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TRACING THE LINEAGES OF DECOLONIAL THINKING THROUGH LATINX FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

The Colonial/Modern [Cis]Gender System and Trans World Traveling

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Abstract

Trans of Color inclusion is not simply a gesture of affectionate commitment to María Lugones's theory of impure communities. Rather, it is required for the enactment of her liberatory theory within and across communities of color. While María Lugones's historico-theoretical analysis of the colonial/modern gender system relies upon anthropological citations of Native gender and sexual diversity, she argues that we must bracket gender for the benefit of [cis]women of color feminisms. However, if this bracketing does not first carefully uncover cisgender histories of violence, then this decolonial feminist praxis reinscribes the invisibility of transphobia, racism, and colonialism's violent intersections, performing another mode of erasure and silence on Trans, Two-Spirit, and Nonbinary Native, Black, and Latinx peoples. In placing Lugones's texts into conversation with the voices of Two-Spirit and Trans of Color theorists, I argue that the mutilation of trans flesh makes possible the integration of [cis]People of Color into the gender–sex binary even if as failures. More important, this essay offers the beginnings of a phenomenological account of Trans World-Traveling, where the unruliness of Two-Spirit and Trans of Color bodies cocoons decolonial worlds from within the spiraling folds of abject flesh—always already in infra-communication with ancestral pasts, presents, and futures.

In "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," María Lugones introduces one of her most influential contributions to the field of *decolonial feminisms*: the colonial/modern gender system. Tracing multiple genealogies of racialized/gendered violence, Lugones offers a historico-theoretical method through which to challenge naturalized notions of gender, race, and sex. Later developed in "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," Lugones diagnoses the coloniality of gender as a central site of analysis for decolonizing our minds, bodies, and communities.[1] Relying on anthropological examples of gender variance within "precolonial" Native societies, Lugones argues that during colonization and its contemporary continuations, the categories of "man" and "woman" were projected onto black and brown bodies as an analytical tool by which to sever sacred, communal relations among Black, Indigenous, and Latinx life-worlds.[2] As the Western gender binary forcibly assimilated Black and Brown folks

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into bifurcated and hierarchized gender systems, this inclusion simultaneously produced raced-gendered-sexed embodiments as a constitutive outside to the categories of "man" and "woman," viewing peoples of color as failures juxtaposed to the ideal of *real* women or men. In Lugones's account, women and men of color were viewed as savage animals in need of taming, domestication, or violent discipline in order to attain the status of womanhood or manhood respectively, where such gender classifications did not exist preconquest. In other words, gender legitimation was reserved for those who were constructed as "human" within the colonial order, that is, land-owning, bourgeois white men and women, continually justifying the dehumanizing structures of slavery and settler colonization as a naturalized necessity. Ultimately, Lugones argues that we must bracket gender as a way to move past the hegemony that the coloniality of gender holds over communities of color.

However, rather than viewing gender variance and liberatory gender relations as precolonial conceptions lost in the destructive aftermath of colonialism, this article demonstrates that gender- diverse identities are neither extinct nor romantically antiquated. I contend that the colonial/modern gender system could not maintain its supremacy without the abjection of Trans, Two-spirit, and Gender-Nonconforming peoples of color, enunciating the ways in which transness and race are inextricably bound within the colonial project. Lugones writes that she wishes to witness bodies in movement against the colonial/modern gender system. She understands that to view women of color solely in relation to the colonial/modern gender system is to strip the body of its resistant sense-making abilities. When Two-Spirit and Trans People of Color are forced to retreat into a chrysalis as the dominant world of sense negates our existence, what is at stake is the impossible task of a recreating the world anew from only the materiality of our flesh. It is to crack open the split of lacerated edges among our colonial wounds, bearing the pain of what it means to weave skin into the fabric of an alternate social world, a world we realize our bodies have always already inhabited because we were never meant to fit into the colonial/modern gender system nor were we made by the colonial/modern gender system. Rather, Two-Spirit and Trans People of Color are continually remaking themselves as a pilgrimage through one's multiplicity of faces.

To be sure of my share in this stake, I write this article as a mixed, nonbinary, Cherokee-Sephardic Jew. I know the possibility of my own identity only through colonization: its many diasporas that have intersected to produce my existence, following backwards from urban barrios, to the trail of tears, Caribbean exodus, Spanish expulsions, and the many other histories I may never come to know. But my body intimately feels its impossibility in my curves that droop unevenly; in the contours that demand on spilling over and over until they again curl back into my ambiguously light-freckled skin. I choose to write from this second place, allowing my body not to take up space, but to rupture it. As Lugones would have us understand, cocooning is not just a self-transformation, but a radical recreating of a new world in which we can fly. While inside this chrysalis, I feel gender blues and diasporic homesickness for lands I will never see. In this darkness, I remember the ancestral stories that have nourished my impossible body since childhood while sitting on my grandmother's lap. It is for these reasons that the bracketing of gender not only reinforces the binary, but disallows me from existing within the contexts of decolonization. Yet here I am/we are, already as Two-Spirit, Black and Trans Latinx peoples.

This article is divided into two major sections. The first traces gendered colonial hierarchies between cis and trans bodies of color, interrogating (a) the naturalization of the sex/gender binary, (b) the gendercide of Two-Spirit peoples and contemporary

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cisgender violence, and (c) the bracketing of gender. The second offers a liberatory account of trans of color embodiment, ending with the notion of trans world-traveling as a development to Lugones's account of ontological pluralism.

Two-Spirit Archives and Epistemic Erasures: Following Hierarchies Written in the Flesh

Desiring a deep sense of recognition that is denied to abject flesh, it is tempting to project macro-narratives of colonization onto others' histories. One way in which scholarship can erase the difference of others across coalitional ties is through a repudiation of sameness, internalizing the arrogant perception of settler worlds into one's own worldview. Inhabiting an arrogant perception, we can erase not only others' lived experiences, but also our complicity in them (see, for example, Ortega 2009; DiPietro 2019). In "Decolonial Woes and Practices of Un-knowing," Mariana Ortega describes the many ways that scholars of color can reinforce the invisibility of certain groups or individuals through overdetermining macro-narratives of decolonization, appropriating the labor of Latina feminisms in order to further obscure the consumptive practices of the academy on women of color bodies, stories, and relations. Reifying the colonial logics of exclusion and erasure that fragment communities of color according to colonial logics, Ortega intimately reflects that her "[c]oncern is not so much about Mignolo. It is about us. It is about those who have taken up the decolonial project (and so many have—we even have decolonial cookbooks) and whether we ourselves will replicate the very same silences that theory such as decoloniality, which rests on border thinking and delinking, negates" (Ortega 2017, 509).

