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ARTICLE

World-Traveling to the Servants' Quarters: The Pseudo-Concreteness of Lugones' Decolonial Feminism

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Abstract

This article focuses on the role of servants in María Lugones' "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception." I show that Lugones uses and erases the work of servants in developing her understanding of world-traveling. This theoretical marginalization and instrumentalization challenges her claim to capture concrete, lived experience. This article argues that Lugones' theory is "pseudo-concrete": it capitulates into the very abstractions it seeks to overcome. Focusing on the role of servants reveals the class character of world-traveling and, in turn, its inability to grasp class relations. This article, thus, invites decolonial feminists to reconsider the advantages of class analysis for understanding not only capitalist domination but also perception, identification, and love.

> The obsession with the conception of concreteness joined with the inability to reach it in thought.
>
> (Adorno [1966] 2007, 75)

What does it mean to capture concreteness in thought? To answer this question, I have often turned to María Lugones' influential essay, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception" (1987). Lugones' work is widely recognized as revealing the dangers of theorizing through abstractions and, concomitantly, the importance of grasping the concrete.[1] Indeed, Lugones describes her own methodology as centering the concrete: actual peoples, their forms of resistance, and the plurality of their everyday existences (2003, 29).[2] In returning to her essay over the years, however, I have been struck by the indifference she shows to her servants as well as the scholarly silence surrounding this neglect.[3] What are servants doing in an essay about playfulness, love, and world-traveling? Everything and nothing. Lugones both ignores the servants and uses them to develop her theory.[4]

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Reading this essay with an eye to its servants reveals that it is about more than playful world-traveling and loving perception; it is also about Lugones' servants and her relationship to them. "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception" is an essay about the master–servant relation. Exploring Lugones' understanding of world-traveling against the backdrop of her servants challenges the view that she brings theory down to the concrete. This article argues that Lugones' theory fails to capture the concrete, capitulating, surprisingly, into the very abstraction it seeks to overcome.

Though Lugones purports to capture concrete, lived experiences, she refuses to lower herself to the world of servitude; in attempting to address racism, she disregards the racial dimensions of domestic servitude in Argentina; in seeking to account for the marginalized, she ignores class; she proffers world-traveling but herself refrains from traveling to the servants' world. The weakness of Lugones' theory attests not to her personal failure but to the inadequacy of world-traveling itself as a critical method and strategy. Specifically, world-traveling is incompatible with class analysis. In its myopic preoccupation with ways of seeing, perceptions, and identities, it omits class relations and real social conditions. To omit class, however, is not merely to overlook it as one perspective, or axis of oppression, among many. To expose this fact is to reveal the class character of world-traveling and, in turn, the form of abstraction into which it flees: "pseudo-concreteness."[5]

I borrow this term from Günther Anders to grasp a feature of Lugones' world-traveling: that in attempting to flee from the abstract into the concrete, it unknowingly takes refuge in abstraction. Indeed, as I shall show, "servants," "White/Anglo women," and "women of color" appear in Lugones' essay as general groups without individuality, class, or history.[6] These abstractions elide the realities of capitalism, class, servitude, and race, consequently purifying women of class and servants of race and gender. In neglecting the specific socio-historical relations and conditions which individuals constitute and in which they are embedded, Lugones' analysis recoils from the concrete. World-traveling thus devolves into pseudo-concreteness because it obscures what it seeks to highlight: the concrete, everyday existences and experiences of individuals. This is the case, I suggest, because world-traveling, as a method, is constituted on the exclusion of class.

This article, however, is not a plea for decolonial feminists to turn their loving perceptions to servants or the poor. Nor is it an invitation to augment Lugones' method with a discussion of class. Ultimately, I aim to analyze the bourgeois foundations of her theory and to expose world-traveling as itself classed. The class character of world-traveling reveals it to be too socially and historically indeterminate to serve as the basis for an adequate critique of contemporary forms of servitude. Thus, my intention is not to expand it but rather to move beyond it as a method. For an adequate critique of the conditions of the marginalized today cannot bracket class concerns and political-economic considerations.

The servants

"Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception" famously develops around "two failures of love:" (i) Lugones' failure to love her mother and (ii) white/Anglo women's failure to love women of color in the US (1987, 5). These two failures, emerging from two unique experiences, shape Lugones' understanding of perception, identification, and world-traveling. However, in the background lurks a third bond: Lugones' relationship with her servants whom she did not love. Her essay thus contains not

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two but three failures of love: Lugones' failure to love her mother, white/Anglo women's failure to love women of color, *and Lugones' failure to love her servants.* Yet Lugones develops her essay with attention to only the first two failures. She never treats the servants with the same seriousness she affords herself, her mother, and women of color. Except for four passing remarks, Lugones passes over her failure to love servants in silence.

Unseen and unheard, Lugones' servants haunt the entire essay. Though they fail to ascend to the status of a "third failure of love," the servants are indispensable to Lugones' arguments. Her relationship to her servants serves as an intermediary experience allowing her to smoothly transition from her failure to love her mother to the failure of white/Anglo women to love women of color. Thus, what at first glance appears like a seamless weaving of theory and experience, upon closer examination, is in fact held together by servants. Lugones builds her theory on the backs of her servants, using their services without acknowledging them. As this section shows, Lugones' servants—in real life and in her essay—are marginalized and instrumentalized.

Lugones begins her essay by telling us that, as a child, she was taught to perceive arrogantly and was the object of arrogant perception. Following Marilyn Frye (1983), she understands arrogant perception as "grafting the substance of another to oneself" (66). Growing up in Argentina, she "watch[ed] men and women of moderate and considerable means graft the substance of their servants to themselves" (1987, 4). Condemning the ethos of arrogant perception that characterized her childhood, she maintains that in such an environment she likewise learned to "graft" her mother's substance to her own (4).

At this point, we only know that those around Lugones had servants but nothing else is said about them. Rather, Lugones proceeds with her childhood story which culminates in an account of her failure to love her mother, an experience on which the development of her essay hinges. This failure, for her, is a constellation of abuse, identification, and desire for non-identification. As a child, Lugones writes, her love for her mother was imperfect because Lugones was "unwilling to become" like her (5). She was "taught to practice [the] enslavement of [her] mother and to learn to become a slave through this experience" (6). To love her mother, Lugones maintains, implied abuse: "using, taking for granted, and demanding her services" (5). But, simultaneously, loving her mother meant identifying with her. Thus, Lugones writes that to love her mother was at once to abuse her and to be open "to being abused" (5).

Importantly, having recounted, though not yet fully analyzed her first failure of love, Lugones does not immediately turn to the second failure of love. The road to the second failure is a rather bumpy one: the memory of her servants is triggered.[7]

Before turning to the second failure, Lugones contrasts her relationship to her servants with her relationship to her mother, with whom she believed she was supposed to identify as a part of loving her. Immediately following the claim that her maternal relation merged love and abuse, Lugones writes: "I was not supposed to love servants: I could abuse them without identifying with them, without seeing myself in them" (5). This statement establishes the difference between a relationship that merges love and abuse (her relationship with her mother) and one founded exclusively on abuse (her relationship with her servants). Thus, Lugones juxtaposes the identification with the "enslavement" that occurs through her love for her mother to the lack of identification and love for her servants (6). However, Lugones elides that it is not merely her lack of identification with servants that causes her inability to love them. For had she identified with her servants she would have identified with servitude, thus still inhibiting love.

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With or without identification, it seems, loving the servants proves impossible. In fact, and perhaps ironically, it is precisely because Lugones does not identify with servants that she escapes identification with servitude.

Though Lugones complicates the relationship between identification and abuse through the servants, she does not engage with them further.[8] Rather, she returns to her mother because her experience of not feeling whole due to a lack of identification is exclusive to her maternal bond. Her inability to "welcome" her mother's "world," she tells us, left her feeling incomplete, lacking "love" and a sense of "self" (6). Lugones' inability to identify with the servants, by contrast, does not leave her lacking. The precise opposite is the case: her sense of self required indifference to the servants; the *I am not* crucial to the *I am*.

Lugones' claim that she neither could nor was supposed to love servants is the final sentence her essay issues on the matter. This indifference is representative of Lugones' treatment of servants throughout her essay. The comparison between her relationship to her mother and to the servants occurs in a *passing sentence*. Lugones' affiliation with her servants is never treated exclusively but always relative to one of the other two failures of love; after all, it is no secret that her essay hinges only on two failures. Lugones' relationship with her servants is best understood as an intermediary experience that lubricates her passage from one failure of love to another, a transitional relation without which the parallel between her failure to love her mother and the failure of white/Anglo women to love women of color would not function.

