

Would You Think What You Would Not Live?

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María Lugones was a feminist philosopher whose work spanned four decades, two continents, and multiple languages. Over the course of her career, her writing made major contributions to feminist ethics, the philosophy of race, lesbian epistemology, and decolonial thought. She passed away on July 14, 2020, after many years of poor health, leaving behind an influential legacy and a substantial body of unpublished work.

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1 Introduction

I had the privilege of knowing María Lugones during the final two and a half decades of her life. I was not her closest or dearest or oldest friend. Neither was I her shrewdest or smartest or wisest interlocutor. But we thought of each other as intellectual soulmates. She meant many things to me: a precursor, a mentor, a critic, a friend, a colleague, a patient, a travelling companion, a dance partner, and a partner in crime. I am grateful to Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach and the *Journal of World Philosophies* for giving me the opportunity to introduce my dearly departed friend to you. It has been extraordinarily difficult for me to write this essay, as the ongoing global pandemic has not even permitted many of us to grieve for those we have lost, much less to reflect in a coherent way on their work. I have felt so ill-equipped to deal with her loss that I hadn't even realized until a year after her death that she had been the subject of a splendid obituary in *The Washington Post* that can also serve as a layperson's introduction to her philosophy (Smith 2020).¹ I attempt here merely to trace the contours of María's philosophizing and to illustrate its generative possibilities. I hope that readers will be inspired to explore her thinking further on their own. The complexity, sophistication, multilingualism, and lyricism of her writing can sometimes leave readers baffled. Anyone who spends time with it, however, should find the reward to be worth the effort. I hope that my introduction shall prove helpful to some.

I have organized this article around the pattern of the tango, a social dance popular in Argentina, the country of María's nativity. She loved both singing tangos and dancing them. When she taught me to dance tango, she always took the lead and I followed. Traditionally, these roles are referred to as the "male lead" and the "female follower." As individuals whose bodily comportment and erotic desires exceeded the confines of white and Eurocentered colonial norms, we found these labels objectionable. María preferred "initiator" and "responder" to better capture the dynamics of the dance without the heteronormative and patriarchal implication of binary and unequal sex roles (Lugones 2012b). In this essay, I present María's writing as suggestive initiations to which I coquettishly respond in a way that does not depart from her close embrace (the *abrazo* of the tango) but that offer my own embellishments (the responder's *adornos*). Much like the tango, what results could not exist without both partners moving—in tandem rather than in unison, as a pair rather than as one. Across three sections that I characterize as three steps (two slow steps, or *pasos paseos*, and one quick step, or *saltito*), I move in response to María's initial movement. In the first *paso paseo*, I explore

the sociality of embodied experience and the implications for understanding oppression, agency, and resistance in the philosophy of María's early and middle career. In the *saltilo*, I consider the role of space and place in what I see as a transitional period in her writing. In the final *paso paseo*, I introduce the project that occupied the final years of María's career: coloniality of gender within the colonial-modern gender system. (Although I have written of María using her given name in this introduction, I will mostly defer to academic convention throughout the rest of this essay and refer to her by her family name.)

2 Embodiment and Resistance

Paso paseo—Taking me into her embrace, she moves her body across, initiating the step. She signals firmly but gently for my body to respond, moving forward as I move backward. My body tries to remember the proper posture: butt out, back arched, weight on the balls of my feet.

María Lugones's scholarly record is one of abundance, richness, and unusual complexity. Her earliest philosophical essays challenged orthodoxies in feminist philosophy from the start, contributing to newly emerging lesbian feminist and woman of color feminist philosophical practices. These practices bear some resemblance to analytic philosophy, phenomenology, postmodernism, and pragmatism, but Lugones—like many feminists of her generation—saw her philosophy to be distinct from these schools. Her essays on emotion, coalitional politics, multiplicity, and political agency broke new ground for intersectional women of color feminisms and placed her among the ranks of foundational thinkers in the field. While using vocabulary that can often feel abstract, Lugones always grounds these early essays in experiences and questions that emerged from the struggles by women and people of color in the United States against homophobic, heterosexist, racist, and sexist oppression.² Many, although not all, of her early essays were eventually collected in her first book *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*.