Lugones's analysis of the colonial/modern gender system performs a type of silencing and erasure to trans of color narratives insofar as it fails to see within colonial difference. Unsurprisingly, given her commitment to impure communities, Lugones does say she explicitly welcomes difference, writing, "I want to see the multiplicity in the fracture of the locus: both the enactment of the coloniality of gender and the resistant response from a subaltern sense of self" (Lugones 2010, 754). However, what's missing is not that Lugones refuses to see gendered embodied difference, but rather that whenever she mentions the social construction of gender, embedded within that structure is always already a hidden and bracketed [cis]. What is invisible in Lugones's analysis of the colonial/modern [cis]gender system is a critical engagement with how the gender binary actively maintains the opposition of cis and trans in order to even make distinctions of "man" and "woman" or "human" and "nonhuman" viable. If Lugones challenges us to see colonial difference as itself a crucial feminist injunction into decolonial theory, then we must begin with a complex historical acknowledgment of how cisgender privilege is intimately tied up within colonial structures.

The oppositional distinction between cis and trans serves as a cut to demarcate the bodies that coloniality finds salvageable if assimilated into identity categories, and the flesh that coloniality must abject in order to maintain its monopoly on the conditions for gender possibility. Mel Chen's *Animacies* identifies this biopolitical process as the economization of animacy hierarchies, which organize the matter of life. Chen briefly discusses this in the context of colonialism, drawing upon Aimé Césaire's concept of colonization as *thingification* (see Césaire 2000, 42; Chen 2012, 49). It is important to notice that thingification takes on a different kind of abjection than the animalizing of bodies in the human/nonhuman distinction. Although similar and overlapping, thingification is the active *making* of an object that requires a violent manipulation of the

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materiality of one's flesh such that it appears not as a body, but as malleable, exploitable material. Things, objects, and stuff are lower on the animacy hierarchy, justifying their use as readily extractable resources. Moreover, Chen's analysis of how gender and sexuality permeate the animal/human border points to how those positioned lower on the animacy hierarchy undergo an ungendering and desexualizing process that disarticulates one's flesh as human in order to render it disposable. In this disposability, dehumanized flesh becomes profitable as a manipulable material for colonial projects. Abject beings do not enter into normative economies except under violent conditions that consume, appropriate, and distort our flesh through its continual wounding.

The loss of gendered-sexed status strips the body of its affective-relational structures, constituting the very condition of abject flesh as sequestered away for extraction and, as such, readily available for reinjury until it can be rendered disposable at a later time. Hortense Spillers's "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" maps out this economy of desire in the context of the Atlantic slave trade and the postslavery era of the antebellum South, where the extraction of excessive, ungendered, captive black flesh gained value only in its eventual extermination. In denying the gendered status of "man" or "woman" to black bodies, the conditions of enslavement created a structure of fungibility between black female and male flesh as ready for remaking through its continual wounding, whipping, and tearing. This mutilation forced captive black flesh to bear the cultural coding of gender differentiation through the hieroglyphics of scarred skin. Reduced to a "thing," genderless and sexless, "the captive body becom[es] *being for* the captor" (Spillers 1987, 67). In this dominant discourse, "material values engender symbolic and discursive ones . . . in perfect synecdoche harmony," requiring the fabric of black bodies and worlds to serve as an American grammar (Spillers 2003, xiii). In this historical moment and its continued legacies, the function of black flesh served as fungible, raw material for the remediation of gender and sex within metaphysical terms, grafting a discourse by which White subjects could access and enjoy the status of human. As understood by both Spillers and Chen, *wounding*, then, constitutes a habitual mode of violence that structures the ontological and ethical relations between beings and others through a hierarchical system of categorization.

To take seriously Lugones's call to see within colonial difference, one must learn to tantear por resistant histories and resistant selves—feeling for others who also shift against the grain of social structures, their skins in searing friction against the grating of the border's sutures. This requires not a bracketing of gender, but rather a reinvention of our flesh away from colonial modernity. Perhaps this is also why Spillers is read as a part of the Trans of Color canon, because she does not shy away from the monstrosity of abjection. She writes: "[I am] less interested in joining the ranks of gendered femaleness than gaining the insurgent ground as female social subject. Actually *claiming* the monstrosity (of a female with potential to 'name'), which her culture imposes in blindness, 'Sapphire' might rewrite after all a radically different text for female empowerment" (Spillers 1987, 80). Spillers's essay leaves us with the possibility of what it would mean to re-create gender, to dwell within its fractured locus and to yet still not be consumed by its fragmentation. Spillers is invested not only in describing the complexity of captive and fungible black flesh, but also how this fungibility makes fugitivity possible—moments of flight, escape, and, perhaps, even liberation.

Drawing upon the Black feminist tradition as Trans of Color wisdom, C. Riley Snorton builds from within Spillers's theory of fungible flesh and its subversive potentialities in *Black on Both Sides* where he traces the historical phenomenon of fugitive Black persons "cross-dressing" in order to escape and pass through undetected under

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the violent conditions of captivity. Snorton argues that because black flesh was ordered outside of gender differentiation, then something like "gender indefiniteness" became a "critical modality of political and cultural maneuvering within figurations of blackness, illustrated, for example, by the frequency with which narratives of fugitivity included cross-gendered modes of escape" (Snorton 2017, 56). This *transitive expressivity of gender* within blackness gave rise to a kind of slippage between fungibility and fugitivity "in the twilight of former slavery" (56). Intentionally reading these moments as part of a Black Trans history, captive black flesh figures as a "critical genealogy for modern transness;" since the fungibility of ungendered black flesh gave rise to an understanding of gender as a mutable form of being (57).

In between the fluid movement of fungibility and fugitivity, gender does travel away from colonial modernity through what Snorton calls a "loop-hole." Given that the ungendering of blackness is also the context for imagining gender as subject to rearrangement, Snorton examines how fungibility became a "critical practice-cum-performance for" Black folks in the antebellum period (57). Looking to cross-gender modes of escape and wandering, fugitive narratives provide us with a kind of map, marking Spillers's concept of the "semiotic terrain of black bodies" (57). Snorton argues that, rather than a recovery of trans figures from the archive, these narratives of escape interrogate how the ungendering of blackness "became a site of fugitive maneuvers wherein the dichotomized and collapsed designations of male-man-masculine and female-woman-feminine remained open—that is fungible—and the black's figurative capacity to change form as a commoditized being engendered flow" (59). This critical move enables Snorton to argue that transness became conceivable as a different kind of being in the world that was not fixed or biologized but both fungible and fugitive. In other words, gender, or more accurately, "transness" became reversible within blackness as a condition of possibility. In this way, blackness and transness are inextricably linked as co-constituting categories.