The passing mention of servants allows Lugones to equalize two discrete relationships, a movement on which her arguments hang. Upon arriving in the US, Lugones proceeds to tells us, she learns that "abuse without identification" is "part of racism" (5). She realizes that "she could be seen as a being to be used by White/Anglo men and women without the possibility of identification, i.e., without their act of attempting to graft [her] substance onto theirs, rubbing off on them at all. They could remain untouched, without any sense of loss" (5). This leads Lugones to conclude that the failure of women to love other women stems from a lack of identification: a failure to see oneself in others. Such arrogant perception, for Lugones, inhibits traveling to other worlds, that is, "world-traveling."

It is striking how traces of Lugones' relationship with servants haunt her description of the second failure of love. The relationship of white/Anglo women to women of color is not analogous to Lugones' relationship to her mother. Rather, the analogy is to Lugones' relationship to her servants. By Lugones' own account, her relationship with her mother is one of abuse, love, identification, and lack of identification, while her relationship to servants is characterized by abuse without identification or love. The latter relationship contains the features Lugones attributes to the treatment of women of color by white/Anglo women. That is, Lugones' attitude toward her servants perfectly grasps her experience in the US, as a woman of color who was abused without identification. As she used and abused her servants without identification, and without a sense of loss or love, women of color, on her own account, are "used by White/Anglo men and women without the possibility of identification" without "rubbing off on them" and "without any sense of loss" (5).

It is troubling, thus, that Lugones equates her failure to love—not her servants but—her mother with white/Anglo women's failure to love women of color (7). For Lugones, white/Anglo women's failure to see themselves in women who are "quite different" from them and, thus, to love them, is "directly abusive" (7).[9] She argues that they ignore, leave alone, ostracize, render invisible, and interpret women of color as crazy while they

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are "*in their midst*" (7). This suggests, she continues, that the more independent the woman of color is, the more independent she is left to be. The "world" and "integrity" of white women do not require women of color "at all" (7). White/Anglo women do not experience a "sense of self-loss" when robbing women of color of their "solidity … through an indifference they can afford" (7). White/Anglo women's desire to exclude women of color from their worlds and have them "out of their field of vision," Lugones maintains, exposes the ills of independence (7). Their lack of concern, she writes, is "a harmful failure to love" that leaves women of color "independent from them" (8). Ultimately, for Lugones, such independence makes love impossible (8). This, she maintains, is a more "complex" failure of love because, unlike her failure to love her mother, it occurs not through grafting but independence (7).[10]

A close reading of Lugones' argument reveals that her treatment of servants figures as the archetype for her understanding of abusive relationships. Notice how Lugones' description of white/Anglo women's treatment of women of color is identical to her treatment of servants: ignoring them, building a sense of self *despite them*—if not unconsciously through them—not experiencing self-loss due to independence, and, most importantly, assuming their non-existence by not identifying with them *while they are in her midst*. What applies to women of color, applies to Lugones in a much higher degree: the master ignoring the servants while they are in her midst, *serving them*.

Furthermore, when describing the above treatment, Lugones curiously states that she is not speaking of all the ways in which white/Anglo women are parasitic upon women of color. She similarly does not mention her parasitic relationship to her servants, remaining silent about her dependency on them. And yet because, upon arriving in the US, she is treated in the same way she treated her servants, outrage erupts, pushing Lugones to rethink her relationship with her mother, which is, even if unconsciously, infiltrated by her servants.

The archetype is concealed by Lugones' attempts to parallel her relationship with her mother to white/Anglo women's relationship to women of color. Throughout the essay, she repeatedly runs to her mother, a defense mechanism in pursuit of maternal protection. While servants work behind the scenes, Lugones' mother guards her from theoretical problems and protects her from her past and present.[11] This reveals that world-traveling does not simply denote *openness*—the possibility for identification and love—but also exclusion.[12] It is the immersion into a singular world that forecloses *other worlds* to the traveler. That is, it is by traveling to her mother's world that Lugones remains oblivious to the servants' worlds.

Masters and servants

Lugones' disregard for servants is evident in her omission of the racialized and gendered history of domestic servitude in Argentina.[13] The efforts to build a European, white Argentine nation, exemplified in depictions of the inferiority of indigenous and mixed-race women servants, are conspicuously absent from her essay.[14] Not a word is uttered about the establishment of the "gaucho" as a national symbol opposed to the image of the immigrant.[15] Instead, embodying this masculine, nationalistic image —the bourgeois attitude of pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps—Lugones emphasizes her defiance of arrogant perceptions through the inspiration and strength she gathered from her "'gaucho' ancestry" (1987, 4).[16]

Why does Lugones overlook domestic servants despite their presence in her own household? Why does she not journey to her servants' worlds? For Thorstein

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Veblen, masters want servants out of their field of vision, in their separate quarters, getting the job done unseen.[17] Bourgeois education, he shows, teaches that personal contact with servants is "distasteful," although their presence is "endured and paid for" ([1899] 1994, 30). "The presence of domestic servants," he adds, "is a concession of physical comfort to the moral need of pecuniary decency" (30). The servants' labor is required but detested.

This is not an exaggeration; identification and independence are intimately related to class and labor. Thus, Veblen stresses, labor signifies different things to a master than to a servant. Though neither wish to serve, only the master cannot stand the sight of service. Despite the valorization of labor today and the cult of the hardworking billionaire, there is a shared hatred for certain forms of labor. This "[r]epugnance for vulgar forms of labor," Veblen writes, is present in "all persons of refined taste" who feel "that a spiritual contamination is inseparable from certain offices that are conventionally required of servants" ([1899] 1994, 21). "The archaic theoretical distinction between the base and the honourable in the manner of a man's life retains very much of its ancient force even today" (19). By contrast, slaves', workers', and servants' dependence on work cannot afford such repugnancy. In fact, the person for whom labor is their life may even take pride in it.

In the bourgeois view, servitude is in itself disreputable, and yet its acquisition showcases nobility. All persons of "considerable means," to use Lugones' expression, find the sight of domestic service and menial labor vulgar and to be avoided (1987, 4). Labor marks "poverty and subjection" and is thus "inconsistent with a reputable standing" (Veblen [1899] 1994, 19). By contrast, abstention from labor, or certain forms of labor, marks "superior pecuniary achievement and the conventional index of reputability" (19). Such abstention, demonstrating wealth and status, is evidenced by the presence of servants. In Argentina too, the maid, considered inherently different from the master, contributed to the construction of the wealthy, white Argentinian (Dunstan and Pite 2018).

We can see the bourgeois abhorrence to servitude exemplified in Lugones' affirmation of dependence against an independence that precludes love. She claims that she is utterly dependent upon—"incomplete and unreal" without—other women (1987, 8). For her, however, this dependence is mutually exclusive with subordination. She is dependent on others without being "their subordinate, their slave, their servant" (8). This aversion to servitude shows that Lugones inhabits the bourgeois belief that, in Veblen's words, "a spiritual contamination" inevitably accompanies tasks typically designated for servants ([1899] 1994, 21). The noble and the free are not fit for servitude.

This relation of dependence is one found historically in classes that own the means of production, such as slave holders, landed aristocracies, and, in Lugones' case, the bourgeoisie. Lugones was indeed dependent on other women without serving them. She was dependent not only on her mother, but also on her servants, who were most likely women of color. Lugones' relationship to servants is precisely the one-sided dependency she admires because having servants is conditioned on not serving. Indeed, Lugones' servants themselves showcase that she was neither "subordinate" nor anyone's "slave" or "servant" (1987, 8).

That dependency *sans* servitude is exclusive to a class is old news; since, at least, Wollstonecraft, Beauvoir à la Hegel, and Wittig, this relationship has been central to feminist critique.[18] Servants, including Lugones', were dependent on others by way of being "subordinate" (8). Perhaps it is Lugones' awareness of this fact that motivates her to attempt to cultivate an alternative, loving dependence incompatible with

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subordination. But this aim comes to an immediate impasse because she does not seriously consider the *literal* servitude of those dependent on subordination for survival.[19] If Lugones' mother is enslaved, what are her servants?

Class(ed) perceptions

Underpinning Lugones' marginalization and instrumentalization of her servants is a more general tendency to elide class analysis. Lugones' essay mentions class once, pointing out that upper-class women are taught to perceive arrogantly (5). Elsewhere, Lugones registers awareness that class is important for decolonial feminist critiques of capitalism and mentions the need to extend loving perception to lower-class women.[20] However, these instances do not amount to an analysis of class. Generally speaking, Lugones is silent on questions of class. In what follows, I explore this elision as a feature of her own classed perception.

In "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception," Lugones is concerned with altering *ways of seeing, perspectives, perceptions, and attitudes*, but not real social conditions. This is evident from the outset. Consider that her reflections are not sparked by racial relations or conditions of servants in Argentina but by her experience of being ignored by white/Anglo women in the US. Lugones was invisible to them, and they were indifferent to her.

