

THESIS

TRANSGRESSIONS

Submitted by

zero

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Masters Committee:

Advisor: Naitnaphit Limlamai

Sue Doe
Kara Coffino

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ABSTRACT

TRANSGRESSIONS

Transgressions aims to use poetry to explore the intersections of transgender and transitional identities in education spaces through the lenses of queer theory, literature studies, and autoethnography. I address the lack of representation of transgender voices and experiences in historical literature and poetry (the classroom content) in addition to my experiences in the classroom itself. The objective of this study is to use evocative methods that intentionally resist hegemonic expectations to highlight the importance of trans*poetry as an essential tool for self-reflection and identity formation and to point toward new methods for teaching writing that reflect the lived experiences of learners in the margins.

The methods used in this study are autoethnographic and involve self-reflexive analysis of my own post-secondary academic experiences and literature-based analysis of my own poetry (written throughout my academic career). My study reveals insights into the nuanced experiences of the learner and educator in post-academic spaces, and the results of my research indicate that trans*poetry has the power to challenge dominant narratives; the power to ground, historicize, and contextualize self-narratives; and the power to create space for marginalized voices to be heard in and out of the classroom.

In conclusion, *Transgressions* offers a new perspective and framework to study identity and history in post-secondary education spaces. It highlights the importance of experience and creative expression as sources of knowledge and understanding and proposes a new historiography that centers the voices and experiences of transgender people. While this study has its limitations, it is hoped that it will inspire further research into the intersections of poetic expression and self-identity in post-secondary classrooms.

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“Give your approval to all you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
has not encountered he has not destroyed.”¹

¹ Berry, “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front,” lines 20-22

INTRODUCTION

distorted strength, explosive growth

a working flower discourages

scarcity of apologies²

Teaching and learning occupy an unimaginably vast expanse in: public imaginations, discourse communities, politics and policies, and the development and implementation of sociopolitical agendas in the United States, actively constructing and constructed by malleable intellectual and cultural sites of advocacy and change.

In response to changing hegemonic structures

— religious, political, cultural, economic,,, —

Western histories and philosophies of schooling were once a masculine endeavor of scholarship and sophistication, a sign of intelligence and wisdom, privileged for the privileged. However, this context mostly exists before the history of schooling in Abya Yala.³

The feminization of teaching in Abya Yala through the late 19th and early 20th centuries cemented our current understandings and notions of education. Women began to enter the classroom, and education shifted toward a value system that privileged morality over intellect and characterized teachers as motherly caretakers; administrators benefited from the shift, too, as women were cheaper to employ.⁴ The schoolmarm or motherteacher ideal, as defined by historian Redding Sugg, is “the notion that teaching and mothering were much the same job, done in different settings”⁵ and came about as the profession re/oriented to “a job that had become socially coded as demure and traditionally feminine.”⁶ What began as a very exclusive and prestigious institution was undermined by “the idea of teachers as non-college-educated,

² written Spring 2019

³ I use the name Abya Yala instead of “America” or “the Americas” to recognize and give authority to the native and indigenous stewards of these lands and encourage (my own and my readers’) delinking from colonial structures through linguistic reconceptualizations. For a more nuanced definition of Abya Yala, its origins in South America, and the surrounding critical applications and indigenous scholarship, see Mignolo and Walsh’s *On Decoloniality*.

⁴ Goldstein, *The teacher wars: a history of america’s most embattled profession*, pg 28

⁵ Goldstein, *The teacher wars*, pg 18

⁶ Goldstein, *The teacher wars*, pg 39

unmarried, low-paid mother substitutes,"⁷ which served to "lower" the standards of the profession, continue to decrease pay, and drive away those who were qualified.



Figure 1. Dufresne, *The history of institutional racism in U.S. public schools*, pg 6. Paintings with text describing early education in the United States.

During this transformational time, “education reformers tended to see schools as secular churches: community centers where any child could be improved – even religiously ‘saved’ – through education. ... Teaching was promoted as the female equivalent of the ministry: a professional whose prestige would be rooted not in worldly rewards, such as money or political influence, but in the personal satisfaction that came from serving others.”⁸ Virtue and motherhood came to define the educational sphere in reaction and in preparation for the presence of feminine⁹ teachers. This served as a justification for the criminal underpayment of female teachers, too. In fact, early women education scholars such as Catharine Beecher noticed that “it seemed that teaching was the one profession in which a woman could gain ‘influence, respectability, and independence’ without venturing outside ‘the prescribed boundaries of

⁷ Goldstein, *The teacher wars*, pg 40

⁸ Goldstein, *The teacher wars*, pgs 30-31

⁹ I use the words feminine and masculine as descriptors rather than "man" and "woman" as discrete categories.

feminine modesty” that prevented her from pursuing a career.¹⁰ Thus, femininity co-constructed our understanding of education, and education, in turn, co-defined femininity.

The purpose of understanding the history of education is that it elucidates the ways in which students and teachers alike have worked to subvert the systems and institutions.

the People of the West

have worshiped masculine & feminine gods.

the dominance of these gods

affects the very archetypes that govern our understandings

regardless of belief or even the existence of these deities,

these shifting archetypes

have real world effects.¹¹

A critical understanding of the history of educational practices in Abya Yala must lead to a questioning of today’s teaching methods and approaches: the question for us now, then, “is not, Shall our children be educated? but, To what end shall they be educated, and by what means? What is the kind of education needed, and how shall it be furnished?”¹² By whom?

One of the new ways in which I have begun to understand educational framework is through a neurodiversity framework, which recognizes the diverse abilities of students. Nick Walker, a foremost theorist in neuroqueer studies, asks us to imagine a neurocosmopolitan¹³ future in which neurodiversity has been fully embraced; the cultural conception and full realization of neuro-based activity oriented toward a model of biological diversity rather than one of dis/ability. Under this framework, she then asks us to consider:

“what sort of sort of attitude or approach towards neurodiversity would one find in individuals who have fully comprehended, embraced, and integrated the neurodiversity paradigm?”

¹⁰ Beecher as quoted by Goldstein in *The teacher wars*, pg 18

¹¹ ZHEANI, “God is dead, long live God.” text formatting by me

¹² Goldstein, *The teacher wars*, pg 32

¹³ Nick Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, pgs 72-79

“what sort of sort of attitude or approach towards neurodiversity might one find in a society that has fully embraced and been transformed by the neurodiversity paradigm?”¹⁴

Nick Walker imagines for us and invites us into a world in which functional brain activity is spectrally understood and the existing natural diversity continues to exist but as the norm. Walker’s fundamental shift in orientation toward dis/ability and neurodiversity required for neurocosmopolitanism results in a larger fundamental shift in societal attitudes and approaches. As we continue to reframe and reshape our thinking, we must make note of the new questions we are able to ask through these new modes of thinking and understanding our world.

rethink our basic concepts and approaches

reinterpret our data

rephrase our questions

recalibrate our pragmatics

redefine our terminology

requires us to

a radical shift in perspective

These neurocosmopolitan attitudes and approaches have far-reaching consequences for us as educators as they recognize the – cultural, linguistic, neurological,,,, – repertoires and skills of our students.

Bomer takes a similar attitude toward recognizing and reconceptualizing student success in the Foreword to *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives: bridging the everyday/academic divide*.¹⁵ In the same spirit as Walker, Bomer entreats us to imagine “how might we teach ... if we had evidence that our ... [students] are actually already competent, well on their way to all the underlying practices of thinking, understanding, and crafting that make up

¹⁴ Nick Walker, *Neuroqueer Heresies*, pg 73

¹⁵ Bomer, “Foreword” to *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives: bridging the everyday/academic divide*

our hopes for their achievement, in and out of school?”¹⁶ Of course, this also requires definitions for the processes and products we want for and from our students and how we will “evaluate” their successes.

Bomer tells us that it is these questions that “giv[e] us eyes for what we, as ... teachers, might learn from what our students are already doing and ... infor[m] our imagination about how we might support them in their expanding capacities.”¹⁷ I intend this study into my own educational experiences and practices to reflect deeply on these questions and use a combination of story, analysis, and hope to begin imagining such practices for myself and my students. I will offer insights into my own practices, offering both stories and critiques of where I have fallen short and areas in which I have found success, as all are equally valid learning experiences. I ultimately find that we must stop imagining how we might teach and start practicing what we believe.

What if we tried teaching in ways in which we believe?

My self-reflexive ruminations throughout this piece reflect a history of and present teaching experience/s, from the secondary to the post-secondary, the public to the collegiate, the “High-school English” to the “College Composition;” beginning in an undergraduate program in the central north of Abya Yala studying,

“English,” “Education,” “Theatre,” and “Spanish”

through a graduate program at the same university for “English Education”

as a “Teaching Assistant”

and “Graduate Teaching Assistantship” awardee;

where seeds of division arise between “student” and “teacher” as one becomes the other.

My content is English, but I primarily study teaching and learning and have been motivated by my own experiences to focus my efforts on neurodiverse, dis/abled, multilingual, and queer learners in various contexts and contents (recognizing the additional intersectional identities of these learners, educators, and myself, too).

¹⁶ Bomer, “Foreword” to *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives*, viii

¹⁷ Bomer, “Foreword” to *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives*, viii

guiding questions

How do our names, positions, and identities inform, engender, and reproduce hegemonic literacies and practices?

(in post-secondary education, in teaching, in learning)

What does it mean to move between positions and identities?

What are my personal and professional implications?

How do trans*¹⁸ authors and poets co-opt and queer hegemonic literacies for political, evocative, and activist aims?

research question/s

How do I reimagine and queer hegemonic literacies and practices for [my] political, evocative, activist aims?

rationale

Of course, these questions remain vast and could provide a life of work. I have weaponized my own queer literacy practices to resist and rebel against hegemonic and colonial practices, and I am thus curious to study models and mentors of how others, too, have rebelled and resisted through their own literacies / literacy practices.

My initial research questions centered on ways in which hegemonic powers and dominant discourses co-opt trans* literacies for their own aims of oppression, but I found this counterproductive to my intentions. By reorienting my framework for a “research question” – to one explicitly recentering the agency in the hands of myself and my community – I could engage in research that validated the discourse communities and literacy practices under investigation – again, mine – rather than seeking methods of their weaponization.

My guiding questions thus serve as reminders of my explicit orientations toward disrupting and queering hegemonic and dominant practices, my explicit orientations to questioning names of authority and status such as author and poet, and the necessary implications I must consider for

¹⁸ I use trans* as an umbrella to include all non/binary transgender individuals and the wealth of diversity within our community.

myself in the field and between identities. I explore these questions to discover how my community and I use our literacies for political, evocative, and activist aims;

I must validate my literacy practices by examining my larger community at work producing change.

I want to reach political and activist aims with my work, which requires more than autoethnographic engagement. Returning again to the idea of story, I must too use methods of counter/story or counter/narrative.

In her book, *Counterstory*, Aja Martinez compiles an incredibly nuanced definition of the term and offers rich options for engagement with critical counterstorying. Martinez begins her work by grounding it in Critical Race Theory (CRT), where counterstorying has its origins. She makes explicit the connections between the central tenets of CRT and the work of writing against hegemonic narratives.¹⁹ For my aims, Martinez's description is useful because it intentionally "advances counterstory by establishing a humanities-informed intervention in the field for teaching with and composing/publishing counterstory."²⁰ Important to note, too, is how Martinez defines what is not counterstory: "if you write/think it like the white academy, you will have no *counter* at all."²¹

As I have continued writing this piece, I have had to grapple with what I think a "thesis" must look like and how I believe it must be completed alongside my true intentions of exploring and validating the trans* and neurodiverse learner experience. Martinez tells a story about a time "a student once asked if there is ever a point at which we (minoritized folk) will get to stop justifying the methodological choice of telling our stories." I have come to this same question, wondering how my writing might change if I spent less time justifying the writing I was doing and the way I am doing it. "Some stories are elevated to the status of theory, scholarship, and literature,"²² and thus enter the cultural domain of normalcy.

¹⁹ For a more complete discussion of the history of counterstory and CRT methods, see *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory* by Martinez.