These essays provide an account of how oppression and resistance are to be found in concrete relations among people, in specific places and times. This puts her in opposition to philosophical traditions that seek general, abstract, asocial, and nonlocal understandings of questions related to ethics, politics, and the self. Consider, for example, her descriptions of her mother (Lugones 1987, 2003a, 2012a). She describes her mother's movements through the kitchen of their family home and her ways of engaging with her family—those who are closest to her, but also most capable of causing her pain and of betraying her. Lugones doesn't locate her mother's oppression or agency in her body. She traces them through the love and arrogance of familial relationships between mother and child and between wife and husband. Her account of her own love for her mother pushes us toward deep examinations of our own lives and relationships to those around us, the places where those relationships are lived, and the dynamics of power that pervade them:

My love for my mother seemed to me thoroughly imperfect as I was growing up because I was unwilling to become what I had been taught to see my mother as being. I thought that to love her was consistent with my abusing her: using, taking her for granted and demanding her services in a far-reaching way that, since four other people engaged in the same grafting of her substance onto themselves, left her little of herself to herself. I also thought that loving her was to be in part constituted by my identifying with her, my seeing myself in her. Thus to love her was supposed to be of a piece with both my abusing her and with my being open to being

abused. It is clear to me that I was not supposed to love servants: I could abuse them without identifying with them, without seeing myself in them. (Lugones 2003a: 80)

Lugones here asks her reader to think about their own arrogance and love. How can one not, when she has opened herself up so mercilessly? In this early essay, Lugones is working out her understanding of a kind of feminist praxis that is complex and multiple, “affirm[ing] the plurality in each of us and among us as richness” (Lugones 2003a: 77). Vital to this praxis is the ability to perceive others “lovingly,” as opposed to “arrogantly.” Such loving perception rejects both the arrogant perception of others as existing solely for one’s own benefit and the failure to see others in any way other than how they have been arrogantly perceived, that is, the failure to see them in ways other than how they have been perceived by their oppressors, to see them as not constituted or exhausted by their oppression.

These failures are captured in Lugones’s account of how she was taught to perceive servants and her mother. To see her mother otherwise would require perceiving her lovingly, and identifying with her in such a way that could perceive her beyond arrogance. That entailed seeing her mother as a person who actively resisted the abusive demands made of her by her family:

I do not think I was wrong in thinking that identification was part of loving and that it involved in part my seeing myself in her. I came to realize through traveling to her “world” that she is not foldable and pliable, that she is not exhausted by the mainstream Argentinian patriarchal construction of her. I came to realize that there are “worlds” in which she shines as a creative being. Seeing myself in her through traveling to her “world” has meant seeing how different from her I am in her “world.” (Lugones 2003a: 98)

“Traveling” to another’s “world” with “loving perception” is the feminist praxis that Lugones identifies for affirming plurality. It can be a perilous praxis, but according to Lugones it is a precondition for coalition, a part of loving, and a necessity for women of color: “By traveling to other people’s ‘worlds,’ we discover that there are ‘worlds’ in which those who are the victims of arrogant perception are really subjects, lively beings, resisters, constructors of visions even though in the mainstream construction they are animated only by the arrogant perceiver and are pliable, foldable, file-awayable, classifiable” (Lugones 2003a: 97).

Lugones elsewhere elaborates that one of the ways in which such “lively beings” become resisters is by asserting their impurity in the face of demands for unity and purity, which she understands as demands for control and domination. “When seen as split,” she writes, “the impure/multiplicitous are seen from the logic of unity, and thus their multiplicity can neither be seen nor understood” (Lugones 1994, 1999a, 2003a: 133). Oppression, in other words, attempts to split others and understands them as fragmented. Put another way, if one is both racialized and gendered in ways that are meaningful, one typically understands one’s racialization and gendering as having something to do with each other, as mutually constitutive. One likely experiences oneself not simply as black and female or indigenous and male, but as a black woman or an indigenous man. The logic of oppression, however, as Lugones describes it, splits the subject into separate parts. This is an act of both ontological and epistemological violence that distorts, or fragments, one’s experiences and makes it difficult to make oneself understood by others (Hames-García 2011).³ This practice is replicated *within* oppressed communities through the denial of multiplicity and of interlocking oppressions. Lugones thus describes some of the practices (political, epistemological, etc.) whereby multiply oppressed members of oppressed groups, such as women of color, are further marginalized within groups to which they belong:

The politics of marginalization in oppressed groups is part of the politics of oppression, and the disconnection of oppressions is part of these politics. Avoiding recognition of the interlocking of oppressions serves many people well, but no one is served so well by it as the pure, rational, full-fledged citizen. [...] Liberatory work that makes vivid that oppressions must be fought as interlocked is consistently blocked in oppressed groups through [...] marginalization. (Lugones 2003a: 140–41)

By understanding oppressions (sexism, homophobia, racism) as separate from one another, those members of a marginalized group who only experience a single oppression are able to have their experiences privileged within that group. Furthermore, they do not have to experience the fragmentation of their oppression or the splitting of their resistant subjectivity in the ways that the multiply oppressed do. This means that resistant practices are necessary to enable resistant subjects, such as women of color, to make apparent the connections among oppressions and the mutual constitution of their experiences of oppression. These resistant practices can also facilitate the building of solidarity across differences. World-traveling and loving perception are some practices that Lugones offers us for resisting purity, separation, and fragmentation. She describes another necessary practice as learning to understand “ourselves and each other in anger” (Lugones 2003a: 117). Yet others involve how we move with and among others through space. I will consider some of these in the next section.

3 Place and Movement

Saltito—She signals for me to quicken my pace slightly. My feet, as they often do, have begun to drag, yet we glide sideways and in a movement that often causes me to catch my breath slightly. As she walks forward, my response must match her initiation. I move backwards quickly enough to leave vacant space for her to advance into. Our torsos press lightly against each other, moving together quickly in productive tension.

María once related a story to me. She was trained in philosophy (as an undergraduate at the University of California, Los Angeles, and as a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin–Madison) and taught in the philosophy department at Carleton College for many years. However, she ended her career in a comparative literature department. At a meeting one day in this department, a colleague suggested that everyone among the faculty should historically periodize their scholarship (i.e., as ancient, medieval, early modern, romantic, modernist, contemporary, etc.). The implication was that the department’s curriculum and activities might be structured so as to evenly distribute resources across these periods. María’s response to what she saw as an outrageous attempt to marginalize her and other colleagues whose scholarship did not engage with European intellectual traditions was to ask that they also locate their scholarship in relation to the geography of knowledge (i.e., as East Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Sub-Saharan, Caribbean, Pacific, Latin American, etc.). The Europeanists, who made up around 90% of the department, retracted their proposal.

Specific *places* designate locations in abstract *space* (Tuan 1977).⁴ In an important article later reprinted in *Pilgrimages*, Lugones seeks to make sense of places that Latina lesbians, like other queer people of color, move into, adapt to, occupy, or simply find themselves in as they seek to chart lives with meaning and integrity while moving through space (Lugones 1998). Unlike epistemic “world”-traveling of her earlier work, this movement physically dislocates one from one place and relocates them in another with consequences that can be epistemic, expressive, and ontological. Such places as the lesbian bar, the barrio (Latino neighborhood), and the lesbian rights movement are

discontinuous in at least two senses. First, they are noncontiguous, separate places that are also imagined as pure in the sense that one of their predicates is that nothing in one also exists in either of the other two. Second, they require entirely different imaginings and sense-makings of the bodies that enter and leave them. The body that flirts at the lesbian bar should not be the same body that shows up for work or that participates in a political meeting. These places can even be entirely nonsensical to one another. It therefore requires extraordinary effort to make sense to oneself and to others as one passes from one place to another. Indeed, as one passes between places, one can feel like she is passing for a completely different person, or else another kind of person. The places a Latina lesbian must pass through include places that seek to make the racialized, gendered, queer, and working-class body an impossibility, such as a workplace full of formality and superficiality or a political organization seeking assimilation and respectability in the eyes of the economically powerful. In such places, Lugones argues, the indecorousness and impropriety of Latina lesbian embodiment cannot be asserted without risk. About what can pass over from the lesbian bar into the workplace, Lugones writes the following:

Y mañana al jale. Con trances de la barra *in the movements of the hips, the pursing of the lips to point to things, the taste for love and style directed strictly inward, toward a point inside that is locked beyond meaning.* Como si fuéramos simplemente mujeres. *Not even bothered by the “conversations” ordered by heterosexual domesticity.* Qué va, si a una ni se le ocurre pensar en ninguna lengua, ni con ningún conjunto de ciatrices y palabras, algo como “*ordered by heterosexual domesticity.*” Oh, a veces se lo piensa, como algo abstracto, *taking a step back, like taking a picture for posterity.* (Lugones 2003a: 171)

There are as well the overlapping places of the gay ghetto—and the many white-dominated gay places within its geography—and the (lesbian) movement. These are often located in places of marches, meetings, and protests, but increasingly in academic queer studies programs. These—explicitly political and purportedly liberatory—places are intended to provide refuge, if not salvation. But they are also minefields lying in wait for uninformed, untrained, uncouth working-class feet.

To understand Lugones’s thinking, it is useful to note that she doesn’t propose a way out for the cachapera. She often said that she would not think what she would not practice. She intended this as a critique of a kind of utopian thinking that sets out to elaborate an ideal world, practice, or ethical principle without regard for what the thinker is actually willing to do. This is different from saying that one should not imagine something that does not yet exist. It does mean that Lugones always begins by asking how people are willing to live rather than asking how they should live. She shows no interest in her work in prescribing a course of action, but rather seeks to describe how people have resisted oppression through their living and sense-making. Her discussion of discontinuous passing rejects the purity of both ethnic nationalism and lesbian separatism because they split and fragment the “Latina/Lesbian” (Lugones 2003a: 176). The demands for the rigid conservation of cultural traditions (nationalism) or for separation from cultural communities of origin (separatism) do not offer a life that Lugones would live. She seeks a solution to “the problem of walking from one of one’s groups to another, being mistreated, misunderstood, engaging in self-abuse and self-betrayal for the sake of the group that only distorts our needs because they erase our complexity” (Lugones 2003a: 139). She finds a possibility for that solution in her own and other women of color’s experiences:

It is my ground, my own sense of walking in some direction rather than wandering aimlessly and without sense in terrains prepared to swallow me whole or in parts, that we, cachaperas, can move away from the frozen states in which the encounter of colony and nation have

imprisoned us. We can exercise ourselves in the encounter at the geographical limits, where change is bound to happen. Our threat and our promise es que podemos amasar la dirección del cambio (*Our threat and our promise is that we can knead the direction of the change.*) (Lugones 2003a: 178)

This entails not being accommodated into a status quo, but instead being part of a transformation of the world, “kneading” the transformation that one needs.

The resistant aspects of Lugones’s philosophy of space emerge fully in the final chapter of *Pilgrimages* where she argues for a rejection of the dichotomy—common among military theorists since Ancient Greece—between tactics (taktike) and strategy (stratos). Within this dichotomy, strategies are overarching objectives and grand schemes, while tactics are means and maneuverings for strategic achievement that need not be as thoroughly theorized as the strategies they support. Lugones writes:

Theoreticians of society and politics have often conceived of themselves as perched up high, looking at or making up the social from a disengaged position. [...] not necessarily the disengagement of political impartiality or neutrality but a disengagement from the concrete. [...] [T]heoreticians so self-conceived [...] occupy the strategist position. In this view of the social, subjected subjects are assumed to negotiate daily survival myopically from within the concreteness of body-to-body engagement. At best, resistance within this concreteness is reduced to the tactical. (Lugones 2003a: 207)

