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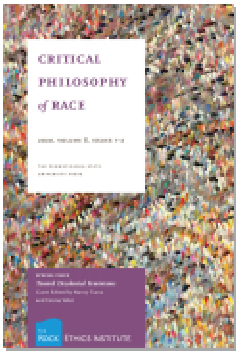
Selamawit D. Terrefe

Critical Philosophy of Race, Volume 8, Numbers 1-2, 2020, pp. 134-164 (Article)

Published by Penn State University Press



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THE PORNOTROPE OF DECOLONIAL FEMINISM

SELAMAWIT D. TERREFE
Tulane University

CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF RACE,
VOL. 8, NOS. 1–2, 2020
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State University, University Park, PA
DOI: 10.5325/critphilrace.8.1–2.0134

Abstract

This article argues that María Lugones's articulation of decolonial feminism, as a theory and potential political praxis, both disappears Blackness and subjugates African American women—their scholarship, their language, and the materiality of their Black "flesh"—within the same subordinate position the coloniality of gender decries. Expanding Hortense Spillers's concept of "pornotroping," this article puts into relief the ideological and rhetorical investments in deploying the figure of the Black woman to institute an argument about gender, but only to erase this figure from the political and affective registers of its theorization. This essay argues that Lugones's theorization of decolonial feminism effectively reifies the libidinal dynamics it denounces: turning Africans into captives, into commodities for use and abuse. It questions the camouflaging and decontextualization of Black feminist interventions that consider the singularity of antiblack violence as a model for thinking about violence as a phenomenological and ontological global order, critiquing the category of gender incipit to the process of enslavement and colonialism that ushers in the very modernity that decoloniality frames itself against.

Keywords: decolonial feminism, black feminism, intersectionality, slavery, gender

The captive body, then, brings into focus a gathering of social realities as well as a metaphor for *value* so thoroughly interwoven in their literal and figurative emphases that distinctions between them are virtually useless. Even though the captive flesh/body has been "liberated, and no one need pretend that even the quotation marks do not matter, dominant symbolic activity, the ruling episteme that releases the dynamics of naming and valuation, remains grounded in the originating metaphors of captivity and mutilation so that it is as if neither time nor history, nor historiography and its topics, shows movement, as the human subject is "murdered" over and over again by the passions of a bloodless and anonymous archaism, showing itself in endless disguise. . . . In a very real sense, every writing as revision makes the "discovery" all over again.
—**HORTENSE SPILLERS**, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book"

In this article, I argue that María Lugones's articulation of decolonial feminism engages in "writing as revision" and posits a misguided rendering of Black feminist theorizing, namely intersectionality, in her conception of the coloniality of gender and decolonial feminist framework for resistance. As I will demonstrate through a reading of the arc of Lugones's work, from earlier texts republished in the collection *Pilgrimages/ Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* to essays such as "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," and "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," I suggest that perhaps in the rush to usher into the Anglo-American academy a feminist counterpart to Anibal Quijano's concept of the "coloniality of power"[1] and Nelson Maldonado-Torres "coloniality of being,"[2] Lugones's decolonial feminism serves to carve a place within a professionalized discourse on violence rather than conceptualize decoloniality's condition of possibility. This condition of possibility, demonstrated through Lugones's rhetorical use of Black American women, I contend, is grounded in the very discourses of power and violence its theoretical orientation denounces. In other words, I argue that Lugones's decolonial feminism, as a theory and potential political praxis, is both a disappearing of Blackness and subjugates African American women—their scholarship, their language, and the materiality of their bodies, or Black "flesh," in Hortense Spillers's formulation, within the same subordinate position the coloniality of gender decries.

Through expanding Spillers's concept of the "pornotrope," this article places into relief the ideological and rhetorical investments in deploying the figure of the Black woman to institute an argument about gender, but only to erase this figure from the political and affective registers of its theorization. My analysis is presented by way of a critique of Lugones's ambivalence toward and misreading of Black feminist practice to frame her articulation of decolonial feminism as offering "liberating possibilities."[3] I question her interpretations of Black feminist interventions that consider the necessary singularity and particularity of antiblack violence as a model for thinking about violence as a phenomenological and ontological global order. Specifically, I investigate two of Lugones's overarching characterizations and elisions of Back feminist theorizing. Firstly, I consider her misconceptions of intersectionality, and her rendering of it as an identity politic that flattens all racial distinction, antiblackness specifically, within Lugones's articulation of a (false) binary of white/European and colonized, or non-white, to account for oppressive categories. Secondly, I consider her work's omission of Black feminist critiques of the category of gender incipit to the process of enslavement and colonialism—the violence that ushers in the very modernity that decoloniality frames itself against. In so doing, I maintain, the project of Lugones's theorization of decolonial feminism effectively reifies the libidinal dynamics it denounces: turning Africans into captives, into commodities for use and abuse. As such, instead of its purported purpose to "affirm life over profit, communalism over individualism...beings in relation rather than dichotomously split over and over in hierarchically and violently ordered fragments,"[4] decolonial feminism without regard to the heterogeneous field of Black feminist interventions mirrors both white feminist discourse and revisionist history.

Lugones's Decolonial Feminism

Lugones's most ambitious and impressive theoretical project appears in her collection *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple*

Oppressions, wherein she outlines a theory of oppression that considers liberation as an “ontological possibility” incumbent upon an embrace of “ontological pluralism.”[5] The theoretical force of her text is written in objection to postmodernist discourse that Lugones unveils as a mode tied to those of domination. Placing her work in contradistinction to poststructuralist literature, Lugones asserts, in her chapter “Purity, Impurity, and Separation,”[6] that her project poses “a very significant difference in the direction from the one suggested by the postmodern literature, which goes against a politics of identity and toward minimizing the political significance of groups. The position presented in this chapter . . . affirms a complex version of identity politics and a complex conception of groups.”[7] The roots of Lugones’s use of and ambivalence toward Black feminist theory and practice appear in this chapter’s theorizations of the concepts of curdling, separation, and fragmentation which will later develop into her conception of fusion that she posits against the very framework of intersectional analysis buttressing the “politics of identity” and “political significance of groups” she defends against postmodernist critiques.

For instance, in “Purity, Impurity, and Separation,” Lugones defines the distinction between “curdling separations” and “interweaving,” locating multiplicity as erased with the actions and logic of fragmentation—a process she conceptualizes as a technology of oppression that erases the potentiality of pluralism or difference as a mode of power rather than problem: “unless one understands groups as explicitly rejecting the logic of fragmentation and embracing a nonfragmented multiplicity that requires an understanding of oppressions as interlocked, group representation does most group members little good. It indeed fails at safeguarding the ‘inclusion and participation of everyone’ in the shaping of public life.”[8] Contrasting the logic of “purity” and “splitting” attendant to the dominant “principles” “ordering the social world”[9] to “impurity” and “curdling” she ascribes to, borrowing from Gloria Anzaldua, “*mestiza* consciousness,”[10] Lugones unwittingly, through cathedralizing “anti-antimiscegenation,” reifies the subjugation, through erasure, of Blackness by positing what Jared Sexton has referred to as a “complicit transgression” of the “law of antimiscegenation as the founding gesture of racial whiteness” and the “event of miscegenation as that which enables and exceeds both antimiscegenation and the political project of multiracialism.”[11] Differently put, whether or not one believes that *mestiza* consciousness in particular or multiracialism writ large is an effective tool against the logics of racial purity entrenched within the modern episteme, Lugones’s recourse to “impurity,” or the multiracial figure of the *mestiza* as a mode of resistance, both "enables and exceeds" the logics of "purity" and "fragmentation," the latter of which she will ascribe to intersectionality as perpetuating categorization and ultimately a form of feminism distinctly opposed to "purity" and "splitting": a mode of being that would have "the potential to germinate a nonoppressive pattern."[12] Lugones frames oppressions that interlock as fragmented, opposed to "something impure, something or someone *mestizo*, as both separated, curdled, and resisting in its curdled state," asserting, "I think of *mestizaje* as an example of and a metaphor for both impurity and resistance. I hold on to the metaphor and adopt *mestizaje* as a central name for impure resistance to interlocked, intermeshed oppressions."[13] Moreover, articulating her aim clearly at the beginning of the essay, Lugones asserts,