²⁰ Martinez, *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*, 3

²¹ Kynard, "Foreword," *Counterstory*, viii

²² Martinez, *Counterstory*, pg 1

Martinez also notes the power in holding and telling stories, as well as what they reveal about the author. She says, “the keepers and tellers of either majoritarian (stock) stories or counterstories reveal the intersections of social location of the storyteller as dominant or nondominant, and these locations are always racialized, classed, and gendered.”²³ The position from which a story is told reveals much about the intersectional identities of the teller, whether they are explicitly acknowledged or not.

summary

This [manifesto/collection/thesis] is thus an exploration of my liminal and transitional identities within specific post-secondary education spaces as a learner and educator over time (Aug 2018 - present). Through the research questions above, we will traverse queer and liminal theories with/in educational research and literary and data analysis of my own poetic and academic work to take a microscope to the experience/s of queer, trans*, multilingual, and neurodiverse learners and educators within current Western post-secondary educational contexts so that others may share in my experiences, learn with and alongside me, and find community and shared experience in a world that characterizes us as “other.” Through this application of autoethnography, theory, data, and self-reflexive critique, I am to embark on a counter/story to hegemonic literacies as a guide for others and with the intention of revealing the insights I have gained through personal experience.

The first section, METHOD/OLOGY, discusses autoethnographic methodologies and fundamental premises of self-reflexivity and critique. I introduce Heewon Chang’s framework for autoethnography, which establishes culture as a group-oriented concept by which the self is always connected with others.²⁴ Culture, too, must be understood as interrelational and co-constructed, and autoethnography as a tool requires an in-depth cultural analysis to provide cultural understanding through the experiences of an individual. Guided by my research question, I explore autoethnographic orientations with an explicit lens and focus on evocative methods and political aims in an attempt to inform myself and my continued work.

²³ Martinez, *Counterstory*, pg 23

²⁴ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*

My autoethnographic methods are situated in writing – poetic and prosaic. Self-narrative serves as the praxis by which trans* authors describe, contextualize, and evaluate the self through writing. I argue that the reading and writing of self-narrative provides a window through which "self" and "others" can be examined and thus understood. By bringing attention to the contextualization within the communal other, autoethnography can reveal greater truths and inspire activism.

Finally, I discuss the significance of trans* poetry in foregrounding the body, its uses and constraints, its uneven legibility, and its relations to racial and colonial modes of categorization. I examine the ways in which the trans* experience is necessarily a political one and how this impacts the trans* poet as they/we depict ourselves for the consumption of others. Poetry is an apt vehicle for queer expression and activism as it transcends space and time with enraptured intensity and radical potential.

In essence, METHOD/OLOGY emphasizes the importance of understanding the self with/in culture and the significance of self-narrative and poetry as tools for understanding and communicating life's horrors and delights and expressing our otherwise illegible experiences. It is through these autoethnographic techniques that I share personal experience/s with an explicit intention toward critical reflexivity that elucidates more extensive social and cultural insights as well as personal insights alongside a story that represents a marginalized yet shared movement through the world.

The following section, SITUATION, explores the complex positionality of myself as an educator in the context of institutionalized education. I emphasize the need for a person-first approach in teaching and acknowledge the privilege and power that whiteness carries within the Colonial Matrix of Power. Furthermore, I discuss the queer experience of transitional spaces and identities and how it affects my interactions with others.

I also highlight the importance of considering intersectionality when evaluating individual identities to situate the analysis within the larger framework of socioeconomic and political institutions. I stress the need for constant reflection and intentional commitment to gaining critical consciousness, which can help transcend the polarizing binaries that seek to engender

and enforce power upon us. Additionally, I self-reflexively examine my own neurodivergent and disabled identities and how they inform my personal and professional self-configuration, pedagogy, and philosophy.

Overall, SITUATION accentuates the significance of recognizing the human dimensions of the educator and considering their complex identity within the larger context of institutionalized education. It encourages reflection and critical consciousness in order to transcend polarizing binaries and engender a person-first approach to teaching.

The third section, GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP, examines the nuances and inequalities that exist within academia, specifically within post-secondary academic spaces and funding (here, graduate teaching assistantships). I use vignettes to bring myself to the surface to make visible and critique my experiences as a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) awardee. This section also includes a discussion of different English-related programs offered at the university in which my experiences took place and my personal experience/s with teaching and curriculum design throughout my undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

My aim is to underscore the importance of acknowledging and addressing systemic inequalities within academia and the need for more inclusive and equitable teaching practices. I specifically emphasize the responsibility of educators to disrupt racism and hegemonic practices to promote critical dialogue in the classroom through the portrayal and critique of such experiences. This section aims toward readers that too might critique and reflect upon their own academic experiences and methods to better understand their own teaching practices and obligations.

The fourth and fifth sections, ACCUMULATION and TRANS*POETICS, respectively, are organized around data analysis of my own poetic works from throughout my academic career. Both poems attempt to explore and express the otherwise unknowable experience of the (transgender) self, and the included analysis provides rich critiques of poetic forms and queer theories that inform my work.

In the poem "accumulation," I engage with the natural elements of the earth, hydrological processes, and the atmosphere to dislocate and alienate the human reader. The poem also employs scalar distortion, a facet of literature engaged with deep time, through a frenzied

reading back and forth across the page. Finally, the poem explores the concept of intimacy, which is characterized as a form of transactional knowledge in traffic between entities and is most acutely represented through the physical aesthetics of the earth and the intimate exchanges between earth systems. Through these various techniques, the poem challenges the reader to see themselves as part of a larger system and invites them to experience the world in a new and dislocating way.

TRANS*POETICS investigates the intersectionality of language, queerness, and historiography through my own personal experience as a trans* poet. I reflect on how trans* poetry can translate across borders and languages and how it can resist hegemonic histories by privileging the transitional and transactional ways of knowing, thinking, and being awarded to queer and trans* people. I make use of my own personal "transpoetic historiography" that dislocates itself from the body to explore the unconscious and disregards legibility for the sake of thick authenticity. I constructed the language for the included poetic works from Old English, constructing a speculative "English" that would be unfamiliar to a modern reader in its orthography and diction, yet familiar in poetic genre and authority (note: a complete dictionary to aid the reader in decoding these works is included in the appendices). Through this probing of poetics, I conclude that poetry's rich compressions of meaning, space, and time make it the ideal vehicle for transpoetics, for ruminating on how language dislocates and situates us in time and allows for co-constructions of knowledge.

The sixth chapter, AUTHORITY, explores constructions of authorial identity and "poet" and the connections between trans*poetic work and personal, evocative autoethnographic methods, highlighting the way in which trans* poets have developed unique methods of expression that are reflective of their/our lived experiences. By embracing queerness as an identity and using it to resist oppressive structures, trans* poets create space for them/ourselves and others to exist outside of the dominant culture. However, I also ruminate on the potential dangers of sensationalization and fetishization instrumentalizing trans writing for profit and consumption. I warn against centering the oppression of trans* literacies rather than the subversion of the hegemonic.

AUTHORITY also stresses the importance of community in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, especially among marginalized communities. I illustrate the need to build bridges between in- and out-of-school literacies in newly productive ways, and how digital communication has radically shifted the landscape of education through rich opportunities for self-education; the necessary presence of community remains unchanged.

Ultimately, this sixth section emphasizes the power and value of community and communal literacy practices in subverting hegemonic structures. I encourage the queer distribution, maintenance, and invention of "literate" practices that allow for the distribution, maintenance, and invention of community and culture. I acknowledge the need for storytelling and the telling and distribution of pain to evoke change. I also articulate the importance of embracing queer modes of being and thinking as a fully-realized exploration of queer as a mode of being and thinking.

Finally, the CONCLUSION discusses my personal experiences as a learner and educator and how my unique identities relate to my educational spaces. I describe the autoethnographic methods used to analyze my positionality in institutionalized education and offer insights and critiques of my lived experiences. I also highlight the importance of inclusive practices in the classroom that honor students' linguistic repertoires and help them reach their communicative potentials. I also critiqued the systemic inequalities in post-secondary education and encouraged intentional actions toward equitable teaching practices.

Throughout each section of the work, I offer analysis through poetic constructions in addition to a series of poems that serve as autoethnographic data points. Some poems appear within the text as quotations or self-constructed poetry adapted from source language and using poetic constructions to elucidate meaning. These poems cannot be separated from the work, nor can the work be separated from them.²⁵ Two additional poems/series are included as stand-out data points in which I explore my own identity construction using poetic genres throughout my post-secondary academic career.

²⁵ see also the Appendix for a complete list of the poems featured, when they were written and on which page they appear

In short, I offer my following counter-narrative²⁶ as a personal, uninhibited exploration of identity and sociocultural and political tensions within [my experiences of] post-secondary educational and academic spaces.

I will provide a rich analysis and critique of Western post-secondary pedagogy, institutional power structures, and the lived experiences of neurodiverse learners, educators, and those whose identities must invariably include all.

²⁶ Adsit & Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities keywords for creative writers*, pgs 73-79; see page six for a further exploration of this term and how I am using it

CHAPTER ONE: METHOD/OLOGY

opine authentically

require exposed

unbuttoned

and transformed compositions²⁷

“We think in stories.”²⁸

We communicate in stories, too. And some of the stories we tell ourselves are “grand narratives” or “master narratives;” those stories that tell us who we ought to be or how we ought to live, like the American Dream or Manifest Destiny.²⁹ Adsit and Byrd warn us about the ways in which such narratives are already upholding and reinventing colonialism through their retelling. It is through these stories that one culture – one way of life, one way of knowing – becomes naturalized. Of course, there must be opposition to this natural state: the other; there is what “makes sense” and what is “nonsense.”³⁰ In the interest of decolonizing my thinking, I also want to avoid false dichotomies or binary thinking. Thus, I must recognize non/sense for what it is: a false dichotomy that limits my thinking to a spectrum that fails to account for the limitless possibilities of meaning-making co-constructed between author and audience.

To choose to tell a different story is the easiest way around these master narratives. Writers must first engage in “effortful processing,” effortful because the writer must pay special mind to the roles of each character and how they represent or resist dominant modes of categorization such as stereotypes. The writer – and thus reader – are then exposed to an opening of possibilities through critical reading and writing of nuanced, complex character development.³¹

My work “rejects notions of “neutral” research or “objective” research and exposes research that silences and distorts epistemologies of people of color ... [my work] recognizes that experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racism that is often well disguised in the rhetoric of normalized structural values and practices... [my work] functions

²⁷ written Spring of 2019

²⁸ Adsit & Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*, pg 73

²⁹ Adsit & Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*, pg 73

³⁰ Adsit & Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*, pg 74

³¹ Johnson as cited in Adsit & Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*, pgs 76–77

through methods that empower the minoritized through the formation of stories that disrupt the erasures embedded in standardized majoritarian methodologies”³²

Autoethnography is, etymologically speaking, the study of

the self – auto

within culture – ethno

through writing – graphy.

It is “an intertwining of science, spirit, and story,”³³ and it is through this intertwining that meaning is co/constructed, and through this explicit intertwining of nontraditional scientific methods and storytelling that one can speak into and against dominant narratives.

Despite its “narrow” focus on the experience/s of an individual, autoethnography as a method must also rely on fundamental premises and theoretical lenses. Heewon Chang provides us with a robust framework by which we might best understand the autoethnographic endeavor in her book *Autoethnography as Method*, which serves as a foundational text in the field of self-study.³⁴

Chang begins by establishing a definition of culture: “a group-oriented concept by which self is always connected with others.”³⁵ Culture, in the context of autoethnography, must provide the larger contextualization by which to study and critique the self. Culture must thus be understood as interrelational and co-constructed. Culture as a group-oriented study also establishes an intentionally situated and contextualized culture as it exists within, among, and between. Yet, we as individuals must nonetheless serve as “individual units;” we are inter/active agents of culture;³⁶ able to “create, transmit, transform, and ... discard certain cultural traits”³⁷ as we see fit, as they fit us.

it's just myself. me. alone. not alone.

in community, in culture.

³² Martinez, *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*, pg 3

³³ Wall Kimerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, viii

³⁴ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*

³⁵ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, pg 13

³⁶ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, pg 15

³⁷ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, pg 20

Next, Chang defines the written aspects of autoethnography, establishing description via self-narrative as the praxis by which authors describe, contextualize, and evaluate the self through and within writing. She contends that this applies to the reader and author alike, as “the reading and writing of self narrative provides a window through which self and others can be examined and understood.”³⁸ Chang seems to be providing the reciprocal echo for Rudine Sims Bishop’s theory of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors for readers;³⁹ for each window that we gaze through, one must be opened by the author. The author’s opening of the window onto self via self-narrative invites understanding, as does the examination of self with/in the context of individual others and culture. Chang focuses on the author and the specific implications for autoethnography, arguing mutual understanding through self-disclosure, analysis, and reflection is fundamental to autoethnographic orientations. She specifies, however, that an in-depth cultural analysis is required for cultural understanding. In essence, we must analyze most deeply what we hope to illuminate most brightly.