What was it in Lugones and in her world that white/Anglo women overlooked? Her race and gender were certainly perceived because, as Lugones recounts, they were used against her (5, 10). Rather, what seems to have been imperceptible to white/Anglo women was Lugones' class. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to claim that Lugones experienced herself as having been *mis*classed. Was she outraged by white/Anglo women's audacity to treat her as a commoner? This would explain her response, which echoes aristocratic distance and pride. *How dare you? Don't you know who I am? If you only traveled to my world, you would see.* Ostensibly, even in this moment, Lugones' servants work for her, their subordination fueling her sense of indignation. Her servants, though physically left behind, are psychically present, solidifying her mastery and symbolizing all that she wishes not to be.

The disparity between her servants' experiences and her own experience in the US reeks of class difference. And it is precisely class distinction that she forcefully and unwillingly experiences upon arriving in the US. Lugones' membership within a class that has servants in Argentina did not grant her privileged treatment in the US. Precisely the opposite: she was treated as a servant—white/Anglo women neither identified nor loved her but merely considered her as a body to abuse with indifference.

Feeling unseen and unheard, Lugones develops world-traveling as a loving perception that invites people to travel to the worlds of those with whom they do not identify. While loving perception may alter attitudes it neither affects class relations nor changes the fact that some people are forced to sacrifice their lives for the leisure of others. Indeed, it does not even purport to address social conditions. As failures of love result from a lack of identification, for Lugones, the loving eye is the solution because it can consult *more* than the self, travel to the other's world, see with the other's eyes. Indeed, by refusing to perceive arrogantly, Lugones traveled to her mother's world, saw with her eyes, perceived their relation in this world, and witnessed, there, her mother's own sense of self. Only then did she cease to "ignore" her mother and come to identify with her (8). Love, Lugones concludes, entails an identification that world-traveling makes possible because it changes one's attitudes and perceptions.

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This is crucial because, for Lugones, we are dependent on others for "the possibility of being understood" (8). Note that she is concerned with being understood without having to change one's class or social position. Thus, she wonders how she can be intelligible to others without surrendering herself and her position; how she can achieve dependence without servitude (8). At stake, then, is a form of loving dependence and identification that precludes the servants.

Not preoccupied with emancipation from literal servitude, Lugones provides a theory that articulates a dependence that escapes the risk of sinking down to the lower classes. She accomplishes this by assuring that her analysis never steps foot in the servants' quarters but swims at the level of abstractions: understanding, perception, intelligibility, and attitudes. Given the attention Lugones devotes to situating her narrative within her raced and gendered positionality, it is striking that she never mentions her class. Nonetheless, her theory is not devoid of class, but directly expresses her class position. After all, it is not generated from the position of the servants—who know well that understanding and loving perceptions will neither feed nor free them—but from her position as master. Lugones presents a theory that seeks to change perceptions while leaving the conditions of servitude unaltered. While it allows for those in power to keep their seats, it slightly adjusts them for comfort: they are no brute masters but loving ones.

Fundamentally, then, Lugones' theory of world-traveling is an ideology of bourgeois class defense. Her occlusion of class analysis springs from a desire to preserve her class position. A close examination of her essay reveals that she develops world-traveling as protection against the risk of descending to a lower class upon her arrival to the US. Notice how this development occurs. Lugones purports to understand women of color based on the indignities that reminded her of her race in the US. Not treated with the dignity afforded to people of her stature, she experiences being *raced* as a demotion from whiteness. Outraged that others did not care who and what she is, nor bothered to travel to her world to discover what was not immediately visible—that her race obscures the truth that she is a wealthy master from Argentina—she proposes an ethical-feminist stance that is not a judgmental but loving, encouraging world-traveling and understanding; an invitation she herself never takes up by refusing to step foot in the servants' quarters.

Lugones is not willing to travel just anywhere—and especially not to worlds that would confront her with class. Her unwillingness to travel to her servants' worlds implies, on her account, that she is not interested in understanding them. It also indicates—like her flight into her mother's protection—a defense mechanism. The class anxiety of someone who grew up around servants—a guilt coupled with fear of becoming or being treated like them—explains why Lugones can only provide the master's perspective. Therefore, though she maintains that it is crucial for her to understand "*what it is to be*" the other and "*to be ourselves in their eyes*," she does not care to see herself reflected in the servants' eyes (18).

Master–servant relations—as class relations—invite class analysis; but not for bourgeois thinkers. In Lugones' case, her class position inhibits the analysis of class. She does not acknowledge her class because it would be distasteful to do so. It is offensive to the bourgeois ear to dirty conversations about love and identification with profane talk of money. The same iron curtain of class that physically and psychologically distances her from her servants ideologically separates her reflections about abuse and identity from class concerns.

The class distinctions that distance Lugones from her servants everywhere infiltrate her thinking. Her omission of class is exacerbated by her reliance on personal

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anecdotes, which reveal too much about her and nothing about the socioeconomic world that many women of color, her servants included, inhabit. Or rather, Lugones inaccurately depicts the world of women of color as one of women with servants because she universalizes her own experience as that of "women of color." She can do this only by omitting class. The fact that she identifies as a woman of color only in the US reveals that she still sees herself as an Argentinian who has servants.

In sum, Lugones' experience of being misclassed due to racist perceptions in the US triggers her sympathy for her servants; but that is all. She does not analyze the class character of her relationship to her servants as their master nor grasp their real conditions and class position. Her analysis remains, from beginning to end, concerned with mere perceptions and selfish wounds.

Just as gazing into Medusa's eyes risks turning one into stone, traveling into the servants' worlds risks hardening Lugones to the reality of her mastery. Always shifting her focus elsewhere—at times to her mother, at others to women of color—she concludes that "women who are perceived arrogantly can perceive other women arrogantly in their turn" (5). This statement perfectly captures the class character of Lugones' theory. Not the servants but her experiences form the locus of her reflections on arrogant perception and are mobilized to make the almost banal claim that the abused become abusers. If arrogant perception leads to failures of identification, and thus of love, Lugones seems to suggest that domination and abuse are caused by the wrong form of perception; and, concomitantly, that the correct form of identification remedies abuse.

Lugones' idealist theory gives ways of seeing, and not social relations, causal agency. She does not treat perception as resulting from relations of domination (like, say, master and servant) but as causing them. Therefore, to domination and abuse Lugones provides the naïve solution of identification, said to make love possible and abuse impossible.[21] She fails, however, to examine the class character of identification itself. Consider that a basic component of bourgeois etiquette is that one ignores the servant. As Lugones herself recognizes, it is a feature of bourgeois identity, and middle- and upper-class education, not to identify with servants (5).[22] By stark contrast, the poor are educated to identify with and to emulate the upper classes. That is, it is ignoble for both the servant and the master to identify with the servant; but the same cannot be said about identification with the master.

The ambiguity of identification in Lugones' essay—she never defines it—can also be traced to her lack of class analysis. Decolonial feminism, however, requires a critical engagement with identification and even an interrogation of Lugones' own identification. This means not collapsing identification with self-identification. Just as we would not take a bourgeois individual's resistance to the label "bourgeois" to mean that they truly do not belong to the bourgeois class, Lugones' class position and social role are not reducible to her self-identification. That Lugones does not present herself as classed—but merely sexed, gendered, and raced—should not prevent us from recognizing her class. Neither should it inhibit us from analyzing the class perspective her analysis unwillingly presents and, thus, the very class character of her theory.

We do not have to dig deep to discern Lugones' class belonging. In the presence of her servants, Lugones is a master. In the presence of women in Argentina and the US, Lugones belongs to the upper class. This is true whether or not she was pleased by the fact that her household had servants; whether she was satisfied with the privileges her position afforded her or came to resent them; whether or not she identified with a master or a member of the upper class or fought her entire life to dismantle them; whether or not she identified with lazy aristocrats or self-made gauchos. That Lugones does not

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acknowledge her class position does not mean that she transcends it. Her theory of world-traveling is a bourgeois defense of her class.

Traveling to the servants' quarters

What would have happened had Lugones traveled to her servants' quarters? Her theory of world-traveling would crumble upon entry. The realities of servants' worlds would reveal the classed character of perception and traveling that her bourgeois perspective conceals. Consequently, it would make apparent that class cannot be seamlessly integrated into her theory, for world-traveling is constructed upon its exclusion.[23]

Having analyzed the class character of world-traveling through Lugones' role as a master, this section examines it from the servants' position. This requires analyzing servants not as Lugones' pseudo-concrete "servants" but as a socio-historical category that grasps, rather than conceals, the concrete: the social role and class of servants in capitalist society.[24]

In investigating the world of servants, I am not purporting to embody the servants' position or to speak on their behalf.[25] We cannot transcend our class positions and truly understand the experience of the servants. In fact, a key limitation of world-traveling is that it presumes that we can take the standpoint of others and promotes a politics terminating in sympathy. Expanding world-traveling to encompass differently classed people reifies class distinctions while affirming the agency of the bourgeoisie to sample experiences at will. By contrast, I am suggesting that we engage in analyses that begin with the concrete reality of servants as a class in capitalist society. Put otherwise, I am not critiquing Lugones for not seeing *as a servant*, but for not *seeing* the servants.