> My aim is to distinguish between multiplicity (mestizaje) and fragmentation and to explain connections that I see between the terms of this distinction and the logics of curdling (impurity) and of splitting (purity). Fragmentation follows the logic of purity. Multiplicity follows the logic of curdling. The distinction between fragmentation and multiplicity is central to this essay.[14]

Here, Lugones distinguishes between two distinct logics, of "multiplicity" versus "fragmentation," "curdling" as opposed to "splitting," with "*mestizaje*" clearly the non-dominant yet superior metaphor. However, the discourse and practice of multiplicity *in distinct opposition* to fragmentation erases the violent histories that constructed fragmented subjectivities and negated ontology: the reality of the slave and her descendants. While rich with fascinating and original analyses of the ontologies of resistance constructed in the wake of modern colonial violence, Lugones's subsequent work on epistemological and ontological categories posit intersectionality as the logic against which she constructs decolonial feminism. Therein Black feminist thought, Black feminist thinkers, and Black diasporic women are both necessary to her oeuvre while simultaneously charged with claims that they are trapped within modes of thought dependent upon the violent logics of fragmentation and split/separation. It is this dual dependency and repulsion as revision that betray a subtle anxiety of influence demonstrated in Lugones's later work on decolonial feminism.

Furthermore, Lugones's introduction to *Pilgramages* suggests her "goal" is to "attempt to intervene in the conceptual traps that constitute us as oppressed" and the metaphor she uses, of an egg (its separated parts of white and yolk and the curdling in the process of making mayonnaise), contains the roots of her subsequent critiques of intersectionality. Although clearly influenced by previous Black feminist theorizations of intersectionality demonstrated by the use of the terms "intersections" and "interlocking" (initially penned into public discourse by the Black lesbian feminist collective, the Combahee River Collective), Lugones crafts a distinction between the "interlocking of oppressions" and "intermeshed oppressions." Written in a footnote to "Purity, Impurity, and Separation," she reveals that at "the time of this writing, I had not drawn the distinction between intermeshed oppressions and the interlocking of oppressions," and also states "I am not ready to give up the term [interlocking] because it is used by other women of color theorists who write in a liberatory vein about enmeshed oppressions. I think *interwoven* or *intermeshed* or *enmeshed* may provide better images."[15] I find curious about the lexical distinctions Lugones outlines concerns first the absence of attribution to any Black feminist thinkers responsible for introducing the vocabulary Lugones embraces and from which she later distances herself. Secondly, Lugones imbricates the very categorical logic she decries within her subsequent theorizations of oppression.

It is not my intent to critique the goals of decolonial feminism in its most ambitious guise, which Lugones defines, in "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," as "the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender."[16] Explicated as an "analysis of racialized, capitalist, gender oppression,"[17] the coloniality of gender, as theorized by Lugones, appears somewhat belated in relation to its predecessors, what she refers to broadly as women of color and third-world women's feminisms. My critique of Lugones's theorization of decolonial feminism is what exceeds the logic of the theory: its belatedness, if not its inability to address the particularity of Black suffering. Appearing within the essay, "Methodological Notes Toward a Decolonial Feminism," Lugones claims to enhance intersectionality's possibilities for praxis, stating: "I have considered intersectionality and strengthened its application to the liberatory possibilities of the inseparability of race/gender/ coloniality."[18] Nonetheless, her initial essay explicating her reading of intersectionality, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," categorizes it vaguely in the following statement: "[C]ontemporary women of color and third-world women's critique of feminist universalism centers the claim that the intersection of race, class, sexuality, and gender exceeds the categories of modernity."[19] Lugones turns repeatedly to Black women, many of them intersectional feminists, to buttress her analyses— analyses which in fact reject intersectionality.

For instance, she mischaracterizes an expansive disciplinary terrain of intersectional analytic production, defining it adjectivally, "intersectional," in terms of the presumed work it does—"question": "[O]ne looks at the theoretical accounts of feminism, at feminist practices, at perceptions, and asks the intersectional question. As such, the intersectional question reveals racism at the fundamental theoretical and epistemological levels."[20] However, the essay fails to disclose what precisely the "intersectional question" concerns. The critique leveled here appears to be aimed at intersectionality's revelation of "racism at the fundamental theoretical and epistemological levels" more so than its method. The lack of elucidation is concomitant with the erasure of the ontological violence attendant to the construction of the slave position in many contemporary feminist philosophical accounts that attempt to solve complex histories through a rush to posit solutions. Many would rightly apply the same critique to intersectional analyses, which perhaps Lugones's work attempts to do in characterizing it as focusing on establishing categories, such as within legal frameworks, rather than celebrating multiplicity at the intersections of those legal identities.

I argue that what Lugones attributes to "categorical thinking"[21] includes her own theorizations that elide how the "racial calculus"[22] of modernity is constituted by relations to Blackness, specifically to what Spillers has described as Black "flesh." Spillers's seminal essay, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," introduces a "vocabulary" to "generate a discourse" necessitating "Black women be a part of" a "theoretical conversation"[23] within multiple fields such as feminist theory. Articulating the subject position of the captive African heretofore illegible within critical and theoretical discourse, Spillers writes accordingly:

> But I would make a distinction in this case between "body" and "flesh" and impose that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions. In that sense, before the "body" there is the "flesh," that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography. Even though the European hegemonies stole bodies . . . we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the flesh, as the person of African females and African males registered the wounding. If we think of the "flesh" as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or "escaped" overboard.[24]

Spillers, here, enriches our critical lexicon to locate the specific position of captive Africans within the void, or "zero degree of social conceptualization," in not only academic and political discourse, but also the symbolic order that dictates "the reflexes of iconography." I place Spillers's illumination of the distinction between "body" and "flesh" as a primary example of theories, and subjectivities, borne of fragmentation—"seared, divided," and ripped-apart— apposite the quintessential resistant subject within Lugones's theorization. Hence, the African captive who has "registered the wounding" is simply insufficiently theorized within Lugones's corpus. The incommensurability between theorizations of subjects constructed in fragmentation, or rupture, and splitting resides, perhaps, in the latter locating the modern period and colonialism circa capital as subtending contemporary racial regimes. Moreover, one of the framework's most critical shortcomings is its silence regarding the antiblackness that constructs modernity's vertical chain of being: an accounting that has been brilliantly theorized by different strands of Black critical thought over the last century.[25]

"Pornotroping" Black Flesh

The domination of African diasporic women in the Americas has and continues to determine both her various discursive articulations within the socio-political realm as well as her erasure. While pornotrope in the original sense clearly explicates the sexual violence attendant to the relations of the production of racialized gender and reproduction of racial blackness, my use of it in this article is to demonstrate the continued exploitation, unwitting or not, of Black women's labor and production for the *reproduction* and *reification* of relations of domination. In the case of Lugones's creation of decolonial feminism, I argue that her formulation of a theory of power hinges on the necessitation of Black feminism only to both erase them from the theoretical force of her purview. Moreover, since "pornotroping" invokes the juridical, material, and libidinal economies of violence attendant to modern racial slavery, I wish to focus on the ontology of rupture integral to the construction of the Black slave's position and rendered in, and through, African diasporic women's theorization and practice. One such critical lexicon is the production of Black feminist thought from the United States and the specific histories and phenomenology borne of that violence.