Finally, Chang leads us to these conclusions:

“autoethnography is an excellent instructional tool to help not only social scientists but also practitioners—such as teachers, medical personnel, counselors, and human services workers—gain profound understanding of self and others and function more effectively with others from diverse cultural backgrounds.”⁴⁰

In explicitly highlighting the value for teachers, Chang has forced me to consider the ways in which I might engage autoethnographically to gain insights into my own teaching practices by analyzing and critiquing myself in teaching and learning situations..

Chang ultimately leaves us understanding autoethnography as a deliberately self-reflexive practice that intentionally “demonstrate[s] an author’s explicit intention of bringing self to the surface as an object of description, analysis, and/or interpretation.”⁴¹ I thus bring myself to the

³⁸ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, pg 13

³⁹ Sims Bishop, “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors”

⁴⁰ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, pg 13

⁴¹ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, pg 35

surface of my work and offer self-reflection and critique contextualized within the self and within the cultural context.

In her book exploring literacy practices of black folk in the Antebellum South, Logan studied the various types of communal and intra- and interracial rhetorical education and intellectual exchange in nineteenth-century Black America sheds light on the prevalence of communal literacy practices among marginalized communities.⁴² Namely, that communities will always find a way to distribute, maintain, and invent “literate” practices that allow for the distribution, maintenance, and invention of community, culture, and knowledge.

Additionally, the digital mediation of community, communication, and culture also radically shapes the sociopolitical landscape, discourses, and discourse communities.⁴³ Logan's understanding of “the communal nature of ... reading, writing, listening, and speaking practices” helps us to comprehend that “self-education ... was not an entirely isolated endeavor.”⁴⁴ Self-education here refers to an instinctual curiosity, a drive toward self-knowledge and worldly knowledge. Logan investigates a community in which listening and speaking reigned supreme as literacies of dissemination and notes the explicit need for these activities to happen within community (i.e., the speaker and the listener). Trans* poets have found the written and the poetic to be these most apt vehicles of self-expression of knowledge.

Important to add to this conversation is the digital mediation of education. “[I]n locales where Internet access is available, youth need not move from their computer screens to interact with others, to engage with content that is linguistically, visually, and aurally rich in meaning, and to communicate on a global scale.”⁴⁵ Thus, queer modes of production are able to reach a far greater audience and provide rich opportunities for self-education through digital communication. This further requires the telling and distribution of our stories to better reach those audiences, too. We as learners and educators must thus learn to build bridges “between in- and out-of-school literacies in newly productive ways” as “contexts are now too complex to be

⁴² Logan, *Liberating language: sites of rhetorical education in nineteenth century Black America*

⁴³ Important to note: digital mediation also radically shapes the sociopolitical landscape, discourses, and discourse communities of language and education.

⁴⁴ Logan, *Liberating language*, pg 63

⁴⁵ Alvermann & Hitchman, *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives*, xiii

attached with a single bridge suggesting only two sides ... [M]ultiple bridges connect texts, purposes, tasks, identities, social affiliations, media, and settings, blurring simple demarcations to form myriad new literacies.”⁴⁶ This expansion beyond binaries to explore the both/and of queer modes of production and distribution moves beyond constructed dichotomies to realize a more rich and authentic depiction of the self through story.

Despite this radically shifting landscape of digital access, what has never changed is the necessary presence of community, even in the pursuit of self-knowledge. Logan highlights the importance of community and communal literacy practices in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, especially among marginalized communities. By describing and distributing our pain, we can listen and learn from one another, which is a way to subvert hegemonic literacy practices to evoke change.

Thus, my work, too, must necessarily exist with/in [my] community. And not just in its analysis, but in its construction, too.

qualitative research has always drawn me.

the study of the unquantifiable;

measurements of my human soul;

sense-making of too many senses.

Denzin teaches us that

“performance ethics imagine a world free of conflict and injustice

the autoethnographer’s life is the topic, the site of inquiry

ethics are always personal, political and relational

ethics’ duty is to inspire critique, to bring dignity,

to inspire hope, to model acts of activism”⁴⁷

In light of this definition, autoethnography becomes the most apt vehicle by which I might study and critique my own experiences in post-secondary education and reach toward my evocative,

⁴⁶ Alvermann & Hitchman, *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives*, xiii

⁴⁷ Denzin, “An Ode to Performance Ethics,” lines 6-10

activist aims that highlight the injustices in current academic spaces and hope for how those spaces might change.

*autoethnographic orientations*⁴⁸

autobiographical ethnography, autobiography, auto-observation, autopathography, collaborative auto ethnography, complete-member researcher, confessional tales, critical autobiography, emotionalism narratives of the self, ethnobiography, ethnographic autobiography, ethnographic memoir, ethnographic poetics, ethnographic short stories, evocative narratives, experiential texts, first-person accounts, impressionistic accounts, indigenous ethnography, interpretive biography, literary tales, lived experience

Autoethnographic methods necessarily contend that the normalized, socialized context establishes the “normal” and establishes [my]self as “other.” I genuinely struggle under the assumption that the able is familiar while experiences of illness, infirmity, and struggle remain distant and foreign, even otherworldly. Autoethnographic methods nonetheless provide valuable insights into the human condition and deepen our understanding of human frailty and vulnerability by bringing the self to the surface in the interests of critique and contextualizing the self through the other/s, especially when making visible the experiences of those on the margins. Through these personal and self-reflexive methods and the contextualizing of self within culture, readers can gain a greater appreciation for the challenges faced by those who experience grief, illness, disability, or who otherwise live with/in the margins to develop a more empathetic and compassionate perspective. It is through these autoethnographic methods that we gain a comprehensive understanding of the social, cultural, and personal factors that shape our knowledge and experiences of illness and disability and identity and the ways in which these experiences are intertwined with broader issues of power and inequality. Autoethnography has the capacity to reveal things to the author/self *and* the reader. As authors use criticality to engage with their own perceptions and experiences within a larger sociocultural and political context, readers can begin to question their own perceptions and assumptions, self-identities and conceptions, and understandings of larger structures and institutions of power and privilege.

⁴⁸ referencing Ellis & Bochner, qtd. in Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, pg 47

Through her work in *Unremitting Entrance*, Adsit provides an authentic, raw, and personal account of her experiences with loss, death, and grief through poetic forms and rhythms.⁴⁹ Adsit utilizes many genres and forms with epigraphs and white space to communicate the depths and intensities of her emotions and literally transports the reader to her world of grief and loss. In this way, Adsit not only provides a personal narrative account of her emotional experiences and reckoning with the loss of her sister, but she also performs rigorous self-reflection and identity work as we move through the piece.

Although representing only her experiences, the N of 1, Adsit's autoethnographic self-reflection, provides opportunities for readers to gain insight and understanding through her work, which may or may not depict familiar experiences and emotions. A critical, intentional reader can thus gain insights into Adsit's experiences and, therefore, better understand themselves, others, and the world around them. The trans* experience is one uniquely aligned with grief as we – and often those around us – mourn and grieve the death of ourselves. The transformation requires the death of the old, the rebirth of the new and though many may only experience the ecstasy of rebirth, it nonetheless requires a certain reckoning.

In her work defining autoethnography, Chang argues that those within marginalized or underrepresented identities serve as the best vehicles for self-reflexive exploration because of their/our ability to work and travel within and between cultures. By “blending old and new cultural competence, edgewalkers constantly turn their former others of difference into others of similarity by reducing strangeness in others and expanding their cultural boundaries.”⁵⁰ Trans* folks are gender edgewalkers; we have the unknowable knowledge of an Other and have generally spent a bit more time than the average cis person considering the roles and construction of gender and its social norms.

The introduction to the anthology *We Want It All: An Anthology Of Radical Trans Poetics* highlights the significance of trans* poetry in foregrounding the body, its uses and constraints, its uneven legibility, and its relations to racial and colonial modes of categorization. The politics

⁴⁹ Adsit, *Unremitting Entrance*

⁵⁰ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*, pg 29

of author-identity are particularly heightened for trans* poets as we navigate the complexities of gender identity and expression in spaces that not only demonize, but criminalize such actions. Within the context of Western precedent and academic prestige, poetry becomes an apt vehicle for queer expression and activism as it transcends space and time with enriched and queer meanings while also working within and against traditionally hegemonic spaces.

Thus, I hope to combine autoethnographic methods with evocative forms such as poetry to better elucidate the emotional component of (trans*) experience, be they enriching or deprecating to the self. Through shortened language, compressed meanings, and intentional spacing, I engage with myself and critique my own responses and reactions.

counter/narrative, counter/memory, counter/discourse

transform history

like a macaw uses its beak, applies 300 pounds of pressure to reap

that sweet fruit, counternarratives crack

and snap dominant narratives,

exposing them for what they are, contingent

stories that serve some at the expense of more

exposing them for who they serve / exposing us for who we can be, suppressed

and subjugated, occluded and castigated,

knowledge becomes our symbolic resistance⁵¹

⁵¹ adapted from Adsit & Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*, pg 77

CHAPTER TWO: SITUATION

when flæsc extends from flæsc

near flæsc — not near flæsc as in flæsc-like — but near flæsc as in closer to flæsc, closer to you.

flæsc extending from flæsc becoming not flæsc. not me.

i am becoem flæsc. i am become Me.⁵²

I am an educator. I am a learner. I am a person. We do not refer to a building by its parts.

The human dimension is too often backgrounded, forgotten, and neglected within the teaching world. It is critical to note, too, that the dominant voices in advocating for educational reform — as in other U.S. discourses — are cisgender and heterosexual, white, and upper-middle-class; (and — in this case — feminine).⁵³

(note the overlap with the dominant identities of those employed as teachers)

Situating whiteness in my positionality feels necessary, as it carries an unspeakable, unknowable privilege and power within each/every sphere of the Colonial Matrix of Power.⁵⁴ Coloniality has entrenched us within systems and institutions: a society with omnipresent, pervasive, contagious racism — amongst other forms of oppressional -isms — which is internalized and maintained by those in power. In other words, I visibly belong to a group with extremely high cultural capital.⁵⁵

Furthermore, I currently move through the world perceived as a white man. This in itself defines and mediates each interaction I have, most noticeably with strangers or acquaintances, as they pay me inordinate respect and deference based solely upon my masculine presentation.

Practicum | Fall 2019

“Oh, hi ladies! How would you like to be introduced?”

“... Mr. Marshall”

“Oh, I am so sorry; I couldn’t tell!”

By definition “Queer” works like a sheet of ice—

⁵² written Spring 2024

⁵³ Goldstein, *The teacher wars*, “Chapter One”

⁵⁴ Mignolo & Walsh, *On Decoloniality*

⁵⁵ Yosso, *Whose Culture Has Capital?*

whatever we put there slips and slides and becomes impossible to pin down for more than a temporary moment.⁵⁶

The queer experience is one of transitional spaces and identities. Through queer self-identity, one is necessarily forced to engage with/in multiple spaces, from the feminine to the masculine and the straight to the queer.

However, within the profession of teaching and educational spaces, masculinity is often marginal and carries certain stereotypes with it, depending on which subject and grade you teach. I have often found myself the only, or one of few, masculine presenting person/s in educational spaces. Due to my experience and socialization, I find these female dominated spaces welcoming, inclusive, and non-threatening; although I am sure some cis, straight masculine-identifying people in those same courses might speak differently to this same experience.

The essence of queer identity necessarily confronts and questions hegemonic norms – heterosexual, cisgender, colonial – regarding the dialectics and power of gender and sexuality;⁵⁷ queerness internally opposes the normalization of heterosexual and cisgender identities and interrogates the social systems and structures that enable the oppression of queer ways of knowing, thinking, and being.⁵⁸ We are necessarily resistant, rebellious.

In her book, *No Future: queer theory and the death drive*, Edelman takes her understanding of queer resistance to its logical extreme: resisting heteropatriarchal futurity.⁵⁹ She argues that "sexual practice will continue to allegorize the vicissitudes of meaning so long as the specifically heterosexual alibi of reproductive necessity obscures the drive beyond meaning driving the machinery of sexual meaningfulness."⁶⁰ Because sex (often) exists outside this boundary of so-called "meaningful" procreation, it presents an opportunity to challenge the heteropatriarchy that demands a reproductive, nuclear family. Queer sex thus resists the religious and cultural institution of "the family;" sex for pleasure is a rebellious act.

⁵⁶ Waite, *Teaching Queer*

⁵⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*.

