *even pressure to be politically correct* is what I am about at all.

Armand Garnet Ruffo clocks that the practice of territorial acknowledgements is “a phenomenon fundamentally rooted in settler Canadians grappling with their colonial past” (Robinson et al. 24), and Asher, Curnow, and Davies state that “[t]hese public statements are often discussed as a way of demonstrating support for reconciliation or as expressions of anticolonial solidarity, yet they have also been critiqued by Indigenous people for the ways they have been institutionalized” (317). Folks like Chelsea Vowel, Daniel Heath Justice, Khelsilem, and Jennifer Winters Ward have argued that territorial acknowledgements and declarations of land histories can and do disrupt settlers’ senses of entitlement to and ownership of land, space, and place but that they also/often are performative and not as active toward decolonizing the academy as we might think. And they can even, as Asher, Curnow, and Davies state, “reproduce[] a troubling colonial dynamic” (317). Building on Vowel’s work that shows how settlers’ and institutions’ territorial acknowledgements are shadows of Indigenous protocols, Asher, Curnow, and Davies state that “[b]y taking what has been, in some nations, a diplomatic protocol, gutting it of its ontological and relational context, and repurposing it to legitimate settlers’ continued presence on stolen land, we effectively colonize territorial acknowledgements” (318). “[T]erritorial

University of Waterloo goes like this” – and here, he almost smirks thinking about how, performatively (whether in drag or not!), they’d pick up their teaching notes and blatantly read aloud verbatim, in a rote fashion, and in that dispassionate, breathless fashion...

“The University of Waterloo acknowledges that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.” (“Territorial Acknowledgement”)

...in order to expand upon it more organically, and more honestly, without a prewritten script, by saying, “So, I grew up not just six miles, not just six feet, not just six inches, but actually *in* the waters of the Grand River.”^[57]

acknowledgements are, at best,” they state, “a tiny part of decolonial solidarity pedagogy, and must be part of a broader decolonial praxis” (317).

For more on critiques of and empowered and empowering paths forward with territorial acknowledgements, see: Chelsea Vowel’s “Indigenization in the Time of Pipelines” talk (part of the 2016-2017 Weweni Indigenous Scholars Speaker Series presented by the University of Winnipeg’s Indigenous Affairs Office) and her blog post, “Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements”; the University of Alberta Centre for Teaching and Learning’s “Territorial Acknowledgements: Going Beyond the Script” video resource, with Jennifer Winters Ward; the University of British Columbia Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology’s “Territory Acknowledgement Panel Talk” with Daniel Heath Justice; and Khelsilem’s “Tips for Acknowledging Territory 1.0” *Liberated Yet?* blog post. (Hyperlinks to each source can be found in their respective entry in my dissertation’s Bibliography.)

⁵⁷ In my public scholarship work while at St. Jerome’s University at the University of Waterloo, I did, indeed, speed through and, as I narratively describe here, “blatantly read aloud verbatim, in a rote fashion, and in that dispassionate, breathless fashion...” to make an embodied rhetorical statement on the rotteness of performative territorial acknowledgements. Asher, Curnow, and Davies note that “[w]hile territorial acknowledgments d[o/may] combat everyday erasure, they also bec[o]me normalized and rote” (322) and that this thus works “as a statement of performativity – we are marked as being good activists and being decolonial, all for just listening to a 13-second statement” (329). “To read and repeat prescriptive acknowledgement without variance runs counter to the foundational values of acknowledgement,” Dylan Robinson says (Robinson et al. 21), and so “[t]o be meaningful and respectful,” Kanonhsyonne Janice C. Hill says, “a territorial acknowledgment needs to be intentional, and not something done by rote, to check a box” (Robinson et al. 24). In my continued and ongoing work and growth with my settler responsibility in territorial acknowledgements, I have moved to and do more land stories intentionally of my place on and across these historic and contemporary lands, and that is why after the rote/check-box-y Waterloo territorial acknowledgement in my counterstory here, I narratively continue after the split-ellipses “...in order to expand upon it more organically, and more honestly, without a pre-written script.”

“And there was this incredibly affective moment for me when I, when I was reconciling these two lived histories of this land: the one that I thought was mine and how I came to be on that land; and then the story of how I never was supposed to have been on this land, for the Treaties that were made in the 1700s and who this land was promised to and never delivered to.[⁵⁸]

⁵⁸ The language that Frederick Haldimand (“Captain General and Governor in Chief of the province of Quebec and Territories depending thereon” and “General and Commander in Chief of His Majesty’s Forces in said province and the Frontiers thereof”) pens in the Haldimand Treaty of 1784, dated October 25th, 1784, includes (my emphases added throughout):

I have at the earnest desire of many of these His Majesty’s [George III, King of Great Britain and of Ireland from 1760 until both kingdoms merged in 1801, and then he was King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until 1820] faithful Allies purchased a tract of land from the Indians situated between the Lakes Ontario, Erie and Huron, and I do hereby in His Majesty’s name *authorize and permit the said Mohawk Nation and such others of the Six Nation Indians as wish to settle in that quarter to take possession of and settle upon the Banks of the River commonly called Ouse or Grand River, running into Lake Erie, allotting to them for that purpose six miles deep from each side of the river beginning at Lake Erie and extending in that proportion to the head of the said river, which them and their posterity are to enjoy for ever.*” (Six Nations Council)

When I worked at St. Jerome’s University in the Registrar’s Office, the land acknowledgement in my e-mail signature was this: “I acknowledge, with respect, that I am a white settler-scholar living, learning, and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. St. Jerome’s University and the University of Waterloo are situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land that Frederick Haldimand in 1784 promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.” Naming Frederick Haldimand and activating the passive voice and changing the verb from “granted” to “promised” was an act of resistance that, in retrospect, I thought at the time was more powerful than it was, could have been, or might have been. I still do like naming Haldimand as an historical person, but the verb could more strongly be taken from/as his own words – “authorize and permit” – as well as explicitly clock the for[ever]-ness of the Treaty.

Activating the passive voice is also something Indigenous scholars and settler-ally/-accomplice scholars take up in their critique of territorial acknowledgements. Armand Garnet Ruffo specifically notes that the “passive construction strives to be general enough to not offend anyone. Who is speaking and for what purpose exactly is never specified. Nobody really has to take responsibility” (Robinson et al. 26). And with nobody taking responsibility, it can feel very “good activist[y] and being decolonial, all for just listening to a 13-second statement,” as Asher, Curnow, and Davies said (329). But what happens when we activate this passive construction and force listeners to hear the active ownership of responsibility? Here in this footnote, I start to imagine getting at that with the idea of saying, *Frederick Haldimand authorized and permitted...*, and elsewhere, I’ve done similar verb-activating to force responsibility retrospectively for attendees listening and engaging in my talks. For example, in the Introduction to my dissertation, I mentioned that my first-ever “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” talk was on December 6th, 2018, the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Montréal Massacre, and I specifically wrote there (and orally spoke so in 2018) that “a male shooter executed fourteen female Engineering students at l’École Polytechnique de Montréal.” I *didn’t* say that they “were killed,” as the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services’ “Ending Violence” webpage had in its prose in 2018 when I consulted it for my talk.

“And so I’m really understanding my relationship to land sort of from river to river as I think about where I was born, where I grew up, where I came from, where I’m living, working, learning, and playing now. And so I do think of my story across this land, and thinking of the five days that my family drove across the nation now call Canada, and thinking about how we came to be here and who was here before. And who was here before but has never *not* been here, too, is also really important to consider. And so I think about these two rivers as I understand my lived journey across these lands as a [raced-]white settler-scholar.

“And so” – another eyes-closed smirk from him as he sits there reflecting and remembering: going offscript can be, apparently, just as breathtaking as sticking to the script...but with a lot more *and-sos* – “And so I wanted to open with this kind of story to get us thinking about that duality I shared around growing up thinking the Grand River was mine but learning it wasn’t, was never supposed to be, and the struggling within myself to reconcile those two competing lived histories of the land, and so” – oh no, there it is again! – “I want to get us thinking about three principles for today with our learning session. We are learning, yes; it is a learning session: but we’re also *unlearning* things that we had been taught or things that we had embraced and embodied and thought of differently. And that leads us to needing to *relearn*.

“So, three kinds of learning,” he thinks about how they would say just as she says the same at the front of the Whitelaw Room, his stream of conscious thought merging uncannily in time with her

flow of speech, “or a kind of trifecta of ‘learning, unlearning, and relearning’ [(Condon 163)^{60,61}], I want us to keep in mind today as we go throughout this talk together.”

It strikes him just now as he pops back out of (t)his reverie and sees the slides with the two photos of Marsha and Sylvia and the (re)minder that “[t]oday is the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots” that she was applying this trifecta of learning, unlearning, and relearning to the story of

⁶⁰ I am quoting and citing Frankie Condon from her epistolary chapter (co-written with Vershawn Ashanti Young) that closes, authentically and powerfully, her book *I Hope I Join the Band: Narrative, Affiliation, and Antiracist Rhetoric* (2012) not because I pulled this phrase – “learning, unlearning, and relearning” – from her or from *Join the Band* in my Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect public scholarship as its guiding principles but because I perhaps *should have*. I do not know precisely where or when in my scholarly career I came across this phrase or first put together as such these three words in this order – it might have been within my anti-oppressive work with the former Educational Developers Caucus (EDC) and my equity-denied peers across the field of educational development in this nation we now call Canada, standing up to the oppressive policies, structures, and plans of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) and never backing down from the STLHE Board; but it also could have been from working and studying in the University of Waterloo English Language and Literature department, breathing the same air of anti-racism and anti-oppressive pedagogies as Frankie Condon, Jay Dolmage, and Vershawn Ashanti Young, attending (to) their talks (formal and informal); and it could have been my linguistically-oriented, rhetorical, writerly mind that, seeing somewhere for the first time the idea of *unlearning* logically extended the power of prefixing to arrive at *relearning* and then put them all together... I do the same thing with ideas of ruptures and prefixing -ruption to get *disruption*, *interruption*, *corruption*, *eruption*, etc. for rhetoric on breaking the system that isn’t broken but is doing exactly what it was built to do which is oppress (to paraphrase Black filmmaker Ava DuVernay) and for which I have not found a similar “Frankie citing,” though I get close with Stacey Waite; of course, my lived experiences across and within all of these (and more) combined could have brought me these three words, these three principles, for and toward social and racial justice work. Yet, I had never seen them in print as such until reading *Join the Band*. I feel a sense of honour and camaraderie here to quote and cite *Join the Band*, and going forward, this phrase now *always* reminds me of Frankie and of anti-racist, anti-oppressive work that we all must, individually and collectively, be doing and be doing in a good way by always learning, always unlearning, and always relearning.

⁶¹ Also...and I know this is not and no longer is or can be a “Blake Dissertation,” but... Janet Warner, in her book *Blake and the Language of Art* (1984), notes that “[c]opying was...for [Blake] and others the grammar of the language of art” in training to become artists and that this phenomenon importantly complicates questions around “borrowing” and/or plagiarism (9). Recalling Joseph Burke’s conclusion before her, she specifically notes that “Blake’s [later] borrowings could seldom have been deliberate but were rather the unconscious product of his eidetic imagination” (9). In my Blake scholarship, I have used Warner and Burke to argue for the intervisual connections across uncited/unlocked paratexts in Blake’s oeuvre that show up throughout his career when we do not have the historical evidence in Blake’s notebooks or marginalia to conclude without a doubt that Blake “saw” or “studied” a certain artist, text, work, etc. But that doesn’t preclude Blake, I argue, from having done so/been guided by it throughout his life where, as Warner notes, it shows up in his later career and work. ...and yes, I did just try to footnote within a footnote, and it didn’t quite work, so please accept (or not) this joint footnote. (Which, together with its sibling above, are also both categorically too long to seriously fit in academic writing. I know this, too.)

Stonewall and *not* to their (mis)connection to the Grand River. It also strikes him just now that she did a “traditional” (re: quasi-rote) territorial acknowledgement, not a land story, and a somewhat mindful story critical of whiteness, not a white body acknowledgement. He doesn’t remember consciously making a chiasmus of these two in his public scholarship work,⁶² but noticing that she has *only* Marsha and Sylvia photographically on this slide (she hasn’t, quite literally, dis-covered Stormé in her work and research yet!), he slips back for the moment into his recollective reflection comparing the slide before him in the Whitelaw Room then to his most recent slide of the same energy now.

He closes his eyes again for the moment and conjures up the image of them sitting behind their desk in their home office logged into a Zoom call and sharing their screen to pages upon pages of 5x5 individual Zoom cells. A visual warmth of light and colour illuminates their face on

⁶² While it is true that I do not remember consciously moving the *acknowledgement* piece from *territorial* to *body* and the *story* piece from *whiteness* to *land*, I do consciously remember and know that I am always working to literally spend more time at the opening and outsets of my talks with these crucial pieces. Asher, Curnow, and Davies note that “[t]erritorial acknowledgements serve[] settler comfort because they [are] easily completed and contained in a way which mark[s] us as good and enable[s] us to move on with the meeting without disruption” (328) and that often “territorial acknowledgements [are] contained and [are] understood as extra; they [are] not considered part of the real work, rather, they [are] a statement to get through and move on from” (330). On their work specifically with their case studies in their article, they point out from their textual analyses of the video and transcribed data of their group’s events that “[t]here was often a note made by chairs at the beginning of the territorial acknowledgement that we had a packed agenda, the suggestion being that we could not waste time and needed to move through the territorial acknowledgment as quickly as possible” (330). “Moves to contain territorial acknowledgements and Indigenous content to a narrow portion of the agenda,” they point out, “kept those topics from having a larger impact on our work, instead allowing many of us to feel as though we had done enough for the day” (328). As may be evident by the page count of this counterstory that is Chapter 3 of my dissertation, I have spent 10 pages and considerable footnoting here toward having this “larger impact on [my] work,” and in real time, my oral openings take about 15 minutes before I get to the “real work” on gender pronouns, teaching and learning, and cultures of respect. (“*[R]eal work*” in scarequotes here because body acknowledgements and land stories are absolutely inextricable from the work of gender pronouns in teaching and learning and toward cultures of respect.)

webcamera as three square portraits rest on a faded background of what looks like a stylized, blocky rainbow.

He thinks about how they would say for this contemporary slide, “I also want to share with you, as you heard me say I am a [raced-]white settler-scholar, that I am a [raced-]white person. I walk around this world in a [raced-]white body. I am a drag queen, and I do identify as a queer and trans-, specifically transfeminine, person, but the colour of my skin is something that affords me incredible privilege and incredible protection to be walking around in a body with two intersections of equity-denied identity, but neither of which are due to my racialized identity as a white person.

“And so thinking specifically about my racial identity as a queer and trans- person, I can walk across a university campus relatively safely in full drag, you know, being, being my true transfeminine self because of powerful *non*-[raced-]white folks who started revolutions and started these, these journeys and these changes in culture way before I was even, even thought of.

“These three powerhouse folks,” they would say, and he thinks about how even on Zoom they would still gesture to the three portraits on the screen as though the audience could see their hands, “Marsha P. Johnson, Stormé DeLarvarie, and Sylvia Rivera, you might have heard their story, but these three are heroes and heroines of the Stonewall Rebellion, which is an event that took place in 1969 in a gay gentleman’s club in Greenwich Village in New York City. And it was perhaps, surprisingly, although maybe not so when you think of the time, almost everything that these folks were up to in that club was illegal. You know, it was illegal to be homeless; it was illegal to be wearing clothing that was gendered for the quote-unquote opposite sex; it was illegal to be engaging in any same-sex relations; it was illegal to be, you know, drinking and doing drugs and all of these things are all illegal; and so the Stonewall Inn was frequently raided by the police and folks were arrested and folks were beaten and broken and abused.

“In the early hours of June 28th, 1969 the cops busted up the Stonewall Inn and, according to legend that’s become myth in queer and trans- communities, we don’t know quite the order for this, but these three are popularly remembered as throwing the first brick at the police officers who were busting up the Stonewall Inn, which was Marsha who threw the first brick, and throwing the first bottle, which was Sylvia Rivera, and throwing the first punch, which was Stormé DeLarvarie. And so the first brick, the first punch, and the first bottle were thrown at the police on June 28th, 1969, and it ignited a riot in the Stonewall Inn that kind of kept going until the early hours, the next morning of June 29th, which happens to be my birthday, but not 1969, but June 29th, when led by these three who are: Marsha P. Johnson is a Black transwoman who’s a drag queen and a homeless person; Stormé DeLarvarie is a biracial transmasculine drag king performer; and Sylvia Rivera is a transgender Latinx drag queen and woman. And the early morning, led by these three, they had a march on the, the precinct in Greenwich Village in, in New York and now is often thought of as the first Pride March, demanding equal rights and equal treatment for all these intersections of being equity-denied. And that’s why in June we celebrate Pride Month, kind of honoring this legacy.”

His eyes still closed, he squeezes them slightly tighter and wills her voice at the front of the room to be saying here,

“[Today is June 28th, 2019. The fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots and Rebellion. Fifty years ago today, Marsha, Sylvia, and Stormé threw the first brick, the first bottle, and the first punch at raiding police officers. Fifty years ago today, a revolution occurred that tiptoes toward equality but not yet equity. Fifty years ago today, this very day, three of my transcestors, as Jack Halberstam would call them [(“Trans*”)], none of whom were raced-white, put into action the moves to allow me, who is a raced-white person, to walk across this campus and stand in front of you all today as my authentic self in my authentic body.]”

But he doesn't remember specifically what she said that June 28th in 2019. It wasn't recorded, no transcripts exist, but he knows they were very early on in their journey. Brave, and bold, yes; but much younger. This was before joining the EDC Executive and taking on the STLHE Board, too, he suddenly connects! And so, he thinks, she also wouldn't have quite said aloud the following, but they would now – instead of with a footnote territorial acknowledgement and with a quick herstory lesson – they would now close this multi-slided opening by saying,

“And thinking about my land story, thinking about those principles of learning and unlearning and relearning, we're also here today to talk about language and the power that language has and what happens with the power of language when our words take on different connotations and evolve, and so I also wanted to think about with this story I'm using to acknowledge my whiteness and the white privilege that comes in my body, even though I'm queer and trans-, is around thinking what happened from 1969, because in 1969, this was a pride march. We don't march anymore in Pride Month...we have parades. We parade in Pride Month. Drag queens and drag kings still lead the parades, but a pride *parade* and a pride *march* are incredibly different political activities.

“And so I want us to think as well about the power language has and what happens over time when language loses some of that power or when language can regain some of that power. And so thinking how, how language can evolve and also de-evolve as we're thinking about what we do with language; so not just learning and unlearning and relearning today, but also language and the power that language has, because today, by the end of the session...”

Once again, here, she says the same word sequence in the same cadence as he is thinking about how they say it in their work, his stream of conscious thought once again merging uncannily across time with her flow of speech at the front of the Whitelaw Room, and he opens his eyes. She

clicks her slide advancer to move forward from the slide with Marsha and Sylvia on it, and in his mind, he sees Stormé powerfully present with them, too.

“...because today, by the end of the session, I hope we all are able to define and discuss pronouns, including gender pronouns, as parts of speech in English language discourse, history, and culture with a knowledgeable, inclusive, and respectful vocabulary. I also hope we will be able to identify and implement strategies and resources for positive engagement with gender pronouns and teaching and learning. And we should be able to use pronoun awareness to signal cultures of respect and reflect on whiteness, marginalization, trauma, and continue to struggle.”

Oh my gosh. He literally looks at her as she says this, his mouth slightly agape. That last line...seems...suspicious? She definitely *did not* say that in June 2019! Her talk only had *two* learning outcomes back then. The first two. He tries to catch her eye to see if something has changed, but she bounces over him in her eye ping-ponging around the room.

“My first language is English,” she continues, with more content than she should have access to in 2019, he realizes: after her learning outcomes, she should have gone right to her “What is a Pronoun?” slide, but she keeps talking with the Learning Outcomes slide up. “English is also,” she says, “as we’re going to talk about, a language that the majority of our post-secondary institutions happen in [and that we rarely pay attention too because of this. But language, especially English, is not neutral, and especially in our academic institutions, we perpetuate and uphold white language supremacy, that white language is superior language. And] my PhD research, where this comes out of, is English Language and Literature.

“So all of those pieces together are why this talk is in English. But I want us also to consider what this might look like and how this might happen in more languages than just English as well.

[And in more Englishes than just the one I'm speaking now, which is white English, academic English, usually-uncritically-English English.]”

He smiles. A big, silly, smirking smile. *I know what's going on here*, he thinks, as he remembers dr vay's stunning (to them) answer to the question asked at the 2021 ATLA Conference, “How do we teach grammar to succeed in academic writing?” And dr vay's response, he'll never forget, was: “I don't teach grammar. I teach grammars, plural. One grammar will never suffice in the academic writing classroom” (Young).

“Alright,” she continues, “so thinking about English language [critically], thinking about where we should start, I'm going to take us right back to basics with parts of speech and what is a pronoun.” And *now* she clicks her slide advancer to bring up the “What is a Pronoun?” slide.

“We're starting at the very beginning with *what is a pronoun* because what I've learned throughout this work is that people who are often feeling a little bit like *I'm-not-quite-sure-how-to-do-this-respectfully*, they aren't actually against gender identity and inclusivity. There's a fear around not remembering the eight parts of speech that we were taught in our grade school curriculum or our grammar school lessons.

“Because you might be thinking, ‘Great, gender pronouns...but I don't remember what a pronoun is...’ or, ‘I've never heard that before’ or, ‘I really didn't think I was going to be tested on parts of speech, since I finished, you know, Grade Nine grammar or Grade Three, you know, English language introduction pieces.’” She smirks the smirks he just did mere moments ago and glances around the room. No one is really acknowledging this, and he can feel a bit of, not prickliness per se, but actual mounting uncomfortable and perhaps anxiety.

“But I also want to assuage any kind of anxiety you might be feeling by sharing this quotation from Dean Spade, who is a trans- activist, lawyer, and writer in the States. Dean Spade says, ‘[A pronoun is] a somewhat obscure grammar term, after all’ [(Spade)]. So, everyone breath a collective sigh of relief – we’re calling it out: it’s obscure.

“It’s a grammar term. It’s this weird thing that we were all taught once upon a time. And then now it’s sort of like they’re back with a vengeance and we’re talking about these all the time and” – and here she starts doing one of their favourite performative teaching moves: deliberately speeding up to the point of blathering – “and [people] are asking us to add them if we’re comfortable to our Zoom names but you know if Tommy gives me a language test right now I’m going to fail it...” She stops here for a respectful moment of silence for the mic-drop of a-language-test-right-now. Boom. “It’s an obscure grammar term,” she emphatically reiterates and verbally underscores. “We’re going to talk about it, we’re going to go through it together, so don’t worry. Breathe. It’s wonky. Clocking it.”

She clicks to bring up the next bit of text.

“But at their core, a pronoun is a part of speech that replaces a noun, and a noun is a person, place, thing, idea, or emotion; so a pronoun replaces a person, place, thing, idea, or emotion in our speech and communication to stand in for that noun.

“Other parts of speech, just in case anyone’s thinking, ‘Well, what are the other six?’ are things like verbs, things like interjections, prepositions. Now you’re maybe starting to remember those lessons, those tests that we all went through as well, but a pronoun replaces a noun to stand in for it.

“So in communication, the kind of idea is we use pronouns to avoid repeating the same word over and over and over again. We can use different words to replace that and stand in for it. And so, thinking about those tests and things we went through, maybe we completed tables like this” – she

clicks again, and an orderly table pops up on the slide – “where we also thought about the different cases of pronouns, like a subject pronoun—*he, she, they, it*—an object pronoun version—*him, her, them, it*—a possessive pronoun—*his, her or hers, their or theirs, and its*.

“So, again, at their core, a pronoun replaces a noun, and a noun is a person, place, thing, idea, or emotion, to stand in for that noun in discourse in communication.”

“So,” she says as she clicks the slide-advancer again and moves forward to another yet-to-be-clicked-and-filled white slide. “What is a gender pronoun? Because this talk is *Gender Pronouns[, Teaching and Learning,] and Cultures of Respect*.

“A gender pronoun – this adds an adjective describing a noun, so *gender* describing *pronoun* when a pronoun replaces and stands in for a noun, who is a person. Because person-place-thing-idea-or-emotion.

“So when a pronoun replaces and stands in for a noun who is a person, we are grammatically responsible for aligning the pronoun standing in with that person’s gender. And our language does dictate this.” She does that thing they do, he thinks here, where they pause for juuust the briefest of moments for dramatic effect. Like, not enough of a pause for anyone really to do anything with in terms of asking a question or sharing a comment, but just enough to performatively punctuate with an embodied rhetoric in teaching.

“So I’m going to take us way back to 1762 with Robert Lowth’s *A Short Introduction to English Grammar: with Critical Notes*, where he defined pronoun as quote, ‘[A] word standing instead of a Noun, as its Substitute or Representative’ and ‘[i]n the Pronoun are to be considered the Person, Number, Gender and Case’ [(31)].

“So that first part should sound familiar: *a word standing instead of a noun as it’s substitute or representative*. But now what Robert Lowth’s saying is four things happen in a pronoun: Person; Number; Gender; and Case.” She physically counts off up to four on her fingers. Four dazzling acrylic nails, one after the other, pops up in sequence as she names off *Person, Number, Gender, and Case*.

“Now, you might be thinking, *1762? Come on, Tommy: that is way too old! I’m sure you could have just Googled pronoun or define pronoun and saw what came up there*. But the reason I’m going to 1762 is also the reason why I started [our learning session today] thinking about those two rivers that connects me as a person across this nation we now call Canada. Because the Haldimand Tract and Haldimand Treaty was in 1784 when that was written. 1762 when this was written” – another glittering acrylic (thumb this time) points backward the screen, he notices – “by Robert Lowth, who was a bishop of the, the Church of England⁶³].

“Something’s happening in the mid- to late-1700s, and that something is colonization.”

She pauses to take a sip of water here, and does so a bit clunkily out of a straw in a water bottle. Dual purpose here: the straw is essential to minimally smearing and smudging her lipstick, and who doesn’t love the awkward, campy, extraneous of someone demurely sipping an Aberfoyle from a paper straw? The pedagogical strategy behind this moment, too – of the water-sip, not the campy bit – is also dual purpose: he can tell that she needs the liquid to keep going smoothly and powerfully in her speech and the lesson (and so other folks in the audience must be noticing that, too); and he

⁶³ In 1762 when his *Short Introduction* was published, Robert Lowth was actually the Archdeacon of Winchester, a post that he served from 1750-1766. Prior to that (and slightly overlapping), he was the Oxford Professor of Poetry (1741-1752); following Archdeacon of Winchester, he served as Bishop of St. David’s (1766) before becoming a Bishop of Oxford (1766-1777) and ultimately the Bishop of London, to which he was elected in 1777. He was offered the position of Archbishop of Canterbury in 1783, though he declined it due to health, and he died four years later in 1787.

knows that she knew how key of a moment in the talk this is, one that has the power to lose but also to change people in the audience.

“That *something*,” she continues, setting her water bottle down with a light thud on the podium, the paper straw whizzing wildly as she turns back to face the audience, “is the British Empire going to the quote-unquote new world, discovering the ‘new world’ and taking things with them to literally change and Anglicize any people they’re going to find in that the ‘new world’.” Another pause here. More eye ping-pongs where hers do land on his and almost (but do they?) linger for a quizzical moment, but she continues:

“We talk about Christopher Columbus *discovering* the Americas; we don’t talk about Neil Armstrong *discovering* the moon. The moon was always there, he was just the first one to visit it. Christopher Columbus never would have been the first person to *visit* the Americas anyway.” She emphatically, and not unsarcastically, intonates that word *visit*. Visitorship and issues and ideas of settler identities and invited/uninvited guests on this land are vital conversations, he thinks and nods slightly, and being back here now at the University of Guelph for her talk today, he suddenly remembers how Cara Wehkamp, University of Guelph Special Advisor to the President on Indigenous Initiatives, once put it for them: A *guest* is someone you have invited to your home, so you expect their knock on your door upon arrival; whereas a *visitor* just shows up, unannounced, knocking at your door [(Wehkamp)].⁶⁴ And he likes, he thinks, still nodding, the Columbus-

⁶⁴ Again, much of my work, thinking, and reflecting on my settler responsibility with land stories and territorial acknowledgements comes from my relational engagements and conversations with Indigenous peers, and this rhetoric here comes from my work alongside Dr. Cara Wehkamp (now, Assistant Vice-President, Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Guelph). And not to clock or counter Cara here but to add further nuance, I would again be remiss to not elaborate that “guest” is a well-debated term in the literature. Bethany Hughes, in their article “Guesting on Indigenous Land: Plimoth Plantation, Land Acknowledgement, and Decolonial Praxis,” argues for the sustained use of what she terms *gusting*: “*Gusting* is an active and intentional practice of presence with the goal of honoring and supporting the Indigenous people and spaces that always already

Armstrong analogy for this talk. It is accessible, contemporary (ish), and very, very land-based, occupation-centric, we-planted-our-flag-here-and-now-we-own-it-as-our-own in ethos. Less accessible perhaps, though more scholastic, punchy, and, indeed, perfect, is Thomas Kuhn on the “discovery” of oxygen in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Paradigm shift, indeed.

“[But t]hat’s another talk for a different time. Regardless,” she continues, “1700s, what was happening with the British Imperial project was a creation of language as a colonizing tool to take to the new world with strict rules that could be very tidy, could be implemented, could be taught and, yes, could be [policed and] punished.

“Robert Lowth also was a Bishop of the Church of England, so incredible power and privilege in this person who wrote this grammar guide, one of the first ones. This document – *A Short Introduction English Grammar: with Critical Notes* – was one of those tools that was taken to tidy up the English language and be able to force it upon other people to speak this language.” Another quick

undergird, surround, and shape your life and work” and “is focused not on attaining or accreting, but on relationships, humility, and reciprocal nurturance” (E-23 – italics original). Moreover, “*gwesting* [i]s a way to practice presence” so that “[a]s guests, we can assess our practice of presence from our hosts’ perspective” (Hughes E-24). “Gwesting reminds us that we are under the authority of our hosts,” Hughes specifically states, and she extends that “guests are not resident owners. They come to a place already occupied, already owned” (E-24).

Citing additional literature, Asher, Curnow, and Davies point out that [Jodi] Byrd (2011) argues against settler-Indigenous binarism, suggesting the use of ‘arrivant’ to differentiate the process of people of colour brought to Indigenous lands through violence, and [that] others have built from this argument ([Nandita] Sharma & [Cynthia] Wright, 2008). However, [Patrick] Wolfe (2013) has argued against moves to avoid the settler-native binary, contending that through their presence on Indigenous land and their (albeit uneven) benefit from occupation, all non-Indigenous peoples are implicated in settler colonialism. (321) “For this reason,” Asher, Curnow, and Davies continue, “we take up ‘settler’, while flagging and fully aware of the limitations of the language, with an eye towards the processes of racialization and historical specificities that complicate settler positionality, and thus the complicated ways in which each of us perform territorial acknowledgements” (321). “[A] lot hinges on the language we use to describe how we occupy the lands we live and work upon,” Robinson says, and “[t]he way we name our positionality—as guests, uninvited, visitors, settlers, invaders, arrivants—speaks to how we understand the terms of occupation, and relationships to Indigenous peoples” (Robinson et al. 20).

pause and glancing around the room to gauge folks' reactions and receptions. Their eyes don't connect this time.

"That way of understanding this text is violent." Longer pause; lingering glancing. A hint of a flick of her eye to his as she continues.

"And let's be honest: English is kind of a violent language. It does kind of cannibalize other languages, it does kind of do what it wants, it does assume it's the only language, you know, thinking about some of our phrases that have fallen out of favour as well around additional language acquisition. We used to say *English as a Second Language*, right? Where somebody was learning English *secondarily* to their own first language, whereas actually it might be *English as an Additional Language* for English as a multiple language, you know, that that language primacy of English is quite powerful and quite dominating for that.

"So I'm going to 1762," she says a bit breathily but still steadily, "because this is the moment – and this will be important as we go through this – this is the moment where rules are really, really written into English language, and with the pronoun [specifically,] you'll see that Person, Number, Gender, and Case were *written into this*.

"So Robert Lowth is the person we have to thank for writing gender into the English language. So I mean, if we're thinking about that, unpacking that, here is somebody with a lot of cultural capital, a lot of cultural power, someone who's taking on a project of tidying up the English language, creating sets of rules for it, and putting it out there to be a kind of training primer guide on English grammar, specifically with critical notes as well. If you've ever heard or if you've ever had an English teacher or anyone tell you *that you can never end a sentence with a preposition*, Robert Lowth is the one we have to thank for creating that rule, too, and putting it in this primer in 1762.

Which then became a rule we still hear people saying and holding up as not being able to end a sentence with a preposition.”

If he were holding and sipping a coffee here, it’s at this moment that he would have spat it out all over the back of the person in front of him. (Good thing he didn’t get to bring a coffee back with him!) Because “preposition” here, for him, suddenly pulls up a teaching memory that he had not thought about nor revisited for quite some time. And it’s not of them teaching, but of the first teacher they ever had that really embodied and powerfully showcased for them a visual, performative, engaged pedagogy in the classroom. Their Grade 9 and 10 English teacher at Elmira District Secondary School (EDSS), Mr. Watt.

Defining the preposition part of speech for their class in Grade 9 grammar with the traditional mnemonic aide of *anywhere a mouse can go*, Mr. Watt told them that instead of the proverbial mouse that he wanted them to think about *anywhere your English Teacher can go* and proceeded to demonstrate at the front of the classroom (which was in a portable on the high school grounds) by standing beside the teachers’ desk and saying, “The English Teacher is *beside* the desk.” Then he moved in front of the desk, stood there, and said, “The English Teacher is *in front of* the desk.” Then he crouched down onto his hands and knees, crawled under the desk, and shouted up from down there, “The English Teacher is *under* the desk!” And for the grand finale, he crawled back out from under the desk, pulled the chair out, told us, “You did not see me do this, m’kay?” and then climbed up the chair and onto the desk, hitting his head on the low ceiling of the portable as he did so and saying, “The English Teacher—apparently hitting his head while doing so—is *on* the desk.” It was a wonderful moment of pre-planned performative pedagogy with the unexpected impromptu of a headbonk to boot that fully embodied in an encompassing visual way that that would stay with them and lead them, very directly, if you traced it, to this talk of theirs in full drag on the 50th anniversary

of the Stonewall Riots. Mr. Watt was an incredibly formative teacher for me, well beyond just this locational genesis of performative pedagogy: in many ways, my academic drag as visual pedagogy is a living love letter to Mr. Watt – and he never really got to see it nor see me come into myself.⁶⁵

He wipes his eyes with the backs of his thumbs and index fingers, first his right eye, then his left, snuffles, wipes his left eye one time, and looks back to the front of the room.

“So what I want to point out using this book from 1762,” she is continuing, “are the ways that language is man made.

“So when we bring back up this table,” she says, returning to the slide and content at hand, “and thinking about Robert Lowth and gender pronouns, something in this table might stand out a little bit like, *Oh, I don’t know if this table actually should be something we’re thinking about when it comes to Gender and Person...*and that would be that bottom row. The *it* series of pronouns is not something that we would use to refer to people, at least not in a respectful and productive, humane way.

⁶⁵ Mr. Watt was also my first teacher to introduce me to Shakespeare (and I kid you not, it was *Twelfth Night*...check the Ontario Secondary School Curriculum for Grade 9 in 2002, if you don’t believe me!), and he was also my first teacher to introduce me to William Blake (in Grade 10 poetry, we read and explicated “The Tyger”...just the text, though: it wouldn’t be until ENGL 200B at the University of Waterloo that I would see a digital facsimile of the full printed and painted plate 42 of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and will visit Mr. Watt back at EDSS to say “Hello!” and tell him I felt robbed that he never told me “The Tyger” was so much more than just text!). I’ll never forget when, in the final term of my coursework year of my PhD studies back at the University of Waterloo, I received an e-mail from another incredibly formative high school teacher of mine, Ms. Knapp, telling me, “I have some very bad news: Ken Watt has died” and that “[a] great light has gone from the world” (Personal correspondence). When I shared with Ms. Knapp via quick e-mails as we set up a meeting to talk, commemorate, and mourn more in person, I expressed the regret I felt from always having meant to but never having actually reconnected with Mr. Watt since I left for Grad School and had returned to the area, and she wrote to me, “For what this is worth, Tommy, Ken and I shared many confidences, and even though you did not get a last chance to speak to him, I know that he admired you, and he also knew that you admired him. Sometimes words are not necessary. Be comforted in this assurance.” Sometimes words are not necessary, indeed, but in my counterstory here, I have chosen my words very necessarily: Mr. Watt cannot be, for me, just a footnote and just a memory in the “he”, “she”, and “they” pronoun-identified autobiographic reflection, so I have, you may have noticed, intentionally concluded the body paragraph to which this footnote is connected with an in-story (i.e., not footnoted) voice shift to the first person *me/my/myself*.

“What happens when we replace someone, when we use the pronoun *it* to stand in for a person, is very dehumanizing, right? To refer to a breathing human body as *it* instead of as their name or instead of as a pronoun or instead of as anything else takes away all aspects of their humanity.

“And we’ve seen this, you know, in quite recent history and, you know, still kind of happening with pandemic pieces as well around marginalized populations. We saw a lot of this happen during [Forty-Five’s] administration⁶⁶, where *it* was used to refer to any ‘non-human person’ for the sake of taking away that humanity and making policies and practices easier cognitively to put through when a pronoun like *it* doesn’t hold humanity in it. We’ve seen this applied politically in [other, uncannily similar] moves as well, you know, during, during World Wars. So *it* is not a pronoun that we would use.

“Over time, and doing this work and meeting and engaging with tons of communities across the world, I have actually added that second sentence to the red note which is” – she points at the slide with the laser pointer near the bottom, pink-zigzag-underlining this time instead of rapid pink circling – “*Never lead with ‘it.’* Because there are some groups of folks who understand themselves to live with the pronoun *it* in a kind of politically reactionary way against, against kind of colonizing moves or dehumanizing moves for *it*. So I say, ‘Never lead with *it*,’ because you would never make the choice as a person speaking about another person to refer to that person as *it*. But if somebody says to us, ‘This is my series of pronouns,’ that’s what we do, we use it.

⁶⁶ Following a powerful rhetorical lead here from Aja Martinez who footnoted in her book *Counterstory* (2020) an administrative reference with “The forty-fifth president of the United States. I don’t care to write his name in my book” (177n15), I, too, do not care to write his name in my dissertation.

“So the Golden Rule or the Platinum Rule in all of this is: *However a person asks or tells you to refer to them with respect is how you do it.*”⁶⁷ She pauses here to make sure this is hitting home and registering for everyone. Doing that teacherly thing in order to be sure where you rephrase and give an example of, she continues:

“So if somebody were to say to me, ‘Oh sorry, I don’t use the *they* series of pronouns: my pronoun is *it*,’ that would be uncomfortable for me, as a person, to refer to this other person as *it*, but that’s how they’re saying I am to engage with them respectfully. It’s not up to me to say, ‘Oh, well, you know, that’s actually not politically correct’ or, ‘You know *it* is dehumanizing.’^[68]

“I always like to say, ‘You can ask if you can ask.’ I like to share that kind of double-strategy for distance, to say you can ask someone if you can ask. That gives them the space to say, ‘No, thank you: I’m not a teacher, I’m not an activist, I’m not someone who’s supposed to be training you. This is me as a person, as a whole person, and you can respect me.’ But it also gives them the space to say, ‘Sure, let’s chat about it.’ Whereas if you say, you know, ‘Can you tell me more about why you use

⁶⁷ This is a moment of my Customer Service background sneaking in unconsciously to my academic teaching and learning and public scholarly work: whereas the Golden Rule is popularly *Treat others the way you would want to be treated* and the Platinum Rule, moving from mere reciprocity to more empathy, is popularly *Treat others the way they want to be treated*, the Rule I am invoking here might seem at first to be a gender pronominal rewording of the Platinum Rule, but it is *more* than that: it’s not just about treatment but about fundamental respect; and it’s not just about want and desire but, as I note, directives...*asks or tells you*. Following hierarchies of precious gems and metals like in video games and SFF literary cultures, I should probably start saying, “Diamond Rule” here.

⁶⁸ Interestingly here – and ironically, and perhaps even tellingly – in my merging of transcriptions approach for crating this counterstory genre of my Gender Pronouns public scholarship and work, I didn’t and haven’t actually honoured and respected this hypothetical person’s lived pronouns! I said, “...that would be uncomfortable for me, as a person, to refer to this other person as *it*, but that’s how they’re saying I am to engage with them respectfully,” and I should have said – and I am making a mental note as I write and type right now to remember to do this and to model this in my future talks! – I should have said, “...that would be uncomfortable for me, as a person, to refer to this other person as *it*, but that’s how it’s saying I am to engage with it respectfully.” (And yes, even typing that feels awful, and I do not, as the whole person whom I am, like reading that; but that is precisely the point. This *is* uncomfortable for me...but this is not about me. This is about referring to people respectfully and using language respectfully. And responsibly.)

that series of pronouns?’ if they say, ‘No,’ it feels like they’re doing something wrong [by not telling you more about why they use that series of pronouns], whereas if you say, ‘Hey, can I ask you about this?’ if they say, ‘No, I’d rather not,’ the difference in that conversation is a lot more friendly for it [and a lot more safe for that person, too].

“However,” she continues, strongly pausing here and shifting in her stance to slightly move her high-heeled feet apart and raise her left hand with just her left index finger raised to the room for dramatic effect, its acrylic nail peeking up and elongating it wonderfully – and the effect is fabulous, he thinks; he remembers it feeling powerful for them, but the effect of seeing it as such is hashtag-chef’s-kiss, “sometimes folks want to talk about and share their journey – and I will share with you mine in a couple slides as well on this – but however” – and she repeats the finger here – “however someone asks you or tells you to refer to them, that’s how you do it.

“And it probably will be difficult if it is something like I-don’t-personally-feel-comfortable-referring-to-another-human-being-as-*it*. But if that person’s saying, ‘That’s my pronoun,’ then do it.

“And when you make a mistake,” she says, getting ahead of, he knows, and pre-answering a question that they always, always, always get asked, “apologize, the same way you would if you made a mistake in any other type of communication, if you accidentally said the wrong room for someone to meet you in for a meeting, you know, ‘Oh, sorry, I meant room 25 not 26.’ So you apologize, you correct it, and you keep going.”

She glances around the room ping-ponging on people’s eyes again, and he knows that she is seeing some slow but deep nodding variously about. He actually hears some scribbling of notes just to his right, too, and when he glances in that direction, he can almost just make out the person mouthing the words as they scribble, too softly for her to hear at the front of the room.

This might be too easy, he thinks to himself, hearing these words aloud and properly for the first time like this. Like, he gets it, they're trying to minimize the profuse, over-the-top, borderline performative apology drama that many enact when they mispronoun⁶⁹ or misname someone, but her words here call up for him nearly verbatim something Frankie⁷⁰ once wrote and that they talked about Elspeth Probyn's difference between guilt and shame. "[S]hame is quite distinct from feelings of guilt," Frankie writes, for Frankie and for Probyn: "[Feelings of guilt] are passing senses—the affective remnants of having erred such that one might simply apologize and move on" (113). *Such that one might simply apologize and move on*. Didn't they just say, "So you apologize, you correct it, and you keep going"? "Shame makes us quiver," Probyn says (2). "[S]hame lingers deep within the self" unlike guilt which "once dealt with is forgotten" (2). We aren't, as a culture, perhaps yet at a point where mere guilt is the attending affect when we mispronoun, misgender, misname someone – in polite discourses, perhaps we do just apologize, correct it, and keep going...but what if shame

⁶⁹ Here and elsewhere I do use the verb *mispronoun* and not *misgender* as it is commonly used because I have a hyperfocus on pronouns and pronoun awareness towards cultures of respect in my scholarship and activism. While to mispronoun someone *may be* to misgender them, a couple nuances I consider here are: (1) agender folks understand their embodied relationships to the social construct of gender differently than gendered folks within this construct do, and so to ascribe gender even in a mis-gendering way to agender folks is, in my opinion, a completely different project of disrespect, dehumanizing, and invalidation that the focus on part of speech does not participate in; and (2) not all misgendering happens at the pronoun level but with more parts of speech, too – such as misnouncing, like with the ever-controversial *guys* – so that the hyperfocus, as I call it, on pronouns toward increasing pronoun awareness works simultaneously to destigmatize and to normalize practices of sharing pronominal systems in discourse and communication in ways that the verb *misgender* alone is too vast of an umbrella term to responsibly do.

⁷⁰ I first-name Frankie rather than scholarlily last-naming her as Condon here in a counterstorying and decolonizing move similarly as I do with Dr. Aja (Martinez), dr vay (Young), and *kokum* (Ward) in not just the counterstory that is Chapter 3 of my dissertation but throughout my dissertation itself. While the genre of counterstory allows Time-Travelling Tommy the scholarly scope to do this in his thoughts to himself, the method of counterstory allows Dissertating Tommy the scholarly bravery to do this elsewhere in my writing, too. (See footnotes below for discussions of first-naming instances for Dean (Spade), Jen (Manion), and Jack (Halberstam) in my gender pronouns public scholarship.)

burns more deeply and forecloses on a relationship, a relational reciprocity, and a power dynamic between teacher and student?

“So,” she repeats, as good instructors do to make sure no one gets left behind as they keep moving forward, and he makes a mental note to keep thinking about shame and guilt and how to attend to this in their scholarship, both public and published, “if you use someone’s wrong name or someone’s wrong pronoun, try, ‘Excuse me, I meant *blank*,’ and then keep going.”

“So thinking about that table,” she circles back verbally as she clicks forward digitally, “thinking about *Person*, thinking about *Case*, thinking about *Number*, that leads us to the classic question, but – I put the dots there” – she interrupts herself mid-sentence to draw folks’ attention to the ellipses in this slide’s subtitle, *But...isn’t “they” plural?*, and even though they’ve built this slide, this strategy, and have done this talk over 40 times in total (and 37 times since this one on June 28th, 2019), he can’t help but smirk slyly and nod as his own eyes dart up directly to the ellipses he hadn’t fully taken notice of when the slide changed – “because there’s always that little hesitancy where you’re kind of like, ‘I don’t want to be *that* person who says but... isn’t *they* plural? But I was taught that *they* is plural...’ So remember: we’re doing some *unlearning* today as well, right? We’re going to unlearn that *they* is [only] plural.”

She clicks her slide advancer now to bring up some quoted text.

“And I want to share a quotation from Jen Manion.” She clicks again to bring up a photo of Jen. Representation matters, and for being with these folks on their individual and collective journeys of learning, unlearning, and relearning, what she’s about to say next, he knows, is most powerful multimodally. “Jen is a History Prof at Amherst College who identifies as ‘a female-bodied [and]

masculine-presenting person' [(Manion, "Transgender Inclusion")] and Jen^[71] says, which I love, 'I argue endless battles with well-educated people who think their own grammar school lessons from 40 or 50 years ago preclude them from referring to an individual student as they' [(Manion, "Transgender Inclusion")].

"And here's Dean Spade again." Another click, another professional headshot visually appears on the slides at the front of the room. More representation. One more click, another chunk of quoted text. "This was 2018 that Dean Spade said this, that '[t]his year, my students are working to advocate that our writing faculty stop teaching that the singular pronoun "they/them" is grammatically incorrect – a battle we still have to fight, even though the mainstream press has recognized this use"' [(Spade)].

She pauses here a brief moment to let this sink in a bit. Photos, text, and oration combined. And she looks at their slides, too; like, looks directly at them physically in the room by turning her head to point her eyes right at them instead of down at her notes or instead of doing that eye-bounce ping-ponging strategy around the room. For a moment, and he gets to take this in now and has only before really ever been able to trust that it is happening, but for a moment, everyone in the room together is quietly taking in authentic transgender and nonbinary gender visual representation.

"So what I love about these two quotations separately and together," she says, breaking the silence but not in an abrasive way, and turning her profile back directly to face the room again, "is they both engage with this idea of being taught. So Jen talking about well-educated people 40 or 50

⁷¹ I am using Jen's name here instead of replacing Jen's name with a pronoun because, as Jen says on Jen's website, "[I]f you are wondering about pronouns, feel free to refer to me by my name (preferred) but if you insist on gendered language, they/them, or she/her will do" ("About"). As is or might be evident, I most certainly do not insist on using gendered language; I love writing Jen's name and honouring who Jen is as a whole person in my prose from Jen's scholarship.

years ago – *half a century ago* – were taught that *they* is plural, and they hold up that lesson from half a century ago, and say, ‘Oh no! You can’t make me unlearn this. I was taught this. It must be right, and therefore I’m going to only use *they* in the plural.’