The term "pornotroping" conjoins both tropological—meaning to turn, or how classical rhetoricians defined aspects of the figurative— and libidinal aspects in its hermeneutics of the violence of captivity. This turn to violence in the formation of Blackness, conceptualized as the axis around which the symbolic order revolves, illumines the relationship between violence and pleasure enacted on Black captive "flesh." Spillers's theorization of the pornotrope demonstrates how pleasure disavowed as such, or pleasure structured in disavowed desire and state-sanctioned abjection, organizes legal and ideological fictions constituting both pre-modern philosophical edicts and modern juridico-political practices determining the status of captive and free, slave and human, property and person. "Porno" references both the Greek *porne,* or prostitute (a female slave sold for prostitution) and relates to *pernani*—to sell or traffic in. Spillers introduces the pornotrope to account for the ways the Black captive community in the New World is, by "externally imposed meanings and uses,"[26] reduced to an object—to a state of powerlessness over the rhetorical, biological, and sensual production of her meaning. The onto-epistemological violence of erasure and abjection is best described in Spillers's following analysis of the founding of the "socio-political order of the New World":

> That order, with its human sequence written in blood, represents for its African and indigenous peoples a scene of actual mutilation, dismemberment, and exile. First of all, their New-World, diasporic plight marked a theft of the body-a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire. Under these conditions, we lose at least gender difference in the outcome, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific. But this body, at least from the point of view of the captive community, focuses a private and particular space, at which point of convergence biological, sexual, social, cultural, linguistic, ritualistic, and psychological fortunes join. This profound intimacy of interlocking detail is disrupted, however, by externally imposed meanings and uses (1) the captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; (2) at the same time – in stunning contradiction – the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming being for the captor; (3) in this absence from a subject position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression

> of "otherness"; (4) as a category of "otherness," the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general "powerlessness," resonating through various centers of human and social meaning.[27]

Clarifying the libidinal aspects constitutive of transforming captive Africans from body to "flesh" nascent to the project of modernity, Spillers, here, describes the Black captive's reduction from body to "thing" as galvanized through the process of "pornotroping." Fundamentally structured within pre-modern epistemes, racial categorizations, and Western cosmologies,[28] the "various centers of human and social meaning" to which Spillers alludes continue to translate the "potential for pornotroping" the African diasporic subject within myriad spheres.

I am thinking of the properties of "pornotroping" within the libidinal economy of feminist scholarship in particular and coalitional politics in general with respect to Lugones's methodological construction of decolonial feminism. Her articulation of its lofty aspirations for "creativity in coalition" and "transcending" dehumanization towards "a newness of being"[29] absents the slave in the Americas and misrepresents the theory and praxis of Black American feminism's insights into the binary logic and violence of ontology, or being, itself. While this version of decolonial feminism conflates the violence of colonization and slavery, the matrix of power within Spillers's work, indicative of more critical schools of Black feminist scholarship, is determined by corporeal *and* ontological violence: "theft of the body," a "severing of the captive body from its motive will," and a general "powerlessness." Spillers includes "indigenous peoples" in the "scene" of New-World making—"dismemberment, and exile"—elucidating rather than obfuscating the distinct yet overlapping modes of the violence of colonialism and slavery determining person versus property. In other words, the formations of power that Spillers's work outlines reference a prior symbolic order that conjoins with the modern era to create the contemporary condition of possibility for a generalized "otherness" which methods of theorizing, such as decolonial feminism, inadequately categorize. In so doing, it conflates the "powerlessness" of an "absence from a subject position" with the general category of persons dominated under colonialism and its aftermath. As such, the pornotrope of Lugones's theorization of decolonial feminism is evinced in the absence of the captive Black woman, utilized within Lugones's misguided rendering of intersectionality, her implicit critique of women of color as overrepresented by Black women, and ultimately her theory's refusal to wrestle with rupture rather than nativity.

Rupture Without Relation: Blackness as Erasure

> The symbolic order that I wish to trace in this writing, calling it an "American grammar," begins at the "beginning," which is really a rupture and a radically different kind of cultural continuation. . . . We write and think, then, about an outcome of aspects of African-American life in the United States under the pressure of those events.[30]

While Lugones and Spillers both illustrate the violence of modernity as positing a new ontology, Lugones's recourse, in her essay "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," is to a nativism that would proffer "fusion" instead of a coalition based on methodologies yielded by Black feminist analyses. However, these perspectives Lugones gains are not deemed valuable in her estimation; in fact, she describes them as a potential "trap,"[31] misrepresenting intersectionality as a singular method. Lugones presents her theorization of the coloniality of gender and decolonial feminism as a "move methodologically from women of color feminism," thinking "about feminism from and at the grassroots, and from and at the colonial difference, with a strong emphasis on ground, on a historicized, incarnate intersubjectivity."[32] In contrast to thinking about "the colonial difference" absent of an analysis of racialization, which is to say racialized gender, Spillers's work, alongside other scholarship that engages racial slavery as a "tear in the world,"[33]commands one to examine rupture as the site par excellence of the slave and her descendants. Rarely does Lugones mention the slave or slavery within her work, unless it is as an analogue to the position of the Native in the Americas presumed to be non-Black: "Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans were classified as not human in terms of species—as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild."[34] Lugones's critique of the coloniality of gender entails erasing the African captive in the Americas who is not Native (in her reasoning) unless it appears as pornotrope: "So, I have shifted to the *coloniality of gender* at and from the *colonial difference* to be able to perceive and understand the fractured locus of colonized women and agents fluent in native cultures."[35] Here, Lugones presents a curious definition of an agential "colonized woman" as "fluent in native cultures," effectively placing the Native figure as the vanguard for any decolonial praxis and the deracinated slave and her descendants as void of any claim to this praxis.

To that end, Lugones turns to the work of Nigerian feminist scholar, Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, and her sociological research on the influence of Western colonization on the Yoruba people's conception of gender. Gender, here, by Lugones's elision in theorizing it from the vantage of racialized slavery in the Americas, represents the logic of purity against which she argues in "Purity, Impurity, and Separation," and implicates later in the identity politics of intersectional Black feminism. As such, Lugones's rhetorical mode of argumentation must refer to a nativism of one ethnic group in Africa to have any cursory representation of Black subjectivity in her decolonial discourse; however, it must be African (continental) as opposed to Black (in the Americas). By eliding the experience of Black dispossession outside of and beyond land dispossession, Lugones's articulation of the coloniality of gender absences the deracinated African in the Americas from the scope of her analysis. Subsequently, the recourse within the goals of decolonial feminism are a return to indigeneity wherein Africa, via Lugones's deployment of Oyěwùmí's work, stands in for a generic nativism, "fluent in native cultures," that also erases Indigenous scholars and activists who have theorized and engaged in their own decolonizing praxis. In so doing, her theorization leaves no space to conceptualize the position of African descended peoples in the Americas outside of her reference to intersectionality as a framework that is inadequate at best and essentialist at worst.

While "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" gestures at her critiques of intersectionality, "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms" misguidedly poses assertions such as theorizing the interlocking of oppressions is "not merely an ideological mechanism, but the categorial training of human beings into homogenous fragments . . . grounded in a categorial mind frame."[36] One of the methods she deploys to argue this point includes resurrecting the discourse of, and indeed "pornotroping," dead Black feminist figures such as Sojourner Truth and Audre Lorde. Thereby, the pornotrope of Lugones's decolonial feminism ventriloquizes Black women to buttress claims that omit Black women by rendering the position of the slave mute in its analysis. Using the Black slave as a metonymic figure for the non-Black Native American also dismisses Indigenous women, such as the Bolivian sociologist and activist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui who, not incidentally, Lugones sidelines as theoretical figures who could authorize an ethico-political and theoretical paradigm for the Americas. Including the condition of slavery as either analogous or secondary to colonialism by omission, posits a double erasure for not only the slave (and her descendants), but also the Native American.

