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Born This Way? Time and the Coloniality of Gender

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ABSTRACT: The “born this way” narrative remains a popular way to defend nonnormative genders and sexualities in the United States. While feminist and queer theorists have critiqued the narrative’s implicit ahistorical and essentialist understanding of sexuality, the narrative’s incorporation by the state as a way to police gender identity has gone largely underdeveloped. I argue that transgender accounts of this narrative reorient it amid questions of temporality, race, colonialism, and the nation-state, thereby allowing for a critique that does justice to the enmeshment of categories of difference.

KEYWORDS: feminism, colonialism, race, transgender, queer

The “born this way” narrative remains a popular way to legitimate nonnormative genders and sexualities in the United States. To take just one example, a recent Gallup poll celebrated by the Human Rights Campaign found that the majority of Americans believe that sexuality is something one is born with.¹ The hope seems to be that eventually we will see a similar poll about gender identity and we will have taken a giant step forward, reaching the next level of liberation. The continued efficacy of the born this way narrative cannot be underestimated. The narrative is especially understandable as a strategic response to accounts of identity as something

that can and should be counteracted, whether through conversion therapy or religion more broadly.² The narrative also capitalizes on the belief that identity is either biologically determined or socially chosen. While much feminist and queer academic work on gender and sexuality has moved far beyond this kind of dualistic thinking, the political landscape in the United States remains entrenched in the either/or model. The fact that the claim has been politically or phenomenologically strategic, however, does not guarantee its veracity, and there are many reasons to be suspicious of this message.

While critical work around the born this way narrative has largely focused on sexuality and biology,³ I focus here not only on the specific deployment of the narrative in transgender experience but also on questions of time and temporality.⁴ Appealing to birth is, after all, not only about biologically determinist or ahistorical accounts of identity but also about the belief that a claim to an origin can ground the realness of one's identity in particularly temporal ways. By tracing how this narrative is specifically deployed by the state in legitimating transgender identity, I analyze how the state wields this understanding of time as a mechanism of differentiation between valid and invalid identities (for example, through the rules governing sex designation on identity documents). Second, I place this use of time in the state allocation of gender within a historical context of colonial and racial identity formation. I argue that postcolonial and decolonial feminisms provide the genealogical groundwork for a more extended critical response to such contemporary state invitations.

Trans Childhood Narratives

Many writers have reflected on the norms governing access to medical and legal gender transition.⁵ Dean Spade's essay "Resisting Medicine, Re/modeling Gender" offers a particularly compelling example of the role of the born this way narrative in the state management of gender. Spade describes how his doctors expected him to provide a "normal" narrative of his "non-normal" identity in order to be declared legitimately transgender and thus granted permission to access surgery. When Spade mocked this narrative, answering a therapist's question—"When did you first know you were different?"—with "Well I knew I was poor and on welfare," a therapist told Spade that he was "really intellectualizing this" and that they needed to get to

the “root” or the origin of why Spade felt that he needed chest reconstruction surgery. A therapist asked, “How long have you felt this way?” In response, Spade asked, “Does realness reside in the length of time a desire exists?”⁶

The state and institutional answer to Spade’s question here is a resounding yes. As Sandy Stone points out in a now foundational essay in transgender studies, there is pressure for trans people to provide identity narratives that fit in with “accepted discourses of gender.”⁷ Emphasizing the part of this accepted narrative that relies on the connection between realness and time draws our attention more generally to how often identities are temporally legitimated. Despite his reservations, Spade felt the strong pull of the born this way narrative. While he “worked hard to not engage the *gay* childhood narrative,” refusing to participate in the trans childhood narrative has different consequences: “It’s always been fun to reject the gay childhood story, to tell people I ‘chose’ lesbianism, or to over-articulate a straight childhood narrative to suggest that lesbianism could happen to anyone. But not engaging a trans childhood narrative is terrifying. What if it means I’m not ‘real’? Even though I don’t believe in real, it matters if other people see me as real. If not, I’m a mutilator, an imitator, and worst of all, I can’t access surgery.”⁸ The difference here is largely a matter of the incorporation of the born this way rhetoric into medical, legal, and administrative state institutions. While feminist and queer theorists have thoroughly critiqued the born this way narrative’s biologically determinist and ahistorical understanding of identity—especially in terms of sexuality—the narrative’s incorporation into the state administration of gender stubbornly remains. Playing with the trans childhood narrative subsequently carries different consequences. These consequences, as Spade demonstrates in *Normal Life*, have everything to do with the institutional and state control of gender, whether illustrated through the difficulty of having identity documents with sex markers that do not match your lived gender or the experience of negotiating sex-segregated institutions.⁹ In maintaining the category of gender, why is the state so invested in the relationship between a legitimate identity and an identity that persists across time?