“We all completed those verb charts where it would be *He is going to the mall... They are going to the mall*: this was literally taught and built into us.

“And then what Dean’s saying is what would happen if we *stopped* that teaching. If we start teaching these grammar lessons [today, that *they* isn’t always and only singular], in 50 years, no one’s going to hold up the grammar lesson and say, ‘I was taught this way.’ So Jen’s getting at this idea of the unlearning, and Spade’s getting this idea of what if we stopped teaching and can kind of get ahead of the unlearning around some of this.^[72]

“And so, what I love about what Spade is saying here is the stopping teaching, right? If we can stop teaching, we can foreclose on the unlearning we will have to do later in life where we’re saying we were taught this. So there’s a strategy, whether it’s implicit or accidental, or going back to

⁷² A bit differently from the above footnote on Frankie’s name with the counterstorying and decolonizing move of first-naming in scholarly prose, my first-naming of Dean (Spade) and of Jen (Manion) here are from the transcripts of my authentic “Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect” public talks. Not every one of my public talks are academic – most, actually, are corporate and/or community – so the scholarly move of last-naming folks you’re quoting isn’t a practice I bring out into corporations nor into community because I bring the people as people (not just as scholars) with me who guide me and teach me. I bring Dean with me. I bring Jen with me. And later in my talk, I bring Jack (Halberstam) with me. And I present my voice literally in conversation with their voices in my public scholarship.

There is, to be sure, however, a counterstorying and decolonizing move at work and at play here: Dr. Aja adds “one additional tenet for CRT—accessibility” (18) in her counterstorying work, and she notes on this, “My own writing process has included and always will include my family, nonacademics, because the work is for them, is sometimes about them, and is nearly always inspired by them” (18). While Dean, Jen, and Jack are not my family and are academics, my audiences often include my family members and even more often include nonacademics – this “multiplicity of audiences beyond the ivory tower,” as Dr. Aja says (18). “And if my work in counterstory is inaccessible to the very people it is for,” Dr. Aja so powerfully questions, “well, then what’s the point? Why do the work if it’s inaccessible?” (18).

Bishop Robert Lowth, part of a larger colonial mission of policing and punishing around language as well.

“And so I really like this idea, because we do often feel – and as much as education is kind of, you know, especially in Ontario right now, is, you know, in kind of the crosshairs of everything governmentally and politically” – he literally almost bursts out laughing because, oh hunny, it ain’t much better in Alberta! – “there is this holding up of what we were taught and how we were taught as if it’s all perfect and as if it’s infallible and as if it never changes or grows over time.”

She takes a breath here, another sip of water through that fabulously and unnecessarily necessary strawed Aberfoyle bottle, then keeps going.

“I also think it’s important to point out that each of Manion and Spade use the idea of battle and when it comes to this” – more quick, pink laser light circles from her slide advancer bouncing between the word *battle* in the Spade quotation and the word *battles* in the Manion quotation – “because, you know, when I first started doing this work, this was way pre-pandemic and we didn’t have so many fires that we were constantly fighting on so many different battle fronts with people in social, racial, and health justice, I used to talk about this as a kind of battle, right? There are sides to this, there are people who have different vested interest and stakes in it as well, and education can be a large part of this unlearning, relearning, and learning. But also the way we teach, the way we police and punish, [the way we celebrate even the seemingly smallest of victories].”

Something about this strikes him as listens to her talking about the battles here and how there weren’t so many fires and so many fights on so many fronts in the pre-pandemic times. But there *were*, though, he thinks. Being white just meant that we didn’t see them burning everywhere and didn’t have to engage in them or even attend to them. Didn’t have to look. Could choose to look away. The pandemic exacerbated these battles, these fires, to the point where we white people can no

longer not look. He thinks here again of dr vay speaking publicly with the APTLY OUTSPOKEN! Collective about the murder of George Floyd and how, happening as it did near the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic on May 25th, 2020, Mister Floyd's murder has been anachronistically seen (and is still seen!) by many white people as the start of the Black Lives Matters movement...*because we white people were staying at home when a police officer knelt on Mister Floyd's neck as his dying words, "I can't breathe," were recorded by incredibly brave bystanders on their cell phones and went viral on the Internet forcing the (white) world to look.* To see. To really see. Finally. When Trayvon Martin was fatally shot in February 2013 with #BlackLivesMatters beginning that summer, we weren't forced to look in the same way. We could glance, virtue-signally acknowledge the sadness and senseless, and send our overwhelming abundance of actionless, tokenistic *thoughts and prayers*. 2013 was the start of BLM, and yet, many, many, many of us white people weren't looking when (can I say *murdered* if the shooter who fatally shot Trayvon was acquitted?) when a firearm-bearing man shot and caused to die Trayvon Martin (how's that for judicial accuracy?). We were shocked, stunned, to see police murder George Floyd and when, as dr vay says, the BLM movement resurged, many white people thought it was the start of something rather than a resurgence of not just a 9-year old movement but a centuries long active and ongoing oppression, ongoing denial of equity, and ongoing ruthless devaluing and discarding of Black lives.

Education can be a large part of this unlearning, relearning, and learning, her words are ringing with him. *But also the way we teach.* He's not mad at her for her lazy language about the battlefronts of the pre-pandemic times, but he knows they weren't looking in 2019 like they were in 2020 and beyond. He makes a mental note again here to revisit this slide critically before their next talk, and he turns his attention back to her at the front of the room.

“In 2015,” she says, clicking again to bring up the last of the three quotations for this slide, “*they* as a singular, nonbinary pronoun was named Word of the Year [(Abadi)]. Which means a whole bunch of people, you know, people who write dictionaries, people who study languages, people who think about how words work and evolve, all got together and said, ‘Hey, this word is actually, you know, kind of changing its use for it[self] – this should be something we talk about and celebrate.’”

“So,” she points the laser point back at the subtitle of this slide. “Isn’t *they* plural?”

“Maybe. But maybe not.”

“So then people might say to me, ‘Okay, but isn’t *they* plural at least in academic and professional writing cultures? So sure, maybe the mainstream press says it is. But surely in higher education and in professional business writing cultures, *they* still has to be plural.’ And until very recently, yes.

“In 2017,” she clicks her slide to bring up the first bullet, “the Chicago Manual of Style, or CSM, updated to include *they* as ‘a generic third-person singular pronoun to refer to a person whose gender is unknown or irrelevant to the context’ [(“Pronouns”)]. In 2019” – another click – “*Merriam Webster’s Dictionary* updated to include *they* as ‘a singular indefinite pronoun [used] to refer to an unknown or unspecified person[,] to a single person whose gender is intentionally not revealed[,] and/or] to a single person whose gender identity is nonbinary’ [(“They”)]. And in 2020” – one more click – “in the early weeks of January 2020, so pre-pandemic, the American Psychological Association, or the APA, and the Modern Language Association, or the MLA, updated to follow suit as well.

“So before 2017, and then before 2020, yes, the guides that dictated these disciplines would have said, ‘No, *they* is plural; you need to take marks off of that student’s writing’, or ‘You can’t publish that because it goes against these rules in these guides.’

“The MLA also had a wonderful move, in so many ways – they added a new word as well to their style guide.” She clicks again, and a word and an arrow pops up to direct folks’ eyes to it. “So the MLA includes the word *themselves* as the reflexive pronoun.

“And this is brilliant for a couple of reasons,” she says, getting quite clearly quite excited. “The first reason is it now has a singular reflexive pronoun to match when, as the slide is saying, any of these cases is why we would be using a singular third-person pronoun. So before *themselves* was a word, we would have had to say *themselves*, even when referring to a single individual person. So the MLA includes *themselves*. So *self* being a singular, *selves*, you know, *change-the-eff-to-vee-and-add-es*, being the plural. So that’s one piece that’s brilliant is now we actually have language that is catching up to the kind of mental gymnastics people often say *I can’t believe you’re asking me to perform this, it goes against everything that I know about language!* Well, language evolves. So here’s a word *themselves* as a reflexive pronoun.

“What else is brilliant with this,” she says after a brief pause, “is it actually kind of pulls the curtain back on another pronoun in our English language that already was doing this, already was singular and plural, already was case dependent on context, and was actually still conjugating the verbs plurally even if it was an individual person. And so what I really, really, really love about the word *themselves* is it should look slightly familiar to us because there’s another pronoun in English language that looks like this, that conjugates verbs in the plural, but depending on context will be singular or plural. And that’s the second person *you*.

“So in English, we say *You are going to the mall, right? Frankie, after work, you are going to the mall.*[⁷³] If Frankie and Tommy were going to the mall, I would say *Frankie and Tommy, you are going to the mall.* Exact same sentence: the verb *to be* is conjugated as *are*. I did not say, ‘Frankie, you is going to the mall.’ But if Frankie by herself was going to the mall, I’d say, ‘You are going to the mall *by yourself.*’ And if Frankie and Tommy were going to the mall, I’d say, ‘You are going to the mall *by yourselves.*’”

He literally almost raises his hand here to interrupt, to even disrupt, her, with his hand doing a little jerk as he thinks, feels, a bit embarrassed for her, for them, to be so unconsciously holding up an actual, unconscious Royal We here in this example that is absolutely a monolithic *we*, a totalizing *we*, a white Western colonial *we*, a barrelling, bombarding, bullying *we*. *So in English, we say...* makes him think here of something Frankie once shared with him that dr vay said to her when she did something similar with her unconscious, automatic white English superiority in “correcting” something on one of their co-authored slides once: *Maybe in YOUR English!*

He makes another mental note here (should have brought coffee *and* a pen and notebook, apparently!) to revisit this slide critically before their next talk, too. His English, her English, their English is, as she (didn’t) say to open the talk, white English, academic English, usually-uncritically-English English, and it is the language of the colonizer. How did they miss this before, he thinks? *Baby, you were taught this way*, he hears Lady Gaga whisperingly sing to him. And the status quo would love to continue to be unlocked, uninterrupted, invisible and inaudible like this with folks like her upholding the “correct” *sounds* of white Western colonial English as supreme over all others. He

⁷³ I have changed names here from my transcribing of my authentic talks. Usually, I use the hosts of my events as characters in my examples with me, so here, I am using Frankie as my supervisor/host of my dissertation in my examples with me!

thinks here, too, of folks “correcting” his usage of the object pronoun *me* in sonic grammatical constructions like “Meet Frankie and me at the mall”: *Don’t you mean, “Meet Frankie and *I* at the mall”?* No, no I do not. I most *certainly* do not. ...and yet...

“So, adding the word *themselves* actually,” she continues, snapping him back to the front of the room, “further demonstrates how wild it is that people [have the, to quote the ever-fierce Tayce from *RuPaul’s Drag Race UK* season 3, ‘the cheek, the nerve, the gall, the audacity, and the gumption’ to] say, ‘You can’t make me use a plural verb, *they* is clearly more than one. I can’t refer to one person as *they*.’”

“But people don’t throw their wigs in the air by referring to one person as *you* and *you are*, and so kind of all of those things start to fold and crumble on themselves when you realize that we do have the mental capacity as human beings to refer to one person with a plurally-conjugated verb, and the context around our language helps us understand.

“It’s the exact same thing when it comes to the singular *they*: context helps us understand it and sure, maybe it is wonky because we were taught wrong how to do this, and what it looks like, but nobody taught us wrong with the second-person pronouns *you*, and I think that’s really interesting. That for some reason, when it comes to gender, everybody throws their wigs in the air, and we all get upset around it, because we can’t possibly do this but unconsciously, we do all the time. [It’s almost like it has nothing to do with language acquisition at all...]

“So the MLA updating to include that was a brilliant move that gives us more kind of evidence against some of these conversations. So I want to note as well, for folks who are thinking about, you know, maybe they don’t have an academic or professional writing guide, but maybe they have a company guide, or maybe their university or their school has department guides that sort of say, *Here’s how we communicate in a branded [and consistent] way*. Specific communication

guidelines that you use so there's consistency and, you know, tone in presentation. Well, we can update our own style and brand guides to knock out some of this non-inclusive language. Perhaps your style guides do say *they* is plural, and if you can change the style guide, you can change the way that the language is used, and the language grows. This way, we build in, you know, style guides for different communications and then reinforce those as part of a culture."

Different communications, he thinks, ah! She's so close! Different Englishes, different grammars, different ways of communicating and the very real materials effects of these that our evolutions and growths and inclusivity of more-than-one language will breath into existence. They were so close! Ah!

"So the one I always like to pick on, especially working in a university, is that *alumnus* is gendered. Very technically – and this is, you know, perhaps a talk for another night – *alumni* is also gendered as the plural for multiple males, multiple binary-males. *Alumna* would be the female, the binary-female *alumnae* would be the plural female. So the Latinate gender suffixes are highly, highly gendered. So thinking about just knocking the *-us* ending off and referring to them as *alumn*, that can be a great move to be more inclusive as well.^[74]

"Okay, so then," she says, taking a breath but not the kind, he knows, where she is about to slow down but the kind you take when you are either about to ramp up or to hone right in, "then I get

⁷⁴ I want to give a little shout-out here to my former co-op student, Catherine Zhang, who worked with me in the Registrar's Office at St. Jerome's University as our Outreach and Recruitment Associate for the Fall 2020 term and who, during my talk with the Ontario University Registrar's Association (OURA), messaged me in MS Teams to share this Latin grammar of the non-gendered-neutrality of *alumni* when I mistakenly said it was neutral as a plural.

the kind of, ‘Fine! Dot-dot-dot...but the singular *they* is at least new right?’ And then that kind of exasperated,

Right?! Like it has to be some kind of Social Justice Warrior – to go off of that battle front kind of thing – it must be some Postmillennial Project, it must be some, you know, Gen Z Project, some, you know, kind of Neoliberal Project where we’re fighting, we’re fighting against all of these things, and everyone’s so easily offended nowadays and we just need blah, blah, blah, blah, blah...but something must be going on here, it can’t possibly be old, right? RIGHT?!

“And then I always kind of go, ‘Welllllll....’, and, you know, kind of linger there for a bit. Because it’s actually remarkable that it took until 2015 when it was Word of the Year, and then even beyond that for academic and post-secondary cultures to catch up, for this pronoun to gain that ‘considerable traction’ [(Abadi)] that it has because, as early as the Middle English of the 1300s in our language, our language has actually used this.

“And so here’s a quotation from the Bible from 1382 – and yes, I’m using the Bible because, why not? Many people go to the Bible to, you know, vilify communities and kind of hold up arguments all the time to literally demonize queer and trans- people and people of color and any kind of minority and equity-denied person, so let’s use the Bible to show, you know, the Bible uses *they* as a singular, nonbinary pronoun.

“So, 1382, in *The Wycliffe Bible* – and I’m not going to read this in Middle English because I can’t pronounce it properly, but this phrase translates to *Each one in their craft is wise*.^[75] The wonky letter that looks like a lowercase *B* and a lowercase *P* put together is called a thorn, which makes a *Th* sound, so a ‘thh’ sound; so that word might be pronounced as ‘ther’ and spelt *T-H-E-R*, which looks like *THEIR*, you know, our English version of *their* we would add an *I* to it, and it would be T-H-E-I-

⁷⁵ The Middle English spelling is: “Eche on in þer craft ys wijs” (Syrach 38:35).

R – or even the other *there* as well with the *E* on the end of it. But that word is *their*, and that’s exactly what that pronoun was: each one, each individual, single person...in *their* craft is wise.”

He can’t help but smirk here. They do it every time, and sitting where he is in the audience catching this live academic drag show version on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, seeing himself as their whole self – his herself! – they’re both smirking a bit. One of their favourite courses in their own Undergrad was “Non-Chaucerian Middle English” where they actually read, and at times read aloud, *Piers Plowman*, so if he *had to*, he could probably conjure up accurate-enough pronunciation of this biblical phrase (*aitcha-one-in-thur-craft-ees-weejus*, perhaps); but growing up Roman Catholic, not remembering being Baptized but remembering the other Sacraments of their Reconciliation, their First Communion, and their Confirmation across their K-8 Catholic Elementary School, and then going to a public secondary school but in the hyper-Conservative Christian small, rural town of Elmira...yeah, he’s smirking. She’s smirking. They’re smirking. The amount of times they’ve had the clobber passage *Leviticus* 18:22 lobbed at them...it feels really, really good every time to hold back up the Bible. After high school, they went to the University of Waterloo for their Undergrad by way of St. Jerome’s University, so while they rekindled some of their Catholicity, they could do so a bit more radically, openly, even, dare he think, transgressively? And they met in their studies through text the likes of Dale Spender and Elaine Pagels, who separately and yet together, taught them that man made language and that the Bible is, if we’re being honest, an edited collection by, you guessed it, men.⁷⁶ And what they love about this is...

⁷⁶ Feminist theorist Dale Spender, in *Man Made Language* (1990), discusses “the Biblical record we have inherited” and notes that “these man-made records have been ‘carefully’ edited and translated” (166). “It is in some of this editing and translating,” she continues, “that we can locate the politics of naming” (166). Spender then gives “the imagery of Adam and Eve” as an example “that has percolated through our culture [and] usually takes the form of Adam being created first, and then Eve being made from Adam’s rib (this gross distortion of the male ‘giving birth’ to the female is an archetypal example of false naming by males)” (166). Spender also

“And what I love about this is,” she continues, breaking his reverie and snapping him back to full attention, “this is the Bible not defaulting to a universal Man. It is actually *not* doing what the Church tells us and what heteropatriarchal culture tells us; it’s not using a universal Man as the unknown subject here. Doesn’t say ‘each one in *his* craft is wise.’ So somewhere along the line – and let’s blame the British Imperial colonizing system in the 1700s – somewhere along the line, a universal Man as gendered male took over the singular *they* standing in for any individual nonbinary person.” She says *nonbinary person* here, but what he knows they mean is, like the updated Style Guides and Dictionaries now declare, any “unknown or unspecified person, a single person whose gender is intentionally not revealed, and/or a single person whose gender identity is nonbinary.”

Bouncing off that unsaid metacognitive connection across them, she continues:

“We also probably were taught that when we don’t know the gender of a person or an imaginary person or a reader or that kind of thing, we would use *he*” – yup, he definitely was taught

rightfully chastises “those who compiled the Bible” as “biased reporters and only one side of the story is presented in the Biblical anthology” (168). She also says that “[m]ales selected the names and they checked with other males to verify their selection and by this process female names were eliminated from the classification of the Deity” (167). Powerfully, she declares,

There are obvious reasons for the suppression of some of the other versions of the Creation which were available at the time. They did not uphold the image of masculine supremacy and would have made little or no contribution to the patriarchal order. There would have been little to gain as far as males were concerned by propagandizing the version which had God make human beings in God’s image – female and male! (166)

And Spender further points out that although the Genesis story “is the popular narrative it must be noted that it was not the only narrative available when the editing of the Bible was being undertaken” (166 – emphasis added). Elaine Pagels explores these other narratives and other gospels and books that did not make it through the Biblical editing process in her essay “What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity.” Here, she notes that “[s]ince the Genesis account goes on to say that mankind was created ‘male and female’ (1:27), some [theologians] concluded, apparently, that the God in whose image we are created likewise must be both masculine and feminine—both Father and Mother” (294). “Marcus, a disciple of Valentinus, [for example,] contends that ‘when Moses began his account of creation, he mentioned the Mother of all things at the very beginning, when he said, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,”’ for the word ‘beginning’ (in Greek, the feminine *arche*) refers to the divine Mother, the course of the cosmic elements” (295).

this – “that we wouldn’t use *they*” – yup, he definitely had marks (taken off, but also red-pen-applied) for this in his writing – “also interestingly here,” she continues, “it doesn’t have the kind of contemporary feminist project of doing *he-slash-she*” – yup, he remembers being taught *and teaching* this himself! He remembers specific Grammar Lessons in his earlier TA work at McMaster, like little 5-10-minute ice-breaker-type activities at the start of his tutorials with his first-ever first-years, thinking “he/she” (which he pronounced and had them pronounce as *he-slash-she*) was innovative, ground-breaking, contemporary. Contemporary to the time, perhaps, but...

“You know that is a move forward away from a masculine kind of dominant universal person,” she continues, once again interrupting his reflection, “but it also recentralizes the gender binary to just use *he-slash-she*.” Contemporary-to-the-time, indeed.

“The Bible’s using *they*.” Full stop here; that dramatic teacherly performative audible punctuation. “It’s not ‘Each one in *his* craft is wise,’” she repeats, verbally painting for the folks at the back of the club, or, as Trixie Mattel would say, *painting for the folks at the Denny’s down the street*. “It’s each,” she triple-downs here, speaking slowly and clearly, almost tasting, savouring each individual, singular word, “one...in...their...craft...is...wise. Each individual, singular person...in *their* craft is wise.”

Long pause. *Yes, queen*, he thinks: soak it *in*. Sop it *up*. Yes, girl: Pay no attention to the smirk at the front of the room! *snap!* (Too much?)

“This is a story for another time because we don’t have time for this one,” she says, rather quickly to chorally emphasize the aside, “but in the very first book of the Bible, *Genesis*, with the story of Adam and Eve, Adam also is referred to with nonbinary, singular pronouns in the Greek and

in the earliest English vernacular translations.^[77] So, Adam also is nonbinary in the Bible. So Adam as the first man was also nonbinary, which is wonderful and blows people’s minds, and that is a talk for another time but...” she pauses and lingers before saying, emphatically, “that’s also in the Bible: in the very first book of the Bible, it uses the singular nonbinary *they* as well.”

She doesn’t here just absolutely *live* in as long of a pause this time for soaking and sopping, but a quick-ish moment of silence before going on and clicking on ahead, chipperly transitioning with,

“And then let’s pick on the British Imperial system again, because we continually should. 1771. Oliver Goldsmith’s *The History of England*. In language that looks not like the wonky teenage phase of ours, but language that looks like ours,” and she reads aloud from the slide, “‘Every person who had been punished for seditious libels during the foregoing administration, now recovered *their* liberty, and had damages given *them* upon those who had decreed *their* punishment’ [(Goldsmith 240-1 – emphases added)]. Every individual, singular person: *their* liberty; *them*; *their* punishment.” Slight pause. “Again,” another slight pause, then: “every individual singular person: *their* and *them*; not *his* and *him*.”

“Not a universal *he*; not a universal Man standing in for every person. So here’s Oliver Goldsmith writing the history of England and accidentally breaking the rules that Robert Lowth set forward ten years earlier saying that we have gender built into these and *they* is a, is a plural pronoun here...because our language used to always do this naturally as part of it.

⁷⁷ Genesis 1.27: “Thus God created the man in his image: in the image of God created he him: he created them male and female.”

Genesis 5.2: “he created them male and female; and blessed them: and called their name Adam.”

Matthew 19.4: “have you not read, that he who made man from the beginning, made them male and female.”

“Middle English is kind of the, the wonky teenage years of our English language,” she repeats, “you know, when you’re kind of figuring out, you’re trying things on, when we’re kind of seeing where it goes from there. And so it is really exciting to see in the 1300s this was always there, and then in the 1700s this was still there in regular kind of writing and correspondence.

“White folks in power in the Church came along and knew they were going to the new world to colonize people who live there, were going to bring English language with them [to do so,] and created these rules that asserted a masculine universal dominance over it.”

Yesssss, he thinks here: *The root of colonization is misogyny*, he suddenly remembers *kokum* saying to him recently, and it connects. All the pieces are coming together here. This, together with her joke-ish turn just a bit ago of *It’s almost like it has nothing to do with language acquisition at all...* These pieces. Misogyny, and eugenics.

“Not a myth,” she says, strongly and confidently. A touch fiercely, too, again, he thinks, and he wants to give another *Yes, queen!* and sassy-ass snap. “Not making it up. Here’s the language. Here’s the evidence for that as well.”

She isn’t smirking – but he is, at her, at them – and she is scanning the room. That ping-pong *ohana* thing. He glances around, too, suddenly re-aware that this isn’t a one-person audience academic drag queen show but a packed room of their past, and there is definite nodding action happening, some scribbling of notes, and an energy that is tense but in a palpably positive way.

“So, that doesn’t always work, I should say,” she says, referencing back to the series of questions about this that they subtitled their slides for this section with. “But knowing that this is a human-made construct, specifically a *man*-made construct, of where [in our language] *they* can’t be plural comes from[, now that’s powerful].

“I’m just assuming we’re all on the same page for that,” she declares after a pause, her voice much more conversational, much more inviting now, though it wasn’t detached before but clearly audibly authoritative and sage-on-the-stage-y that even he could tell it wasn’t really time yet to raise your hand: this was a gift of listening, and of learning, unlearning, and relearning, but her shift in voice is moving everyone to a gift of participating now. “Please do ask questions and stuff, and let’s chat about this as well.

“[Really,]” she says, clicking the slide advancer before placing it on the podium and stepping out onto the side of the room and into the actual space with her audience rather than the staged front of the room.

“I’m going to pause here. [For real.]” She, for the first obvious time thus far in this scholarly public performance, subtly draws attention to her body. From where he is sitting, he can’t see her feet, but he knows this draggy power stance all too well. Stiletto-booted feet crossed at the ankles, seemingly-precariously balancing on naught but the ball of her left foot and the mere toe of her right; left arm left dangling by her side as though the cheap drugstore bracelets on her wrist are pure silver-plated osmium bands, and right hand naturally placed on manufactured hip, right thumb out-of-sight but right forefinger gently hugging, and elbow tipping out to a perfect triangle; chin slightly up and just ever so to the left, artificial lighting in the library room magically intensifying the contour and highlight just as it should...the dynamism of the lines and angles is damn near intimidating. A hush falls over the room, though perhaps he is just enamoured by statuesque her.

“Let’s do a little bit of a touchdown.” The hush is refocused into directed silence. “What can I clarify about English language?”

After waiting the requisite seven-to-ten seconds – no version of them can ever make it to *the Fryeian thirty*, like their MA thesis supervisor, Dr. Jeffery Donaldson, whose PhD supervisor was Northrop Frye, once told them Frye would literally wait in silence with his students for! – they raise their braceleted arm. With a jingle of the metal, this arm forms a second elbow angle, left palm facing up, cupping the image on the projected slide. (He knows statuesque she feels and is completely unshakeable right now, but never having seen herself out of himself and as herself standing like this before, he knows that if statuesque her’s left palm were facing down instead of up, and making a swan head to the neck arm of her left side instead of cupping the slide on the screen, he knows the resemblance to My Little Teapot would be *Snatch Game* gold. Not lost on him, too, is that out-of-drag, they are rather short and stout. No one does laugh, and he can tell no one wants to, too.)

“This is a picture of Sam,” statuesque she says, completing the tableau vivant at the front of the room. “I teased, you know, our 16-year-old dog and I [like showing pics not only of Sam to bring him into my work with me but because, pedagogically, as studies show, viewing cute animal pictures in lectures – or doing “Cute Animal Breaks,” as I like to call them! – actually enhances attention and aides in memory and focus on content [(Nittono et al. 2012)]. So here’s a photo of Sam to focus our attention as we pause here for a moment to touch down on how we’re doing so far with a Cute Animal Break.]

“So what can I clarify about the English language and pronouns before we add a bit more gender to it and kind of get into some more storytelling about myself and my understanding of my three pronouns as my lived identity?”

She smiles very warmly and scans the room, but she doesn’t have to wait as long as he remembered before a hand goes up. Just one, but it’s always the first question that really opens the dam for free-flowing questions and discussion.

“[Hi, yes,]” she says, gesturing with an opened-hand extended in the direction of the question-asker, and he turns around to look back a few rows of chairs from where he’s sitting to see the person with their hand up.

“Hi!” the question-asker starts. “Could you speak a bit [more] about *they/them*. I often use this pronoun rather than other pronouns, but I worry that someone who actually uses this pronoun to refer to themselves may be offended that it is being used generally.” The question-asker pauses here, biting their lip slightly and looking like they might say more. “OR,” they re-start, “someone who uses another pronoun may not appreciate being referred to in this way” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).⁷⁸

“This is a great question!” she says, vocally excited, but trying, he knows, to not be *too* excited to the point of appearing disingenuous. “A best practice is, yes, to use the *they*-series of pronouns as the default gender-neutral pronouns – and our academic style guides do seem to have caught up to this in 2020 as well, which is helpful for teaching writing and communication as well as having these disciplinary updates to support us. I have often been asked about the worry of offending someone who uses this pronoun as well as of someone who does not use this pronoun, and so I say this is safer (not safe or safest) to use the *they*-series because it is more inclusive and forecloses on any assumptions – and in the case where someone may not have this as their lived pronoun (someone who, for examples, lives with the binary *she*-series or *he*-series...which is totally okay!), this can be a

⁷⁸ This is a real question that was submitted to me after my Keynote with the University of Alberta Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at their Online Teaching Institute (OTI) in August 2020. Questions were not asked and answered live because of an Internet outage than happened while I was presenting remotely from Waterloo – and I was doing this talk virtually in full drag, so yes, I was scrambling and crawling around in full drag on the bedroom floor with the router while also on my cellphone with the Lead Educational Developer at CTL running the Institute! – so OTI participants submitted questions to a Google form and I spent time after typing up some responses and resources. The submitted questions and my responses live on the CTL website now as “Resources from the 2020 Online Teaching Institute.” My in-text parenthetical citations of “(Mayberry, “Q&A”),” then, are direct quotations from this online resource narrativized here for my counterstory.

great teaching moment and push toward reflection for the wider instances of misgendering people with pronouns, such as the earlier ‘universal he’ to refer to an unknown person and, yes, the misgendering of non-binary [*sic*] and trans people by the use of binary-gendered pronouns” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).

“[Does that help and answer your question?]

 she asks, and he sees the question-asker nod and smile. She smiles, too, and, turning back to gesture to the whole room, continues,

“[What else are we thinking or wondering about language here at the moment?]

A couple hands go up almost at once.

“[Ooh, nice!]

 she says. “[Let’s go here and then here, shall we?] She gestures as she says this to a raised hand at front of the room and then the one at the side of the room.

“Why was gender ever written into our language?” the first of the two next question-askers asks. “Is there any point to gendering language?” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).

“This is such an interesting question,” she starts, slowly nodding “because it is a ‘why’ question (instead of a ‘when’ or ‘how’ question). In terms of gender being written into our language, that came with the introduction of French in 1066 with the Norman Invasion, so the French language (which has gender built into its system) merged with our Anglo-Saxon (or, ‘Old English’) language to become what was for a while ‘Middle English.’ Our English language today has several hang-overs from both Anglo-Saxon and French in it, and gender is one of them. In term of the ‘why’ and the ‘is there any point,’ that is not precisely known, but as I mentioned [so far] with Bishop Robert Lowth in the 1700s, several people with power in our history took different liberties to ‘tidy up’ our language to create rules and formalities (this is how our language itself continues and perpetuates colonization), and many of these rules and formalities were to solidify the gender binary and, in doing so, work to maintain the subordination of (binary) women” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).

Transmisogyny is a real thing, too, he thinks, listening to this response, and he thinks again here of *kokum*'s wisdom on the roots of colonization. *Why was gender ever written into our language?* Well, to privilege some and to oppress some. And it worked and works in that way, too. He thinks here again now of Ava DuVernay's crystal clear, matter-of-fact tone and rhetoric in *When They See Us Now* on Netflix that, when he first heard her say it, unlocked inside them something he didn't know was locked up: "[We live in] a system that's not broken. It was built to be this way, okay? It was built this way. It was built to oppress. It was built to control. It was built to shape our culture in a specific way that kept some people here [she gestures low] and some people here [she gestures high]."

She nods and gestures to the next question-asker at the side of the room.

"What about the word 'folks'? Would that be considered inclusive?" (Mayberry, "Q&A").

"Yes, absolutely!" she says. "*Folks* is one of the easiest ways to inclusivize our language by getting rid of saying 'guys' when we refer to a group of people. There is an alternate spelling, too, that people use ('folx' – pronounced the same) that uses the x to symbolize an unknown variable as well" (Mayberry, "Q&A").

"[Great questions so far!]" she says, because no other hands are up at the moment. "[What other questions do we have on these language pieces before we keep going with a bit more gender layering on top?]" She pauses here and gently ping-pongs her eyes around the room to see folks' reactions and body language. He glances around, too, and seeing some nodding but no more hands twitching or raising, he turns back to face her at the front of the room.

"[So] let's talk about what are gender pronouns that people use.

“Alright, so yes,” she repeats, “so what are gender pronouns that people use.” She takes a quick sip of water, and continues. “That is the next part of this, where we lay gender on it.

“When we talk about this [and] when we’re thinking about some of this, it can be really helpful when we’re talking about people’s personal pronouns and gender pronouns and lived pronouns and just pronouns to think of them in series as well as cases. So that table before, we bring it back up here” – she clicks the slide advancer, and a similar but now more robust pronoun table pops up on the slide – “we can add a column to the left that is ‘Series.’

“So you heard me say, ‘You can use any of those *three series* – *he*; *she*; and *they* – to refer to me with respect.’ So rather than thinking of the whole table and all the lines and all the cells and everything, it can be very easy to think of them as series. You know, rather than saying, *My object pronoun is...*, we can just say, you know, *My pronouns are the he-series of pronouns*, right? They happen in series for that, so the *he*-series could be *he*, *him*, *his*; the *she*-series can be *she*, *her*, *her* or *hers*; and *they*-series *they*, *them*, *their* or *theirs*.”

The red dotted light of the laser pointer bounces cheerfully on each word, case, and series. And it’s a calming bounce, he thinks, taking it in, not unlike an accidentally-dropped rubber ball that catches and keeps your attention.

“Not quite neopronouns,” she continues, “but some more popular, more commonly-used pronouns over the past kind of 15 to 20 years might be the *ze*- or the *ve*-series of pronouns. So the *ze*-series” – she takes a quick breath – “might...*might*...sound like ‘zee, hear, hears’; the *ve*-series might sound like ‘vee, vem, ver.’

“There’s also really importantly what I kind of call the just-my-name-series, which is where somebody might say, ‘Please use my name to refer to me with respect.’ They might not say, ‘I don’t use a pronoun series,’ but they might say that as well. [Essentially, they are saying,]

‘Please don’t replace my name. My name is who I am.’ In which case you would use the person’s name to refer to them for the subject pronoun, the person’s name for the object pronoun, and the person’s-name-plus-apostrophe-es for the possessive pronoun.

“And one reason – we’ll talk about this a little bit at the close as well – one reason why somebody might say, ‘Please just use my name to refer to me with respect’ is different violence that has happened to bodies who aren’t easily put into a binary category of Male or Female when a baby’s born. A category like intersex that intersexualizes a baby. That child is subjected to a lot of non-consensual surgeries, hormone replacements, you know, psychological conditioning for their entire life, and when puberty hits, everything that doctors and psychologists [and parents] thought they were doing to this body no longer works when that body begins to come into its own as an adult human, and so that often brings a lot of trauma and a lot of pain and then more surgeries and replacements and counseling, and so many, but not all, many intersexualized folks will say, *My name is my everything. [Or,] You can’t replace my name when talking about me respectfully because no other word can actually responsibly capture who I am as a whole person because I wasn’t given the chance to know who I could be as a whole person.*

“So the just-my-name-series is an important one not to throw off and think, ‘Oh, it’s wonky to say, “Tommy put Tommy’s water bottle down so Tommy could take a sip when Tommy was thirsty later in Tommy’s day”...you know, using a pronoun sure could make that sentence less cumbersome!’ But it’s not up to you to say, ‘Well, that’s difficult,’ not up to you to say that your ease of saying that sentence is more important than Tommy hearing Tommy’s name every single time to reaffirm who Tommy is.” Another pause here, and he can tell from where he’s sitting that her glances from where she’s standing at the front of the room, moving from person to person to person in the audience to gauge reception, reaction, confrontation, even, isn’t darting glares...although he knows

that this is often how it feels at this moment for them in this work. Darts. Glares. But this is really, really, important. And as someone who was not intersexualized at birth, he also knows how untalked-about this is and how he very likely is the first person many folks are hearing talking about intersexualization.

“If Tommy doesn’t use a pronoun series and asks you [or tells you] to use Tommy’s name instead, that’s how you do it.”

The silence isn’t cold at all. He’s quite happy to feel that because he anticipates a bit of coldness being perhaps received here.

“So this table is not exhaustive, and it’s not complete, so please don’t screenshot [or take a picture of] the slide and put it up in your office and say, ‘Tommy told me these are all the pronouns I’m ever going to need. I’m going to memorize this, and I’m going to be great. Good to go!’ Language changes. Language evolves. [And so] one of the most important things that I want us to think about as we’re thinking about learning, unlearning, and relearning, is as Jack Halberstam says – and Jack Halberstam is one of the leading if not *the* leading transgender and cultural studies theorists – Jack says, quote, ‘Our words and the language we have is only temporary: but we need it to explain ourselves to each other’ endquote [(Halberstam, “Trans*”⁷⁹)]. So language is only temporary, but we need it to explain ourselves to each other. And so by temporary, as we can see when we kind of look back on 700-plus-years of history, language is evolving. And in different moments of time, it’s different ways we explained ourselves to each other. So the table is not exhaustive [nor complete.

⁷⁹ See footnotes above on counterstorying, decolonizing, and accessibilizing with first-naming over last-naming. Here in my public talks, with Jack, I do introduce him by full name twice before dropping his last name and just calling him “Jack” orally; and then writerly for the counterstory version based on transcripts of my talks, I type Jack’s last name in bracketed parentheses to identify the editorial addition (now) in writing to the (then) unspoken citation as (now) an endnote citation in MLA standards.

Again], don't screenshot this and put it up and say, *Tommy said these are all of those series of personal pronouns.*

“So a couple notes on this,” she says as she clicks and smaller text at the top of the slide shows up boldly saying, *Notes*: “Some people do use gender neutral pronouns series that might be unfamiliar, like the *ze*- and the *ve*-series. People also may mix series together, so there are folks I know who use the *ze* as the subject pronoun but then use *vem* and *ver* as the object and possessive pronouns because *hir* and *hirs* actually do have historicity: *hir* was another Middle English pronoun that was nonbinary and singular, so *hir* and *hirs* exists in, you know, old texts like *Beowulf* and Chaucer^[80] and those sorts of pieces as well, so some folks don't want to use those two because they do have kind of British Imperial colonial histories to them as well, so they might mix some series together as well; again, however, someone tells you or asks you to refer to them is how you do it.

“Some people's pronominal systems is just their name and not a series of pronouns,” she says, near-rotely, as she clicks and brings up the second Note. “So here's another part of speech vocab word for us: adjectives. Adjectives describe nouns, so *pronominal* means ‘relating to and/or serving as a pronoun,’^[81] and *system* is a noun, so *pronominal system* is a system that relates to and/or serves as a pronoun, which could be someone's name. So someone wouldn't actually [have to]

⁸⁰ Okay, truth time here: I don't know if the pronoun *hir* is in Chaucer or not...I mention Chaucer in my public scholarship because I think Chaucer as an historical Middle English poet (and *Beowulf* as iconic Anglo-Saxon text before that) will be more familiar to folks than William Langland, but the pronoun *hir* most certainly is in Langland's *Piers Plowman* (c. 1370-1386). Please see Endnote I for some specific citations of the pronoun *hir* in *Piers Plowman* as well as some deeper etymological scholarship around this pronoun.

⁸¹ As defined in the *OED*, the word *pronominal* means “Of, relating to, or of the nature of a pronoun; that is a pronoun; standing in place of a noun.” The definitional quotation I give here – “relating to or serving as a pronoun” – is what comes up when you Google “define pronominal.” Clearly, in my public scholarship updates to this slide, I was lazy in sourcing authoritatively; regardless of source, however, the explanation for function is the same/similar. But for my dissertation, let's go with not-Google.

say, ‘My pronouns are just my name,’ somebody would say, somebody might say, ‘The pronominal system I use is my name’; or, more likely they’ll just say, ‘Please use my name.’

“But it can be challenging sometimes to think of, you know, when we’re thinking, you know, as [teachers,] leaders, and communicators. When we ask people to share their pronouns, that’s not fully inclusive because folks who use a pronominal system that isn’t pronouns can’t actually fill out that blank that we put there. And so thinking of other ways to be more inclusive, more representational – and you’ll see this in action in a quotation coming up in a moment as well.

“But asking folks to share their pronouns-slash-pronominal-systems, asking people to share how we can respectfully refer to you, can also be a great question to not use *pronominal system* or *pronoun* but actually say, you know, for this [teaching] event or this conference, *How can we respectfully refer to you?* That might be a way to kind of shift that as well.”

She slightly pauses here, and then clicks to bring up the third Note at the top of the slide, and then:

“And then some people use and are open to being referred to by more than one series of pronouns...” – she clicks her advancer mid-sentence to switch from this text-heavy, table-heavy slide of pure grammar and parts of speech to a word-cloud-looking slide with their name and pronouns as the title and with three photos of people smiling out from the centre – “...like me, for example.”

“So I introduced myself saying that my name is Tommy and my pronouns are *he*, *she*, and *they*, and you can use any of those three series to refer to me with respect. And so what I want to do now for just a couple minutes is to share with you literally my life story; so, you know, tuck in, this is *Tommy Storytime* here, and I want to share with you how I came to understand and see myself and live these three series of pronouns.

“And I do want to be very clear,” she says, sternly, but intentionally so and not threateningly so. “The disclaimer here is that what I’m about to do is something I feel confident and powerful doing as a queer and trans- person with you folks today for this teaching and learning event, and I am doing this from my lived experience as a queer and transfeminine person. But I do want to be clear that just because I’m about to do this[, to share my story] and then invite questions from you folks on my story, this does not mean you can ask any queer or trans- person or any person who identifies or has lived experience different from yours to share their details in as much detail as I’m about to share as well. Doesn’t mean you can say, *Well, Tommy told me their whole life story, can you tell me yours? Because that was really helpful for me to learn more about this.*

“Again, you can ask if you can ask. But be ready for folks to say ‘No.’ Not everybody who lives with intersections of equity-denied identity is or needs to be an activist or a teacher or a trainer. Some folks are, you know, activists, living and breathing, and would love the opportunity to share with you their story to give you another kind of narrative to help you on your journeys. Other folks just want to be who they are and just want to go about their life without having to educate and inform every person who comes across their path on their point in their journey. I just happened to be, and so I’m very happy to share this with you, with all of you folks today, even though I’m about to share with you a lot of incredibly personal details, some of which might actually make you uncomfortable to hear. And I’m doing that for the sake of education and of learning, unlearning, and relearning today.

“I also want to say that this is my story and I’m an individual, unique person. This does not mean that every other queer person, every other drag queen, every other trans-identifying person also has the same or similar story. So I’m not a representative here of, you know, and you can see it on the slide” – she gestures to the word-cloud cluster of letters and numerals – “of the 2SLGBTQIA+

community. I'm a person who lives and breathes and has a real experience as a whole person in this community, but I'm not a representative to stand in for the whole community."

This last bit, this last phrase, its precise wording strikes him a bit. Not too roughly, but definitely enough to give him a pause as he sits there listening, really hearing, what she is saying. He knows *why* she says this and is saying it: they take huge risks – huge, vulnerable, authentic hooksian risks – by putting themselves and their story up for grabs as a case study here in their public scholarship and don't want that mis-taken as open season on all and any queer and trans- folks these folks might cross paths with, however good their intentions may be in asking...but what she didn't know now and what they have been learning since then is that more is happening in their body, in their scholarship, in their pedagogies, than just a performative pedagogy self-as-case-study approach to looking in and to critical, reflective praxis. They are telling their story. And their story is counter to the majoritarian narratives, as Dr. Aja would say. And as dr vay says, "It's true I'm writing about my own racial performance, but it certainly isn't true that what I'm writing concerns only me" (Young 3). "[T]he personal *can*," Dr. Aja says (my emphasis), "represent the collective" (91) because "this collective voice can speak for a group but can also represent varying/diverse/divergent viewpoints within groups" (91). And channeling Victor Villanueva before her, Frankie says that "[p]ersonal narrative is necessary and integral to the creation and sustenance of community and solidarity" (31): "We need to learn," Frankie continues, "to read, to engage with one another's stories, not as voyeurs but as players, in a dramatic sense, within them, and as actors who may be changed not only by the telling of our own stories, but also by the practices of listening, attending, acknowledging, and honoring the[se] stories" (32). Frankie takes him right back to performative pedagogies, and to his visual pedagogies as an academic drag queen, and he hears her repeat at the front of the room, *I'm a person who lives and breathes and has a real experience as a whole person in this community, but I'm not a*

representative to stand in for the whole community. Can my voice represent the collective? Yes, though not as synecdoche, as you say here, and perhaps not even metonymy...but indexically. (And pronouns, of course, are rhetorically indexical, too.)

“Last thing before I tell you my story,” she says, as he snaps back to attention, “because you’re like *Just tell me the story of Tommy!*” He grins. “I do also want you to please ask me questions about who I am and my understanding as well, so when we get to the [*What can I clarify?* point in just a moment], please do feel you have permission to say, ‘I’d love to know more about X’ or ‘You mentioned this that I don’t know what that means.’ I do – and now I sound like a narcissist – I do want to talk about myself today with all of you: I want to use myself, less narcissistically, I want to use myself and my story as a case study for us to think through some of this together before we think about [how to do this toward cultures of respect] and move to the Q+A [at the end].

“So,” she says, after a quick breath from the overly-long-but-overtly-necessary preambly prelude to their story, “I was assigned male at birth, which is *AMAB*, that acronym” – she gestures to the word-cloud acronym – “assigned-male-at-birth; [and there’s also] *AFAB*, assigned-female-at-birth. And I like to share that I was actually assigned male *before* I was born: my parents didn’t want to know the, well, the way they say it is they didn’t want to know the gender of their kids before we were born – more accurately, what they didn’t know they were not wanting, they weren’t wanting to know how the doctor was going to look between their kids’ legs and say *Your child is going to be this or that.*

“They didn’t know that that was what they were saying, but in an early ultrasound, my family doctor let slip particularly masculine anatomical sounding words, and my parents’ ears perked up and they thought, ‘Oh, that sounds male.’ And the doctor laughed and probably said something like, ‘Yes, he’s a boy.’ My doctor, of course, didn’t say, *Yes, I apologize for letting that slip, but when your baby*

is born, I am going to tell you that I'm assigning them to the male gender and casting them in that script for their life. (See? I just actually used the singular they and I could have said his.)"

He smirks here, but not actually at the jokey aside but that that since this talk, they actually have sat down with their mom and dad and asked them, like how Dr. Aja closes her book *Counterstory* with what her daughter once asked her, to "tell me my baby story" (Martinez 139). And here's how that goes:

I'll tell you the way I remember it, Mom says, and then like Dad might have a bit of a different version. That's why I always liked Dad to come as well: he wanted to come to all the appointments, too, because he was very involved, and he might have different versions of it, and it was always good that he came because sometimes after appointments and things that happens I'd say, "Man, what did he say again?" Like, what did the doctor say, in case we'd forget different things. So okay, back then, ultrasounds weren't standard like unless there was a problem. Like, now you know they have ultrasounds I-don't-know-how-many times during pregnancies, but it wasn't standard if everything was fine. Like, I didn't have them with Erin: no ultrasound, just got pregnant, fat, boom! in the delivery room, and there she was! And with you at some point in time, and I'm thinking it was more around the sixth- or seventh-month mark of everything being fine, but I started noticing spotting, a little bit of bleeding. And so then, of course, I was like, "Okay, well that's not good!" So we went to Dr. Hicks, and he set up for an ultrasound to go and see what was going on. And so we went, and we had the ultrasound, and then he called us in for the meeting when the ultrasound was done. And I don't remember exactly, but I remember, like, seeing them push, I think push the thing on my stomach, and I remember seeing on the screen and we could see you. But I don't think we got a picture of you, to tell the truth. And of course, the ultrasound techs don't tell you anything. So then Dr. Hicks said, "Everything's fine. Don't worry about the spotting and the

bleeding.” And then he said, “But I see that the baby has a scrotal hydrocele...” and he kept talking, and I’m just going in my head like, “Scrotal? Scrotal? Sounds like scrotum. Sounds like something male!” And so he said – and I forget if I looked at Dad or elbowed him or not or something – and so he’s done talking, and I said, “Yeah, excuse me, Dr. Hicks, but you said scrotal hydrocele and that sounds like a very male thing. So does it mean we are having a boy?” And he’s like, “Oops, I guess I let it slip!” So he said, “Yes, you’re having a boy” and that your scrotal hydrocele was just a little water blister sort of on your scrotum and that was nothing to worry about at all, everything was all fine. But that’s what they saw at the ultrasound, yes. So yes, that’s how we found out that you were a boy. And then we named you “Tommy” right away because that’s what we had picked out if you were a boy.