⁵⁸ Edelman, *No future: queer theory and the death drive*, pg 4

⁵⁹ Edelman, *No future*

⁶⁰ Edelman, *No Future*, pg 13

Edelman pursues her argument further, stating, “the efficacy of queerness, its real strategic value, lies in its resistance to a Symbolic reality that only ever invests us as subjects insofar as we invest ourselves in it, ... as reality itself.”⁶¹ Although contextualized within a dispassionate, political, ideological discussion, I balk at her reducing queerness – my identity, not just a theoretical orientation – to its “strategic” value. My work is inexorably personal, and I therefore must challenge her notion that queerness is solely an orientation to resistance and opposition – and, therefore, one cannot hold “queer” as an identity. Edelman’s teleology of queer-constructed resistance to Symbolic reality has the potential to further subvert and oppose hegemonic structures – i.e., the heteropatriarchy – only through full, realized queer modes of being.

Key also to Edelman’s teleology of resistance is the narrative that “there are no *queers* in that [heteropatriarchal] future as there can be no future for queers.”⁶² Assuming “history can be lost, recovered, revised, or rewritten,”⁶³ imagining historical precedent for queer experiences is not only accurate, it is also profoundly healing and restorative *and* lays the foundations for queer futures.

Of course, I cannot neglect the ways in which my neurodivergent and disabled identities inform significant aspects of my personal and professional self-configuration, pedagogy, and philosophy, too. I have used my particular identities and experiences to drive my research, my approaches, my curricula, studying myself and my own experiences as a student to better inform the methods and approaches I use with my own students. I use my own accommodations as a foundation for my teaching, ensuring all students have access to the same things I need access to: slides in advance of and after lectures, comprehensive online materials, access to extensions and additional time, flexibility with attendance; anything I can get away with inside the curriculum and required standards.

Returning again to the human dimension of the educator, it becomes evident that no single identity can be considered in isolation but rather is better understood in an intersectional, socialized, contextualized framework. Apparent also in the breakdown of the student // teacher

⁶¹ Edelman, *No Future*, pg 18

⁶² Edelman, *No Future*, pg 30, emphasis in original.

⁶³ Stein, “American Literary History and Queer Temporalities,” pgs 856–7

binary is the breakdown of the barrier between self as teacher, observer, and learner. Reflexive praxis necessitates constant reflection and intentional commitment to gaining critical consciousness, echoing Chang's framework of autoethnography.⁶⁴ In both fields, critical self-reflection engenders justice through a well-developed and nuanced understanding of self and others. Through this reflexive praxis, we might transcend the liminal spaces between object of study, objective analyst, and subjective interpreter of self, culture, and positionality within larger socioeconomic and political institutions, to transgress, trespass, and otherwise remove ourselves from polarizing binaries – such as student and teacher – that seek to engender and enforce power.

(B)Orderlands' Being

I am neither wholly of one side nor the other.

I am not either / or but instead both / and.

I am uneasiness with ambiguity and contradiction.

I slip into impropriety,

inauthenticity,

slide into illegitimacy,

impurity

I am discursively disobedient

consciously drifting into the recreative terrain⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*

⁶⁵ adapted from Licona, "(B)Orderlands' Rhetorics and Representations: The Transformative Potential of Feminist Third-Space Scholarship and Zines."

CHAPTER THREE: GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP

student

student teacher

teaching assistant

graduate teaching assistant

(these labels do not encounter our humanity)⁶⁶

Conceptualizations of literacy – what it means to be literate, how literacy skills should be taught and assessed – have remained malleable and responsive to changing social and economic needs,⁶⁷ including the continued suppression and oppression of non-white literacies, manifesting in racist/ableist/etc-ist (written) Standard Academic English, standardized assessment practices, tracking, and more. Further, “American teachers continue to enter the classroom after studying education at the undergraduate level at nonselective colleges,”⁶⁸ and Abya Yalan professors continue to enter the classroom with little to no pedagogical knowledge nor educational schooling, at any level of “selectivity.”

Today, educators exist in positions of power over students, and each is awarded varying statuses based on titles and roles (i.e., teacher versus professor, IEP versus gifted and talented).

I am an educator.

As I'm sure is becoming apparent, particular linguistic community practices within academia and education serve to indoctrinate and to alienate through particular, precise language – such as terminology and acronyms – and highly abstract, theoretical language situated in larger discourse communities.

I am still locating myself within this landscape. In theory, I'm now a faculty member, my learners call me Professor (sometimes), and I have the immense financial and social privilege of a GTA position. In my first year in the program, I was not a GTA, but nor was I paying for my school as my parents were. (I continue to wrestle with the gratitude and guilt I feel, as well as the anger and fear; my father said I was "breaking my contract" as his child when I tried to start paying for my

⁶⁶ written fall 2023

⁶⁷ Myers, *Changing our minds: negotiating English and literacy*

⁶⁸ Goldstein, *The teacher wars*, pg 26

own rent.) To the point, in that first year, I was a teaching assistant for a class. So I was a Graduate student and a Teaching Assistant, but not a GTA. I am still in limbo between student and teacher; terrain made trickier to navigate when teaching is also my subject of study. Yet I still feel myself an imposter, knowing/assuming the superior experience of many of my peers and colleagues or feeling an undeserved superiority of expertise; in the GTA program, we are all teaching, but we aren't all teachers – I am one of the few in the program studying teaching as my profession, my career in the capitalistic sense. We certainly have different pedagogies and philosophies of education, richly informed and at varying states of (critical) consciousness.

// student // teaching assistant // graduate teaching assistant // instructor //

// faculty // adjunct // continuing contract adjunct faculty // professor // tenure-track // tenured //

There is much to be read between the lines, and those within academia are familiar with the contextual nuance and (financial) privilege of each of these titles.

The unspoken discord drives wedges between those with/out funding and those with/out security.

I spent my first graduate semester as a Teaching Assistant (TA) in an English survey course, but I was co-teaching with a lot of curricular freedom.

In my second year of graduate school, I was accepted for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) position, making me the instructor of record for a Composition 150 – an introductory academic writing course – for two semesters. Even with my previous secondary teaching experiences and my work as a TA, my work as a GTA was all very new to me and I was balancing learning the curriculum and teaching it alongside my own personal graduate and professional work (I know I speak to a very familiar experience, but it feels necessary to voice, nonetheless).

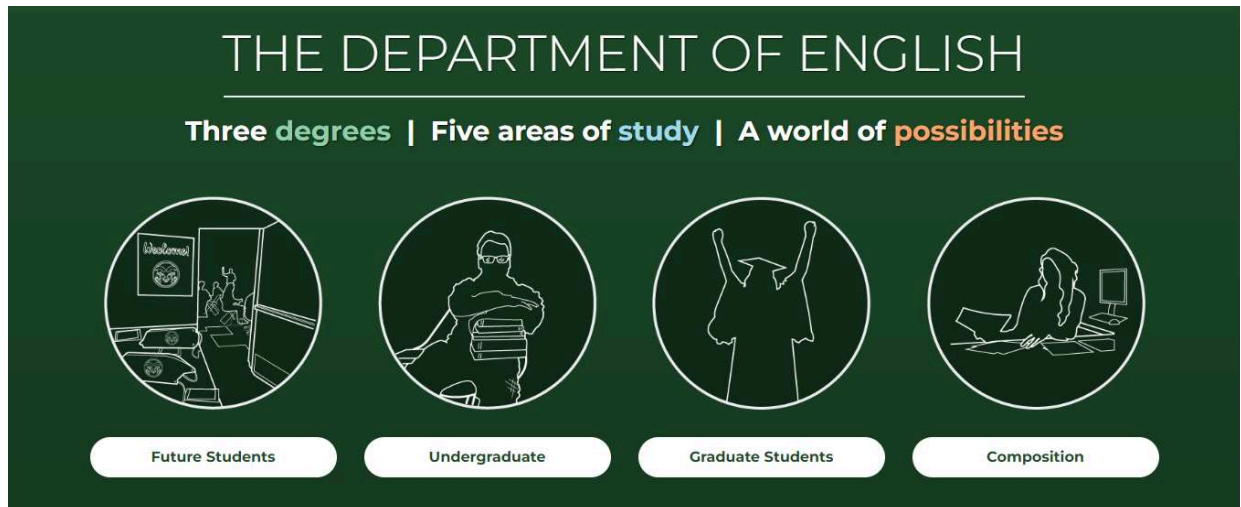


Figure 2. Colorado State University. *The Department of English*. From <https://english.colostate.edu/>

My cohort of GTAs began our assistantship with a week-long orientation: a rigorous onboarding process of acculturation, curriculum development, and a crash course in basic secondary educational pedagogy (continued in a semester-long course in “theories of composition pedagogy”). This “orientation” serves many purposes: primarily to indoctrinate the new recruits with the culture and curriculum and offer those with little or no teaching experience the minimum necessary information to begin building classrooms and classroom environments (the detrimental effects being little consideration given to reflexive practices that encourage genuine, critical engagement with the curriculum, our methods and approaches, or the ways in which classrooms reproduce harm and enact trauma).

In a meeting during my final semester as a GTA, a poll of my cohort revealed that nearly all of us are thinking about or actively planning to teach in the future. The prevalence of this desire must reveal something about our program and the success of my peers in the classroom, yet our underpreparedness and lack of motivation demonstrate an ongoing need for professional development and classroom experience.

Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) Orientation Day Four | Thursday, 17 August 2023

Already fatigued and defeated from our intensive and brutal orientation, our small community participated in a series of hypothetical situations designed to help us collaboratively explore

potential diffusion and classroom management techniques for likely “sticky situations” that might arise in the classroom.

Of course, due to its pervasive nature on our campus, one example had to include a form of racism; specifically, the use of racialized, white-washed, sanitized histories that lead to misinformation about the historical relationships between the United States and the indigenous peoples who have inhabited Abya Yala for thousands of years. It was framed as a disagreement between students about Thanksgiving taking place at the very beginning of class. The first, a student excited for Thanksgiving celebrations, expresses his enjoyment of the traditions and history of interracial cooperation and nation founding. This statement is then challenged by a student who “schools him” on the honest (and brutal) history around this tradition.⁶⁹

Turning to my small group, I immediately – without second thought or hesitation – informed my group that I would likely drop my lesson for the day, instead choosing to address this conversation and engage in critical dialogue with students.

To my surprise, upon returning to whole-class discussion, our program administrators encouraged a complete “diffusion” of the situation; going so far as to label the intervening student “combative,” the admins agreed unanimously that it was “not our job” to engage in such conversations nor would it benefit our classrooms. Instead, they advocated for encouraging learners to recognize the positions of one another, the “journey” of education that each of us embarks on in college, and to discourage ad-hominem attacks. This explanation earned many side-eyes and shared looks; I leaned back in my chair to make faces with Aria⁷⁰ that hopefully conveyed my stupefaction, concern, and outright disgust at such blatant complicity in the classroom.

No mention was made – either in my small group conversation by me or others nor the whole class discussion – that we live, work, eat and breathe on Native land, on a Land Grant

⁶⁹ The language “schools him” comes directly from the presentation we were shown.

⁷⁰ note that all names have been changed to protect the privacy of my cohort.

University.⁷¹ We failed to notice and acknowledge our moral and ethical imperatives to remediate, educate, and disrupt racism.

In later conversations with my cohort of GTAs, I learned that others shared similar, intense emotional reactions to this conversation, ranging from discomfort to vehement disagreement and rejection. Yet, none of us voiced these concerns in the moment. None of us directly challenged the direction we received. Was it because we did not yet have confidence in our own teacherly identities? Or have the confidence to speak toward marginalized identities we did not possess? Or because those in power did not give us adequate space and permission to feel confident voicing such concerns?

Irrespective of the cause, our communal silence communicated our complicity in these racist practices.

liberal arts

graduate

// teaching english as a second / foreign language // english education // writing, rhetoric, & social change // literature // creative writing (mfa; fiction, non-fiction, & poetry) //

under / graduate

// creative writing // english education // linguistics // literature // writing, rhetoric, & literacy //

minor

// english // creative writing // linguistics & culture // ⁷²

Office Hours | Thursday, 07 September 2023

Knowing she was likely there, I found my feet taking me straight to Arianah's office first. We easily fell into conversation (critique) of our curriculum and teaching practices, offering advice, our own alternatives, and our full, colorful opinions of the required, standardized course pedagogies and policies.

⁷¹ The term "land grant" can be a bit misleading as it refers to the granting of land from states to educational institutions but marginalizes and (consciously? deliberately?) obfuscates the oppressive and violent thievery of land from indigenous peoples and the ongoing, exigent consequences of displacement, diaspora, resource theft, and genocide.

⁷² written Fall 2023

I used her as a sounding board to process my ideas for an asynchronous peer review for a few of my learners, one of whom was absent and a few others who did not have their draft ready yet. This went in direct opposition to our mentors' advice to stick to the "bare minimum" and experiment with the curriculum and alternative assessments and grading in later semesters when I feel more confident. I have been told that these kinds of statements are in reaction to previous complaints among GTAs about the excessive workload required of us. It seems the solution to ease our workload is encourage practices that reproduce harm in the classroom because it is "easier."