Similarly, in relation to transness and Indigeneity, the fungibility of Two-Spirit personhood made possible the dispossession of Indigenous life as unbodied flesh. Indigenous cosmologies of Two-Spirit genders did not rely upon categorial logics, but on intimate networks of relationality. As an inherent threat to settler-colonial powers, the colonial/modern [cis]gender system sought to sequester Two-Spirit lives away from their fundamental role in Indigenous life-worlds. However, at the same time, this condition of unbodied fungibility became a way of unraveling the self into an assemblage of flesh, respooling one's material-affective relations towards decolonial possibilities. In *Asegi Stories*, multiracial Black and Cherokee Two-Spirit scholar Qwo-Li Driskill searches for Two-Spirit memories within the traces of archives, reading the silences as gaps where Two-Spirit life escaped its totalizing violence—a practice of reading Two-Spirit life where only absence appears. Dwelling within the fractured locus of subjectivity, Driskill tells us that this weaving of Two-Spirit histories is different. It is "an un-weaving. Unraveling these threads of colonial history to find how a pattern emerges. . . . Call it what you want: dreams, imaginings, trauma. I will call it *asegi* memory. I listen to stories of each of these waves of invasion and know that for every story colonists tell us, there are other stories that took place that colonists knew not to leave evidence of" (Driskill 2016, 93). Inhabiting a multiplicity of spatio-temporal orders within the touch of soft skin, the body cradles trauma, memory, and ancient knowledges as living remnants of different worlds which nonetheless continue to contour reality. "The weight of all of these routes [are] etched into my body," because flesh is also something one inherits (93). To read Two-Spirit life within the context of violent colonial histories, one must travel the flow of coagulated wounds as they stitch together

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peripheries of resistant subjectivities, allowing these openings to lead unto new folds of decolonial geographies, narratives, and poetry. Colonial archives only leave traces of Trans of Color life, which one may miss if they do not know how to intuit resistance, liberation, and joy from within its patterns just as one reads from a textile or beadwork.

Although Two-Spirit folks may inhabit a perpetual condition of non-sovereignty—dispossessed from not only one's lands but also recognition, love, and importance in communal life-worlds—Driskill ultimately argues that we must reclaim the stolen body of colonialism by re-entering into the vulnerability of eroticism. Mourning the loss of these intersubjective, affectionate ties that anchors one to sacred grounds and peoples, Two-Spirit poet Billy-Ray Belcourt notes that "to be unbodied is the 'sadder than that' of love, but it is also love's first condition of possibility" (Belcourt 2019, 59). He continues: "it seems difficult to speak of or to ontologize indigeneity without conjuring sadness and death … to be unbodied is the 'sadder than that' of love, but it is also love's first condition of possibility. That indigeneity births us into a relation of non-sovereignty is not solely coloniality's dirty work. No, it is also what emerges from a commitment to the notion that the body is an assemblage, a mass of everyone who's ever moved us, for better or for worse" (Belcourt 2019, 59). If gender is to be lived at all, then, let it be un-bodied. Let it be a knocking memory that together we re-write anew each time we touch in the flowering of scarred flesh. Spooling the extra material of skin on hand—the parts left over from the colonial projects which named us perpetually 'unfinished'—Two-Spirit fabrics, medicines, and art are "fueled often by a love for land, community, and forces in the universe" (Sinclair 2016). Rather than a commodity, Two-Spirit teachings and traditions reminded tribal life that "sex was only a form of exchange" in the twilight of intermingled flesh, between interlaced fingers, thighs, breaths, worries, gifts, and sweet knowledge. This is the particular medicine Two-Spirit peoples "gifted their communities [as] some of the greatest expressions of relationship making, carrying knowledge and experience on how to form ties using the body, spirit, and other parts of life" (Sinclair 2016).

Two-Spirit Mexika medicine-maker, community organizer, crisis worker, and beloved partner, Sarah María Acosta Ahmad also gently reminds us that this task of weaving together ancestral stories and our lived experiences requires a recognition of one's own positionality. Only this is where one may start. They write, "in weaving together the stories of our ancestors and our knowledge…these narratives are stitched like the colors of the four directions we wear on our ceremonial *huipiles*. Red for the blood our ancestors shed, Yellow like the fires we sing around, White like the vapours in the t*emazkal*, and Black like the night sky we dance under. All of this is tied together in long and thick black braids trailing down our backs" (Ahmad 2019, 3). Cherokee teachings remind us that there are not only four directions, but seven: north, east, west, south, above, below, and 'here from within the center' of where I stand. My position in the center engenders meanings for all the others; it is the only place by which one's feet may touch and be touched by the earth. A re-weaving of current relations unto decolonial possibilities requires one to not only interrogate their own positionality but to recognize the ancestral raíces which have sustained the ground one walks, especially when these roots solidify the knotted binds of other people's oppression (see, Levins-Morales 1998).

In re-threading "a spectrum of ties in the interests of Indigenous life-making across corporeal and incorporeal realities," Trans of Color and Two-Spirit bodies unravel the inter-relations of violence marked in the folds of our flesh, finding a splint that divides our relations from [cis]communities of color and disentangling it from the routine wounding of gendered, colonial violence (Sinclair 2016). Intuiting "where the pattern

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was thrown off" requires the labor of love to bear the pain of unweaving the past, so that we may continue "a reweaving of present and future" memories (Driskill 2016, 103). Let us begin, then, to follow the divergent threads that construct sex, gender, and race as separate relations in order to re-weave these histories anew.

The Naturalization of the Sex/Gender Binary

Lugones's work participates in the epistemic erasure of contemporary Two-Spirit and Trans of Color lives, widening the silences that already permeate violence against trans of color bodies in both mainstream discourses and communities of color. To see within colonial difference requires a critical awareness of cisgender privileges. On the second page of her essay, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," Lugones reveals the focus of her theoretical scope. She writes, "the framework [she] introduce[s] is wholly grounded in the feminisms of women of color and women of the Third World and arise from within them" (Lugones 2007, 187). Although Lugones utilizes Indigenous gender and sexual diversity as foundational to her historical analysis, Two-Spirit or Trans of Color scholarship remains, at best, decentered in her essays, erasing the complexity of trans histories of violence, survival, and resistance. In contrast, as a systematic repression of desire, the coloniality of gender thrives on the routine disappearance of Two-Spirit and Trans folks of color from our lands, communities, and scholarship. Although Lugones explicitly recognizes the incompleteness of binary gender formulations that concentrate solely on [cis]women-based oppressions, she misrecognizes gender and sex as separate yet co-animating categories, remaining trapped within a conception of gender as fixed to sex. In an interview with Mariana Ortega, Lugones explains,

> What I mean by *decolonial feminism* is tied to what I came to call "the coloniality of gender" . . . [I] understand gender as inseparable from race, but I do not think of gender/sex as subsumable to race. I also think that both sex and gender are socially, historically constructed in ways that give rise to "gender systems" . . . I use *gender systems* to name oppressive constructions of women, and sometimes men. *Gender*, as I understand contemporary usage, is the name for an oppressed woman in relation to men. This I understand as a problematic usage. When reporters show gender trends in voting, buying, and so on, *gender* does not have the meaning that it has when *gender* is used to name women as oppression. Women are oppressed in relation to men. Women are inferior and men are superior. This is also simplistic and in much need of critique. Women of color have presented the critique. (Lugones and Ortega 2019, 279–80)

Responding to the need for a critique of the above formulation, we may begin to problematize Lugones's use of gender-deviant Indigenous bodies as analyzed through and for the benefit of [cis]women of color feminisms without a mutual exchange with Two-Spirit or Trans of Color theory. We may also ask, what does Lugones miss by not acknowledging Two-spirit, Black, Trans, and Latinx discourses? One risks obscuring the everyday acts of resistance by which trans folks of color creatively remake gender away from colonial modernity. Already gesturing to the failure of bracketing gender, the Western gender binary is stitched through the wounded flesh of gender-nonconforming peoples of color, instrumentalizing trans marginality within Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities as a way to insure the continuance of the colonial/modern gender system. When Lugones calls for a response, seeks action, or

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names her political community, she almost always uses binary language. For example, she is very clear that "the intent of [her] writing is to make visible the instrumentality of the colonial/modern gender system in subjecting us—both men and women of color—in all domains of existence" (Lugones 2007, 189). Here, she does not see that already, not all of us are men or women, that Two-Spirit, Black, Trans, and Latinx people have more than survived colonialism; they have resisted it.