And we weren’t in the least bit upset at all, like, to find out the sex, like we didn’t want to for any of them. But not like, I-never-want-to-know, you know? Not like that. So when we found out, we were just thrilled. And then, you know, I talked to you, like told you what’s your name and everything and whether you’re still inside of me and stuff. So it was really cool to know that you were a boy.

“So I love this story,” she continues at the front of the room, “because my parents actually named me before I was born – I’m the only one of my parents’ kids who are and the only one of my siblings who was actually named before I was born – and so when my mom was pregnant with me, I was named Thomas, which is the name on my birth certificate and passport, but my mom and dad called me ‘Little Tommy’ and the neighbours in the place where I grew up always would ask in the morning, you know, ‘How’s little Tommy doing?’”

Not quite, he thinks again, smiling now instead of smirking. Remembering their baby story from their parents’ lips, here’s how Mom and Dad say their naming went:

Well “Ray,” Mom says of my middle name, because the “Thomas Ray” because of Dad and “Thomas” was your grandfather. And Dad’s second name and your grandfather’s second name, so the first boy was just going to have more Mayberry names, so that’s what we want. We wanted Dad’s name for sure – my name in the first one; Dad’s name in the second one – but we didn’t want Juniors, so that’s how we came up with that name. And we discussed that we could just call you whatever we wanted. Like, you know, “Thomas” if we wanted to, and I do like the name “Thomas,” but to me, you were always Little Tommy, you know?

I do know, he thinks, almost tearing up.

“So that’s why I keep my name *Tommy* instead of *Thomas*,” she says, not really knowing the full ins-and-outs from never herself having asked their parents metacognitively before. “*Thomas*, you know, some people think *Tommy* may not be the most professional name, that I shouldn’t be using as an [academic and professional], but I have such a unique kind of origin story that I was Little Tommy before I was born.”⁸²

She flicks the red laser light back at the slide and hovers near the text just below the acronym AMAB.

“I do in my day to day life,” she continues with her theirstory, “visually present most often in that culturally-coded male way, you know, the beard, the facial hair, the clothes from the men’s side of the store, or I guess, the men’s button now on the online shopping kind of pieces for it; not heavy

⁸² As part of my familial and ancestral research, I also have, of course, come to learn and to know that my/the name “Thomas Mayberry” goes all the way back to Ireland and so isn’t *just* my name because “Thomas” was my dad’s dad’s name. Thomas Mayberry was the Patriarch in the Mayberry family in our history with settling pre-Confederacy in this nation we now call Canada, and his name was passed down through seven generations...to me. And so not keeping/going-by “Thomas” isn’t consciously because of this colonial and settler history of my name and my family, but you know the patriarchal-deferent joke, “*Mister So-and-So* was my *father!* Call me [my first name]”? I kind of love the idea of one day unironically saying, “*Thomas Mayberry* is my quadruple-Great Grandpa and settler-colonial ancestor! *Please*, call me Tommy!”

or colourful makeup, I do wear a BB cream and a primer and usually that's about it as a boy, and in drag, you see" – she gestures here to her own physical body as well as shines the laser pointer light on the photo of them in drag on the slide – "you know, I do wear a lot of color and a lot of other pieces as well, but I walk around this world, for the most [part], most of my life, in a male-presenting body.

"I do have a same sex partner," she says as she clicks the slide advancer and the centre headshot of her out-of-drag/the centre headshot of him changes to a photograph of him with their Tommy wearing white suspenders and white bowties, "who also was named Tommy, and so together we appear as a gay male couple often affectionately known as The Tommies. And so there are a lot of things about me that visually signify that the *he*-series of pronouns might be the one that you would use for me, and it is, since before I was born this pronoun was used to talk about me and it has, for the most part, felt comfortable and felt like, you know, it didn't, it didn't hit me and fall off. It felt like it was me.

"And, as I said, that was given to me before I was born and for my entire life that's been a pronoun that has fit and has felt like who I was. Only recently in this kind of, you know, anti-intellectual society that we're living in have people used it derogatorily to refer to me in a kind of questioning of my masculinity or a kind of derogatory way of, you know, saying, *You're not man enough*, to say that *You're a man* kind of thing, so it *has* been used derogatorily for me, but for the most part, that was who I was.

"When I went to high school," she continues, and he can actually feel her take that quick breath to steady herself without oversteading herself, "I was bullied quite badly in high school. I almost didn't survive high school.

“My parents tell the story about my being bullied in high school as I was bullied for being gay. I didn’t come out ’til I was 21 as it wasn’t really safe to do so in the hometown that I grew up in and kind of the culture around that, but when I reflect back and think on...”

Her voice fades out here for a moment and is replaced by his parents’ voices telling him how they remember this story:

We do not know what we could’ve done to stop it or whatever, Mom says. Even like Erin would tell us what was going on. You’d tell us some of what was going on. We talked to a few people at the school and all that, but there’s nothing they could do really do about it. And I’m not sure that we know or have ever known everything that you went through – I don’t think that you told us everything. I know that Erin was there for you a lot as far as she could, from what I know from over the years, and I think that she would maybe bag some classes with you, maybe your gym class. You didn’t talk to us a lot about what was going on, back then. We found out more later, I remember, I was really talking to you a lot about gym class and the gym class was really, really horrible. And I remember that we talked to the teacher, and of course they said it was like any other bullying: “If we said something and talk to the people that were doing it to him, it would just make it worse for him. Maybe not on school property, but they definitely would find him after school property and, you know, and beat him up worse.” I would only make it worse for you if we were to force the school to confront the students that we’re doing it in gym class.

And I remember asking like, “What else can he do? Can he do more Health projects on the side? Can he, what else can he do to skip the rest of the gym classes?” Or how many more classes can he skip that the minimum that he will still need to pass because we don’t want him to have to stay in gym class because of what’s happening. But there wasn’t much other way to get you out of gym classes to still get the credit that you needed. But I remember asking about how many? How many?

How many classes you have to show up and so that he can miss the rest of the gym and still get his credit, you know, but I don't remember the answer. But I wasn't happy with the answer they gave, you know, you still had to go. I wanted you to do more Health projects on the side and have to miss being with them, and of course the teachers were like, "Oh, yeah, no, no, you know, like, we'll watch out and, um, you know, pay more attention and whatever." But I know they didn't. I know it didn't work. And the teacher doesn't hear everything and see everything.

So yeah, it was, it was, it was really hard. I cried a lot. I, for you, I, 'cause I didn't know what to do. I didn't know everything that you were going through. I knew that it was a lot. And as far as we knew at that point, like, like I was always, I was pretty sure, that you were gay but you weren't or hadn't said it out loud yet that you were, so that must have been like a huge struggle for you. And me really thinking and knowing that you were gay but you not, and it's something I certainly can't, couldn't, say to you, you know, that like, "Well, I really think that you are..." That's not up to me, like it's up to you.

"...but when I reflect back and think on," her voice at the front of the room breaks back in here, "on how I was treated in high school and how I was kind of, you know, broken and abused, none of it was because of any same-sex attraction.

"I was really bullied badly for the tone of my voice, the timbre of my voice, the, the movements of my body, the way that I walked, you know, my mannerisms, my close female friends who I had. I was bullied quite badly because of my femininity not because of my same-sex attraction, and so I was really derogatorily called *Tammy* in high school and I had the *she*-series applied to me in really kind of villainizing ways, and so I was actually bullied and really broken down because of my femininity that other people saw not because of my, my orientation.

“So the *she*-series of pronouns has a really dark history for me, and it took a long time for me to find my way back to the, the *she*-series of pronouns.”⁸³

It’s a beautifully, hauntingly bizarre event, he thinks, to see themselves in full drag at the front of this room on a university campus talking about the dark history the *she*-series of pronouns has for themselves on the same day that fifty years ago, a full-on riot and revolution happened that led, that allowed, him in her body, in this their body, to be in full drag at the front of this room on a university campus talking openly and vulnerably about the dark history the *she*-series of pronouns has had for themselves. Fifty years is a long time for that much to have changed but still to have stayed the same.

“I started doing drag in my first Master’s degree as a kind of project around identity and language,” she continues with their story of coming to know themselves with three series of pronouns, “and the first time I saw myself in drag – a drag queen in Hamilton, Ontario, I did my Masters at McMaster, was putting me in drag and we were talking the whole time about like who would my character be, what was her name going to be, you know, she going to be sassy, she going to be chic, like, you know, all of those things, and it was all kind of *she-she-she* that I was starting to feel.

“But when he handed the mirror to me and I looked at myself, for the first time in full drag, I recognized myself. It was this really wonderful, surreal moment where I was like, ‘I know who this person is *and* this person’s name.’ And, and I couldn’t create a new character, because this was me: this was someone who I didn’t know I had seen many times throughout my childhood, but had repressed.

⁸³ Please see Endnote II for my metacognitive and metadiscursive reflection on the curricular elements of Mom and Dad’s story as well one other piece that I still do not know how to write about (as/with counterstory or otherwise) nor even talk about (publicly or privately, scholarly or informally).

“It took when, when my, when my last living grandparent died in the beginning of 2020 and we were going through all the old photo albums to build the photo boards for the visitation. And so that photo on the left” – she gestures back at it on the slide – “there is a photo of me when I was seven for Hallowe’en. I don’t remember this. I don’t remember this Hallowe’en at all, but this was a Hallowe’en when I was seven.

“One of my cousins found this photo and was like, ‘I think this is you and your sister’ – my sister’s the Wicked Witch with the green there – and we took it to my mom, and we asked my mom, you know, what’s going on in this photo.

“And my mom laughs and she says, ‘Oh my gosh, you know this was you, seven years old, you know, like you know I remember doing your hair like the wig and curlers kind of thing,’ and I asked my mom, you know, well who was I? and she says, ‘I don’t know, for Hallowe’en you wanted to be just a lady.’ And so, when I was seven, for Hallowe’en, I wanted to be just a lady.”

She pauses here a moment as she smiles warmly to the room. The energy in the room wasn’t and hadn’t been dark or cold before, but there was a gloominess, a sombreness, a heaviness hanging above the room that he could feel threatening to descend on everyone that was abated now. It feels, he could tell – and he could tell she could tell, too – that everyone was ready for a warm joke to bring us all forward.

“I should say,” she says, with a very different, almost performative tone in her voice, “that’s my *mom*’s interpretation of just-a-lady” – he smiles at the joke here he’s told countless times in his public talks after this one, too; and there are, indeed, some warm, friendly giggles and laughs around him where he sits – “*my* interpretation,” she continues, intoning powerfully as only a drag queen can, “might be the picture on the far right there of just-a-lady” – and she gestures to the picture of

them on the slide in drag – “how I see myself as a female person.” She also gestures at her own body, their drag body, for how they are as a female person.

“But that moment of my grandma’s funeral in January 2020,” she continues, “I realized that I had often seen myself in makeup and wigs and drag well before I was 21, and it’s been, and then we started finding more and more photos throughout the years as well, and not just Hallowe’en.

“And so my mom was my drag mother who put me in drag for the first time” – he notices a catch in her voice here – “and I had these unconscious memories of looking in the mirror and seeing myself, which is why I knew who this person was when I was in full drag for [what I then thought was] the first time.

“I realized that moment just before the pandemic that I had forgotten how many times, when I was a kid” – her voice shakes here, and she pauses for a moment, tries to start again, but her voice shakes enough to the point of cracking, and she does break up into tears here – “sorry, how many times, when I was a kid my mom put me in drag, and I saw myself, and I loved myself, and high school kind of had me repress a lot of that, and so recently in my life, I’ve really found a lot of empowerment in this *she*-series of pronouns to bring that back in a powerful way for who I am as a person.

“Sorry,” she says, completely becoming self-aware of the audience she now has for the reflective performance she didn’t know was going to hit her today. He wipes a tear from his eyes, too, seeing this vulnerability that he’s only ever felt before, not seen. “I didn’t know this is going to hit me,” she says, “[like this today, in this moment as I still, to-the-minute, am myself learning, unlearning, and relearning].”

Very carefully, so as not to smear her makeup or shake-loose an eyelash, she dabs at her eyes with the pads of her ring fingers on both hands, very careful also so as to not poke her eyes with her

long and albeit obviously now too pointed acrylics. He, seeing this for the first time, too, can't help but smirk a bit to himself: RuGirls always look so freakin' extra doing this exact thing when they tear up and cry on the mainstage runway, and yet, there is nothing extra about this. This is authentic, and almost unconsciously so, too.

"I was able to reclaim this series of pronouns," she says, composing herself a bit more and getting back into the strong, confident, and yes, fierce swing of things by gesturing back towards the slides and the three series of pronouns beside their name, "and when I think about the, the acronym LGBTQIA2S+, I do feel an affinity for the G, the T, and the Q. I always talk about myself as, you know, having my nails done, my hair on fleek, my makeups on whether I'm in or out of drag; you know, the two eff words that I love most are *flamboyant* and *fierce*. And I do use the *they*-series of pronouns to refer to myself in the third person.

"That *they*-series came about in a bit more of a practical way for me when I started publishing in academic circles and they were asking for third-person bios. And to put *he* didn't feel like it represented authentically who I am as a whole person, and neither did putting *she* – *he* felt like I was missing, you know, an entire part of who I am; and *she* felt like it wasn't honouring the past that brought me to be who I was. And so, for the first time, when I published under my name, which is still Tommy Mayberry, I used the *they*-series to refer to me, and it felt like it represented who I was as a whole person. I tried *they*, and it looked right and it felt right and that's when the *they*-series entered into my life.

"And so I use these three series," she states, "and I jokingly say they're also alphabetical, you know, that little jab to kind of the colonial structure of the English alphabet, but they're also how I came to understand them in, in who I am as a person. They're chronological for me as well, and so,

when I say I'm an academic drag queen, I *am* a drag queen: I teach in drag, I conference in drag...it's a part of who I am.

“And so all three of these series are the series that you can use to refer to me with respect. And that respect piece is really huge for it because, as I shared about the *she*-series that has been used to refer to me very disrespectfully, and recently in some social media engagements as well, the *he*-series has been used to refer to me quite disrespectfully as well. So respect is huge when it comes to pronouns and pronoun series and pronominal systems.”

She pauses to take a sip of water and to let this respect piece really resonate, especially, she knows and feels, the disrespect of how either of the *he*-series and the *she*-series can be and has been used for them, before continuing.

“And I'm also not confident enough to say that I have fully arrived as who I am as a person at 33 years old. So these pronouns might not be the same series that I have for the rest of my life as I continue learning and unlearning and relearning about who I am and about how the world works and about social and racial and health justice. My pronouns also might change, and that's okay. If somebody you know who you knew with one series of pronouns tells you they're now using a different series of pronouns, they want you to be on that journey with them because they're sharing that part of who they are with you. So don't be that person's first bully when they're coming out [to you] with a different series of pronouns: be that person's first champion with them, and go on that journey with them, because they want you to be with them. And, yes, it can be hard and, yes, it can be difficult, but honour that person who's wanting you to stay with them on their journey.

“[My mom was my first champion,]” she says, and he can tell she is feeling her voice shake again and that tears are announcing they're welling up at the back of her eyes again, “[before I was even born, when an anatomical vocabulary slip had me named ‘Little Tommy,’ my mom was my first

champion. So] it's actually biographical for me is, is how these, these pronouns arrive in this order – *he; she; they* – for me. But it's also really that guiding piece of my identity and how I kind of found and saved myself over the years." Here, her voice cracks again, but she keeps going, "but I didn't know – and that's what's really cool about looking back [and reflecting critically and creatively] – I didn't know, for years I didn't know, *why* I recognized myself that first time when I was 21, and now, and now I do" – another voice crack, one he feels, too, as he tries to swallow with tears welling up in his eyes where he sits – "and so" – her voice cracks harder, and she stops – "sorry, I'm going to pause here again for a Sam-What-Can-I-Clarify-Moment."

"[So,]" she says, taking a breath and steadying herself, "[what can I clarify about gender pronouns, and my self, before we move into some tips and tricks for positive engagement with gender pronouns towards cultures of respect?]"

A hand immediately goes up, and still sniffing a bit, she gestures to the person and smiles.

"You are so brave and beautiful to share your story," the person says as they lower their hand. "I was so moved by what you shared, thank you so much for helping me (and I am sure many others) with the healing that is so very much needed every day. [I don't have a question yet, but I just wanted to say that y]ou are fabulous!" (Hall)⁸⁴

⁸⁴ The Hall citation here for this quotation is a recent addition and not from any transcripts of my "Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect" public talks. It was historically during my Ivey Business School talk in November 2021 that I first broke down telling this story, in-the-moment making critical connections with my past and my story. Since November 2021, I continue to tear up and get emotional at this moment in my public scholarship, and after my talk with the Region of Waterloo Library in May 2022, my colleague and friend Shirley Hall e-mailed me and included this note that I now, with her permission, include here in my counterstory to soften the formerly-abrupt transition in just continuing directly to the Q+A and to honour my emotions and place these emotions powerfully in my scholarship.

She giggles, dabs at her eyes with the back of her thumbs, and says, “[Thank you so much. An Elder told me recently that we should not apologize for our tears because tears are medicine, so I am working on that. But thank you so, so much.]”

A hand slowly, almost sheepishly, goes up beside him where he’s sitting, and he looks to his left and sees that the about-to-be question-asker is looking down and looking a bit timid.

“[Yes, thank you].” He looks back at the front of the room and sees her gesture her braceleted hand in the direction of the raised hand.

“I’m really apologetic about my lack of knowledge,” the question-asker starts, “but can you describe how the term *queer* relates to *lesbian*, *gay*, *bisexual* and *transgender*? It would really help me understand a person’s perspective if they identify themselves to me as queer but maybe not another term” (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

“This is a BIG question,” she says, verbally intoning the *bigness* of it as she does, “and a question that doesn’t have a consensus in the community nor across history. The way that I understand, use, and explain the term *queer*, especially when talking about and doing work across the [2S]LGBTQIA+ banner, is to think of *queer* and *trans* as sibling terms that together are more representative of the bodies and identities within [2S]LGBTQIA+. *Queer* is often considered to have to do more with sexuality, sexual orientation, and who-loves-whom (and is opposite of straight/hetero-), whereas *trans* is often considered to have to do more with gender identity, gender expression, and not expressions of love/desire (and is opposite to cis-)” (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

She pauses here for a brief second, making a slightly screwed-up face as though she just caught herself saying something she might not have necessarily wanted to say.

“This is not definitionally accurate,” she continues after her pause, “as I said, this is the way that I understand, use, and explain the terms. The acronym [2S]LGBTQIA+, then, is made up of both: Lesbians, Gay people, Bi people, and Ace people are communities with identities that are often considered to have to do more with sexuality, sexual orientation, and who-loves-whom (and are opposite of straight/hetero); [Two-Spirit peoples,] Trans people[,] and Intersex people are communities with identities that are often considered to have to do more with gender identity, gender expression, and not expressions of love/desire (and are opposite to cis-). And, of course, many people – such as myself, as I shared – identify with more than one letter in the acronym and so can be queer and trans at the same time (again, like me)” (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

He thinks here of a recent guest lesson he did in the fourth-year capstone course with the School of Dentistry at the University of Alberta that was literally an entire lesson on just the acronym...and they even ran out of time in an 80-minute lesson for the whole thing! But with those Dentistry students, he remembers, he went through each letter and symbol one at a time before sharing with them that queerness might helpfully be understood as being largely about sexuality and the spectrum of sexual attraction, while transness might helpfully be understood as being largely about sex (anatomy), gender (behaviours), and expressions of both. He smirks as he thinks of the “Pro Tip” he added to that slide that somewhat counters what she just said here about love: “It all comes down to love. Queerness is about loving others, and transness is about loving yourself” (Mayberry, DHYG 456).

“[I hope that helps,]” she says, and when the question-asker nods, she gestures to another hand that went up just then.

“What are some strategies to help a student who does not identify with a term the majority of minority community uses?” this next question-asker asks. “For example,” they continue, “I taught a

class that included Queer Shakespearean interpretations, Queer theory, and openly identified Queer folks, but they told me personally they did not like the term ‘Queer.’ I was not sure how to accommodate them in my teaching rhetoric” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).

“Another great question,” she says. “[And you can use similar things from my answer to the previous question about queerness and transness to help here, too, but w]hen it comes to trigger words in teaching and learning, there is a big difference between all of using a word, quoting a word, and teaching a word, and too often we as teachers don’t transparently and consciously unpack this with our students. Our students are totally allowed to not like, not identify with, not use, etc. labels and words, but it is our responsibility as teachers to create and maintain a space in our classrooms where we are having the meta-conversations around this. Etymology mini-lessons, rhetorical mini-lessons, historical mini-lessons, etc. all are great ways to mitigate this and proactively and meaningfully not just accommodate but engage our students who are hearing, feeling, understanding language and its power differently” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).

“Is LGBTQ+ then not okay?” someone cuts in here. “[It’s] too exclusive?” (Mayberry, SJU).⁸⁵ She is not upset at all by the not-hand-raisedness of this question-asker: it can be wonky and

⁸⁵ This is also a real question that was submitted to me during one of my presentations, and it is from my public talk with the St. Jerome’s University (SJU) Registrar’s Office in April 2021. While the SJU talk was recorded and lives online (and the transcripts from this are one of the three sets of transcripts that I merged together to create the bulk of the narrated dialogue that Drag Queen Tommy speaks in this counterstory), the Q+A for this SJU talk was not recorded. (As a general rule, I ask hosts to not record the Q+A, but to please record the presentation if they’d like, so that we can create a safer space to encourage more openness and vulnerability and asking questions and sharing stories and experiences without having them recorded and being shared on the Internet.) After the SJU talk and before closing the MS Teams platform it was on, I did screengrab just the text (no names/identifying information) of the asked questions in the Chat and Q+A, so this question here and others from the SJU talk are transcribed verbatim (and turned into counterstory narrative as though attendees were orally asking them); but unlike the U of A CTL OTI Keynote, my responses are not from and cannot be from the historical moment of the SJU talk but from me now writing back (in)to them – as such, any non-direct quotations have their text in brackets, as I did above, to show breaks in voice from quoted/transcribed text that already exists and has been captured using a variety of technologies and softwares from ones I am, as the writer

borderline fake/inauthentic to facilitate a back-and-forth Q+A that doesn't organically unfold into a discussion, though it doesn't always go that way, so he knows what she's doing here when she almost overly-excitedly continues the conversation rather than the stock thank-celebrate-respond trifecta of Q+A engagement: she's making sure she gets ahead of anyone feeling that this was rude, disrespectful, out-of-line, etc.

“[The plus sign, though, right?]” she says, “[That helps to make it inclusive because that symbol holds the door open for all the other letters and identities and ways of being that aren't L-G-B-T-Q. Some social, racial, and yes, health justice moves are going with the bit longer but more diversely representational 2S-L-G-B-T-Q-I-A-plus acronym to bring to the front communities and identities that we don't often think of and that we don't often focus on for justice: 2S, Two-Spirit peoples in Indigenous communities and ways of knowing and being; intersexualized peoples, as we talked about; but also asexual people...and/or even allies, too.]

“[So it's not so much that LGBTQ+ is too exclusive, because it's not; it's more so that we can consciously draw attention to more and more equity-denied, medicalized, and marginalized folks and communities by purposely representing some of the more intersectionally side-lined and harmed and oppressed bodies and identities within sex, gender, anatomy, and our white Western world.]

“[Does that make sense?]” she says. Genuinely pausing here, and the beautifully interrupting question-asker nods. And so do other people.

“[What else are we thinking or curious about and wanting to ask here?]”

Three hands go up here almost simultaneously.

of this dissertation and counterstory, adding in narratively myself. My in-text parenthetical citations of “(Mayberry, SJU),” then, are direct questions from the SJU talk narrativized here for my counterstory.

“[Woo, okay!]” she says, laughing. “[I have no idea who won the race here, but let’s go here, here, and then here, if that’s okay].” And with each *here* she bounces her hand across the room, not unlike, he silently laughs to himself, the Catholic priests of their childhood blessing the congregations.

“I am unsure when *ve* or *ze* would be used?” the first of these next three question-askers asks (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

“The *ve*-series and the *ze*-series of pronouns,” she starts, “would be used when someone who lives with either of those series as their pronouns tells you that that is their lived pronouns” (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

She smirks here, then continues: “For example, this sentence I just [said], respectfully, should [have] be[en]: ‘The *ve*-series and the *ze*-series of pronouns would be used when someone who lives with either of those series as *vir* or *hirs* pronouns tells you that that is *vir* or *hirs* lived pronouns’” (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

“Another time that you would use either of these series of pronouns,” she goes on, connecting it to a teaching and learning example, “could be in creating a case study or question for your students to engage with it – instead of having the characters in the case study/question be binary-gender[ed] (*he*-series or *she*-series), or even gender-neutral with the *they*-series, you could use the *ve*-series or *ze*-series to create more diverse and representational case studies and questions” (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

“[How does that sound?]” she says, and the question-asker smiles and nods while scribbling down some notes.

“[And yes,]” she continues, gesturing to the second of these next three question-askers-in-waiting.

“I went to a presentation about gender pronouns before,” this question-asker starts. “The presenter identified as he/she. The individual explained that some days they prefer the pronouns *he* and the other days the pronoun *she*. And it was important to them that when speaking to them you clarify their pronoun each day. For the lack of a better way to phrase a question...how does a person keep up with this? I don’t want to be disrespectful, but I find this one challenging to not mess up” (Mayberry, SJU).

“[This is a great question,]” she begins, “[and an important one because, as I had mentioned, too, I’m not confident enough to say that I have fully arrived as who I am as a person, and I’m not confident enough to say that my pronouns will never change and will always and for the rest of my life be these three. And that’s okay. What can be really helpful, and this is thinking back to our conversations about *pronominal systems* instead of just *pronouns* but also to asking folks *How can I respectfully refer to you?*, in this scenario – and even, perhaps, in any scenario – we might add *How can I respectfully refer to you...today?* This way, when someone who is or might be genderfluid or genderqueer, which are terms folks might use to live their fluctuating gender identities and expressions that can, yes, change for them daily or even during the day as they live and breath, we can work to be respectful and inclusive by not assuming pronominal systems are stagnant. *How can I respectfully refer to you today?* could be a great question to ask folks so that *you* are opening the door to welcome them and to indicate that *you* are working on your language to ensure they are respected and that they belong.]

“[Does that kind of answer your question?]” she says, and the question-asker says it does and thanks her.

“[And on the messing-it-up part,]” she quickly says before taking the third of the three next questions, “[let’s keep in mind that we *will*, me included, make mistakes when it comes to

respectfully referring to other people, and so how we handle these mistakes in the moment and after the moment is also crucial to cultures of respect.]”

She gestures in the direction of the final hand that was raised: “[And then here, yes. Thank you.]”

“As a woman,” this question-asker starts their question, “I prefer she/they pronouns to she/her pronouns. Although I am a culturally-coded female (I hope I said that right), I don’t often feel that I identify with the femininity commonly expected of a woman, but still considered myself to be a woman. Are they/them pronouns and being non[-]binary mutually inclusive?” (Mayberry, SJU).

“[Ooh, this is another really great question, thank you!]” she says. “[Not every nonbinary person will use they-them pronouns – some folks might use the *ve*-series or *ze*-series or another series of neopronouns – and many binary people, like yourself, as you shared, and thank you for that, might also be okay with being referred to respectfully with binary-gendered pronouns *and* gender-neutral pronouns. A she/they lived pronominal system would indicate to folks that they could respectfully refer to you with either of those two series, and whether you know yourself as binary-gendered or nonbinary-gender or somewhere in-between/not-yet-known on your journey, either of these two pronouns are powerful and empowering for you.]

“[I do also get asked sometimes about whether binary-gendered people, or cisgender people, *should* include the *they*-series in sharing their pronouns, or if this might be cultural appropriation in some way, and I think this is important to think about, too, because when it comes to pronouns and cultures of respect, we should also be thinking about normalization of sharing our pronouns and pronominal systems but also stigmatization and destigmatizing the sharing of pronouns.

Normalization is when we can, as a culture, make something standard and expected and regular as part of our practices and engagements, and destigmatization is taking the stigma out of a particular

practice or process so that it isn't seen as silly or bad or marginalized or only of a particular population or group.]

“[These two processes can go hand in hand, normalization and destigmatization, so I often encourage cisfolks, and especially teachers and instructors with power and privilege, to think carefully and critically through how and why they are sharing and wanting to share their pronouns and pronominal systems in the classroom because while these can go hand in hand, they each have very different drives toward social, racial, and health justice, and that's important.]”

A pause here, and the question-asker and several heads around them nod. She smiles and nods, too, before she ping-pongs around the room, and he knows she's counting to ten in her head (he counts with her) before breaking the silence. At ten, with a close-ended question now (as opposed to the open-ended version – a trick he knows she's doing when they're mindful both of time constraints but also of the robustness of the discussion with learners and whether they should move to close and move on or keep it open and going), she asks, “[Is there anything I can clarify about gender pronouns and/or about my self and my story before we head into the last part of this talk together today?]”

Two hands go up here, one after the other with a clear first and second order for calling on them.

“[Wonderful, yes, thank you,]” she says to the first person.

“How do you respond to someone who does not respect your preferred pronouns?”

(Mayberry, SJU).

“[With me, personally,]” she says to start, “[when someone does not respect my lived pronouns, I call them out. It is very obvious, and very confrontational, in my lived situation with two binary pronouns and one gender-neutral pronoun that I give folks permission to refer to me with respectfully when someone is openly not respecting me. And it does happen, and it usually sounds

like someone going out of their way to make it clear that my three series of pronouns are silly or not worthy of respect by them, and they say something like, ‘I am just going call you a dude because you clearly are a dude.’ Or something like that. Because it is quite difficult to, when being respectful, to mispronoun me, it is obvious and apparent when someone is bigoted and wanting to make it clear that my invitation to be referred to respectfully is pissing them off. So I call them out. And I often press on their subsequent gendered language that follows their assumption that just because I do live with the *he*-series means, they think, that they can use any and all male-gendered words to refer to me, and *this* is not the case. When they call me a *man* or call me *sir* or call me *Mister*, then I gently interrupt to say, ‘Not *sir*, no’ or ‘Not *Mister*, no’.]

“[With folks who aren’t me personally,]” she continues, moving to the next part of her response, “[when someone does not respect the lived pronouns of someone else, there are two things I’d encourage here: first, if you hear someone mispronoun someone else and you know you have their confidence to use their lived pronouns publicly, you can interrupt and use their lived pronouns properly in an affirmative sentence or statement. I like to lean on Lizzo here with that stunning example after Demi Lovato shared that their pronouns are now them/they and at a red carpet opening, paparazzi were mispronouncing Demi and Lizzo, literally leaning forward into a paparazzo’s camera, almost yelling, just says and repeats, ‘*THEM!*’ and ‘Demi’s pronouns are they/them!’]”

“[So, be a Lizzo and/or find your Lizzo, I like to say. Interrupt and disrupt, as you are comfortable, confident, safe to do so, and have permission to do so. Remember: someone might have shared with you who and how they are, but that doesn’t necessarily mean they would be comfortable or safe to have that disclosure revealed in any and every situation. If you are unsure whether or how to interrupt or disrupt when it happens – and it can be very disorienting, startling, and challenging

right in the moment it happens, too – check in with the person as soon as it is safe to do so afterward and ask them both how they’re doing and how you can support and empower them.]”

Lizzo, he thinks, smiling, as she confirms with the question-asker that that response spoke to and addressed their question. We do need more Lizzo.

She moves to the next and last question here at this *What can I clarify* touchpoint.

“[And here, yes, thank you.]”

“Did you have any challenges with your siblings as you revealed your gender identification growing up?” (Mayberry, SJU).

“[Aww, thank you so much for this question!]” she says, placing her left hand over her heart, and smiling so widely. “[I was very lucky to have grown up with an incredibly close, incredibly open and supportive family, so no, I didn’t have any challenges with my siblings with my gender identity growing up. To be fair, though, I didn’t come out as queer until I was 21 and in my first Master’s degree and then not as a drag queen until 22 during my second Master’s degree, so maybe I was grown? Haha! But even not being ‘out’ in that sense growing up as a child with my sister and two brothers in my parents’ house in Elmira, they never made fun of me or excluded me when we’d play Power Rangers or Ninja Turtles or Digimon together and I’d want to be Kimberly the Pink Ranger or April O’Neill or Mimi or Palmon. They also would also let my Barbies join their games, too! So, no, my siblings were great with and to me.]

“[Erin is older than me and so was in high school already when I was being bullied in Grades 9 and 10, and she was really, fiercely there with and for me. She bagged her own classes to help me escape gym class, and she walked to and from school with me and between classes when she could to protect me. My two brothers are younger than me and so were still in grade school during my 9 and 10 years, but when they look back, they often say that they wish they could have been there with and

for me in high school. They maybe were too young to know and understand everything that was happening, not like I really did either, though, so...but still. A really strong, close, supportive family. I was and am very lucky.]

“[Thank you again so much for that question.]”

She smiles at the question-asker, and then glances back around the room. He looks around, too, and people are smiling back, and so she keeps going.

“[W]hen it comes to gender pronouns and communication,” she says, clicking her slide advancer and moving off the Sam What-Can-I-Clarify? slide and onto the next and final part of the presentation, “we can foster inclusivity in our [teaching and learning] work with gender pronouns in two key ways. So, two key takeaways for us,” she says, clicking her slide advancer again to bring up the two bullets for this: “And the first is to create and maintain an inviting place around us as leaders. And the second is modeling.”

She pauses here, gently placing the slide advancer down on the podium beside her. And – and he knows it’s coming, and he can barely contain himself, he remembers this so well – and she snaps the fingers of her right hand out in front of her chest and spins on the balls of her feet at the front of the room to, as RuPaul would sing (though there’s no music), “[t]urn to the left” and, again as RuPaul would continue singing, “[s]ashay [and s]hantay!” *You better work*, indeed (“Supermodel”). He remembers this so well, and often orally re-members this in his work when not in drag at the front of a physical room, how she literally turns this sage’s stage into a catwalk and struts – modelling, as their visual, embodied pun would have it – to the wall at the corner of the front of the room before glancing back over her shoulder at the now-audience, flips her hair over her shoulder, spins again, and returns, bouncing, to the podium to reclaim her clicker.

“[Okay, okay, okay,]” she says, giggling – and he’d be lying if he didn’t think she was absolutely living for the clapping...although no standing ovation...maybe next time, he smirks – “not *that kind* of modeling. We’ll get to that in a second about the kind of modeling I mean, but creating and maintaining inviting place and modeling are the two key ways we can foster inclusivity in our [teaching and learning]. And with both of these, we have to be intentional and meaningful.

“So these aren’t things to just do because Tommy said it would be a great way to be inclusive, or they aren’t just things to do because you think it would be a good thing to say, ‘Hey, everybody, tell us what your pronouns are, we’re supposed to do that.’ No, you need to be intentional and meaningful.

“[I once did a version of this talk with LinkedIn head offices as part of their Learning InDays with their Out@In employee group, and the event organizers] opened up the talk by saying, ‘If you’re comfortable, please change your Zoom names to add [your pronouns].’ It was an invitation to create that space as leaders, but also model in the way that they had put both of theirs to their Zoom screen names before [and] the way that they had said *if you’re comfortable*, so it wasn’t a everyone’s-going-to-do-this-because-we’re-doing-this-as-a-group-and-this-is-how-it’s-going-to-be, you know, it was intentional and meaningful around that exercise.

“And we’ll talk about this a little bit at the end before we get to the Q and A, but the stakes are actually quite high when it comes to this. And the lower we think the stakes are, it’s because it doesn’t impact us as people when we think the stakes are that low. But for other folks, as you heard about my story as well with pronouns, it can be life and death stakes as well. So intentionality and meaningfulness are huge.”

“So for creating and maintaining an inviting place around us, I want to share with us two quotations that have kind of guided my entire inclusive pedagogy. And they come from these really, you know, powerful intersectional [*sic*] feminists, Toni Morrison and Adrienne Rich.”^{86,87}

She clicks to change the slide and bring up the quotations and headshots of each.

“So Adrienne Rich says that

When someone with the authority of a teacher describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and

⁸⁶ Actually, I no longer do what you are about to read in my “Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect” public scholarship work. Starting on May 18th, 2022 when I had the honour of being invited “back” (virtually) to the Waterloo Region for a public talk as part of the Region of Waterloo Library’s Spring 2022 programming for a talk on “Gender Pronouns and Creating Cultures of Respect,” I removed my referencing, quoting, and citing of Adrienne Rich that had been there for years in my work, and I replaced it with Indeed’s #EmpathyAtWork campaign video “A New Beginning” that I jokingly-not-joking say does in 51 seconds a better job than my 90-minute presentation could ever do for showcasing power, privilege, and especially empowerment with sharing and modelling pronouns. Guided by and citing Frankie Condon’s Statement from Program Chair of CCCC on also removing an Adrienne Rich citation from the CCCC 2023 CFP, I thank Frankie for sharing with me that Rich’s work, in not following and in forgetting her own teachings, amplified and continues to be used to amplify transphobia, which has no place in creating cultures of respect in any facet...and I, too, could have and should have known this about who I am citing (and why, and how). I, too, continue always to learn, unlearn, and relearn, and while I have removed my Rich citing in my 2022 public scholarship, I preserve it here as authentic to my 2021 scholarly self as lived and living in the transcripts I merged for this counterstory as well as to mark definitively the moment when I moved forward to be accountable and to keep growing. And I could, with counterstory as method and genre, have Time-Travelling Tommy react to this as himself authentically in the body of the counterstory, but I feel and believe it is more meaningful and powerful to here footnote as Dissertating Tommy and engage discursively as myself with the “I/me/my” pronounced version of myself in this moment and in this prose.

⁸⁷ In attempting to footnote-within-a-footnote again, I also want to comment on my use and positioning of Morrison and Rich as “intersectional feminists” here. In my Introduction to my dissertation, I set up Morrison as a *Black* feminist (not as an *intersectional* feminist) before block-quoting her as I do here, and I did not cite, quote, or incorporate Rich there as I do/did here. In sharing my dissertation draft with my committee and engaging with their feedback (as I similarly did with Rich and Frankie’s CCCC Statement in conversations and meetings with Frankie as my supervisor throughout my initial writing process), I have learned and been thinking deeply about the assumptions and implications of *de facto* calling all non-white feminisms intersectional feminisms. To call Morrison intersectional, my committee member Kim Hong Nguyen shared with me, assumes that she comes after/aligns herself with the intellectual history and conversations by Crenshaw and others. And while Morrison likely would agree with intersectional feminist principles, she has been situated by Black feminists as a Black feminist or womanist and not as an intersectional feminist. I want, like Kim, to be careful that not all feminisms are intersectional and that (as a point of clarity and nuance, not a critique of their work), I should not be so generous in calling all non-white feminisms as intersectional feminisms. (Again, I preserve this here as authentic to my 2021 scholarly self as lived and living in the transcripts I merged for this counterstory *and* the early drafts of this dissertation as I submitted to my committee.)

saw nothing. Yet you know you exist and others like you, that this is a game with mirrors. It takes some strength of soul – and not just individual strength, but collective understanding – to resist this void, this nonbeing, into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard. [(Rich)]

“And Toni Morrison says,

I tell my students, “When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.” [(Morrison)]

“And I love these two quotations because as a teacher, or even not as a teacher, but as somebody who has authority, somebody who can hold up a picture or a description of the world and have that be something that doesn’t reflect all the diversity of people who are out there, that causes folks who are looking back at that to say, *I’m not there*, you know? We say representation matters. And this is exactly why: because the colonial structures, the systems of power, the systems of heteropatriarchy, they hold up these mirrors that intentionally don’t include everyone in them, so that as both Morrison and Rich are saying, there’s a game that’s happening. [And i]t’s not a fun game.

“It’s a game of who gets to belong, who gets to *be*, who’s allowed to live and who’s not allowed to live,” she states. *Misogyny and eugenics again*, he thinks here, connecting what she isn’t yet at the capacity to connect. “The stakes are incredibly high for this,” she continues, “and both of these quotations are talking about the teaching and learning enterprise specifically, because teachers have an incredible amount of authority. And I love Morrison’s quotation, that no matter what you’re studying for when you get your degree or when you graduate with your diploma or your journey person’s papers, if you have some sense of freedom, your real job is to free someone else and to extend that power to keep empowering.

“[You know,]” she continues, activating that tone and posture that aurally signals they are going on a bit of an unplanned, but by no means less important, tangent of thought, “[when it comes

to privilege – especially white privilege, especially privileges unearned because of colonial advantages unclocked in the systems in which we live and grow – there is this fear among the privileged folks about not-having-enough-to-go-around. This idea that if we achieve equity – equity, not equality; but equity – that people will *lose some of their candy*. In a “grab-bag candy game,” as Morrison calls it, that might be case. But this *isn't*, as Morrison says, a grab-bag candy game. Power isn't candy; there isn't a bowl in the centre full for whoever gets there first and fastest getting the most, no. Power is more like a lighted candle, and empowerment is using your light to light more candles. The light from your candle doesn't lose any brightness or warmth in doing this, and you can light an infinite number of candles from your flame who can ignite an infinite number more each themselves. And some of those flames, too, might even burn brighter than the original flame that lighted them! *This* is empowerment. *This is our real jobs*, as Morrison tells us, and like Rich says, this isn't just individual strength but collective understanding to stand up and to demand to be seen and heard.]”

Yes, he thinks here. Yes, yes, and yes. He knows they've said this before, many times and in many situations, but hearing it, and seeing them in her body saying it, is an incredible moment. Whately people, to borrow that Frankie phrase (who incorporates it from Marilyn Frye before her and Minnie Bruce Pratt before them (34)), have a very, very hard time *not* seeing the candy bowl. He thinks of that TikTok he recently had seen during a doom-scrolling evening on the couch but that he can no longer find: A white dad is telling TikTok how he successfully explained white privilege to his daughter when she asked what it is by getting her to imagine a scenario where, for breakfast every morning, she gets five pancakes every day and her little brother gets one pancake every day. And this goes on for weeks and even years until one day the little brother asks why she gets five pancakes but he only gets one, and so the dad takes two pancakes from the sister and gives them to the brother and

now they're equal. And he tells his daughter that she might be upset because now she has less but in reality now they both have the same, and so that's white privilege, this white dad says: there was never a reason for her to have five pancakes and her brother to only have one when they each could have three and be equal. *But that's equality not equity.* The pancake analogy uses the finite resources of food, much like the candy bowl in the grab-bag candy game, and this is where us whitely people get caught: power is not a finite resource, and we don't lose our power by empowering others. Let's think that again but louder this time for the whitely folks at the back of the room: Power. Is. Not. A. Finite. Resource. *I'm through with the pancakes and grab-bag candy games, he thinks. Lighted candles together, let's go: melt this Ivory Tower down!*

“And so these are ways we as [teachers],” she sums up, snapping him back to attention and continuing on as though neither of their tangents didn't happen in real life, “we can create and maintain those spaces.”

She clicks her slide advancer, and the slide goes blank again except for the title, subtitle, and institutional logo now.

“So I want to share some statistics from the OECD report from 2019,” she says, keeping the slide blank for the moment. “The OECD is the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development. And so,” she says, clicking again to bring up the first small chunk of text, “within Canada and other OECD countries, nearly one in three individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ report experiencing discrimination [(OECD)]. So one-in-three. A third. Thinking back on the past four years and seeing two American elections take place, one third can actually sound maybe a bit, okay, because we've seen this bipolarity where it's been half and half, where the stakes have been half and half, you know,

where a country is divided. And we have this myth in Canada that we are doing better than the States. And so this statistic might actually feel like *Well, at least it's not half-and-half.*

“Regardless, nearly one in three individuals being discriminated against for being 2SLGBTQIA+ plus is staggering. The Report also notes” – another click of the slide advancer, another small chunk of text appears – “that social acceptance of sexual and gender minorities by Canadian citizens is approximately half the population surveyed [(OECD)]. So there’s your half. There’s your country divided, where approximately half of the population of Canadian citizens surveyed don’t accept, don’t socially accept sexual and gender minorities.

“And here’s the kicker when it comes to gender identity as well,” she says, and she pauses before clicking one more time to bring up the last of the three statistics for this slide. “Only 44% of respondents said they would accept a child who expresses themselves differently from their assigned sex at birth [(OECD)]. Which means that 56% of people said they would reject their kid if their kid told them one day, *The doctor got it wrong: I’m not that.* I mean,” she says, heavily, but not sarcastically, “56% of people would reject their own kid.”

She pauses here, long and hard. She does do the eye-ping-ponging thing again to see how folks are doing with these statistics, with this knowledge, and when her eyes meet his, they both are thinking, *My parents are in the 44% of Canadians who would – and did and do – accept their child, accept me...my parents, and my experience as my parents’ child, are in the minority here across this nation we now call Canada.*

“So when we’re thinking about the stakes of gender pronouns and [teaching and learning],” she says, gently moving her gaze away from him, “this is our context: where 56% of people would reject their own kid who said, *Those aren’t my pronoun series...these are mine.* Fifty-six percent.”

She sounds it out like that: fifty...six...percent. And she waits with these three small, but infinitely heavy, statistics up on the slide.⁸⁸

“Spade says,” she clicks forward in the slides to reveal a new small chunk of text, “that ‘being called by what you go by, rather than being mis-gendered and mis-named, can reduce anxiety, depression and suicidality’ [(Spade)]. And if reducing those three things isn’t enough, I don’t know what else we need to say to make a clear case for properly and accurately gendering and naming people how they say to respectfully refer to them. If we can reduce anxiety, reduce depression, and reduce suicidality, not just in the classroom, but outside in all the circles that we engage in, that’s a goal worth chasing.

“What it all comes down to is that being called what you go by, rather than being misgendered, misnamed, actually makes us healthier, more whole people. So,” she clicks the slide advancer to bring up the text question *So, how do we begin to create and maintain these inviting places?* and says, “how we do this move toward this way of becoming healthier and more respectful is” – and she clicks again to bring up the bottom row of text that answers the question – “we can model our own pronouns and pronominal systems, and we can invite others to do so as well.”

⁸⁸ Here, I would like to explicitly thank two of my Educational Development peers, colleagues, and friends, Drs. Phillip Joy and Jill Marie McSweeney-Flaherty, who together are one of my incredible *RuPedagogies* author-teams, for sharing these statistics (with me for the first time) in their fabulous chapter “Pedagogy of the Mother: Exploring Freire’s Philosophy of Co-Productive Learning.” I always knew that hard stats were missing from my Gender Pronouns public scholarship, but none ever hit me so hard and brought me to tears so swiftly as reading these three in their first chapter draft, now gloriously published (Joy and McSweeney-Flaherty 63).

“So when we’re thinking about modeling, and we’re thinking about those pieces for it,” she clicks to the next slide, “share your pronouns, if you’re comfortable, in your [teaching and learning] work, events, activities, any of those places.

“The *if-you’re-comfortable* is key here because we are all on our own journeys, we all are growing and changing as we go. And it should never be mandatory to share your pronouns or pronominal system. And this could be [that] one space is more comfortable than another to share that in. This could be I-don’t-yet-know-which-is-my-pronominal-system-and-I’m-still-working-through-that. It also could be there are way too many new people here who might judge me and I’m not comfortable doing that. So never mandatory. But if you feel comfortable, that can be a great signal.”

She clicks to bring up the first bullet point on the slide underneath *Share your pronouns (if you are comfortable) in your work, events, and activities* and says,

“You can include them by your name on introductory slides” – click – “say them out loud when you’re introducing yourself. It can feel very embarrassing and intimidating and wonky and weird,” she says, “for the first time to say, ‘Hi, my name is Tommy, and my pronouns are...’ so I would encourage you to do it with your family[, loved ones, trusted friends] first, they’re ironically the safest people to do it with. They’re also the ones who will make you feel *the most* weird about doing it. I’ll never forget, when I was trying to break *guys* out of my vocabulary as a masculine word, we were playing poker one night and I asked if my brother and my dad down [the table] there, I asked if those ‘folks’ could pass me the chips, and I’ll never forget the silence and then the laughter when they were like, ‘Folks?!’ like ‘Did you just say *folks*?!’ kind of thing. It’s easier to say *folks* with a bunch of professionals than it is with your loved ones playing poker one night, but they were the ones who, if they were going to laugh, were not going to be malicious; it was going to help me break the

ice to say it. [And it did.] So say your pronouns out loud to introduce yourself and find a way to practice that as well.

“Pronoun buttons and badges,” she clicks and continues, “again for being in the physical world, can be great ways to do this” – click – “pronoun suffixes or the Bitmojis in the digital world” – click, and close-up shot of a pile of pronoun buttons shows up along with the text, pronoun buttons that he remembers they, along with the University of Guelph Writing Services team, spent an afternoon before this very talk printing, colouring, button-ing, and bowl-ing – “e-mail signatures, business cards, and more. There are so many points of contact that we don’t recognize happen where we can be including this and, you know, destigmatizing the sharing of pronouns and pronominal systems.

