



## Gender-as-Lived: The Coloniality of Gender in Schools as a Queer Teacher Listens in to Complicated Moments of Resistance

by A. K. O'Loughlin

### Abstract

*In this paper, I use Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) narrative method of "autohistoria" in concert with theoretical analysis to reflect on my experiences as a queer teacher in the heteronormative United States schooling system. These reflections are aimed at unpacking the ways in which racialization, sexual orientation and coloniality are inseparably tied to living out one's gender. It is this phenomenon of "Gender-as-Lived" that I urge become a focus of identity development research in education studies and is my central concern in this post-intentional phenomenological study. Furthermore, Anzaldúa's conceptualization of the liminal zone of "nepantla" as an embodied and in-between space of resistance offers to transform the practice of teaching into a vocation of healing.*

### Introduction

I echo the sentiment of María Lugones:

In this paper I want to figure out how to think about intimate, everyday resistant interactions to the colonial difference. (Lugones, 2010, p. 743)

#### Monday

*On Monday I am driving toward the school where I teach at 7:00 a.m. After I drop my six year old off at her school, I remember how the gas light in my car came on two days ago. I stir both my body and vehicle forward, wondering if I can make it to the Holiday gas station near my work on the edge of downtown, the gas sold there usually a nickel cheaper than at the ones where I live in South Minneapolis. I pass my school building with gratitude and pull next door into the gas station parking lot. Other customers mill back and forth between cars and station. It is one of those already sunny autumn days and*

*getting warmer. I can feel the unexpected heat on the flesh of my cheek; I am overdressed in my down coat and boots.*

*A middle-aged white man busy eating breakfast sausage wrapped in wax paper thinks the same thing. "Beautiful day," he declares, walking toward me. "Yes," I agree, saying nothing more. He is closer now calling out, "You're overdressed in that jacket, beautiful." I tilt my chin down and sideways toward the station to avoid his gaze and make a small nod. I notice that Mustafa<sup>1</sup>, Jamal and Abdi, students of mine, are waiting in line at the counter behind the glass door. I wonder if they see me. Hurrying now to put the nozzle discreetly back into the pump to go, I turn around and the man is waiting a foot from my face. He stares at me, taking his time crumpling the now empty wax paper in his hands and depositing it in the square concrete garbage*

<sup>1</sup> All names have been changed to maintain anonymity

bin beside us. "I said ... you're overdressed in that jacket," he repeats himself. "It is warm ..." is all I can think to say, my pre-coffee brain focusing on the space his body takes up in between my body and my car door.

I see it before it happens; in one motion he moves toward me and grabs hold of the zipper of my coat near my throat. "I'll help you take this off," he whispers as his body cuts through space. His proximity breaks the tension I held in my body from a possibility that he would try to touch me. He is touching me now and I am cursing at him, stepping away, stepping toward him. I am cursing at him as the chime from the door keeping track of my students' bodies in and out of convenience store sounds across the morning parking lot. I look at my students as they stop outside the door clutching their breakfast Takis, watching in confusion. The man looks at the three 17, 18- year-old black and brown men who stare at him; he forces a pointed scoff as he walks away. We watch. "What the fuck was that?" Mustafa, who is in my AP Literature class, breaks the silence. "Do you want me to go kick that guy's ass for you?" he asks earnestly. "No, Mustafa," I affirm quickly, already too aware of the police presence in front of the light rail 100 yards away, already too aware that the man left because he noticed I was "accounted" for by other men. "No Mustafa," I sigh. "I want many things in this world, but I do not want that". "Okay, Miss," he nods in agreement, "I feel you".

This paper will address "the problem" of gendered violence in schools and how this violence is a symptom of cis-hetero white supremacist patriarchy, as a colonial gender project. I will discuss how embodied understandings of Gender-as-Lived in schooling may move students, teachers and teacher-educators closer to schools as spaces of resistance and healing. In the first section, *Statement of the Problem*, I begin with the scope of the "problem" of gendered violence in schools. I use the above vignette to illustrate the way that gender is always lived out in embodied interaction with both one's own racialization and sexual orientation, as well as inter-subjectively played out with others' identities. This Gender-as-Lived is the site of both gendered violences and important resistances. Next, in the second section, *Philosophical Claims*, I spend a significant portion of this paper outlining my theoretical framework on the coloniality of gender performance derived from the work of scholars María Lugones and Judith Butler as well as social constructionist theory to examine how everyday gendered acts produce the social project of gender as both racialized and often constrained within heterosexism. Finally, in the third section, *Statement of the Phenomenon*, I set up the details of my own forthcoming

phenomenological research study on Gender-as-Lived, as well as urge the community of phenomenological research to take up the phenomenon of Gender-as-Lived in all its embodied and contextual complexities for further interpretation.