Sex, Gender, and Birth Certificates

Read through the lens of temporality and trans experience, the born this way narrative is used not only to allocate access to medical and legal institutions but also to reinforce the kinds of identities that will be recognized

by the state in the first place. For another example of the role of temporality in the institutional and state validation of identities, I turn now to an identity document ripe for play with origins: birth certificates. Birth certificates carry an additional layer of complexity in these negotiations because they are known as “breeder” documents, meaning that they are documents used to obtain other documents (for example, Social Security card, driver’s license, passport, etc.).¹⁰ The debates surrounding sex designations on birth certificates also demonstrate the connection between this use of temporality and racialized anxieties about state practices.

Entering the fraught history of medical and legal battles over definitions of sex, Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore specifically analyze sex designation on birth certificates in New York City between 1965 and 2006.¹¹ The primary shift they identify during this time period was from a concern with *fraud* to a concern with *permanence* on the part of state officials. In short, in the 1960s the birth certificate was that which could prove fraud and secure the truth of sex. To begin to use language that will resonate with my turn to theories of colonialism in a moment, the origin story was preserved through the work of the document. The state thus refused to grant a rebirth and reiterated its control over the terms of the initial birth. By extension, the power of the origin-granting entity was also reinforced.

In 2002, however, a coalition of organizations successfully petitioned New York City to reconsider its policy. Advocates for a changed policy quickly realized that the anxiety expressed by state officials had shifted from a concern with fraud to focus primarily on the permanence of any change to one’s sex designation. Despite the wealth of testimony that such an “irreversible and permanent” understanding of bodily sex does not actually exist from a medical perspective, the desire for an official guarantee led to compromise over the role of medical authorities and an agreement about the language of social permanence. In 2005, all parties thus agreed that while there would not be any particular requirement for body modification, there would still be a requirement for expert testimony from medical professionals about the permanence, social and otherwise, of an individual’s sex designation on a birth certificate.

Anxiety about race and national borders figured prominently in the response to this 2005 decision. The press coverage was disastrous, and officials ultimately withdrew the agreement, citing “federal identity requirements for vital records post 9/11 and broader societal concerns.”¹² The specificity of the birth certificate as a “breeder” document is again important to note here. The state declared that, in a post-9/11 world, the need for

this kind of stable document was even stronger. Allowing documents to change—to say nothing of an ostensibly important, stable metric of identification such as sex—would make it harder for the state to know its citizens. The importance of this “knowing” is explicitly linked to the need to police the borders and boundaries of the nation-state.¹³

Rather than see this state focus on permanence as a shift toward a primary concern with the future, however, I argue that we should see it as part of a continued effort to maintain control over origins and the terms of (re)birth. The born this way narrative offers a framework to understand the state anxiety here. Through its focus on permanence, the state says: We will grant you a new origin, but only if you agree that the same logic of a stable and knowable linear temporal organization of identity grounded in a fixed origin applies. By ensuring continued control over the terms of sex designation on documents, the state escapes anxiety about the initial assignment and its control over shifting bodies and identities within its borders. In other words, sex continues to serve as an anchor point for contact between people and administrative systems, an anchor point that reiterates the power of the state to classify and know its citizens.