One primary reason for this erasure concerns Lugones's limited theorization of the complex ways in which gender is racialized and how this racialization operates beyond and despite the dichotomous white/non-white, or European/non-European, binary that her version of decolonial feminism posits. Spillers, however, offers an incisive and salient analysis of dispossession beyond the binary of land and ontology, discussing the ramifications of colonialism and enslavement in the New World as follows:

> The loss of the indigenous name/land provides a metaphor of displacement for other human and cultural features and relations, including the displacement of the genitalia, the female's and the male's desire that engenders future. The fact that the enslaved person's access to the issue of his/her own body is not entirely clear in this historic period throws in crisis all aspects of the blood relations, as captors apparently felt no obligation to acknowledge them. Actually trying to understand how the confusions of consanguinity worked becomes the project, because the outcome goes far to explain the rule of gender and its application to the African female in captivity.[37]

Spillers, here, conducts a trenchant analysis of how structural relations of power subtended in colonialism and slavery determine how not only the world is ordered symbolically, "a metaphor of displacement for other human and cultural features and relations," but also the construction of the African captive's phenomenological, epistemological, and ontological arrangement within that order. These arrangements include the rupturing, or "confusions" of "consanguinity" and "the rule of gender" through dispossession: the "loss of the indigenous name/land." Current investigations, feminist or otherwise, into questions of agency, the sex/gender system within Western colonial modernity, decolonization, and the often-elided project of abolition must consider the continued life and/as death of African descended peoples as one of rupture.

In contrast to this provocative and haunting elucidation of the effects of colonialism and enslavement on the epistemology and ontology of modern conceptions of sex, gender, and dispossession, Lugones's methodology gestures towards an insufficient theorization of modernity and modern racial and gender classifications, beginning in 1492, with Columbus's violent arrival in the Americas and without considering its effects on the enslaved. If Lugones's analysis aims to "unveil what is obscured,"[38] its articulation of modernity as imposing "an ontology and a cosmology that, in its power and constitution, disallows all humanity, all possibility of understanding, all possibility of human communication, to dehumanized beings,"[39] only postures in this direction. Frantz Fanon, in the midst of the decolonizing movements of the twentieth century, asserted: "Decolonization, we know, is a historical process: In other words, it can only be understood, it can only find its significance and become self coherent insofar as we can discern the history-making movement which gives it historical form and substance."[40] Without considering rupture in relation to the slave, rupture as a mode of power and domination, and rupture as an ethical paradigm from which to begin theorizing the violence of modern ontology, knowledge, and gender formations, Lugones's theorization of decolonial feminism's rush to recuperate loss of humanity and cosmology will continue to privilege a locus that can only be recognized within its Eurocentric frame. Accordingly, in advancing her argument for resistance and a return to native cultures and cosmologies, one must question who is classified as Native in Lugones's logic. Where do African American women, as descendants of natives of Africa, dispossessed of body, name, land, language, and cosmology, fit within the constellation Lugones poses? For the rush to recapture stolen humanity is different than the impossible quest for stolen life to be returned.

Decolonial feminism does not simply erase or work against the Black feminist roots of women of color feminisms, it places itself as the authority of Indigenous feminisms, representing a "historicized" "ground" on which claims to decoloniality of gender and "incarnate intersubjectivity" could be made on behalf of subjects Lugones's work erases. Yet, I am left questioning which definition of "intersubjectivity"[41] with which Lugones is working considering her emphasis on relation without a full account of *relations of domination* within subjugated groups in the Americas; an analysis of how power relations structure intra-and-inter psychic dynamics that Audre Lorde theorized as "horizontal hostility,"[42] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui as "internal colonialism,"[43] or Spillers with her concept of the Black "intramural." [44] The reason for the ambiguous characterization of "intersubjectivity" in Lugones's work, I argue, concerns her lack of engagement with Blackness and racial slavery as phenomena independent of and in concert with colonialism in the New World. The ethical, political, and theoretical erasure of this articulation within her version of decolonial feminism reveals how its very condition of possibility as a theoretical framework depends upon, argues against, and yet still omits the figure of African American and Black diasporic women in the Americas, including African-Native Americans: a method of "pornotroping" shadowed by its aims Lugones presents as follows: "I want to follow subjects in intersubjective oration and conflict, fully informed as members of Native American or African societies, as they take up, respond, resist, and accommodate to hostile invaders who mean to dispossess and dehumanize them."[45] Lugones's vocabulary of acting in relation, of "be-ing in relation,"[46] proves seductive in advocating for community in resistance at the site of "colonial difference."[47] However, these ideal suppositions fortify the coloniality of gender's porno-tropological use of Black feminist theorizing and Black women's bodies to establish a field of discourse toward a decolonial feminism, the goal of which Lugones asserts as the "beginning" or "possibility"[48] of resistance.

Intersectionality and Its Discontents

Relying on the trope of juxtaposition—integrating a broad, multiplicitous women of color feminism at the expense of Black women—Lugones contrasts the Combahee River Collective's statement, penned in 1977, and its discussion of "interlocking" "systems of oppression"[49] with semantics of "intermeshing" or "fused." While the distinctions seem cursory, the deleterious effects organize the mobilization of Black feminist discourse without acknowledging the major tenets of prominent schools of Black feminism *as* Black. The Combahee River Collective's analysis of "interlocking" systems of power followed the tradition of Black revolutionary, rather than radical or liberal, feminist theory and organizing, evidenced in part by the naming of the collective after the 1863 military campaign led by Harriet Tubman to free almost one thousand enslaved men, women, and children in South Carolina. Lugones begins and ends "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" by exhuming Black abolitionist and women's rights activist, Sojourner Truth, to galvanize her arguments. Lugones ventriloquizes Truth to furnish a rhetorical response to "the semantic consequence of the coloniality of gender,"[50] a response to Truth's infamous speech at the 1851 women's rights convention in Akron, Ohio, "Ain't I a Woman?,"[51] with the following bold assertion: "Thus, the colonial answer to Sojourner Truth is clearly, 'no.'"[52] Without providing a cogent analysis of the relationship between racialization—blackness, specifically—gender, and sex in her decolonial feminism, Lugones concludes her essay by once again conjuring Truth and deploying the first-person plural pronoun "We":

> Isn't it the case that those of us who rejected the offer made to us over and over by white women in consciousness-raising groups, conferences, workshops, and women's studies program meetings saw the offer as slamming the door to a coalition that would really include us? Isn't it the case that we felt a calm, full, substantial sense of recognition when we asked: "What do you mean "We," White Woman?" Isn't it the case that we rejected the offer from the side of Sojourner Truth and were ready to reject their answer? Isn't it the case that we refused the offer at the colonial difference, sure that for them there was only one woman, only one reality?[53]