I will not enforce ableist policies to ease my own workload.

I will not punish learners by further limiting their learning opportunities.

Composition / Thursday, 14 September 2023

"A1 is due this Sunday, and it's our first major deadline, so how do you respond to late submissions, say if it's turned in two hours late?"

"Honestly, if it's two hours, they've had plenty of time to work on this. I'm sorry but it's a zero," responds Roman first.

I will not enforce ableist policies to ease my own workload.

I will not punish learners by further limiting their learning opportunities.

GTA Group Chat / Monday, 16 February 2024

A recent poll in our GTA group chat revealed that most of us have had at least one student address them as "Doctor."

The poll took place under the following assumption:

"I was just talking to someone and just vaguely wanted to see how often it happens.

I have a theory (not even really a theory, but want to really see the number) that masculine professors get called it more by students than feminine ones."

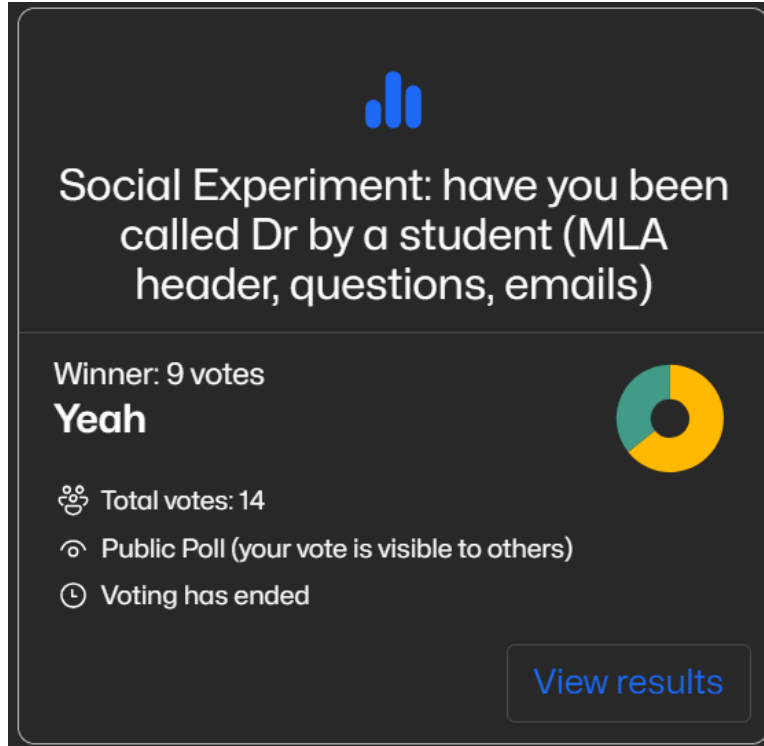


Figure 3. *Social Experiment.*

These questions can only lead me to more questions as I am introduced to the layers of hierarchy and named divisions that mask themselves in bureaucracy and institutions. The inherent and nearly explicit sexism pervades the teaching field and encroaches on the classroom. Many of my feminine classmates noted that they had indeed been called “doctor,” especially when a student wanted to “kiss ass.”

Of course, we will never really know what our students think of us, but it is clear what we believe about what they believe about us.

Class | Monday, 18 March 2024

she says it’s dumb

to take our points away

to remove reduce subtract

from our “grade”

but she says it’s not dumb

to take away

from undergrads
apparently, they live
and die
by those points
for those points
apparently, they fight
for those points

they seem to have such high stakes, these points
so why take them away at all?
she says it's dumb⁷³

⁷³ written Spring 2024

sun-drenched, swollen talc

dense, convection currents surge

sensate matter - leaden maelstrom, charcoal cache

sombrío prolongado; we reach out – our tempestuous midnight

a vast, rippling mist caresses

(we return)

The first element that “accumulation” engages with is the earth – literally, the dirt, soil, rocks – before exploring the above and underground processes of nature such as the “water cycle.” Recognizing the colonial epistemologies embedded in the extraction, categorization, and labeling of precious stones, I chose to engage with gemstone and mineral color descriptors throughout “accumulation;” in particular, “hessonite” (1), the yellow- or red-orange cinnamon stone used in jewelry;⁷⁶ “talc” (6), a white or coarse gray mineral extracted and used in cosmetics, metalworking, food and pharmaceuticals, and ceramics and stonewares;⁷⁷ and “charcoal” (8) a carbon residue produced with plant (or animal) material and heat. Gems and minerals are the vocabularies of the earth and I have co-opted their meaning/s, attempted to detach them from human perspectives. Yet, their human connotations come anyway, bearing explicit meanings rooted in human extraction, “purification,” and use. As okpik immerses her poetry with/in natural and geological narratives, mineral diction grounds “accumulation” in the rock bed of earth systems. This intentional dislocation of the elements of nature from the human perspective disrupts common poetic readings in which the narrator and author are inextricable. In this way, I represent my own otherness by disguising it within the non-human.

Using W. G. Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn* as a mentor for the utilization of the gathering of hurricane and sandstorm clouds and the erosion caused by storms to mark the passage of time, I developed visual imagery of “sun-drenched, swollen talc / dense, convection currents surge /

⁷⁶ Arem, Joel E., Donald Clark, and International Gem Society, “Hessonite Garnet Value, Price, and Jewelry Information.”

⁷⁷ “Talc”

sensate matter - leaden maelstrom, charcoal cache" (7-9) in the second stanza.⁷⁸ These lines work to engender a scalar distortion of time from the human perspective. This scalar distortion of both space and time again dislocates and alienates the human reader and human author.

Scalar distortion is a dramatic enlargement and/or reduction – and the disorientation associated with it – of scale. In the case of "accumulation," time and space are disrupted. Defamiliarization – the practice of describing or otherwise making the familiar unfamiliar to gain new perspectives and insights – is an unavoidable consequence of this radical scale enlargement. "accumulation" employs this nauseating decentralization of human time through a frenzied reading back and forth across the page, the imagined experiences of water condensation, cloud formation, and the slow turning of the earth working together and across interconnected systems. By co-opting the nonhuman perspective, I intentionally dislocate myself and the reader from my/their everyday experiences.

"accumulation" likewise engages with the physical, hydrological processes of evaporation, condensation, precipitation, tides, and currents. The kinesthetic liquid imagery of "bubbling, stagnating, roiling – cresting, crashing, breaking" in line four physically manifests the systems and processes at play, not one of them operating alone. The weather, the climate, the environment; they, too, live in community and harmony with one another; each system is interdependent. Despite attempting to decenter human perspectives, I found myself nonetheless drawn to communal orientations, noting the ways in which earth systems and ecological processes "communicate" with one another in ways we humans have yet to grasp. The experiences and knowledge that come with community are integral to the trans* experience, and it is important to note how I have centralized this concept in "accumulation."

The final element of air in "accumulation" is the full realization of these interconnected, communicative systems, linking the elemental systems together through breath. In his article "Auras and Ice Cores: Atmospheric Archives and the Anthropocene," Taylor ruminates on the word "inspire" – literally to inhale and figuratively "to give an idea or a stroke of insight" (80) –

⁷⁸ W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*

and our shared being through breath/ing.⁷⁹ The universalizing atmosphere in “accumulation” represents a system of linkages through the air “we” breathe, defining this inspiration as the gaseous exchanges of animals and plants (5-6), the convection currents warming and cooling the air (8), and the intermixing of hot and cold fronts that create storms (10). okpik’s *Corpse Whale* develops the personification of breath and smoke as they relate to wind, clouds, inua,⁸⁰ and song.⁸¹ “accumulation” engages in the personification of the clouds through the physical manifestation of sensation (9) and the expression of identity and will through nosism (2, 12).

David Farrier also discusses the concept of intimacy in poetry, which he characterizes as a form of transactional knowledge in traffic between entities in his *Anthropocene Poetics*.⁸² Intimacy is imaginative in construction and the knowledge gained is procured through “terms of texture, sensuality, or violence” (19). Sensuality is most acutely represented in “accumulation” through the physical aesthetics of the earth and the intimate exchanges/transactions between earth systems. “[T]he undulating belly” and “arching back” (3) of the earth use sensuous kinesthetic imagery that insists upon a living, physical understanding of the land as it relates to and interacts with the air. There is further blatant transactional intimacy in inspiration/respiration. Through evaporative processes, water “reach[es] blind” as “steam ... smoke ... perspiration / our inspiration” (5-6), then undergoes dispersion and condensation as the clouds begin to “cache” (9). Finally, the intimate knowledge transaction is precipitated through “a vast, rippling mist” that “caresses” the earth and, ultimately, “(we return)” (11-12). This transaction in the final line references “Imieauraq’s Ceremony of the Dead” from okpik’s *Corpse Whale*. The ultimate line of okpik’s poem, “(he waits for the earth to turn)” (14), hints again at the deep time of earth systems and global workings, disjointed from human perspective and narrativizations.

⁷⁹ Taylor, “Auras and Ice Cores: Atmospheric Archives and the Anthropocene”

⁸⁰ inua ᐃᐅᐱ - spirit or soul in all people, animals, lakes, mountains, and plants; the vital force representing a chain or continuum of all individual spirits of that genus which had lived, were living, or were to live (Berlow and Phillips cited in Wikipedia); manna

⁸¹ for example, the narrator or okpik’s citation of Pudlo Pudlat, Inuit Elder (cited pg 1); in “For the Spirits-Who-Have-Not-Yet-Rounded-the-Bend” (pg 70); and “A Cigarette Among the Dead” (pg 90))

⁸² Farrier, *Anthropocene Poetics*

In this dislocating from the human perspective, “accumulation” helped me think through identities in transition by exploring alive systems. In portraying these systems, I explored – exploited? – the perspective of a non-human “other.” In autoethnographic terms, this kind of mirroring to draw out critical implications necessitates an exploration or revealing of the self. In this case, I have chosen to represent experiences in flux, in movement and transition. I reveal my own experiences slipping between boundaries of state and nature. These queer boundaries exist in the liminal, transactional spaces of intimate exchange between earth systems, allowing them to slip and slide between states (moving from gaseous to liquid) and occupy multiple spaces (ocean, sky, and earth).

“accumulation” pursues a decentering of the human perspective necessary for species thinking⁸³ through embodied non-human, non-organic perspectives and a sensuous description of the intimate transactional wisdom of earth systems. This decentering of the human is limited by language – how do we narrate non-human experiences in human language? In the same way I felt limited in my understanding of okpik’s poetry through my colonizer positionality, “accumulation” also struggles to fully embody an “other” perspective, instead serving as a mirror for my own, very human experiences and drawing on colonial knowledge systems to generate meaning.

⁸³ Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History: Four Theses*, pg 213

CHAPTER FIVE: HISTORIOGRAPHY

How does trans* poetry
translate across borders and languages,
or account for the colonial conditions of its own emergence?
What modes are capable of forcing an encounter
between the ideal and the actual?⁸⁴

The first poem in this series of translanguaged⁸⁵ poems, titled *hyldmærzān*, opens a series of three poems investigating my own oneiric experiences during post-secondary education, written in a language speculatively constructed from Old English (OE) to articulate my queer, unconscious, and transitional experiences. What began as an emulation of Jos Charles' queer, speculative English in her poetry collection *feeld*⁸⁶ to narrate my transition and the liminal spaces of dreaming blossomed into a wealth of liminal linguistic resources for my realizing a personal "transpoetic historiography"⁸⁷ that explicitly resists hegemonic histories and privileges the transitional and transactional ways of knowing, thinking, and being awarded to queer and trans* people and learners, even in traditionally hegemonic literary and academic spaces such as linguistics and Old English studies. *feeld* makes use of speculative language to do the work of narrating and historicizing her trans* experiences, which is why I chose it as a mentor text to explore my similar goals of reimagining and queering hegemonic literacy practices for my own aims. Thus, my *hyldmærzān* collection explicitly dislocates itself from the body to explore the unconscious and disregards legibility for the sake of thick authenticity, rewarding arduous and tedious readings of the work/s.

⁸⁴ adapted from Abi-Karam and Gabriel, *We want it all: an anthology of radical trans poetics*, pg

2

⁸⁵ Translanguaging refers to the use of one's complete linguistic repertoire, and here speaks to my use of academic Englishes and Old Englishes embedded within one another to make visible my own experiences.