“I also would encourage you,” she says and clicks one more time, “to use the singular *they* as a default for others when you’re talking about them, consciously to use a singular *they*. The asterisk there is that it’s not perfect, some folks may not use *they* as a singular pronoun for them, which does mean you could technically be using the wrong pronoun for that person.

“But it’s more inclusive to use a singular *they* than it is to use *he-* or *she-*series, and it’s a powerful signal of a culture of respect.”

“Because pronoun awareness does signal that culture of respect,” she says, changing slides to the final part of their presentation, fittingly titled *Cultures of Respect* and that begins with the Dean Spade quotation from which they first took that phrase. “Spade also says that ‘if we explain th[is] to folks really clearly, it will do the job we want it to do and make the group spaces easier for people to participate in, and build skills and each of us to make less assumptions about each other’ [(Spade)].

“As Jack Halberstam says,” she says, clicking to bring up Jack’s quotation under Dean’s, “he’s probably the world’s leading Transgender Studies theorist, he says ‘[he] wish[es] more people would behave like [his] partner’s son and simply ask, politely and without judgment, what pronoun an individual prefers’ [(Halberstam, *Trans** 154)]. Jack ‘also wish[es] more people would use a pronoun system based on gender and not on sex, based on comfort rather than biology, based on the presumption that there are many gendered bodies in the world and “male” and “female” do not even begin the hard work of classifying them’ [(Halberstam, *Trans** 154)].”

“Pronouns also are increasingly showing up in popular and public cultures,” she says as she clicks to the next slide before the penultimate slide of their presentation. “TikTok most impressively right now with the way where there are whole streams of neopronouns and pronoun TikTok videos happening. [But just a few days before the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots,] in 2019, Lady Gaga, at a packed, sold out concert at the Apollo Theater[, which is just over a two-hour walk through Central Park from the Stonewall Inn,] on June 25, before she started singing her song ‘Million Reasons,’ she shared with the roaring crowd:

I wish to share this with anyone who is listening—not just in this theater, but around the world—ask the question: What is your pronoun? Because for a lot of people it’s really hard and their pronoun is not respected or they’re not asked, and for me, I’ve grown and changed over the years in a lot of different ways. I’ve felt misunderstood in a lot of different ways. All of our hardships are different—I don’t mean to compare—I just mean to say we’re in this together and I’ve had a million reasons to want to give up, but sometimes, if you’re lucky you just need one good reason to stick around. [(Lady Gaga qtd. in Michelson)]

“One good reason to stick around,” she repeats, and pauses. “Remembering our statistics about suicidality and being rejected by your parents, *one good reason* could be being called by what you go by, rather than being mis-named and mis-gendered.”

She pauses again, longer here, letting it come home.

“So here’s Lady Gaga, to a packed theater, talking about pronoun awareness and cultures of respect.”

“So I want us to wrap up with thinking about [our duty of] care [as instructors] in two ways: caring, but careful.” She clicks the slide to bring up the text for these two types of care. “Let’s be caring. Absolutely. And let’s be careful as well.

“We have to be caring and careful because,” she says and clicks to bring up the next bullet point, “queer, trans-, and intersex[ualized] bodies do have pathological, medicalized, Westernized histories around their bodies. All three of these types of bodies exist because they were things that were wrong with people that Western Medicine had to actually surgically and psychologically correct. Maybe it’s not the most obvious or most contemporary thing to think of queer bodies as medicalized bodies, but the reason why the word *homosexuality* came into existence was a way of classifying something that was mentally wrong with people who had same sex attractions [(Foucault)]. It was a diagnosable illness, something to be corrected, something to quite literally be straightened out of people with [Western] Medicine.

“Trans- bodies, similar trajectory. Increasingly, they are becoming less medicalized in terms of the stigma, but they absolutely still are bodies that go through or don’t go through hormone replacements, go through [or don’t go through] gender confirmation surgeries, [which] can be very painful, can be very traumatic as well. And as I talked about with intersex[ualized] bodies, intersex[ualized] bodies are absolutely still medical bodies. In Western Medicine specifically, intersex[ualized] bodies are where non-consensual operations are horrifically performed on newly-born babies[, toddlers, and even young children]. So that medicalization and that history of queer,

trans-, and intersex[ualized] bodies we have to be careful with when it comes to how we're creating these cultures of respect. Because" – another click, another bullet – "there's trauma involved in these communities, in these [individual and collective] bodies, in these people[s]. And there's always, then, that risk of that retraumatization.

"There also is, as I opened the talk [remembering] Marsha and Stormé and Sylvia, whiteness takes over very quickly and that can lead to more marginalization and more struggled. So," she says and clicks again, "always being careful and reflecting on whiteness and marginalization and struggle.

"So Laverne Cox," she clicks to bring up a photo of Laverne Cox speaking at a podium with a quotation of hers superimposed on the image, "a Black transwoman, she once said,

Where are we as an LGBT community over 45 years after the Stonewall Rebellion?
...Sylvia Rivera warned us about becoming a movement that was only for white,
middle class people. And forty-five years later, the most marginalized of our
communities are still struggling.

"45 years later, the most marginalized communities are still struggling," she says, and pauses. Then she clicks her slide advancer to bring up Xs to cross out *45* and *forty-five* over the image before saying, "[Today, June 28th, 2019, is exactly 50 years later now,] half a century later, and this is even more true. And again, something happened where that march on the precinct became only a celebration and not a fight by becoming a Pride Parade rather than a Pride March.

"Also," she says as she clicks and bring up a circle around *LGBT* on the image with an arrow pointing outward to a text bubble they now add with the fuller acronym *2SLGBTQIA+*, "I'm not clocking Laverne, but I'm showing us as well that language changes, so [five] years ago, Laverne used L-G-B-T as an acronym, and largely we're now using 2S-L-G-B-T-Q-I-A-plus as an acronym, and we can chat about that more as well."

“We also can use and update visual symbols,” she says, and clicks to change the photo of Laverne to a photo of flag flying on a flagpole, “so this is the flag pole at St. Jerome’s University in Waterloo, Ontario, and 2020, for the first time in this Catholic institution’s history, they flew a version of the Pride Flag for Pride Month.

“And I say *version* here, and you might be noticing something looks a little different about that rainbow Pride flag, because it’s not just the original six bars. It includes the arrowhead on the left-hand side, the arrow pointing to the right, the metaphorical direction of the future, that includes the white, pink, and blue bars of the Trans and Nonbinary Pride Flag, and includes the brown and black bars to bring in and symbolize Black [peoples], Indigenous [peoples], and Peoples of Color. So this is called the Progress Pride Flag.

“So new visual symbolism is also a way that we can signal those cultures of respect.”

“This was 2020,” she says, gesturing at the flag pole photo from St. Jerome’s. “For June 2021,” she says and clicks to change the photo once more, this time to a new flag image, “we got another updated version of the Progress Pride Flag that included the yellow wash with the purple circle that’s the Intersex Pride Flag. So again, everything is going to keep evolving as we get better and better and more inclusive with this.

“My parents are like, *Now we have to buy another flag!*, and I was like, *Yes, you do...and that is the point.* So we want to stay evolving as we continue evolving.”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ A fun fact and side story with my parents and the Progress Pride Flag: two years ago for Christmas (2020), my dad’s Secret Santa gifted him the first iteration of the Progress Pride Flag, and the day I told my parents that I had accepted the position of Executive Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Alberta and that Tommy, Sam, and I would be moving halfway across the country was also the day that we had planned to come out to the trailer in West Montrose to fly the Progress Pride Flag at the beginning of June for Pride Month (2021). This past Christmas, my dad’s Secret Santa gifted him the newest version of the Progress

“[So, that’s it. That’s all I’ve got for you,]” she says as she clicks one last final time and brings up their *Thank-You* and *Q&A* slide with three photos of Sam in various states on it. “You might be feeling like one of these three Sams: You might be the one who’s kind of coming up for air at this point; you might be alert, but still curious like the middle one; or you might have your bow tie on and you might just be good to go.

“But in any case, I’d love to hear from you with any of your questions or comments or discussion pieces. [And] I do want to very much say thank-you, and using some of the languages [we speak] across this nation we now call Canada, I want to say *Miigwech*, *Marsi*, *Nia:wey*, thank you, and *Merci* as we move into our discussion together.”

A bunch of hands go up right away, and she doesn’t hesitate a minute before calling on folks and getting the conversation going.

Pride Flag, and while Tommy, Sam, and I were Zooming in for this Christmas from Edmonton, I will never forget Dad’s response to opening this new flag: “Oh yeah!” he said. “Now I can hang one at the front of the trailer and one at the back.” And, dear reader, let me tell you he did: on Saturday, June 11th, 2022, I received a small series of text messages from my dad saying, “Flying high at our trailer one out front and now one out back both flying proud” and including a picture of each.

Thinking of the Progress Pride Flag and where it flies at my parents’ trailer, that same trailer that I grew up in and where I played in the waters of the Grand River before learning about the Haldimand Tract and Proclamation of 1794, my mom also told me that a young teen at the trailer came onto their lot one day when just the first iteration of the Progress Pride Flag was flying and told my mom and dad that they are nonbinary and that they are so excited to see that flag because it meant a lot to them to know that there are allies there at the West Montrose Family Campground. And mom told them about me and my work and that she and my dad don’t quite know all about the flag and what it means but that it’s really important and that they’re still learning. Replying to Dad’s June 11th, 2022 texts, I said, “I love it! Thanks for showing me. Saw a Progress Pride flag up in our neighbourhood here just today walking Sam, too!” and Dad replied, “Yep I have them flying for you” and “I’m proud of them.” And no, I’m not crying now, you’re crying!

“You posted your ‘adjectives’,” the first question-asker here at the end of the talk asks, “do you recommend this as a potential ‘ice breaker’ with undergrad students?” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).

“I love that this question presents that moment in my talk as adjectival, thank you!” she begins, just beaming. “I might steal that... When I d[id] this, I think of it as sharing/declaring and making transparent my identity markers and intersections as well as acknowledging the privileges and marginalizations that my body and identity experience. In terms of recommending this as a potential ice-break activity with Undergrad students, I would not: perhaps with upper-year Undergrads and/or even Grad students, this could work better, and then with decided care and caution... My worry of having this be an ice-breaker activity in a first- or second-year Undergrad class would be: (1) they may not know what you mean, what they can and could share, how they can and could share this respectfully, etc., and (2) this would be a very heavy and loaded activity to break the ice with for a group of new students. It could work well, perhaps, as a mid-point or end-of-term activity – or as I said, with upper-year Undergrad and/or Grad – but this also could be, instead of an ice-breaker activity, and great way for a professor to introduce themselves the first day of class and to model not only their pronouns as a signal of a pronoun awareness and cultures of respect, but other identity markers, intersections, privileges, and marginalization[s] that your teaching body has.

Acknowledging – and troubling – the authority that you have as a teacher in that classroom, too, would be a great “adjective” to add, too” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Upon further and deeper reflection, writing, and growth – as well as my own continued learning, unlearning, relearning on my own journey – I do agree with Kim (in her gifts of feedback on my dissertation) that, contrary to what I said in my 2020 OTI Keynote at the University of Alberta, this really is not a good idea for any demographic. It takes time to figure out something as intimate and vulnerable as pronouns, and it certainly took me many, many years to reconcile and come to terms with my own lived pronouns. A lifetime, really; not a four-year degree.

“[I hope that helps,]” she says, as she goes onto the next hand up. “[Yes, thank you.]”

“How can instructors show the hidden oppression that the LBGTQ2+ people face?” the next question-asker asks, “[And h]ow do we show society’s binary way of thinking about gender and the problems that causes?” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).

“This is a great question...and another BIG question,” she starts. “My response here is to make the hidden oppression unhidden – literally unhide (re: show) it in class. Use diverse examples, diverse authors; problematize binary thinking in textbooks when you see it (i.e., why are all the characters in the sample questions named John and have *he*-series of pronouns? Why is this John always married to a Jane, and why does this Jane always have *she*-series? Why isn’t Jane married to Chris who uses the *they*-series? Why, even, are Jane and Chris married instead?). Question everything, I say. And encourage and empower your students to question everything as well. Then find out together who is missing and is not represented – and how they could be” (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

He nods here, too, listening because it makes him think of her answer to the question about their siblings and growing up. Now, he doesn’t disagree with her – they definitely do have a really strong, close, supportive family and they were and are very lucky – but that doesn’t mean, kind of like this question is asking, that their family is without their heteropatriarchal and binary-gendered biases and the problems and challenges that causes for queer and trans- peoples. And these do sneak out sometimes microaggressively with their family. He remembers a big one for them is with their straight siblings and their Catholic family and with marriage: Erin, Ben, and John (all straight) were all assumed to be getting married before any of them were even engaged – “*when you get married one day...*” kind of thing; but with them and their Tommy, who have been together in their committed relationship longer than all of the other three’s relationships combined, it was microaggressively, and

unconsciously, “*if* you get married one day...” And he won’t lie: it hurts. It stings. It is painful that straightness assumes a relationship status and celebration and a familial legitimizedness that queerness does not, and that that assumption then makes its way into verbalized existence as literally *conditional* (language on your) love (life). And don’t even get me started, he thinks, on procreation and straight coupled family members proudly saying at Thanksgiving dinner that they’re *practicing having a baby*...

“[Yes, next],” she says, and he looks back at her and then at who she is next calling on.

“If we don’t know a gender pronoun in a work environment, say e-mail, is it best to refer to a person as ‘they?’” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).

“Yes, absolutely, I would say so,” she says. “A best practice is to use the *they*-series of pronouns as the default gender-neutral pronouns – and our academic style guides do seem to have caught up to this in 2020 as well. I also use the *they*-series in oral communication to refer to my students when I do not know their lived pronouns – if I am teaching a large class, for instance, where I haven’t done a Getting To Know You questionnaire or a Pronoun Go-Round, or if I am teaching a guest lesson in a class – and that can feel weird at the beginning to look at a student who visually-presented in a way that has us assume a binary gender and to actively and consciously use the *they*-pronoun, but it is much better than giving into that visual assumption and using a binary pronoun. Also, by orally using the *they*-pronoun, you are now orally signalling pronoun awareness and cultures of respect – and this will go a long way with your students, especially your trans and nonbinary students – who absolutely will hear this from you and will feel seen and respected...even if they were not the one you were referring to in that instance!” (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

“Another great tip here,” she continues, after the briefest of pauses as she simultaneously is responding to the question and reflecting on how best to respond to the question, “especially when

you do not know pronouns of students, are in that large class, or in that guest lesson, is just to ask their NAME and then use their name to refer to them – i.e., ‘Great point, thank you for sharing that! And what was your name? ... Thank you! As Tommy said...’ (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

“[Does that help?]” she asks, and after the question-askers nods that it does, she goes onto the next hand and the next question, which follows nicely from the one just asked:

“What strategies can we use when writing reference letters for students who have not shared their preferred pronouns?”

“Ooh, I love this question!” she says. “And this one has a very clear, unambiguous answer: ask the student you are writing the letter [for] how they would like you to write about them in the third-person for the reader(s) of the letter you are writing. In this case, defaulting to a singular, gender-neutral *they*-series might not be the best, especially if the letter of reference is for a job (academic or otherwise) because the *they*-series might not be received as an inclusive universal but as a marker of gender non-binarity/transness that could be used to discriminate against the student. It is a best practice in writing letters of reference to ‘fact check’ with the student for accuracy of name, graduation dates, course names, publications, etc., so ‘fact checking’ on how they would like the reader of the letter of reference to see pronouns in print is also great. Also, as with the pronoun go-rounds, you may know your student’s lived pronouns, but those may not be the one they want you to use out loud in class in front of other students just yet; same with letter of reference writing...even if you know your student’s lived pronouns, check with them on how they would like themselves to be presented in the third-person in your letter because they may choose a different pronoun series to avoid bias, stereotyping, and discrimination as well as outing” (Mayberry, “Q&A” – italics added).

“Thanks for your talk Tommy!” the next question-asker starts with. “You are great! I’m wondering how to approach being (deadly) careful in the classroom, especially when the stakes are so

high when it comes to traumatizing students, even with seemingly minor language mistakes around pronouns or other speech acts? How do you approach this work carefully, knowing the stakes are so high, while also trying new things or experimenting in class generally in ways that may result in your ‘screwing up’ at some point? I feel like I am very careful in my classes but of course I know I inevitably screw up, and I regularly lose sleep and stress over what the impacts of these mistakes may be. I try to address them as best I can but I feel like it is never good enough. How does one proceed?” (Mayberry, “Q&A”)

“Great question here, and great, compassionate explanation/narrative around it, too,” she says. “I appreciate that. And I experience this, too. For how one should proceed here, it all comes back to, as I share as a consistent theme throughout my talk, that transparency and intentionality on our behalf as teachers in the shared space of the classroom with our learners. We are going to make mistakes, and we are going to keep making mistakes. And so will our students. How we work to foreclose on these mistakes as well as to be proactive with handling them when they happen can change everything. If we tell our students at the beginning of our courses and teaching events with them that we are working on this, that we know we are going to make mistakes, that we know the impacts matter much more than just our good intentions, etc., we can signal this culture of respect with our students and make the teaching and learning spaces more productive, more brave, and more safe for everyone. We need to be vulnerable as teachers and model this vulnerability, and we need to trouble and challenge the authority of us as teachers in teaching and learning spaces – our students have knowledges, lived experiences, valid perspectives, and expertises, too... we are not the only ones! We need to tell our students that we know the stakes are high here, that we know language can and does traumatize and re-traumatize, and that we know will ‘screw up’ but that we are cognizant always that there are impacts even when our intentions are good” (Mayberry, “Q&A”).

“[I hope that helps and addresses your great question and thoughts here,]” she says, and after a nod from the question-asker, gestures to the next.

“Thank you Tommy,” the next question-asker says, “this was fantastic. I’m looking for advice on how to discuss this with family members. I’ve heard negative references to LGBTQ2S+ from people very close to me. How do I approach these conversations?” (Mayberry, SJU).

“[Oh, this is a really important one because, like my example with family poker night and the ironically safe and brave space to try switching out *guys* for *folks*, family might not always be the safest or bravest spaces, especially when there are hardwired, generational biases and prejudices in our families. I like to think here of the racist-uncle-and-ruining-Thanksgiving-by-calling-him-out example – the time has come to ruin Thanksgiving, yup! Silence is violence, and our younger generations can’t see and hear these harmful statements and jokes go unlocked and internalize them and perpetuate them as they learn and grow – we need to interrupt and disrupt. We need to say something to not let the prejudices and biases continue into our next generations. The damage that is caused by leaving these nasty, hurtful, and hateful things, especially when ‘just a joke’ or when ‘you know he didn’t mean anything racist by that comment,’ is very real because it becomes unconsciously internalized and then makes its way uncritically into thought processes and speech patterns as, as I think of it, my nieces and nephews and nibblings are learning. Just like Spade on the stopping teaching of *they* as only plural, if we can get ahead of these racist, ableist, sanist, etc. biases early in young people’s lives, we can foreclose on the *un*learning and *re*learning they’ll have to do later in life.]

“[So,]” she continues after catching her breath, “[always interrupt, and also disrupt, especially when it’s family and especially when it’s uncomfortable. You don’t have to flip the table and start a food fight, although it may and does sometimes come to that, but make sure there is more than that one narrative happening, and push to critical thinking. And if you don’t know *why* something is racist

or problematic, don't let that stop you from interrupting and disrupting: admit that you don't know why, and own it. Say, 'I can't quite explain exactly why that is racist and why we shouldn't be saying it, but I know it is, and we shouldn't be making jokes like because they are harmful']'."

He knows that there are many more questions from those attending this talk, and he remembers that this talk on June 28th, 2019, on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, went overtime in the Whitelaw Room in the McLaughlin Library on the University of Guelph campus with people even after it was officially closed lining up to ask her more questions as they and their teaching centre team were taking down and resetting the room, but he has this sudden urge to see what would happen if he raised his hand to ask a question. And he knows exactly the question he'd like to ask her because it's still one he doesn't quite have the answer to himself in their work.

So, he slowly raises his right hand, and her eyes move over to his hand, then to his eyes, and she says, "Yes, Tommy?"

Suddenly, they're no longer in the Whitelaw Room, no longer surrounded by the talk attendees, and no longer juxtaposed with Drag Queen Tommy standing at the front of the room and Time-Travelling Tommy sitting facing her. They're both in their office on the fifth floor of the Cameron Library at the University of Alberta. Their office in the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Which is a fitting place to meet and consult since neither he, she, nor they have ever yet consulted there in their work due to work-from-home orders and health and safety measures since they started here, and so even that is an imaginary future.

"My question," he says, "is about decentring whiteness in critical pedagogies and how you (me) someone with a dominant subject position at the nexus of race, gender, sex, sexuality, and ability can ever centre the equity-denied perspectives of yourself, the queerness and transness, in your teaching and scholarship without recentering the whiteness, the maleness, and the able-bodiedness.

Someone who occupies an intersectional subject position more deeply impacted by conditions of exclusion and oppression but is white and able-bodied, right?”

“Well,” she starts, “it’s definitely interesting, and important, I’d say, because we do do a very look-at-me approach to our teaching and scholarship by literally, like literally literally, reoccupying the stage as a sage...and while we are doing so as an academic drag queen to put our queerness and our transness front and centre on the stage in a decentering of straightness and cisness, we are and always will be a *white* academic drag queen. To centre our queerness and our transness is to centre our whiteness, too, because ours is a *white* queerness as well as a *white* transness. And that’s important to clock.

“But it doesn’t mean,” she continues, “that we are *recentering* whiteness by necessarily centering *our* whiteness. It’s not that we aren’t white – we are – but we are becoming more and more critical of whiteness. I wouldn’t say I’m *critically white*, and I don’t know if you’re *critically white* yet either, but we’re *becoming* critically white. And it may take our lifetime to do so, if we can even ever get there. But that means that the whiteness we are centering isn’t unconscious colonial whiteness but a consciousness toward de- and anti-colonialism. A kind of white accomplice.”

“I do talk about my whiteness a lot,” he says, “in my land stories and opening body acknowledgements that clock the intersections of privileges and oppressions I live with and bring to my work and teaching.”

“Right,” she says, “and you know how powerful your voice is as a voice coming from a white body, a culturally-coded male body, and an able-body, and your work is increasingly decentering other white voices to centre non-white voices. Your job talk?”

“Yeah, my voice was the only white voice there because I couldn’t change that, but I could change the other voices I quoted and cited. And so Black, Indigenous, and queer and trans and femme

voices of colour were who I leaned on and partnered with. And I took that further in my work on the Graduate Student Supervisory Development Program with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research here at the U of A, too – *I clocked in my module that that was what I was doing and why*. I didn't say so in my job talk, but *kokum* noticed, but I didn't clock it, and so unless people were attuned to see citation as a practice of resistance, it was completely missed.”

“So we need to increasingly make sure that it can't be missed when we are centering voices and experiences and stories of non-dominant, especially non-white, folks. And we need to always speak the unspoken modifier *white* in front of our intersections of equity-denied identities because as adjectivally-white queerness and adjectivally-white transness, these aren't compounded in their representations. Our queerness might be visible because of mannerisms and because of Tommy, but until we're in drag, our transness might not be as readily identifiable and known: and whiteness can forgive a hell of a lot of things in this heteropatriarchal, colonial culture.

“There is still an over-representation of white queers, specifically white queer men, in the academy as check-boxing queer representation, and while there isn't, I don't think it would be appropriate to say, the same representation of white transpeople, neither one is intersectional – as Crenshaw identifies it, as compounding the active denying of equity to the point that whole bodies get ignored, forgotten, pushed aside – neither intersectional white queerness nor intersectional white transness can liberate the most marginalized and most oppressed in the academy.”

“Is a white academic drag queen, a white queer and transfeminine person, in a position of power and authority like that of Executive Director of a Centre for Teaching and Learning in a Provost's Office at a Top Ten (formerly Top Five) University in this nation colonially known as Canada better than a white queer woman-identifying person or a non-white cis het academic?”

“The Oppression Olympics are never helpful, let's not go there.”

“Wise words and guidance from *kokum*, yes.”

“So not *better*, like quantitatively stacking of privileges and oppressions, but qualitatively of how anyone, any individual, singular person, at the nexus of their lived experiences across intersections of privileges and of oppressions moves collectively with the equity-denied communities they are a part of and, so importantly, collectively with the ones they are not a part of and can never be a part of.”

“I miss *kokum*.”

“So much.

“I feel like she’d know the answer here.”

“Or if not, she’d have a story from an Elder in her community that she’d gift to us and send us away to think on here.”

“She would.”

“She loved you, you know, right? You meant the world to her and she was and is so proud of you!”

“I know. But I never will believe, as she often told me, that I taught her more than she taught me.”

“We would not be who we are nor where we are today without her.”

“We will miss her every day. We will think of her often and remember her powerfully. And we will work hard to live up to her legacy and make her proud of the leader we are and will keep becoming.”

“It really means that our work has only begun, then, right?”⁹¹

⁹¹ Jennifer Winters Ward, *kokum*, passed away after a fierce battle with cancer on March 16th, 2022. I was not and never will be ready to keep going in my decolonization work – burning the system down, as we’d say to

I open my eyes, and I'm back on the mainstage runway, but instead of RuPaul, Michelle Visage, and Brooke Lynn Hytes together with Pythia and Alyssa now on the Judges' Panel, they are now Drs. Frankie Condon, Jay Dolmage, and Kim Hong Nguyen together with Drs. Joan Coutu and Stacey Waite.

each other! – without her, but I know I can, and I will. Two sentences together in one set of quotations above are a combination of things Jen's daughter Emma and Jen's husband Dave said to me after Jen began her journey to the spirit world when I met them. At Jen's Celebration of Life Ceremony, wearing the hand-sewn dress with the blue ribbon that Jen made for her 2018 Keynote and wore on that day we first met in Victoria, BC (Jen always made one new piece of clothing and/or regalia for each of her Keynotes), Emma, looking so much like her mother it simultaneously hurt and healed, took my hands in hers just like her mom did that first meeting, and told me, "She loved you, you know, right?" And on Facebook in talking about creating an Award for Indigenous Educational Development in Jen's name, honour, memory, and legacy, Dave told me, "Tommy, you meant the world to her and she was and is so proud of you!" Jen was always part of my (counter)story, and was in my dissertation drafts while she was still with me and with us, and I am so honoured, so beyond honoured, to have Emma and Dave here with me, too.

I include both this footnote and their named representation here with Ward family's permission – after sending it to Dave and Emma for their thoughts before including it, Dave replied: "It was a pleasure to review your work and after discussing it with the kids we'd be honoured if you'd include this part of the work. I know Jen would be over the moon proud of you and humbled by your reflection on her impact."

Endnotes

I – The Pronoun *hir* in *Piers Plowman* and Some Deeper Etymological Scholarship

In William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (c. 1370–86), the *sound* (because, of course, there wasn’t standardized spellings just yet) of the pronoun *hir* for “their” is abundantly present across the poem as well as showing up in occasional instances of exact spelling. For just one example, lines 40-45 from the Prologue –

[Here is the transcribed Middle English text (italics added):]

Bidders and beggeres fast about yede
[Til] *her* bely and *her* bagge [were bretful] y-crammed;
[Flite thanne] for *here* fode, foughten atte ale.
In glotonye, God it wote, gone *hir* to bedde,
And risen [up] with ribaudye, tho Roberdes knaves.
Slepe and sleuth seweth *hem* evre. (Prologue 40-45, p. 4)

[And here is the editors’ contemporary English poetic translation (italics added):]

Beadsmen and beggars bustled about
Till both *their* bellies and *their* bags were crammed to the brim;
Staged flytings for *their* food, fought over beer.
In gluttony, God knows, *they* go to bed,
And rise up with ribaldry, those Robert’s boys.
Sleep and sloth pursue *them* always. (Prologue 40-45, p. 5)

While not aligning perfectly to the *ze*-series with *ze*/*hir*/*hirs*, the three cases here in *Piers Plowman* of the *they*-series would be: *hir*/*hem*/*her(e)*.

In Charles Richardson’s *A New Dictionary of the English Language, Combining Explanation with Etymology: And Illustrated by Quotations from the Best Authorities* (London, 1844), the word *her*, as Richardson notes, comes from the Anglo-Saxon *Heora* “of which *here* and *her*, are contractions, [and which] may be compounded of *he*, (itself used with no distinction of number or gender,) and *ora* or *er*”(1: 989 – italics original). Richardson directs dictionary-readers to “See

HEER, and ORD” (1: 989) for the “her” entry, but then does not include entries for either of these words. (Page 983 of Richardson’s *New Dictionary* has “Heed” followed by “Heel” (twice v., and v. and n.) on 1: 984, and then after the second “Heel” on 1: 984, Richardson enters “Heft.” And in volume 2, page 1377, Richardson’s entries go right from “Orchestra” to “Ordain.”) Since Richardson does tell us that *heer* and *ord* are of Anglo-Saxon origins, we can seek them out elsewhere, and looking to *Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Primer* (1882) for illumination, it does not have “heer” in it, but it does have “ōra,” which it translates as a masculine noun for “bank, shore” or “ore” (Davis 121). Tying together Sweet and Richardson, then, we can see a misogynistic Christian Biblical Genesis connection in the etymology of *her* (bank, shore, ore, and the “degrading[] and opprobrious[]” earth that “is opposed to heaven”), and we also importantly see an etymological aspect of *her* gendered male and gendered neutral – in Sweet, the *ōra* that Richardson contracts with *heora* is male, and the second part of that contraction, the *he*, Richardson parenthetically notes here is “used with no distinction of number or gender.”

II – My Metacognitive and Metadiscursive Reflection on Mom and Dad’s Story

My Grade 9 and 10 years in high school were the years that I was brutally bullied, and I do not have many memories of these two years from what I now increasingly understand as my own psychological self-protection from the traumas I almost didn’t survive. What I do very much remember, more so because it is documented fact than just personal experience, is that my Grade 11 year in high school began with the accidental death of the ringleader bully, Jesse Millard Martin, who tormented me and rallied the torment of me by other bullies in my year. In talking with Mom and Dad to gather details from their own lips of their own memories for my counterstory writing of not just my

baby story but of my bullying story, the following conversation ensued as I listened and went back there with Mom and Dad:

Mom: “And then, of course, the Jesse Millard Martin thing was just awful. The horrible phone calls that we’d get here, which were about me and about you and all that stuff. And I know you and your brothers and sister, well, I *think*, I don’t *know*, are just really like happy that he’s like dead like, well, I am, too, but I can’t help have mixed feelings. It’s sad that it had to come to somebody’s death, you know, like actual death, but I just remember the feeling of afterwards. It’s like...it just stopped. Like that part, you know? Like, it’s not there no more now that like, like, he’s gone. He was the ringleader.”

Dad: “He fell, and them other kids that were running with him or whatever were not strong enough or brave enough to call the cops, they just up and left him overnight to suffer and die ‘til the cops got called because somebody just never showed up at home and his mother called the other kids and when they finally went back and looked, there he was laying there dead. Like, do you even look out for him if he was supposed to be your friend?”

Mom: “And his mother’s a liar. Because Dad traced the call back whenever you Star-Six-Nine something, and it shows that it came from his house. And then she’d say they weren’t here and that it just wasn’t right on our telephone. So she lied to us.”

[A pause in the conversation here, with Mom and Dad sadly looking at each other and looking down a bit.]

Me: “With the Jesse piece specifically, I don’t know if I’m ever gonna know how to talk about that. It’s like you both said it, and I don’t know how to include it in the dissertation. Or maybe I’ll ask Frankie how to do this. But like, how do you actually write and publish, *I’m glad he’s dead*? I don’t know what to do with that because like, I get asked a lot in my work about how parents can support their kids and their kids’ friends. You know, specifically because of teaching and learning. People ask about like, ‘What can teachers do and administrators?’ And always like on the tip of my tongue is like, “Well, if the bullies actually just go away...”, like not kill them, but like, if you remove them from the situations, right? And I quickly jotted down something just now listening to you two, I had a really good thought when you were talking about the extra Health classes or the how-many-classes-can-you-miss: *The actual curriculum forced me to stay in that unsafe, abusive situation.*”

Mom: “Yeah. And we tried to get you out of it. But, they wouldn’t.”

Me: “And so for me, as the Director of a Teaching Centre, I talk almost daily about how we need to change the curricula, you know, the structures of universities, to be more inclusive and more accessible. And I’ve never put that together before, which is also why I like counterstory: it’s these stories, right? Like, I don’t remember as a 15-year-old kid, I don’t remember feeling that the actual curriculum of the high school system is part of the problem. I don’t remember that, and thinking back on it, I wasn’t bagging class with Erin and thinking,

If they would just change the curriculum to allow me succeed safely... But now I think that, and I think that's really powerful from a teaching perspective, and I mean, that's something that I've talked about as well, the removing of the bullies, right? Not removing of the victims. But now I'm actually thinking: just change the curriculum. And like not even just for queer and trans- kids in locker rooms and gym class, like, what about differently-abled kids or differently-sized and differently-athletically-build kids who can't as safely or similarly or proudly-for-their-self-esteem run laps?"

Mom: "I couldn't understand why they just couldn't have given you like a bunch more like Health projects to do on the side, you know, like *Research this and write a paper on that?* Why did you still have to go to volleyball class or floor hockey or whatever else stupid ones you were doing? To me, I couldn't see why they wouldn't let you do that as a way of not just skipping class the whole rest of the year but giving you something else to do. And we asked. And told them why and everything. The answer was just, 'No.'"

Me: "That's right. Yeah. And you know, like, now I would push really hard on an instructor or a Dean or someone who said, 'No, there's no alternative assessment they can do to still get the credit they need for their degree.' There's *always* an alternative."

Mom: "Yeah, I should have pushed harder, I guess..."

Dad: "But we didn't want, we didn't want to make it worse for you, though. Yeah, it was the worst. Yeah, that's why your Mom didn't, I know. We talked to one teacher, the male one there. And I didn't agree with him. We were talking to him or whatever and he more or less just said, 'No, there's nothing I can really do for him.' But there is something he could do. He could either have stood up for us or for you, or he could take the whole situation to the next level where it should have went to but he wouldn't even do that. And you, then, you were stuck, where you had to be to do all this and just take all this. And there's nothing we could do about it. The more that we would have pushed it harder, it would have just made it worse for you. Yeah, we had to kind of sit on the fence and just see. Wait day by day. Just wait to see what would happen to you. But then the day come that the problem went away. It's not nice to say, but his life ended there and your problems ended. We never got no more phone calls after that night. We wondered why we didn't get one that Saturday night, and when we found out, we said, 'Well, that's why we didn't.' Yeah, there's not really another way to interpret that."

This is that other piece that I still do not know how to write about, not even as/with counterstory nor otherwise – which is why I am making this an Endnote instead of a footnote or even a musing/remembering of Time-Travelling Tommy in my counterstory. And I avoid speaking about this in my public scholarship and in conversations outside my immediate family. It is one of the spectres of my childhood that continues to haunt me still today: that I am alive today because I did not

kill myself in Grade 11 because the bullying stopped because my head bully died. I didn't become Valedictorian of my graduating class in 2006 because I overcame and persevered, the way RuPaul would like me to find strength and solace in, no: I had finally begun a plan to kill myself because Grade 11 began worse than Grade 10 ended. (I had bought the bottle of pills, and I kept it on me in my backpack to be at the ready; I remember this because I struggled with the tension of being Catholic and of suicide being a sin, but my prayers for God to take my life so I didn't have to weren't working and I couldn't find a way out or through.) But when Jesse died, my bullying stopped.⁹² And when my bullying stopped, on all fronts and from all the other bullies, then I grew. Then I flourished, and somehow, miraculously, even, the Student Activities Director of my high school asked me at the end of Grade 12 if I would be willing to stand for the vote to be my class' Valedictorian, and I said yes, and what I didn't know at that time was that my name was the *only* name put forward by my classmates for our Valedictorian and that I was unanimously nominated so by many, many of my classmates. From the brink of suicide to delivering a speech to my peers and their families about our four years together, my picture and words published in both our local Elmira newspapers, *The Independent* and *The Observer*, I somehow made it.⁹³

⁹² My mom, I know, continues to struggle to this day with her faith and her Catholicity because of this because she prayed every day for the bullying to stop, and when it did, and how it did, she struggles with *God works in mysterious ways* but also with God isn't a *Be careful what you wish for* genie from a horror movie.

⁹³ Mr. Conlon was the Student Activities Director of EDSS when I was in Grade 12, and in his retired life post-EDSS, he is the Program Director for the Canadian Student Leadership Association (CSLA). While not one of the three talks' transcripts I've merged into this counterstory, Mr. Conlon reached out to me over the Summer of 2021 to invite me to be one of the Keynote Speakers with my "Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect" talk for the 2021 CSLA national conference. In Fall 2006, after a conversation with Mr. Conlon, I delivered a speech to just over a hundred people at my high school Commencement; fifteen years later, in Fall 2021, after another conversation with this same Mr. Conlon (now "Dave" to me), I delivered another (not quite) speech (but still) to *hundreds* of high school leaders that included pieces of my own high school story. Somehow, yes, I made it.

I don't know if I'll ever be able to write about all of this ethically or powerfully or responsibly, but I include it here as an Endnote quasi-counterstory-within-a-counterstory that isn't quite autobiographic reflection nor quite dialogic epistolary, but definitely is not narrated dialogue nor fantasy/allegory.

Epilogue

Dear Little Tommy:

Or, My *Actual* Love Letter to My Seven-Year-Old Self

I open my eyes, and I'm back on the mainstage runway, but instead of RuPaul, Michelle Visage, and Brooke Lynn Hytes together with Pythia and Alyssa now on the Judges' Panel, they are now Drs. Frankie Condon, Jay Dolmage, and Kim Hong Nguyen together with Drs. Joan Coutu and Stacey Waite.⁹⁴

"I knew this was coming," I say, already holding back tears I can feel welling in my eyes. "It happens every season! And so" – I reach my right hand into the left breast area beside my wine-stemmed highlighted-and-contoured chest and behind the left cup of my triple-push-up – "I've come prepared!"

From my bra, I pull out a pretty thick, quadruply-folded wad of 8.5 x 11 paper and begin unfolding them. Absent this stack, the protruding illusion of my left breast deflates as compared to my right breast, and in tandem with my hands slightly trembling as I unfold and the boom mics of the studio picking up every crinkle, every ripple, that one snuffle, I am quite a spectacle!

"Ahem," I clear my throat once I have my papers in order. I look back up at my Panel, and I begin reading.

Dear Little Tommy,

⁹⁴ Please see Appendix A: "Citations of *RuPaul's Drag Race* episodes for creating Prologue" for both the citations themselves merged as counterstory narrative dialogue as well as for a brief discussion in advance of the dissertation Conclusion on this imaginary, dreaming/time-travelling narrative framing.

Hi! Hey, little buddy. Well, you've made it. You're at the finish line! Congragulations in advance, because this certainly has not been an easy or quick experience. Ten years. Almost to the day! There will come a time in your life, when you're about seventeen or eighteen years old, where you're going to set a goal for yourself of publishing your first novel before your twenty-first birthday. That doesn't happen – sorry, kiddo! – but then at twenty-one, you set yourself a new goal of getting your PhD, and that goal turns into getting your PhD in drag, and then there will come a time when you, like with your novel, set a clock on this goal. Get your PhD by the time you are thirty. Spoiler alert, Little Tommy: you're thirty-four years old now, writing this letter...but writing this letter is marking the success, not failure, of you getting your PhD...and getting it in drag!

Hold onto those ambitious feelings, those bright-eyed lookings-ahead toward your twenty-first birthday and your thirtieth birthday, because you are going to get hit with a lot in life. A lot that feels and looks and hangs-heavy like failures. You're going to get dumped by your first serious boyfriend an hour before you defend your MA thesis. You're going struggle in your MFA and leave it unfinished to start your PhD. You're going to find great successes throughout your PhD studies at first – two OGSs; one SSHRC; the University's highest honour for teaching by a student; as well as publications, conferences, employment! – and you're going to find catastrophic failures, too. You're going to be disqualified from the 3MT competition for competing in drag, for competing as your authentic self in your authentic body. You're going to be told you're harming the Department for teaching a course of your own design outside of it, a course the University itself has never offered and that is received excitedly by students and senior admin. You're going to write a beautiful, innovative 375+ page dissertation on William Blake and your academic drag that is going to, on the cusp of going to defense, be returned to you as deemed indefensible. (All those people who will tell

you that crap about The only “good” dissertation is a done dissertation, don’t listen to them! “Done” means nothing if your supervisors refuse to allow you to defend it.)

And then when you’re reworking that dissertation to make it defensible by your supervisors’ standards, you are going to get a life-changing job offer that will take you halfway across the country with just you and your Tommy and your Sam. (Spoiler alert again! Mere moments after deciding to withdraw from the MFA program and start your PhD, you are going to meet your soulmate, another Tommy, and he and his seven-year-old dog Sam are going to enter your life, stay with you, and move with you for this new job ten years later. Finding family, little one, you will be able to check off your Goal List, too, I really want you to know that.) Two months into your new job in a new city in a new province three thousand kilometres from home, your supervisors are going to tell that it isn’t working (the trying to get this first dissertation defensible isn’t working), and they’re going to tell you, in no uncertain terms, “Be satisfied with what you have done, and release yourself from it [the PhD program]. Take it [your ABD status] as a success, and give yourself credit for the work that you’ve actually done.” Hearing this on a Zoom call so far from home, and with you not yet done your probationary period in your new job, although you will tell them you agree with them and you also will thank them for everything, this will not feel like “a success.”

“[T]ake the MA and go,” Dr. Aja recounts being told as a graduate student herself, in effect “being kicked out of [her] doctoral program” (76). And while you were not being kicked out of the PhD program, your supervisors’ advice to you was unambiguously to “STOP the PhD.” In the introduction to Failure Pedagogies: Learning and Unlearning What It Means to Fail (2020), editors Allison D. Carr and Laura R. Micciche outline that one of the questions their volume contends with is, “For whom is failure a real end rather than an opening to generative possibilities?” (3). For many doctoral students and even doctoral candidates – many of those from your cohort starting

together with you in 2012, too – not getting their PhD is a real end. An ultimate end. But for you, this failure of your first dissertation will, I promise you, lead directly into the generative possibilities of your second dissertation – and beyond! This (second) dissertation that you never ever could have written six years ago (six years ago being the time frame to have defended and completed on responsible, appropriate programmatic time!) because you will not have yet become the scholar nor person you are who is writing this letter today. And do know, Little Tommy, that you will find Frankie, and then Jay, and then Kim. And do know, Little Tommy, that, as Benny LeMaster writes in their “Pedagogies of Failure” essay, “it is less that the non-normative subject has failed to meet normative standards and more aptly that normative culture has failed to make room for and to affirm non-normative embodiment, identification, and subjectivity” (86).

Because this is where you will find yourself: a non-normative subject with non-normative embodiment, identification, and subjectivity trying to survive in normative culture. In your (second) dissertation, when you unpack and define how you are using and how you understand yourself with the term “trans-” with the hyphen (and not the asterisk), you note that regardless of hyphen or asterisk, the activation of your drag/trans- body on the stages of your classrooms most definitely invokes practices of looking but also presents practices of being looked at. This is actually quite important. “Traditional” definitions and culture-at-large understandings of trans as transsexual always take the medicalization and anatomical transformations of the body as assumed/expected when engaging with notions of transgender. But as you identify, understand, and theorize – with and through thinkers who do the same, like Halberstam with his visual archives of the transgendered body – practices of looking and being looked at move away from the medicalization fetishes and allow trans to emphasize, even begin to normalize, non-medical transgender material effects. The medicalization of trans identity, to put this another way, has caused enormous negative outcomes to

trans people individually and as a population (physical, emotional, mental, and financial health deficits up to and including literal death – being murdered, or taking your own life). Normalizing transgender identity as hinging on the practice of looking and being looked at helps counter this, helps remedy this, through its very material effects. You might not have bought that bottle of pills during high school if this could have been the visual reality and world you grew up in and looking at.

Some of this is partly why you will come to say that you don't ever want to teach Butler on gender performativity again. Like the documentary Paris is Burning, Butler's notions of gender performativity get taken up in popular cultures in ways that aren't just not helpful but are actually harmful. For you, Halberstam, McKenna and Kessler, and RuPaul together with the activation of your teaching body as an academic drag queen can do a much better job of looking at the physical, material body and how the gaze directs, contours, and creates gender by assuming sex characteristics (specifically, genitals) rather than the way that Butler sees it and says it. For you, drag will not be just an art form; drag will be your identity. Your name in drag will be your name out of drag, and your three series of pronouns that you will come to find and come to live will be your lived pronouns in and out of drag as well. You will collapse gender performativity into your lived, material body of who you are. This is quite different, materially and phenomenologically, from drag queens, kings, and performers who have different names in drag, different pronouns in drag, different selves in drag. I want you to know that it will be challenging for many people who you will meet and engage with that you won't have a character name for who you are in drag, that you won't meet their expectations of who and how a drag queen is, because your drag dis-appears the distance between self and other. There is more distance between a drag body that is spectacle than there is between a drag body that is self-same. And the violence done to one body is different than the violence done to another body, with neither violence being a "good" or "better" violence. Any degree of violence is still violent. This

is so important because drag, whether art form or identity, has real-world material effects that have real-world material consequences. While some queens, kings, and performers can and do “take it off,” I can’t, I don’t...this is who and how I am.

And so one cannot really fail at being drag royalty. For “[w]hile drag has some conventions, it ultimately has no rules – its defining quality is often to break as many rules as possible!” (Keenan and Hot Mess 448). And as Waite says about queer communities and queer activism informing queer pedagogies, “[W]e will need to misbehave, to disobey our own disciplinary rules, to push the boundaries of what we think we already know about teaching and writing” (189). And when Goldfarb was writing about the Brothers Dating Game and the safer sex diva digital teacher on those consoles, he identifies “the teacherly superego” in the game as a drag queen and argues that the game writers and creators “subvert the stereotype of the teacher as authoritarian man or straight woman” so that “Authority is internalized in the form of a figure whose status vis-à-vis power is both off center and in defiance of codes of authenticity” (92). This off-centre-ness and this power in defiance of codes of authenticity makes me think of Waite on Halberstam and eccentricity.

In Halberstam’s essay, “Reflections on Queer Studies and Queer Pedagogy,” he suggests that a queer theorized teaching practice, as Waite terms it (142), might begin with “refusing the schemata of identitarian institutional position (lesbian teacher, heterosexual students, for example) and proceeding eccentrically. By this I mean that the queer teacher may take up an eccentric position in relation to queer material and position [them]self as always implicated in and outside the topics [they are] teaching” (271). “Geometrically,” Waite expands, “eccentric can imply two circles or spheres, at least one of which contains the centers of both. But the word always implies that the center is in question (the center of one circle is within another but not necessarily the center of that other circle) – hence the term’s use as a way of saying someone or something is unusual, strangely

paired, or peculiar” (142 – italics original). Drag queens, kings, and performers are eccentric. I am eccentric. I am an eccentric academic as a drag queen. “For Halberstam to suggest that the queer pedagogue position itself is decentered,” Waite points out, “as being both ‘in and outside’ the materials one teaches, means that a queer theorized teaching practice is the practicing of decentering” (142).

Decentring, yes, and pushing towards the margins from the centre – even or especially from a de-centred centre. Myatt notes that “we can learn about advancing social justice projects by studying the incremental steps toward progress taken by our predecessors” (178), and this is absolutely something I have done and am doing in this dissertation. My dissertation is a study in the incremental steps toward progress taken by my predecessors – including my own 2015 self as predecessor to my self today – toward social justice in pedagogy and across the academy. As Carr and Micciche outline, “[S]ocial justice is an incremental process, a series of coordinated, persistent pushes” (5). And through my academic drag as pedagogy and praxis as I have argued, modelled, and embodied in this dissertation, I have shown how I enter into the academic space created by equity-denied and oppressed scholars before me and join them in pushing further from the dominant centre toward the margins, widening that fucking hallowed ground of what is scholarly research and whose voices can be there and can belong there. This dissertation is scholarly research. (So was my first dissertation.) And my voice can be (t)here. I can belong here.