### Statement of the Problem

A conversation about Gender-as-Lived in schools is a conversation about both violence and resistance. Violence and feelings of unsafety in and around schools have been extensively documented by educational researchers, and yet student and teacher bodies are still under threat in United States schools. We know that 73% of LGBTQ+ youth report being verbally harassed or threatened because of their identities, and 95% report having trouble sleeping at night due to these threats and related distress (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2018). Recently surveyed, one in four college-age women report having been sexually assaulted (Cantor et al., 2015) and 23% of women and 14% of men experience intimate partner violence before the age of 18 (Centres for Disease Control, 2017). Female black adolescents are disproportionately suspended and expelled from school, which push-out catalyzes adolescent homelessness and arrest (Morris, 2016), and the criminality of black, masculinized bodies is an epidemic that endangers the bodily safety of school-age young men on a daily basis (Muhammad, 2011).

When we talk about violence in schools toward *queer* youth, young black *men*, and *women* in domestic partnership, the site of this violence is a gendered body as it is lived out inseparable from race, class, language, dis/ability, sexuality, religion and other socialized identity markers. Gendered violence in schools is a problem that impacts every single school in the United States to varying degrees and with myriad complexities. I contend that exploring Gender as it is lived out in embodied, intersubjective and contextual ways may open up access to resistances. We know that the safety of students from violence is fundamental to their ability not only to learn, but to contribute to society and self-actualize. It is therefore a moral imperative for education researchers, teachers and citizens alike to work toward both safer and existentially freer schools for our youth.

As a teacher in public education for nearly ten years, a teacher educator for five, and a student for twenty-five years, I have encountered gendered violence toward my students, my colleagues and myself on more occasions than are bearable to recount. In this study, I practise feminist and queer post-intentional phenomenology to move closer to and listen in to the focal phenomenon of Gender-as-Lived. This phenomenon is significant due to the catastrophic magnitude of gendered violence in US schools, as well as the multitudinous opportunities for resistance that getting smarter at Gender-as-Lived may perhaps offer us.

## Tuesday

*On Tuesday afternoon I return to my classroom for prep hour. There is a large, round, dark wooden table in the centre of the room I share with two other teachers. Another teacher, Ms Jackie, sits at the table cutting half sheets of paper with writing rubrics upon them, sipping her coffee. "I didn't tell you ..." she begins abruptly. I turn to look at her inquisitively as I cross the room to set my coat and bag down beside my desk. "I didn't tell you," she repeats as she continues, "about after work on Friday when I went out with the other teachers." After work-week drinks is a ritual for near 30% of the school staff, the clean third who do not have children to pick up after school, who do not observe avoidance of khamr (wine), who are mostly white. "Mr Leoni told me that he had to write up Mr Galel for 'joking' to his class about where they should beat their wives so that the bruises won't show." I hold my breath. I have nothing to say in response. I think about the students who had been listening to Mr Galel in class when he spoke these words, if they were scared, if they thought his joke was indeed funny.*

*My focus returns to my classroom and Ms Jackie's face looking expectantly at me. I wonder if this teacher is telling me this, here, now, in my classroom, because she knows that I also incorporate the practice of Islam into my life as Mr Galel does, if she wants me to lead her away from her own xenophobic prejudices or affirm them. Perhaps she tells me this because she and I are both socialized as women, because she knows that there is a 33% chance in this country that we will each have experienced domestic violence (see *The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV], 2018*), because she knows that we both have. Or perhaps she needs someone to talk to because she is confused, because Mr Galel and she are friends who eat lunch together and bring their families to visit one another's homes for dinner.*

## Philosophical Claims

In this section, I will provide basic theoretical framing on (1) the role of narrative in phenomenological research, (2) our working premises about the coloniality of gender performance as informed deeply by the work of Maria Lugones and Judith Butler, and (3) gender as socialized through daily acts. All three philosophical claims are fundamental to our exploration of the lived experience of intersubjective gender identity development.