Moreover, in recirculating the names we did not give ourselves, but the ones that anthropologists, missionary priests, and Indian boarding schools gave us, Lugones frequently refers to Two-Spirit identities under terms such as third-gender, berdache, or hermaphrodite despite major consensus among queer Native communities that these terms are not only offensive, but deeply implicated within histories of violence.[3] During the height of the term's popularity as an appropriated LGBTQ icon for non-Native, mostly white, queers, Native activists in the 1980s widely considered "the berdache an erroneous colonial term that represented Native peoples in primordial and generalizing terms, while projecting masculinism and sexualization onto them" (Morgensen 2011, 81). Following more closely the term's colonial origins, *berdache* was popularized widely within anthropology, but first used by Spanish colonizers in general reference to assigned-male-at-birth, sexual and/or gender-nonconforming Indigenous peoples in the late sixteenth century, translating to mean "kept boy" or "male prostitute" from its French and Arabic origins. When put into historical context, berdache refers to the systematic rape of Two-Spirit peoples whom we might now describe as under the transfeminine umbrella. Still assuming the fixity of the sex–gender binary, Lugones writes:

> [H]ermaphrodites, sodomites, viragos, and the colonized were all understood to be aberrations of male perfection. . . . [F]rom this point of view, colonized people became males and females. Males became not-human-as-not-men, and colonized females became not-human-as-not-women. . . . Colonized men were not understood to be lacking as not being women-like. *What has been understood as the "feminization" of colonized "men" seems rather a gesture of humiliation, attributing them sexual passivity under the threat of rape.* (Lugones 2010, 744, my emphasis)

She continues to argue that the inferiorization of colonized males was ultimately used to subordinate women of color, so that men of color would take up superior positions in relation to colonized females. However, missing here is the fact that Two-Spirit bodies often labeled as "berdache," "hermaphrodite," or "sodomites" did not experience violence—murder, enslavement, harassment, theft, rape—at the expense of women of color nor were they gendered as a failure to be not-human-as-not-men. To generalize all bodies labeled "berdache" as simply "colonized males" repeats highly transphobic logic that somehow sees transwomen as *really* {insert mis-gendering} or transmen as *really* {insert mis-gendering}. Lugones's account of the colonial/modern gender system tacitly remains attached to the facticity of a sex–gender binary. Her account operates under the misconception that there would not be bodies that failed to meet either sex–gender requirements of male/female within the colonial/modern gender system.

Rather, targeted with increased levels of violence, Two-Spirit bodies failed to qualify as either colonized male (not-human-as-not-man) or colonized female (not-human-as-not-woman), inhabiting a gendered relation that could not be easily translated into the dimorphic, sex–gender binary. In her essay, the "Extermination of the Joyas," Deborah Miranda's concept of *gendercide*, "the killing of people *because of their gender*," articulates these hierarchies of flesh. In an economy of desire that

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circulates discourses of excess and lack onto the value a body could accrue, Miranda explains that often "one segment of Indigenous populations [were] sacrificed in hopes that others would survive" (Miranda 2010, 259). In order to secure the legitimation of the sex–gender binary, the colonial/modern gender system invests necropolitical power in a civilizing project, routinely necessitating the targeting of Two-Spirit peoples for eradication in addition to its habitual discipline. In fact, archival documents comprised of field notes, map sketches, observational journal entries, and private diaries note the difficulty with which settlers attempted to translate Two-Spirit individuals into Western, European, sexed/gendered norms, expressing their confusion and utter repulsion regarding the acceptance of gender variance within Native communities.

One of the first published uses of the term *berdache* appears footnoted in volume 59 of *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* where Jacques Marquette's field notes comment on "the character of the Illinois" (Marquette 1675/1959, 125). He observes:

> Their garments consist only of skins; the women are always clad very modestly and very becomingly, while the men do not take the trouble to cover themselves. I know not through what superstition some Illinois, as well as some Nadouessi, while still young, assume the garb of women, and retain it throughout their lives. There is some mystery in this. For they never marry and glory in demeaning themselves to do everything that the women do. They go to war, however, but can use only clubs, and not bows and arrows, which are the weapons proper to men. They are present at all the juggleries, and at the solemn dances in honor of the Calumet; at these they sing, but must not dance. They are summoned to the Councils, and nothing can be decided without their advice. Finally, through their profession of leading an Extraordinary life, they pass for Manitous,—That is to say, for Spirits,—or persons of Consequence. (129)

Take note of how, here, the term *berdache* fails to fit the gendered norms required of both Native "men" and Native "women" in the colonial/modern gender system: refusing both modesty and marriage, while still taking on sexually passive positions; dressing in feminine clothes, yet still heading to war even though their choice of weapon does not meet masculine expectations; and so on. Seen through the Western gender binary, Two-Spirit and Trans of Color peoples confound the analytic tool of gender that sought to divide Indigenous communities into a sex–gender binary. The footnoted reference under which the above passage appears acknowledges the general confusion and outright disgust with which colonizers encountered gender-variant Native individuals as they could not figure out why someone who should be assigned-male-at-birth would have a feminine appearance, be esteemed in their respective communities, be allowed to assume roles of any gender, and also perform sacred ceremonial duties.

Following one particular figure as a further example, the manuscript journals of both Alexander Henry (fur trader of the Northwest Company) and of David Thompson (official geographer and explorer of the Northwest Company) from 1799–1814 recount chief Sucrie's (Ojibwe) child Ozaawindib, also referred to as Yellow Head:

> Berdash, a son of Sucrie, arrived from Assiniboine, where he had been with a young man to carry tobacco concerning the war. This person is a curious compound between a man and a woman. He is a man both as to members and courage, but pretends to be womanish, and dresses as such. His walk and mode of

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> sitting, his manners, occupations, and language are those of a woman. (Henry and Thompson 1897, 163)

Not only does the narrator make a point of differentiating Ozaawindib from the young man who had been with them, but the narrator also describes Ozaawindib's gender as a "compound," rejecting a reading of the colonial/modern gender system that groups bodies of color into the two categories of either "colonized males" or "colonized females." Moreover, it is not clear that colonizers were certain of how to "correctly" sex or gender Ozaawindib, as Henry later points out in other documents that Ozaawindib is cited using feminine pronouns.[4] Consider a passage from John Tanner, who had been kidnapped around the age of ten by the Shawnee and was adopted by the Ottawa:

> Some time in the course of this winter, there came to our lodge one of the sons of the celebrated Ojibbeway chief, called Wesh-ko-bug, (the sweet) who lived at Leech Lake. This man was one of those who make themselves women, and are called women by the Indians. There are several of this sort among most, if not all the Indian tribes; they are commonly called A-go-kwa, a word which is expressive of their condition. This creature, called Ozaw-wend-dib, (the yellow head), was now near fifty years old, and had lived with many husbands. I do not know whether she had seen me, or only heard of me, but she soon let me know she had come a long distance to see me, and with the hope of living with me. She often offered herself to me, but not being discouraged with one refusal, she repeated her disgusting advances until I was almost driven from the lodge. Old Net-no-kwa was perfectly well acquainted with her character, and only laughed at the embarrassment and shame which I evinced whenever she addressed me. She seemed rather to countenance and encourage the Yellow Head in remaining at our lodge. The latter was very expert in the various employments of the women, to which all her time was given. At length, despairing of success in her addresses to me, or being too much pinched by hunger, which was commonly felt in our lodge, she disappeared, and was absent three or four days. I began to hope I should be no more troubled with her, when she came back loaded with dry meat. She stated that she had found the band of Wa-ge-to-tah-gun, and that that chief had sent by her an invitation for us to join him. . . . I was glad enough of this invitation, and started immediately. (Tanner 1975, 105)

The use of feminine pronouns, dynamic description of personality, and likening to a "creature" suggests that Ozaawindib was not seen as merely different in type from colonized males, but different in kind from both colonized females and males. This reading also coincides with earlier accounts from the *Jesuit Relations* that refer to gender-deviant Natives as some kind of supernatural, spiritual beings. Sinclair explains even further: "whether Ozaawindib is definable by what we may now call transsexual or homosexual (or whatever else!)" overlooks a central part of Ozaawindib's lived experience, which "is that in the time and place Ozaawindib lived, this 'curious compound of man and woman' did not 'fit' into Western and European sexual and gender norms—and perhaps even Anishanaabeg, too" (Sinclair 2016). In fact, trying to categorize Ozaawindib presented an impossible task, "for most around her, Ozaawindib's sexual, physical, and cultural identity is undefinable." Although Lugones's argument hinges on the generalization that all bodies of color were sexed into the neat categories of male or

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female, historical records indicate that Trans of Color individuals posed a threat to the success of the colonial/modern gender system since we could not be neatly identified into either sex–gender category (even as juxtaposed failures). If one of the goals of the colonial/modern gender system is to assimilate bodies of color into a strict gender–sex binary (even if as failures of such binarized gender categories), then the presence of bodies that refused the reduction of gendered roles to naturalized sexed statuses faced elimination rather than assimilation. Elimination becomes necessary because Two-Spirit materiality was not needed to serve as a constitutive outside for the categories of "woman" or "man," for this is what the disciplining of [cis]Native "men" and "women" accomplished. Transness, then, becomes an excess in the flesh that does not gain value within the economy of a sexed/gendered binary except through its disavowal and disposal.

The Gendercide of Two-Spirit Peoples and Contemporary Cisgender Violence

There is a significant erasure in Lugones's work that manifests a lack of mutual engagement with Trans of Color experiences and theory, affecting her work not only on the level of language but also her ability to theorize the complexity of historical oppression and resistance to the colonial/modern gender system. It is not surprising for cis privilege to reproduce an erasure of transness while appropriating trans flesh, trans narratives, and trans concepts, for structurally, this is what cis-ness is meant to do. Let us take note of a passage from Lugones:

> [T]he colonial civilizing mission was the euphemistic mask of brutal access to people's bodies through unimaginable exploitation, violent sexual violation, control of reproduction, and systematic terror (feeding people alive to dogs or making pouches and hats from the vaginas of brutally killed indigenous females, for example). (Lugones 2010, 744)

Mentioned only in passing, feeding Indigenous peoples alive to hungry dogs, dogs trained for war, was a common practice saved strategically for the bodies of color we would now recognize as Two-Spirit, Trans, Genderqueer, or Nonbinary. Whereas Lugones situates "males" and "females" of color at the status of the animal (failed human), Trans of Color bodies were relegated to below the status of animal in the colonial order as extractable flesh made valuable only in its consumption or disposal. In fact, we might say that this particular inferiorization was necessary for [cis]men and [cis]women of color to have been sexed as male/female at all.

Tarry, for one moment, with me in the oppressive August summer heat of 1515. Peter Martyr d'Anghiera recounts in his field notes how "the Spaniards commonly used their dogs in fighting against these naked people [that is, gender-deviant people], and the dogs threw themselves upon them as though they were wild boars or timid deer. The Spaniards found these animals as ready to share their dangers as did the people of Colophon or Castabara, who trained cohorts of dogs for war; for the dogs were always in the lead and never shirked a fight" (Anghiera 1912, 184).[5] On this particular day, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa and his army dragged forty "men dressed as women" to the center of the village to be put on display where all could see (184). He then ordered his army to throw them into a pit of vicious dogs—who devoured, through dismemberment and mutilation, the flesh of each Two-Spirit body as food. Their flesh reserved as sustenance for the maintenance of these canine companions. Two years prior to this public slaughter, Balboa staged a confrontation with a neighboring community in

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this region of Quarequa. Punishing them for their insubordination, he forced a mass of 600 Indigenous people to confront a row of archers. When they tried to run, they were met with men on horses whose swords chopped each body down at the head, waist, hip, or leg "like butchers cutting up beef and mutton for market. Six hundred, including the Cacique[chief], were thus slain like brute beasts" (185). But, in 1515, Balboa used dogs to kill those he considered below animal life—those whose genderqueer bodies indicated a world beyond the colonial project.

When other Native peoples of Quarequa heard the vicious stories of Balboa's treatment of these "shameless men," they pressed Balboa for mercy (185). "Spitting upon those whom they suspected to be guilty of this vice, they begged [Balboa] to exterminate" these sinful people (185). They argued that this gender contagion had not yet spread to the common people. Spanish witnesses recount that they raised their eyes and hands to heaven, confessing that God did indeed view these aberrations with disgust and horror. They admitted that these cursed sins were the cause of frequent floods, famine, and sickness in their communities. From a Two-Spirit perspective on the colonial/modern [cis]gender system, the practice of siccing dogs upon Two-Spirit bodies was a common form of disciplining Indigenous communities into submission, until eventually [cis]people of color enacted this violence on their own communities. Now, "the intersection of being a [trans] person of color culminates in the *highest* rate of murder per capita *than any other* section in [United States] society," where it is not enough to murder a trans person of color, but our bodies are continually left dismembered, mutilated, and mangled beyond recognition (Jones 2017). In fact, Black and Indigenous Trans women, femmes, and nonbinary folks face the highest rates of murder, harassment, trafficking, and discrimination. Daily, I wake up to the news of another Trans Latinx or Indigenx person found dead in a detention center or among the borderlands. I feel the weight of the names we will never know and the bodies that will never be found.

It is this mutilation of trans flesh that makes possible the integration of certain assigned male and female bodies of color into the gender binary and thus the realm of "human." The coloniality of gender requires the abjection of Two-Spirit, Trans, and Nonbinary bodies of color, suturing the peripheries between what is considered human and what is considered disposable. If Lugones challenges us to see within colonial difference as itself a crucial feminist intervention into decolonial theory, then we must begin with a complex historical acknowledgment of how cisgender privilege is intimately tied up within colonial structures.