Lugones, here, retreats from acknowledging the importance of differences in the category of woman *within groups of women of color* rather than the "we" she posits against "white women." Additionally, any absence of reference to these differences Lorde warned, "weakens any feminist discussion of the personal and the political."[54] The distinct histories of colonialism and enslavement as practiced in the Americas are omitted in the service of positing a supposed universal "We," with Lugones, writing in first-person plural assuming a shared perspective with a former slave, Sojourner Truth. Indeed, in so doing, Lugones, in a gesture of rhetorical violence, occupies Truth's position, as well as the positions of other women differently situated within the universal category Lugones ascribes *against* the flat category of "white women." In other words, the metonymical lexicon of intersectionality for a Black feminism denied yet critiqued as such proves useful to Lugones only in the interests of weaponizing Black speech, Black suffering. Moreover, she deploys a homogenous representation of Black feminism against a universal classification of women she derides as indicative of binary logic and according to an implicit dichotomy she constructs between white and non-white. Directly contradicting her critiques of "the logic of dichotomies,"[55] Lugones's ventriloquizing of Truth is the effect of "pornotroping" African-American women, effacing their singular position out of disregard and or indifference to positionings Donna Haraway has described as "not the same as those of other women of color; each condition of oppression requires specific analysis that both refuses the separations and insists on the nonidentities of race, sex, sexuality, and class. These matters make starkly clear why an adequate feminist theory of gender must simultaneously be a theory of racial and sexual difference in specific historical conditions of production and reproduction."[56] Haraway's apt reading of intersectionality recognizes its ability to investigate, critique, and account for the ideologically constructed categories of racial, sexual, and gender difference as historic "conditions of production and reproduction" which must be theorized "simultaneously" to be an "adequate feminist theory of gender."[57]

In fact, throughout much of her oeuvre, Lugones posits decolonial feminism as a solution to rather than engagement with intersectional analyses, declaring,

> I will argue for a second unmasking [of ornamental multiculturalism and white bourgeois feminisms] in which we move from the logic of intersectionality to the logic of fusion, intermeshing, coalescence. This logic is one of logical inseparability of race, class, sexuality, gender. While the logic of interconnection leaves the logic of categories intact, the logic of fusion corrupts it. I will focus on my own and Audre Lorde's work in enacting the second unmasking. Fusion or coalescence enables us to move fully into resistance.[58]

Lugones aligns herself with the late Black lesbian feminist poet, Lorde, to reject the theoretical propositions of intersectionality, what Lugones deems "inseparability," in favor of her new formulation: "fusion, intermeshing, coalescence." Implying that intersectionality—without specifying which scholar's particular elucidation or which school of Black feminism (such as liberal, radical, or revolutionary, for instance)—shares the same facets as "ornamental multiculturalism and white bourgeois feminism" for leaving "the logic of categories in tact," Lugones must "pornotrope" Lorde to authorize her claims. This implicit charge of essentialism appears in "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," with statements such as: "If woman and black are terms for homogenous, atomic, separable categories, then their intersection shows us the absence of black women rather than their presence."[59] Directly following her suggestion that Black women absent *themselves* by employing categorical, dichotomous terms engendered within colonial modernity ("woman" and "black") in advocating for recourse within the law, she asserts: "So, to see non-white women is to exceed 'categorical' logic. I propose the modern, colonial, gender systems as a lens through which to theorize further the oppressive logic of colonial modernity, its use of hierarchical dichotomies and categorical logic."[60] The aforementioned assertions serve to obfuscate rather than clarify which specific theorization of intersectionality Lugones is critiquing (or surpassing) and the ideological variations within intersectional analyses. Furthermore, Lugones fails to illuminate the distinctions, if any, between Black feminisms, women of color feminisms, and third world feminisms and how or why her version of decolonial feminism can provide material solutions to the problem of essentialist, "categorical logic." In other words, the distinctions between "inseparability" and "intermeshing," or "interconnection" and "fusion," remain ambiguous outside of assertions that her terms enable "us to move fully into resistance." Lugones's later work in "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminism" maintains, "[E]verywhere we turn we find the interlocking of oppressions disabling us from perceiving and resisting oppressions as intermeshed or fused," suggesting that the violence that intersectional analyses unveil provide "a possible trap."[61] Critiquing Kimberlé Crenshaw's contributions to the canon of intersectional analyses, Lugones mischaracterizes her study with the following claim: "But seeing the violence while trapped in its logic does not awaken one to resistance to it. Indeed, depending on one's location perceiving the violence may move one to promote it, or to resist it."[62] Lugones provides a mischaracterization of Crenshaw's seminal work which coined and brought the term intersectionality into common parlance. Without providing justification for the exact means by which perception of violence "promotes" it, Lugones paints Crenshaw's analytic critique of single-axis frameworks in feminist and antiracist recourses to legal discrimination doctrine as deleterious practice. Lugones is unclear as to how Crenshaw underscores a hermeneutic to the point of promoting the violence it critiques yet maintains that the work of Lorde provides appropriate remedy. In this respect, she proffers a fictive ideological fissure between the Black feminist insights of intersectionality as theorized by Crenshaw and the oeuvre of Audre Lorde: "[T] he difference between Audre Lorde and Kimberlé Crenshaw lies precisely in the difference in the logic of their starting points. It is here that Lorde's 'nondominant differences' makes sense. And we can see why there is an impulse towards coalition within the logic of fusion."[63] Again, Lugones deploys Black feminist theorists as rhetorical devices to cathedralize and establish an approach to feminist analysis that eclipses the "categorical thinking" underscoring the essentialist creation of race—the "trap" of the pornotrope, Blackness in women of color feminisms.

Of course, as with all Black intellectual and cultural production, such as with Black "flesh" writ large, Black discourses—from resistance movements to structural analyses—can and have been mobilized by the state and sectors of society for counterrevolutionary aims. In her essay, "Radicalizing Black Feminisms," Joy James notes the distinction between various forms of Black feminisms through an analysis of their political aim and ideology:

> Radical black feminists' liberation theories address their nemesis: political violence, in both its private and public manifestations; counterrevolutionary state police repression; and a liberal antirevolutionary discourse that seeks to contain radical black feminism by portraying it as an idealistic maverick. Radicalizing potential based on incisive analyses; autonomy from mainstream and bourgeois feminism; independence from masculinist or patriarchal antiracism; a (self-) critique of neoradicalism, and, most importantly, activism (beyond "speech acts") that connects with "grassroots" and nonelite objectives and leadership—all mark a transformative black feminism.[64]

If Lugones's critique were subtended in a political analysis of the goals of Crenshaw's work, then the description of her articulation of intersectionality as a "trap" could prove useful. Yet nowhere in Lugones's oeuvre does she cite a specific instance where Crenshaw's work aided in negating the aims of decolonial feminism. Nevertheless, Lugones's theorization of the coloniality of gender and decolonial feminism is contingent upon a misplaced critique of one of Black feminism's earlier, most popularized (to the detriment of its original radical aims, at times), and coalition-building modes of analysis: a method of inquiry that has been deployed by academics, scholars, nineteenth-century abolitionists, and contemporary social-movement organizers globally to resist various mechanisms of domination.[65] Black feminist theorist and writer Patricia Hill Collins "recognize[s] the complexity of intersectionality as a heuristic device," "emphasiz[ing] its race and gender dimensions in the United States in order to stress how violence links social hierarchies."[66] Collins utilizes the phenomenology of Black women's experiences with violence to reconceptualize "the significance of group histories for constructing American violence," essentially arguing that "[r]econceptualizing violence through this logic of intersectionality" "creates conceptual space for anti-violence theory."[67] I do not wish to suggest that intersectionality (generalized, or generalizable, as an analytic tool or hermeneutic) can ameliorate or adjudicate violence; rather, I maintain that the specific experiences of Black people in the Americas has generated the groundwork for theorizing and resisting paradigmatic violence. Indeed, Sylvia Wynter locates Black Americans' specific experience of ontological and material dispossession within a "classificatory logic" of the premodern era—a mode of domination rooted in antiblack ideology and categories prior to the epoch which decoloniality theorizes: "Black Americans are the only population group of the post-1492 Americas who had been legitimately owned, that is, enslaved, over several centuries. Their owned and enslaved status had been systemically precepted within the 'inner eyes' and the classificatory logic of the earlier episteme, its hegemonic political categories and behavior-orienting political ethic, to be legitimate and just."[68] Hence, figures such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett whose courageous advocacy and journalism exposed the routine lynchings of Black men throughout the American Jim Crow south demonstrates a form of intersectional analysis and/as resistance that animates contemporary global movements against state-sanctioned and vigilante violence. Still, within contemporary Black feminist discourse there is dissension about how "intersectionality might be misused (for individualism, liberalism, and/or apolitical postmodernism)."[69] However, even within these debates about intersectionality, rarely has the onus of positing a deleterious logic of oppression been placed on the scholarship of a subjugated group that has consistently demonstrated an openness to include members differently positioned within diverse social, political, and identity categories. For intersectionality, in its varied analyses and hermeneutics, "explicitly challenge[s] the status quo and aim[s] to transform power relations."[70] Much of the misuse, misapplication, and misunderstanding about intersectionality derives from the difficulty of locating a homogenous political ideology within its vast discourse.