## Toward Embodied Understandings Using Narrative in Phenomenological Research

The memories included as vignettes in this chapter can never be fully explained, analysed or understood. This is perhaps the most important point I can make in this paper. The legacy of racial projects in the United States (Omi & Winant, 1986) employed both past and present to subjugate communities on the altar of white supremacist economic gain cannot be simplified in an anecdote. Along with healing, there is harm done in remembering. There is harm done in not-telling bits of stories, in amputations of memory and synthesis. Yet, I argue that including narrative account in phenomenological research is a uniquely generative way to talk about experiences of the body and embodied identities toward phenomenological sense-making (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). When my colleague spoke of beating women to his 7th grade students, that pain showed up in my body. When the man at the gas station attempts to unzip my coat without consent, it is not the two-dimensional word "gender" that it impacts, but my embodiment of it. We move closer to receiving and understanding that feeling through narrative. I find it self-evident that racialization and gendering are co-constructed. And, rather than proving that connection in this paper, I aim, instead, to use memory of embodied experience to dig into *the how* of the co-construction of racialization and gendering, of what it feels like, to quiet down and move closer in to listen to the phenomenon of Gender-as-Lived toward embodied understandings without any expectation of an arrival to full knowledge.

## Intersubjective Identity Construction

When gender operates, a gendered person is also always racialized; furthermore, that racialization and gendering is dependent on heterosexist notions. For example, in the first vignette, my intersecting identities as a queer person socialized as a white woman impact my experience of threat, relative safety and erasure as "the sausage man" approaches me to forcibly unzip my coat. I am a queer, white, non-binary, middle-classed person socialized as a woman. When the man at the gas station in the first vignette read my identity as "woman", he demonstrates what Maria Lugones (2010) refers to as the human: non-human binary with his entitlement to touching my body and attempting to unzip my coat without consent. His choices coerce my body to participate in a heterosexist exchange, as well as the human:less-than-human power dynamic.

In the same vignette, my white body that was gendered as woman and in distress threatened the bodily safety of the young, black and brown students socialized as men with a nearby police force that surveilles them constantly at the gas station next to our school as a means of protecting whiteness and white property "rights". This is due to a historical legacy of young, black men being

punished for being in proximity to or witnessing the sexuality of white women (Muhammad, 2011; Pickens, 2013; Woods, 2015). My gender and sexuality as an educator is rendered in relation to the man in the parking lot; my students' surveilled bodies are racialized in relation to whiteness. There is more going on here than individual intersectionality; instead, it is the identities constructed in relation to Others' identities that begin to unfold Gender-as-Lived as an embodied and contextual experience.

### Wednesday

*During a circle discussion in a university classroom, I bring up the eco-feminist argument about using "she" pronouns for exploitable resources, transport or volatile storms (Warren, 2000). My cousins who fish off the west coast of Ireland in County Clare refer to both their boats and the sea as she – as in "May she give us more fish next year (referring to the ocean and the supply of fish available for catch and sale near the Aran Islands)" or "Don't worry, she can take the tar that peels off the bottom of the boats." "Maybe it's a question of colonial language," suggests my professor. A brief verbal survey is taken around the room; the class discovers how many languages both known and spoken in this room do not in fact use gendered pronouns. In Ojibwe, Lao, Finnish, Saami, Old Gaelic, Meskwaki and an indigenous language of Mexico (as well as many other languages), there are no gendered pronouns. In Finnish, the all-genders pronoun for a person is Hän (as in Han Solo). Upon learning this, I am shaken with awe and have a strange lightness gathering near my diaphragm like a balloon. I wonder how my childhood would have shifted if adults around me had said things like "Hän is very smart", or "Hän wants to study physics", or even the thought that sinks in slightly less flippantly, "Hän likes girls".*

*"Lē'ahi is technically a dormant volcano," our host Ken in Hawaii clarifies a week later, as he drives us windward around the island of Oahu, "so you never know, she might decide to go off at any moment." In Hawaiian, the language of the location of the Lē'ahi volcano, there are no gendered pronouns. "She might decide to go off at any moment" because the daily acts of coloniality of gender create her volatile, mysterious, primitive, feminine nature, predicated on the colonial project of hierarchical dichotomy. "She" ... the pronoun echoes in my mind.*

### The Human:Non-Human Binary and Gender at Work

María Lugones's philosophical outline of the coloniality of gender is a central premise in this work. In *Towards a Decolonial Feminism* (2010), Lugones details how gender as we "know" it today is a colonial project and fictitious construct, which benefits the cis-heterosexual European man directly. This framework is important to our study of how Gender-as-Lived operates, since it clarifies that the phenomenon being studied is not gender itself, but rather the constructs *at work* in contemporary society.