⁸⁶ Charles, *feeld*

⁸⁷ transpoetics referring to narrating trans experiences through poetry and historiography being the reading and writing of history.

hyldmærgan

hyldmærgan /

scynn 2 scynn / ic swefnie of

becuman ænlic

tweoneleht leas tweon ys ure secrod tid / murcyree

binnan receroꝥred /

we hæmeþ /

scynn 2 scynn / swefnracu binnan wæt flæsc /

we hæmeþ /

laꝥufæðm / eftsona / eftsona

neoðanfelnes /

þæt cwic eꝥe of liꝥering syn /

hwænne sum yfel wurm

ðerþ

/ binnan min eðeland / innoð / tranboren banhus /

na / butan sawolhus

næfre

Poetry's rich compressions of meaning, space, and time⁸⁸ make it the ideal vehicle for narrating the trans* experience, for ruminating on how language dislocates and situates us in time and allows for co-constructions of knowledge. In actualizing my poetics, I was thus drawn to the oneiric. I have long been fascinated by divining meaning from dreams and lucid dreaming (the ability to control and shape one's dreams). I also have been plagued by vivid dreams with recurring images, scenes, or themes since adolescence. These sub- or un-conscious and seemingly uncontrollable manifestations of my psyche allow a singular glimpse into the liminal spaces between conscious and unconscious desires and aspirations, my fears and anxieties. Or, at least my analysis of these dreams does the revealing.

⁸⁸ Farrier, *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction*

Dreams exist in liminal, atemporal queer time wherein events are non-sequential, and the passage of time is non-linear and relative to the dreamer. Tapping into this alternate source of knowledge in transaction with my own unconscious processes and desires offers a unique lens to actualize my transpoetic historiography, constructing queer timelines to portray my queer experiences in transition.

To articulate my transpoetics, I needed language nearly indecipherable to readers with implications far across time embedded in the transaction of meaning-making; I needed to “mak[e] visible the arbitrariness of linguistic meaning-making”⁸⁹ in Present Day English (PDE). I needed to make visible the ways in which our words fail to hold the illegibility of the trans* experience. Charles takes up this call in *feeld* through speculative language construction; by placing trans bodies in the distant, imagined past, she engages in queer space-making and medievalism wherein she exists just as she is, with the language needed to probe and articulate her experiences. This type of “queer medievalism ... deviates from the expected and linear in terms of its relationship to its source material, with a foregrounded awareness of the performative in terms of how it adapts, translates, appropriates ... [and] experiments.” Transpoetic historiography, too, places queer and trans ways of thinking, knowing, and being firmly in the archaic–(un)imaginable, (un)intelligible–past and queerly “deviates from the expected and linear”⁹⁰ to exact meaning-making.

Candace Barrington identifies four features of Middle English (ME) that make it aptly suited to construct a speculative language rich with meaning, as in Charles’ transpoetics in *feeld*.

“First, it is the result of a diachronic accumulation of multiple linguistic ruptures.

Second, ME thrived in a synchronic, multilingual milieu.

Third, it was not subjected to a regime of correctness.

And fourth, ME has been transmitted to us via a manuscript culture.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ Candace Barrington, “*feeld* Notes: Jos Charles’s Chaucerian ‘anteseedynts,’” pg 80

⁹⁰ Hadbawnik, *Postmodern poetry and queer medievalisms: time mechanics*, pg 5

⁹¹ Barrington, “*feeld* Notes” pg 65

Old English (OE) serves as the foundation for an ensuing “rupture” in my poetics as it is inaccessible and indecipherable to a reader of PDE. Charles’ and I’s poetic techniques are also similarly stylized in our use of archaic syntactic constructions and vocabularies, uniquely suited to trans*linguaging.⁹²

My intentional translanguaging also further explores and makes meaning within the liminal boundaries between dreaming and consciousness. Thus, in crafting my poems irrespective of linear, capitalistic time, I constructed a speculative “English” that would be unfamiliar to a modern reader in its orthography and diction – yet familiar in poetic genre and authority – by making use of OE and PDE linguistic metaknowledge, orthography, and etymology alongside queer orientations to historiography. However, I shied away from deep engagement with traditional OE poetic conventions and structures as they are too remote and static for narrating my experiences, choosing instead to highlight my own syntactic constructions for meaning-making.

Indeed, the linguistic functions of OE in my transpoetic historiography create meaning across and through time, acting as a barrier to and a kaleidoscope for meaning-making. By including words directly from OE within PDE in homophonic translation, my poetry alienates readers from the text and forces a slow, articulated reading. Although arduous, this exhaustive reading “goes beyond [OE and PDE] modes of reading by combining them, allowing the words to draw on both ... conventions of meaning-making.”⁹³ I am thus able to draw queer meanings from each word and phrase via my / my readers’ knowledge of OE and PDE, additively constructing meaning through layered connotation, punning, and reference, yet remaining illegible to the reader without the guidance of my personalized dictionary. Foregrounding speculation and mutual creation within the language further elucidates the construction of queer realities to question, challenge, and upset hegemonic structures.

In emulating her work, I also maintained one element of Charles’ ME transpoetics, what Barrington identifies as “the Middle English virgule, a punctuation feature that can often

⁹² Peter Baker, *Introduction to Old English*

⁹³ Barrington, “*feeld Notes*” pg 74

separate, frequently highlight, and sometimes end an expressed idea, all without creating hard boundaries.”⁹⁴ Charles makes liberal use of this “virgule” (/) throughout her poems to explore transitional spaces and create meaning through multiple readings against and through these constructed boundaries. In my transpoetic historiography, I maintain this fluid movement between, through, and past ideas regardless of boundaries to explore transition and gender and introduce the layer of dreaming.⁹⁵ Using the virgule and other markers of space or marginality to hold the liminal spaces between dreaming and awake, unconscious and conscious, and the queer allows a further queering of time, structure, and meaning-making. My layering of queer historiography and etymology with unconscious processes (dreams) with queer and trans* ways of knowing, thinking, and being in transpoetics is predicated on ontological (re)orientation towards the queer, liminal, and transitional.

ic si her / nu /

ic si her / nu /

eftsona /

sum mæting /

a circul ic scule beride binnan tīd

ofer foldes / eald sediementede oyl

binnan mettelhus /

unswefn astyrieþ

heo cummeþ hider

7 min sið misfeþ binnan ungewiss /

þær ys blod betwux min leower

The most unique feature of my – and Charles’ – poems is the constructed language specific to our personal transitions and life experiences, yet the languages we hypothesize are not entirely novel. Authors like Kingsnorth, who wrote a speculative language novel titled *The Wake* in an OE

⁹⁴ Barrington, “*feeld Notes*” pg 71

⁹⁵ I continue to make use of dividers in visual space throughout this entire work as an intentional drawing of attention towards what falls between and within the margins.

decipherable to modern readers, share in the tradition of using language to historicize experience. Kingsnorth himself uses a “shadow tongue – a pseudo-language intended to convey the feeling of the old language by combining some of its vocabulary and syntax with the English we speak today.”⁹⁶ Kingsnorth intentionally translates OE into a more legible version of English for PDE readers and provides a novel's worth of prose, allowing readers to adjust to syntactic patterns. I, on the other hand, intentionally alienate readers with an indecipherable language. Using OE allows me to portray myself illegibly, except to those intentional, careful readers who consciously seek out meaning from my work.

Jos Charles' *feeld*⁹⁷ – and my *hyldmærgan* collection – represents an inventive poetic and linguistic expression in which she explores gender and transition through polyphonic, indefinite writing. Charles makes use of a speculative ME, often translated polyphonically from PDE and utilizing syntactic and orthographic conventions from both, to layer, pun, and queer meanings in both ME and PDE to construct a poetic narrative delving into her own – oft violent – transition. Exposing the trans* perspective through poetry is so effective because poetic perspectives inherently require a long-view understanding of the transitional, the in-flux, and can compress meaning⁹⁸ and experience into nuance-rich utterances. Ergo, to realize my vision of transpoetic historiography, I emulate Charles' “transpoetic techniques,” which “work to reveal the multifaceted possibilities of each utterance and of each individual”⁹⁹ alongside my own constructed language informed by OE linguistic studies and mentor texts such as *The Wake*. Candace Barrington argues that Charles affects trans*poetics through “the effort to trouble conventional boundaries defining not only gender identities but also any identities that would be managed and controlled by” larger social and Colonial systems.¹⁰⁰ In other words, Charles' work is queer not only in its perspective, but in its intentional troubling and disrupting via speculative language. The historical yet modern liminal language I invented relies on obviously queer

⁹⁶ Kingsnorth, *The Wake*, pg 353

⁹⁷ Charles, *feeld*

⁹⁸ Farrier, *Anthropocene Poetics*

⁹⁹ Barrington, “*feeld* Notes,” pg 64

¹⁰⁰ Barrington, “*feeld* Notes,” pg 64

visual-linguistic features – such as the virgule – and subversive trans* ways of knowing, and “the resulting transpoetics nudges readers away from a hermeneutic that defines either gender or semantics as predetermined, fixed, or hidden.”¹⁰¹ Compelling readers to exhaustively read through plural, flexible ontologies ensures a transpoetics that indeed forces encounters between the ideal and the actual¹⁰² and confrontations between the self and the other.

A mode of violence I explore in *hyldmærgan* is the interpersonal, enacted against myself and the larger trans* community. In “ic si her / nu /” I recount a (sexually) violent and traumatic event. Consistent statistics for sexual violence against trans people are hard to come by, but Colorado State University’s Women and Gender Advocacy Center reports that one in two transgender people will experience interpersonal violence in their lifetimes.¹⁰³ The poetic scene begins when “ic si her [i see her].” However, the image is immediately destabilized by the establishment of the present “nu [now]” and “eftsona [soon after, again].” The layering and queering of time serves to express the horror of the dream and the realities of reliving traumatic events. Through this exploration of bodily trauma through time I am able to better represent my own personal experience while also shedding light upon a larger issue facing our community as a whole. The latter half of the poem takes place within the “unswefn [bad dream],” which again serves multiple functions of setting the poem outside reality and in the realm of the dream—or nightmare. Of course, to limit the meaning solely to the literal is an unfair reading of the text and fails to grasp the created horror through the animate nightmare as it stirs and moves forward, approaching the narrator and the reader simultaneously. Only the reader gets to choose how many times the violence is enacted upon the narrator; to re-read and seek to understand is also to enact violence.

¹⁰¹ Barrington, “*feeld* Notes,” pg 63

¹⁰² Abi-Karam and Gabriel, *We want it all*, pg 2

¹⁰³ Women and Gender Advocacy Center, “Victim Assistance Team”

ic lyft min sihð

ic lyft min sihð / 2 drenc binnan min syn /

beorht swa sunne

7 swa blendende

unholda / heahfirgen smolders mid fyr

min sihð hyðede mid

trees ealle

sinfyrende

fyr 7 smoca fæðm / binnan scæduscima /

þæt cnawiende syn

min mod hyðede mid /

fær

min pað ðlowende swa ic forænan þæt fyrwylm /

ðiet forð

scæduzenða

þa

/ ic a woake / mid inðehyd

ic a woake mid sweoloð môd /

swatið heafod 2 ta

In crafting a transpoetics that linguistically and emotionally responds to and acknowledges queer realities, I sought ontological (re)orientations that place resistance, questioning, and interaction at the forefront of queer knowledge production and modes of thinking and being.

Like poetry and dreaming, history is “less a modality of sequential time than a modality of sequential narrative” that can “accommodate other kinds of [queer] temporalities” for discursive functions; “history can be cyclical, circular, recursive, or reincarnated; history can be continuous, discontinuous, or interrupted; history can be eventful or everyday; history can measure events

macroscopically or microscopically,"¹⁰⁴ simply dependent on the historiographer, the writer of that history. Thus, despite the difficulty with which historians have and will record queer histories, queer historiography represents a real, imagined, and oneiric space for constructing queer histories. When queerness is threatened in the present and future, historical precedent informed by queer knowledge aids in subverting dominant historical narratives of oppression and violence.

An extension of this queer historiography comes from what Carolyn Dinshaw defines as the queer historical impulse in her book, *Getting Medieval: sexualities and communities, pre- and postmodern*. Her queer historical impulse is a theory of touch founded on conversations through texts, readers, and authors across time.¹⁰⁵ This impulse or theory of touch is another intimate transactional one that demands queer, nonlinear histories, similar to what David Farrier explores in his theory of intimacy.¹⁰⁶ To draw "partial connections" between texts and readers, Dinshaw puts texts in conversation with one another, allowing transactions of information and co-constructions of knowledge. These touches form "queer relations between incommensurate lives and phenomena ... that collapse the critical and theoretical oppositions between transhistorical and alteritist accounts, between truths and pleasure, between past and present, between self and other."¹⁰⁷ This collapsing of oppositions opens liminal spaces for trans* and queer pleasure. My unique combination of historiography and transpoetics similarly strives to "draw attention to the possibilities afforded by this coming together of textual and sensual pleasures"¹⁰⁸ as an essential aspect of meaning-making, an intimate exchange between the author, text, and reader.