Although the insights generated from intersectionality's hermeneutics have led to radical movements from the left, its vernacular has also been adopted for neoliberal aims, demonstrated recently by twitter feeds of white carceral feminists such as Hillary Clinton during her failed 2016 presidential election campaign. In other words, the potentials and pitfalls of intersectionality are determined by the political ideologies of the scholars, activists, and politicians who deploy its analytic tools and rhetoric; intersectionality is not an ideology—political or otherwise—in and of itself, contrary to Lugones's assertions. More importantly, the radical insights gleaned from its analytics include how during the period of New World slavery, the "customary lexis" of gender, sexuality, desire, and pleasure, for instance, were placed into "unrelieved crisis."[71] Any mode of feminist analysis that does not take matters such as race, structure, power, historical context, and violence into account, effectively disclosing this Spillersian "unrelieved crisis," will continually fail in its elucidations as well as its ability to enact what Lugones describes as "a lived transformation of the social world."[72] Accordingly, one of the more disturbing aspects of Lugones's work is its perspective—a decolonial feminism against and in spite of intersectionality— that serves to industrialize a field of discourse within academia at the expense of the multiplicity it espouses: "The defiant inhabitation of the colonial difference cannot be done in dichotomous terms precisely because the logic of dichotomies places us at the fracture, but the logic of coalition at the colonial difference is constituted by a rejection of dichotomous construction of realities. The multiplicity is never reduced."[73] Perhaps this would be the case for Lugones's decolonial feminism—that the "multiplicity is never reduced"— if it were not for a continued erasure of African American women, and a trenchant analysis of racial slavery in general, from its fields of perception.

A Return to "Flesh"

Black women's struggle is quite other. Our struggle as Black women has to do with the destruction of the genre; with the displacement of the genre of the human of "Man," of which the Black population group—men, women and children—must function as the negation.

—SYLVIA WYNTER, "*ProudFlesh* Inter/Views Sylvia Wynter," *ProudFlesh: New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness* 4 (2006)

Investigating the relationship between enslavement, racialization, and the sex/gender system within modernity is important to understand the ways in which scholarship and resistance movements are indebted to Black women's bodies, "pornotroping" them even within the most radical declarations of decolonization. Hence, I must return to Hortense Spillers work, published over two decades prior to the construction of decolonial feminist theory (at least in the Anglo-American academy) and which supplies an ethical and trenchant analysis of the production of the symbolics of gender within the New World. Spillers describes the epistemological and ontological shifts of New World slavery and colonialism in the following:

> [W]e might interpret the whole career of African-Americans, a decisive factor in national political life since the mid-seventeenth century…as a metaphor of social and cultural management. According to this reading, gender, or sex-role assignation, or the clear differentiation of sexual stuff, sustained elsewhere in the culture, does not emerge for the African-American female in this historic instance, except indirectly, except as a way to re-enforce through the process of birthing, "the reproduction of the relations of production" that involves "the reproduction of the values and behavior patterns necessary to maintain the system of hierarchy in its various aspects of gender, class, and race or ethnicity."[74]

Spillers, like Black feminists from the nineteenth century forward, continues to map for us the ontological and cultural stakes of Black women's banishment "out of the traditional symbolics of female gender," stating that "in the historic outline of dominance, the respective subject-positions of 'female' and 'male' adhere to no symbolic integrity." In fact, she maintains that "gendering, in its coeval reference to African American women, insinuates an implicit and unresolved puzzle both within current feminist discourse and within those discursive communities that investigate the entire problematics of culture."[75] In aiming toward a decolonial feminism, the bodies, labor, thought, and creativity of Black feminisms is subordinated to the task of an assumed, inclusive category of "Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans." But I *must* ask, where is the African American woman, as a figure for thought and a figure unthought, within decoloniality? This question is critical for a feminism that profits highly from the work of figures such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Sojourner Truth, and Audre Lorde whose work appears repeatedly throughout Lugones's oeuvre, while the subjects of their work are consistently disappeared within the metonymic arrangements of a generalized colonized subject. Feasibly, if Lugones's decolonial feminism were to investigate and theorize (anti) blackness within its theoretical and political horizons, it could provide an analysis of how the categories incipit to colonial modernity shift our ethical and epistemological insights about how we view sex, race, and gender in feminist scholarship. In this vein, decoloniality of gender could provide a nuanced, historically contextualized analysis of difference rather than the one that Lugones posits—one dependent upon weaponizing one strand of Black feminist thought, such as Audre Lorde, to theorize *against* the work of another Black feminist, Crenshaw. The theorization of difference Lugones quotes from Lorde, "nondominant differences,"[76] erases Lorde's warning that militant resistance also means, "actively working for change, sometimes in the absence of any surety that change is coming. It means doing the unromantic and tedious work necessary to forge meaningful coalitions, and it means recognizing which coalitions are possible and which coalitions are not."[77] Instrumentalizing and "pornotroping" the bodies and scholarship of figures pitted against each other for rhetorical effect constitutes, in Lorde's estimation, an impossible coalition.

Lugones's insertion of Black diasporic women into a discourse that absences them presents a diametrically opposed position than that of a revolutionary let alone radical feminism. It replicates absence—or posits an absence of absence—rather than resisting Black women's absence *from* absence. These utterances and instantiations of Black womanhood, or Blackness denied womanhood within the logic of colonial modernity for Lugones, engage in "pornotroping," which I find foundational to the theoretical framework of her decolonial feminism, a framework that has deleterious consequences for a truly emancipatory or fully coalitional practice. "Pornotroping" Black women's flesh is an outcome of antiblackness that produces and is reproduced by relations of violence within all social groups, across and within racial, gender, sex, class, and geographic differences. Hence, (anti)blackness produces and is reproduced by scales of humanity that, in Lugones's logic, would comprise a binary field in their recognition—seeing the intersections of race, gender and a host of other differences, perceiving "interlocking systems of power" as they operate on one's body and in the world. Mechanisms of state sanctioned violence and the violent epistemological regimes of the modern episteme meet at the nexus of Black women's bodies, constructing them as expedient politically as they are necessary libidinally: in other words, expendable and disposable. These desiring mechanisms of the political and affective spheres are tied to the "pornotroping" of Black female flesh and their seemingly permanent position of multiplied absence. More importantly, Black women's flesh continues to operate according to what C. Riley Snorton, in *Black on Both Sides: A History of Transracial Identity,* has described in the following passage: "Flesh is, above all else, a thing that produces relations—real and imagined, metaphysical and material. As Nicole Ivy argues, '[N]ot only were black women made to be the ciphers through which medical knowledge about an imagined constituency of suffering white womanhood could be telegraphed, they also remained rendered knowable and fungible across time and geographic space.'"[78] Flesh is "the condition of possibility for the science and symbolics of modern sex"[79] as much as it is for institutional resistance/discursive intellectual production of feminist discourse that theorizes best practices, and analyses, for resistance. These distinctions slide along a scale aiding in their rhetorical substitution rather than allow Blackness in its singularity to authorize one's ethical and political commitment to address the violence of slavery and coloniality.

