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It's Time to Abolish Gender: A Cyborg Gen Z's Take

This past Halloween I wanted to sew a dress. I had recently changed my name to Pearl, a change that was an amalgamation from all the bits of media I had consumed in the past few months. My new name came to me in visions and signs. The movie *Pearl* starring Mia Goth struck my heart with iron. I resonated with the main character and her jealousies, her desire for so much, her murderous envy that slayed to be the star. I see her in myself; a part of myself I try to ignore. A part of self that I felt so intensely as a child. How many nights did I spend in a jealous, crazed mood over my middle school nemesis Shua? Shua who knew the tractates of Talmud by heart; Shua who skipped a grade because of his scholarly potential. While Shua progressed, I stayed behind, learning with the kids in my grade. Shua took me to such heights of passion; Shua who introduced me to the delicious high of pulling out one's hair; Shua who slept in the same bed as me, our faces turned to one another, the breath hot and sweet.

Pearl. That part of myself that is the source of so much power and genius; but a part of myself that, if held onto too tightly, ensures my destruction. My growth is contingent on being one pearl of many, one pearl on a necklace, my community and loves pearls from oysters, our guts bisected and bifurcated by string, tied together as a unit - a unit of power - to be worn on the neck of God. Pearl who is not a man. Pearl who lives in what Sandy Stone calls the "intertextual possibilities of the transgender body" (Stone 166). Pearl, who is not really human, but something else, a "chimera, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short... cyborgs"

(Haraway 104). I sought to reproduce the dress from Ti West's *Pearl*. I found myself cobbling on the cobbles of Cobble Hill, Brooklyn; I found the fabric shop, I bought the fabric, I had no idea what I was to do. In a moment of Pearl pride, I did not confess I had no idea how to sew a dress. I just bought the fabric. Seventy dollars. They knew I had no idea what I was doing, but a sale is a sale, and if someone has the blinding pride of the fool, one can make a pretty penny in the city of capital.

I returned to the cobbles of this rich neighborhood. There is you—my sister, the nanny. I spot you from up the hill, you are walking with your child, the child that you care. You see me too, we rush towards the other, your child asks me, “would you rather die by a rusty knife or a pool of lava.” I choose lava, an instant death. Your child asks my name, I reply Pearl, and the child is confused. I tell the child I use she/her pronouns as well as they/them. The child is even more confused. It is getting late, the child must go home - you must feed the child. As we part, I hear you say, “well, it’s sort of like how you chose your own name.” The child is named B, this is not their original name. I think, “when did this child choose their gender? Has their gender not been forced upon them?” My aunt chides that you cannot know that a child is trans until they say it for themselves. But how can we be so sure that a child is a boy, or a girl, until they have said it themselves?

When I was a child, a series of invisible forces were acting upon my body. These forces had a source that I was unaware of until knowledge and education. Until someone took the time to tell me of the knowledge, I was a very confused child. The knowledge was hidden and obfuscated. But these forces had a name, and their names had histories of power and violence. This is what I have come to know: that the colonizing European powers after a few hundred years have scattered their seed of capital, hierarchy, enclosure, and division. That this

colonization brought their systems of gender and enforced it on colonized peoples. That we are born into a colonial system of gender that is decided on biological sex. That even though sex is highly varied and an infallible thing, with many intersex bodies born amongst the human population (Roughgarden 6), a binary is enforced by the state the moment a baby is born. That if the child comes out of their mother and carries the distinctive hanging flesh of what doctors call “the penis,” the nurses will circle ‘M.’ Male. That if the child comes out of their mother and carries the distinctive flesh of what doctors call “the vagina,” the nurses will circle ‘F.’ Female. Before the baby has a chance to know itself or the parents have a chance to understand their new creature, the state has intervened and set up a binary that the parents have internalized, and over the next few years of development, so will the baby.

This is what I have come to understand, believe, and fight for: that the gender binary must be abolished. That it is too reductive to capture the complexities of human psychology, spirit, and being. This is why gender must be abolished. One: The Western Identity Machine¹ is false in its creation of identities that are opposite hegemonic identity. This collapses gradients of experience into strict binaries that limit the human capacity for exploration and play. The privileging and creation of certain strict, binary identities increases acts of violence against those that do not identify with hegemonic identities and allows the state greater control over bodies. Two: the modern European gender system was created during the transition from feudalism to capitalism in order to increase the primitive accumulation of capital through the absorption of women’s unpaid labor. Three: as noted in reason one, individuals that are outliers in the