And that is why, in addition to counterstory and teaching queer as the method and genre through which I have found my scholarly voice and tried it on in this dissertation, I also chose to frame my dissertation with RuPaul’s Drag Race and specifically the iconic Final Four Advice-to-Your-Younger-Self moments across the franchise. There is, I believe, a failure in these moments that comes from the same energy and (mis)conceived assumptions that Keenan and Hot Mess clock in that

“while drag may be implicitly transgressive, it is not inherently anti-oppressive” (447). With my dissertation, I want to position these Final Four Advice-to-Your-Younger-Self moments as having the energy of counterstory, as Dr. Aja defines and explores it, but as failing as counterstories told by each queen as such, for, as David Fine explores with The Vixen on RuPaul’s Drag Race, the (dominant) story of RuPaul’s Drag Race (RPDR) is overcoming tragedy not living with it – as Fine says, “RuPaul makes it perfectly clear that RPDR exists to share stories of triumph not tragedy. Shame belongs in the annals” (170). As Sara Ahmed notes on unhappiness, “the risk of promoting the happy queer is that the unhappiness of this world could disappear from view. We must stay unhappy with this world” (Happiness 105 – emphasis original). Even Pythia, who, like me, prayed to God to end her life as a child because her religious upbringing taught her so strictly that suicide is a sin, has a “successful” story on Canada’s Drag Race – Top Three, and fan-favourite to win season 2– which is not counter within the enterprise but is the enterprise’s dominant narrative. The master, majoritarian narrative of the show, and indexically, of drag queens. There is a danger here and across Drag Race in creating and perpetuating “the happy queer,” and so by failing to be(come) “the happy queer,” we can, as Gavin P. Johnson and Ryan Sheehan in their essay on “The Uses of Queer Failure: Navigating the Pedagogical Mandate of Happiness” note, “create different worlds separate from the world in which we weren’t meant to succeed in the first place” (128).

“[E]mbrac[e] the affective messiness of failure in pedagogical settings,” Johnson and Sheehan say (131), and on their drag pedagogy, Keenan and Hot Mess say that teaching in drag “brings a sense of queerness more robustly into the classroom, not merely by teaching about Harvey Milk or Sylvia Rivera, but through an embodied and affective process” (454). Ultimately in my dissertation, this is what my academic drag is about: embodiment and affect. And embodiment and affect toward act-ually (to borrow that Marlatt phrase) image-ining (to borrow that Halberstam

phrase) change into existence. Halberstam talks about “the fabulous, inventive, dis-identificatory processes by which and through which trans* people dream themselves into the world and remake the world in the process” (44). And this happens through transgender visibility because “[v]isibility,” as Traue, Blanch, and Cambre note, “consists of acts and technologies of showing, or pointing out, and their effects” (5). Their material effects that can and do have real material changes in and across not just our bodies but our world.

“[N]ew visibility for any given community has advantages and disadvantages,” Halberstam notes, “liabilities and potentialities. With recognition comes acceptance, with acceptance comes power, and with power comes regulation” (18). Like Martinez and Waite before me, I am not regulating or taxonomizing academic drag as a new monolith of a singular pedagogy (nor of a singular pedagogy in a singular praxis) but of my own praxis (and, indeed, my own praxes) from my entry into this pedagogy (and, indeed, into these pedagogies). I am holding the door open with this dissertation and with myself as synecdochic in both ways (part for whole; whole for part) of intersectionally equity-denied folks in academia – especially young scholars, new scholars, junior scholars – for them to point at and to push with. Always to push, further and farther, shoving those borders and barriers away and away to expand the circle and trouble where the centre of that circle is and, even, could be. “Massive shifts in the meaning of embodiment do not happen overnight,” Halberstam says, “rather, they accrue meaning over time, incrementally but decisively” (29). And to quote Carr and Micciche again: “[S]ocial justice[, too,] is an incremental process, a series of coordinated, persistent pushes” (5).

So, dear Little Tommy⁹⁵, I leave you now with these words of bell hooks from *Teaching to Transgress* connected to Harper Keenan and Lil Miss Hot Mess from their “Drag Pedagogy.” hooks writes in her chapter “A Revolution of Values”:

If we examine critically the traditional role of the university in the pursuit of truth and the sharing of knowledge and information, it is painfully clear that biases that uphold and maintain white supremacy, imperialism, sexism, and racism have distorted education so that it is no longer about the practice of freedom. The call for a recognition of cultural diversity, a rethinking of ways of knowing, a deconstruction of old epistemologies, and the concomitant demand that there be a transformation in our classrooms, in how we teach and what we teach, has been a necessary revolution – one that seeks to restore life to a corrupt and dying academy. (29-30)

And Keenan and Hot Mess write, “Drag loves to turn rejection into desire, transforming the labour of performance into the pleasure of participation” (452) and that “drag has always included its own practices of teaching and learning” (447) – indeed, “drag serves as an intentional way of rewriting these scripts” (Keenan and Hot Mess 447).

I love you, little one.

Good luck, and I’ll see you in twenty-seven years.

You’ve got this,

Tommy

⁹⁵ And “dear Dissertation Reader,” too! I hope you noticed, even felt, my shift in voice from the second-person future tense (counterstory voice) to the first-person present tense (academic voice) about halfway through this epistolary conclusion to my dissertation.

Artifacts

Artifact 1 – *RuPaul's Drag Race* Season Five Audition Tape



[Tommy Mayberry's "RuPaul's Drag Race" Season Five Audition Tape](https://vimeo.com/38407287)

[URL: <https://vimeo.com/38407287>]

Password: QueenTommy1988

Thick Description for Artifact 1:

Artifact 1 is a still image that I include in my dissertation as a composite of four screenshots from my audition tape for Season Five of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. In the top, left-hand corner, there is a screenshot of the title card that I made for my audition tape, and it says, “RuPaul’s Drag Race Season 5 Audition Tape” and then “Tommy Mayberry” underneath in a bright purple-pink font. In the top, right-hand corner is a screenshot of me in drag, teaching an Art History lesson on Renaissance art history and Titian’s *Danaë* painting. I’m at the front of the lecture hall, and this is a cropped shot of me standing in front of the projection with Titian’s *Danaë* on the screen. I am wearing a black jacket and a black dress with a blue tulle blouse underneath. I have a black wig on, and I have it styled back

in a ponytail with a top ponytail coming out as well. I'm smiling, and I have a pen in my left hand. The pen is pointing at the figure of Danae in the projected painting. Specifically, I am pointing out that she's giving the middle finger gesture – something that I reference and explicate in this art history lesson.

In the bottom, left-hand corner is a screenshot of me doing my lip-sync. As part of this audition tape process, we had to do and include a lip-sync performance to RuPaul's single "The Beginning," and I started this lip-sync off by wearing what I called my Sarah Palin Drag. I am wearing black dress pants, a white blouse with a little black tielette, and a red dress sweater-jacket on. I have a very short Palin-esque wig with Palin-esque glasses on, so I look politician-formal but campy. This was an early joke around "teacher drag" and what that might look like, campily and iconically. I'm standing in one of the studio classrooms at the University of Windsor in the old LeBel Fine Arts building in front of a greenboard (so, not a blackboard but a greenboard). And on the greenboard, I have written in very nice cursive writing in the top right, "Ms. Mayberry" the way I would if I were an old-school supply teacher or a teacher in a TV sitcom on the first day of class introducing myself. Behind me, I've written out the first couple of stanzas of the lyrics of RuPaul's song as well. This writing is obscured because I'm standing in front of it. Part of my lip-sync performance to "The Beginning" was me at the front-of-the-room dancing with a metre stick, slapping the greenboard and slapping my thighs as I was lip syncing and pointing at some of the lyrics.

In the bottom, right-hand corner of the four composites that make up the full still image here is a screenshot of me wearing a floor-length glittery-gold dress with black gloves on, black heels with faux-diamond straps on them, a black belt, a very long black wig with a black braid wrapped around my head. I'm sitting on one of the nude model plinths in one of the first-year drawing studios. I am

semi-reclined and resting on my left hand with my right hand holding my gold sash outward as though I am waiting for a fairy tale bluebird to sit on it, and I'm looking off into the distance. This was me as a *drag queen* model instead of *nude* model for first-year figural drawing. Like the "teacher drag" Palin-esque look, this was another early academic drag embodiment.

In addition to including a lip-sync to RuPaul's song "The Beginning," we also had to include other performances and other of our drag looks. There was a very specific checklist, exactly like a scavenger hunt, of things we had to include in the audition tape for it to be eligible and accepted. Not included as screenshots here in this composite still image but included throughout the audition tape are: a tour of my drag closet, at least three other drag performances that I've done, my best runway catwalk, discussions about myself, my life, and work while specifically *not* being in drag on camera for them.

Textual Transcription of Audition Tape:

[Me, in drag, between two rows of books in the University of Windsor library stacks]

Tommy: Shhh! We have to be very, very quiet. We're in the University of Windsor library, in the Queer Theory section, and people are studying. I just needed to get the new book that came out – I'll be right with you!

[Feigns searching for book on top shelf with fingers running over spines]

Tommy: Oh! Oh, sorry. This is it! Oh, my god; oh, my god! And why it's so exciting? It has an essay in it on RuPaul: "Why RuPaul *Worked*." I'll see you back in my studio so we can chat.

[Video transitions to a black leather loveseat against a black wall with dozens of printed and framed photos on it; I, out of drag, drop down to sit on the loveseat]

Tommy: So, hi! Welcome to my studio. I'm Tommy Mayberry...in and out of drag. I'm 23 years old. I grew up in Elmira, Ontario, Canada, and I'm currently in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, studying at the University of Windsor. I'm in the MFA program here, Master of Fine Arts, and I'm studying Visual Arts.

[During the above monologue, video footage pans of my studio space with my drag bag, wigs, makeup, and props all over the place as well as includes drop-cuts of UWindsor campus, including my “runway catwalk” strut down the main quad area of campus before the video transitions back to me on the loveseat in my studio talking]

Tommy: My life in a nutshell? I’ve been in school ever since I could walk, and ever since I could strut, I’ve been doing drag. Actually, that’s not true: I actually was strutting pretty much my whole life. But since I could sashay and put on heels, I think I’ve been in drag. And that basically happened kind of by mistake, I kind of tripped into drag: I was doing a project in one of my Grad Seminar classes about metaphor, and I wanted to show my class how man could be female, that man didn’t have to be male. And so I got out the wigs and I got out the makeup and duct tape and got myself all fabulous and did a photoshoot with my class in drag. And ever since then, I’ve been interested in looking at drag as this transformative process, a way to become more of me because I don’t have a drag persona. My name in drag is my name outside of drag: I’m Tommy Mayberry, whether I’m in heels or sneakers. And that’s important for me because for me, drag is about showing the world an invisible side of me, making it visible through all those wonderful tools that allow queens to become their fabulous, fierce selves. Drag isn’t about performing for the sake of performing but performing for the sake of living.

[Video moves to me standing in my walk-in closet to share and show more of my drag]

Tommy: Welcome to my closet. It’s a little bit of a mess right now, but...it’s always a little bit of a mess. Ummm, let’s see. What do I have to show for you today? Oh, this piece! This one is one of my favourites, this little sexy teddy here. This reminds me a lot of RuPaul: RuPaul talks about fashion being about the masculine brushing up against the feminine, and to me, this piece *screams* male courting female. Ooh, this is [another] one of my favourites, this little piece right here: very stretchy, very durable, very fun. It can be a dress; it can be a shirt. It’s even as magical as to be a pantsuit. [Grabs another piece] Oh, this one guy back here, my hat! My grandma gave me that: she saw it at a flea market, and she thought that’d be perfect for Tommy and his work. Oh, I have my, my wonderful array of some leotard here. All of the pretty colors. I do have a violent yellow somewhere... [Grabs another item] These are a key piece of my wardrobe, these sexy leather pants. I just love them. Very chic, very Halle Berry in *Catwoman*. They look much better on...they don’t look like so much like black condoms when they’re on... Oh, that’s my corset, of course. ...of *course* it is. [Laughing and literally slapping my knees] Okay, maybe I shouldn’t do puns.... Ooh! Oh, this is my fishy poncho. It shows top *and* bottom. [Staring at clothes and counting them off with finger] Sexy negligée...oh, my tits!

[Holding up individual pieces to the camera now that appear in drop-cut edits in post-production]

Tommy: This is what I wear whenever I have to go see the Dean of Arts. This one’s Black and White Polaroids. Smallville, 1982. Mardi Gras in November. Oh, that one was Christmas in July last year. [Holding up fishnet leotards] These are my study pants. [Grabbing random items and looking mock-confused at the camera] Black Panther? Black Panther? [Long pause holding a piece and looking at it not knowing what to say] This one shouldn’t be in here. [Holding a pair of handcuffs with an incredibly long chain] These bring me back!

[Holding up pairs of shoes to the camera now that appear in drop-cut edits in post-production]

Tommy: These are my Rubber Snake Skins. These are my Cinderella Sling-Backs. These are my Gold Member's gold members. And these tall girls are my Caravaggio Stompers. [Drop cut of me in the library stacks tripping on my boots, almost falling down, and holding onto the bookshelf to stabilize me]

[Video moves to me standing in front of one of my gallery installation photo projects]

Tommy: This is my Installation Inspiration Wall, and it's about my family because here [points at a framed picture of RuPaul] I have my ever-fabulous drag mother, Ru; and then [points at a framed picture of Lady Gaga] I have the also ever-fabulous Mother Monster, Lady Gaga; and then there's me [points at a framed picture of me between them] their wonderful offspring. And this whole Wall is about all of the fabulous identities that these three fierce bitches take on in their work.

[Video moves to me standing in front of another one of my gallery installation photo projects]

Tommy: This is a project I'm working on on Lady Gaga's and RuPaul's songs. [Points at each individual piece one at a time and comments on each] This is Gaga's "Dance in the Dark." I love the lights. I love what it's doing for my body. This is Ru's "Devil Made Me Do It." And she may look like a crack whore, but that's okay, because she's hot as hell. This one, I have the biggest tits I've ever seen...and they're not even fake! This is what I call double-drag because it's me doing a guy doing a girl. ...that doesn't sound hot... [And y]ou can't see it in this one, but there's actually a human being coming *right* out my vagina. That one's actually my twin sister. And this one? Even when I tried to do Guy Drag, I'm still a Cover Girl.

[New title card comes up that says, "Performance Lecture: 'Lady Gaga: Uncanny Bodies'" and "February 28, 2012 University of Windsor" and is footage of one of the very-first public lectures I ever gave in drag and that was also a dress rehearsal for my very-first conference presentation I ever gave in drag]

Tommy: ...except where Halberstam and Livingston suggest that the drivers may as well abandon their vehicles, Gaga commands hers like no other, and is able to supersede the traffic jam with her innate GPS, navigating this maze of sex changes, wardrobe changes, etc. And let us not forget that the New York City voguing scene, via its drag queens, comfortably fits Lady Gaga's career, too, as she shows not only her pushing of these things human but her bending of gender as well. In her 2011 music video "You and I," we see Lady Gaga perform as a drag *king*, as Jo Calderone, crouched upon a grand piano situated in what looks like a large crop circle in a cornfield. Recall the notion of aliens here...

[Video switches to audience member asking a question]

Audience member: ...[referring to] those kinds of bodies as posthuman or uncanny, because *uncanny* means, umm, that it's like close but not quite, and so it like makes you uncomfortable...

[Video switches back to me speaking to the audience member's question]

Tommy: *Uncanny* means something repressed, that's coming back to the surface and challenging you because it has an unhomely quality, something you once recognized and understood and through a series of repressions no longer do. And something like an inter-female identity that you use makeup and wigs and cosmetics to bring out, I think in a proactive manner, has an uncanny resemblance because we will be uncomfortable talking to drag queens because there's something about them that we're not understanding or ready to face. Because through series of repression, people don't do that. You don't do this [gestures at my own face and self], but people do. So I'm...I think maybe I'm struggling to find where it would be offensive to the community at large when it's kind of a liberating discussion to have that your body freaks people out, and that's good.

[Video transitions back to me in my studio, standing in front of my armchair opposite the black loveseat with my hands in the pockets of my ripped blue jeans]

Tommy: So, I'm Tommy, Tommy Mayberry. Whether I'm in drag or whether I'm a boy, I'm always going to be Tommy. And because there are those two of me, I have to be better than the other one. When I'm fierce and fabulous as a woman, I need to be strong and confident as a man. And it usually comes out with grades: if I don't have the best grade in my class...well, that, that can't happen! I *have* to have the best grade in my class. I *have* to be the funniest person in the conference. And I have to be the *best* teacher my students have ever had.

[Video cuts to me teaching Titian's *Danaë* painting in my Art History lesson]

Tommy: This painting is Titian's *Danaë* painting from 1553 and 1554. It's called *Danaë and the Golden Shower*. And yes, Mark, that's where we got the term *golden shower* from, it's from this *Danaë* painting. Thanks for pointing that out. And what's interesting also about this one in terms of contemporary references is this dog right here: Titian added the dog in as a symbol of sexuality in the painting. And it's from this culture of courtesans that we see Paris Hilton with her Chihuahua, that we see Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* with her Chihuahua, and it comes out of this whore culture. [Slight pause while I gaze out and read the room] And I see a couple people rolling eyes that I'm linking Titian from Renaissance Art History to Paris Hilton and *Legally Blonde*, but it totally is. And if you don't believe me...can anyone tell me what's going on with her hand right here?

Student [off camera]: Middle finger?

Tommy: Middle finger, thank you! She is actually gesturing with the same gesture we use to mean *eff you*, which did mean the same thing in this period. So she's pointing at the dog with that symbol of effing. Okay? [Slight giggles from students] The other thing to link sexuality here, which I think is interesting in terms of the history of the painting, is what's going on with her hand right here. [Points pen at the crotch of the figure of Danaë] In comparison to the way Titian has rendered the rest of this painting – he's a master painter – something's off with that hand. And historical scholars have argued that someone has rubbed it out for her [Pauses, gasps, puts hand on hips as students burst out laughing] Oh, my god. Okay, okay...bad choice of words! *Really* bad choice of words. Someone has

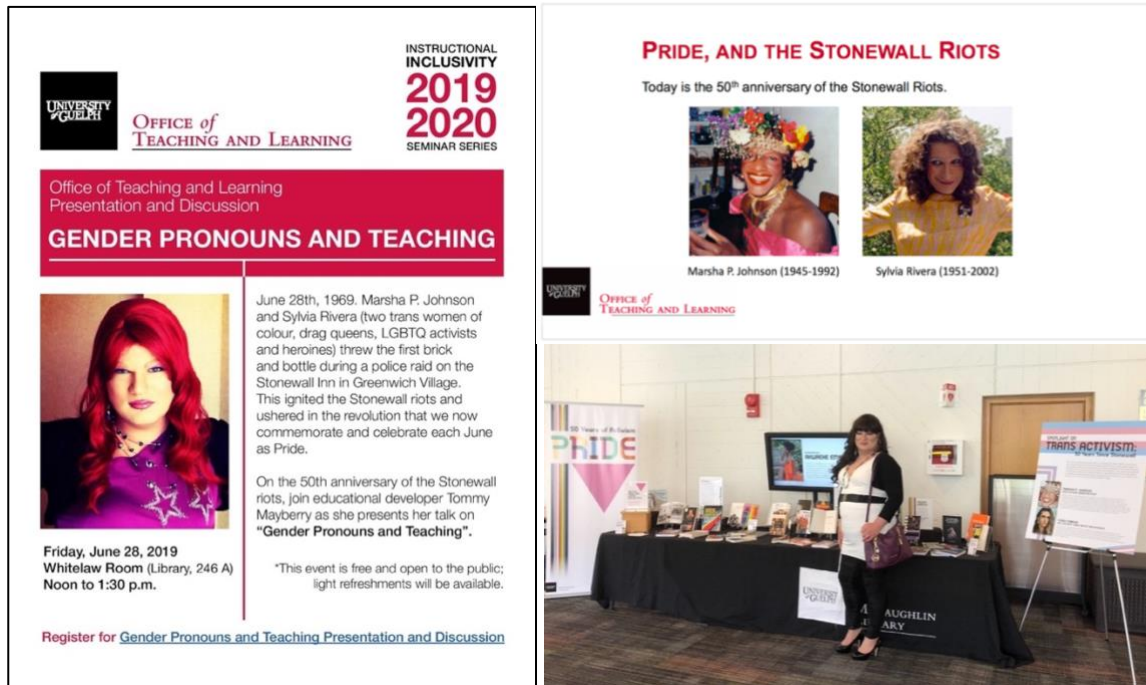
edited the hand here to suggest that she's not playing with herself. That, to me, wrecks the painting because look at her facial features, look at her gestures with the dog, if we could see a fully-rendered hand, she'd be *working* in this painting. [Tons of laughter from students]

[Video transitions to some B-roll footage of me around campus and then back to sitting in the black loveseat in my studio]

Tommy: For me, drag started an academic practice in school, but then it quickly became my life. And since my life *is* academic, [it] kinda worked out for me: I get to be a queen and I get to be a scholar and I get to be a fabulous scholarly queen.

[Video cuts to black as the music for RuPaul's song "The Beginning" begins to play, and it transitions to my Sarah Palin-esque "teacher drag" lip-sync performance to close my video and audition tape]

Artifact 2 – Poster, Slide, and Photo for June 28th, 2019 “Gender Pronouns and Teaching”



Left: Office of Teaching and Learning Poster for “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” presentation and discussion. Top-right: Opening slides from June 28th, 2019 “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” presentation and discussion. Bottom-right: Tommy before “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” presentation in front of library Pride Month display.

Thick Description for Artifact 2:

Artifact 2 is another composite still image of three separate images (a poster; a PowerPoint slide; a personal photograph) from my “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” public talk at the University of Guelph on June 28th, 2019. On the left-hand side of the composite is the poster from the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) at the University of Guelph for my “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” presentation and discussion as part of OTL’s Instructional Inclusivity Seminar Series for the 2019 to 2020 year, which my talk on June 28th kicked off. The poster includes a headshot of me in drag where I’m wearing a red, chest-length wig with a purple top with silver-studded star-shaped outlines on it as well as a black beaded necklace. The text of the poster indicates that the talk will be on Friday, June

28th, 2019 in the Whitelaw Room, which is the library room 246 A, from noon to 1:30pm. The text description/abstract on the poster reads as following:

“June 28th, 1969. Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera (two trans women of colour, drag queens, LGBTQ activists, and heroines) threw the first brick and bottle during a police raid on the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village. This ignited the Stonewall riots and ushered in the revolution we now commemorate and celebrate each June as Pride. On the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, join educational developer Tommy Mayberry as she presents her talk on ‘Gender Pronouns and Teaching.’ This event is free and open to the public; light refreshments will be available.”

There is a link at the bottom of the poster with a call to register that says, “Register for Gender Pronouns and Teaching Presentation and Discussion.”

The top, right-hand side of the composite includes a screenshot of my second PowerPoint slide of my “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” presentation that says, “Pride, and the Stonewall Riots” at the top as this slide’s title, and it shows a picture of Marsha P. Johnson on the left and a picture of Sylvia Rivera on right, both centred in the middle of the slide. In her picture, Marsha is wearing a hot pink, shoulderless dress, a crown of bright spring flowers on her head, and she is smiling a huge, toothy grin at the camera and cheersing with her left hand and a glass of clear liquid; in her picture, Sylvia is wearing a yellow, long-sleeved top with her arms outstretched past the frame of the camera, and she is grinning a side grin that tilts up to the right corner of her mouth while looking off to her right off camera. Underneath the picture of Marsha P. Johnson, it says her name as well as her years of birth to death, which are 1945 to 1992. And underneath Sylvia Rivera’s picture, it says her name as well as her years of birth to death, which are 1951 to 2002. This slide also includes in the bottom, left-hand corner of it the logo for the University of Guelph Office of Teaching and Learning, and there is

a sentence of text underneath this slide's title that reads, "Today is the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots."

In the bottom, right-hand corner of the composite is a photograph that was taken by my baby brother's now-wife (so, my sister-in-law), Emily, who joined me at this talk on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots and who drove me to campus that day after getting ready in drag in her apartment that morning. When we walked up to the McLaughlin Library together on the University of Guelph main campus, front and centre when you walked in was a big Pride display. There's a vertical-standing banner in the photograph that says, "50 Years of Pride Activism." I'm standing in full drag in what I was wearing that day – which is my black wig, my white dress with a black belt, my black pants, black heels, my black bolero jacket, and I'm carrying my purple Michael Kors purse – and I'm standing in front of a large display table that has the McLaughlin Library logo of the University of Guelph on its black tablecloth as well as a bunch of books, DVDs, pamphlets, and posters about Pride month and history. To my left in the photo, which is to the right of looking at the photo, there is a cardboard printed poster displayed on an easel that says, "Spotlight on Trans Activism: 50 Years Since Stonewall," and it includes a picture of Marsha P. Johnson (the same photo in my slide and as mentioned above). The image also includes a picture of Canadian writer, visual artist, musician, and University of Calgary professor Vivek Shraya. In chunks of text too small to read in this personal photograph Emily took of me, there is, as I remember, Johnson's and Shraya's bios and some more information on each of their life, work, and impact as well.

I put these three still images together into one composite as an artifact for my dissertation about my "Gender Pronoun and Teaching" talk on June 28th, 2019 because that was the poster we created in the Office of Teaching and Learning to advertise and celebrate this event (and launch our Instructional Inclusivity Seminar Series). This slide is also one that I reference for how I started

opening this talk that day as the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, and this personal photograph that Emily took of me is photographic documentation of how I looked that day in my authentic body when I went to do this talk for the first time in full drag and stood so powerfully, and proudly, in front of that Pride and Trans Activism table in the University of Guelph McLaughlin Library main foyer.

Artifact 3 – “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” slide: “Tommy Mayberry (he/she/they)”

TOMMY MAYBERRY (he/she/they)

AMAB –
Assigned Male
At Birth

Visually-presents
most often as
culturally-coded
“male”

Same-sex partner
(also named Tommy)
– we appear as **gay**
male couple



Academic **Drag Queen**

LGBTQIA+

Nails did, **hair** on fleek,
and **make-ups** on –
in *and* out of drag

Flamboyant
and **fierce**

I use “they” when I refer to myself in the third-person

 **OFFICE of**
TEACHING AND LEARNING

Thick Description for Artifact 3:

Artifact 3 is a screenshot of another slide from my “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” talk from the exact same PowerPoint slide deck from Artifact 2 above as well. And this one is the “Tommy Mayberry” slide with my pronouns on it that includes in the centre of it a photo of me in drag with my red wig and the purple dress with the silver-studded stars on it, the black bolero jacket, and the black beaded necklace. This shot is actually a photograph that my partner Tommy took of me at the Popular Culture Association of Canada in Niagara Falls one year. One of the photos he took of me has become my headshot in drag (and was included on the poster for my “Gender Pronouns and Teaching” talk in Artifact 2), and in this one here on this slide for Artifact 3, I have my hands out and my face is a surprised look as if Tommy just caught me in full drag...although, of course, it took about three hours to get ready in drag in the hotel room in Niagara Falls, so this expression and pose

is most definitely staged and is a little more fun than a professional headshot. But the image matches because it's the same outfit, the same wig, and the same makeup that I wore for the one that has since become my professional headshot.

Superimposed on top of this photo, which is recreated on this slide in four-by-six dimensions like traditional personal photographs, is another photo that my Tommy also took with me but out of drag and in our very first basement apartment that we lived in together. I'm walking up the stairs there, and I'm wearing a blue, white, and red plaid shirt overtop of a bright blue t-shirt. I have sunglasses on, my hair's done in my kind of signature rooster comb spiked hair, and I'm smiling. (We actually are on our way to see a staged play version of *The Wizard of Oz* in Toronto, I remember.) So these two photos together from this talk that I did the first time in drag shows me in drag and out of drag together, and at the top of the slide as the slide's title, it says my name, "Tommy Mayberry" in the burgundy red that is one of the University of Guelph colours and beside my name in black font and in parentheses are my three series of pronouns: he, she, and they. Almost in a word cloud burst arrangement around the centred image and in black font are those sort of adjectives, those pieces of my intersections of privilege and my intersections of being equity-denied. Reading them in counter-clockwise order starting at the top left, this slide reads: AMAB, which means assigned male at birth; next, it says, "Visually-presents most often as culturally-coded male"; then it says, "Same-sex partner (also named Tommy) – we appear as a gay male couple"; next, and now at the top right and then in clockwise order, it says, "Academic Drag Queen"; then it says, "LGBTQIA+" with the letters G, T, and Q bolded; next, it says, "Nails did, hair on fleek, and make-ups on – in *and* out of drag"; then it says, "Flamboyant and fierce"; and at the bottom of the slide under the photo, it says, "I use 'they' when I refer to myself in the third person."

This slide is the very first iteration of the slide that I had with my intersections of privileges and oppressions here and that I continue to use when I share my life story as part of my “Gender Pronouns and Cultures of Respect” public scholarship and work to let folks to know a little bit more about me and my journey. As I say in Chapter Three of the dissertation when I do this as a counterstory, how I came to know and understand and live with these three series in the order that they are.

Artifact 4 – The Real Paris on Fire Project: My Affective Reflection Notes and Writing (Re-Watching *Paris is Burning*)

Scene/Moment: Opening B-roll footage after title card of “New York 1987” – particularly, the night shot of the Twin Towers still standing, the Pride-esque colour palette of the Statue of Liberty billboard, the scrolling light sign saying, “White Supremacist Church Begins National Conference” with a billboard right behind it with Marilyn Monroe’s face (Andy Warhol design or Andy Warhol-esque)...all this with sounds of the city before any music is heard

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Shock, like taken-aback [we’re not even a minute into the
Reaction You’re Having: documentary yet - !]

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

This is a pretty impressively heavy dialectic montage (*à la* Jameson) of social and racial justice icons and images; like, the affective whiplash (*à la* Lothian) of seeing the Twin Towers – while it never could have been Livingston’s intention (anachronistic/ahistorical) – today calls to mind terrorism, xenophobia, and the paradigm shift brought about due to 9/11 of anti-Muslim racism; but thinking chronologically and historically in 1987 when Livingston was filming, these images and icons represent COMMERCE, BUSINESS, INTERNATIONAL TRADE, and CAPITALISM; the Pride-paletted Statue of Liberty sets up the assumed progressiveness (*à la* hooks) of what we’re about to see as well as hints at the (assumed) queer inclusivity and liberation 18 years after Stonewall in New York City, as so does the Marilyn-Monroe-Andy-Warhol sighting. But this is queer *whiteness*, *white* celebrity, even *white* transness (thinking of Holly Woodlawn and Warhol).

The most shocking piece, though, is the text scrolling on the light sign about the White Supremacist Church beginning a national conference: by including this particular piece of B-roll footage to open the documentary, Livingston *is* undeniably (though perhaps not critically at all, nor

self-reflectively at all) framing the documentary in terms of white supremacy and (assumed) white Christianity, even. All of this together in the first 36 seconds is incredibly subliminally powerful for tacitly orienting viewers of the tone of the film to follow that hooks clocks but that actually largely goes unlocked by white viewers.

Scene/Moment: The opening voice-over about “3 strikes against you in this life,” and being a Black man, you already have two

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Kind of sad nodding
Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

This reminds me of some of the comments Black queens also make on *RuPaul’s Drag Race* – RuPaul more angrily so, in the Season 10 Reunion episode, about being discriminated against for being Black, gay, and too femme; The Vixen talking about the impossibility of being a Black drag queen today [RuPaul specifically says, “Let me tell you something, I have been discriminated against by white people for being Black, by Black people for being gay, by gay people for being too femme” (“Reunited”); and The Vixen, six episodes earlier in the season, says, “It is hard being a Black person in America. It is hard being a Black gay person in America. It is impossible being a Black gay drag queen in America” (“Snatch Game”).] Interestingly, each of RuPaul and of The Vixen in these quotations also rhetorically go “in threes” in their statements, which rhymes with this dad’s advice about “three strikes against you”...as well as then saying/adding the “You’re going to need to be stronger than ever” (qtd. in Livingston)

The “stronger than ever” part also calls to mind RuPaul’s transcendence narrative on the show that centres his whole pedagogy with overcoming trauma through the strength of drag that empowers you.[⁹⁶]

Also privilege and like that activity of privilege walks where, as this dad is saying, Black gay people start off their lives with 2 out of 3 strikes already against them; they start two steps back from straight white men, and inferentially, then, one step back, too, from white gay men.[⁹⁷]

Scene/Moment: The club sign “Uptown Girl” at 1:16

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Laughter, like a quick laugh
Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

⁹⁶ As Phillip Joy and Jill Marie McSweeney-Flaherty in their chapter “Pedagogy of the Mother: Exploring Freire’s Philosophy of Co-Productive Learning” argue, “Mother Ru awards, much like a grade, and deems successful those queens who find their voice and when they accept those qualities that isolated them” (80), and they cite the “Evil Twins” episode of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* season 10 as iconic of this where, as they note, “Miz Cracker becomes both the teacher and the learner, a co-producer of knowledge, when she explores and learns about her inability to be vulnerable in her personal and drag life, and it has been detrimental to her emotional and mental health” (78). However, as David J. Fine in his chapter “RuPaulogetics: Assimilation, Backwash, and the Charisma of Queer Pedagogy” argues on this same episode and moment with Miz Cracker, “On the surface, the episode acknowledges the good and the bad; however, in their isolation, the challenge refuses the reality of their inseparability. In effect, RuPaul uses the lesson to teach others how to pluck the lotus from the mud. She forces the redemptive storyline, fostering a consolatory fantasy of good’s ultimate separation from bad. It is fitting, therefore, that Miz Cracker, who struggles openly with depression, goes home” (174).

⁹⁷ At the time of doing this Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity myself – which was the week of February 9th, 2022 – I hadn’t yet started watching *Survivor* season 42 and hadn’t yet seen the Tribal Council episode where two Black women, Drea Wheeler and Maryanne Oketch, forfeited (not played, forfeited) their Immunity Idols so as not to be the third Black cast members in a row to be voted out and sent to the Jury. In the discussion that ensued just before they handed over their respective Idols to *Survivor* host Jeff Probst, Maryanne (a 24 year old seminary student from Ajax, Ontario) explained to Jeff, the white cast members, and the world watching that while mathematically each *Survivor* contestant statistically has the same broadcasted odds of a 1-in-18 shot at winning the game and the title of Sole Survivor, “because we all come with our burdens and all come with our privileges, that 1 in 18 might be bigger or smaller for some people” (“Game of Chicken”). My February 2022 reflection on this moment of *Paris is Burning* that brought me to connect to the Privilege Walk activity made me further connect in April/May 2022 in turning my rough “Pause-and-Reflect” reflective writing into “dissertation ready” writing on this great 2022 reality TV example of the subtle, but so present, nuances of equality (same odds/1-in-18) and equity (“bigger or smaller for some people”) in social and racial justice discussions.

This reminds me of the song “Uptown Girl...living in an uptown world,” but then makes me sad that I laughed because this, as the documentary shows and as hooks takes real issue with, is the unreachable dream for the queens and girls Livingston is interviewing toward making *Paris is Burning*...to be(come) “uptown girls” instead of the diametrically opposed “downtown girls”...

hooks is right: laughter is never innocent. ...especially not when the cut-scene following this shows two female-presenting people of colour dressed fancily/“uptown”-y and drinking Diet Pepsi through straws to, inferentially, not smear their lipstick but also watch their weight with the sugar-free – but name-brand! – drink.

Scene/Moment: Pepper LaBeija walking up to the club in that *incredible* gold outfit and sleeves, saying “You have to open the door” (time stamp: 1:24)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Laughter/Giggling
Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

I've never worn something that fabulous and OTT, but I remember many a conference and/or teaching event with my parents and/or Tommy and needing them to "have to open the door" for me (especially vehicle doors, ha!) because of my heels, tape, tuck, and wig. (I also will never forget – nor live down, let's be honest – how impressively diva-ish and needy I do become both getting into drag and being driven...chauffeured, if you will...motel to conference centre, house to campus, because I need my heels on to finish my look and because my driving isn't the most confident *out* of drag and in running shoes!)

And so I laughed/giggled here because of my own experiences in drag and, highly likely, having said these exact words in this exact order in an unintentional-direct-quoting of Pepper: "You have to open the door." Having said these to my parents, siblings, and/or partner at least once in my life (if not many, many more times than just the once, ha!). I don't think I was laughing *at* Pepper, and so if not laughing at, could my laughter/giggling here be innocent? Or at least not-guilty? The fact that I recorded "Laughter/Giggling" might lean into that, too – what are the synergies and separations between *laughter* and *giggling*? hooks doesn't expound upon *guilty giggling*, but how does that intersect and compound?

Scene/Moment: Listing the opening categories – especially "Butch Queen" (time stamp: 5:30)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Laughing

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

I definitely do need to reflect more on “Butch Queen,” specially in a Halberstamian way with “butchness” and history/etymology of the word “butch,” but I do laugh/snicker at “butch” and even more so when paired with “queen.” I think here of Red Lip Day at Sephora, for example, when I worked there as a National Trainer and when, out of drag, I was the lip model for the training that day for the Mini Make-over Service...and how serving Butch Queen Realness became the unofficial theme! But also, for another example, when I take my wig off – and even before my wig goes on! – in drag that is this fun, funny, ironic Butch Queen moment (and I’ve written about this, too, in *RuPedagogies* for the power and magic of the wig moment, and then, as Ricarda writes in her *RuPedagogies* chapter, the Mirror Moment) but both before and after the wig, there are these sharp contrasts instantaneously rather than progressively (as when I paint and then remove paint, which is progressive, processual, not snatching and being snatched with wigs).^[98] Like, the Butch

⁹⁸ It is actually Vicky Kampouridou’s chapter in *RuPedagogies*, not Ricarda Goetz-Preisner’s, that situates and discusses the Mirror Moment: in “*RuPaul’s Drag Race* as a Heterotopic Learning Experience,” Kampouridou highlights “two significant points in the [drag queen] makeover procedure” that are “[t]he Mirror Moment...when the self-identifying male person sees themselves in the mirror as a female presence for the first time” and “[t]he Presentation Moment...when the self-identifying male person has to present this newfound female identity to the public eye for the first time” (22). And in my own chapter, “‘And where is the body?’: Naked Drag and the Social Construction of Anatomy as Sexed and Gendered,” in a rather long autobiographical footnote on the “massive no-no” of “queens snatching off their wigs on stage” (102), I share:

True to my own gendered identity, I have always innately understood that my wig is tantamount to my female identity. It is always the last piece of my transformation to go on, and it is always the first piece of my transformation to come off; I am truly female just after and just before these respective polar moments. Anything else remains part of my gender oscillation. When I first started doing academic drag as a conscious and decided project of embodied cognition at the University of Windsor (Windsor, Ontario) during Master of Fine Arts studies, my peers and supervisors consistently criticized me for not exploring this fissure in a performative way. They wanted, and they expressed so in these words, to see me “rip off my wig” to conclude each guest lecture and conference paper I performed in drag as part of my thesis body of work to showcase the dichotomy of my gendered selves. I was (and remain) vehemently opposed to this deliberate breakdown in a live and public setting, but it is most certainly a fetish in drag/trans- bodies and performance art: uncannily, people want to see the queen without her wig on, they want that peek behind the curtain, they want that confirmation of the illusion, but (as with Medusa) they do not want to/cannot look directly. Once they do, it is over: the wig reveal breaks the

Queen Realness *pre-wig* isn't so apparent to me because I am watching myself slowly transition in the mirror as I paint and apply lashes, etc., but it *is* apparent for Tommy in another room if/when he sees me fully painted but no wig...and then when I pull my wig off to start getting out of drag, *that* moment is instantaneous where I can see myself more immediately than slowly as serving Butch Queen Realness.

And so again I laughed here, and yes, decidedly laughed *at* the category of "Butch Queen."

To what extent, then, is this/could this be innocent laughter?

Scene/Moment: Pepper listing icons for drag queens across time: Las Vegas show girls originally, but then movie stars in the 70s, Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, and then now (1987) models like Iman and Christie Brinkley and Maud Adam... "all those children" (time stamp: 11:30)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Nodding

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Not to counter or clock hooks at all – especially because 1 of 5 isn't actually a great stat – but it is interesting that Pepper tucks Iman into this list of icons for drag queens "now" in 1987 since Iman is a model of colour whose very first modelling job was with *Vogue*. (I wonder if Livingston recorded and has any footage of pages of Iman ripped from *Vogue* that didn't make into the documentary...)

The evolution from showgirl icons to movie star icons to fashion model icons is also interesting here.

"poetic faith" (as Coleridge would call it) of the drag show and shatters the audience's "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment." (Mayberry 112-13n79)

Scene/Moment: “All these categories that I can never stay awake for” – Dorian says this! (time stamp: 12:45)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Laughing, like a quick burst out laughing
Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

The “old” queen, the “tired” queen, the grandmother/*kokum* queen – I don’t think this is a guilty laughter, but it could be (reflect more) but the irony is great in terms of intergenerational growth and community.

Thinking though, perhaps, of Livingston saying she was drawn to the “more articulate” queens for her documentary, perhaps there is a non-innocence in laughing at this irony of Dorian’s comment about age here because Dorian *is articulate enough to make Livingston’s cut of articulation for her documentary...* thinking recently of Kornbread “The Snack” Jeté on *RuPaul’s Drag Race* season 14, episode 1 and Michelle Visage saying she couldn’t understand what Kornbread was saying in her original song, Lizzo (Extra Special Guest Judge for the talent show) *and* RuPaul jumped in to say that *they* understood Kornbread...they made it clear, too, that they understood because they are Black people listening and hearing differently to what Kornbread is saying and singing (“Big Opening #1”). Michelle Visage, not a Black person, can’t listen and hear in the same way (can’t, or won’t/don’t), so perhaps *some* of the laughter here that is “never innocent” is because it’s being edited in here by a non-Black person (Livingston) and is hitting my ears as a non-Black listener in a way that makes me laugh, that makes me hear the irony of grandparents and can’t-stay-awake and “back in my day”

...I wonder what else Livingston recorded and didn’t listen to/didn’t hear because she is white...or more dangerously, perhaps, I wonder what Livingston didn’t even choose to attempt to

listen to because the queens/speakers were less articulate...and/or even Livingston's assumption that they *were* less articulate is the moment of her saying she didn't/wouldn't/couldn't hear them/understand them like Michelle to Kornbread. Thinking of hooks and her extrapolations on Livingston's comments about "I wish a Black director had made this film"⁹⁹] and how it would basically be the same, it never could be the same! A Black director – like Lizzo and RuPaul listening/hearing/understanding Kornbread – would have approached articulation vastly differently – read: ethically – than Livingston as a white cisqueer woman in a Black queer and trans- space.

Scene/Moment: Junior LaBeija clarifying what "Miss Cheesecake" means (time stamp: 13:12)

Emotion You're Feeling/ BIG laughter, like LOL-type legit laughter
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

I don't yet know why this is so funny to me...I mean, Junior says, "You must have a body but also be sexy," and then the unseen asker of this question for clarification, perhaps much like a viewer of this documentary – or even Livingston herself as interloper...did she ask the MC this question? Is she the unseen question-asker here?! – being like, "What on earth is Miss Cheesecake?" Like, "The Poconos vs. The Catskills" is an obvious category of bougie capitalist escapism, but not being "in" the culture and not knowing "Cheesecake," it would be jarring and quite alien to hear/attempt to interpret who (or *what*) Miss Cheesecake is - !

⁹⁹ I was quoting here based off memory in my reflective writing; the actual Livingston quotation, properly quoted and cited for scholarly dissertational purposes, is: "I certainly don't have the final word on the gay [B]lack experience. I'd love for a [B]lack director to have made this film" (qtd. in hooks 152).

Also! This is *very* much like Gia Gunn serving “tilapia realness” and Ricarda’s exposition of this about serving *white* woman realness^[100] – i.e., for the Miss Cheesecake category, cheesecake made from cream cheese would be *white* and smooth, so indexically here, the category of Miss Cheesecake is another moment of serving/aspiring to *whiteness*. Junior doesn’t say this, they just say, “That means you must not only have a body, but you must be sexy,” but the script of bodily sexiness here is baked (pun intended) into the whiteness of the cream cheese main ingredient in serving cheesecake (realness). ALSO! Junior continues, “A lot of people have bodies but are not sexy” (qtd. in Livingston). Another indexical property here of the Cheesecake Category is its smoothness and sweetness...its sexiness, yes, and its script for the type of body that can run for and stand a chance at winning Miss Cheesecake...not every *body*, Junior makes clear.

Scene/Moment: School Category – “Going to College” (time stamp: 13:45)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Laughter

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

The drag here is just a Yale t-shirt – like university swag as drag...I literally just can’t! And the performing of University-Student-Realness is just so, so good.

¹⁰⁰ In her chapter “The Influence of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* on Pop Culture and the Way We Talk” in *RuPedagogies of Realness: Essays on Teaching and Learning with RuPaul’s Drag Race* (2022), Ricarda Goetz-Preisner discusses how the example of the word and concept of “fishiness” can “show how many layers of puns drag queens work with in their language: drag queen (and now trans woman) Gia Gunn in season 6 of *RPDR* refers to herself as a ‘fresh Tilapia’ upon first entering the workroom. In order to understand the complexity of what Gia is saying here, first the audience has to know that Tilapia is a fish; more over, they have to know Tilapia is a type of fish with very white meat. As Gia Gunn is of Japanese-American descent, the pun is even more powerful because in this nuanced understanding, she is saying of herself that she is serving *white woman realness*” (51 – italics original).

I don't think this is a dangerous laughter here on my part – though let's clock the potential blind spots and biases here for sure and keep thinking toward unpacking them – because, as an academic drag queen, this was always and largely part of my mission: as I used to say in my early-early work, “Raising the *academy* to the level of drag and drag clubs, not raising drag and clubs to the level of the academy.”^[101] So seeing this ballwalker performing University-Student-Realness drag in a *Yale University* t-shirt, an article of clothing they might have even mopped from a second-hand clothing store (or better yet, fingers crossed, right from the Yale U Bookstore!), there is a ton of anti-capitalist and waste-economy layers happening here, too – and this is amazing. It reminds me so much, too, of that moment in my *RuPaul's Drag Race* Season 5 audition tape where I'm reading Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* in the University of Windsor library in my own take on University-Student-Realness drag...but, so regrettably, I did *not* wear UWindsor swag. I think I didn't think to wear UWindsor swag because, as a white person, even a white queen, my bodily presence on campus wouldn't be as likely to be questioned as not passing for a real student...and I also *was* a real UWindsor student, could afford (though barely) tuition and therefore didn't “need” the UWindsor swag to “prove”/pass or embody it. (I also could have produced my UWindsor Student Card as authorized ID, should I have been questioned or confronted.) So, yes, my laughter

¹⁰¹ This isn't a real quotation from any of my published or conference-paper-printed work and research, but I remember saying this (almost verbatim) in 2012 at *Still Life?* Stony Brook University's fifth annual Philosophy & Art Conference (New York, NY) where I did one of my very-first-ever in-drag conference paper performances and when, during the open discussion and Q+A after the panel I was a part of, a visible upset white male professor accused me of making a mockery of academic conferences by delivering my paper in drag and effectively lowering the whole panel and conference to the level of a drag club. As Harper Keenan and Lil Miss Hot Mess write in their article “Drag Pedagogy: The Playful Practice of Queer Imagination in Early Childhood,” drag as an art form, “is all about bending and breaking the rules, and so its aims are totally different from a normative classroom. When a drag queen enters a (class)room, she generally intends to draw attention to herself – whether through shock, admiration, or envy of her embodied performance. There is a premium on standing out, on artfully desecrating the sacred” (451). (Say it louder for the visibly upset white male professors in the back: *There is a premium on standing out, on artfully desecrating the sacred.*)

here *is* less-than-innocent because of the layers of my whiteness in reading this scene in the documentary of a non-white person performing University-Student-Realness similarly – though vastly differently – from my performance of it in my audition tape.

I also am thinking here of the icon of ableism as well in this scene – the glasses, stereotypical “student”/“intellectual” attire, but iconic of disability in terms of sightedness inherent in glasses-wearing as drag article signifier here. Junior asks the judges, “Does she look like a girl going to school?” and as Livingston’s camera pans over the standing-to-be-considered ballwalkers, two of them are wearing glasses as part of their drag. Glasses as drag. Thinking of my own contact-lens-wearing as hiding my differently-abled eyes/sightedness to *not* appear differently-abled by the signifier of glasses as something I wear.

Also! We see the walker wearing the Yale t-shirt performing a bit before the three walkers stand together to be judged, and in that performance of University-Student-Realness, they are flipping the pages of the book prop they have...but are flipping them *backwards*! Whether intentional or not on this ballwalker’s part – like whether a critique on the backwardness of it all as further embodied in the flipping the pages back to front instead front to back – this is a powerful moment for viewers “looking in” to voyeuristically infer classist, racism, ableist perceptions...*white* perceptions (like, and yes I myself did go here, though several steps in reflectively unpacking and writing just now, not instantaneously-immediately, like that horrible Adam Sandler joke in *Billy Madison* (1995) when his Grade 3 classmate is stuttering in reading aloud in front of the class and he mocks, “Kid can’t even read!”