Servants' perception

The world of servitude does not permit the arrogance which the bourgeois world requires. Arrogant perception is an attribute that the bourgeoisie can afford to cultivate. Whether we accept a mundane definition of arrogance or take up the one offered by Frye (that Lugones favors), arrogant perception cannot so easily be attributed to the servant class or the working class. Indeed, Lugones' account suggests this much in stating that only women "of a certain class" are taught to perceive arrogantly (5). Nonetheless, Lugones proceeds to use arrogant perception as a general feature of all persons regardless of class, thus elevating bourgeois perception to perception as such.

Traveling to the servants' world dramatically provincializes arrogant perception. Servants do not perceive arrogantly. That is, servants' social role—as opposed to the distinct individualities and private lives of those forced to serve—tends to preclude this attitude. Literature on the particularities of the servant class in capitalist society shows that they, unlike servant classes in ancient and feudal contexts, express no sentimental bonds to their masters. They perceive with hate and fear. The servant class, fully aware of itself as a "caste," James McCillan writes, is a "bitter class" (2002, 175). Writing about obscene wealth and the evils of poverty characteristic of the master–slave relationship, William Godwin equally captures the servant's envious and hungry eye. The spectacle of the master's wealth that the servant must endure provokes a desire for the "embroidered garment," which contains only the false promise of security and "felicity" ([1793] 2013, 29). The servant's eye is angry, too, for the servant understands that the juxtaposition of obscene wealth and horrific poverty does not express meritocracy.[26] For servants know full well upon whose shoulders the master's kingdom is built. Thus,

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servants' perceptions are neither arrogant nor mere perceptions. Rather, their perceptions reveal an aspect of the master–servant relation that the perspective of the master conceals.[27]

The servant's world-traveling

Lugones distinguishes between compulsive and voluntary world-traveling, associating the former with marginalized subjects condemned to travel for survival. Yet she neglects servants' compulsive world-traveling. For what is the role and duty of the servant but to travel to the world of the master, the patron, the employer, to learn their world and its rules? Servitude requires understanding mastery. As world-traveling is a condition for the servant's survival it occurs without arrogant perception. To understand this, we must embark upon a journey Lugones forgoes.

Servitude initiates servants into a world in which they do not belong: the master's world. Servants get a taste of the finer things in life, which have no place in their own world only in order to deliver them in servitude. Such traveling is conditioned on maintaining fixed class distinctions. Masters allows servants into their worlds only with the conviction that such initiation improves their servitude without disrupting their class position. As long as class positions are not threatened, the master's gate is open. To use Lugones' language, the master is dependent on the other without servitude while the servant is dependent on the other through servitude.

This initiation serves to consolidate class distinctions and fixes the servant in their position. Their entry into the master's world marks them as fit for servitude. Servants never undergo ontological transformations that render them beings suited for the world of wealth; they remain servants. The servant's world-traveling thus is literal and not metaphorical or ontological.[28] Their servitude does not transcend but fixes their class position; they are servants both while resting in the world of poverty and serving in the world of wealth.

Entry into the master's world sets the experience of servants apart from other forms of working servitude. The norm in capitalism is that workers are removed from immediate relations with their masters; this is not so with servants. As Veblen observes, the servant class provides a personal service to their masters ([1899] 1994, 26). Though aspects of servitude have changed since the nineteenth century, personalized treatment remains an integral feature of the servant class today. This special treatment, Veblen argues, testifies to the embodiment of "worth and honour" in the master's person (27). And this is a serious matter; it is imperative for the master's reputation and self-respect "that he should have at his call efficient specialised servants, whose attendance upon his person is not diverted from their chief office by any by-occupation" (27).[29]

The personal service that distinguishes servant labor necessitates intimate knowledge of the master and their world. It is the duty of servants to understand the masters without the master having to toil for this understanding; just as, historically, it has been the duty of the wife to meet the husband's needs before they utter a demand. Such understanding, contrary to Lugones' account, does not necessarily lead to love. This implies that the connection between world-traveling, identification, and love is not ontological but belongs to a particular class relation. The servants' world-traveling delinks traveling, identification, and love.

The servant's attentiveness contrasts the master's utter indifference. Servants, like women, historically, are not only useful because of practical service but also for displaying wealth and status (26). The leisure of the master class is "an indulgence of a

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proclivity for the avoidance of labour" said to "enhance the master's own well-being and fulness of life" (28). If today the possession of servants does not signal the avoidance of labor as such, it surely indicates the avoidance of certain forms of labor. Indeed, even the punishment that follows masters' rage when they are not correctly served manifests their indifference to the person who serves them. Lugones knows this indifference well.

Pseudo-concreteness

Failing to acknowledge her own class position as well as servants as a class, Lugones knows only "servants." Having turned our gaze to the servants, we can now see that she does not treat servants in any concrete sense; rather, her theory is pseudo-concrete. Pseudo-concreteness captures the failed attempt to grasp the concrete against the abstract that culminates in new abstractions. It results from the hasty repudiation of the abstract for the concrete. It denotes, in Theodore Adorno's ([1966] 2007) words, "[t]he obsession with the concept of the concrete" bound up "with the incapacity to achieve it in thought" such that "[t]he conjuring word replaced the thing" (75). Lugones' claim to capture the concrete is just that, a mere claim; pseudo-concreteness is concreteness in name only. Though her project attempts to grasp concreteness, it is unable to do so because the realities of the capitalist world, class, and servitude escape her. Pseudo-concreteness thus captures Lugones' class ideology, the remnants of bourgeois thought in her theory, and her mystifying language that obscures present conditions of domination.

Servants in Lugones' essay appear as "servants" in general. She fails to grasp even the most rudimentary fact about servants: that servitude is a class category. There is no analysis of her servants as gendered, raced, sexed, classed, within a particular household, time, and place, or with a history and name. Erasing their individuality, class, social position, and role in her life and in her theory, and reducing them to servants as such, Lugones renders them pseudo-concrete: an abstract group conjured as a memory—"servants."

Similarly, she presents white/Anglo women and women of color as anonymous, homogeneous groups against and through which her own experience is highlighted. Here, she exclusively considers gender and race, two axioms she withholds from her commentary on servants. Without class, citizenship, ethnicity, or history, white/Anglo women are reduced to a monolith. In all actuality, I do not know what "white woman" signals to an Argentinian woman who grew up around servants. Likewise, Lugones treats women of color in the US interchangeably, discussing neither their class nor any concrete features of their identity and experience beyond race, which is reduced to a phenotypical attribute: color.

Lugones singles out characteristics, such as race and gender, to assemble women into groups—for example, "women of color in the US." Thus, she groups herself in the category of "women of color in the US" by virtue of "race" and "gender," though race here plays the predominant role. Lugones, moreover, abstracts concreteness by erasing differences within groups (Terrefe 2020).[30] For example, "women of color" appear undifferentiated, as unclassed bodies with shared experiences. Similarly, "Argentinian women" equally groups mothers, servants, children of servants, children who grew up with servants, and heads of households with servants, mirroring the identity politics criticized by Kimberlé Crenshaw for erasing differences within groups (1991).[31] This erasure of differences *within* groups also renders differences *among* groups irrelevant. For example, Lugones identifies with "women of color in the US" because race and gender are the

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group's exclusive particularities. Though she is indeed racialized in the US, Lugones, an Argentinian woman who grew up with servants, can identify with "women of color in the US" only if this group lacks class distinctions or a shared history.[32]

Lugones, who has a sharp eye for racial differences, sees no class, thus blurring her experience with "women of color." This omission allows Lugones to parallel her experience, growing up in Argentina with servants, to the experience of "women of color" in the US. If "women of color" were qualified by class, Lugones would cease to belong to the group and be granted membership to "upper-class women." In fact, her class position and social status—not to mention her treatment of servants—illustrates that she has more in common with upper-class white/Anglo women than women of color in the US.

Ignoring class distinctions and merely focusing on perspectives affects Lugones' account of perception itself. For Lugones never asks how women of color in the US perceive *her*. Simply by having been misclassed she inaugurates herself as a woman of color in the US. Is her experience of being slighted comparable to years of violence experienced by poor and working-class racialized women in the US? Certainly, it is not comparable to the experiences of women under slavery, Jim Crow laws, police brutality, and servitude.

Despite her intentions, Lugones offers little insight into the concreteness of women of color. Historically, for instance, many women of color in the US experienced slavery, servitude, low-paying menial work, and domestic work—social positions foreign to Lugones' experience.[33] They have more often been servants for households than housewives. By contrast, housewives, though oppressed under patriarchy, represent the prosperity of middle- and upper-middle-class bourgeoise families; their experiences are thus closer to Lugones'. The history of women of color in the US, and mestizo, indigenous, and mixed-raced women in Argentina, hardly captures Lugones' class position and experience.[34] Like Lugones' servants, women of color in the US have been housekeepers for white households, standing, in Angela Davis' words, "in the shadow of the housewife" (1981, 203).