Lugones begins by explaining how she "understand[s] the dichotomous hierarchy between the human and the non-human as the central dichotomy of colonial modernity" (p. 743). Through the gaze of the colonizer, the colonized are less than human, objectified in "their service of Western man" (p. 743). In the acts of colonization, the objectification of third world peoples, of Indigenous peoples, of African peoples, aims to reduce these nations to tools for bourgeois European financial and political gain. Even the bourgeois European woman is an object in Lugones's framework of coloniality, reduced to a tool "who reproduce[s] race and capital through her sexual purity, passivity and being home-bound ..." (p. 743).

In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler summarizes Simone de Beauvoir's (1949/1952) question of what constitutes *woman*: "Is there some commonality among 'women'", Butler asks, "that pre-exists their oppression, or do 'women' have a bond by virtue of their oppression alone? Is there specificity to women's culture that is independent of their subordination by hegemonic, masculine cultures?" (p. 5). Butler presents this tension between gender essence versus gender socialization to emphasize the category of "woman" without any stable definition. From a place where "woman" has no universally shared denotation, Butler develops her theory of gender as performance. There is no "deeper" gender which generates gender expression; rather, our gender is defined by our expressions and performances. Lugones further critiques the language of "woman" when she details the absence denoted in the intersectional category of "Black Woman" through categorical purity. Due to the hierarchical dichotomies of modernity, Lugones reveals the sign "woman" stands for white women. "'Black' stands for black men" (p. 757). Intersectional identities are thus rendered impossible within the homogenous, atomic and separable colonial system of gender.

In conversations I have with colleagues, friends and family regarding the socially constructed nature of gender, one tenet that many radical people in my life hold on to over and over again to justify colonial gender difference is the idea of empirical gender roles. For instance, my

colleague may point out that in many cultures around the world, and at many different times, gender role differences between the categories of men and women have existed. This argument is premised on a straw man fallacy that Lugones's work helps to clarify. Lugones does not posit that gender is not expressed in communities of non-modern thought, but, rather, that the kind of gendering pervasive today is unique to the colonial context. That colonization, Lugones argues, moulds/moulded gender expression variance to be racialized, hierarchical, binary and causal (i.e., one sex to one gender).

I extend Lugones's argument about the impossibility of identity as woman. I identify, at the same time, as both not-a-woman and "woman" as a political category. My experience and expression of my own gender is non-binary. I feel no essential womanness to my being and never have. I respect that some individuals do connect with a conceptualized core of femininity – but that simply has never been the case for me. That nevertheless does not mean that I do not share experiences with other persons socialized as women, subordinated in womanness and also, importantly, resisting in womanness. Diana Chandara, a colleague who researches identity formation of/with Southeast Asian American Youth<sup>2</sup>, often troubles the language of the category "Asian" because of its problematic generality and coded signification. However, she reminds us that the political category of "Asian" is still useful for movement building. This idea is freeing to me both personally and politically, as I add the identity of "woman" as a political category" as occurring simultaneously with my non-binary gender expression.

### Thursday

*On Thursday afternoon, I pull into my gravel driveway after work to see my friend, fellow teacher and housemate Kendra in her car next to mine. She is sitting in the driver's seat, back erect, lost in thought. We open our car doors in tandem and mull our way into our home to grade papers. It takes ten minutes, maybe more, of rather silent tea-making and folder arranging before the tension in Kendra's jaw slackens in decision. "I was asked if I was gay during class today," Kendra illuminates the air in between us. Her eyes move slowly from her work to find mine. "Hmmpop," I grunt and then pause ... "Tell me more." "Isse leaned down next to my ear during graded discussion and whispered – 'Miss, are you gay?' while I was grading the socratic seminar on the theme of love in Coelho's*

*The Alchemist." I shift my hips and find a seat next to Kendra, sensing her reflection undone. Kendra identifies as a woman and dates a man. She did not want to respond with a "No" to Isse's quandary, even though she could have. She explains she doesn't want to answer "No" because I cannot, because seven other teachers out of 35 cannot, because the last teacher who answered "Yes" was fired within a week at the school where we both teach.*