Scene/Moment: Executive Realness (time stamp: 14:14)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ More LOL laughter!

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Okay, this one is not laughing *at* any of the queens or ballwalkers for, as Junior says, “Get[ting] into the suits, and get[ting] into the pumps” but for how much *Paris is Buring-through-RuPaul’s Drag Race* has influenced and infected my and Tommy’s (the Tommies’) language between us as a couple – for instance, when we literally went to Mark’s (formerly known as Mark’s Work Wearhouse) to buy winter coats for living in Edmonton now and, even though we were in a global pandemic, picking one out to wear one day on the University of Alberta campus to go to work as the *Executive* Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning and using the very real and literal lens of “Executive Realness” to purchase this coat. And not *just* to purchase my coat but also to model it and gaze at myself in it in the mirrors on the floor of Mark’s! Tommy and I *literally* were, I am not being hyperbolic, looking for Executive Realness – and, I believe, used this language as we shopped without caring/being aware of fellow Edmontonian shoppers around us – to pick out my coat.

The non-innocence of this laughter, of course, and of it all hits me now that as the Executive Director of the University of Alberta Centre for Teaching and Learning, I have realized this – *realized* this – I’ve made it, I’ve achieved it, and the queens walking the balls are doing so in this category because, as they say in the opening moments of the documentary, this is as close to reality as they will get: walking the ball in [Executive Realness] drag. The irony also is not lost on me that, while we did buy my Executive Realness winter coat on sale from a Mark’s Doorcrasher Event, we did still purchase it...we did not mop it from Mark’s nor buy it at or even mop it from a second-hand clothing store. Yes, I am a drag queen, and yes, I am queer and trans, but I didn’t grow up in the ballroom scene...I didn’t *have to*, so to speak, because of my whiteness...my

whiteness that very literally and very non-innocently allowed me to achieve and to Real-ize, to put the “Real” in Executive *Realness*, an Executive position in a U15 Canadian university.

(And notice how I say “non-innocently” here instead of “guiltily”? It’s an important distinction – it’s not “white guilt” here that I am feeling and experiencing, but a cognizant, critical awareness of *the lack of innocence* in my whiteness. I am not *guilty* for being white...but I am not innocent of the powers, privileges, accesses, opportunities, etc. that my whiteness affords me.)

Scene/Moment: Dorian Corey on Executive Realness (following immediately after above – time stamp: 14:30)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Reaction You’re Having: Deep nodding, not sorrowful or guilty, but critically contemplative

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

“In real life, you can’t get a job as an Executive unless you have the educational background and the opportunity” – Dorian Corey [qtd. in Livingston]

“Now the fact that you are not an Executive is merely because of the social standing of life. That is just a pure thing: Black people have a harder time getting anywhere. And those that do are usually straight” – Dorian Corey [qtd. in Livingston]

See above notes and reflective writing on this, too, because you did start to go into it with that reflective writing above, but what Corey says here is what you are reflecting on about your achieving of Executive status, getting a job as an Executive, because of your educational background and opportunity...but also because, and this is important from a decolonizing education standpoint in 2021, because of *more than* just education in my background: my task for my first interview with the Hiring Committee was to prepare a 10-minute Opening Statement on the question/prompt, *What in your background has prepared you to be the Executive Director of CTL at this time?* To an unconsciously colonized white applicant mind approaching this question

and task, this may just look like the standard-and-to-be-expected prompt of almost exactly what Corey is clocking – i.e., “What are your credentials and qualifications?” What is your *educational background*, and your previously-achieved opportunities? But the question in my interview didn’t actually ask this and, in its rhetoric, I saw the door open a bit for, as Corey also alludes to, intersectionality of lived experience to be positioned and lobbied as the wider-than-just-educational background.

Hence the affective reflection here of “Deep nodding, not sorrowful or guilty, but critically contemplative”: I know that my educational background unambiguously has been open and available to me – no matter how hard I’ve had it financially and as a queer and trans kid going through this system...and going through this system to and through the trauma of the 375-page complete dissertation on William Blake unallowed to proceed to defense because of my embodied voice and viewpoint – in ways that were not “three strikes against me” from the start kind of way, but what I find so interesting here about my affective reaction to Dorian’s comments and perspectives here is that I was able to successfully leverage those intersections of being equity-denied together with my privileges (oppressions and privileges, Dr. Aja calls this, I think^[102]) to “get a job as an Executive.” This feels new, this feels like a crack in the armor of the system, and it wasn’t without controversy either (see LinkedIn trolling on my job announcement^[103]).

¹⁰² The specific quotations from Dr. Aja here that I was thinking of are when she writes, “I believe in the importance of subjective transparency and forthrightness regarding the intersections of our oppressions and privileges” (68) as well as talks about “the privileged and oppressed intersections of our identities” (76).

¹⁰³ On June 30th, 2021 (literally one day after my 33rd birthday), a stranger messaged me on LinkedIn with the following note, “Hi Tommy, I just came across your profile based on someone’s questioning your ED appointment on LinkedIn as lacking in their 30 years of experience as if time in roles is the measure. Good luck in the role and check my activity for the thread. Warm regards,” and upon checking their activity for the thread, as they noted, I found that someone had shared the U of A Announcement of my appointment with the following commentary, “The University of Alberta has appointed someone with no formal academic background in instructional and learning science as Executive Director of its Centre for T&L. This person has a

In no way, though, of course, am I wanting with this reflective discussion to be pulling-a-Livingston here and saying, “I wish a Black academic drag queen had applied for the CTL Executive Director job, but oop, that didn’t happen!” because of course my whiteness not only afforded me the opportunities, as Corey notes, for the educations of my background and the full-time academic employment positions I’ve held, but it also forgives, even – even, and perhaps most problematically – my queerness and transness because, as I expounded in the “EDI Statement” I was asked to include in my application package for the Executive Director position, EDI is often shitty white work that serves only to diversify by elevating *white* people with intersections of equity-denied lived identities and experiences...in a very real Crenshawian way.^[104] I might have been terrifyingly exciting as a candidate to the CTL Executive Director Hiring Committee – being *very* aware that the folks who comprised that Hiring Committee are now my peers, colleagues, partners, team members, and even my director supervisor/boss – as a (white) queer and trans academic drag queen because, being embodied in my whiteness, my queerness, my transness, and my drag queen identity are *just* dangerous enough to approach flipping the table of the status quo without actually overturning it and ruining game night for everyone with chips all over the floor. At the end of the day, as progressive and as unexpected as my hiring was, undeniably, the University of Alberta hired a white person to this Executive position. (A white male-presenting-for-most-of-

BA and MA in English and is a PhD student in English. The field of Education has become a joke. The fact that the ED is a drag queen is irrelevant” and there was considerable action on this post in the comments – to date, 47 comments (Kettle).

¹⁰⁴ I now know that the “academic” way to say “shitty white work” is actually “Interest Convergence” from Critical Race Theory’s central tenets. As Martinez parenthetically defines it, “interest convergence (whites will never allow progress for people of color if white self-interest is not also secured)” (134), for “white self-interest always wins out in matters of perceived racial progress for communities of color” (67).

the-time-and-especially-in-a-pandemic person, too – which is why my headshot and profile picture is the double-headshot of me both in and out of drag.)

“In a ball room, you can be anything you want. You’re not really an Executive, but you’re looking like an Executive, and therefore you’re showing the straight world that I can be an Executive. If I had the opportunity, I could be one because I can look like one” – Dorian Corey [qtd. in Livingston] (time stamp: 14:50)

Again, the irony is not lost on me that I’ve had the opportunity to become an Executive and *then* I bought the coat to “look like one,” and so I am both “really an Executive” *and* “looking like an Executive” – which is also interesting that this is coming to my conscious attention about *the winter coat I bought for living in Edmonton for when it’s -40 degrees!* Just the coat – and perhaps it doesn’t even do that all that well because of my age (32 years old at the time of appointment), my hair (spiky rooster-comb wave), my “ripped jeans” etc. – but just the coat, this item of clothing, is my visual drag link to “looking like one”...nothing else about my visual presentation, in or out of drag, is Executive Realness...which is the kicker here, right? Because I *am*...I don’t have to *serve* it or bring it to the runway. Because I am an Executive, I don’t have to present like one (my office, my authority, my paycheques all still exist and will exist^[105]). “Now that’s shade,” to quote Dorian here on this mic-drop of a realization but from elsewhere in the documentary (qtd. in Livingston).

¹⁰⁵ One of my favourite personal anecdotes (*very apropos* here!) about my first months in my new role as CTL Executive Director is when I went to campus to pick up from the CTL mailroom an order of Orange Shirts I had placed from the U of A Bookstore for my team for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day. CTL is on the fifth floor of the Cameron Library on U of A’s North Campus, and so since no one was working there during the pandemic, all of our mail stayed in the central Cameron Library backroom on the main floor. I had arranged with the Cameron Library Facilities Manager to pick them up from him, but not knowing campus at all nor Cameron Library, I checked in with the front service desk to let them know I was here and was looking for the Facilities Manager. When the person at the front desk asked me if the Facilities Manager was expecting me and I confirmed that yes, he was expecting me, the front desk attendant walked with me to the back room and announced to the Facilities Manager upon entry, “Your new co-op student is here!” Having started my new role in August 2021 working-from-home, comfortably wearing my ripped jeans off-camera sitting at my new desk all day, I had this day grabbed a hoodie to throw on (and not even a U of A hoodie – I hadn’t bought one of those just yet!) and headed into campus, not even remotely paying attention to what I looked like and not thinking about, as I would later in Mark’s coat-shopping, just what would I wear as an

Scene/Moment: Lena Horne mention (time stamp: 17:10)

Emotion You're Feeling/ [I didn't actually reflectively write anything here...but I am guessing
Reaction You're Having: I smiled or acknowledged the reference to Lena Horne, a Black actress, who also is referenced in *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995) which I also taught in "Transgender Visual Culture"]

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

[I didn't actually reflectively write anything here either! But going off the above note about *To Wong Foo* and "Transgender Visual Culture," I do remember talking about Noxeema Jackson (played by Wesley Snipes) being fascinated with Lena Horne as a Black actress who she looked up to and emulated, so perhaps I was similarly thinking in recording this Lena Horne sighting to my reflective notes above about Iman and the presence of Black female role models and celebrities for the queens.]

Scene/Moment: "To Be Real" song playing – Cheryl Lynn (time stamp: 18:00)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Smirking
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

[Yes, I smirked here!] At least the song is by Black woman artist, so there's that, even though the montage of B-roll while it plays is a lot of straight white people candidly caught just

Executive Director. Serving New Co-op Student Realness, apparently, I was still, *regardless of how I looked*, already a winner of the Executive Realness category and didn't necessarily need to dress the part to be the part. (I *did* notice, after awkward apologies for mistaking my type of employment at the Cameron Library, the tone and demeanor of the front desk attendant changed – they absolutely were not rude or condescending or dismissive to me when they thought I was a co-op student, but after the Facilities Manager's performative utterance "No, that's Tommy, the new big boss upstairs!" that breathed me into existence in that backroom *as* the Executive Director of the teaching centre on floor 5 upstairs, I swear the front desk attendant stood just a touch straighter. Regardless of my ripped jeans.

existing...the inference here is white-washed, then, since the Realness ascribed here, as hooks rightly clocks, is *white* realness; so even though a Black woman artist is the vocal and musical overlay here ascribed and assigned by Livingston, it's still upholding, uplifting, pedestalling white heteropatriarchy...even the voice over comment says that to be a man and woman (note: they didn't say "white," but they definitely meant "straight"), you can get away with anything...even sex in the street! Most that's gonna happen, the voiceover continues, is being told to get a room! But if you're gay (again, not clocking race, but it's compoundedly intersectional in viewing) you have to monitor everything to "pass," the voice over says (and I am paraphrasing here, so will need to grab the quotation verbatim if using it.^[106])

Scene/Moment: "Shake the dice and steal the rice" moment (time stamp: 18:44)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Ah-ha moment

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

This is what RuPaul always said to introduce Santino Rice when he was a resident judge on *RuPaul's Drag Race* in the early seasons of the show...taking it literally from *Paris is Burning* with no cited reference, to the film nor to Junior LaBeija. Which is again so interesting because RuPaul *does* reference and cite *Paris is Burning* every season when setting up the Reading Mini Challenge ("In the great tradition of *Paris is Burning*, the Library is now open!"), and that, too, is such a weird and wonky thing because RuPaul could instead be citing and referencing *the great*

¹⁰⁶ The full and accurate quotation from the voiceover is: "When you're a man and a woman, you can do anything! You can, you can almost have sex in the street if you want to. The most somebody is gonna say is, 'Hey! Get a hump for me!' you know? But when you're gay, you monitor everything thing you do. You monitor how you look, how you dress, how you talk, how you act. When they see me, what do they think of me?" (qtd. in Livingston).

tradition of Black and Latinx ballroom scenes instead of a white lesbian filmmaker’s intervention into that great tradition.

Scene/Moment: “To make your illusion perfect” (time stamp: 20:24)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Ah-ha moment

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Lady Gaga’s song “Perfect Illusion”! (Lady Gaga, like RuPaul, has historical interconnections with the New York City voguing scene – while RuPaul was one of the club kids^[107], Gaga notes that she learned to become Lady Gaga by emulating and following the lead of the club kids.^[108])

Scene/Moment: Pepper on having breasts and being found out by his parents (time stamp: 21:00)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Sadness and sorrow

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

The being found out part is incredibly sad and painful to hear and relate to, but also the comparison to anatomical women assigned female at birth – and the comments queens often get (me included!) about how we look better as a woman than they (AFAB woman, or “real women,” as they sometimes unfortunately say) ever could...and this is challenging because it not only

¹⁰⁷ As Tom Fitzgerald and Lorenzo Marquez note in their book *Legendary Children: The First Decade of RuPaul’s Drag Race and the Last Century of Queer Life* (2020), RuPaul “got most of her early nightlife and drag experience in [the NYC voguing scene]” and was even “crowned Queen of Manhattan in 1989 as leader of the scene” (153)

¹⁰⁸ In her 2009 interview for *Flare* magazine, Lady Gaga tells us, “Clubs were like libraries, [and] the club kids were my textbooks” (qtd. in Iannacci 113). It is also and always important to remember that Lady Gaga (through her alter ego Jo Calderone) is unambiguously part of the drag community as a drag king.

reinforces the gender binary but also draws attention away from the assignation at birth pieces that anatomical women assigned female at birth are a part of.

Scene/Moment: “Some people say we’re sick or we’re crazy...and some say we’re the most beautiful creatures on earth” (Venus – time stamp: 22:16)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Seen, in a bad way

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

This is like what people say about you on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn – especially since your announcement of becoming Executive Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at University of Alberta. [See more on this above.]

But also the overwhelming attention to beauty signifiers and being, as Venus says here, seen and regarded and lauded as the most beautiful. So, it’s extreme bipolarity here of the emotions with very little in between from strangers.

Scene/Moment: Venus: “That’s why I want my sex change, to make myself complete” (time stamp: 22:58)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Sad, and hurt

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Knowing that this is 1987 and, thus, a year before you were born, knowing that this hasn’t completely gone away in society and understandings of the self, this notion of being *incomplete* or not-whole as who and how you are because of the limitations of your physical body. Yeah, this hits me and makes me feel saddened and pain/hurt here. “[T]o make myself complete”...that’s a big part of my drag and my story.

Scene/Moment: Rejection from your mother and father and family (23:20)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Tearing up (darker affect than positive affect)

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Tearing up as Pepper speaks here, right after Venus talked about leaving home for New York so as to not embarrass her parents for dressing (up) in woman's clothes, and then Pepper talking about the rejection (not the choice to leave to save your parents' face but to be told to leave or to be cast out...to be rejected) just hits so hard in so many ways. Now, this *didn't* happen to me, of course – before I even came out and understood who and how I was, Mom and Dad *always* supported me and told me they always would (and then when I did come out, it was actually *Mom* who had some of this dark affect with telling *her* parents (my maternal grandparents) because of her and their strong Roman Catholic heteropatriarchal roots...though, of course, Mom didn't say it like that in those words, but she was afraid of what her own parents would think, of me and of her, and that there would/might be, yes, rejection). Mom even specifically asked me to wait before telling my cousins so she could figure out how to tell her parents...so there's *that* which need some good reflection and unpacking, perhaps (!)

But there's also that story of Dad and his boss at work coming to mind who, when their son came out, they did reject him and he was almost bragging about it at work with the other guys in the lot (my dad's a trucker), and Dad heard and Dad interrupted their (dangerous and guilty) laughter...and when my dad's boss asked my dad what he would do in that situation if he was so much better than them, Dad said his son (me!) has come out, is gay, and that he (Dad!) DIDN'T do what you did but accepted and loves him even harder. So, lots of emotions here for sure, yeah. And

maybe some positive affect peeking in here from the darker affect, but still so powerfully heavy and heartbreaking.

Scene/Moment: A NEW meaning of “family,” Dorian says (time stamp: 25:00)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ smiling

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

[I didn’t actually reflectively write anything here either, just left it blank! But seeing this here – “A NEW meaning of ‘family’,” and with *new* like that in all caps – I am smiling again. This is so important, rhetorically and in terms of survival, and it’s an empowered smile here, I think.]

Scene/Moment: Angie Xtravaganza introducing herself (time stamp: 28:15)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ smiling, but like a warm smiling, a knowing smiling

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

I don’t know why yet but there is something about Angie (even perhaps the semiotics of the staging of her interview with the room and the lighting, but also her voice, too, perhaps) that just made me smile and nod and feel warm inside seeing her and listening to her introduce herself.

I also love how she is talking about how busy she is before balls with doing everyone’s make up and hair and picking out which shoes match best, etc.

There’s something about this moment that did make me feel something, and something positive and warm – unpack this further reflectively!

Scene/Moment: “I bought her those tits” and “Shake those tits, mama!” and then the song “Her two front tits” they sing and the several times Angie’s shirt is pulled down and her breasts touched or licked/kissed (time stamp: 28:47)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Laughter, like laugh-out-loud laughter
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

There is obviously the shock-and-awe part of Angie pulling out her breasts for the camera when he says he bought her her tits, and there is something fabulous in the openness about the *purchasing* of the breasts (and the assumed surgery) but the quotidian aspects almost of like buying shoes and buying tits is strong and potentially powerfully ironic here.

There is also the patriarchal capitalist impulses here of a male-presenting person buying these breasts and then demanding, even if in high-energy and celebratory-energy to “show and shake those tits” (which she does), and so the laughter here, of course, is *not* innocent at all – there is a lot going on in terms of the axes of oppression in Angie’s intersectionality here, and even if she is totally and completely consenting and proud and brave, etc., these intersectional semiotics *are* at play and need to be thought through...especially in thinking about the non-consensual allowances often made and inferred in contemporary drag clubs with the stereotypical white cis het bachelorettes when drag queens are assaulted and touched and their butts slapped, etc. because the bachelorettes see this on *Drag Race* but *don't* see it as and *can't* understand it as “in-crowd” acceptable cultural behaviour and then break into this world aggressively (but, as they say, with the best intentions and wantings and yearnings and desirings of belonging)^[109]; so these non-white,

¹⁰⁹ In her fabulous 2015 *Slate* article “Beware the Bachelorette! A Report From the Straight Lady Invasion of Gay Bars,” Miz Cracker (*RuPaul's Drag Race* season 10, and *RuPaul's Drag Race: All Stars* season 5) narrates and outlines this recent phenomenon and specifically notes as she sums up that “a group of office girls can run roughshod over the nerves of a gay room with their uncomfortable pronouncements and personal comments. *I'm, like, an honorary gay. I'm a gay man in a woman's body. Yes, queen, I live for your shoes! Ugh, why do gay guys have the best bodies? If you were straight, I would totally make out with you.* And so on. They declare their allegiance to queers, they make jokes based on outmoded perceptions of queer life—but most of all they make a lot of tone-deaf noise that can entirely ruin the night for a room full of queer patrons.”

non-straight, non-cis moments of “shake those tits” can’t, maybe, be powerful and revolutionary in the viewership contexts of Livingston’s documentary when taken up by audience of out-crowd folks. It’s funny looking in from not being in, and the tone and body-humour and other aspects that allow this to happen semiotically.

Scene/Moment: “My mother even nurses us...she nourishes us” as they suck on Angie’s breasts publicly [same scene as above]

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Discomfort
Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

I get the jokes and the potentially powerful, wonderful puns here (thinking of puns on *Drag Race*, too – my own previous work, and Ricarda’s...and others’!), but I can’t help thinking of Kristevan abjection here (including how Angie turns away from the camera and leaves the shot after pulling her shirt back up, still smiling but visibly uncomfortable) and the interconnections of bodily functions based on heteroreproductive anatomy (i.e., Angie physically is unable to “nurse” from her breasts, though she is a woman with breasts, because her breasts will not produce milk...so there are abject pieces not just of fluids but of loss and mourning, too – i.e., the mourning many women (trans, cis, enby, any, all) – feel about being physically unable to bear children and experience this aspect of canonic/iconic and cultural motherhood...which is the aspect most often used against celebrating and honouring transwomen as “real women” because they cannot become pregnant and reproduce. But as much writing, blogging, political arguing, and scholarship matter-of-factly shows, this same cisnormative and transphobic argument falls flat the moment anatomical women assigned female at birth are also/become also unable to conceive. So not only is the discomfort I’m feeling here from the abjectness of this scene in all regards of it and from the

language and the layers and axes of oppression but of the larger, more contemporary, and still impacting barriers that *all* women face with womanhood and femininity from a misogynistic-colonial and eugenics cultural norming.

Scene/Moment: Angie winning “Mother of the Year” (time stamp: 29:20)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Clapping and beaming

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Ah, I love this! From Angie’s interview first moments where I felt that warmth in her and haven’t fully unpacked that yet to the discomfort and abject affect of the breasts and nursing and touching/sucking to this announcement captured of Angie being Mother of the Year, it’s a good moment.

...and I *think* it is and should be a good moment looking in, but definitely need to unpack and critically reflect more here (especially on watching and reacting to this moment as a raced-white subject).

Scene/Moment: Willi Ninja’s introduction and discussion on Mother and on Ninja (time stamp: 30:20)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Nodding

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

The semiotics of a *non-drag/trans-* person as “Mother” is important here and doesn’t get near enough discussion and attention – and the way that Willi talks about it with saying, “Take a real family, it’s the mother who is the hardest worker and the one who gets the most respect” [qtd. in

Livingston] comment with the mantle of *Mother* as titular from value, place, and power instead of gendered – this is interesting!

Also: the comments about ninjas as hitting hard and fast and being silent/invisible assassins recalls *Drag Race* and RuPaul’s appropriating with “lip-sync assassins” (another intertextual reference that doesn’t get cited).[¹¹⁰]

Scene/Moment: The *men’s* garment controversy (time stamp: 32:20)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Laughing
Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

This is funny to me because of the reinforcing of the gender binary with the categories but also the actual differences in binary-gendered clothing – and it recalls for me that comment from the International Žižek Conference in 2012 with your *RuPaul’s Drag Race + Pimp My Ride* paper (which, funnily enough, was looking at the power of the pun as a rhetorical device between these two shows and (drag) queens/cars!) when the discussion in your Q+A went to clothing and that white prof talked about the clothing you were wearing and the zipper and how he’d get carpal-tunnel trying to wear that and zip it up – !

¹¹⁰ Looking back on this now, and in light of another instance of the word *ninja* coming up in race discussions in popular culture and reality TV, I wasn’t thinking at the time of affective reflective re-watching of *Paris is Burning* here about the racial aspects of the figure of the ninja – even though Willi Ninja *does* say on camera in the documentary that he wants to take voguing and the House of Ninja to Japan! – but in her interview with New York Mayoral candidate Andrew Yang where Ziwe asked him what his favourite Jay-Z songs are after he said he likes ’90s and 2000s hip-hop, Yang struggled to say the name of a Jay-Z song with the n-word in it, and Ziwe interjected to say, “Yeah, ‘*Ninjas* in Paris,’ you can say ‘*Ninjas* in Paris,’” and now I am wondering about the substitution of one racial noun and their history for another, (inter)cultural appropriation and/vs. appreciation, and just what is the historical place of ninjas from Japanese culture and history (“Wealth Hoarders”).

Also: “It buttons on the right side” *but also* “a man bought it” as arguments for this coat *not* being disqualifying (but as, indeed, qualifying competitively) for the walker in this category – *so* interesting because the clothing industry standards/creation of which side the zipper/buttons are for which gender the coat will be...but also the gender of the purchaser/consumer of the coat! Like Eddie Izzard saying all his clothes are men’s clothes because he, a man, bought them! Yes to laughing here, then, because it’s brilliant and so layered and you’re not laughing *at* the emotions or the controversy of a space to which you are a scopophilic voyeur but again the semiotics of it.

Now, to be fair, honest, and ethical, other less critically-eyed folks watching this and laughing might not be so innocent/non-guilty here because laughing here can/could be read as happening because it is perceived as petty and, in light of the conversations to here in the documentary about the “war on the floor,” “WW3,” and actual fights breaking out, the documentary/Livingston is making it look on the silly side that this is and would be so controversial in the ballroom...*and yet that is exactly the point!* The culture in the ball scene is so strict and upholds generationally such strong notions of Realness that, when combined with fame and glory and winning and succeeding, any flaw (anticipating the Shade conversation to come, but also recalling Venus on the flaws and Dorian on the passing and going undetected), these detected flaws are not small nor petty but, quite literally, totalizing aspects of the performances of Realness of and for these walkers. The anger at being disqualified (or about to be disqualified) is not and should not be as simple as *it buttons on the right side* or *a man bought it* – but there is so much at stake here that, as I said, it totalizes the Realness and/or the detectedness of the walker and of the performance.^[111]

¹¹¹ This also makes me think again of the semiotics of being disqualified from the 3MT for competing in drag as my authentic self...

Scene/Moment: Venus reading Pedro and the “touch this skin” and “overgrown orangutan” reads (time stamp: 34:07)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Ah-ha moment

Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

RuPaul like legit just steals this from Venus and doesn’t cite it or reference it or her – like, RuPaul’s song *directly* takes this, and then it makes its way unlocked into *RuPaul’s Drag Race* culture and language...*from Venus!* From a Latinx transwoman and drag queen.^[112] (And then, like above with discussions of “Shake the dice and steal the rice” non-citation of Junior, when anything from the NYC ballroom scenes makes it in citationally to *Drag Race*, it’s “In the great tradition of *Paris is Burning...*” via a white lesbian filmmaker’s intervention into that great tradition and not *the great tradition* itself of Black and Latinx ballroom scenes.)

[I also believe, perhaps, that I did a bad job of teaching this in my “Transgender Visual Culture” course in 2015 because I know that I used RuPaul’s music video for “Looking Good, Feeling Gorgeous” for a midterm essay question because of the many, many visual-rhetorical pieces at play in it – including *Frankenstein!* – and so looking at that specifically and your

¹¹² The song I am referring to here is RuPaul’s first single from her album *Red Hot* (2004) titled, “Looking Good, Feeling Gorgeous,” which has a spoken interlude of RuPaul saying, “Touch this skin, honey, touch all of this skin, darling / You can’t take it / You’re just an overgrown orangutan.” While not an exact direct quotation of Venus’ read on Pedro captured by Livingston’s camera – Venus’ exact read is, “Touch this skin, darling, touch this skin, honey, touch all of this skin! You just can’t take it. You’re just an overgrown orangutan” – RuPaul’s use of this is not a paraphrase or a just head-nod either, clearly. And, further to my note above about this Latinx transwoman’s read making into the *Drag Race* franchise uncited, there is gets permutated, too, and further removed from Venus’ creativity, ingenuity, and legacy – for example, punning on Thorgy Thor’s name to say, “Looking good and feeling *thorgeous!*” I agree with hooks so much here: Venus wanted nothing more than fame, and it is so heartbreaking that she could and should have this posthumously with this read and its legacy (at least) but does not.

students' answers...because I believe you photocopied them all...will be quite interesting and telling when you get to that part of this re-envisioning dissertation project.]

Scene/Moment: Dorian on Shade and being all the same thing (Black queens, for instance, being Black is just a fact) (time stamp: 35:20)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Laughing – LOL laughing out loud!

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Dorian isn't actually being funny here – she is being dead serious and pedagogical in talking to Livingston about reading and shade, and she makes excellent points that anticipate our contemporary social and racial justice moments with punching-up versus punching-down and axes of oppression even within equity-denied communities – but what makes me laugh here are the examples she gives of the flaws you might find (or invent) and put on blast to exaggerate...and two of these examples being “your ridiculous shape” and “your saggy face” (qtd. in Livingston) – these got me laughing out loud, literally!

Need to unpack the fatphobia perhaps (though thinking of Willam and Jasmine on *New Normal* talking about shade and going in for the flaws, they point out make-up flaws and padding flaws¹¹³], and so it isn't, though Livingston is presenting it as such, necessarily your *anatomy* but

¹¹³ The 2012-2013 NBC sitcom *The New Normal* gives a contemporary reading lesson with two *Drag Race* alumni (Willam, of Season Four, and Jasmine Masters, of Seasons Seven and *All Stars* Four) in a quirky cut-to scene off the main narrative of its thirteenth episode (“The Goldie Rush”). In this skit, looking directly into the camera, Jasmine tells us that “[r]eading is an oral tradition passed down through generations of queens,” and Willam says, “It’s all about obtaining power through insult by focusing in on someone’s flaws and putting them on blast.” The two demonstrate by reading each other as follows: “Speaking of flaws,” Jasmine says, turning directly to face Willam, “I noticed your crow’s feet are showing. Did the 99-cent store run out of your wrinkle cream again, or did your eyes request a road map to your receding wig line?” “My eyes are fine,” Willam snaps back: “For example, they can see that you’ve been packing on the pounds. That cushion-for-the-pushin’ is so big, it’s part of a twelve-piece sectional!” “Reading,” Willam says, turning back to look into the camera, smiling. “A necessity of life,” Jasmine concludes the skit.

your *artform* that gets clocked for being flawed and exaggerated...though like above with Angie's breasts, looking from the outside in and not being a part of the culture but trying it on from positions of power and privilege, it can and will get distorted...and it does on *Drag Race* some times when the comments *are* fatphobic (on someone's weight-gain or loss) instead of attacking the flaws of the artform and make-up/padding/being put together...like comments about eating habits (physical) versus angular padding (artform), or comments about busted grills/teeth (physical) versus poor contouring looking like having painted on a beard (artform).

Scene/Moment: Willi on voguing and making a name for itself and it going worldwide (time stamp: 39:00)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Sad/regret

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

It was hard to hear that Willi says in the documentary on camera that voguing is starting to make a name for itself and that he wants to take it worldwide and be on top of it with his name associated for the voguing movement...and then knowing that *Madonna* is the one who takes it worldwide as a movement and that it is *her* name (white, cishet, female, rich celebrity...literally on the cover of *Vogue*, too, to boot!) and not Willi Ninja, the godfather of voguing and one of the best and most iconic voguers in the New York City ballrooms (a non-white, non-straight male dancer).

Thought: it would be interesting to see where/how Willi Ninja does go because I think he might be in Madonna's "Vogue" music video and/or taught her to vogue – so some more biographical and historical research into Willi Ninja for teaching this and/or writing about it more would be good...but it definitely hits you affectively that this is said, captured, edited, etc. into

Livingston's documentary, and then never properly nor powerfully can come into existence outside of it...

Willi: "I want to take it to the real Paris and make the real Paris burn" (the city of Paris as icon and height of fashion, too, and Madonna connections here, plus hooks' expectations/hope for the documentary when she heard its name) [qtd. in Livingston]

Scene/Moment: The dog with the matching pearls and the "Opulence" category! ("You own everything!") (time stamp: 40:55)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Cheering, and screaming
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

I can't *not* cheer and scream at a dog, so that happened; but also the matching jewelry and walking the ball and the pet as accessory (we have seen this on *Drag Race*, too) and then the category of "Opulence" too (also on *Drag Race*, and the jokes about a queen for whom English is an additional language not understanding the reference nor the language...this was, in fact, a Muslim queen, too^[114]), so a bit of intertextual non-innocence and dangerous laughter in an affective whiplash way re-watching *Paris is Burning* in the retrospective shadow of *Drag Race* and unclosed/uncited *Paris is Burning* references and cultural appropriation vs. cultural appreciation (like above with Junior's "Shake the dice and steal the rice!" legendary ball commenting and Venus' "You're just an overgrown orangutan" read on Pedro).

Scene/Moment: The dream of every minority is to live and look like a white person (time stamp: 41:55)

¹¹⁴ This queen was Mercedes Iman Diamond, the franchise's first Muslim queen, who has become immortalized in *Drag Race* intertextuality and fandom not for winning but for mispronouncing (repeatedly, and even with "help" from scene directors Ross Matthews and Michelle Visage) the phrase "Opulence! You own everything!" as "Opalance! You earn everything!" ("Good God Girl, Get Out").

Emotion You're Feeling/ Grimace and "...yikes" moment
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Whoa, yup: there it is. Again – *lots* to unpack and quote and critically and affectively reflect on here because there is also the *Forbes* cover Livingston drop-cuts in ("What We Learned in the 1980s") as well as the other B-roll footage, so lots going on here, and here is a moment of one marginalized group/culture speaking about whiteness, and in particular ways unique to them, that is standing in uncritically through Livingston's editing and releasing of this documentary as not really critiquing whiteness so much as accepting it uncritically as the norm and as normal and dominant and permanent.

So, yes, *lots to do with this one here!*

Some more moments of other capitalistic pieces ("everybody owns their own house," "the pool is in the back," "Fisher Price," "Honey Grams" cereal, *Dynasty* and the *Colbys* on TV, etc.) [qtd. in Livingston]

Some more moments of other racial pieces ("This is white America," and "And when it comes to the minorities, especially Black...for the past 400 years..." at 42:38) [qtd. in Livingston]

Scene/Moment: If you have captured the "great white way" of living, in the ballroom circuit, "you is a marvel" (time stamp: 43:20)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Ah-ha moment!
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Not really an affective piece so much as an intertextual piece with your Tommy's work on "marvel" and "marvellous" and "Marvel Monsters" and intersections of oppression, so, along with the above piece and the unpacking to do, this is something important, too, as it connects to the ballroom scenes and circuit with capturing whiteness and aspiring to whiteness.

Scene/Moment: "This is not a game for me or fun, this is what I want to live" – Octavia St. Laurent (time stamp: 44:15)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Nodding
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

The connections with "game" and thinking of Adrienne Rich and Toni Morrison and your Gender Pronouns talk and pieces with their quotations and the colonial grab-bag game of privilege. [See Chapter 3, "Gender Pronouns, Teaching and Learning, and Cultures of Respect: A Counterstory Novella" for this specifically and for more on this.]

Scene/Moment: "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of These)" song playing with Paris Dupree walking (time stamp: 48:35)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Smile
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Smiled at the song because I know and like the song, but not sure what else at the moment other than that – thinking of your other work and research with songs during sequences (your chapter Q+A in *RuPedagogies*^[115]) and above notes and reflections on "To Be Real" song, it will

¹¹⁵ My own chapter in *RuPedagogies of Realness*, "And where is the body?": Naked Drag and the Social Construction of Anatomy as Sexed and Gendered," has the following as its Maxi Challenge Activity and

be interesting to reflect more here with the intersectional identity of the singer-songwriter/band for this song, its legacy and lyrics, and well as other semiotics for this moment.

Scene/Moment: Breaking the fourth wall moment – Roy Rogers’ burger/mopping interview
(time stamp: 52:00)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Awareness
Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Awareness that Freddie asks Jennie Livingston herself how much she paid for her sandwich and fries, and she says she doesn’t know but maybe five dollars, and then Freddie talks about “this interview” and how he’d be heartbroken if Roy Rogers changes the way they do food because of it.

This is a rare moment, as hooks even points out on these rare moments, of where Livingston’s presence behind the camera is brought into attention/focus^[116]...not overly or overtly here, but here is a moment where we hear her voice...and her privilege – i.e., she can afford the

Assignment prompt for instructors using this edited collection (or just my essay) in their teaching: “This chapter’s title, ‘And where is the body?’, comes from Salt-N-Pepa’s 1995 song, ‘I Am the Body Beautiful’ that was used in the opening montage of *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995) with Wesley Snipes and Patrick Swayze getting ready in drag from shower to out-the-door for their queenly characters. Compare and contrast this scene in *To Wong Foo* to other popular culture examples of getting-into-drag montages-with-music (i.e., 1993’s *Mrs. Doubtfire* with Robin Williams, Harvey Fierstein, and Scott Capurro set to Aerosmith’s ‘Dude (Looks Like a Lady),’ or 2006’s *She’s the Man* with Amanda Bynes, Jonathan Sadowski, Amanda Crew, and Jessica Lucas set to Joan Jett & The Blackhearts’ ‘Love Is All Around’). Consider, too: What music, what mannerisms, what drag/transformation technologies...and why/how?” (Mayberry 108).¹¹⁶ The moment from hooks’ “Is Paris Burning?” essay I am referencing here is when hooks talks about how “Jennie Livingston approaches her subject matter as an outsider looking in. Since her presence as white woman/lesbian filmmaker is ‘absent’ from *Paris is Burning* it is easy for viewers to imagine that they are watching an ethnographic film documenting the life of [B]lack gay ‘natives’ and not recognize that they are watching a work shaped and formed by a perspective and standpoint specific to Livingston” (151) and how “[b]y cinematically masking this reality (we hear her ask questions but never see her), Livingston does not oppose the way hegemonic whiteness ‘represents’ [B]lackness, but rather assumes an imperial overseeing position that is in no way progressive or counter-hegemonic” (151).

five American dollars...and the *assumed* five dollars at that because she doesn't even remember how much she paid for it, that's how much privilege she has (here and comparatively)!

Scene/Moment: Venus talking about being with a client and touching her crotch and freaking out (time stamp: 55:00)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Cringe and wince
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Yup, not a good moment, hearing the eff word here but also the retelling of this story by Venus of what she went through – also, the choice on Livingston's part to have B-roll of Venus walking instead of talking to her/to the camera while she recounts this (this editorial decision makes it take place visually at a distance instead of right in our viewers' faces having to look at, having to witness, Venus telling us what happened to her).

Venus' very *words* here are also harder to listen to, to really hear, because of this choice on Livingston's part – i.e., we're distracted, visually and aurally here, but to put subtitles on, or to take the direct quotations of Venus' story here and read them, look at them, and/or even to close your eyes here and listen, really listen to Venus' words and actions and memories...that would be entirely different and a whole other kind of powerful here.

Also: *fear* and *AIDS*, too, in what Venus is talking about and recounting/sharing here.

[In my initial affective reflective re-watching of *Paris is Burning* as part of my lesson re-planning project, I did not capture Venus' words as I indicated would be powerful to do so, so I capture them here now to honour her, her voice, her story, and to preserve them here without the editorial moves and distractions of the film:

I used to hustle in New York to make my money. I was with a guy, and he was playing with my titties 'til he touched me down there. He felt it and he seen it and he

like totally flipped out. He said, “You fucking faggot! You’re a freak! You’re a victim of AIDS, and you’re trying to give me AIDS. What, are you crazy? You’re a homo, I should kill you!” You know, stuff like that. And, like, I was really terrified! So I just jumped out the window! I grabbed my bag and just jumped out the window. But see now I don’t like to hustle anymore, I don’t. And I’m afraid of what’s going on, with the AIDS, and I don’t want to catch it. (Venus Xtravaganza qtd. in Livingston)]

Scene/Moment: Venus’ analogy of the heteropatriarchal wife having to sleep with her husband to get a washer and dryer set (time stamp: 56:45)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Cringe and wince again (but differently than above)
Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Yeah, yikes: lots going on here, too, that needs to be unpackaged and reflected on via affective whiplash but also intersectionality and axes of oppression for where Venus is coming from in her understanding of sex, gender, marriage, and heteropatriarchy so that this statement and analogy isn’t taken against her and suffrage/equality but is seen as part of the understanding and part of the desire by these non-white, non-het folks to be white and to be straight in a “man’s world” economy – how much of an increase in social status it would be for them to have to sleep with their husband for a washer and dryer set instead of having to sleep with a john for food, shelter, and clothing/cosmetics to affirm and perpetually (re)affirm your identity and to, in the basest of terms, literally survive?

You also, Tommy, are coming at this not even having been born at the time Venus said this and then now reflecting back on it *again* after having taught *Paris is Burning* in 2015 and then going on your critical whiteness journey in 2018 (when you met *kokum*) and then more decidedly in 2021 and beyond; so, *lots* to unpack and critically and affectively think on here.

Scene/Moment: “There’s Miss Supermodel of the World Octavia” (time stamp: 57:45)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Ah-ha moment!
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

RuPaul's song that she, again, takes right from *Paris is Burning*...appropriating via the documentary[']s appropriating] a Black/Latinx transwoman as a Black cisqueer drag queen (and then with the lines taken directly from Venus' read, too, which I think is in the song, too, or another one from that album...but I think *this* is the name of that album^[117]...all this is similar but not-quite to Madonna's appropriation, but makes its way uncritically into the *Drag Race* juggernaut enterprise, further removing and forgetting these disenfranchised peoples as RuPaul literally franchises in and franchises out aspects of their culture (which was, yes, his culture, too; but I think something different is happening here when these aspects are historically-discursively linked to a white lesbian filmmaker's artwork, and without citation, than to and through the cultures themselves.)

Scene/Moment: Pepper on "that service once a month" and never having been pregnant (time stamp: 58:45)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Shock/eye-bulging a bit, and cringe
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Another moment where we are circling around abjection and binary aspects of womanhood without really going there – menstruation here, and then very apparently pregnancy, too. The

¹¹⁷ *Supermodel of the World* is actually RuPaul's debut album, released in 1993 and with the first single being "Supermodel (You Better Work)," which was released in advance of the whole album on November 17th, 1992. *Paris is Burning*, of course, was released two years before RuPaul's single and three years before his album (1990). *Red Hot* (the album on which "Looking Good, Feeling Gorgeous" is listed) is RuPaul's fourth album (2004).

binary holding-up, too, with “I’ve been a man and a man emulating a woman but never a woman,” as Pepper says, and then “I never wanted a sex change...that’s taking it a little too far” [qtd. in Livingston].

Pussy word dropped, too, here in this scene.

Pepper talking about later in life maybe wanting to go back but “once it’s gone, it’s gone” (i.e. your penis) and how he never recommends sex change surgeries and is so glad that he never got one and was never that stupid [qtd. in Livingston].

This is all yikes! Affective whiplash for sure here, but also just *yikes, yikes, yikes* with drag and trans- dichotomies/Venn diagrammatic pieces...and Pepper as being presented as one of the best Mothers out there but then getting this much air time from Livingston in her documentary on what, in retrospect, is quite heavily cisnormative *and* transphobic language and leanings from his position of authority...and position of, self-affirming and self-declaring now, as a cisgender gay man.

Scene/Moment: Brooke and Carmen Xtravanganza and their surgeries and sex changes (time stamp: 1:00:00)

Emotion You’re Feeling/ Nodding, touch of affective whiplash, but also sad
Reaction You’re Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

A touch of affective whiplash with their language of “transsexualism operation” and “I am no longer a man” here, but these phrases, while affectively whiplashing us today/me today, are their truths, their celebrations, and their authentic understandings of who and how they each are as whole people, which is very powerful, I think.

After the Pepper LaBeija scene before condemning gender confirmation surgeries, this scene is refreshing to see from an allied lens, but its dialectical sequence as Livingston includes it, and some of the ways it is shot as less-than-celebratory, doesn't quite contrast powerfully enough with Pepper and his cisnormative and transphobic sentiments before it (there, the dark room, the domestic space, the strong voice, the authoritative Mother condemning it and reaffirming bodily sex assigned at birth as better) to the light, outdoor beach, freely romping in bathing suits and laughing almost lovingly-childishly like children (youth vs. elder; innocence vs. experience) and making fun of each other – sad, actually, and deeply frustrating, that Livingston would present it in this way with such powerful and potent compounding chiasmic semiotics...

Scene/Moment: Venus “I want to get married in Church in white” (time stamp: 1:04:12)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Shock

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Wow, that was intense – the dropout sequence of Octavia and of Venus separately sharing their “I want” moments that Livingston edits out and pieces back together bouncing back and forth between the two of them, so much aspiring to of white Christian heteropatriarchy here in that statement of Venus is shocking – a good shocking, I think, because of the zeitgeist of the time but also because of the medial pieces these folks are seeing and aspiring, but it is *definitely* a fantasy of a “white America” in all its heteropatriarchal colonial glory, wow.

Lots to unpack and critical reflect on there and here, that's for sure.

Scene/Moment: “New York 1989” title card (time stamp: 1:05:04)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Deep sadness

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

You don't know it yet in the movie if this is your first watching of *Paris is Burning*, but if it's not your first time, you know and shouldn't forget that Venus was murdered in 1988 just before Christmas, and so her final lines before this title card of "New York 1989" with her saying, "This is what I want and I'm going to go for it" [qtd. in Livingston] is incredibly sad and heartbreaking, in retrospect of the documentary and Livingston's editing of it, because Livingston takes us from Venus' hopes, dreams, drives, and ambitions in "going for it" *right literally over her murder just before 1989* to 1989 itself, and Livingston doesn't even mention it...

hooks clocks Livingston for this, too, about Venus death, and although Angie does comment on it at the close of the documentary, it isn't here where it could/should be.

Scene/Moment: Willi Ninja on buying the Gaultier earring in Japan and keeping the receipt
(time stamp: 1:07:30)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Smirk
Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

It is fun to see Willi again here, especially since the earlier pieces with him wanting to go to Japan and to make a name for himself and bring voguing to more prominent attention, which the news footage just before this scene showed, and the receipt and the keeping the receipt and Willi saying "I don't know where it [the receipt is] but I bought it!" [qtd. in Livingston] brings back up implicitly the mopping conversations and even Livingston's privilege with not knowing how much her Roy Rogers' sandwich cost...but you can bet and can tell Willi knows *exactly* how much he spent on the earring and the fact for him that it is and was a purchase is his everything.

Scene/Moment: Willi talking about people now going to balls and being underwhelmed by them
(time stamp: 1:08:00)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Nodding

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

You are nodding here, physically reacting in that embodied way with the nods, because what Willi is saying reminds you of Russ' chapter in *RuPedagogies* and folks going to local drag clubs and being underwhelmed because it isn't the media(ted) *RuPaul's Drag Race* franchise they see on TV and that they mistakenly/implicitly believe is the actual lived culture...Willi saying the rise of voguing over the past two years from when first interviewed to now is causing people to expect the balls (as they come in as voyeurs and tourists now, as hooks talks about!^[118]) to be "bigger and better" than they are in and for and by the folks for whom this isn't a tourist attraction but their actual life and living.^[119]

Scene/Moment: Angie talking about Venus' murder (time stamp: 1:08:40)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Shock, anger, sadness, and tearing up

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

¹¹⁸ "[A]ssuming the position of outsider looking in," hooks writes, "can, and often does, pervert and distort one's perspective" (152-153).

¹¹⁹ Russ Martin, in his ethnographic chapter, "Pop the Corn and Teach the Children: Drag Lessons in Gender, Race, and Class Beyond RuPaul's Televised Curriculum," quotes Toronto-based drag performer Selena Vyle from her interviews with him as saying, "People think that what they see on TV needs to translate to what you see in the club. They'll read you for your looks, they'll read you for your performance. And they'll compare you to a queen they saw on TV who's doing it with a lot more money behind them" (131) and then expands on Vyle's perspective here that "[t]his is a point of contention for many of the research participants" he interviewed since "*RPDR* fans who have found their way to local drag shows have a specific framing for drag; the drag they are familiar with is within the context of reality television. It is perfectly lit, shot in HD, color-corrected, and professionally edited" (132).

Reacting to the footage of Venus from Livingston's 1987 shooting being shown now in the 1989 part of the documentary and with Venus smiling at the camera while Angie talks about Venus always taking too many risks and just "being Venus" as a voiceover on this footage [qtd. in Livingston]

When it finally shows Angie's face talking, Angie is sitting in the same clothes and room as when we first met Angie (back when I felt that warmth and smiled at her as my visceral, affective reaction), and so *now* we as viewers know that, chronologically in the documentary shooting and footage, Angie's interview was *after* Venus' death and so can't/shouldn't be able to be separated from the murder having happened and Venus no longer being there with Angie and a part of Angie's family...but here it is now in the closing scenes, almost like an afterthought, it feels like, in retrospect and in re-watching now.