In reflecting back upon the initial driving questions proposed in Abi-Karam and Gabriel's introduction to their *Anthology of Radical Transpoetics*, I think it is clear that my transpoetic

¹⁰⁴ Stein, "American Literary History and Queer Temporalities," pgs 856-7

¹⁰⁵ Caroline Dinshaw, *Getting medieval: sexualities and communities, pre- and postmodern*

¹⁰⁶ Farrier, *Anthropocene Poetics*, see earlier discussion on page 48

¹⁰⁷ Dinshaw, *Getting medieval*, pg 35

¹⁰⁸ Vincent Nardizzi, Stephen Guy-Bray, and Will Stockton, *Queer Renaissance historiography: backward gaze*, pg 4; see their discussion of queer historiography in Renaissance Poetry

historiography strives to make use of a wealth of translingual resources to queer the borders of identity and language, forcing an encounter between the ideal and the actual self.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Abi-Karam and Gabriel, *We want it all*, pg 2

CHAPTER SIX: AUTHORITY

I remember the first time someone asked my permission to go to the bathroom

the first time I was given authority over

someone else's body

control over it, over them

I wish I could remember it as the last time.¹¹⁰

With/in this piece itself, which relies on my own poetic work as both a source for data analysis and the analysis itself, I struggle to call myself either poet or author. I struggle against hegemony. I struggle against the expectation that this is not possible.

The "strategic" value of trans* identity has been furthered by its rising politicization and sensationalization. Indeed, "opportunistic publishers have attempted to instrumentalize trans writing for profit; we're asked to transform even a brutal personal experience of abjection into titillating narratives for bourgeois readers eager to consume stories of trans pain."¹¹¹ Abi-Karam and Gabriel warn us of the dangers reflected in my early drafts of my research questions that centered the oppression of trans* literacies rather than our subversion of the hegemonic.

True, too, disclosing ourselves in the evocation of political activism has the potential to backfire; a story cannot be untold. Adsynt and Byrd spend time discussing the Author in their creative writing dictionary. They argue that "authors are a composite of discourses. And the reading of every text is always beyond the author's control."¹¹² We cannot control the reader's response anymore than we can prevent ourselves from being present and reflected in the text, and this lack of control can be used as a tool to silence – rather than amplify – trans* voices and perspectives. Indeed, "every piece of writing is shaped by its imbrication in social forces, its genre and context, and its being taken up by the meaning-making strategies of the reader within a constellation of cultural forces."¹¹³ Or, as said by Bomer in his work exploring the literacy practices of adolescents,

¹¹⁰ written Spring 2024

¹¹¹ Abi-Karam & Gabriel, *Anthology of Radical Transpoetics*, 3

¹¹² Adsynt & Byrd, 2019, p. 34

¹¹³ Adsynt & Byrd, 2019, p. 34

“literate texts ... don’t act in isolation. They are always situated in a complex network of purposes, activities, and relationships.”¹¹⁴

we build our understandings

from the raw materials of the more-than-human¹¹⁵

i draw out each letter,

slide around the s curves

the sharp cut of a consonant catches me

and if i tell you about

a cat

a brown cat

a brown cat with spots

his long legs stretched out alongside mine

his round softball head curled around and tucked tightly against my thigh

what do you see?

can you see him?

you imagine something, but i didn’t show it to you

i haven’t drawn out the plush fur around the back of his neck

where his stripes splay out across his back.

the soft black fur peeking from between his toes as he stretches

his curled tongue appearing from gaping jaws,

his tucked ears shaking from the effort.

you imagine something, but i didn’t show it to you

i just spelled it out

i can’t stop thinking about the the way my pen curls around the trace of each letter,

and i have said something, painted a picture with my words

but I can also paint a picture

¹¹⁴ Bomer, foreword to *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives*, ix

¹¹⁵ Adsit and Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*.

and while this might be subject to the same colonial institutions of prestige,
it doesn't belong in a library.

Adsit and Byrd have a rather thorough and critical dictionary, and though it focuses on the creative writing classroom, I find their analysis relevant both to my own work and to my education studies. In order to further interrogate my questions about the power in naming a poet or author, then, I must turn to their dictionary.

In their discussion of the author, Adsit and Byrd begin by retracing to the fundamental premise of the author and interrogating our understandings of classifying names such as "poet" and "author." They demand to know:

who
gets to decide?
who gets to decide who possesses
the qualities of
the poet
or author
who
gets to decide how?
who gets to decide how
a person will be judged
in relation to
cultural
ideals?

We reflect:

who are we most likely to name Author and
how do we use the idea of an Author and
who is served by our naming and use of Author¹¹⁶

Adsit and Byrd go on to note the etymological connections between author and authority.

¹¹⁶ adapted from Adsit & Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*, pgs 31-32

"To have the status of an author is to have a status of authority ... The author's break in conventions is considered to be artful, whereas the novice's break in convention may be read as an error."¹¹⁷

Escape from the interlocking web of existing (oppressive) structures and histories of oppression seems impossible when the inclination is to write into them, make space for yourself within dominant discourses and demand they listen; there is also a queer third-space within modes of production. "Existing definitions of 'author' make a number of assumptions about textual production"¹¹⁸ that center academia and inaccessibility through restrictions in publishing and distribution. These barriers to becoming an "author" can be cracked open through online distribution, musical production, self-publishing, and other queer means of access.

Poetry and "The Poet" as Western constructs have additional cultural resonance and authority beyond the fiction or nonfiction author. "The 'author' and the 'poet' become special personae in the cultural imaginary" as we engage with/in their works, and, indeed, "[i]n the Western aesthetic tradition, the poet has sometimes been characterized in spiritual terms."¹¹⁹ Throughout Western history, we have intertwined authority and the author, imbued one with the other. Unfortunately, these concepts have often excluded individuals who exist in the margins of dominant Western traditions. The "other" is thus constructed through exclusion as people who are non-white, feminine, disabled, or otherwise marginalized, dominated, oppressed, and devalued are consistently excluded from dominant modes of production and distribution (i.e., through publishing). This exclusion results from the intentionally structured and exclusive Colonial Matrix of Power.¹²⁰ Despite this exclusion, queer, disabled, and brown poets have made themselves known through experimentation, evocation, and nontraditional expressions of intelligence within the forms, styles, and genres of authority and spirituality. As I continue to argue, the marginalized perspective also adds an inherent insight into the liminal and between spaces; the marginalized

¹¹⁷ Adsit and Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*, pg 31

¹¹⁸ Adsit and Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*, pg 32

¹¹⁹ Adsit and Byrd, *Writing Intersectional Identities*, pg 32

¹²⁰ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*

experience talks across the border into the dominant through modes of reading and writing traditionally reserved for those we deem worthy. However, by using poetic forms, structures, and non-traditional literacy practices marginalized – in this case trans* – poets and authors also are better able to express the realities of living within these margins.

CONCLUSION

i hope the light leads me somewhere beautiful – maybe i will find myself embraced; maybe i will find a freezing wasteland – and i don't know how to tell You how scared i feel free-falling into a future i haven't faced

and no one taught me how to hold out my hands for You to hold, so i let them freeze, let them shake, leave them at my sides

Your opinion of me makes no difference.

Throughout this piece of work, I delved into my personal experiences as a learner and educator within different post-secondary education environments over the years spanning from August 2018 to the present, with a keen eye toward examining my unique identities and how they relate to my educational spaces and identity as a teacher. By examining queer and liminal theories alongside educational history and alongside the analysis of my own academic and poetic work, I have made visible my experiences as a learner and educator on the margins of some – but not all – academic spaces. In contextualizing these experiences within a self-reflexive critique, I have opened space for author and reader alike to critically reflect on teaching and learning experiences to better understand and avoid reproducing harm in our own classrooms. I have shared my experiences, learned from them, and now can better understand the ways in which I am enmeshed within my community of teachers and learners. By understanding myself within this context, I have also gained an appreciation for the ways in which I learn with and from others. In all I was able to speak back to my research question and, through the use of autoethnographic methods, theory, data analysis, and self-reflexive critique, I have challenged the dominant literacies and literacy practices privileged in high academic spaces and provided guidance for others by sharing the insights I have gained through my personal experiences.

In the classroom, my own experiences writing poetry as a way to translate and communicate my otherwise incommunicable and individual experiences led me to consider how I can use genres such as poetry alongside intentional pushback against academic genre conventions to aid my students in representing their own experiences. Through the use of mentor texts and exposure to these genres, I am also better able to represent and privilege my students' diverse identities and

literacy practices in the classroom. By sharing these insights and potential methods, I hope to inspire change via conscious shifts toward inclusive practices honoring students' linguistic repertoires. Specifically, I have highlighted the ways that genres that play with form (i.e., poetry) are uniquely positioned for narrating the queer and trans* experiences as identities that exist within and between; trans* poetry is an apt vehicle for queer expression and activism as it transcends space and time with enraptured intensity and radical potential, and we as teachers must celebrate this in our classrooms. In these ways, I have intentionally made use of autoethnographic methods to offer insights and critiques of lived experience to provide cultural insights through a narrative that represents a marginalized yet shared movement through the world.

In addition to the insights I have gained about genre inquiry in the classroom, I was also able to use autoethnographic methods to self-reflexively analyze my positionality as an educator in institutionalized education. I am a white educator, which places me in a position of power and privilege in and out of the classroom. Nevertheless, it is necessary to note the ways in which my visible and invisible identities, marginalized and dominant, mediate my interactions with students and other faculty alike. Indeed, by making visible my own identities, I feel uniquely situated to understand the value of an intersectional approach to evaluating individual identities within the larger frameworks of socioeconomic and political institutions. Gaining critical consciousness is not a one-step process, however. It requires constant, critical reflection and deliberate commitment. Self-reflexivity and critical consciousness are necessary to fully understand one's identities and how they shape interactions with the world outside the self. They are, therefore, essential for justice-oriented, person-first teaching approaches.

My analysis of my experiences in my posting as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in Post-Secondary education spaces documented my work toward these goals, but I also offered critiques where I have fallen short of critical consciousness in my classroom or education spaces. I decided to discuss the scripted curriculum and the ways it both constrains and retains freedom for GTAs alongside the culture present in the program. I also needed to ground my critiques of the systemic inequalities present in post-secondary education in some concrete experiences from

my time in school to legitimize my calls to disrupt harmful/traumatic practices. By taking a step back and offering these experiences, I encouraged the reader to do the same for their own practices, encouraging intentional actions toward equitable teaching practices that honor students.

However, I also wanted to make my background as a student explicit to make visible the ways in which our learners can be best supported. By exploring the ways in which I have used poetry to explore and describe my own experiences, I have also made visible teaching practices that honor the linguistic and cultural background of our students and help them reach a new communicative potential. Poetry also has incredibly niche applications for presenting the self through and exploring language and co-constructions of knowledge through its rich compressions of meaning, space, and time. Further, queer-constructed resistance to Symbolic reality in the hands of trans* authors will further subvert and oppose hegemonic structures such as the heteropatriarchy and the Colonial Matrix of Power through fully realized queer modes of being. By embracing queerness as an identity and using it to resist oppressive structures, trans* poets create space/s for our/themselves and others to exist outside of the dominant culture.

In my quest to understand how trans* authors and poets co-opt and resist hegemony, I have come to a profound realization about the connection between much transpoetic work and the use of personal, evocative autoethnographic methods. Through their/our writing and lived experiences, trans* poets have developed unique methods of expression that are intimately personal and reflective of journeys between and through socially defined dichotomies. Returning once more to Edelman and her false characterization of queer as a mere orientation, trans* poetics clearly offers a fully-realized exploration of queer as a mode of being and thinking. Beyond ontology, beyond epistemology; I am queer.

Finally, having explored my identities as both a teacher and learner and using self-reflexive methods to make sense of this experiential knowledge, I felt it necessary to investigate the academic construction of the author and the embodiment of authorial identity. This, too, was informed by queer theory and ways of knowing and being, making visible yet another way to intentionally resist hegemonic structures and dominant literacy practices. I once again

acknowledge the importance of community as a context by which we better understand ourselves and our students and as a resource on which we rely for support. Along this same vein, recognizing our / our students' literacy practices as they relate to our communities is an early step to bridging learners' in and out-of-school literacies and competencies.