Lugones does not utter a single word about the race of her servants nor the class of women of color. But, in Selma James' words (1974), "there is no class 'purity'" (95). Rather, "[t]he objective oppression of black women in America," as Davis (1977) argues, "has a class … origin" (185). For James and Davis, the material connections between race, nationality, ethnicity, sex, and gender exist within, not outside, class relations. Class analysis thus does not erase differences but orients us toward the abolition of exploitative labor as a step toward liberation.

Unlike Lugones, James and Davis analyze the historical specificity of women's oppression in capitalism. Davis characterizes feminisms without class analysis as "narrow bourgeois feminis[ms]" (184) that disregard women's labor, distort the class character of gender relations, and veil the social character and function of women's oppression in capitalism. Such feminism, Davis writes, "fails to acknowledge the specificity of the social subjugation of the women who live outside the privileged class under capitalism" (184).

Lugones' pseudo-concreteness epitomizes such bourgeois feminism. She speaks of servitude without expressing any indignation for literal servitude. In occluding class, she neglects the capitalist subjugation of poor and working-class women and fails to grasp that liberation from toilsome labor, servitude, and oppression is central to feminism. Anti-capitalist emancipatory theory cannot do with mere changes in perception but requires class analysis because, as Davis maintains, women's oppression is

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"inextricably tethered to capitalism" (185). The pursuit of women's emancipation requires emancipation from capitalism.

The proper response to Lugones' pseudo-concreteness, therefore, is not to reject all abstraction as such. Davis' and James' analyses, in demonstrating the importance of class analysis for feminism, are decisive on this point: we can understand women's oppression in capitalist society only through historically specific categories that grasp capitalism's structure.[35]

The pseudo-concreteness of play

Having abandoned the servants, Lugones proceeds to provide solutions that further solidify the barrier between obscene wealth and poverty. Like past soul-saviors—from St Augustine to Mother Teresa—she turns to love to combat arrogant perception. But this solution provides rewards and no punishments, thus leaving servants in their despicable conditions.[36] For Lugones, playfulness is the "loving attitude" of world-traveling (1987, 13–14). To understand the limitations of loving playfulness, in this section, I show how pseudo-concreteness infiltrates her playful world-traveling and crystallizes in sterile play. Lugones' play stages the proper environment for pseudo-concreteness: the ground of playful world-traveling as a sanitized space where no difference can shine through.

Lugones contrasts playfulness with the "serious human" who has "no fun in life" and lacks "multidimensionality" (15). In a moment of honesty, she expresses her fear of becoming a person who has had "the fun constructed out of them" (15). Lugones, lucky to have escaped the world of mere survival to which servants belong, fears descending into the hell that is a life lived only to work. For, indeed, who is this serious, one-dimensional, person that has no fun and even lacks the necessary attitude required for fun if not the worker? Given the context of the essay, Lugones seems to attribute seriousness and lack of fun to the privileged person. There may be some truth to the familiar image of the curmudgeonly capitalist, but in actuality it is the working class, the poor, and the servants who have long been stripped of their right to have fun.

The image of the lifeless worker haunts the bourgeois, who forever fears becoming like them. The no-fun person that Lugones fears she might become is the person she cannot become; it is the person with whom she neither identifies nor loves: the servant. She fears of becoming nothing but a poor old worker, a servant, a pauper whose anger penetrates so deeply that it leaves no room for a smile. This fear is real. For the sadness of the wretched is indeed serious; the fun has been beaten out of them.

Daring to ask *Can the person submerged in poverty have fun?* is to treat their condition seriously. It means facing up to the severe conditions that have hardened the worker. It also implies inquiring whether conditions for fun and play really do exist today. But Lugones does not venture there. Lugones wants to play! And in a very particular way. She critiques antagonistic play for centering winning, losing, risk taking, battling, competence, and rules. Play as agon, Lugones maintains, imbues players with a sense of superiority and renders the playful attitude "*secondary to or derivative from play*" (15). In contrast, Lugones presents loving playfulness as an attitude that makes world-traveling possible. This alternative play is delivered to us in an image:

> We are by the river banks … You pick up a stone and crash it onto the others. As it breaks, it is quite wet inside and it is very colorful, very pretty. I pick up a stone and break it and run toward the pieces to see the colors. They are beautiful. I laugh

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> and bring the pieces back to you and you are doing the same with your pieces. We keep on crashing stones for hours … We are playing. The playfulness of our activity does not presuppose that there is something like "crashing stones" that is a particular form of play with its own rules. Rather *the attitude that carries us through the activity, a playful attitude, turns the activity into play*. Our activity has no rules … The playfulness that gives meaning to our activity includes uncertainty, but in this case the uncertainty is an *openness to surprise* … we are *open to self-construction*. We may not have rules, and when we do have rules, *there are no rules that are to us sacred.* We are not worried about competence … While playful we have not abandoned ourselves to, nor are we stuck in, any particular "world." We *are there creatively.* (16)

Let us take her image of play seriously. Why is a boring activity of crashing stones for hours presented as a creative and desirable endeavour? Anyone who has ever played knows we have exited the realm of play, creativity, and fun.

Where could one engage in such play? There is no proper place for it, barring Lugones' imagination. However, Lugones is not concerned with play but strictly with the playful attitude, which appears devoid of playing. This attitude is characterized by a lack of rules and an openness to possibilities. World-traveling, which requires playfulness, is considered by Lugones to be a form of resistance (2003, 7, 10–12). Thus, for many readers the playful attitude is important precisely because it enables "resisting" and "self-construction" (Islekel 2020, 447); and that it is so open that it even includes "disrupt[ing] particular contexts that are oppressive or provid[ing] power to a particular group" (Dewart et al. 2020, 370). We are assured that Lugones' loving playfulness, unlike agonistic play, does not seek to win.

But it seems to me that nor does it seek to play. As the above scholars glean from Lugones' rather vague and watery description, play is so open and directionless that it could be anything, even an activity in the service of a socio-political task. Play could become work.

Don't we sacrifice playfulness when we subject it to the service of politics? Doesn't play return to the realm of winning, taking risks, and battling if understood as resistance against oppressive groups and the accumulation of power for the oppressed? Lugones' fear of becoming a serious worker does not permit her to capture playfulness; rather, play turns into resistance against oppression. In other words, play becomes agonistic and the playful attitude "*secondary to … play*" (Lugones 1987, 15). This is possible because playfulness is so undefined, undetermined, and open that it contains any possibility. The playful attitude, it seems, can do anything but play.

Lugones' playful attitude raises other important questions: Who is Lugones playing *with*? Where are the raced, sexed, gendered, and classed bodies in her image of play? Exiled? Lugones' image of play centers her but erases the other player. There is no *concreteness* of others. It seems that Lugones' pseudo-concreteness contaminates even her conception of play.

The subjects of Lugones' play are beings devoid of specificity. That the space of play is *open* renders the subject no one, thus anyone. But can the player really be anyone? I doubt the status and social realities that keep servants busy at work allow for such play; not to mention their seriousness which is not conducive to the correct attitude required to play with Lugones. But if they could embody the playful attitude, perhaps it would alleviate some of the exhaustion of their daily toils—though not the need for toil itself.

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We do not know who Lugones is playing with, and this is precisely the point. If we venture into speculation about player two, we are forced into a thought experiment in which someone is playing *with* Lugones. I am coerced into playing *with her*, to center her, to be open, entertain, and surprise her. Whatever the speculation, we do not, and must not, know who *she* is playing with, or risk dirtying the scene of play with a concreteness that would put her commitment to openness into question. The subjects of Lugones' play are abstract embodiments of the attitude required to play with Lugones.

Indeed, Lugones' playful world-traveling is pseudo-concrete. The subjects of play are neutral and the scene of play attempts to achieve the same. Where is the plurality and difference promised to us by Lugones in the opening of her essay? Why is the image of play so sterile and sanitized, that is, lacking in concreteness? These are not Lugones' questions. If they were, perhaps she would be forced to travel out of this sterile scene and into the filth of the concrete. Now, Lugones intends to deal with concreteness; but, despite the muddy water and colorful stones, she does not capture it; *perspectives, perceptions,* and *attitudes* along with imaginary traveling are her primary concerns. Thus, she constructs a dream-like world as the image of play, where "trout hid[e] under rocks" in a river that is "almost dry" (16).

We can bring the abstract character of the scene of play into view by resituating it amongst its primary historical referents. Lugones tells us that she chose crashing stones because there is no play with its own rules called "crashing stones;" rather the playful attitude "*turns*" this "*activity into play*" (16). Though she is correct that there is no play called crashing stones, nonetheless, in the US, crashing stones has a far darker history. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, crashing stones was an activity performed by individuals subjected to work on chain-gangs.[37] It goes without saying that Lugones did not mean to suggest that chain-gangs' stone-crashing was fun and games; nor that it would be fun to be in a chain-gang (though it does imply that it could have been play had the attitude been different). Nonetheless, it is not insignificant that this is the image of Lugones' play.