My goal in outlining Lugones's "pornotroping" of Black women and Black feminisms concerns the overall project of abolition: how our intellectual theorizations have yet to match the rigor of abolition as an ongoing political project in communities across the globe, rooted in the strategies of Harriet Tubman, alongside other African diasporic women in the Caribbean and South America. Considering the political stakes to Black life, the sustainability of the planet, and onto-political stakes we have yet to imagine, we must return to the revolutionary roots of a Black feminism "less interested in joining the ranks of gendered femaleness," away from antiblack horizons that absent insurgency from lines of thought and forms of praxis. In framing it as I've demonstrated, it would be theoretically anemic to conceive the sex and gender system, and therefore "flesh" or decolonial or Black feminisms, outside of the critical function Black female "flesh" serves within all of those discourses, including those constituting the Black reproductive capacities (for the purposes of modern capital) of figures designated female-sexed chattel slaves. Lugones encourages the reader to "inhabit" defiantly, yet I am left wondering what is it that one is inhabiting? A body deemed the property of non-Black others? The child taken from an enslaved and/or migrant mother? Where is the agency in dispossession other than the very resistance which Truth and other Black women abolitionists in the nineteenth century questioned then, and which #BlackLivesMatter continues to question now? Is it based on dichotomous terms or the violence that lingers from the institution of a world that parses out lived experiences, total dispossession for some, for theoretical coalition at the *expense* of movements on the ground— reformist, radical, or revolutionary? For African diasporic people's dispossession entails not only land, but also Black bodies and a Black insurgent will made subordinate within the turn to colonial modernity and nativism, away from the abolitionist politics and practices engendered by racial slavery *and* colonialism.

Instead of resting on an ahistorical lexicon of solidarity and coalition, I find myself still turning to the revolutionary thought of Black feminist thinkers, like Spillers, who states of the captive female that "our task is to make a place for this different social subject. In doing so we are less interested in joining the ranks of gendered femaleness than gaining the insurgent ground as female social subject."[80] Without acknowledging our indebtedness to the ground of a liberatory thought and practice, both our destination and process of arrival will be forestalled in the wake of thought, resistant to the absent suffering of Black women who have paved the way. As such, I find this coalitional emancipatory politics for a global Black diaspora impossible within the frameworks presented within Lugones's decolonial feminism. Perhaps a recognition of pluralities—a multiverse consisting of the human, colonized, and enslaved as navigating distinct and interdependent ontologies and non-ontologies— could form the basis of feminist revolutionary action and thought. The "deep coalitions"[81] Lugones envisions would require a restructuring of thought *and* being, but much of the conceptual labor has yet to be achieved. A truly comprehensive and inclusive theory and praxis of liberation, especially the necessary liberation from one's *self*, whether there is consensus or not regarding its fragmentation, could perhaps act "against the grain of oppression,"[82] and appear identical to embracing rupture not as fragmentation, but rather the recognition that only within separation constitutive of rupture could one illumine the fulcrum of the psychic and political economies of dispossession.

SELAMAWIT D. TERREFE is an assistant professor in English at Tulane University specializing in Global Black Studies, Gender and Sexuality, Psychoanalysis, Continental Philosophy, Critical Theory, and Radical and Revolutionary Politics. Attending to the intersections between race and

gender, popular culture and fantasy, and violence and desire, she has published in *Theory and Event, Rhizomes, Oxford Bibliographies, The Feminist Wire,* and has publications forthcoming by Random House OneWorld. Before coming to Tulane, she was a postdoctoral fellow in Black Atlantic Studies at the University of Bremen, Germany, in the department of English Speaking Cultures.

NOTES

1. Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *International Sociology* 15, no. 2 (2000): 215–32.
2. Although first mentioned in Nelson Maldonado-Torres's essay, "The Topology of Being and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: Modernity, Empire, Coloniality," *City* 8, no. 1 (2004): 29–56, the following essay demonstrates a fuller elaboration of the concept: Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2–3 (2007): 240–70.
3. María Lugones, "Methodological Notes Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy* (2012): 68–86, 85.
4. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 754.
5. María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 86.
6. Originally published in the journal *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 458.
7. Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinaje*s, 142.
8. Ibid., 141.
9. Ibid., 127.
10. Ibid, 133.
11. Jared Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 198.
12. Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes,* 133.
13. Ibid., 123, 122.
14. Ibid., 126. Italics are Lugones's.
15. Ibid., 146n1.
16. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 747.
17. Ibid.
18. Lugones, "Methodological Notes Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 85.
19. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 742.
20. Lugones, "Methodological Notes Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 69–70.
21. María Lugones, "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 13, no. 1 (2014): 68–80, 75.
22. Saidiya Hartman poignantly writes, "If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperiled

and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery—skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration. I, too, am the afterlife of slavery," in *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Macmillan, 2008), 6.

23. Hortense Spillers et al., ""Whatcha gonna do?": Revisiting "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book": A Conversation with Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Shelly Eversley, and Jennifer L. Morgan," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 35, nos. 1–2 (2007): 300.
24. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.
25. The oeuvre of the Caribbean theorist, scholar, and writer, Sylvia Wynter, has demonstrated that over two centuries prior to Columbus's navigation to the New World, the Islamic trans-Saharan slave trade of Black Africans had already indicated a racial order, a mode of pre-colonial racial thinking that would transfer to modernity. This racial thinking was framed in terms of who could and would be enslavable, according to what was divinely ordained, or interpretations of divine edicts. Feudal Europe would eventually adopt the same cartographic and religious reasonings that Black Africans were enslavable because their souls could not be saved. The Valladolid debates between De las Casas and Sepulveda in the sixteenth century provided further evidence of the racialized justifications and religious discourse of enslavability with the Catholic Church's discourse about the morality of enslaving Indigenous peoples of the Americas. There was never such a debate about the ethics of enslaving Black Africans. Wynter writes: "Because the mainstream accounts of the earth's geography of Columbus's era also still functioned, in spite of the Portuguese voyages, mainly within the same "knowledge-of-categories" mode of cognition as did that of medieval Islam's accounts of black Africa's geography, their rules of representation and operational strategies followed a similar logic. The transgressive chaos in medieval Islam's trading and monotheistic way of life and 'mode of subjective understanding' had been signified by a binary opposition between...people who traded like Muslims and peoples who—unlike either the Muslims or the intermediate category of other peoples who traded in a rudimentary manner—did not trade at all and necessarily lived like "beasts," that is, conceptually other peoples like the *Zanj*, the *Habasha*. These latter were paralleled in the geographic account of the earth by feudal-Christian geography and its rules of representation, by a binary opposition. . . . This binary opposition was then inscribed in an ostensibly unbridgeable separation between the *habitable* areas of the earth (which were within the redemptive grace of the Scholastics' God and His only "partial providence for mankind"), and the *uninhabitable* areas of the earth (which were outside His grace). Both the torrid zones (such as the lands that lay beyond the bulge of Cape Bojador) and the Western Hemisphere (the allegedly nonexistent site of today's America and the Caribbean) were therefore discursively made into mobile labels, so as to detach them from their "moorings in reality" and to convert them into the "stereotyped images" whose function was exactly the same as that of the *Zanj, and*