It is tempting to infer that strategies like nationalism, separatism, and purity might appeal to strategists, and that strategists might fail to recognize the plurality of complex beings. Strategists might also find it difficult, if not impossible, to recognize impurity or discontinuous passing as worthwhile in any sense other than a *merely* tactical one: “Given the dichotomy, tying “theory” to “strategy” and “resistance” to “tactic” erases the possibility of a theory of resistance to oppressions, unless the strategist does the theorizing. But the strategist cannot understand the logic of the tactical from the strategic position” (Lugones 2003a: 207). As an alternative to this dichotomy, Lugones proposes tactical strategies, theorized at street level, naming the tactical strategist a “streetwalker” (Lugones 2003a: 209).⁵

Streetwalker theorizing, in Lugones’s philosophy, is not simply another way of understanding the social or strategizing done in a way that is informed by concrete experience. It is also not simply to privilege resistance over large-scale social transformation:

Pivoting the specialty of theorizing enables us to see the possibility of tactical strategies and the tie between the strategist’s location and domination or the maintenance of domination. But it is also clear that the tactical alone will not do to go beyond survival. Tactical strategies require a renewed sense of active subjectivity and sociality [. . .] As strategies and tactics will not do for resistance, neither will the late modern understanding of agency. (Lugones 2003a: 226)

She developed this work as she was beginning to engage with the emerging body of historical and theoretical scholarship on decoloniality in the Americas. As she did so, she was moving (sometimes bodily) from one space (upstate New York) to others (Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Argentina) and from one set of collectivities (North American lesbian and women of color feminisms) to another (decolonial movements in the Global South). As she made this move, she remained highly skeptical of the strategic logic of some decolonial theorizing that was deeply indebted to the world systems

theory of French historian Fernand Braudel and US sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein. As she moved, she sought to be a part of a collective creation of a decolonial feminist sociality—one that might knead decolonial change.

4 Decolonial Feminism

Paso paseo—She changes her direction, suggesting as an invitation that I move with her, laterally. I do so gladly, grateful as always to be in her company as well as her embrace. All the same, it is clear to me that she is not sure where on the dance floor we will end up. After all, she must navigate us through countless other couples who are all dancing their own dances, feeling for their own paths across, around, and through the crowd. Tango, after all, is not merely a dance improvised between two people, but one negotiated among everyone on the dance floor.

When I became María's colleague at SUNY Binghamton in 1998, I was unaware that she was already thinking about the conceptual framework we now call the colonial/modern gender system (Lugones 2007). One might sense a discontinuity between her earlier work, conversant with lesbian and women of color feminisms located in the United States, and her more recent work, conversant with theorists of decolonization, decoloniality, and postcoloniality located primarily (although not exclusively) in Latin America and other parts of the Global South.⁶ To my perception, the passage from one place to the other is less discontinuous than it might seem. In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa describes herself as *mita' y mita'*, half and half (Anzaldúa 2007: 41).⁷ She employs this description broadly in order to situate herself with respect to gender, race, nation, and language. Like living in the borderlands, being *mita' y mita'* is painful and dangerous. It limits agency. However, it also generates important possibilities for knowing and understanding the world in which such pain, danger, and limitation are lived, negotiated, and resisted. Lugones's place in the US racial order, neither Chicana nor white, is both impure and separated, neither here nor there (*ni pa'cá ni pa'llá*) and yet *mita' y mita'* (half and half).

The decolonial turn emerged through Lugones's engagement with decolonial thought in Latin America as demonstrated in her translation of Argentine philosopher Rodolfo Kusch's *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, her co-edited collection *Decolonial Feminism in Abya Yala*, and her 900-page unfinished manuscript "Decolonial Feminism" (Kusch 2010; Espinosa Miñoso, Lugones, and Maldonado-Torres 2022; Lugones unpublished).⁸ This work helped to establish the parameters of a vitally important global area of inquiry in which Lugones is positioned alongside the central thinkers. Indeed, within a remarkably short span of time, Lugones moved from the periphery of the decolonial school of thought to its center. Her first sustained engagement in print with its tenets was "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System" (Lugones 2007). This article functions, in part, as a critique of Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano's model of the coloniality of power. Quijano's work is foundational to much of the historical, sociological, and philosophical scholarship in Latin America that has been loosely grouped under the label of "decolonial thought." According to Quijano,