*The school where we both teach is a public charter high school. There are many queer bodies in the school building, both teachers and students. There is also a strong homonegative school culture. In many ways, our school represents an average one of the near 7,000 public charter high schools in this country (National Alliance for Charter Schools, 2018). When Isse whispered into Ms Kendra's ear today, quietly enough for only her to hear, his question did not exist separate from the homonegative shame and violence that preceded it in this space we share. Kendra continues to puzzle. I close my eyes and remember a student's rage last week when he spat on his classmate, calling him a f\*ggot. I remember Sarah, who had witnessed this, proclaiming that, if her brother were gay, killing him would be more humane than letting him live in sin. What does it mean that I cannot answer my students' questions about my own sexuality in the place where I work, where I spend the majority of my life? What does it mean that a student like Isse, who asks these questions, cannot safely give an honest answer either? The common response to questions about sexuality in many schools is: "We don't talk about that here". How does this silencing impact student and teacher bodies? Is a climate of silence meant to quiet us until we no longer even exist?*

### Daily Acts of Gender

Social Constructionists agree that *gender knowledge* (about what certain genders like "woman" and "man" are, are like and can do) is a social product (Marecek, Crawford, & Popp, 2004) that defines gender expression in relation to hegemonic masculinity (Stacey & Connell, 1988). West and Zimmerman (1987/2002) contend that this social construction is negotiated in everyday acts of "doing gender" like the complex and overlapping acts of a teacher responding to a student's question about sexual orientation or the "sausage man's" choices at the gas station. Furthermore, many quotidian acts of "doing gender" are racialized practices of heterosexuality and heteronormative behaviours (West & Zimmerman, 1987/2002) as well as cis-gender expression. Queer and transgender youth experience disproportionate discrimination

<sup>2</sup> Diana Chandara presented her work on the identity development of Southeast Asian American Youth, including the concept of Asian as a political category useful for movement building at the 2018 Emerging Scholars Conference held at the University of Minnesota at Twin Cities.

at school, with 75% percent of transgender youth reporting feeling unsafe in school because of their gender expression (Movement Advancement Project, 2017) and every single incident of LGBT victimization increasing the likelihood of self-harming behaviour by 2.5 times (Mustanski, Garofalo, & Emerson, 2010). The lived experience of belonging, safety and/or alienation of youth is taught in schools through the norming, delineating and stabilizing of “sexual difference”.

### Resistances

While Gender-as-Lived may be the site of gendered violence, violence does not define gender. I hope these vignettes also speak to the way that solidarities are enacted and how Gender-as-Lived is a site of resistance to the binary colonial difference. When Mustafa nods at me in agreement in the gas station parking lot and says “I feel you”, we practise the visibilization of one another’s contextual identities and resist the cis-hetero white supremacist patriarchy that threatens us both in very different, but interdependent ways. As a teacher, I work and hope to show up for my students as Mustafa did for me that day. As a teacher, it is this in-between space of both gendered and gendering, object and subject, receiver and reinscriber that creates what Gloria Anzaldúa refers to as the liminal space of *Nepantla* (1987), where in-between identities coalesce in sometimes painful ways that have the potential to break open the binaries of colonial thought and transform teaching into a vocation of healing.

I experience sensations of joy, hope, relief and release when Lugones returns to the constancy of resistance within this colonial gender system. We are “other than what the hegemon makes us to be” (2010, p. 746), Lugones affirms, because the situatedness of coloniality generates constant resistance. Lugones describes the resistance from a colonized situatedness on page when she reflects in her 2003 book *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*: “Resistance is the tension between subjectification (the forming/informing of the subject) and active subjectivity, that minimal sense of agency required for the oppressing ← → resisting relation being an active one, without appeal to the maximal sense of agency of the modern subject” (as cited in Lugones, 2010, p. 746). No human being is only what the colonizer imagines him or her to be. The colonizer views colonized peoples as non-human. Yet, the colonized are surviving, communicating, connecting – a humanness that is paradoxical to the colonial non-human paradigm. It is the border crossing of this colonial imaginary with the surviving and thriving of the colonized that is the womb of resistance, a tension that is always already becoming.