EPILOGUE

Defending your work is never easy, nor is it often asked of us. But, of course, there is also a certain pride associated with the act. During my presentation and ensuing space for questions, we touched on my topics and themes, from the title, *Transgressions*, to how I would adapt a specific assignment, the Critical Literacy Narrative, from the CO150 curriculum to align it with the goals I laid out in this project.

One theme that came up frequently in my defense was the element of community. Through the study itself and my intentionally collaborative methods of meaning-making during the defense (asking those present to spend time translating one of my speculative language poems, “ic lyft min sihð”), I wanted to ensure that my work highlighted the effects of community on the ways we construct knowledge and understand the world around us. None of my work could exist without the help of others, so it is necessarily rooted in community, but I also spoke of my intentional dispersion of this work to further aid my community of teachers in serving learners, of my intentions to redistribute power to community-based models that will then emphasize collaborative meaning- and justice-making. Part of this realization has come through self-reflexive critique and a better understanding of my own experiences.

How I could act

How easy it is to do nothing and say nothing about injustices I see

What could I have done?

Speaking to and naming that I didn't

Revelation: how I didn't act

This work also continues to shape the ways I interact with the world. Through the deconstruction of a single binary, I have suddenly encountered numerous new binaries previously unnoticed. Divisions like day and night, plant and animal, limit our understandings. They are constructed binaries that prevent us from seeing what is within and between; it is both/and rather than either/or. And I am only now fully beginning to understand how dichotomies and divisions have prevented a fuller understanding of my world. I can only hope now to incite this same thinking in others, to guide others toward a full realization of self and world that exists as both/and.

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APPENDIX ONE: POEMS

“accumulation,” written Fall 2022, appears on page 51.

“(B)Orderlands’ Being,” written Fall 2023, appears on page 36.

“counter/narrative, counter/memory, counter/discourse,” written Spring 2024, appears on page 28.

“distorted strength, explosive growth,” written Spring 2019, appears on page 2.

“dumb,*” written Spring 2024, appears on page 48.

“hyldmærgan,” written Spring 2023, appears on page 58.

“I remember the first time,” written Spring 2024, appears on page 70.

“ic lyft min sihð,” written Spring 2023, appears on page 67.

“ic si her / nu /,” written Spring 2023, appears on page 63.

“i draw out each letter,” written Spring 2024, appears on page 73.

“i hope the light leads me,” written Fall of 2021, appears on page 76.

“liberal arts,” written Fall of 2023, appears on page 43.

“opine authentically,” written Spring of 2019, appears on page 17.

“(these labels do not encounter our humanity),” written Fall of 2023, appears on page 37.

“when flæsc extends from flæsc,” written Spring of 2024, appears on page 30.

APPENDIX TWO: FIGURES

Figure 1. Dufresne, *The history of institutional racism in U.S. public schools*, pg 6. Paintings with text describing early education in the United States, appears on page 3.

Figure 2. Colorado State University. *The Department of English*. From <https://english.colostate.edu/>, appears on page 32.

Figure 3. *Social Experiment*, appears on page 36.

APPENDIX THREE: DICTIONARY ACCOMPANYING *HYLDMÆRAN* COLLECTION

Zero's speculative language	Present Day English	Old English	additional meanings, punned meanings
2	to, too, two	to	
+nog	enough	+nog	sufficient, abundant
+felnes	sensation, feeling	+felnes	
+gan	to 'go' ('i-go')	±gan	move, proceed, advance, traverse, walk
+iernan	gain by running or riding	+iernan	
±mærgan	to mix, combine, unite	±mengan (æ)	associate, consort, cohabit with: disturb: converse. ['meng']; merge
7	and conj.	geſice, 7	&, but like as if
a	always	a	
a-	opposition, negation	and- an-, on-, ond-	
æfre	ever	æfre	
æfter	after	æfter	
ænlic	one	ænlic	only, singular, solitary, unique, glorious, noble, splendid, excellent
ær	before	ær	
astyrian	to stir up, excite, move, move forward, raise	astyrian	be roused, become angry
banhus	(bone house), body	banhûs	awake, conscious body
becuman	become	becuman, bêon	happen, befall: come, approach, arrive, enter, meet with, fall in with: befall, befit; to be, exist
beorht	bright	beorht	
beridan	ride	beridan, ridan	
betwux	between	betweonan, betweonum, betwux	amon, amid
binnan	within, in, inside of, into.	binnan ['bin'], in	inside, within, less than,

			during, whilst.
blendan	to blind, deprive of sight	blendan	decieve
blod	blood	dreor, heolfor, blod	
butan	out of, outside of	butan	except, without,, all but, but only
cifesboren	bastard	cifesboren	
circul	circle, cycle	circul	zodiac
cisboren	cis-born; cis-gender		
cnawan	to know, know carnally	cnawan, cneowian	['knee']
cuman	to come	cuman	approach, get to, attain
cwic	quick, living, alive	cwic	
ðeran	tio thrash, thresh, beat	ðercan, ðercan	
drenc	drink	drenc	drinking, draught, drowning [drincan; 'drench,' 'drunk']
eald	old, aged, ancient, antique	eald (a) comp. ieldra, yldra; sup. ieldest, yldest	experienced, tried: honoured, eminent, great. ðâ ieldstan men the chief men.
eall	all, entirely	eall	every, entire, whole, universal, all men, fully, wholly, entirely, quite, when through that, on that account, because
eðeland	wasteland, desert	unland, westen, westenstaðol, westig (oe), eðe	
eft	afterwords	eft, siððan, þæs	
eftsona	soon after, again	eftsona	
ege	awe, fear, terror, dread	ege (æ)	overawing influence: cause of fear; edge
eow	you (plural)	ȝe, eow	
eower	your (plural)	eower	

fæðm	fathom; to surround, encompass, embrace, grasp, seize	ymbfôn fæðm (e)	outstretched or encircling arms, embrace, grasp: protection: interior, bosom, lap, breast, womb: cubit: power: expanse, surface.
fær	fear; sudden danger, peril	fær (e), fyrhtnes, fyrht, fyrhto; egesa, êgnes	sudden attack: marvel?; to fear, tremble, frighten, terrify, ['fright,' vb.]
firgen	mountain, woodland	firgen	fir tree
flæsc	flesh	flæsc	body (as opposed to soul)
forænan	to run before, outrun	foriernan	effect.
forð	forwards	forð	
fyr	fire	fyr	
ȝiese	yes	ȝea, ȝiese	
ȝiet	yet	ȝiet	
hæmen	to have sex with, fonicate, marry	hæmen	human, hymen
he	he	he	
heafod	head	heafod	
heah	high, tall, lofty	heah	high-class, exalted, sublime
heo	she	heo	
her	here	her, hær	in this world, at this point of time, at this date, now, towards this place, hither
hider	hither	hider	
hie	her	hie, hire	they, them
hie	they	hie	her
him	him	hine, him	it
him	it	hit, him	him
him	them	hie, him	him, it, her
hira	their	hira	
his	his	his	its

his	its	his	his
hwænne	when	ahwænne, hwænne, hwonne	
hyðan	plunder, ravage	hyðan, ongebreacan	attack; heathen
hyld	grace	êst, gifnes, hyld, liss (lîðs)	bounty, harmony, consent: delacacies: favour, love, kindness, mercy: loyalty, fidelity: joy, peace, rest: remission, forgiveness: saving (of life) 'liss'; lîðe]; Grace (my partner)
ic	I (first pers.)	ic	i am
ingehyd	consciousness, mind, conscience	inge-hyd, ingewitnes	sense, understaning
innan	from within	innan	
innoð	womb	innop	enough
lagufæðm	enveloping waves	lagufæðm	
leas	without, free from, devoid of	leas	false, faithless; untruthful, decietful
leow	legs, thigh	leow, læu	
liger	concubinage, fornication, adultery	lig-er, -ere n., -ernes	
lyft	lift	lyft, onahebban, oðhebban	air, sky; exault
mæting	dream	mæting	meting; mating
mec	me	me, mec	
mettelhus	(metal house), bus		
mid	with, in conjunction with, in company with, together with: with that, thereupon	mid I. prep. w. d. inst. (WS) midd	into the presence of: through, by means of, by: among, in: at (time): in the sight of, opinion of altogether, completely, entirely every, entire, whole,

			universal, all men, fully, wholly, entirely, quite
min	my	min	
misfon	fail, make a mistake	ateorian, misfon, ofniman	become exhausted, cease
mod	heart, mind, spirit, 'mood,' temper	mod, breosthord, breostsefa, hreðer (a, æ)	courage: arrogance, pride: power, violence. of one mind, harmonious, peaceful; breast, bosom: heart, mind, thought: womb
murcyree	Mercury	Wōden, cedelc, efenlāste	the herb mercury, evenlesten, Mercury (my cat)
na	not at all	na	
næfre	never	næfre	
ne	not	ne	
neoðan	from below	neoðan	
nese	no	nese	
nu	now	nu	at present, at this time, very recently; II. conj. now that, inasmuch as, because, since, when, III. interj. lo! behold! come!
oyl	oil	ele	
rænan	to run	ænan	ride, gallop, run to, reach
rezerozred	retrograde		the "mercury retrograde shadow pattern" refers to the illusion of back and forth zig-zag movement of the planet believed to cause ripple effects; mercury in retrograde is also

			what we say when my cat (Mercury) has the zoomies.
sawolhus	(soul house), body	sâwolhûs	unconscious, sleeping body
scædu	shadow	scead (a, æ, e), sceadu, scua	shade: shelter, protection: stye; 'shade,' shadow, darkness
scædugenga	wanderer in darkness	sceadugenga	wanderer in shadow
sceadugenga	wanderer in darkness	sceadugenga	
scima	ray, light, brightness, effulgence, splendour	scima [scinan]	twilight, gloom
scule	must	motan, sculan	opportunity, compulsion
scynn	skin	scynn	
secred	holy; consecrated, sacred	halig	
si	see, sight	sien (eo, i, y)	
sihð	sight	sihð	
smoca	smoke	rec, reocan, smeocan, smic (e, y), smican, smoca	
sona	immediately	sona	
sum	some	sum	
swa	so	swa (æ, e)	consequently, just as, so far as, in such wise, in this or that way, thus, so that, provided that, just as, so that, same, in like manner: therefore, on that account: as, like the...the: where: when, so soon, as soon: although, unless, yet: if, as if the same, such, that

swa cont.	whosoever wherever on whichever side. in the same way also though...not. whether...or. nevertheless, yet, however	swâ hwâ swâ; swâ hwilc swâ swâ hwær swâ bi swâ hwaðerre efes swâ swâ ilce swilce. swâ selfe êac swâ swâ...ne swâ...swâ swâ ðêah	
swatiġ	sweaty	swatiġ	gory
swefnian	to dream	swefnian	
swefnigend	dreamer	swefnigend	
swefnracu	interpretation of dreams	swefnracu	
swefnreccere	interpreter of dreams	swefnreccere	
sweoloð	burning heat	sweoloð (a, o) [swelan]	glow, fire, flame
syn	sin	syn, synn	
ta	toe	ta, tan	
tid	time	tîd	period, season, while, on tîde at the proper time: hour, feast-day, festal-tide, canonical hour or service, ['tide']
tranboren	trans-born; trans*		
tweoneleohht	twilight	tweoneleohht	twêolic (î, ý) - doubtful, ambiguous, equivocal twêon, twêode - to doubt, hesitate, seem doubtful twêonian (ý) - to doubt, be uncertain, hesitate ûht, ûhta - twilight, dusk, early morning, dawn. on ûhtan at daybreak. tô ûhtes towards dawn: nocturns
ufan	from above	ufan	
unc	us two	unc	

ungewiss	uncertainty, ignorance, unconsciousness	ungewiss, unwittig	
unhold	disloyal, unfriendly, hostile	unhold	
unholda	monster, devil	unholda	
unswefn	bad dream	unswefn	
up	up	up	
ure	our	ure	
us	us	us	
ut	out	ut	
wæt	wet	wæt (â, ê), wæta, wætan, ±wæterian	moist, liquid, drink, wetness, moisture, humours, fluid, water, to wet, moisten, irrigate
wæter	water	wæter	sea
we	we	we	
wyrm	worm	wyrm, smeawyrm, slingan (vb.)	serpent, snake; penis/phallus
yfel	evil, bad, ill	yfel, yfelcund	
ys	is	ys, wesan	to be: happen
þa	the, that, those (plural)	þa, þara, þæra, þam	
þa, þonne	then	þa, þonne	
þær	there	þær	
þæt	the, that, those (singular)	þæt, þæs, þam, þy, þon	
þas	this, these (plural)	þas, þisra, þissum	
þin	your (singular)	þin	
þis	this, these (singular)	þis, þisses, þissum, þys	
þu	you (singular)	þu, þe, þec	