What is termed globalization the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America [the Americas] and colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as a new global power. One of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world's population around the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. The racial axis has a colonial origin and

character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established. Therefore, the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality. (Quijano 2000: 1)

Lugones chooses to engage with Quijano's work because he, unlike many others in the decolonial school, considers gender to have a central role within the development of the coloniality of power, alongside race, class, and Eurocentrism (Lugones 2007: 189). Quijano's coloniality of power entails an effort to understand the hierarchical reordering of people, knowledge, and resources through European global ascendancy beginning in the early sixteenth century and extending through the present. Central to this reordering have been the development of a global capitalist world system and the elaboration of the concept of race (Quijano 2000).⁹ Although she finds his model of power to be convincing, Lugones takes Quijano to task for misunderstanding the nature of gender and its relationship to colonialism, modernity, and power.

To delineate the potential and the shortcomings of Quijano's inclusion of gender as a "structural axis" of power, Lugones draws from the women of color feminist tradition of which she was a part as well as from scholarship by feminists in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. She uses the work of Nigerian sociologist Oyéronké Oyewùní and Native American literary critic Paula Gunn Allen to show that gender cannot be understood as a biological given or a primary "organizing principle" within societies outside of Europe before European colonization and the emergence of a colonial/modern world system beginning in the early sixteenth century (Lugones 2007: 196). For Lugones, "understanding the place of gender in precolonial societies is pivotal to understanding the nature and scope of changes in the social structure that the processes constituting colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism imposed" (Lugones 2007: 201). These changes varied from continent to continent and century to century and even from community to community and decade to decade. What remained salient, however, was the introduction of a colonial/modern gender system that "violently inferiorized colonized women" in a manner vastly different from the ways in which white European women were construed as inferior to white European men:

Only white bourgeois women have consistently counted as women so described in the West. Females excluded from that description were not just their subordinates. [...] They were understood as animals in the deep sense of "without gender," sexually marked as female, but without the characteristics of femininity. Women racialized as inferior were turned from animals into various modified versions of "women" as it fit the processes of global, Eurocentered capitalism. Thus, heterosexual rape of Indian or African slave women coexisted with concubinage, as well as with the imposition of the heterosexual understanding of gender relations among the colonized—when and as it suited global, Eurocentered capitalism, and heterosexual domination of white women. (Lugones 2007: 202–3)

What's more, the imposition of a colonial and modern system of gender "became intent on erasing community, ecological practices, knowledge of planting, of weaving, of the cosmos, and not only on changing and controlling reproductive and sexual practices" (Lugones 2010b: 745). Some critics understood Lugones to be arguing that precolonial peoples did not have a conception of gender. What mattered to her more was that the imposition of a colonial/modern gender system was both essential to and constitutive of colonization and that racialized gender inequality as a complex phenomenon remains both essential and constitutive of the coloniality of power today (Lugones 2010b: 746).

In "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," an article that has been translated into Spanish and Portuguese, Lugones brings her earlier thinking about resistance to bear on her theorization of the

coloniality of gender (Lugones 2010a, 2010b, 2014c). In this piece, she sets out to understand “intimate, everyday resistant interactions to the colonial difference,” the context of created and imposed difference between the human and the nonhuman, men and women, the civilized and the colonized (Lugones 2010b: 743). To set up this goal, Lugones introduces two concepts. The first is the coloniality of gender (“the analysis of racialized, capitalist, gender oppression”) and the second is decolonial feminism (“the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender”) (Lugones 2010b: 747). Understanding resistance requires Lugones to move between the coloniality of gender and decolonial feminism. She thus avoids “thinking of the global, capitalist, colonial system as in every way successful in its destruction of peoples, knowledges, relations, and economies” (Lugones 2010b: 748).