If the born this way narrative legitimates one’s identity by appealing to the connection between a real identity and its persistence across time, trans experiences of this narrative demonstrate how deeply it is entrenched in the state administration of gender. While we are all caught up in these mechanisms, those who are privileged by the current arrangement do not have to question whether the state is “getting them right” or the processes through which that rightness is secured. As many scholars in trans studies have argued, to ask these questions is to move beyond the framework of looking to trans people as exceptions. It is instead to ask about how we all participate in these systems of classifications at the level of state institutions. Finally, it is no accident that temporal tropes and racialized anxiety emerge in the state’s attempt to keep gender in place. The state use of the born this way narrative must be thought within a broader historical context.

Colonial Pasts and Presents: Origin Stories and Naming

Temporality is a central mechanism of power in racial and colonial formations. Many postcolonial and race theorists have confronted and identified specifically European forms of linear temporality that have been (and

continue to be) deployed in the service of naturalizing racial and colonial orders.¹⁴ Below, I focus on how acts of naming and declarations of origins work in the colonial scene. I read both through the lens of temporality insofar as they work in the service of the linear development of a stable identity. By turning to this use of temporality, I aim to connect the temporal narratives about gender at work in the modern state more explicitly to theories of colonialism.

“Discovery,” McClintock writes in her book *Imperial Leather*, “is always late.”¹⁵ The disavowal of this belatedness is marked through a familiar colonial strategy: naming. In explaining the central role of naming in colonialism, McClintock draws on Luce Irigaray’s argument (in *Speculum of the Other Woman*) that the impetus behind naming is a historically masculine relationship to origins, a relationship that thrives on anxiety. In her analysis of this anxiety over origins, Irigaray writes, “The master-proprietor . . . will always put his trademark upon the finished product.”¹⁶ The name serves here as a secondary womb that initiates a new origin. McClintock argues that we see these same dynamics play out in the violent birthing rituals of colonialism in which a territory is (re)named, a past is erased, and a new origin is declared to secure a proper and controllable future. The anxiety analyzed here, by McClintock in a colonial scene and by Irigaray in a gendered one, is about the need to own this origin and therefore the terms of the story that follows.

By reading scenes of conquest through anxiety about control, McClintock diagnoses how “the augural scene of discovery becomes a scene of ambivalence, suspended between an imperial megalomania, with its fantasy of unstoppable rapine—and a contradictory fear of engulfment, with its fantasy of dismemberment and emasculation.”¹⁷ The one feeds the other, as the narratives of control and power are bolstered by narratives of threat and danger, leading to an obsession both with conquering and with what might be lurking in the margins. In the context of contemporary debates around sex designation, we can see this anxiety emerge in the frenetic responses of state officials asking just how far this reconfiguration of identity categories might extend or how the state will still be able, as Currah and Moore emphasize in their analysis, to “know who you are.”

As diagnosed by McClintock and others, anxiety in the colonial scene is also warded off through frantic deployments of time. These rituals to ward off ambiguity should resonate with contemporary discussions about sex designation on identity documents. Consider, for example, how the

M or *F* stamped on an identity document functions, in Irigaray's terms, as a "trademark" that assures the state of its ownership. This might help us to understand why, in the birth certificate debates among other places, the actual complexity of sex and gender is regularly cast as less important than the need for a sex marker. As we can see in both the sexual scene of origins (Irigaray) and the imperial scene of conquest (McClintock), surrogate birthing rituals become critical components of gaining power over origins. When the lands are already peopled and the child is already born, how are the logics of birth reenacted in order to retroactively discover and thereby control? And as we move to consider how this history continues in the present, what birthing rituals does the state employ to maintain the category of gender and to claim a privileged relationship to its origin?

The Coloniality of Gender

Thus far, I have highlighted similarities between the use of temporality in the born this way narrative and the use of temporality in colonialism. This similarity places the state's contemporary use of temporality into a broader context. To move beyond the analogy, however, requires further clarifying the connection between the born this way narrative and racial and colonial politics. To do this, I turn now to María Lugones's articulation of the colonial/modern gender system. While Lugones does not directly address questions of temporality, her account of the coloniality of gender underscores the need to bring this colonial history into conversation with contemporary discussions of gender.