"But that's part of life as far as being a transsexual in New York City and surviving" Angie says [qtd. in Livingston]

The whole clip/scene of Venus here at the end is 76 seconds long (time stamp: 1:08:16-1:09:32)

And the sentiment it ends on is "fact of life" for trans people in New York City, that being murdered and stuffed under a bed in a sleazy motel for four days before being found is "part of life" – I JUST CAN'T WITH THIS! [Yes, I did type that all in caps during my affective reflective viewing of *Paris is Burning*.] Livingston is allowing this to be – and dangerously to become (as it has in the thirty years since this documentary) – the dominant narrative for New York City non-white transpeople...there isn't time, as I think hooks says, to mourn Venus here without very

literally pausing (the documentary) to mourn her and to remember her^[120]...and the voiceover of Angie over the B-roll footage of Venus and of Venus and Angie together also minimizes the violence and the murder here (just as the same editing strategy for Venus talking about her assault and escape earlier did, too); and so it almost (or literally does) hide this violence from viewers...literally, we can't even look at it because Livingston doesn't let us/doesn't allow us to - ! How differently would this hit if, like I reflected above on Venus, you had to read this in prose from Angie's words, or listened to Angie with your eyes closed or the screen turned off with just the sound left on? How would you engage if you couldn't look at the happier, quotidian aspects of the B-roll while these assault and murder aspects are being told to us, shared with us?

[In my initial affective reflective re-watching of *Paris is Burning* as part of my lesson re-planning project, I did not capture Angie's words either, and so I capture them here now, as I did above with Venus', to honour both of them, both of their voices, their interconnected story, and to preserve them here without the editorial moves and distractions of the film:

I always used to say to her, I'd say, "Venus, you take too many chances, you're too wild with people in the streets, something's gonna happen to you." But that was Venus. She always took a chance; she always went into a stranger's car; she always did what she wanted to get what she wanted.

I had a booking for a Christmas show at Sally's and the police came to me with a picture of her murdered, and they were about to cremate her because nobody had come to verify the body, and I was one that had to give all this information

¹²⁰ hooks specifically says that "tragedy is made explicit when we are told that the fair-skinned Venus has been murdered, and yet there is no mourning of him/her in the film, no intense focus on the sadness of this murder" (154-155) and that "[h]aving served the purpose of 'spectacle' the film abandons him/her" (155). "The audience does not see Venus after the murder," hooks continues, "There are no scenes of grief. To put it crassly, her dying is upstaged by spectacle. Death is not entertaining" (155). hooks doesn't actually say that there is not time to mourn Venus without pausing the documentary to mourn her and to remember her, but that is what I did – paused the documentary, and I did and do mourn her and remember her. (And I do so by intentionally using and honouring her pronouns, too, as the *she*-series exclusively – see also Chapter 2, Endnote I – Some Extended Discussion on How bell hooks May Be/Is Becoming Problematic.)

down to her family. Actually, they found her dead after four days, strangled under a bed in a sleazy hotel in New York City. [...¹²¹]

We used to get dressed together, call each other and say what we were gonna wear and, you know, she was like my right hand, as far as I'm concerned. I miss her. Every time I go anywhere, I miss her. That was my main, the main daughter of my house, in other words. But that's part of life as far as being a transsexual in New York City and surviving. (Angie Xtravaganza qtd. in Livingston)]

And the documentary just literally, without pause, without even like 3 seconds of just blackness and silence in the documentary to even have it sink in for viewers, it just literally cuts back to Dorian Corey doing her makeup still in her make-up room. And this is an editorial and dialectical choice that Jennie Livingston made. [And yes, I still just can't with this, even now, typing back into these reflectively written notes of mine to tszuj them for my dissertation reader, I just can't.]

Scene/Moment: Dorian Corey "If you shoot an arrow and it goes real high...good for you" (time stamp: 1:10:50)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Anger

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Yup, I am not loving how this ends now, that that is the final note and sentiment, especially after Angie talking about and revealing Venus' murder.

¹²¹ The ellipses here *are* because I have edited something out of this block quotation of Angie's, and what I edited was a dropout clip of Venus smiling to the camera and saying, "I'm hungry." I absolutely did *not* notice this dropout nor its insensitivity in my initial affective reflective re-watching of *Paris is Burning*, but here and now, capturing Angie's words for honouring them and her and her story of Venus' murder, I noticed it. And it hit me how, in addition to my critique here of the more general insensitivity of having B-roll of Venus playing while Angie is recounting this to Livingston in her interview, how Livingston's editorial choice to include Venus' voice with an ironic "I'm hungry" is devastating in terms of the overall tone of how Angie ends this recounting ("But that's part of life as far as being a transsexual in New York City and surviving") and how Venus' *hungriness* here is dropped in as if to grossly remind the viewing of where fault and blame lie here in a blaming-the-victim subliminality of Venus' inability to, in fact, survive. And I hate it, but it's there.

Remembering and reflecting now, too, on PJ, Wesley, Dan, and Nate quoting this line exaggeratedly and always laughing^[122], and I always associated this line with humour and light-hearted irony about celebrity and making a name for yourself and changing the world, but watching it now, and seeing the hooksian appal at the handling of Venus' murder – even the “In Memory Of” Livingston has before the credits roll and the queens' names roll does *not* say/include Venus! – now I am thinking of privilege races/Oppression Olympics and being equity-denied and Corey's athletic metaphor here with privilege and her lackluster “good for you” that isn't funny but sad, terribly sad, because who gets which bows and arrows, and who gets *stringed* bows and more than one arrow for multiple shots, etc.? [Thinking again here of Maryanne from *Survivor* on the equality but inequity of the 1-in-18 odds and that “that 1 in 18 might be bigger or smaller for some people.”] Like in Learning Outcomes and measuring equally how to a climb a tree, a fish will always fail and live their life thinking they are stupid compared to the squirrel (Einstein or someone else said this^[123]), so bookending *Paris is Burning*, Livingston has the opening voiceover of the father's advice about “having a hard go” because being born Black already has two strikes against you and so adding gay and drag is even harder, here now, completing the bookend, is Corey taking about advantage and privilege and literally “aiming lower” (archery) as you get older

¹²² During my MA at McMaster in 2011, I was dating the here-mentioned PJ whose brother was Wesley and whose best friends were Dan and Nate. That is all I wish to include autobiographically-ancedotally here for context for my reader, thank you.

¹²³ Funny how research works, right? What I paraphrase-cited in my affective reflective writing here is in reference to the quotation “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid” that is *attributed* to Einstein in Internet meme cultures but isn't, actually, traceable back to him. That “Our Education System” cartoon comic is a great one, though, for entry-level instructional development conversations into assessment equity and differentiated assessments in curriculum design (Melville).

because you come to realize the world isn't fair and just...this is incredibly, incredibly *not* funny, and I hate that I used to laugh at it so in an almost inside-joke kind of way.

Scene/Moment: Credits with "To Be Real" (time stamp: 1:10:52)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Cringe/disgust

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

Ick, this song is included three times in the film, and see above for the other two (I don't know if you captured the middle one, but I think it was after "Sweet Dreams" there), and now it hits differently, too – too upbeat for the notes this film is ending on and *could instead* be ending on.

Scene/Moment: Final moment, the two young kids from the beginning, "So this is New York City, and this is what the gay life is about, right?" (time stamp: 1:16:26)

Emotion You're Feeling/ Cringe/Yikes...

Reaction You're Having:

Why do you think you are feeling this emotion/having this reaction?

...I don't even know what to do with this yet...

Artifact 5 – The Real Paris on Fire Project: Sequence of Lesson Events/Key Dates and Deliverables

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics^[124]
ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
Tommy Mayberry

**The Real Paris On Fire Project
Sequence of Lesson Events/Key Dates and Deliverables**

Date:	Instructor Activity:	Student Activity:
Thursday, May 12 th	<i>Admin:</i> Introduce “The Real Paris on Fire Project” as a whole project overview	<i>Admin:</i> Receive “The Real Paris on Fire Project” project overview (physically, and on LEARN)
	<i>Admin:</i> Introduce the Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity specifically	<i>Admin:</i> Receive the Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity handout (physically, and on LEARN)
May 12 th -16 th	<i>Action:</i> Complete the Pause-and-Reflect activity	<i>Action:</i> Complete the Pause-and-Reflect activity
Monday, May 16 th	<i>Admin:</i> Compile full class list of scenes/moments, ordering from most frequent to least <i>Admin:</i> Create the Mentimetre prompts for each	<i>Submit:</i> e-mail list of scenes/moments to Tommy by 4:00pm EST

¹²⁴ **Note to Dissertation Reader:** I first taught *Paris is Burning* with (Note: not “on”) bell hooks in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Waterloo in Fall 2015. As part of my dissertation project in asking myself “How would I teach this again differently, more responsibly, less-whitely and more racially-responsive?”, I also implicitly was/might-have-been asking myself, too, how would I/what if I were teaching this in the Department of English Language and Literature anew this time in Spring 2022? What might change across disciplines? What might not?

In Fall 2015, my course was called “Transgender Visual Culture” and, thus, had Visual Culture in it (at the time, Visual Culture was a Major area of focus in the University of Waterloo Fine Arts Department and, due to systemic technical issues with Microsoft, couldn’t effectively use VCULT course codes, so I taught “Transgender *Visual Culture*” as a cross-listed Special Topics course in Art History *and* in Film Studies and *as* a PhD Candidate in English Language and Literature). Today, there is no reason why I couldn’t teach “Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics” in an English Department, is there? Given hooks’ cultural studies, film studies, visual studies, writing studies, and English studies, the heart of the cultural text and moment I am teaching isn’t necessarily counter/opposed.

Tuesday, May 17 th	<p><i>Action:</i> Facilitate in-class re-watch and discussion of Pause-and-Reflect scenes/moments</p> <p><i>Action:</i> Capture each class-generated word cloud in Mentimeter</p> <p><i>Admin:</i> Upload word clouds to LEARN after class</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> Participate in in-class re-watch and discussion of Pause-and-Reflect scenes/moments</p>
Thursday, May 19 th	<p><i>Admin:</i> Introduce the Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment specifically</p> <p><i>Lesson:</i> Mini Lesson #1: “Storytelling Through Documentary and the Non-Neutrality of the Documentary Filmmaker” (c. 40 minutes)</p> <p><i>Lesson:</i> Mini Lesson #2: “Ritual and Spectacle” (c. 30 minutes)</p>	<p><i>Admin:</i> Receive the Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment handout (physically, and on LEARN)</p> <p><i>Action:</i> Participate in Mini Lesson #1, actively listening and engaging, maybe taking notes and/or asking questions, including small class discussions and TPS</p> <p><i>Action:</i> Participate in Mini Lesson #2, actively listening and engaging, maybe taking notes and/or asking questions, including class brainstorming, small class discussions, and 1min Paper</p>
May 19 th -24 th	<p><i>Admin:</i> Prepare materials for In-Class Work Period on May 26th</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> Complete the Critical Reflection assignment</p>
Tuesday, May 24 th	<p><i>Admin:</i> Collect any physical Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignments</p> <p><i>Admin:</i> Introduce the Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment specifically</p> <p><i>Lesson:</i> Mini Lesson #3: “Heteropatriarchy, Intersectionality, and the Black Male Comedian in Drag” (c. 25 minutes)</p> <p><i>Lesson:</i> Mini Lesson #4: “A Critique of Progress and of Play” (c. 50 minutes)</p> <p><i>Admin:</i> Distribute the “How Far Have We Come, and How Far Do</p>	<p><i>Submit:</i> Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment due in-class and/or uploaded to essay dropbox by 4:00pm</p> <p><i>Admin:</i> Receive the Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment handout (physically, and on LEARN)</p> <p><i>Action:</i> Participate in Mini Lesson #3, actively listening and engaging, maybe taking notes and/or asking questions, including small class discussions</p> <p><i>Action:</i> Participate in Mini Lesson #4, actively listening and engaging, maybe taking notes and/or asking questions, including TPS, small class</p>

	<p>We Still Have to Go?” Pro-and-Con Grid activity sheet (physically, and on LEARN) <i>Admin:</i> Log physical with digital Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment submits</p>	<p>sharing circle and discussions, Pro-and-Con Grid <i>Admin:</i> Receive the “How Far Have We Come, and How Far Do We Still Have to Go?” Pro-and-Con Grid activity sheet (physically, and on LEARN)</p>
May 24 th -26 th	<p><i>Action:</i> Grade and comment on Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignments</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> Work on Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignments</p>
Thursday, May 26 th	<p><i>Admin:</i> Hand back graded and commented on Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignments <i>Action:</i> Facilitate In-Class Work Period for Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignments</p>	<p><i>Admin:</i> Receive back graded and commented on Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignments <i>Action:</i> Participate in In-Class Work Period for Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignments</p>
May 26 th -31 st	<p><i>Admin:</i> Prepare materials for In-Class Work Period on May 31th</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> Continue work on Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignments</p>
Tuesday, May 31 st	<p><i>Action:</i> Facilitate In-Class Work Period for Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignments</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> Participate in In-Class Work Period for Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignments</p>
Thursday, June 2 nd	<p><i>Admin:</i> Collect any physical Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignments <i>Lesson:</i> Use time for any points in Mini Lessons #1-4 you didn’t get to and/or for “What else would we like to talk about with bell hooks on <i>Paris is Burning</i>?” <i>Admin:</i> Introduce the Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self-Assessment specifically <i>Admin:</i> Log physical with digital Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment submissions</p>	<p><i>Submit:</i> Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) due in-class and/or uploaded to essay dropbox by 4:00pm <i>Admin:</i> Receive the Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self-Assessment handout (physically, and on LEARN) <i>Action:</i> Participate in continued discussions from any points in Mini Lessons #1-4 we didn’t get to and/or from “What else would we like to talk about with bell hooks on <i>Paris is Burning</i>?”, actively listening and engaging, taking notes and/or asking questions</p>

June 2 nd -7 th	<i>Action:</i> Read, reflect on, and comment with summary feedback on Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment submissions	<i>Action:</i> No action! Rest, recover, turn off and tune out! (...but if you want an Action Item for the weekend, begin thinking about which final grade you deserve on your Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment...and why.)
Tuesday, June 7 th	<i>Lesson:</i> Use time for any points in Mini Lessons #1-4 you didn’t get to and/or for “What else would we like to talk about with bell hooks on <i>Paris is Burning</i> ”? <i>Admin:</i> Introduce the Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self-Assessment specifically <i>Admin:</i> Hold vote on how we’d like to use Thursday’s class time: (1) In-Class Work Period; (2) “Open Office Hours” for/with Tommy; (3) Cancel Class/No Class!; or something else I’m not thinking of (i.e., <i>you</i> tell me how we could best use Thursday’s class time) <i>Admin:</i> Hand back commented on Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignments	<i>Action:</i> Participate in continued discussions from any points in Mini Lessons #1-4 we didn’t get to and/or from “What else would we like to talk about with bell hooks on <i>Paris is Burning</i> ?”, actively listening and engaging, taking notes and/or asking questions <i>Admin:</i> Vote with class on how we’d like to use Thursday’s class time: (1) In-Class Work Period; (2) “Open Office Hours” for/with Tommy; (3) Cancel Class/No Class!; or something else Tommy’s not thinking of (i.e., <i>we</i> tell Tommy how we could best use Thursday’s class time) <i>Admin:</i> Receive back commented on Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignments
June 7 th -9 th	<i>Admin:</i> Prepare accordingly for Thursday’s class based on results of Tuesday’s in-class vote	<i>Action:</i> Begin and/or continue thinking about which final grade you deserve on your Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment...and why.) <i>Action:</i> Prepare accordingly for Thursday’s class based on results of Tuesday’s in-class vote
Thursday, June 9 th	<i>Action:</i> Depending on how Tuesday’s class vote goes...(1) Facilitate In-Class Work Period for Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self-Assessments; (2) Hold “Open Office Hours” during regularly-	<i>Action:</i> Depending on how Tuesday’s class vote goes...(1) Participate in In-Class Work Period for Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self-Assessments; (2) Visit Tommy for “Open Office Hours” during

	scheduled class time; (3) No class!; (4) The Something Else (TBD)	regularly-scheduled class time; (3) No class!; (4) Participate in The Something Else (TBD)
Friday, June 10 th	<i>Admin:</i> Receive and log e-mails as Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self- Assessment submissions	<i>Submit:</i> Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self-Assessment due by e-mail and as an e-mail to Tommy by 4:00pm
June 10 th -14 th	<i>Action:</i> Read, reflect on, and draft replies to e-mailed Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self-Assessment submissions	<i>Action:</i> No action! Rest, recover, turn off and tune out! (...but if you want an Action Item for the weekend, begin thinking about your overall thoughts, reactions, and reflections on The Real Paris on Fire Project.)
Tuesday, June 14 th	<i>Action:</i> Facilitate and engage in In- Class collective debrief on The Real Paris on Fire Project <i>Action:</i> Send replies to e-mailed Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self- Assessment submissions	<i>Action:</i> Participate and engage in In- Class collective debrief on The Real Paris on Fire Project

Artifact 6 – The Real Paris on Fire Project: overview/cover sheet

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
Tommy Mayberry

The Real Paris On Fire Project

bell hooks, writing in the early 1990s, tells us that “[w]hen I first heard that there was this new documentary film about [B]lack gay men, drag queens, and drag balls I was fascinated by the title,” for the title (*Paris is Burning*) “evoked images of the real Paris on fire, of the death and destruction of a dominating white western civilization and culture, an end to oppressive Eurocentrism and white supremacy” (“Is Paris Burning?” 149). Flipping the documentary title in on itself to title her essay, the declarative titular statement that *Paris is burning* becomes through hooks a critical, rhetorical question: “Is Paris burning?” *Is it*, hooks challenges us to think through; and for this course project I am calling “The Real Paris On Fire Project,” I want us to think through, collectively and individually, the analogic extent to which Paris is burning, what it means if Paris is and/or isn’t burning in this context, and how we in 2022 can anti-colonially just burn it all down.

The Real Paris On Fire Project is comprised of four scaffolded and interconnected parts that involve the gamut of pre-class work, in-class work, post-class work, as well as variously submitted formative and summative assessments. These are:

- Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity
 - Due: Monday, May 16th, 2022
- Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment
 - Due: Tuesday, May 24th, 2022
- Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment
 - Due: Thursday, June 2nd, 2022
- Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) – Self-Assessment
 - Due: Friday, June 10th, 2022

Associated Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs):

The Real Paris On Fire Project will help you to:

[Numbered CLO listed here¹²⁵]

¹²⁵ **Note to Dissertation Reader:** As part of my assignment design for the assignment outline/overview sheets I create for students, I include on these sheets the Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) that I associate with each project/assignment/assessment and that I have mapped together in my course design as I have envisioned

To not overwhelm, and to focus on each project piece in order as they build on each other sequentially with and through the pre-class, in-class, and post-class/out-of-class pieces to the Self-Assessment at the end, each of the four parts above have their own assignment sheets with their own respective details, prompts, deadlines, etc.

students as meeting/working on and developing. For this dissertation project, I am not imagining a full course re-design of my Fall 2015 “Transgender Visual Culture” course (although maybe I should...) but just a re-imagining of the specific teaching event and lesson planning with lesson delivery of how I taught Jennie Livingston’s documentary *Paris is Burning* with hooks’ essay “Is Paris Burning?” in 2015 and how I would now actually envision teaching bell hooks on (Note: not “with”) *Paris is Burning* today. As such, I do not have here CLOs but would, in authentically teaching The Real Paris on Fire Project, map CLOs specifically here.

Artifact 7 – The Real Paris on Fire Project: Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity handout

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
Tommy Mayberry

**The Real Paris On Fire Project:
Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) Activity**

Due: Monday, May 16th, 2022 – e-mail to tommy.mayberry@uwaterloo.ca by 4:00pm EST

Length: Quantity of emotions captured and recorded (see below)

Weight: Not graded (but will guide and inform later graded submission)

Activity:

Before class on Tuesday, watch *Paris is Burning* with a notebook or laptop beside you for some in-the-moment journaling as you watch.

Whenever you laugh, whenever you cry, whenever you cringe, scoff, snap, feel offended, squeamish, empowered, overjoyed, overwhelmed, etc. – basically, whenever you feel any emotion or have any reaction to something happening on screen – I want you to do four things:

- 1) pause the documentary;
- 2) jot down the scene/moment as well as the emotion you’re feeling/reaction you’re having;
- 3) ask yourself, “Why do I think that I am feeling this emotion or having this reaction at this scene/moment in the documentary?”; and
- 4) write what you are thinking/what comes to mind when you ask yourself this question about the emotion/reaction you are experiencing at this scene/moment.

Write as much or as little as you’d like for each pause-and-record as you go – quantity of emotions captured and recorded is the goal here, not quantity (nor even quality!) of words jotted down in reflection. This pre-class activity is about getting things down in their raw form, not about getting them “right” or polished or scholarly, etc.

When you have finished watching *Paris is Burning* in this pause-and-reflect manner (which might take you between two and three hours or more, just a heads up: the documentary is 78 minutes long itself without pausing and recording notes and thoughts), **please e-mail me your list of scenes/moments**. Please do NOT e-mail me the emotions/reactions nor your reflections on them – just the scenes/moments so I can make a full list of yours with mine and the rest of the class’ to guide our in-class discussion and activity. And please do e-mail me these by 4:00pm on Monday, May 16th so I can compile the full list, together with mine, for class on May 17th.

In class on Tuesday, May 17th, we will go through as many of these scenes/moments of the full class list as we can, rewatching them together and discussing them as a class.

Note: Please do feel free to bring your journal writing notes and reflections from the Pause-and-Reflect activity with you, *but you do not have to*: you will **not** be asked to share these with a partner nor out loud with/in front of the class. The Pause-and-Reflect activity is a first step in compiling scenes/moments toward our in-class activity and not necessarily for the in-class activity itself. But don't throw your journaling notes out either! You will want to revisit them toward writing the Critical Reflection assignment that you will submit to me in full for formative and summative assessment.

Artifact 8 – The Real Paris on Fire Project: Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment handout

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
Tommy Mayberry

**The Real Paris On Fire Project:
Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Assignment**

Due: Tuesday, May 24th, 2022 – in-class and/or uploaded to essay dropbox by 4:00pm

Length: *minimum 2 full pages* (by MLA standards of 12 point, Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced throughout, and numbered consecutively as well as student name and number, my name, course code, and date submitted in the top, left-hand corner of the first page).

Note: You may print your Critical Reflection (on both sides of the paper, if you’d like!) and/or upload a digital PDF of your Critical Reflection to the essay dropbox on LEARN. I handwrite comments on papers and type up final comments on project rubrics to hand back as physical packages to you, so I will print any papers that come in as PDFs only, no worries!

Note: The length is *minimum 2 full pages*, not *maximum 2 full pages*... The minimum requirement here is to provide enough space for getting good thoughts down and to not overwhelm you, so there isn’t a maximum page length because it isn’t for stressing about cutting down to exactly 2 pages – I will read and comment on as much writing as you submit, and you won’t be awarded nor penalized for going over here!

Note: Yes, this is a *very* quick delivery date – 5 days from giving you this assignment outline! – and this is not to cause you undue stress/pressure but to keep you from being bogged down and to get you to write, write, write! Notice the weight (5%) and the rubric (only 4 possible grades): you’ve got this, and I can’t wait to read your Critical Reflection and what you’ve learned, unlearned, and are relearning from our Pause-and-Reflect activity!

Weight: 5%

Assignment:

This Critical Reflection assignment is your opportunity to spend some more individual time reflecting and writing on your and viewers’ affective reactions and responses to the documentary *Paris is Burning* and bell hooks’ writing and critique in “Is Paris Burning?”. Essentially, it is taking you from your pause-and-reflect individual watching of *Paris is Burning* through our collective class conversations on specific moments as well as on bell hooks’ essay and to further and deeper individual critical reflection on your part.

For this Critical Reflection, you will:

- i. **Select ONE** moment of *Paris is Burning* that you now think differently about to critically reflect and write on
- ii. **Identify** and **describe** the range of affective responses and reactions that you experience(d) and that viewers may/could experience
- iii. **Consider** how (and why) you now understand and engage with this particularly scene differently than in your initial watching and reflecting
- iv. **Imagine** the answer to the question “What would bell hooks say?”

Once you have done the above, you will:

- v. **Write** at least two full pages (see “Length” above) discussing what you’ve learned, unlearned, and possibly relearned/are relearning about the scene you’ve

chosen from your first watching and reflecting through our class conversations and into your further critical reflection now.

Use your in-the-moment journaling from our pre-class activity together with your notes from our in-class discussions as well as the Menimeter word clouds we co-created. Ask yourself again, “Why do I think that I am feeling the emotion(s) I am feeling or having the reaction(s) I am having at this scene/moment in the documentary?”...and ask yourself now, too, “Why do I think that viewers are/might be feeling these and other emotions and/or having these and other reactions at this scene/moment in the documentary?” Build in some hooksian reflection and dialogue, too – if hooks talks about the scene you’ve chosen in “Is Paris Burning?”, feel free to quote/paraphrase; if she doesn’t, feel free to imagine into existence what you think she might say/how you think she might react to the scene (and your reflection on the scene) you’ve chosen.

Artifact 9 – The Real Paris on Fire Project: Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Rubric handout

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
 Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
 ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
 Tommy Mayberry

**The Real Paris On Fire Project
 Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) Rubric**

Student Name and Number: _____ Grade: _____

Criteria	Percentage:	Weight:
Completed and submitted a Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) paper that meets the assignment details and embodies authentic, sincere, and deep reflection on the chosen moment of <i>Paris is Burning</i> with powerful connections to class discussions and debriefs of the Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) activity.	100%	5/5
Completed and submitted a Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) paper that meets the assignment details and demonstrates reflection on the chosen moment of <i>Paris is Burning</i> with connections to class discussions and debriefs of the Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) activity.	75%	3.75/5
Completed and submitted a Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) paper that does not meet the assignment details and/or that demonstrates little to no reflection on the chosen moment of <i>Paris is Burning</i> with few to zero connections to class discussions and debriefs of the Affective Reflection (or, “Pause-and-Reflect”) activity.	50%	2.5/5
Submitted something that does not look like the Critical Reflection (or, “What I’ve Learned, Unlearned, and Relearned”) assignment; did not complete the assignment; and/or did not submit anything for this assignment.	0%	0/5

Comments:

Artifact 10 – The Real Paris on Fire Project: Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment handout

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
Tommy Mayberry

**The Real Paris On Fire Project
Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Assignment**

Due: Thursday, June 2nd, 2022 – in-class and/or uploaded to essay dropbox by 4:00pm

Length: *between 750-1000 words*

Note: There is a word count range instead of a page spread/limit here for length because, for this assignment, you do not have to use MLA formatting – be creative in your formal presentation of your assignment, but please ensure you stick to the 750-1000 word range limit for total word count.

Weight: 10%

Assignment:

Solo, in partners, or in groups of three, you will envision a new poster/cover image for the documentary *Paris is Burning* for a 2022 DVD/streaming platform release. You do not need to be a graphic designer to be successful in this assignment – but if graphic design is your passion (either truly or in the spirit of the meme from which this assignment takes its subtitle), then go for it! The ultimate goal for this assignment is to come up with an updated poster/cover image that reflects the energy and honesty of bell hooks from 1992 together with the energy, honesty, and vulnerability of our class discussions and affective, critical reflection on, as RuPaul calls it, this “great tradition of *Paris is Burning*.”

There are two ways that you can enter into this assignment:

- as the Design Lead/Design Team
 - o In this pathway, you (solo, duo, or trio) are on the Design Team for this 2022 release of *Paris is Burning* and are submitting your work via e-mail to the Executive Team for feedback and approval – think, “As per your directions and recommendations, I/we have mocked up...”
- as the Executive Producer/Executive Team
 - o In this pathway, you (solo, duo, trio) are on the Executive Team for this 2022 release of *Paris is Burning* and are delegating via e-mail to the Design Team your directions and recommendations for the post/cover image – think, “For this poster/cover image, I/we would like to see...”

Whichever pathway you choose, the core of this assignment is the writing component with any visual component(s) entirely optional and entirely up to you. (Having no sketches or having napkin doodles are just as valid as having JPEG-exported InDesign files for this assignment and won’t impact your grade for better or for worse!) I am looking for clear communication, decided rationale, and expository justification of your choices. Which image(s) that exist already will you incorporate? Which images don’t exist but you’d like created to incorporate? What taglines, slogans, quotations,

reviews, ratings, etc. will you include? What colour palette/scheme will you use? What is the composition, focal point, symmetry, asymmetry, juxtaposition, etc.? All of these questions/prompts (and more) and, importantly, the *why*: why this image, this quotation, this colour scheme, this composition, (a)symmetry, juxtaposition, etc.?

Ultimately, what story are *you* wanting to tell with this new poster/cover image for a 2022 release of *Paris is Burning* to set the stage (pun intended) and to provoke affective and critical reflections, responses, and reactions from viewers (new and returning) to this documentary? The title of the documentary, recall, for hooks, “evoked images of the real Paris on fire, of the death and destruction of a dominating white western civilization and culture, an end to oppressive Eurocentrism and white supremacy” (“Is Paris Burning?” 149). What images do you want to evoke in, for, and beyond 2022...and how?

Artifact 11 – The Real Paris on Fire Project: Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) Self-Assessment handout

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
Tommy Mayberry

The Real Paris On Fire Project
Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) – Self-Assessment

Due: Friday, June 10th– e-mail to tommy.mayberry@uwaterloo.ca by 4:00pm EST

Length: As long or as short as you want or need.

Note: While there is no page limit or word count here, consider how many words you want/need. You will be submitting this as an e-mail body (not attached document – see below), so that will and should be some gauge for you as well.

Weight: Not graded (but will determine your 10% Creative Reflection grade)

Assignment:

I am not going to grade your Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) assignment...*you are*. That’s right: while I am going to read, reflect on, comment on, and return to you my summary feedback on your work, you are going to tell me which final grade you deserve on it...and why. Be sure to think about and reflect yourself on my comments and feedback on your Creative Reflection assignment, and think about as well the choices you made, the choices you did not make, what you wish you had done differently, what you are glad you hadn’t done differently, etc. to fill out your rationale and discussion of the grade you deserve.

The frame for this assignment will be a formal e-mail from you to me sent by 4:00pm on Friday, June 10th. Please feel free to use (if you wish) the following outline to begin:

Subject line: Self-Assessment – Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion”)

e-mail body: Dear Tommy,

The grade that I deserve on my Creative Reflection (or, “Graphic Design is My Passion!”) assignment is $x/10$. And here’s why:

[as many/as few words as you want or need to tell me why – see above “Be sure to think about...” prompts to guide you]

Thank you very much, and I hope you have a great weekend!

Sincerely,

[your name + UW ID]

Note: Whether you worked by yourself, with a partner, or in a group of three for your Creative Reflection assignment, you are submitting an individually-authored Self-Assessment here. You are welcome to collaborate with your partner(s) on the rationale and writing since, if you worked in a duo or trio, you did co-create your Creative Reflection piece, but the final Self-Assessment is yours individually to submit for your individual grade on the Creative Reflection assignment.

Artifact 12 – Mini Lesson #1: “Storytelling Through Documentary and the Non-Neutrality of the Documentary Filmmaker”

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
 Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
 ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
 Tommy Mayberry

Storytelling Through Documentary and the Non-Neutrality of the Documentary Filmmaker

c. 40min. Mini-Lesson Plan

	Time
<p>Bridge-in and Lesson Opening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video Clip: Abed from <i>Community</i> on documentary filmmaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask, “Any <i>Community</i> fans out there? Please don’t tell me I’m <i>that old</i> that <i>Community</i>, too, is now passé for cultural references in teaching!” ○ Say, “Okay, fine, whatever: I want to show you two clips of Abed talking about the genre of documentary in filmmaking, and as we watch this clip, I want you to pay particular attention to synergies and fissures of bias and neutrality with how Abed talks about documentary filmmaking.” ○ Play the opening and closing clips of <i>Community</i> season 2, episode 5 “Intermediate Documentary Filmmaking” (0:00-1:00; and 19:30-20:00) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Clip 1</i>: “Pierce asked me to document his life for historical purposes. At first, I said, ‘No’ because, at the risk of sounding overly sensitive, I feel bored by Pierce as a subject. But I’m excited about <i>the narrative facility of the documentary format</i>: it’s easier to tell a complex story when you can just cut to people explaining things to the camera” (emphasis added) ▪ <i>Clip 2</i>: “So, I thought the documentary format would be like fish in a barrel. But as is the case with a real barrel of fish, after a while, it can become cramped, chaotic, and stinky. Fortunately, if in the end, your documentary is turning out just as messy as real life, you can always wrap it up with a series of random shots which, when cut together under a generic voice-over, suggest a profound thematic connection. I’m not knocking it: it works” ○ After clip, ask, “What comments/reactions do we have before/as we get (back) into hooks on <i>Paris is Burning</i>?” ○ Facilitate mini discussion 	5 min.
Teaching and Learning Resource(s): Video clip of <i>Community</i> season 2, episode 5	
Learning Outcomes (LOs):	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “By cinematically masking this reality (we hear her ask questions but never see her), Livingston does not oppose the way hegemonic whiteness ‘represents’ [B]lackness, but rather assumes an imperial overseeing position that is in no way progressive or counter-hegemonic” (hooks 151) ○ Say, “I want to draw our attention here to two important things: first, ethnography, and second, aurality.” ○ Ask, “What are the politics and ethics of ethnography and ethnographic research? And what do we mean by “ethnographic?”” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow up with, “What are the slippery slopes hooks is pointing us to here with <i>Paris is Burning</i> as a cultural artifact?” ○ Facilitate small discussion with class ○ Ask, “And what about aurality? <i>We hear her ask questions but never see her...</i> How does this change the way we look at, and listen to, <i>Paris is Burning</i>?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow up with, “To what extent can we hear whiteness, and particularly Jennie Livingston’s whiteness, in <i>Paris is Burning</i>? Not a rhetorical question: I actually want to know what you think here!” ○ Facilitate small discussion with class ○ Ask, “And before we dive deeper into whiteness, and particularly Jennie Livingston’s whiteness, what do we think Abed would say here if he were in class with us?” ● P2 Slide 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up slide with quotation from hooks on Livingston being asked about her whiteness on it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Didn’t the fact that you’re a white lesbian going into a world of Black queens and street kids make [the interview process] difficult?” (qtd. in hooks 151) ○ Say, “Without looking at your books, who remembers how Livingston responds to this question?” ○ Engage with participation if/as it comes up ○ Click to bring up Livingston’s response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “If you know someone over a period of two years, and they still retain their sex and their race, you’ve got to be a pretty sexist, racist person” (qtd. in hooks 151) ○ Say, “Let’s pause here for a moment to unpack this, problematize this, and add some contemporaneity to this. But first...any thoughts, comments, reactions here anyone would like to and is comfortable sharing?” ○ Engage with participation if/as it comes up ○ Click to bring up Alexis Lothian’s concept of <i>affective whiplash</i> when dealing with historical texts (and yes, 1992 is “historical” apparently...): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “As is common in encounters with old futures, contemporary readers in search of affirmative histories of our political 	<p>9 min.</p>
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<p>allegiances are likely to experience affective whiplash” when we find in old texts moments of, as Lothian notes, “virulent racism” and other then-unfortunately-normative narratives and moments (Lothian 272n76)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask, “Who felt a Lothian kind of affective whiplash when first reading this response of Livingston’s and/or seeing these words again now on the screen? Okay, this <i>was</i> a rhetorical question: we all should have felt affective whiplash here, and that’s because...” ○ Click to bring up Aja Martinez quotations on <i>color blind racism</i> in contexts of Critical Race Theory: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “the liberal notion of color blindness...ignor[es] racial difference [and] maintains and perpetuates the ‘status quo with all of its deeply institutionalized injustices to racial minorities’” (Martinez 7) ▪ “The ideological problem with discussions of racism is that individuals have been socially and politically urged to view race consciousness less favorably than color blindness...and that bringing attention to difference is cause for fear, worry, and impending attack” (Martinez 27) ○ Say, “...and that’s because, as Dr. Aja tells us, color blindness was...<i>is</i>...a thing.” ○ Read aloud the Aja quotations ○ Ask, “So, what are some of the things we’re thinking here now?” ○ Facilitate small discussion with class ○ Say, “Livingston is, as hooks tells us on page 151, ‘[a]voiding the difficult questions underlying what it means to be a white person in a white supremacist society creating a film about any aspect of [B]lack life’” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● P2 Slide 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up hooks quotation on a foreclosed-upon Black director of a Black-directed documentary of the NYC drag and trans ballroom culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “To say, as Livingston does, ‘I certainly don’t have the final word on the gay [B]lack experience. I’d love for a [B]lack director to have made this film’ is to oversimplify the issue and absolve her of responsibility and accountability for progressive critical reflection and it implicitly suggests that there would be no difference between her work and that of a [B]lack director” (152) ▪ “Underlying this apparently self-effacing comment is cultural arrogance, for she implies not only that she has cornered the market on the subject matter but that being able to make films is a question of personal choice, like she just ‘discovered’ the ‘raw material’ before a [B]lack director did” (152) ○ Ask, “<i>Now</i> what are some of the things we’re thinking here?” 	<p>5 min.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate small discussion with class ● P2 Slide 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up hooks quotation on the roots of racism in Livingston’s non-interrogative approach to documentary filmmaking and her own positionality and social location: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Livingston appears unwilling to interrogate the way assuming the position of outsider looking in, as well as[PAGE BREAK]interpreter, can, and often does, pervert and distort one’s perspective” (152-153) ▪ “Her ability to assume such a position without rigorous interrogation of intent is rooted in the politics of race and racism” (153) ○ Say, “I want to play one more clip from Abed in <i>Community</i> before we get into a little activity on storytelling through documentary and the non-neutrality of the documentary filmmaker” ○ Play the closing clip of <i>Community</i> season 3, episode 8 “Documentary Filmmaking: Redux” (19:40-19:50) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Clip 1:</i> “Documentarians are supposed to be objective to avoid having any effect on the story. And yet <i>we have more effect than anyone because we decide to tell it. And we decide how it ends</i>” (emphases added) <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): PPT slides; video clip of <i>Community</i> season 3, episode 8</p>	5 min.
<p>Post-assessment (P3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “What Question Would You Ask Jennie Livingston?” Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say, “So, I know what question I would ask Jennie Livingston if I were interviewing her – I’d ask her what story was she wanting to tell and what was her place within that story – but what question would <i>you</i> ask Jennie Livingston?” ○ Click to bring up slide with the following Think-“Pair”-Share prompt and instructions on it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “One your own, with a partner, or in groups three, please spend the next 5 minutes talking about and coming up with...What question would <i>you</i> ask Jennie Livingston? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “After 5 minutes, we’ll hear some questions from folks and build our own Class Interview Guide for an imagined interview article we’d write about Livingston and <i>Paris is Burning</i> today.” ○ Read the prompt aloud ○ Ask, “What can I clarify about this activity before I set the timer and we get started?” ○ Clarify if/as needed ○ Set timer for 5 minutes 	9 min.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When time is up, ask if anyone would like to share out loud the question(s) they came up with, and record them on the whiteboard to compile the hokey Class Interview Guide ○ When done recording on whiteboard, say, “I’ll take a picture of this to upload to LEARN for us for future reference.” ○ And do take the picture <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): PPT slides; whiteboard and whiteboard markers; cell phone camera</p>	
<p>Summary and Closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revisit Learning Outcome for this mini-lesson from the full lesson on the slides as you go close this chunk: LO1: identify and discuss storytelling through documentary and the non-neutrality of the documentary filmmaker, and reflect on the impacts, impasses, and legacies of colour blind racism” ● Link to/set up next mini-lesson as part of the full lesson <p>Visual Resource: PPT Slides</p>	1 min.

Artifact 13 – Mini Lesson #2: “Ritual and Spectacle”

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
 Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
 ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
 Tommy Mayberry

Ritual and Spectacle

c. 30min. Mini-Lesson Plan

	Time
<p>Bridge-in and Lesson Opening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What Comes to Mind When You Think Of...” Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask, “What comes to mind when you think of <i>ritual</i> and of <i>spectacle</i>?” ○ Write the question prompt on a whiteboard ○ Write each of <i>ritual</i> and <i>spectacle</i> as respective headings on a whiteboard ○ Record what students say/share as they say/share it – no matter what it is they say/share, no matter how accurate, off-base, silly, serious, etc., record it to capture the class’ impressions and understandings of each of <i>ritual</i> and of <i>spectacle</i> at the outset of this mini-lesson chunk <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): Whiteboard, whiteboard markers (or equivalent)</p>	3 min.
<p>Learning Outcomes (LOs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include Learning Outcome for this mini-lesson from the full lesson on the slides as you go through this chunk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LO2: “define and discuss <i>ritual</i> and <i>spectacle</i> in visual cultures as well as in literary cultures, and reflect on the rhetorical power of them, separately and together, in <i>Paris is Burning</i> and in contemporary culture” <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): LO on slides in PPT</p>	1 min.
<p>Pre-assessment (P1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [<i>Bridge-in and Lesson Opening was the Pre-Assessment</i>] <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): n/a</p>	n/a
<p>Participatory/Interactive Learning (P2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P2 Slide 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share hooks quotations discussing the conflation of ritual and spectacle in <i>Paris is Burning</i> as well as her take on the nuanced separation of them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Much of the film’s focus on pageantry takes the ritual of the [B]lack drag balls and makes it spectacle” (150) 	3 min. (P2-1)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Ritual is that ceremonial act that carries with it meaning and significance beyond what appears, while spectacle functions primarily as entertaining dramatic display” (150) ○ Ask, “How do these two quotations of hooks’ fit with, and not fit with, our understandings of <i>ritual</i> and of <i>spectacle</i> as we captured them together on the whiteboard?” ○ Facilitate small discussion with class ○ Record in a new colour to the whiteboard any new ideas/concepts that come up in discussion ○ Say, “Let’s look at some other definitions and understandings of <i>ritual</i> and of <i>spectacle</i>” • P2 Slide 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up slide with definitions of <i>ritual</i> on it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rituals: “set forms and procedures in sacred ceremonies” (Abrams 178) ▪ ritual, n.2.a. “A ritual act or ceremonial observance. Also in later use: an action or series of actions regularly or habitually repeated” (<i>OED</i>) ▪ ritual, n.3. “The performance of ritual acts. Also in later use: repeated actions or patterns of behaviour having significance within a particular social group” (<i>OED</i>) ○ Read aloud the definitions ○ Ask, “What are we noticing that we’d like to add to our definitions and understandings with hooks?” ○ Record in a third new colour to the whiteboard any new ideas/concepts that come up in discussion ○ Click to bring up slide with definitions of <i>spectacle</i> on it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ spectacle: “A term that generally refers to something that is striking or impressive in its visual display, if not awe inspiring. The term <i>spectacle</i> was used by French theorist Guy Debord in his book <i>Society of the Spectacle</i> to describe how representations dominate contemporary culture and how all social relations are mediated by and through images” (Sturken and Cartwright 460) ▪ spectacle, n.1.a. “A specially prepared or arranged display of a more or less public nature (esp. one on a large scale), forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment for those viewing it” (<i>OED</i>) ▪ spectacle, n.2. “A person or thing exhibited to, or set before, the public gaze as an object either (a) of curiosity or contempt, or (b) of marvel or admiration” (<i>OED</i>) ○ Ask, “What are we noticing that we’d like to add to our definitions and understandings with hooks?” ○ Record in the third colour to the whiteboard any new ideas/concepts that come up in discussion 	<p>5 min. (P2-2)</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say, “Let’s go back to hooks on <i>Paris is Burning</i> with ritual and spectacle now, then.” ● P2 Slide 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up slide with hooks quotations on growing up with diverse pageants and rituals as well as on white observers “eas[il]y” depicting Black rituals as spectacle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Those of us who have grown up in a segregated [B]lack setting where we participated in diverse pageants and rituals know that those elements of a given ritual that are empowering and subversive may not be readily visible to an outsider looking in” (150) ▪ “Hence it is easy for white observers to depict [B]lack rituals as spectacle” (150) ○ Ask, “What thoughts and/or reactions are coming to mind in light of our definitions conversations on ritual and spectacle with these words and reflections of hooks’ before us now?” ○ Facilitate small discussion with class ○ Before setting up the next part, give Content Warning for murder, transphobia, misgendering, and misnaming, and give space and time for folks put their headphones in, leave the room for a bio break, and take care of themselves as they need to ○ Say, “And what about here?” and click to bring up next slide ● P2 Slide 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Read aloud from the slide with hooks quotations on Venus’ murder as spectacle, the documentary abandoning her, and death not being entertaining (enough) for the film to spend more time on – and be sure to have several pictures of Venus on the slides, too: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “[T]ragedy is made explicit when we are told that the fair-skinned Venus has been murdered, and yet there is no mourning of him/her in the film, no intense focus on the sadness of this murder” (154-155) ▪ “Having served the purpose of ‘spectacle’ the film abandons him/her” (155) ▪ “The audience does not see Venus after the murder. There are no scenes of grief. To put it crassly, her dying is upstaged by spectacle. Death is not entertaining” (hooks 155) ○ Ask, “What thoughts and/or reactions are coming to mind in light of our definitions conversations on ritual and spectacle with these words and critique of hooks’ before us now?” ○ Facilitate small discussion with class, including (if it doesn’t come up on its own, hooks’ pronouncing of Venus) <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): Whiteboard and whiteboard markers (or equivalent); PPT slides; pictures/images of Venus Xtravaganza</p>	<p>5 min. (P2-3)</p> <p>5 min. (P2-4)</p>
<p>Post-assessment (P3):</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Reflection/“1-minute Paper” Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up slide with the following writing prompt and instructions on it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Please get out your journal (physical or digital) and spend the next 3 minutes writing about... What does hooks mean when she talks about ritual being subordinated to spectacle (155) and the overshadowing power of spectacle (156) in the context of the drag balls as documented by Jennie Livingston in <i>Paris is Burning</i>? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’ll set the timer...and go!” ○ Set timer for 3 minutes ○ When time is up, ask if anyone would like to share out loud anything they wrote/reflected on, or any final-for-the-moment thoughts or comments on ritual and/or spectacle in hooks on <i>Paris is Burning</i> before we move onto the next mini-lesson chunk <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): PPT slides</p>	5 min.
<p>Summary and Closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit Learning Outcome for this mini-lesson from the full lesson on the slides as you go close this chunk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LO2: “define and discuss <i>ritual</i> and <i>spectacle</i> in visual cultures as well as in literary cultures, and reflect on the rhetorical power of them, separately and together, in <i>Paris is Burning</i> and in contemporary culture” • Link to/set up next mini-lesson as part of the full lesson <p>Visual Resource: PPT Slides</p>	1 min.

Artifact 14 – Mini Lesson #3: “Heteropatriarchy, Intersectionality, and the Black Male Comedian in Drag”

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
 Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
 ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
 Tommy Mayberry

Heteropatriarchy, Intersectionality, and the Black Male Comedian in Drag

c. 25min. Mini-Lesson Plan

	Time
<p>Bridge-in and Lesson Opening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: “Tommy Mayberry’s 3 Minute Thesis at UWaterloo” (2015) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Play the YouTube video of your 3-Minute Thesis from the 2015 Arts Heat Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YouTube Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxbGJrQSW6g <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length: 0:00-2:47 ○ After video, say, “Now that wasn’t stand-up comedy in drag – although I get a few laughs, didn’t I? – but it set up a couple things that I want us to start with as we move toward being able to...” ○ Click to change to slide with Learning Outcomes on it <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): PPT slides for mini lesson; YouTube video of Tommy Mayberry’s 2015 3MT</p>	3 min.
<p>Learning Outcomes (LOs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include Learning Outcome for this mini-lesson from the full lesson on the slides as you go through this chunk: LO3: “discuss bell hooks’ argument and critique of heteropatriarchal intersectionality with Black male comedians in drag, and connect it to contemporary evolutions and representations of Black excellence in drag cultures” <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): LO on slides in PPT</p>	1 min.
<p>Pre-assessment (P1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video Clip: “A Message to Mary Cheney from RuPaul’s Drag Race” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say, “So in my 3MT video – which we can talk about more in just a moment – I anchored my early dissertation scope rhetorically for the 3MT Arts Heat with that note about Mary Cheney.” ○ Tell the story of <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race</i> Season 7 promo trailer that had Mary Cheney (lesbian daughter of former Vice-President of the United States, Dick Cheney) take to Facebook “to wonder aloud,” as you say, 	3 min.