Elaborating on this point at more length, Lugones writes that

the long process of subjectification of the colonized toward adoption/internalization of the men/women dichotomy as a normative construction of the social—a mark of civilization, citizenship, and membership in civil society—was and is constantly renewed. It is met in the flesh over and over by oppositional responses grounded in a long history of oppositional responses and lived as sensical in alternative, resistant socialities at the colonial difference. (Lugones 2010b: 748)

There is resistance wherever there is oppression, but the modern and colonial gender system seeks to impose in the minds of both colonizer and colonized the image of the totality of a Eurocentric imagination. That totality is, of course, a fiction, even as the violence it enacts is all too real.

Running the length of Lugones’s work—from her 1983 co-authored article on feminism and cultural imperialism to her 2020 article on gender and universality in colonial methodology—is a desire for pluralistic, rather than unitary, resistant collectivities (Lugones and Spelman 1983; Lugones 2020). However, I think that her best statement on this matter comes from her essay on decolonial feminism:

One does not resist the coloniality of gender alone. One resists it from within a way of understanding the world and living in it that is shared and that can understand one’s actions, thus providing recognition. Communities rather than individuals enable the doing; one does with someone else, not in individualist isolation. The passing from mouth to mouth, from hand to hand of lived practices, values, beliefs, ontologies, space-times, and cosmologies constitutes one. The production of the everyday within which one exists produces one’s self as it provides particular, meaningful clothing, food, economies and ecologies, gestures, rhythms, habitats, and senses of space and time. But it is important that these ways are not just different. They include affirmation of life over profit, communalism over individualism, “estar” over enterprise, beings in relation rather than dichotomously split over and over in hierarchically and violently ordered fragments. These ways of being, valuing, and believing have persisted in the resistant response to the coloniality. (Lugones 2010b: 754)

With these words, María invites all of us to join her in the resistant and life-affirming negotiations of decolonial feminism.

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by María Lugones

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- 1 Harrison Smith, “María Lugones, Feminist Philosopher Who Studied Colonialism’s Legacy, Dies at 76. *The Washington Post*, July 21 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/maria-lugones-feminist-philosopher-who-studied-colonialisms-legacy-dies-at-76/2020/07/21/dbea9250-cb58-11ea-91f1-28aca4d833a0_story.html; last accessed on 27 October, 2021).
 - 2 Some of her frequent interlocutors here include Gloria Anzaldúa, Claudia Card, Marilyn Frye, Nancy Hartsock, Sarah Hoagland, Caren Kaplan, Henri Lefebvre, Audre Lorde, Doreen Massey, Albert Memmi, Walter Mignolo, Cherríe Moraga, Joshua Price, James Scott, Ella Shohat, Edward Soja, Elizabeth Spelman, Robert Stam, Janet Wolff, and Iris Marion Young.
 - 3 Michael Hames-García, *Identity Complex: Making the Case for Multiplicity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
 - 4 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).
 - 5 So much of Lugones’s writing plays humorously on the ambiguous possibilities of language. Here she uses the dual meanings of “streetwalker” as both “a pedestrian” and “a prostitute.” The first meaning clearly locates tactical strategizing away from the strategist who is “perched up high.” The second meaning positions the tactical strategist among the most oppressed people in any society, particularly since prostitutes who ply their trade in the street lack even the respectability of those who work in brothels.
 - 6 Some of the scholars whom she most frequently cites in her work on the colonality of gender include Paula Gunn Allen, Nelson Maldonado Torres, Sylvia Marcos, Walter Mignolo, Oyéronké Oyewùmí, Emma Perez, Anibal Quijano, Chela Sandoval, Irene Silverblatt, Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberle Crenshaw, Jean Casimir, Michael Horswell, Rodolfo Kusch, Audre Lorde, Julieta Paredes, Mary Louise Pratt, Rita Segato, Hortense Spillers, Gloria Wekker, and Sylvia Wynter.
 - 7 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza*, Second Edition (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007).
 - 8 Rodolfo Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, trans. María Lugones and Joshua M. Price (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).
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