The "coloniality of power" is a term developed by Aníbal Quijano and others to describe the incorporation of European colonialism into the modern era.¹⁸ The term connects the invention of race as a tool of justification for colonialism with the ongoing racial classification of the world in terms of inferiority and superiority. In turn, it attends to the use of that classification in global capitalism. As Walter D. Mignolo emphasizes, "Coloniality [is] a constitutive component of modernity . . . not . . . a derivative one."¹⁹

While this work often emphasizes the invention of race in the colonial scene, Lugones expands and complicates the framework by foregrounding the colonial imposition of systems of gender.²⁰ In doing so, she acknowledges her debt to Quijano's account. At the same time, she asks whether Quijano's account sufficiently examines the co-constitutive relationship

between gender and race under colonialism and in the modern era. For Quijano, global Euro-centered capitalist power is organized around two axes: the coloniality of power and modernity. These axes order disputes over “the four basic areas of human existence: sex, labor, collective authority and subjectivity/intersubjectivity, their resources and products.”²¹ The sex/gender system, then, is defined by disputes/control over “sexual access, its resources and products.”²² These disputes are in turn organized through the coloniality of power and modernity.

Lugones argues that Quijano’s framework paints “too narrow an understanding of the oppressive modern/colonial constructions of the scope of gender.”²³ While Quijano “accepts the global, Eurocentered, capitalist understanding of what gender is about,” that is, “sexual access, its resources and products,” Lugones contends that we must instead understand gender as a colonial imposition that goes far beyond “patriarchal and heterosexual understandings of the disputes over control of sex.”²⁴ This shift matters, among other reasons, because if we follow this limited account of what gender is all about—that is, disputes over control of sex, its resources, and its products—then we miss the racializing use of gender. As Lugones writes in “Toward a Decolonial Feminism,” the colonial answer to Sojourner Truth’s question, “Ain’t I a woman?” is “Clearly, no.”²⁵ Gender has served a crucial role in the racial and colonial formation of identity.

Lugones argues that the modern Western gender system cannot be understood apart from this colonial and racial history. To begin to witness this past in the ways we experience and understand gender means questioning dominant narratives of what gender is “really” all about. This means seeing that the hegemonic account of gender—which includes characteristics of sexual dimorphism, heterosexuality, and patriarchy—has not been applied equally across colonial lines. To the contrary, it is the colonizers who were understood through what Lugones calls the “light side” of this gendered framework (as biologically dimorphic and heterosexual, for example). On what Lugones calls the “dark side,” or the colonized side, alternative understandings of gender were often violently erased, and the colonized were regularly portrayed as hypersexual and hermaphroditic. Sexual dimorphism, to take just one characteristic of the hegemonic gender system, was not applied to everyone. To the contrary, white bourgeois males and females were understood as dimorphic, while the colonized were cast as threateningly ambiguous: “Those in the ‘dark side’ [of the colonial gender system] were not necessarily understood dimorphically. Sexual fears

of colonizers led them to imagine the indigenous people of the Americas as hermaphrodites or intersexed, with large penises and breasts with flowing milk."²⁶ In other words, the colonial/modern gender system is applied through an intense process of racialization. This system becomes the way to make and naturalize the cut between human/not human, superior/inferior, colonizer/colonized, white/nonwhite, and so on. Gender makes a racializing cut. By portraying gender as being "really" about biological sex, heterosexuality, and so on, dominant accounts of gender erase this differential allocation of gender across colonial lines. The turn to anatomical criteria also finds its unsettling history here, as the body (and especially genitalia) is consistently appealed to in order to determine the hierarchical arrangement of the races. Sex becomes an origin story. This use of sex allows for naturalizing claims of inferiority and superiority across colonial lines.