The Bracketing of Gender

Introduced in "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" (Lugones 2010) and taken up more carefully in "Methodological Notes toward a Decolonial Feminism" (Lugones 2011), Lugones calls for women of color to disidentify with the gender binary due to its definitional origins in colonialism. She offers the "bracketing of gender" as a method to denaturalize sex, gender, and racial relations, so that one may think beyond the coloniality of gender in order to consider other habitations and possible constructions of coalitional spaces. A practice of suspending the natural attitude, "bracketing gender" makes visible the forceful introduction of the gender binary into communities of color as a tactic of domination, division, and control. In freeing our relations from the coloniality of gender, Lugones hopes to reimagine new futures and relations—ones not organized by the death-making violence of the colonial/modern gender

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system. However, since Two-Spirit and Trans of Color bodies already escape the territorialized bounds of normalized sex, gender, and race as an excess in flesh, bracketing gender does not make cisgender violence visible. Realizing that unruly genders already exceed its brackets, then, bracketing may remind us that sex, love, desire, and gender are nothing but relations: threads that connect me to this earth and to beloved others. However, ultimately, a gender-bracketed world ignores the current state of a trans-bracketed world. The colonial/modern [cis]gender system demands the constant dematerialization of Trans flesh in order to animate straight-cis-white worlds and their relations. Forced to fall into the background by the coloniality of gender, trans of color flesh serves as manipulable materiality for the normate ground by which [cis]gender peoples enter into the realm of the social and its many overlapping degrees with other worlds. Moreover, given the elision of transphobia in Lugones's work, we may begin to question the efficacy of "bracketing" as both a theoretical and practical liberatory practice.

The danger of bracketing is the risk of assuming the reduction is complete while still maintaining aspects of the natural attitude, thinking that one has arrived at a nonproblematic conception of gender. However, without an awareness of cisgender privilege and trans of color history, bracketing would further obscure cisgender violence. In "Bodies and Sensings," Alia Al-Saji grapples with this tension in Husserlian phenomenology. After all, she writes, "the phenomenological reduction claims to bracket not only the object-in-itself, but also, on the subjective side, the empirical ego—with all that this includes of the concrete body, personal historicity, and, not mentioned by Husserl, gendered and racialized difference," upholding a "disembodied structure of consciousness" (Al-Saji 2010, 15). Serving to "normalize and validate the standpoint of the phenomenological observer," this forgetfulness of embodied difference that can "potentially motivate the reduction" ultimately leads to the assumption that bracketing places one within a neutral set of relations optimal for investigation (15). She continues: "it could be argued that this self-forgetfulness reinscribes Husserlian phenomenology within the 'natural attitude' it has sought to bracket" (15). At the same time, however, a bracketing of gender that does not make cisgender violence visible could be seen as a failure to successfully complete the reduction, necessitating a new one. As such, other feminist phenomenologists find the never-ending project of the reduction to be one of its strengths (see, for example, Simms and Starwaska 2013). Requiring people to constantly question their assumptions about the world as a possible point of collusion with systems of power, bracketing could be used as a training tool to "check" one's arrogant perceptions of others, for "bracketing implies that we have to be suspicious of our own cultural prejudices and accept that we will never be able to perform a complete reduction" (Simms and Starwaska 2013, 11). Lisa Guenther similarly explains that bracketing is not meant to "abstract from the complexity of ordinary experience, but rather to lead back from an uncritical absorption in the world toward a rigorous understanding of the conditions for the possibility of any 'world' whatsoever" (Guenther 2019, 11). The self-reflexive practice of bracketing is meant to make visible one's habitual orientation toward certain objects as indicative of the conditions that discipline our bodily comportment and determine our relations to others as such (see Ahmed 2006 on straightening devices). This is the task that marks the turn of critical phenomenology's attention and commitment toward interrogating oppressive social systems. Social structures of power actually aim to mimic transcendental structures of experience through their forced naturalization, engendering their ability to make coloniality's dehumanizing project of control, exploitation, and inferiorization invisible as a

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condition of being itself. In fact, "structures such as patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity permeate, organize, and reproduce that natural attitude in ways that go beyond any particular object of thought. These are not things to be seen, but rather *ways of seeing* and even ways of *making the world* that go unnoticed without a sustained practice of critical reflection" (12). However, how do we diagnose, challenge, and upend ways of being designed to escape their invisibilization even upon conscious subjective reflection? It does not seem as though bracketing can sustain this type of resistance, although it may be a useful tool in some contexts.

Diagnosing the natural attitude is one step toward identifying the racializing regimes that condition our conferral of raced/sexed/gendered categories onto others. However, given the dynamic and contradictory tactics deployed by these processes, bracketing must rely on another method by which to render legible the dialectics of historical oppression in order for critical phenomenology to maintain its criticality. In "Crossed Lines in the Racialization Process: Race as a Border Concept," Robert Bernasconi complicates these questions as he challenges dominant misconceptions of race as organized by static, bifurcated, and impermeable categories. Identifying racialization as "the practice of *seeing* people in terms of race" that entails both the immediate and historical context, Bernasconi argues that "just as Husserlian phenomenology gave birth to a phenomenological hermeneutics, so the phenomenology of racialization needs to be supplemented and refined by what one might call a hermeneutics of racialization that addresses the terms in which *we see and interpret racial difference*" (Bernasconi 2012, 206, 207). Hermeneutics of gendered-sexed racializations highlight the construction of identity categories as staked not in an essentialized core, but rather constituted through the policing of its boundaries. Instead of viewing gender oppression as localized solely within the category of "woman" or "female," the coloniality of gender is maintained by the policing of its peripheries. In other words, the colonial/modern gender system maintains its dominance over communities of color through its disciplining of gender-nonconforming peoples of color who threaten the factious narrative of gender as static, indexed to one's sex at birth, and dimorphic. Decentralizing our focus to concentrate on movements of transgression, resistance to the coloniality of gender requires a complex methodology. Bearing witness to the violence of extracted flesh that "congeals around these borders," the colonial/modern gender system targets malleable, fluid, and ambiguous matter for the remaking of sex, gender, and race as categories enjoyed solely by those considered human (227). However, the inventive work of crafting new ways of seeing, touching, relating, and being does not happen in the moment of bracketing, which only suspends oppressive relations rather than imagining anew within them.

As a system of oppression that is already made invisible, cisgender violence does not automatically come into critical light from suspending cis attitudes toward sex–gender (as evidenced by the reification of the sex–gender binary in Lugones's account). Rather, the material and semiotic movement by which transness articulates the falsity of the gender–sex binary, at the same time, transmutes the meanings and contexts of identificatory relations. This is what fungibility engenders, the possibility of second-order rearrangements in the flesh that constitute bodily possibility as continually anew. Requiring one to remain unsearchable in order to escape conditions of extreme violence, slavery, dispossession, and removal, one must become something entirely other than oneself—to *trans*-mute (see McKintrick 2014; Snorton 2017; King 2019). In a mutation of race, gender, and sex, Trans of Color flesh inhabits alternate, resistant spatiotemporal orders not only out of necessity, but also out of the brilliance by which

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unbodied flesh (that which sustains our very condition of abjection) makes possible a process of invention within the fabric of our skin. Continuing our interrogation of the coloniality of gender, we must not begin at its localized core of cisgenders, but rather the policed edges of gender-nonconforming embodiments whose flesh threatens to spill over its sutures into vast decolonial worlds, ones we will have realized we inhabited all along.