the Habesha in medieval Islamic geography. These images indeed served as the boundary markers or the *nec plus ultra* sign of the transgressive chaos that awaited outside the mode of rationality of the behavioral norms and therefore of subjective understanding of the feudal-Christian order—in the same way as, incidentally, the Aztecs' "abode-of-the-dead" label attached to the ocean also served the same function (see Kandel 1988:76–77)" (Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View,* ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 5–57, 21. Wynter also locates the violence of colonial modernity prior to 1492, describing how European colonization of the Americas began in a "pattern of conquest and colonization that Europe had begun to establish starting some two-and-a-half centuries before 1492, with its expansion into the western Mediterranean and then into the eastern Atlantic" (11). Additionally, Wynter, in the same essay, elaborates on how Africa, and antiblack violence against Africa, served as a "prelude" to Europe's conquest of the Americas as follows: "[T]he attraction that had impelled the Portuguese state to round the hitherto nonroundable Cape Bojador had been the lure of circumventing, by a newly discovered sea route, the Islamic trans-Saharan monopoly over the rich gold trade. The hitherto closed-in world of feudal-Christian Europe had only begun to suspect the existence of the source of this trade in the ostensibly uninhabitable torrid zone areas, below the Sahara Desert, following on the fabled pilgrimage of the Islamized African emperor of Mali, Mansa Musa, to Mecca in 1324. News of the prodigality with which he had lavished gold upon his hosts had sent ripples of rumors of undreamed of affluence throughout a still-poor and—in relation to the then still-dominate world of Islam—backward Latin-Christian Europe. Consequently, the Portuguese landing on the shores of today's Senegal and their drawing of areas of West Africa into a mercantile network and trading system, on the basis of the exchange of their goods for gold or slaves, were the necessary and indispensable prelude, not only to Columbus's own voyage but also to the specific patterns of relations of which Cerio speaks between Christian Europe and the non-Christian peoples of the world to which Columbus and his crew had newly arrived" ("1492: A New World View," 9–11). Lastly, Wynter locates the central role of African/Black people in constituting our current racial order rooted in essentialist thinking determining not only who "would come to embody the new symbolic construct of Race"—Africans—but also how Indigenous peoples of the Americas were released from the category of enslavable and brought into the fold, however reluctantly, of humanity: "[N]ot only would they [peoples of African descent] be used, as Morgenthau (1991) points out, as the totally disposable, coercible, and unpaid labor force that alone made possible the accelerated economic development of the Americas. They would also play a central role in the instituting of the bases of the new social structure. In this role they would not only serve to free the indigenous peoples from the outright slavery to which many had been reduced in the immediate decades after 1492, when a flourishing intra-Caribbean and Caribbean-mainland slave trade in cabezas de indios y indias (heads of Indian men, as in heads of cattle) (Pastor Ig88:.s8–.s9) and one that had been initiated by Columbus himself, had made the fortunes of some of the founder families of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean (Wynter 1984:30). As the liminal category whose mode of excluded difference, based on the hereditary slave status of its members as the only legitimately enslavable population group, they would also generate the principle of similarity or of conspecificity that would come to bond, if on the terms of sharply unequal relations, the incoming Spanish settlers with the indigenous peoples. From the mid-sixteenth century on, this principle would come to bond the latter as members of a category whose status was that of hereditarily free subjects of the Spanish state. This third population group, would come to embody the new symbolic construct of Race or of innately determined difference that would enable the Spanish state to legitimate its sovereignty over the lands of the Americas in the post religious legal terms of Western Europe's now-expanding state system. It would do so by instituting by means of the physical referent of the groups enslaved lives and labor the empirical basis, of, in Cerio's terms, "the 'moral and philosophical foundations' on which the Spaniards 'accepted' the indigenous peoples 'into their societies, however rudely'" ("1492: A New World View," 11–12).

26. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.
27. Ibid.
28. Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 5–57.
29. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 753.
30. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.
31. Lugones, "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," 76.
32. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 746.
33. "The name of the people we came from has ceased to matter....The question however was more complicated, more nuanced. That moment between my grandfather and I several decades ago revealed a tear I the world...the rupture this exchange with my grandfather revealed was greater than the need for familial bonds. It was a rupture in history, a rupture in the quality of being, a rupture of geography." Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2012), 4–5.
34. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 743.
35. Ibid., 758.
36. Lugones, "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," 76.
37. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 73.
38. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 747.
39. Ibid., 751.
40. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007), 2.
41. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 748.
42. Audre Lorde, "Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving," *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Toronto: Crossing Press, 2012), 48
43. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Pachakuti: The Historical Horizons of Internal Colonialism," *Página Consultada a* 27, no. 15 (1991): 1–10; and "Ch'ixinakax utxiwa:

A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 1 (2012): 95–109.

44. Hortense Spillers, "'All the Things You Could Be by Now, If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother': Psychoanalysis and Race," *Boundary 2* 23, no. 3 (1996): 75–141, 76, 89.
45. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 748.
46. Ibid., 755.
47. Ibid., 753.
48. Ibid., 746.
49. Barbara Smith, ed. *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 264.
50. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 745.
51. Erlene Stetson and Linda David. *Glorying in Tribulation: The Life Work of Sojourner Truth* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994).
52. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 745.
53. Ibid., 755–56.
54. Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider*, 110. This chapter was originally a commentary delivered by Lorde in New York on September 29, 1979 at "The Personal and the Political" panel at the Second Sex Conference.
55. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 758, 755.
56. Donna Haraway, "Ecce Homo, Ain't (Ar'n't) I a Woman, and Inappropriate/d Others: The Human in a Post-humanist Landscape," *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 104–18, 95.
57. Ibid., 95.
58. Lugones, "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," 73.
59. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 742.
60. Ibid.
61. Lugones, "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," 76.
62. Ibid., 75.
63. Ibid., 77.
64. Joy James, "Radicalizing Black Feminism," *Seeking the Beloved Community: A Feminist Race Reader* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2013), 57.
65. In the interview titled "Rethinking Identity Politics," Demita Frazier, one of the founding members of the Black feminist lesbian organization, The Combahee River Collective, states, "I never believed that Combahee, or other Black feminist groups I have participated in, should focus only on issues of concern for us as Black women, or that, as lesbian/bisexual women, we should only focus on lesbian issues. It's really important to note that Combahee was instrumental in founding a local battered women's shelter. We worked in coalition with community activists, women and men, lesbians and straight folks. We were very active in the reproductive rights movement, even though, at the tie, most of us were lesbians. We found ourselves involved in coalition with the labor movement because we believed in the

importance of supporting other groups even if the individuals in that group weren't all feminist. We understood that coalition building was crucial to our own survival." Demita Frazier, in "Interview by Karen Kahn: Rethinking Identity Politics," *Sojourner, September* 12 (1995): 13–23, appearing in Asad Haidir, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (London: Verso Books, 2018), 12.

66. Patricia Hill Collins, "The Tie That Binds: Race, Gender and US Violence," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 5 (1998): 917–38, 920.
67. Ibid., 917.
68. Sylvia Wynter, "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues," *Forum NHI: Knowledge for the 21st Century* 1, no. 1 (1994): pp. 42–73, 62, 62.
69. Kathryn T. Gines, "Black Feminism and Intersectional Analyses: A Defense of Intersectionality," *Philosophy Today* 55 (2011): 275–84, 279.
70. Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 33.
71. Spillers writes, "Indeed, we could go so far as to entertain the very real possibility that 'sexuality,' as a term of implied relationship and desire, is dubiously appropriate, manageable, or accurate to any of the familial arrangements under a system of enslavement, from the master's family to the captive enclave. Under these arrangements, the customary lexis of sexuality, including 'reproduction,' 'motherhood,' 'pleasure,' and 'desire' are thrown into unrelieved crisis," "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 76.
72. Lugones, "Methodological Notes Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 76.
73. Ibid., 85.
74. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 79.
75. Ibid., 78.
76. Lugones, "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," 69, 77.
77. Lorde, "Learning from the 60s," *Sister Outsider*, 142.
78. C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 40.
79. Ibid., 20.
80. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 80.
81. Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 758n12.
82. Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*. The phrase appears throughout the text.