Lugones is correct that crashing stones is not play in any ordinary sense. But it does seem to capture Lugones' sense of play: the crashing of stones to which chain-gangs were subjected as punishment was certainly not agonistic play: it did not seek to win, lose, battle, or conquer. In fact, it signals the aftermath of loss and conquest. Even more, an important aspect of crashing of rocks was that it was not always productive labor. "State highway officials" in Alabama in 1995 "are reported to have said that they have no use for the crushed rock produced by the prisoners" (De jonge 1999).[38] While at times crushed chunks of limestone were used to make gravel for roads, at others, limestone was primarily an excuse for crushing stones as punishment.

Seeking the antithesis of the conquering and arrogant attitude, Lugones' loving playfulness invokes loving play as a form of punishment. We can chalk this up to mere chance or recognize the consequences of her pseudo-concreteness. Had Lugones taken the servants seriously, instead of leaping to play, perhaps servitude would not have haunted her riverbank scene of playful world-traveling.[39]

Lugones' image of play is at best a boring pastime, and at worse, forced labor and punishment. In fact, it is the playful attitude itself which renders equivalent these otherwise distinct activities. Here, of course, "boring" is not an indictment of Lugones personally but proof that we cannot merely *think* ourselves into fun if we exist in a society founded on domination. Even the wishes and the images we conjure in search of emancipation capitulate into scenes of domination.[40] Thus, instead of fleeing into experimental thinking, we must, as Adorno (1946) suggests, face the cold world with coldness (639).

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Lugones' theory is pseudo-concrete because it turns its back on the cold and harsh reality. The alien features of the world she has constructed to combat existing society are alien to her. One could object that Lugones is aware of the coldness of our world and, thus, wishes that *all* could be play. Indeed, on her account, all *can* play if they embody the correct attitude and find refuge in the right world. But, in Bayard Rustin's words (1970), the problem is not "bad attitudes but bad social conditions" (31).[41] To genuinely wish for the poor to play is to wish Lugones' class out of existence. As it stands there is no evidence of such desire in her work. Lugones is aware of the limitations of playfulness—we cannot play all the time and not everywhere, especially not in agonistic worlds (1987, 17). She fails to consider that "agonistic" worlds are for some the only worlds. Indeed, what is capitalism if not an agonistic world? But Lugones does not critique present conditions for the possibility of emancipated play, for a society where the very conditions and social relations allow for play; rather, she concludes by maintaining that we can play in some worlds and not others.[42] In reality, it is Lugones who can play in some worlds and not others. The confinement of the poor to agonistic worlds makes bourgeois play possible.

Only the master

Despite the merits of world-traveling for cross-cultural and cross-racial love, it is pseudo-concrete, and thus substantially freighted as a critical and political strategy for decolonial feminism.[43] It is too historically and socially undetermined to grasp and challenge present forms of domination. Thus, to my mind, its burdens far outweigh its promises. Emancipatory theory, by contrast, requires a critical examination of class. It is not the case that perceptions and ways of seeing have no place in decolonial feminism; rather, my claim is that they do not transcend but rather express class relations.

This article proposes "pseudo-concreteness" as a critical tool for feminist analysis. Pseudo-concreteness exposes the limitations of feminist methodologies that abandon materialist analysis and obscure class by merely targeting perspectives and perceptions without condemning capitalist relations that bring them about. As a tool for materialist critique, pseudo-concreteness highlights the dangers of a hasty move from abstractions to what is *apparently* concrete. It critiques theories that obscure class as ideological expressions of class positions while simultaneously highlighting the necessity of class analysis for feminism. This essay thus seeks to reorient feminism toward real social conditions and class relations. Decolonial feminism must grasp the concrete socio-historical conditions of the marginalized. This, I have shown, Lugones does not do.

In a final act of avoidance, in the essay's closing moments, Lugones writes that she "always imagines the Aristotelian slave as pliable and foldable at night or after he or she cannot work anymore (when he or she dies as a tool)" (1987, 18). But "Aristotle," she adds, "tells us nothing about the slave *apart from the master*. We know the slave only through the master. After working hours he or she is folded and placed in a drawer till the next morning" (18). Thus Lugones concludes, having once and for all folded and placed her servants in a drawer.

But Lugones, as should now be clear, reproduces the very error she attributes to Aristotle: not another word is uttered about her servants. To be sure, Aristotle says more about slaves than Lugones does about servants.[44] In fact, Lugones tells us nothing about them. When she does briefly mention them, it is to use them, like Aristotle's living tools, to make a point. Lugones' indictment of Aristotle does not prompt her to

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speak of her servants at all, let alone about the servants apart from her; rather, she concludes by returning once again to her mother. Traveling to her mother's world, Lugones tells us, she realized that her mother "is not foldable and pliable" nor "exhausted by the mainstream Argentinian patriarchal construction of her" as there are "'worlds' in which she shines as a creative being" (18). Had Lugones traveled to her servants' quarters, she would have found, to her surprise, that unlike her mother, they are exhausted. That their servitude to the likes of Lugones implies that there are no worlds in which they can shine. Like Aristotle's slaves, the servants are "pliable and foldable at night" after they "cannot work anymore" dying "as a tool" (18).

Concluding her essay with a guilty conscience, Lugones maintains that Aristotle tells us nothing about slaves just about the master. Likewise, Lugones tells us nothing about servants, only about their master.

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Notes

1 Scholars have emphasized the different ways in which Lugones centers concrete particularity against abstract universality. For an account of how she captures the concrete by bringing theory down from the bourgeois, universal, abstract individual, to the concrete, irreducibly plural identity, see Ortega (2016); for Lugones' treatment of the concreteness of the self and everyday existence, see Ortega (2016, 236); for a discussion of Lugones as theorizing the concrete from below, as opposed to from the perspective of the bourgeois abstract individual, see Gordon (2020). Additionally, for an analysis of Lugones' method that focuses on her critique of capitalism, see Bohrer (2020).

2 Lugones (2010) argues that a decolonial feminist critique of racialized, colonial, and capitalist gender oppression hinges on the "concrete, lived resistance to the coloniality of gender" (746–48). This is the case, she adds, because the coloniality of gender is challenged by "different concrete people whose bodies, selves in relation, and relations to the spirit world do not follow the logic of capital" (754).

3 Countless articles, books, and essays written on Lugones' influential essay about playful world-traveling equally fail to mention the servants. I encountered one exception, Linda Alcoff's "Lugones' world-making" (2020), where she praises Lugones for writing about "her own intimate relations and spaces—her difficult love for her mother, the painful way she is taught to perceive servants" (206). However, Alcoff too says nothing further about the servants.

4 I am here following a long tradition of feminist readings that attend to the excess, the unaccounted, the ejected, and the background. Like Sara Ahmed (2006), who invites us to look behind Husserl's desk only to find a housewife in servitude, I look behind Lugones' shoulders to find an army of servants. I look at the unaccounted experience of the servants, upon which her well-being depended and her theory still rests.

5 Günther Anders (1948) deploys the term to critique Martin Heidegger's fundamental ontology. Heidegger's philosophy is pseudo-concrete, Anders maintains, because its ostensibly bold jump from the generality of theory into the concreteness of existence capitulates into a theoretical existence (356). *Dasein*, Anders argues, is removed from material reality and bereft of class. Though Heidegger speaks of *Sorge*, Anders shows, he is not concerned with capitalism, alienation, slavery, economy, needs, or hunger. Consequently, that Heidegger, a bourgeois thinker, does not seek the abolition of capitalism is not surprising as he does not take the real world, its social relation, and real human needs into account.

6 I note that while Lugones capitalizes white in her essay, in this article, henceforth, I follow current practices within philosophy of race and render it in the lower case.

7 It should be noted that this triggering is not accidental but rather involuntary. That is, the servants do not represent an obstacle but the very tools that enable Lugones to develop her essay. Her "psychical tripping" over her servants reads as an unintentional confrontation occurring while she writes about her past. We

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would thus be justified to understand this tripping as a form of parapraxes, which on Sigmund Freud's (1917) account, results from an antagonism between one's conscious intention and repressed content. What appears to be a passing and harmless mention of servants expresses an interference of intentions. Perhaps the servants are conjured because what truly occupies Lugones is class and servitude, though her conscious intent is presented as the possibility for cross-cultural and cross-racial love.

8 Of course, her lack of identification with servants is not equivalent to achieving freedom from servitude. For Lugones, the path to love does not imply identification with servitude but is paved by identifying with those who are free and not in servitude. Though this is beyond the scope of the paper, I want to note that this raises important questions about her theory of identification. If we live in a capitalist, colonial world, which Lugones maintains we do, none of us are free. If this is the case, identification with anyone would at once be identification with some form of domination, alienation, or servitude. This raises serious challenges to identification and world-traveling as a liberatory practice.