Trans World-Traveling and Cocooning: Spiraling Temporalities of the Flesh

> The suggestion is not to search for a non-colonized construction of gender in indigenous organizations of the social. There is no such thing; "gender" does not travel away from colonial modernity.
>
> —Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"

Two-Spirit and Trans of Color identities are not contemporary identities crafted through the gender binary, nor are they an effort to return to a lost past before colonization. However, when we find that our communities have forgotten these identities; when we are pressed in-between on all sides, we are forced to retreat into a chrysalis. In the spiraling time of cocooning, gender travels among ancestral futures. "Incarnating a weave from the fractured locus," I grab hold tightly of "the cleavage, a split that cuts through [myself] and through [my] relations" and I rip it open (Lugones 2007, 70; Lugones 2010, 754). Tarrying inside this wound, I am faced with the task of building it anew with only the fabric of my body—what some might call "transitioning." It is a pilgrimage in which I must cross over the border of myself in order to get beyond, but only by first entering into my interiority. And I do not walk this journey alone; rather I find myself joined at the flesh of my hips to others, to my ancestors, elders, lovers, queer friends, teachers, and strangers, to the summer-yellow-hornets who occasionally slip into the cracks of my bedroom screen door and the hornworms of my partner's wild medicine garden where Sarah María teaches me how to ask and listen before picking the *cempaxochitl*.[6]

No one "resist[s] the coloniality of gender alone" (Lugones 2010, 754). In "Indigenous Science (fiction) for the Anthropocene," Kyle Whyte relays the teachings of Anishinaabe "grandmother and knowledge keeper" Sherry Copenance and Dylan Miner on how "ancestor" and "descendant" share the same word in *Anishinaabemowin,* suggesting a kind of "intergenerational time—a perspective embedded in spiraling temporality (sense of time) in which it makes sense to consider ourselves as living alongside future and past relatives simultaneously as we walk through life" (Whyte 2018, 229). In infra-communication with Indigenous past, present, and future ancestors, one is left with the task of constant reinvention, finding, once again, new ways to feel and be felt among ancient knowledges. The reclamation of Two-Spirit identities is not a move to a precolonial past, as Lugones might warn. Two-Spirit worlds are always already in intimate connection with Indigenous pasts, presents, and futures. Learning from intergenerational dialogue, we discover how to live, love, and *be* differently, for it is this body that contains the blood memory of past, present, and queer Native futures.

World-traveling makes possible a radical remembering of the future. Our genders travel to past-futures through sacred ceremonial spaces. In these worlds, we do not need to bracket gender as there is no lack of epistemic, ontological, or material relations for being and learning gender as otherwise from the colonial/modern gender system. Moreover, in *Beyond Settler Time*, Mark Rifkin problematizes how Natives are forced

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into a temporal double bind as either anachronistic or subsumed into one singular present. The first relies upon the settler myth that Natives are backward, disappearing peoples out of place and out of time; true or authentic Indigeneity is frozen in the concept of the "precolonial" and the "primitive." The second enables settlers to claim benevolence for their colonizing mission, boasting that modernity enabled the innocent, lost savages to enter into civilization by the grace of god and man's helping hand. In other words, this view argues that colonization properly allowed Natives entrance into inhabiting time, that is, being-in-time.

In resistance to these structures of settler colonialism, Rifkin goes on to argue that there are multiple and permeable "discrepant temporalities" that we inhabit while they simultaneously affect one another.[7] Consequently, Rifkin challenges the notion that Natives share a present *now* with nonnatives, bearing witness to the vast decolonial temporalities by which Indigenous folks participate in social complexities. Drawing heavily from Sarah Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* on how orientations habitually condition different temporal-spatial orders for certain bodies, Rifkin considers how we might understand collective Indigenous temporal modes, frames of reference, and processes of becoming:

> Native peoples remain oriented in relation to collective experiences of peoplehood, to particular territories (whether or not such places are legally recognized as reservations or given official trust status), to the ongoing histories of their inhabitance in those spaces, and to histories of displacement from them. Such orientations open up "different worlds" than those at play in dominant settler orderings, articulations, and reckonings of time . . . conceptualizing Native continuity and change in ways that move beyond the modern/traditional binary; that do not take non-native frameworks as the self-evident basis for approaching Indigenous forms of persistence, adaptation, and innovation; and that enable consideration of temporal sovereignty, how sensations and articulations of time take part in Indigenous peoples' operation as polities and their pursuit of self-determination. (Rifkin 2017, 3)

In conversation with Rifkin, Lugones's concept of ontological pluralism is crucial here to explain how these discrepant temporalities construct different histories, lived experiences, and organizations of the social into thick, complex worlds. In *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes,* Lugones theorizes that there are multiple worlds that we travel between. She argues that this constructs the realm of the social. They are not possible worlds, but actual ones. These worlds are "not autonomous, but intertwined semantically and materially, with a logic that is sufficiently self-coherent and sufficiently in contradiction with others to constitute an alternative construction of the social" (Lugones 2003, 29–30). Thus, not only can we have resistant meanings of gender categories that contradict one another in different worlds, we can travel between these worlds. Lugones writes that world-traveling is an inter and intra-communication with other worlds, and that these worlds are not "unilinear, univocal, [or] unilogical" abstractions of space (38). I contend that Lugones would also support the idea that worlds are not unilinear abstractions of time.

Through this framework we can view Two-Spirit and Trans of Color identities as existing in different worlds of sense, constituted by their own autonomous and sovereign temporalities even if they are intertwined or permeable with colonial worlds. As semantically self-coherent, gendered language in Two-Spirit worlds does not depend

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on the dominant world's sense of the clinical and violent gender binary. However, when we find ourselves erased, abjected, and in zones of social death where we are chronically forced into isolation, away from intimacy, friendship, and solidarity, once more we are forced to retreat into a chrysalis (see, Malatino 2019, 127). We are cocooning, "an inward motion intent on sense-making" (Lugones 2003, 103). This cocooning is a metamorphosis of passion (Lugones 2003; Anzaldúa 2012). In making space for ourselves despite intimate terror, we decry "the sense of world that erases [our anger and despair] precisely since that world of sense stands in the way of its possibility. It recognizes this world's walls. It pushes against them rather than making claims within them" (Lugones 2003, 111). While inside the darkness of this chrysalis, we world-travel in-between the histories of our Indigenous past, present, and future. The materiality of our abject bodies expands to meet the borders of the gender binary, rupturing the space of the cocoon and the worlds of sense that force Trans folks back into the violent categories of the coloniality of gender. We do not bracket; we go beyond it as our bodies materially transition in our own creative reclamation of Two-Spirit genders. Anguksuar LaFortune in "Restoration of Indigenous Taxonomies" writes:

> [I]t would be a mistake to think that [Two-Spirit identity] is a recently developed fiction used to resituate individuals into tribal communities that sometimes reject them on the grounds that homosexuality is a malady "brought by the white man." What is happening, actually, is that we are remembering again who we are and that our identities can no longer be used as a weapon against us. It is once again a source of our healing. (LaFortune 1997, 222)

Through rupturing the gender binary in world-traveling and counter sense-making, we open up possibilities of healing for our whole communities. As Driskill writes, Two-Spirit people have their own unique medicine among other genders (Driskill 2010, 86). And this medicine is in part allowing our Latinx and Native communities to heal from the coloniality of gender, rupturing it through our own cocooning so that others may remake gender as their own as well. However, this is an ongoing project, one Lugones so intimately and humbly calls for as well. She writes: "it is also the project's intent to make visible the crucial disruption of bonds of practical solidarity. My intent is to provide a way of understanding, of reading, of perceiving our allegiance to this gender system. We need to place ourselves in a position to call each other to reject this gender system as we perform a transformation of communal relations" (Lugones 2016, 14). Decolonial feminisms, without an awareness of Two-Spirit wisdom, will continue to enact modes of erasure, will reinforce cisgender privilege, maintain practices of unknowing, and uphold the coloniality of gender. Supporting these violent forces that sustain the condition of possibility of the colonial/modern gender system (that is, transphobic racism) not only is at the expense of women of color, but this expense is paid through by the ever-mounting deaths of Two-Spirit and Trans people of color. In "Beyond Benevolent Violence," Pedro DiPietro adds:

> If trans* of color communities, our allies and advocates, truly mean to be accountable for what we don't know about each other, and about each other's understanding of transing phenomena, we have much work ahead of us as we make commitments, radically multicultural commitments, decolonizing and intercultural commitments, to know, sense, and feel otherwise. (DiPietro 2019, 198)

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When we add two-spirit, Black and Latinx trans voices to our coalitional spaces, gender becomes a powerful way to resist and reclaim one's own body from the intimate terror of the colonial/modern gender system. The intervention described is not a critique as Western philosophy might understand it, but rather an affectionate call to take up Lugones's commitment to a radical coalitional politics and impure communities.

In the trans-spiraling cocoon of reinvention, trans of color bodies world-travel to vast decolonial worlds—ones we all already inhabit as people of color, but that the colonial/modern gender system renders invisible. In a labor of love, the resistant-creative work of trans bodies of color liberates not just the folds of our own flesh from the Western gaze, but also sustains a new place of possibility for the cis accomplices who also refuse the privileges of the colonial/modern gender system. Through world-traveling, the material bodies of Trans of Color folks creatively cocoon new worlds of sense where gender is anticolonial. In pushing against the walls of the world that the colonial/modern gender system constructs, we—women, men, trans, Two-Spirit, and nonbinary people of color—do not bracket gender. We rupture gender, together, or not at all.

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Notes

1 Decoloniality has taken on many different forms and threads of thought in various scholarship among Indigenous/Native theory, Latina/x and Chicana/x thought, settler colonial studies, black feminisms, women of color feminisms, and so on. The question of how to decolonize and one's specific obligations to decoloniality given one's position in relation to colonial powers is rife with contestation among these various literatures. Committed to neither a decolonial politics of purity nor its privileging of certain oppressions, this article bears witness to the resisting ←→ oppressing dyad by which active subjects navigate colonial structures and powers. In viewing accountability as a radical opportunity for intimacy and community-building, decolonizing requires a willingness to be called out on our complicity within one another's oppressions. In accordance with this Lugonian framework of liberatory praxis for decolonial feminist spaces, I conceptualize decoloniality in conversation with Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's essay, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" as itself land-reparation and reclamation (Tuck and Yang 2012). Our relationship toward the land and one another must not be a metaphor, but one of incommensurable proximities as we learn to weave together worlds anew. Rather than forming solidarity in the name of macro-narratives on colonization, we must seek the historical and material threads that tie our bodies together for removal, genocide, and violence. This article offers up several of these threads in a hope to sustain further conversation, contestation, and creation from within each of our differential becomings as complexly thick individuals who straddle a multiplicity of communities and worlds. In following how Latina/x, Black, and Indigenous thought make explicit these moments of convergence and divergence, this article aims to make explicit which histories and structures of settler colonial power maintain the gender binary within contemporary Indigenous, Latinx, and Black American communities, paying particular attention to how these systems reproduce the invisibility of and violence against trans of color folks within said communities. Most important, this work is indebted to the rich theoretical work by two-spirit artists, scholars, and theorists, who have also gently taught me that if decolonization is not a metaphor and it requires the return of our lands, then decolonization is also a reclamation of the stolen body—of how we dress, love, eat, write, and relate to the world. As Qwo-Lii Driskill writes, "I have not only been removed

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from my homelands, I have also been removed from my erotic self and continue a journey back to my first homeland: the body . . .” (Driskill 2004, 53). I ask us to consider what Western culture calls “transitioning” as a spiraling pilgrimage home to reclaim our genders, bodies, and desires in the twilight of all our relations with the land, ancestors, and one another.

2 It is important to note here that “precolonial” appears in quotes because this periodization is one projected onto Native communities. It reinforces a Western, European chronology where significant economic, political, and cultural shifts among various nations on Turtle Island are told only in relation to colonialism, perpetuating settler colonial logics where colonization marks a moment of “bringing Natives into civilization” and, as such, history. In this temporal enclosure, a purity or authenticity is prescribed to precolonial, Indigenous organizations of the social as juxtaposed to a somehow tainted and destroyed Native America after the “colonial encounter.” Casting Indigeneity as extant in both scenarios, the former constructs the myth of an unreturnable past, and the latter erases Native survival and resistance in order to make Native presents invisible and to monopolize Native futures.

3 For example, several white and non-Native LGBTQ movements have appropriated the figure of the berdache or two-spirit terminology in order to justify homonationalist calls for the normalization and romanticization of queerness. Scott Morgensen’s *Spaces between Us* explains that tales of the “berdache promised sexual or gender liberation only inasmuch as it first liberated non-Native and presumably white gays and lesbians from identifying as settlers and rewrote their lives on stolen Native land as somehow being a return to kinship with their own kind” (Morgensen 2011, 63). Invocations of the figure of the berdache is a settler move toward innocence, often casting queerness as an originary position to the land.

4 Henry comments, in reading John Tanner’s diary, “It is curious to find the name [Yellow Head] in the list with the feminine article” (Henry and Thompson 1897, 53).

5 These accounts are sourced from a series of Peter Martyr Anghiera’s letters and reports of early conquest in Central and South America that was later anthologized into a book, *Decades of the New World*. The practice of siccing dogs on gender-deviant peoples or forcing a fight for survival between the two was a common practice among colonizers as a terrorizing form of discipline. The account cited here occurred in a region called Quarequa, now Panama.

6 Well, with this disabled aneurotypical bodymind of mine, sometimes walking is more like dragging, slipping, aching, rocking, curling up, lying still, fidgeting, forgetting where I am entirely or how I got here, or, what I came in here for? But I still always get where I’m going to, even if it’s not where I had intended to end up.

7 By “simultaneously,” I do not mean to suggest by equal measure, weight, or in reciprocity.

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