To return to my questions about the use of temporality in the contemporary state allocation of gender, Lugones provides us with an account of how the reduction of gender to sex (which importantly includes critiques of this reduction that stay within these terms) has played a crucial role in this racial and colonial history. As Mel Chen succinctly states, "The 'genitals' are directly tied to social orders that are vastly more complex than systems of gender alone."²⁷ Battles over sex designation, then, as well as the state's desire to naturalize gender through specifically temporal narratives (such as the "born this way" injunction or this emphasis on the permanence of an assignment) must be brought into conversation with the colonial/modern gender system.

By thinking about how this biological and binary view of sex has not been applied equally across colonial lines, we are in a better position to understand contemporary battles over sex designation on identity documents as simultaneously about race and the borders of the nation-state. The anxieties we see in these debates may well bear this historical inheritance of sex as an anchoring point for racial and colonial formations.

In a cautionary note that is precisely what must be brought into the critique of the state use of the born this way narrative, Lugones writes: "As with other assumptions, it is important to ask how sexual dimorphism served and continues to serve global Eurocentered, capitalist domination/exploitation."²⁸ By asking how a hegemonic account of gender as the organization of biological sex serves to obscure the role of racial and colonial domination and the differential allocation of gender across racial lines (and

race along gendered lines), the colonial/modern gender system provides a bridge between my focus on the temporal dynamics at work in the born this way narrative and the temporal anxiety around naming and origin stories in the colonial scene. This connection moves us beyond analogy to the enmeshment of racial and colonial politics in the born this way narrative.²⁹ I am suggesting here that the state use of temporality is one way to trace this continued project.

Conclusion

Transgender people have been disproportionately affected by the intensification of U.S. state surveillance following 9/11, with these effects arguably being lessened or intensified through additional norms (such as whiteness and able-bodiedness). Advocates for policy changes repeatedly run into claims that permanent identity markers such as sex are crucial for the kind of state-building work that makes populations legible. As Jane Caplan and John Torpey argue, “The creation of a ‘legible people’ through the documentation of individual identity . . . has become a hallmark of modern statehood.”³⁰ In turn, however, decolonial thought pushes us to witness this modern statehood and coloniality as two sides of the same coin. Lugones’s use of this literature to account for the coloniality of gender therefore shifts our sense of what is at stake in the modern administration of gender. Temporality, I have argued, is one way to witness these connections and think about how coloniality permeates today.

Transgender studies must continue to explicitly call out the potentially racializing implications of trans politics in the contemporary United States. As these issues gain more currency, the temptation of narratives like “born this way” gains power, especially in terms of mainstream audiences. The lessons of intersectionality as well as the interventions by scholars of race and colonialism must be applied to these questions. At the same time, the specific challenges and insights of transgender studies must be brought to bear on theories of race and gender, especially as they disrupt an unmarked expectation of cisgender experience and point us to the role of the state in managing gender. Furthermore, as transgender experience directs us to this role of state institutions in analyses of gender, state power should be placed within a broader context of racial and colonial politics. Here, I have examined how the state use of temporality is one example of

how state-building continues to operate through the bodies of racialized/gendered subjects; there are, of course, others. The lessons of colonial state-building are especially important to bring to bear on this contemporary moment when trans subjects are invited to participate in particular legitimating narratives.

I began by analyzing the deployment of the “born this way” narrative in medical and social tactics of transgender legitimation. At the level of state institutions, this temporal narrative is a way of hierarchizing identities. Placing this use of time as a mechanism of power within a historical context of racism and colonialism, I argued that this link directs our attention to the enmeshment of race, gender, and colonialism both historically and today. Critiques of the born this way narrative should resist the separation of historically enmeshed categories of difference and attend to the narrative’s complicity in the state production of racialized/gendered bodies and populations.

The temptation of the born this way narrative is understandable. It is a powerful force of legitimation. But examining this use of temporality through the lens of the colonial/modern gender system offers us an extended genealogical ground from which to critically consider everything else that is being naturalized through these state birthing rituals. As I have demonstrated, this attention should make the use of sex in contemporary debates around identity documents deeply unsettling.