### Friday

*On Friday afternoon I call my mother and ask her to send me scanned photos of her sisters*

*and cousins on patios in the northern Nordic countryside and the Northwoods of the United States, all eight women uproarious in laughter. With matching faces, the photos shows them passing food around the outdoor table; their unity a resistance to the plan their grandfather made for them. When my great-grandfather Heikki came to America nearly one hundred years ago from the land surrounding Lake Inari in Northern Finland, he came to escape civil conflict including the persecution of the Sami people and lack of economic opportunity. He asked his wife and daughters to remain behind. Upon arrival, I infer that he realized privilege was a choice for him as a newly becoming white man in the Americas. He brought his sons (who could also be racialized and gendered hierarchically in the United States) with him to this new country in the northern Michigan countryside, including my grandfather, who was raised among Heikki’s new wife and children. Descendants in the United States and Finland grew and bore eight daughters, a blessing and/or curse bestowed. These daughters found one another after nearly one hundred years, and when they get together, they laugh in circles at jokes that I cannot even follow and talk about their dreams.*

### Statement of Phenomenon (Research Questions)

At this point, I must admit to both the reader and myself that my goals in this post-intentional phenomenological study are not apolitical. In fact, I do not believe that any choice made in a school can possibly be apolitical, since schools are procreant agents of socialization. The truth is, I desire to collectively resist the colonial gender project and to heal personally from the ways that I have learned to reinscribe it.

### Research Questions

I urge phenomenological researchers to consider both teachers’ and learners’ experiences and to ask “*How is Gender-as-Lived at work in schooling?*” Secondary research questions help to further explore the operation of gender identity development as it is tied up with embodied racialization and sexual orientation. These include: (1) What is the lived experience of rendering gender? (2) How do racialization and sexual orientation impact gendered notions in schools? (3) What are the opportunities for resistance to normative gender narratives presented in schools?

### Context of the Phenomenon

I am very much still coming to understand the multiple and varied contexts that the phenomenon of Gender-as-Lived shows up in. Broadly, I am looking at how

Gender-as-Lived shows up in schools. Sometimes this context is explicit; sometimes this context is implicit. Gender is racialized and sexualized between students, teachers and educators. Sometimes this rendering reifies dominant discourses; sometimes this disrupts dominant discourses; most of the time, it does both. The gendered embodiment of racialization and sexual orientation are at work in every school in America. Therefore, this phenomenological study could take place at any learning institution. While we assumed that all individuals have an understanding of their own gender, tapping into the lived experience of queer embodiment of Gender-as-Lived “looks behind the table”, as Sara Ahmed puts it in *Queer Phenomenology* (2007), or seeks to queer the frames from which we gaze and notice individuals and communities that have been historically marginalized.

In this study, I call upon the research methodology of Post-Intentional Phenomenology (Vagle, 2014) with ontological commitments and research methods inherited from feminist and queer phenomenological theory. As I dig into my own preliminary phenomenological research on Gender-as-Lived in schools, I choose to focus first on one of the five schools at which I have taught and built relationships within.

### Partial Significance

As this reflection comes to an end, I want to reiterate that this paper endeavoured to identify the phenomenon of Gender-as-Lived in its multiple, partial and varied contexts. In operation, Gender-as-Lived often looks like gendered violences, and yet it also generates resistance. The opening vignette of some sexist remarks from a “dude” at a gas station is one rather benign example, in fact. It is an easier memory for me to begin with. How do I make sense of sexual assault in the schools I have taught in? Or the administrative silence in the wake of these violences? Of the remarks of shame and alienation I hear at times whispered, at times yelled

at the students? While gendered violences are pervasive, so are solidarities and resistances. I aim to take this time to quieten down and listen in to these complicated and embodied moments of resistance. I hope that the account which emerges can offer teachers and teacher educators insight into the messy practices of teaching from an in-between space toward schools as spaces of healing from the colonial gender difference.

### Saturday

*Dedre gets off work and brings me Palo Santo to burn while I write this paper. It hurts to remember. She understands. We taught together for two years and she is also queer and tall and in-school while she works full-time. In many other ways, we do not share the same experiences of life, loss and love. “One does not resist the coloniality of gender alone”, I read to Dedre from my Lugones text (p. 754) as we sprawl across freshly washed sheets. As I read her the daily memories collected in this reflection, different coalitions of identity jump from the page: sexuality and religion; racialization and gender; class, language and cultural capital. In these moments of coloniality, resistance, solidarity and sharing are always already present. The dialogue and relationships between students, teachers, family and selves weave – they are more than a sum of their parts. “This was just one week”, I think aloud to the popcorn ceiling, “and also one whole week, like one whole week of my life feels saturated with the coloniality of gender”. Dedre lets out a sigh, rolls over to her right hip and props up on one elbow. “Not the whole week”, she teases. “What are you doing tomorrow? I mean ... what are we doing tomorrow?” The truth is, I don’t know; what happens tomorrow is still undecided*

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