¹ In order to clarify what I mean by Western Identity Machine, I will quote hannah baer from *trans girl suicide museum*: “If we lived in a culture with a higher tolerance of ambiguity, rather than obsession with measurement, fixed identity, and knowability, transition wouldn’t be so confounding to people, and the process might be more normal... White supremacist capitalism wants to make a map of everything, and then monetize the ways that things move around on the map” (Baer 132). Western thought is obsessed with categorization as a means for control. Identities become fixed points of data used by capitalist forces in order to commodify and sell. Historical frames of reference are forthcoming later on in this essay, i.e. when dealing with Roughgarden’s research.

constructed state binaries face violence encouraged by the state. The gender system is a system that harms and constructs trans individuals and minoritarian identities (such as women) as villains. Four: throughout history and culture, trans and genderqueer individuals existed, and it is time that Global North communities returned to models that uplifted and celebrated genderqueer identity. Five: Humanity has entered a stage in technology that questions what it means to be a human. We have naturally entered a time of post-humanism, the time of the cyborg. We are all chimeras and this new status of cyborg should cause us to seriously question what it means to have a body in the 21st century.

The colonizing Global North finds itself in a perpetual trend- the uplifting of one identity as hegemonic and superior to others. Behaviors and identities are hierarchized. As Kadji Amin writes, “the Western history of gender-sexuality has been one of the creation, through the method of divergence as a means of managing categorical instability, of increasingly idealized and uninhabitable normative categories, from heterosexual, to cisgender, to binary” (Amin 116). The state, through allegiance with medical, religious, and educational institutions, creates identities deemed normative, and then places a value-judgment of morality on them. State control in Western civilization has been foundational to its existence. I turn to Michel Foucault to understand how the European state began regulating sex.

Foucault wrote extensively about sexuality and the state. As a post-structuralist theorist, he prods at the sutures of society, pulling at the threads, showing the reader through a historical critique of the issue’s consummate parts. According to Foucault on the European Middle Ages, sexuality is a cultural/political discourse that has its origins with the Church Penitentials (Foucault 18-19). The Penitentials were issued as practical guides for confessors when they came to confession. They prescribed the sexual positions that were allowed, on what days sex could be

had, and with whom it was permissible, and with whom it was forbidden (Foucault 19). This rhetoric of sex, dating all the way back to the 7th century, set the trend for “confession of the flesh” (Foucault 19). This trend amplified later on during the Counter Reformation, when the church began to place greater emphasis on the confessional (Foucault 19). During the 19th century, the world of medicine classified archives of “deviant sex” (Foucault 36). This is when the “homosexual” was created (42-43).

Our human obsession with language and the desire to categorize are not liberatory practices - indeed, this is what Foucault uncovers through the invention of the “homosexual.” Our bodies, our desires, and our understanding of ourselves cannot be neatly packaged in language - when they are, a certain violence is committed through the subordination of body and self to a categorical box. This box can then be utilized by the state for subordination and control. If we allow ourselves to move fluidly between sex and gender, something that has been done in the past, something that is not new, we would reach more radical and liberatory ontologies of self.

Indeed, the creation of the “homosexual” has had devastating effects on the history of sexuality. As Amin notes, “homosexuality birthed an idealized heterosexuality,” a heterosexuality that once included the self-acceptance of a man to have sex with “a fairy without any diminishment (and even with a potential enhancement) of his manhood, now heterosexual men who are attracted to trans women may commit acts of extreme transmisogynist violence to protect their heterosexual masculine status” (Amin 111-114). Through the formation of explicit identities that are then regurgitated and codified for capital, the boundaries of sex and pleasure during Late Capitalism become harder and more violent; the binaries reduce to harsh polemics

instead of gradients. The same can be said about transgenderism - Amin argues “transgender birthed an idealized cisgender” (Amin 114). Amin continues:

But how is a gender-typical person to go about developing a relation to their gender-identity? In a context in which most gender-typical people have never had to think about their gender identity, when they look within to find some felt relation to it, they may well draw a blank. When they do find feelings about manhood and womanhood, these feelings are likely to be extremely ambivalent--how could they not be, since these terms are artifacts of patriarchal gender expectations and racialized civilization distinctions? While they may have heard trans people talk about gender dysphoria, they will search in vain for the feeling that indicates cisness. For there is none. The reason is that cisgender--the notion of an alignment so exact between one's personal sense of identity and the gender role assigned to one that there is no rub, no ambivalence, and no sense of constraint--is and has always been a fantasy (Amin 113-114).