NOTES

1. Jeffrey M. Jones, “Majority in U.S. Now Say Gays and Lesbians Born, Not Made,” May 20, 2015, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/183332/majority-say-gays-lesbians-born-not-made.aspx>; Hayley Miller, “Born This Way: New Poll Finds Increase in Americans’ Understanding of Sexual Orientation,” May 20, 2015, <http://www.hrc.org/blog/born-this-way-new-poll-finds-increase-in-americans-understanding-of-sexual>.

2. For an account of the influence of Christian conservative groups on the use of the born this way narrative by LGBTQ groups in the United States, see Shannon Weber, “What’s Wrong with Be(com)ing Queer? Biological Determinism as Discursive Queer Hegemony,” *Sexualities* 15, nos. 5–6 (2012): 679–701.

3. See, for example, Rebecca Jordan-Young, *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). For examples of this line of feminist and queer critique of the born this way narrative, see Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*

(New York: Basic Books, 2000); and John D'Emilio, *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

4. I use *trans* and *transgender* here as terms that refer to a wide variety of ways in which people move away from the gender they were assigned at birth. For more on how these terms developed in the specific context of the United States and should not be hastily universalized, see Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008).

5. See, for example, Dan Irving, "Normalized Transgressions: Legitimizing the Transgender Body as Productive," in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, ed. Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 15–29; Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Paisley Currah, Richard M. Juang, and Shannon Price Minter, eds., *Transgender Rights* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

6. Dean Spade, "Resisting Medicine, Re/modeling Gender," *Berkeley Women's Law Journal* 18 (2003): 19–21.

7. Sandy Stone, "The 'Empire' Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 29 (1992): 164.

8. Spade, "Resisting Medicine, Re/modeling Gender," 20.

9. See Spade, *Normal Life*. Details about these consequences can also be found in Jaime M. Grant, Lisa A. Mottet, and Justin Tanis, with Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling, *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011), http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf. For more on the tension between this state ownership of gender and the lived experience of gender, see Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender Theory and Rhetorics of Materiality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

10. On the specificity of the birth certificate as an identity document, see Kyla Bender-Baird, *Transgender Employment Experiences: Gendered Perceptions and the Law* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2011); also Saru Matambanadzo, "Engendering Sex: Birth Certificates, Biology, and the Body in Anglo American Law," *Cardozo Journal of Law and Gender* 12 (2005): 213–46.

11. Paisley Currah and Lisa Jean Moore, "'We Won't Know Who You Are,'": Contesting Sex Designations in New York City Birth Certificates," *Hypatia* 24, no. 3 (2009): 129. To situate these debates within changing understandings of sex and gender, see Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

12. Currah and Moore, "'We Won't Know Who You Are,'" 129.

13. On the broader issue of gender and state surveillance, see Toby Beauchamp, "Artful Concealment and Strategic Visibility: Transgender Bodies and U.S. State Surveillance After 9/11," *Surveillance and Society* 6, no. 4 (2009): 356–66; and

Paisley Currah and Tara Mulqueen, "Securitizing Gender: Identity, Biometrics, and Transgender Bodies at the Airport," *Social Research* 78, no. 2 (2011): 557–82.

14. See, for example, Bill Ashcroft, *Post-colonial Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2001); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

15. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 28.

16. Luce Irigaray, qtd. in *ibid.*, 23.

17. *Ibid.*, 26–27.

18. Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *International Sociology* 15, no. 2 (2000): 215–32.

19. Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 348 n. 2.

20. María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," *Hypatia* 22, no. 3 (2007): 186–209.

21. Anibal Quijano, qtd. in *ibid.*, 189.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, 189–90.

25. María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (2010): 745.

26. Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," 195.

27. Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 137.

28. Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," 196.

29. In using the language of enmeshment here, I follow Lugones's call in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes* to honor the importance of intersectional frameworks forged in feminisms of women of color while also continuing to question the ways that the model of the intersection can allow categories of privilege and oppression to remain problematically pure and separate from each other. For more on the mesh as a way to resist that separation, see María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

30. Jane Caplan and John Torpey, *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 1. See also James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).