9 This claim leads Lugones to maintain that Frye's argument that the loving perception treats the Other as independent is insufficient for two reasons. First, it cannot explain Lugones' failure to love her mother, because seeing her mother as "logically independent" left Lugones feeling incomplete (Lugones 1987, 7). Second, it cannot grasp "why the racist or ethnocentric failure of love of White/Anglo women … should leave me not quite substantive among them" (7).

10 Notice the role "grafting" plays in Lugones' attempt to parallel the two failures of love. In the beginning of the essay, Lugones explains how women and men of considerable means in Argentina grafted their servants' substance to themselves and that she, likewise, grafted her mother's substance to herself (1987, 4). Such grafting, for Lugones, is abusive (5). However, the abuse she experiences from white/Anglo women in the US is different for it occurs without identification or grafting. White/Anglo women, Lugones tells us, did not graft her substance unto theirs (5). This is the case, she maintains, because their failure to love women of color does not occur through grafting but independence (7). Interestingly, even though Lugones introduces the category of abuse without identification through her discussion of servants—whom she could abuse without identification or love—she proceeds to parallel her failure to love her mother with the failure of white/Anglo women to love women of color.

11 I am thankful to Lucien Ferguson for this insight.

12 See Bowman (2020); Dewart et al. (2020); Hansen (2017); Islekel (2020); Kramer (2017); Ortega (2016); Sealey (2018).

13 Lugones does not discuss or even mention that Argentina's domestic servants have been primarily women from low-income households, immigrants, native women, and foreigners, from poor northern provinces and neighbouring countries such as Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru. See Edwards (2020), Castro (2001), Dunstan and Pite (2018), Guy (1981, 1995, 2000), Masés (2002), Pite (2011, 2014). During the colonial and early national period most domestic servants were of African descent, in "the early twentieth centuries the majority came from Europe," and starting in the 1940s they were primarily women of mixed or indigenous ancestry from provinces and bordering countries (Pite 2011, 102); see also Andrews (1981). The number of domestic servants in Argentina reached its peak in the late 1800s and slowly decreased by the 1950s and 1960s (Guy 1981). During this period of decrease, however, elites continued to enjoy domestic service, but middle-class homes increasingly had part-time servants. The gender dynamics of servitude in Argentina, moreover, are very complex and require a much larger discussion including, e.g., the 1830s labor shortage that resulted in forcefully placing poor and convicted women as domestic servants and punishing them if they abandoned their jobs (Guy 2000, 90); the pipeline of indigenous women and children established as a part of the "Conquest of the Desert" military campaign, which forced them to be domestic servants for families in Buenos Aires (Dunstan and Pite 2018, 406); and the history of elite philanthropic societies run by white women that placed indigenous men, women, and children within upper-class families (Masés 2002, 72).

14 Any history of Argentinian domestic servitude would be incomplete without considering the larger context of Argentina's transition from a colony to a slave-owning labor and peonage society, and then to a nation with wage-labor; the mass European migration and nineteenth-century efforts to constitute Argentina as a white nation through ideological campaigns; and the whitening processes targeting Afro-Argentines and indigenous groups. Lugones fails to address the depiction of indigenous and mixed-race women servants as inferior, "evil" and "treacherous black maid[s]" in contrast to the white women who symbolize Argentina's national identity (Dunstan and Pite 2018, 404). Argentina's efforts to establish itself as white and European are exemplified in portrayals of the "classy white mistress vs.

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her inferior non-white maid," are conspicuously absent from Lugones' essay (Dunstan and Pite 2018, 401). Nor does Lugones mention the history of Argentine elites who supported the mass European immigration hoping to "outnumber and override the 'racial backwardness' of indigenous people, Afro-Argentines, and mixed-race groups" by attracting white Northern Europeans (Dunstan and Pite 2018, 406). The majority of the immigrants, however, were Italian and Spanish, igniting debates about whiteness and race in Argentina. More than 6 million immigrants entered Argentina between 1876 and 1930, rendering a large percentage of the population foreign and the overall population diverse with a European, indigenous, African, and mixed ancestry population. In this context, though "most members of the Generation of 1837 supported the partial abolition of slavery," Dunstan and Pite (2018) argue, "they did not consider black people (30 per cent of the population of Buenos Aires in the early nineteenth century) or the indigenous and mixed-race majority to be their equals" (402). These intellectuals, invested in constructing a white, European Argentina, "used their fictions to seek to write this nation into being" (402).

15 Slatta (1985) and Solberg (1969) argue that the rise of the gaucho as a national symbol occurred during the fall from grace of the immigrant, which was itself a symptom of elite anxieties regarding their economic status and power. This was a part of the romanticization of volk as pure and ennobled by contact with soil that resulted from a consideration of modernization as a foreign imposition that threatened Argentine culture, at least among the intellectuals (Gellner [1983] 2009). This was expressed in denigrating the immigrant and uplifting the gaucho as a national symbol. Thus, the gaucho embodied the anti-immigrant antidote to modernity. Moreover, it is interesting to note, as Dunstan and Pite (2018) show, that even though the gaucho was a lower-class, rural male this did not affect the status of non-white domestic servants who continued to be considered as lesser than and other to white women (401).

16 Lugones (1987) maintains that she values her "rural 'gaucho' ancestry" because it signals independence in poverty through courage and self-reliance (4). I am thankful to Catalina Rodriguez for directing my attention to the rich literature on the figure of the gaucho in Argentina.

17 Veblen's analysis of the connections between the bourgeois class, servitude, and leisure is salient in this regard, especially as Argentine master–servant relations resemble those in Western, colonial, and postcolonial places and helped reify Argentina's national, white, bourgeois identity. See Dunstan and Pite (2018). See also Davidoff (1979), Flynn (2011), McClintock (1995), and Shumway (1993) for analyses of the portrayal of maids in the colonial context. Dunstan and Pite (2018) argue that the Argentine maid–mistresses relationship, as well as its literary and cultural representations, resembles such relationships in Western and postcolonial contexts. Like in England and the British colonial setting, the image of the non-white and subservient maid helped reify Argentina's "national and/or white bourgeois identity" (402). This, they maintain, is in part due to the nineteenth-century efforts to transform Argentina into a white, European nation. Furthermore, as Shumway (1993) shows, the Argentine elite perpetuated colonial racial and gendered hierarchies when it felt its position threatened by the potential socioeconomic mobility of maids. Dustan and Pite trace these anxieties in literary representations and argue that this mobility threatened not only the class and racial boundaries of the mistress but of Argentina's very image of itself. This is not meant to suggest that threat of the socioeconomic mobility of the maid is exclusive to Argentina, but rather that conceptions of domestic servants in Argentina are also linked to economic and racial hierarchies.

18 See Beauvoir ([1949] 2011); Wittig (1992); Wollstonecraft ([1792] 2009).

19 It is important to note that Frye, with whom Lugones is in direct dialogue, takes up this issue in *The politics of reality* (1983).

20 In *Pilgrimages/peregrinajes: Theorizing coalition against multiple oppressions,* Lugones (2003) mentions maids in the context of discussing memory. People, she writes, "act in front of their maids as if there were no one in the room … When people behave this way, they do not see themselves as the maid sees them and they do not want to remember or recognize the persons who are seen by the maids, of whom the maids are witnesses. The maids can testify only in the world of the dominated, the only world where that testimony is understood and recognized. There are many reasons why the employers do not remember themselves as maids know them" (58). This is just one example, among many, showcasing Lugones' concern with perception.