<p>why drag is allowed by Blackface isn't ("should both be okay, or neither," she said)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Play, the YouTube clip of RuPaul and <i>RuPaul Drag Race</i>'s "Message to Mary Cheney" at the Season 7 Finale of the "little herstory" lesson they put together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>YouTube Link:</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5G4-oatHs3A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clip: 0:00-0:56 ○ After clip, ask, "What comments/reactions do we have, and/or what are some of our initial thoughts here – on either/both of <i>RuPaul's Drag Race</i>'s message to Mary Cheney and/or my 3MT video?" ○ Facilitate mini discussion <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): PPT slides; video clip of "A Message to Mary Cheney from RuPaul's Drag Race";</p>	
<p>Participatory/Interactive Learning (P2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P2 Slide 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say, "In RuPaul's Drag Herstory 101 lesson, among the many things that drag is and/or can be, he said that 'Drag is a laugh riot' and as he said this, showed an image of Flip Wilson perfuming her wig with the title of 'Comedian' underneath her name. This immediately calls to mind what bell hooks says..." ○ Click to bring up hooks quotation on the often most successful part of a Black male comedian's act and read quotation aloud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Often the moment when a [B]lack male comedian appeared in drag was the most successful segment of a given comedian's act (for example, Flip Wilson, Redd Foxx, or Eddie Murphy)" (hooks 146) ○ Say, "RuPaul isn't critical here of Flip Wilson as a cishet Black man in drag, but hooks notes..." ○ Click to bring up hooks quotation on these televised images helping to sustain racism and sexism and read quotation aloud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "These televised images of [B]lack men in drag were never subversive; they helped sustain sexism and racism" (hooks 146) ○ Say, "And what hooks means by this, as she tells us reflectively of her own growing up, is..." ○ Click to bring up hooks quotations on disempowerment in growing up seeing these images and read quotations aloud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "As a young [B]lack female, I found these images to be disempowering. They seemed to both allow [B]lack males to give public expression to a general misogyny, as well as to a more specific hatred and contempt toward [B]lack women" (hooks 146) ▪ "Growing up in a world where [B]lack women were, and still are, the objects of extreme abuse, scorn, and ridicule, I felt these 	3 min.

<p>impersonations were aimed at reinforcing everyone’s power over us. In retrospect, I can see that the [B]lack male in drag was also a disempowering image of [B]lack masculinity” (hooks 146)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say, “I’m going to pause here for some of our reflections, questions, comments, inquires, and reactions – what are we thinking and/or feeling at this point, from our reading of hooks’ essay and her reflections in the 1990s?” ○ Facilitate mini discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● P2 Slide 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say, “hooks outlines an intricate, intimate, intensely critical visual-rhetorical argument of how she sees this happening in cishet Black male comedians’ acts in the ’90s that has everything to do with, as she says, ‘white supremacist patriarchal culture’.” ○ Click to bring up hooks quotations on white supremacist patriarchal culture and read quotations aloud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Many heterosexual [B]lack men in white supremacist patriarchal culture have acted as though the primary ‘evil’ of racism has been the refusal of the dominant culture to allow them full access to patriarchal power, so that in sexist terms they are compelled to inhabit a sphere of powerlessness, deemed ‘feminine,’ hence they have perceived themselves as emasculated” (hooks 147) ▪ “To the extent that [B]lack men accept a white supremacist sexist representation of themselves as castrated, without phallic power, and therefore pseudo-females, they will need to overly assert a phallic misogynist masculinity, one rooted in contempt for the female” (hooks 147) ○ Say, “Let’s pause here, too: what are some of our reflections, questions, comments, inquires, and reactions here?” ○ Facilitate mini discussion 	3 min.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● P2 Slide 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up slide with quotation from hooks connecting back to Black gay men: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Much [B]lack male homophobia is rooted in the desire to eschew connection with all things deemed ‘feminine’ and that would, of course, include [B]lack gay men” (hooks 147) ▪ “A contemporary[-to-the-1990s] [B]lack comedian like Eddie Murphy ‘proves’ his phallic power by daring to publicly ridicule women and gays” (hooks 147) ▪ And hooks notes, too, “that audiences collude in perpetuating” this “image of [B]lack gay culture he [Eddie Murphy] evokes and subjects to comic homophobic assault” (147) ○ Say, “Remember, as hooks also says (later in her essay and on <i>Paris is Burning</i>), that laughter is never innocent.” 	3 min.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P2 Slide 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say, “But hooks tells how this might be flipped around to become empowering and progressive.” ○ Click to bring up slide with quotations from hooks on taking Black men in drag seriously: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “For [B]lack males to take appearing in drag seriously, be they gay or straight, is to oppose a heterosexist representation of [B]lack manhood” (hooks 147) ▪ “Gender bending and blending on the part of [B]lack males has always been a critique of phallogentric masculinity in traditional [B]lack experience. Yet the subversive power of those images is radically altered when informed by a racialized fictional construction of the ‘feminine’ that suddenly makes the representation of whiteness as crucial to the experience of female impersonation as gender, <i>that is to say when the idealized notion of the female/feminine is really a sexist idealization of white womanhood</i>” (hooks 147 – emphasis added) ○ Ask, “Now what are some of the things we’re thinking here?” ○ Facilitate small discussion with class <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): PPT slides</p>	3 min.
<p>Post-assessment (P3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Gay Drag Performers: hooks’ Today and Our Today <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up photos of Kendall Gender, Symone, and Shea Couleé, from their respective seasons of the <i>Drag Race</i> franchise (<i>Canada’s Drag Race</i> Season 2; <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race</i> Season 13; and <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race: All Stars</i> Season 5) ○ Say, “Here are three contemporary-to-us drag performers, two Black (Symone and Shea) and one bi-racial (Kendall), who decidedly, consciously, and vocally embody in their drag idealized notions of Black womanhood.” ○ Say, “Of this look” and point to Kendall Gender’s <i>Canada’s Drag Race</i> season 2, episode 10 #CoronationEleganza look, Kendall says, “I wanted to stand here in my full realization and show you that this is beautiful. My heritage is beautiful. And what I represent, I believe in” (“Queen of the North”) ○ Say, “Of this look” and point to Symone’s <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race</i> season 13, episode 14 #DragExcellence look, Symone says, “I wanted to bring Black excellence to this competition because I wanted to show that you can be that and be unapologetic about it” (“Gettin’ Lucky”) ○ Say, “Of this look” and point to Shea Couleé’s <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race: All Stars</i> season 5, episode 8 #AllStarEleganza look, Shea tells us that it is a recreation of a 50-year-old Polaroid photo of her mom going to 	5 min.

<p>prom and says, “My drag, in its purest form, is a love letter to Black women” (“Clap Back!”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask, “Thoughts, reactions, questions, comments, reflections?” ○ Facilitate small discussion with class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be sure to connect, if doesn’t come up organically, to hooks and those idealized versions of white womanhood (Madonna, <i>Vogue</i>, etc.) but also an echoing being heard more loudly now today in our present of Dorian Corey on Lena Horne <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): PPT slides; photos of Kendall Gender’s <i>Canada’s Drag Race</i> season 2, episode 10 runway look, of Symone’s <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race</i> season 13, episode 14 runway look, and of Shea Couleé’s <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race: All Stars</i> season 5, episode 8 runway look</p>	
<p>Summary and Closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit Learning Outcome for this mini-lesson from the full lesson on the slides as you go close this chunk: LO3: “discuss bell hooks’ argument and critique of heteropatriarchal intersectionality with Black male comedians in drag, and connect it to contemporary evolutions and representations of Black excellence in drag cultures” • Link to/set up next mini-lesson as part of the full lesson <p>Visual Resource: PPT Slides</p>	1 min.

Artifact 15 – Mini Lesson #4: “A Critique of Progress and of Play”

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
 Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
 ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
 Tommy Mayberry

A Critique of Progress and of Play

c. 50min. Mini-Lesson Plan

	Time
<p>Bridge-in and Lesson Opening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Storytelling: “Little Tommy” In/At Play as a Child <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Show childhood photos of you as a little kid in play and at play – including, but not only, ones in drag for Hallowe’en (include Barbie ones, too, if you can as well as other ones with your siblings) ○ Tell the stories behind each photo and memory as well as what you remember going on and why you think that was going on <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): Childhood photos of you in/at play</p>	2 min.
<p>Learning Outcomes (LOs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include Learning Outcome for this mini-lesson from the full lesson on the slides as you go through this chunk: LO4: “reflect on play and power, empowerment, disempowerment, and patriarchy, and begin to critique progress in white Western cultures and white Western assumptions of progressiveness” <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): LO on slides in PPT</p>	1 min.
<p>Pre-assessment (P1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Storytelling: “Little You” In/At Play as a Child <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say to students, “On your own, with a partner, or in groups of three – so, solo, duo, or trio – please share a favourite memory of yourself as a child in play and/or at play that you have, whether it involves cross-dressing or not! If you would like to work on your own for this, please do so, and whether you are solo, duo, or trio, please jot some notes down a piece of paper or a text/Word doc in case you’d like to share after our small discussions.” ○ Ask students, “What can I clarify about this activity before we begin” and address any questions that may arise ○ Tell students the time for this: 1-2 minutes solo, duo, or trio, and 2-3 minutes for sharing back with the full class as folks would like to ○ Set a timer, and send folks off to reflect and share their stories! ○ Show timer on screen as students are working/talking/sharing 	6 min.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When timer stops, bring students back to attention and ask if anyone would like to share any stories with the class ○ Facilitate small sharing circle as time, energy, and enthusiasm allows <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): Activity instructions on slides in PPT; digital timer to have up on screen for the activity</p>	
<p>Participatory/Interactive Learning (P2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● P2 Slide 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share hooks quotations on drag – and <i>in drag</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “There was a time in my life when I liked to dress up as a male and go out into the world. It was a form of ritual, of play. It was also about power. To cross-dress as a woman in patriarchy—then, more so than now—was also to symbolically cross from the world of powerlessness into a world of privilege. It was the ultimate, intimate, voyeuristic gesture” (hooks 145) ○ Say, “Thinking of our earlier conversations on ritual (and spectacle), but also on play with Daphne Marlatt”¹²⁷ – and click to bring up Daphne Marlatt quotation, see below – “where do we see or might we have seen power, including empowerment and disempowerment, of ourselves and/or of others, in my childhood stories in and at play as well as any of our shared childhood stories in and at play?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Marlatt quotations for P2 Slide 1:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “In our culture of ready-mades, making anything is an accomplishment, making something of yourself even more so, but add that little word ‘up’ and you add speciousness, you add a sneer. Children learn that dressing themselves is an achievement but dressing up is only play, child’s play as they say of something easy. Yet as children we know that play is not only easy, it is also absorbing and immensely serious, that play is the actual practice (not factual but act-ual) of who else we might be” (Marlatt 14) ○ Facilitate class discussion on power and play ● P2 Slide 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share hooks quotations of “crossing over from the realm of power into a realm of powerlessness” and of the win/lose rhetoric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Within white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy the experience of men dressing as women, appearing in drag, has always been 	<p>5 min.</p> <p>5 min.</p>

¹²⁷ **Note to Dissertation Reader:** In my “Transgender Visual Culture” course (Fall 2015) – and in most of my narrative teaching and writing, including “Communication in the Life Sciences”! – I assign Daphne Marlatt’s short essay “Self-Representation and Fictionalysis” as required reading within the first few days of class together to get students thinking about themselves and their writerly voices/personae differently and with a shared vocabulary together for us together in the course. In the specific context of teaching bell hooks and/on *Paris is Burning*, Marlatt on play would definitely have already been a precursory discussion in class.

<p>regarded by the dominant heterosexist cultural gaze as a sign that one is symbolically crossing over from the realm of power into a realm of powerlessness” (hooks 146)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “To choose to appear as ‘female’ when one is ‘male’ is always constructed in the patriarchal mindset as a loss, as a choice worthy only of ridicule” (hooks 146) ○ Say, “Notice how hooks here says <i>has always been regarded</i>, and we know she is writing in the late-80s/early-90s...the 1990s!...so let’s keep that in mind as we watch this quick 1-minute clip from Netflix’s <i>Orange is the New Black</i>” ○ Give Content Warning for <i>T</i>-word, mispronouncing of a trans person, classism, sexism, ableism, sanism, misogyny, and transmisogyny (all in one 1-minute clip, yes!), and give space and time for folks put their headphones in, leave the room for a bio break, and take the care they need to of themselves before playing the clip ○ Play <i>Orange is the New Black</i> clip with Figueroa saying, “[Being a transwoman is] like winning the lottery and giving the ticket back” (Season 1, Episode 3: “Lesbian Request Denied”, 13:00-14:00) ○ Ask, “Thoughts, reactions, comments?” ○ Facilitate class discussion, paying particular attention to nuances of games, of winning/losing dichotomy, and Figueroa as a rich, cisnet, white-presenting woman saying this about a Black transwoman convicted of credit card fraud committed to pay for her transition¹²⁸ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When it comes up organically and/or if you have to connect to it, click to bring up a photo of Alysia Reiner as Natalie Figueroa and a photo of Laverne Cox as Sophia Burset ● P2 Slide 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say, “So let’s talk about white women for a moment, and specifically white femininity as hooks looks at it in the documentary and its surrounding culture.” ○ Click to bring up hooks quotations on white femininity and white male patriarchy, and the queens’ class, race, and gender aspirations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Significantly, the fixation on becoming as much like a white female as possible implicitly evokes a connection to a figure never visible in this film: that of the white male patriarch” (hooks 148) 	1 min.
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¹²⁸ **Note to Dissertation Reader:** The *Orange is the New Black* character Sophia Burset (played by Laverne Cox) is “doing time,” trans woman and criminal defense attorney Christina A. DiEdoardo states in her essay “Nietzsche and a Trans Woman Walk into a Prison,” “because she financed [her] surgery (which, in the real world, *still* isn’t covered by insurance in most states and can run to five figures) by a series of credit-card frauds” (30 – italics original). On this, DiEdoardo importantly notes that Burset’s crime of credit-card fraud “is arguably the most victimless crime of any prisoner” because “[c]redit card customers are never personally liable for frauds committed on their account and credit card companies can mitigate much, if not all, of their risk of garden-variety fraud and loss either via insurance or by writing off the losses at tax time” (32).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>P2 Slide 4:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to change to slide of professional headshots of Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato, Tom Campbell, and Chris McKim ○ Ask, “Who are these folks?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If no one answers correctly that they are Executive Producers of <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race</i>, ask, “Who do we think these folks might be?” ○ Click to add RuPaul’s professional headshot photo to the roster with the first four ○ Ask, “Now who do we think these folks might be?” ○ Click to bring up text boxes: one that says, “Executive Producers of <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race</i>”; one of hooks quotation, “...a figure never visible...that of the white male patriarch...” ○ Ask, “Thoughts, comments, reactions?” ○ Facilitate small class discussion 	4 min.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>P2 Slide 5:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up hooks quotations on the NYC ballroom queens’ class, race, and gender aspirations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “And yet if the class, race, and gender aspirations expressed by the drag queens who share their deepest dreams is always the longing to be in the position of the ruling-class woman then that means there is also the desire to act in partnership with the ruling-class white male” (hooks 148) ○ Ask, “Thoughts, comments, reactions?” ○ Facilitate small class discussion 	5 min.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>P2 Slide 6:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up hooks quotation on (lack of) a critique of patriarchy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “This combination of class and race longing that privileges the ‘femininity’ of the ruling-class white woman, adored and kept, shrouded in luxury, does not imply a critique of patriarchy” (hooks 148) ▪ “Often it is assumed that the gay male, and most specifically the ‘queen,’ is both anti-phallogentric and anti-patriarchal” (hooks 148) ○ Ask, “Thoughts, comments, reactions?” ○ Facilitate small class discussion 	5 min.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>P2 Slide 7:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Click to bring up hooks quotations of the assumptions that <i>Paris is Burning</i> “is inherently oppositional” and of the film really being about questions of power and privilege: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “<i>Paris is Burning</i> is a film that many audiences assume is inherently oppositional because of its subject matter and the identity of the filmmaker” (hooks 149) 	1 min.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “So much of what is expressed in the film has to do with questions of power and privilege and the way racism impedes [B]lack progress” (hooks 152) ○ [Move into Post-Assessment (P3) right after this, leaving these two quotations up on the slide] <p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): PPT slides; Video clip of <i>Orange is the New Black</i>; photo of Alysia Reiner as Natalie Figueroa and photo of Laverne Cox as Sophia Burset; professional headshot photos of the Executive Producers of <i>RuPaul’s Drag Race</i></p>	
<p>Post-assessment (P3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How Far Have We Come, and How Far Do We Still Have to Go?” Pro-and-Con Grid Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Say, “We may have come a long way from the late 1980s and early 1990s – and as hooks is arguing with <i>Paris is Burning</i>, whose politics of race, gender, and class she sees as being played out in ways that are both progressive and reactionary^[129] – but we still have a long, long ways to go and to keep going.” ○ Hand out the Pro-and-Con Grid activity prompt with instructions on it (attached/see below), and say, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Solo, duo, or trio, please spend the next 10 minutes filling out this table with ideas of <i>How Far We Have Come</i> in the left column and <i>How Far We Still Have to Go</i> in the right regarding Black and Latinx progress, specifically but not exclusively Black and Latinx progress with class, race, and gender equity.” ○ Tell students there is also an editable Word document version of the Handout on LEARN if they’d rather work digitally than physically, and tell students there is a variety of pencils, pens, and markers if they’d like to use any of them as well ○ Ask, “What can I clarify about this activity before I set the timer and we get started?” ○ Clarify if/as needed ○ Set timer for 10 minutes ○ When time is up, ask if anyone would like to share out loud the progresses and/or the con-gresses they came up with, and record them live on an editable Word document version of the handout activity sheet to compile together as the class ○ When done recording in-document, say, “I’ll upload this to LEARN for us for future reference.” ○ And do upload to LEARN 	15min.

¹²⁹ Paraphrased here from hooks’ quotation, partially used on the slides: “*Paris is Burning* is a film that many audiences assume is inherently oppositional because of its subject matter and the identity of the filmmaker. Yet the film’s politics of race, gender, and class are played out in ways that are both progressive and reactionary” (149).

<p>Teaching and Learning Resource(s): PPT slides; Pro-and-Con Grid Handout sheets (physical copies, enough for one per students); Pro-and-Con Grid Handout Word doc editable version (on LEARN for students; on computer for you); bin with a variety of pencils, pens, and markers for students who'd like to use them</p>	
<p>Summary and Closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit Learning Outcome for this mini-lesson from the full lesson on the slides as you go close this chunk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LO4: “reflect on play and power, empowerment, disempowerment, and patriarchy, and begin to critique progress in white Western cultures and white Western assumptions of progressiveness” • Click to bring back up all four Learning Outcomes as the full lesson • Say, “And that’s it for today, folks! Next time we meet, we’ll be spending some in-class time working on our writing projects, and after those, we’ll touch base again with what else/what left we’d like to talk about and discuss with bell hooks on <i>Paris is Burning!</i>” <p>Visual Resource: PPT Slides</p>	<p>1 min.</p>

Attachment:

“How Far Have We Come, and How Far Do We Still Have to Go?” Pro-and-Con Grid Activity

University of Waterloo, Department of English Language and Literature
Drag and Trans- Visual Cultures and Rhetorics
ENGL XXXX, Spring 2022
Tommy Mayberry

**The Real Paris On Fire Project:
“How Far Have We Come, and How Far Do We Still Have to Go?” Activity Sheet**

In-Class Pro-and-Con Grid Activity

We may have come a long way from the late 1980s and early 1990s – and as hooks argues in “Is Paris Burning?”, the documentary “*Paris is Burning* is a film that many audiences assume is inherently oppositional because of its subject matter and the identity of the filmmaker. Yet the film’s politics of race, gender, and class are played out in ways that are both progressive and reactionary” (149) – but we still have a long, long ways to go and to keep going.

On your own, with a partner, or in a group of three, please fill out the table below with ideas of *How Far We Have Come* and *How Far We Still Have to Go* regarding Black and Latinx progress – specifically, but not exclusively, Black and Latinx progress with class, race, and gender equity.

Please note: There is also an editable Word document version of this handout on LEARN if you would rather work digitally than physically, and in either case (or both!), there is a variety of pencils, pens, and markers available to you from Tommy if you’d like to use any of them as well.

How Far We Have Come:	How Far We Still Have to Go:

*there are more cells on the other side of this page, if you need them or would like them!

Artifact 16a – Scans of Lecture Notes from “Transgender Visual Culture” (Fall 2015): November 5th
[page 1 of 8]

University of Waterloo, Department of Fine Arts
Fine Arts 205/6, Transgender Visual Culture, Fall 2015
Tommy Mayberry

Thursday, November 5th, 2015

Get links and images ready

Set alarm for 2:00pm to stop lecturing and administer the Reading Quiz

Pass around Sign In Sheet

Research/Creation Proposals due Tuesday, November 10th in class (NEXT CLASS!)

Content for the rest of the course – we’re keeping it all; overwhelming support for it all

Distribute handouts

Susan Stryker’s “My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage”

- at the conference, she performed her paper in drag – read chunk on [page 245](#)
→ which is super fabulous because Stryker is a MTF transsexual, so for her to perform in drag is putting back *on* the male self she completed her PhD in (she transitioned *after* getting her doctorate) – dressing *up*, as Marlatt would say, as a previously sexed version of herself (*drag kinging*)
- “My idea was to perform self-consciously a queer gender rather than simply talk about it, thus embodying and enacting the concept simultaneously under discussion” (244-5)
→ “I wanted [to] challeng[e] generic classification with the forms of my words just as my transsexuality challenges the conventions of legitimate gender and my performance in the conference room challenged the boundaries of acceptable academic discourse” (245)

From e-mail to you:

“I always say academia should be a cocktail party with papers, and I’ve never seen a party yet that wasn’t livened up by a good drag queen”

Stryker’s Content in her Article and Performance

“[Stryker] turns this literary meeting [of Victor and his monster] into a metaphor for the critical encounter between a radicalized transgender subjectivity and the normativizing intent of medical science” (244)

-read second chunk on [page 245](#)

→ decidedly and importantly the monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: not the Boris Karloff one in James Whale’s *Frankenstein*:

*“But [Whale’s] is not the monster who speaks to me so potently of my own situation as an openly transsexual being. I emulate instead Mary Shelley’s literary monster, who is quick-witted, agile, strong, and eloquent” (248)

Paris is Burning (Livingston, hooks, and Butler together)

Start with Madonna’s “Vogue” music video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuJQSAiODqI>

Lyrics:

- “Strike a pose / Strike a pose / Vouge, vogue, vogue”

- “You try everything you can to escape / The pain of life that you know”

- When all else fails and you long to be

Something better than you are today

I know a place where you can get away

It’s call a dance floor

*note: NOT a “ballroom”

-It makes no difference if you’re black or white

If you’re a boy or a girl

If the music’s pumping it will give you new life

You’re a superstar, yes, that’s what you are, you know it

*YIKES! Doesn’t it make ALL the difference, though?

- “Magical, life’s a ball / So get up on the dance floor”

- Ladies with an attitude

Fellows that were in the mood

Don’t just stand there, let’s get to it

Strike a pose, there’s nothing to it

*what does she mean “there’s nothing to it”?! There’s literally EVERYTHING to it!

Cultural Appropriation

- adopting or using elements of one culture (often a minority culture) by members of another culture (often a dominant culture) outside of the original culture’s intimate context – and often against the expressive wish of the originating culture
 - it is largely viewed as a negative social phenomenon in that the borrowing culture is (knowingly or unknowingly) oppressing or perpetuating the oppression of the borrowed culture

*think of this:

<http://www.newnownext.com/gus-kenworthy-takes-down-culturally-insensitive-halloween-photo-says-he-was-just-having-fun/11/2015/>

- issues of colonization and assimilation arise, as well as claims to intellectual property rights

- **Halberstam and Livingston:** “Madonna mimics black and latino gay prostitute culture and translates it into a million-dollar stage act; her performances are attempts to originate the forms she has appropriated” (4)
 - 1920’s and 1930’s aesthetics – flappers and *The Great Gatsby* looks
 - high class, very very chic, and clean
 - art history and Venetian pillars – even more timely than 1920s...
 - and that apartment seems to be the very one that Pepper LaBeija doesn’t seem to understand! – i.e. “What are all those rooms for?”
 - also, all the Hollywood icons Madonna lists are white

*this is what voguing means to Madonna and where she places it from her appropriation of it from Harlem during the very time Jennie Livingston was filming *Paris is Burning*
-it’s worth noting, too, that *Paris is Burning* came out AFTER Madonna’s video
 - “The release of Jennie Livingston’s film, *Paris is Burning*, drained Madonna’s voguing extravaganza of its reality effect even while being pulled part way up by her bootstraps” (5)
 - “Not only do New York City’s drag queens give an alternative history to the origin of voguing, they also give an alternative history of gender and its performance” (5)
 - *here’s Willi Ninja’s history of voguing:
 - “[T]he dance takes from the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt. It also takes from some forms of gymnastics. They both strive for perfect lines in the body, awkward positions; but it goes one step further”
- “The name is taken from the magazine *Vogue* because some of the movements of the dance are also the same as the poses inside the magazine. The name is a statement in itself” (37:34 – Willi)
- Madonna was on the cover of *Vogue* in 1989 – **show image: Madonna cover**
 - *in her career, Madonna has been on the cover of *Vogue* 12 times (internationally, not just the US *Vogue*)
- **hooks:** “[E]ven though [Livingston] is openly critical of Madonna, she does not convey how her work differs from Madonna’s appropriation of black experience” (152)
 - **is it fair to equate Madonna’s appropriation with Livingston’s documentary?**
 - **Butler** criticizes hooks for a kind of “reverse colonization” of gay men by reading drag so sharply through the critical lens of radical feminism
 - i.e. that drag is offensive to women because it is an imitation based on ridicule and degradation, that it is rooted in hatred appropriation of women and of “being a woman”
 - Butler takes this idea to the homophobic claim on lesbianism that “a lesbian is one who must have had a bad experience with me, or who has not yet found the right one” (127)
 - “lesbian desire is figured as the fatal effect of derailed heterosexual causality” (127)

*read that chunk on [page 127](#)

- **Butler:** “*Paris Is Burning* (1991) is a film produced and directed by Jennie Livingston about drag balls in New York City, in Harlem, attended by, performed by ‘men’ who are either African-American or Latino” (128)
 - now *this* is a fair and accurate description!
 - *here’s how bell hooks describes it:
 - “Within the world of the black gay drag ball culture [Jennie Livingston] depicts [in her film *Paris is Burning*], the idea of womanness and femininity is totally personified by whiteness” (147), and then on page 149: “this new documentary fil, about black gay men, drag queens, and drag balls”
 - *moreover, hooks is incredibly inaccurate and insensitive to gender identity: page 148 with Dorian Corey – hooks spells her name wrong and uses the wrong pronouns in reference to her – *her* name is Dorian Corey; *his* name is Frederick Legg
- read the chunks on pages 128-9
- **Butler:** “For a performance to work, then, means that a reading is no longer possible, or that a reading, an interpretation, appears to be a kind of transparent seeing, where what appears and what it means coincide” (129)
 - “[T]he impossibility of reading mean that the artifice works, the approximation of realness appears to be achieved, the body performing and the ideal performed appear indistinguishable” (129)

Reading and Shade

- “This is a man’s coat – it buttons on the right side! It buttons on the right side!”
 - *show **Eddie Izzard image**
 - Eddie Izzard is a British stand-up comedian and actor
 - *he started talking about his transvestism in the early 1990s, and for him it is not performance or fetish but a part of his identity
 - “Women wear what they want to wear, and so do I,” he says
 - *he identifies as a straight transvestite, a male lesbian, a lesbian trapped in a man’s body, transgender, and “a complete boy, plus half a girl”
 - ***hooks** on drag and stand-up comedy:
- “I used to wonder if the sexual stereotype of black men as overly sexual, manly, as ‘rapists,’ allowed black males to cross this gendered boundary more easily than white men without having to fear that they would be seen as possibly gay or transvestites” (146)
- “I can see that the black male in drag was also a disempowering image of black masculinity” (146)
- “These televised images of black men in drag were never subversive; they helped sustain sexism and racism” (146)

*To *Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* is from 1995, and it shows Wesley (who we better know as Blade from Marvel Comics!) in drag
-we'll talk about this more next week

- “Shade comes from reading. Reading came first. Reading is the real art form of insult” (33:40 – Dorian)
 - show that clip from *The New Normal!* (S01E12 – “The Goldie Rush”)
 - *starts at 7:10; then restarts at 14:00 for Shania’s reading
- “[If y]ou found a flaw and exaggerated it, [and everyone laughs,] then you’ve got a good read going” (34:23 – Dorian)
- “If it’s happening between the gay world and the straight world, it’s not really a read. It’s more of an insult, a vicious slur fight” (34:32 – Dorian)
- “[W]hen you are all of the same thing, then you have to go to the fine point. In other words, if I’m a black queen and you’re a black queen, we can’t call each other ‘black queens,’ ‘cause we’re both black queens: that’s not a read; that’s just a fact” (34:58 – Dorian)
- “Then reading became a developed form where it became shade. Shade is: ‘I don’t tell you you’re ugly, but I don’t have to tell you because you know you’re ugly.’ And that’s shade” (35:28 – Dorian)
- “Voguing is the same thing as, like, taking two knives and cutting each other up, but through a dance form” (35:55 - Willi)
- “Voguing came from shade because it was a dance that two people did because they didn’t like each other. Instead of fighting, you would dance it out on the dance floor, and whoever did the better moves was throwing the best shade, basically” (36:09 – Willi)
- “[V]oguing is like a safe form of throwing shade” (37:00 – Willi)

So, Butler then read bell hooks to filth!

hooks:

“Too many reviewers and interviewers assume not only that there is no need to raise pressing critical questions about Livingston’s film, but act as though she somehow did this marginalized black gay subculture a favor by bringing their experience to a wider public” (153)

→ I may get hate-mail for saying this, but didn’t she? Look at Venus, for example: she is immortalized here in the film – and now digital medium – of Livingston’s *Paris is Burning* and we know her story, and mourn her loss, *solely because of* Livingston’s film

*I don’t know about the rest of you, but this is SUPER important to me

- read Butler chunk on [page 133](#)

“Since so many of the black gay men in the film express the desire to be big stars, it is easy to place Livingston in the role of benefactor, offering these ‘poor black souls’ a way to realize their dreams” (153)

→ first off, why is “poor black souls” in quotation marks? It is a direct quote or an ironic stab?

→ second, this is a tad unfair to Livingston – the people involved in this project volunteered for, and happily – see 151 where hooks quotes her saying so!

Artifact 16f – Scans of Lecture Notes from “Transgender Visual Culture” (Fall 2015): November 5th
[page 6 of 8]

- third, see above commentary on that quotation
- read Butler chunk on page 133 after the first one

*Interpellation, Discursivity, and Documentary genre as (auto)biography/life writing and ethnography

Butler:

“[A]s a lesbian, [Livingston] apparently maintains some kind of identificatory bond with the gay men in the film” (134)

“The one instance where Livingston’s body might be said to appear allegorically on camera is when Octavia St. Laurent is posing for the camera, as a moving model would for a photographer. We hear a voice tell her that she’s terrific, and it is unclear whether it is a man shooting the film as a proxy for Livingston, or Livingston herself” (135)

“What would it mean to say that Octavia is Jennie Livingston’s kind of girl?” (135)

“If this is the production of the black transsexual for an exoticizing white gaze, is it not also the transsexualization of lesbian desire?” (135)

“[T]he camera itself is empowered as phallic instrument. Moreover, the camera acts as surgical instrument and operation, the vehicle through which the transubstantiation occurs” (135)

→ “Livingston thus becomes the one with the power to turn men into women who, then, depend on the power of her gaze to become and remain women” (135)

hooks:

“Reviewers like Georgia Brown in the *Village Voice* who suggest that Livingston’s whiteness is ‘a fact of nature that didn’t hinder her research’ collude in the denial of the way whiteness informs her perspective and standpoint” (152)

→ i.e. *who* gets to tell *which* stories

“I certainly don’t have the final word on the gay black experience. I’d love for a black director to have made this film” (Livingston qtd. 152)

→ but if this proverbial “black director” was a woman, or was straight, or was a straight woman, or was a lesbian, wouldn’t people still rage? What if this proverbial “[non-white] director” was Latino/-a? And again, straight?

**who* gets to tell *which* stories?!

→ why didn’t/couldn’t’ve one? We got this movie, the look into this culture, why isn’t *that* celebrated?

“like [Livingston] just ‘discovered’ the ‘raw material’ before a black director did” (152)

→ back to Abed!

*“Documentaries are supposed to be objective, to avoid having any effect on the story... And yet we have more effect than anyone. Because we decide to tell it. And we decide how it ends. Will your story be yet another sad one, of yet a man

who just wanted to be happy? Or will your story acknowledge the very nature of stories? And embraces the fact that sharing the sad ones can sometimes make them happy."

- all but two of the persons in the film who survived -- Willi Ninja and Dorian Corey -- hired lawyers to sue Jennie Livingston and try to cash in on the film's success.
- Paris DuPree, sued for \$40 million – even though she is never named on camera and appears for less than three minutes of the movie
 - Paris' ball, called Paris Is Burning, is where the title for the film comes from, and the majority of the footage is almost exclusively featured in it
 - *like all of the others, she had signed a release, and her lawyer dropped the matter

"There's no obligation, in a documentary, to pay your subjects," Ms. Livingston said. "The journalistic ethic says you should not pay them. On the other hand, these people are giving us their lives! How do you put a price on that?"

Artifact 16h – Scans of Lecture Notes from “Transgender Visual Culture” (Fall 2015): November 5th
[page 8 of 8]



Artifact 17a – Scans of Lecture Notes from “Transgender Visual Culture” (Fall 2015): November 10th [page 1 of 6]

University of Waterloo, Department of Fine Arts
Fine Arts 205/6, Transgender Visual Culture, Fall 2015
Tommy Mayberry

Tuesday, November 10th, 2015

Get links and images ready

Research/Creation Proposals due TODAY – collect them

Pass around Sign In Sheet

Hand back Reading Quiz #2s

Distribute handouts

Paris is Burning (finishing up)

Taking up the Reading Quiz:

- some core and key issues:

- *the white, privileged “gaze” vs. others “gazes”
- *Marilyn Monroe vs. Lena Horne and Hollywood/big screen iconicity
- *the class, race, and ethnicity of the *authors*
- *spectacle vs. trauma in viewing *Paris Is Burning*
- *mopping and sex work involved in the costs of passing, not just in the ballrooms but also through surgeries – being trans- and acquiring trans- realness is no cheap feat!
- *real/Real – White America is Real
- *issues and implications of cis- privilege (regardless of race, class, and ethnicity – Pepper LaBeija, of course, pulls the cis- card)

hooks:

“Too many reviewers and interviewers assume not only that there is no need to raise pressing critical questions about Livingston’s film, but act as though she somehow did this marginalized black gay subculture a favor by bringing their experience to a wider public” (153)

→ I may get hate-mail for saying this, but didn’t she? Look at Venus, for example: she is immortalized here in the film – and now digital medium – of Livingston’s *Paris is Burning* and we know her story, and mourn her loss, *solely because of* Livingston’s film

*I don’t know about the rest of you, but this is SUPER important to me

- read Butler chunk on [page 133](#)

“Since so many of the black gay men in the film express the desire to be big stars, it is easy to place Livingston in the role of benefactor, offering these ‘poor black souls’ a way to realize their dreams” (153)

Artifact 17b – Scans of Lecture Notes from “Transgender Visual Culture” (Fall 2015): November 10th [page 2 of 6]

- first off, why is “poor black souls” in quotation marks? It is a direct quote or an ironic stab?
- second, this is a tad unfair to Livingston – the people involved in this project volunteered for, and happily – see 151 where hooks quotes her saying so!
- third, see above commentary on that quotation
- read Butler chunk on **page 133** after the first one
- read the Butler chunks on **pages 128-9**

***What’s the difference between “mopping” and “cultural appropriation”?**

- both of them are theft AND the unauthorized borrowings of one culture displaced into and upon another
- *i.e. the designers aren’t paid when their clothes are stolen, but the garments are worn in the ballroom precisely because of the designers’ cultural influence

Cultural Appropriation

- adopting or using elements of one culture (often a minority culture) by members of another culture (often a dominant culture) outside of the original culture’s intimate context – and often against the expressive wish of the originating culture
 - it is largely viewed as a negative social phenomenon in that the borrowing culture is (knowingly or unknowingly) oppressing or perpetuating the oppression of the borrowed culture
- issues of colonization and assimilation arise, as well as claims to intellectual property rights
- **Butler:** “For a performance to work, then, means that a reading is no longer possible, or that a reading, an interpretation, appears to be a kind of transparent seeing, where what appears and what it means coincide” (129)
 - “[T]he impossibility of reading mean that the artifice works, the approximation of realness appears to be achieved, the body performing and the ideal performed appear indistinguishable” (129)

Reading and Shade

- “This is a man’s coat – it buttons on the right side! It buttons on the right side!”
 - ***show Eddie Izzard image**
 - Eddie Izzard is a British stand-up comedian and actor
 - *he started talking about his transvestism in the early 1990s, and for him it is not performance or fetish but a part of his identity
 - “Women wear what they want to wear, and so do I,” he says
 - *he identifies as a straight transvestite, a male lesbian, a lesbian trapped in a man’s body, transgender, and “a complete boy, plus half a girl”
 - ***hooks** on drag and stand-up comedy:
- “I used to wonder if the sexual stereotype of black men as overly sexual, manly, as ‘rapists,’ allowed black males to cross this gendered boundary more easily than white

- men without having to fear that they would be seen as possibly gay or transvestites” (146)
- “I can see that the black male in drag was also a disempowering image of black masculinity” (146)
 - “These televised images of black men in drag were never subversive; they helped sustain sexism and racism” (146)
 - **To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* is from 1995, and it shows Wesley (who we better know as Blade from Marvel Comics!) in drag
 - we’ll talk about this more next week
 - “Shade comes from reading. Reading came first. Reading is the real art form of insult” (33:40 – Dorian)
 - show that clip from *The New Normal!* (S01E12 – “The Goldie Rush”)
 - *starts at 7:10; then restarts at 14:00 for Shania’s reading
 - “[If y]ou found a flaw and exaggerated it, [and everyone laughs,] then you’ve got a good read going” (34:23 – Dorian)
 - “If it’s happening between the gay world and the straight world, it’s not really a read. It’s more of an insult, a vicious slur fight” (34:32 – Dorian)
 - “[W]hen you are all of the same thing, then you have to go to the fine point. In other words, if I’m a black queen and you’re a black queen, we can’t call each other ‘black queens,’ ’cause we’re both black queens: that’s not a read; that’s just a fact” (34:58 – Dorian)
 - “Then reading became a developed form where it became shade. Shade is: ‘I don’t tell you you’re ugly, but I don’t have to tell you because you know you’re ugly.’ And that’s shade” (35:28 – Dorian)
 - “Voguing is the same thing as, like, taking two knives and cutting each other up, but through a dance form” (35:55 - Willi)
 - “Voguing came from shade because it was a dance that two people did because they didn’t like each other. Instead of fighting, you would dance it out on the dance floor, and whoever did the better moves was throwing the best shade, basically” (36:09 – Willi)
 - *“[V]oguing is like a safe form of throwing shade” (37:00 – Willi)
- *we’ll move into discussion of *To Wong Foo* next, and then into discussions of *I Am Divine*:
-*To Wong Foo* follows chronologically after *Paris Is Burning* and is, in my humble opinion, a seemingly direct response to *Paris Is Burning* itself
-*I Am Divine*, while a very recent and contemporary documentary, showcases and explores Divine’s life which presents an earlier and alternative vision and history of drag and gender identity in America – Divine was active from the mid-60s to his untimely death in 1988 – right smack in the middle of Jennie Livingston shooting *Paris Is Burning*

Beeban Kidron’s *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995)

- Beeban Kidron: female English film director (straight, presumably cis-)
- before *To Wong Foo*, she made a documentary called *Hookers, Hustlers, Pimps and Their Johns* in 1993 that focused on the sex industry in New York
- this movie is often cited as “politically responsible” – what do we think that means?
 - *it is a comedy and more of a cult classic than a staple of mainstream cinema – kind of like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*

*connections to *Paris is Burning*:

- the racial and ethnic identities of the three main drag queens – Caucasian, African-American, and Latina
- the world of the balls in New York City as they evolved at the end of *PiB* to be large spectacles
- drag families – we see Vida as Noxie’s drag mom, and then them both as Chi Chi’s, so that makes Vida in essence Chi Chi’s drag grandmother
- biological families:
 - “I’m not rich: my parents are” (20:12)
 - “We were so poor, my parents got married for the rice. So tell me: why did you give this up?” (20:21)
 - “Vida gave all this up to be Vida” (20:25)
 - she speaks about herself in the third person – she doesn’t say *I* gave this all up to be *me*...
 - “Well next time you give something this that up, you call me: I’ll take it” (20:31)
- Chi Chi Rodriguez is Venus Xtravaganza:
 - sex work, getting into strangers’ trucks,
- Lena Horne!
 - *that scene where Noxie talks black Hollywood actresses with Miss Clara - here we see a black drag queen from New York City looking up to black icons from the movies! And a discussion of Lena Horne! Dorian Corey, eat your heart out.
 - “Wanna try Lena Horne?” (57:52)
 - “You’re not gonna start walkin’ across water and, like, makin’ the blind see and stuff like that, are you?” (58:08)
 - *Noxie makes allusions to Jesus because of how amazing (and important) it is that a white woman knows and understands the legacy of Lena Horne and “blacktresses” of the classic Hollywood era in the 40s and 50s
- the domestic abuse in *To Wong Foo* realizes Pepper LaBeija’s warning about white women not being all that better off than black women...or even black gay men...because “they get hit, too,” as Pepper says, and we see this happen to Carol-Ann
- “Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of this year’s Drag Queen of America Contest: Miss Chi Chi Rodriguez” (1:42:48)
 - *Chi Chi wins the Drag Queen of America Contest!!! We get to see Venus here, if we go with that metaphor and foil

*the portrayal of drag and trans- identities:

-the most notorious, and potentially damaging quotation:

“When a straight man puts on dress and gets his sexual kicks, he is a transvestite. When a man is a woman trapped in a man’s body and has a little operation, he is a transsexual. When a gay man has waaay to much fashion sense for one gender he is [*snap!]* a drag queen” (21:44)

→ “And when a tired little Latin boy puts on a dress, he is simply a boy in a dress” (22:05)

*SHADE! And the glasses of it all, too!

-“There are steps to becoming a queen...four! There are four steps to becoming a drag queen” (23:40)

1. “Let good thoughts be your sword and shield” (24:25)
2. “Ignore Adversity” (27:25)
3. “Abide by the rules of love” (1:21:12)
4. “Larger than life. It’s just the right size” (1:43:06)

-living their lives in drag:

→ “Oh, what in gay hell? This could prove problematic: the first name on my driver’s license is Eugene” (28:56)

→ there’s that moment in *I Am Divine* when they all – especially John Waters – talk about “talking that shit off” (the drag attire) because Divine never wanted to be a woman – and how that differs so greatly from the portrayal of drag in *To Wong Foo*

→ whenever Noxie and Vida encounter other people, like Bobby Ray in the truck with Chi Chi the first time, they always look away and cover their faces slightly, or when the light turns on the in the room and Vida says for Chi Chi to turn it off → the chandelier snatches Vida’s wig (at 1:15:50), and it’s the only other time in the whole movie (save for the very beginning) when we see any of them out of drag or resembling masculine individuals – (although, when Dollard grabs Vida’s crotch, Vida does respond in a low, deep, masculine voice saying “Get your hand off my dick, buddy!” so that’s another slippage

*and it’s interesting that we never see Noxeema or Chi Chi fully out of drag – we see Noxeema undressed but already with make-up on at the very beginning, and then Chi Chi walking down the street getting harassed but with no wig on – but never fully out of drag, as we see Patrick Swayze completely naked getting out of the shower – recall: RuPaul and the shower here – at the very beginning

-part-time drag versus full-time job, as RuPaul says

→ “I love you, Miss Vida Bohemme” / “I’ve waited my whole life to hear those words said to that name. And I’m very, very, very happy that you’re the one to say them” (1:40:30)

-Blake’s Human Form Divine:

→ “Vida! I don’t think of you as a man, and I don’t think of you as a woman. I think of you as an angel” (1:41:41)

*the treatment of “our sort of person,” as Noxie says (16:20)

–“I don’t know if you’ve seen this America place, but it does *not* respond kindly to our sort of persons” (16:20)

Artifact 17f – Scans of Lecture Notes from “Transgender Visual Culture” (Fall 2015): November 10th [page 6 of 6]

- “Get out of here, freak!” / “¡Ay, policia! Help!” (4:08)
 - Chi Chi gets stuff thrown at her at the beginning – she is walking down to the ball without her wig on
- “Does everything have to be a joke with you? This is not a masquerade! This is real life” (23:37)
 - sure, things may be a joke to Chi Chi, but she is fearless in drag – walking around without her wig on at the beginning, going into the hotel when they warn her not to, etc.
 - *“Fine, let’s throw you two a pity party, okay? Two ‘fraidy old ladies” (25:40)
 - is she brave because she passes, because she’s young and maybe therefore innocent of culture?
- the Budget Hosts hotel:
 - “People are gonna be cruel to us. It could get violent, Vida you know: we have been there before” (25:35)
 - *“The child is gonna get herself killed” (25:47)
 - “Welcome?” (26:25)
- homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia:
 - Sheriff Dollard:
 - “You know, we don’t go for that around these parts: white girls riding around with niggers and spicks” (30:20)
 - “They were not girls. They were boys and there were three of them, and one of them was black” (47:54)
 - “You sons of bitches, don’t laugh at me! I was just attacked by perverts” (48:17)
 - “Places for homos: (1) Flower Shops (2) Ballet Schools (3) Flight Attendants Lounges (4) Restaurants for Brunch (5) Antique Stores” (59:01)
 - *latent homosexuality and homosexual panic:
 - (“Men...acting like women. Men wanting to be with one another. Men touching each other. Their stubbly chins rubbing up against one another. Touching each other. Manly hands touching swirls of chest hair. Occasional whiff of a rugged after-shave. Their low baritone voices sighing, grunting. They hold one another in manly, masculine arms. Hold one another. Tight” (1:26:22)
 - what a sexy soliloguy! Latent homosexuality and homosexual panic, like in *Frankenstein!*

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Appendix A

Citations of *RuPaul's Drag Race* episodes for creating Prologue

In generating the opening script for the Prologue to my dissertation, I pulled from Aja Martinez's counterstory genre of (mostly) narrated dialogue to put into a new sequence several direct quotations of RuPaul on the "*Drag Race* tradition," as she says, in which at the Final Four of each season since season 7 (2015), she holds up a photo of each queen's younger self and "ask[s] each of [them] to take a moment to look back and reflect" ("Gettin' Lucky!"; "American"). Since the Prologue opens my dissertation and comes before any of my own setting up, theorizing, and unpacking has been done for my arguments, I chose not to format this imaginary opening editorially with brackets, endnotes, footnotes, etc. but to present it seamlessly as a dreamlike sequence to set up and frame my dissertation narratively and creatively.

Here, then, to cite-my-sources and avoid plagiarism, I include the full quotations with proper citation that I dialogically narrated together in my Prologue. From Season 7: "Kennedy, you were born naked, but you've grown to become a *fierce* drag queen. Here's a photo of you as a *little bitty* boy. Now if you could time travel, what would Kennedy Davenport have to say to little Ruben?" ("And the Rest is Drag" – emphasizes original); from Season 8: "Ladies, here at *RuPaul's Drag Race*, we have the luxury of celebrating who we are, but we must never forget that even today, there are little boys and girls who feel they don't fit in" and "So, Bob The Drag Queen. This is you at four years old" ("The Realness – emphasis original); from Season 9: "This show is like a GPS system for many of our young viewers as they try to navigate their lives" ("Category Is"); from Season 10: "Welcome back, ladies. I gotta say, you know, whenever we do the final four, I always get very emotional because I know, I know the struggle. I know what you all had to do to get here, not just in this competition, but in your lives. You should be very, very proud of yourselves. You really should" ("American"); and from Season 13: "Queens, to share your wisdom and experience, especially with

our young viewers around the world, it's become a *Drag Race* tradition for me to ask you this question" (Gettin' Lucky!").

RuPaul's Drag Race: Canada, of course, is also an imaginary spin-off from the mothership (since the version in Canada is called *Canada's Drag Race*), but in 2012, I auditioned for the mothership and wanted to re-member that as part of my overall framing with my academic drag and artifacts. Our *Canada's Drag Race* host and mothership alumna Brooke Lynn Hytes (season 11) joins RuPaul and Michelle Visage (staples of the named franchise spin-offs) as resident Judges for my imagined named Canada version on which I am a Top Four Queen, and they become my Dissertation Committee when I wake back up. My final two Examiners at and after my Defense will become Extra Special Guest Judges, as they should.