21 As if to expiate herself, Lugones (1987) asks, "to what extent" are women "responsible for their arrogant perceptions of other women" (5–6). Deeming this an "open question," she concludes thus: "I am not interested in assigning responsibility" but "in understanding the phenomenon so as to understand a loving way out of it (5–6). This claim inaugurates Lugones' turn to a set of lukewarm solutions that are ultimately

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favorable only to her class and aligned with her class interests. She pre-empts the possibility of any solution other than love, thus foreclosing the possibility of targeting real social conditions. Accordingly, it is almost predictable that she is allergic to "responsibility"—for that would implicate her. But Lugones is no theorist of reparations or retribution; there is no attempt to make whole what has been shattered. That something has been shattered is selectively acknowledged—no outrage is ever expressed for the abuse of the servants.
22 In rare cases, however, this does occur as a part of bourgeois education. For an account of this, see Robert Campbell (2011).
23 A mere integration of class into the existing method of world-traveling would not result in a concrete analysis of class. Rather, it would simply substitute real concrete analysis for new abstractions that acknowledge class, such as "poor women" or "working-class women." This is the case because world-traveling's primary preoccupation with attitudes, perceptions, and perspectives—which are not considered to be themselves classed—would collapse concrete existence into theoretical existence. Thus, unlike Lugones' pseudo-concreteness, a concrete analysis grasps the historical form of our social conditions and relations. It uncovers the historical and class character of the object of analysis—whether that is "women of color," "servants," "perception", or "love"—and reveals that theories which trade exclusively in perceptions, perspectives, and attitudes, are themselves classed.
24 As my analysis of servants as a class shows, I do not reject abstractions *tout court*. Rather, I oppose those abstractions that veil, instead of grasping and expressing, concreteness. Lugones' abstractions, as I further show in the "Pseudo-concreteness" section, detach "servants," "women of color," and "white/Anglo women" from their social and historical form and their material reality. Consequently, servants appear bereft of gender, race, nationality, and ethnicity, while women are presented as bereft of class, nationality, ethnicity. By contrast, my use of abstractions such as "servants" in the critique I develop here serves as a socio-historical category and captures concreteness. This is the case because treating servants as the class they are expresses their social role in capitalist society.
25 Besides treating servants in their role in capitalist society, this analysis does not purport to undertake a political economy of servants or to analyze domestic labor or women's labor as such. Nor does it examine the racial, gender, ethnic, and national dynamics of servitude in a given location. While such an endeavor is very important it is beyond the scope of this paper. For scholarly contributions to these dimensions of servitude in Argentina see: Davidoff (1979), Dunstan and Pite (2018), Edwards (2020), Flynn (2011), Guy (1981, 2000), Masés, 2002), McClintock (1995), and Shumway (1993). For analysis of domestic labor and women's labor, as well as the relation between domestic labor and race, see: Anderson (2000), Bhattacharya (2017), Branch and Wooten (2012), Collins (2002), Dalla Costa and James (1972), Davis (1977, 1981), Dill (1994), Federici (2004, 2018, 2021), Glenn (1992), James (1974), Parreñas (2001), Schwartz (2019).
26 "Human beings are capable of encountering with cheerfulness considerable hardships when those hardships are impartially shared with the rest of the society, and they are not insulted with the spectacle of indolence and ease in others, no way deserving of greater advantages than themselves. But it is a bitter aggravation of their own calamity, to have the privileges of others forced on their observation, and, while they are perpetually and vainly endeavoring to secure for themselves and their families the poorest conveniences, to find others revelling in the fruits of their labours. This aggravation is assiduously administered to them under most of the political establishments at present in existence. There is a numerous class of individuals who, though rich, have neither brilliant talents nor sublime virtues; and, however highly they may prize their education, their affability, their superior polish and the elegance of their manners, have a secret consciousness that they possess nothing by which they can so securely assert their pre-eminence and keep their inferiors at a distance as the splendour of their equipage, the magnificence of their retinue and the sumptuousness of their entertainments. The poor man is struck with this exhibition; he feels his own miseries; he knows how unwearied are his efforts to obtain a slender pittance of this prodigal waste; and he mistakes opulence for felicity. He cannot persuade himself that an embroidered garment may frequently cover an aching heart" (Godwin [1793] 2013, 29–30).
27 This issue of perspective is not foreign to decolonial feminism. Ortega (2016), for example, highlights the perspectival differences precisely through the servant. Following Linda Alcoff, she maintains that servants and queens have "different interpretations" (Ortega 2016, 151). "[T]he servant," Ortega writes, sees "the castle and its objects in terms of the maintenance that she has to provide for it, while the queen views them in terms of their possibilities for entertainment (151).
28 Note that Lugones' conception of world-traveling is not about literal travel but ontological and epistemic traveling.

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29 What makes a servant good, dare we ask? It is as true for servants today as it was for the servants of the leisure class Veblen ([1899] 1994) analyzed that the "first requisite of a good servant is that [t]he[y] should conspicuously know [their] place" (29). That is, it is imperative that the class distinction is expressed in the performance of servitude. It is also not sufficient that servants merely serve; they must embody an attitude of subservience by performing certain tasks and desired results in correct form. For this reason, Veblen maintains that servants and slaves play different roles in their relationship to the master. While the "possession and maintenance of slaves employed in the production of goods argues wealth and prowess," Veblen writes, "the maintenance of servants who produce nothing argues still higher wealth and position" (30).
30 Terrefe (2020) argues that Lugones does not acknowledge the importance of differences within the category of women of color but merely posits women of color against white women (149).
31 It may appear like a misnomer to accuse a decolonial feminist of identity politics, but Lugones groups on the basis of a particularities and treats people belonging in the same group as having the same experiences and interests. She particularly falls prey to what Crenshaw refers to as the "identity politics," which groups individuals based on particularities, assumes shared experiences and interests, and erases differences within groups (1991). Crenshaw argues that identity politics does not transcend but merely conflates or ignores differences within groups—e.g., how rich, heterosexual women and poor, lesbian woman experience different forms of violence. For a critical engagement with Lugones' critique of intersectionality, see Thomas (2020), Velez (2019).
32 Lugones' treatment of women of color mimics her indifference to her servants as well as the indifference of white/Anglo women to women of color that she herself critiques. Terrefe (2020) illustrates this in her critique of Lugones for rhetorically deploying Black American women for her theory. Lugones' decolonial feminism, Terrefe shows, "reifies the libidinal dynamics it denounces" by "turning Africans into captives, into commodities for use and abuse" (134). While her theory of power, Terrefe adds, "hinges the necessitation of Black feminism only to both erase them from the theoretical force of her purview" (141). Such use, Terrefe maintains, goes hand in hand with the erasure of the particularities of black suffering, of blackness and its materiality, as well as the slave and the Native American. Terrefe attributes this erasure to Lugones' inability to theorize the racialization of gender "beyond and despite the dichotomous white/nonwhite, or European/non-European, binary that her version of decolonial feminism posits" (146). Following Terrefe, we can add, that it also results from her omission of class.
33 For an account of Lugones' neglect of slavery in the US, see Terrefe (2020).
34 Pite (2011) shows that the role of Argentine domestic servants in the constitution of the middle-class or elite housewife in the 1950s. Since the early twentieth century, Argentines associated "respectable middle- and upper-class familial status with women who could afford to stay at home and, ideally, supervise lower-class women to assist them" (Pite 2011, 101). The markers of female decency in Argentina, Pite contends, relates to class and race. The modern housewife was white and enjoyed domestic services provided by "indigenous or mixed-race migrants" from northern Argentina and neighboring countries (106).
35 To that end, Davis and James follow Karl Marx's method, which does not purport to bring theory from the abstract to the concrete. Marx's analysis of capitalism does not use abstractions as generalities that detach objects from their historical form freed of social antagonisms and contradictions; rather, he uses them as concepts that grasp real social processes of abstraction. In other words, Marx's economic categories are historical expressions of social relations of production.
36 It is important to highlight, however, that the category of love does not only have a conservative history but also a revolutionary and a feminist one. Theorists and activists, such as James Baldwin (1992), Lauren Berlant (2012), Amilcar Cabral (1973, 1979), Patricia Hill Collins (2004), Fred Hampton (1969), bell hooks (2001, 2002, 2007, 2018), Audre Lorde (2020), among others, analyzed love in relation to class, racism, and slavery and attempt to free it from its bourgeois character.
37 In the late 1980s in the US, offenders could be sentenced to work in a chain gang where they would spend indeed hours (10–12) hours a day breaking rocks with sledgehammers while bound together at the ankles with heavy chains and shackles.
38 See also Bosworth (2004).
39 In describing parapraxes, Freud (1917) cites the following Goethe passage: "Where he makes a jest a problem lies concealed" (38). Following the proposition suggested in n. 7 that Lugones' mention of servants is a form of parapraxes, we can here understand her turn to play as the concealment of the seriousness of the servants' conditions. Lugones knows full well what she cannot bear to know.

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40 Ultimately, perhaps the play Lugones offers is the only one possible in capitalist society, in an alienated world where we indeed do not know each other; alienated, we break rocks, and waste time. But, in an alienated world, whomever we identify with is equally alienated and thus in a condition of servitude. Thus, every identification risks being an identification with servitude that Lugones critiques in the context of her maternal relationship. This raises important and serious questions about Lugones' account as liberatory, which are beyond the scope of the article.
41 An important insight into this is the perspective of servant and slaves that we do have available: nothing in the accounts suggests the desire for a loving attitude on the part of the master but to the desire to end the conditions of servitude.
42 Lugones' image of play can be interpreted as a nostalgic rendering of her childhood. Though she has undeniably had a difficult childhood and life, as she recounts in her work, it is possible that the image of play seeks to capture or recuperate a time where she could afford the necessary time required for leisurely play, afforded on the backs of those subjected to labor. The image of play thus captures dependency without servitude, for which Lugones longs, afforded to the master with servants; it captures the labor of servants that makes play possible. Perhaps this is why she turns to Aristotle, who knew well that free time and leisure requires slaves.
43 This opens up questions about the bourgeois foundations of world-traveling, which I develop in another article.
44 See books 1, 3, and 7 of Aristotle's *Politics* (2017).

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