Nobody is purely cisgender, just as nobody is purely heterosexual. The Western identity machine creates absolute, idealized binaries. As time progresses and as more identities are added to this list, the idealized binaries that these identities form from hold more power. They become debilitating to all people, those who fit into the normative identities of sexuality and gender as well as those who do not, as their purity becomes deified. What would the expression of human's personal freedom look like if these binaries were understood as infallible? Nobody is binary. It does not exist. It limits the natural human capacity for exploration and play. This self-inflicted violence affects the lives of all social bodies, as violence is enacted on trans people for the sake of preserving one's masculinity; as subliminal desires become anathema and suppressed, creating a ripple effect of violence to one's self and violence towards one's community.

Indeed, trans identity in the early 20th century was not limited by the postwar medical model which cemented a binary vision of transsexuality (Gill-Peterson 60). Trans life would often fall under the term “homosexuality” (Gill-Peterson 61). A distinction existed between the intersex body, diagnosed as “hermaphrodite,” and the non-intersex body who wished for transition, labeled as “homosexual” (Gill-Peterson 60-61). Intersex children were encouraged to undergo operations by plastic surgeons and urologists to cement them more steadily within the binary (Gill-Peterson 59). Trans individuals who exhibited normative sex organs, like a trans man in his mid-thirties who contacted the Brady Institute of John Hopkins in 1959, sought trans affirming care knowing the urologists there performed sex changes for intersexed bodies (Gill Peterson 91). He came in for a breast abscess, a valiant attempt to make the case for top surgery, but the urologist found nothing intersex about his body, and diagnosed him as a transvestite, a new term coined to describe trans people in the 1940s (Gill-Peterson 91). This trans man lived in the 1930s and 1940s as a boy, dressing as a man and performing male-dominated labor, working in the lumber industry (Gill-Peterson 92). A language for trans identity did not exist, had not been invented, and because of this “there were multiple trans childhoods in play in this era, that the definition of transness characterizing children takes a range of differing and competing forms, without any discursive resolution” (Gill Peterson 95). The medical model of transsexuality developed later collapsed trans life to a “singular, binary-driven definition” (Gill-Peterson 95). In the vein of Foucault, this is an example of the medical institutions creating new categories of embodiment in order to exert control; in this case of the transgender body, the Hopkins psychologists conducted interviews in order to “craft a new category of embodiment and psychology called ‘gender’ that, they hoped, might finally achieve a level of control over plasticity, cementing the sex binary once and for all” (Gill Peterson 96).

Language, then, has proved to be a double edged sword. Trans individuals always have had the language to describe their experience, their dysphoria, their inability to perform the normative gender codes placed on them. But the language of identity shares a history with the medical institutions serving the state, and through that service, a flattening has occurred. Instead of understanding the infallibility of mapping systems of performance onto sexed bodies, gender was created by psychologists to cement the sex binary. The trans children of the 1920s to 1940s remind me of what Sandy Stone calls “the possibility of a life grounded in the *intertextual* possibilities of the transsexual body” (Stone 166). Denied access to a medical transition, and therefore unable to fully “pass” as the gender of their choice, these children performed their truth without the language of the state defining who they were. They lived in a gender gradient where the reaches of state-sponsored identity could not reach. While they most likely experienced pain due to gender dysphoria as the other still saw them as the gender they did not identify with, I think of Awkward Rich’s question: “what kind of theories would we produce if we noticed pain and, rather than automatically seeking out its source in order to alleviate it, or mining it for resources for perverse or resistant pleasure, we instead took it as a fact of being embodied that is not necessarily loaded with moral weight?” (Awkward Rich 824). I do not advocate for trans individuals not getting access to hormones and the surgeries they desire; instead, I am interested in the experience of these trans children in the early 20th century, and how their embodiment was very different from the trans individual of today. I am curious how they lived with their dysphoria, how they navigated their pain, living in the *intertextual* zone.

Further, Stone responds to Janice Raymond’s TERF (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist) claim “All transsexuals rape women’s bodies by reducing the female form to an artifact” by placing it in the context of the historic literature of trans narratives, which always

fashioned themselves as wanting to pass exactly like a woman in high stylized, gender normative ways (Stone 154-55). A trans narrative that aligns itself closely to strict binaries, Stone critiques this, and calls for a transsexuality that is not interested in passing; that complicates what it means to be a woman or a man or something in between (Stone 166). In this essay, there is a part of myself that wishes Stone went harder on Raymond, instead of rhetorically pivoting to an issue within trans literature. Raymond's TERF stance to "government policy contributed to a decades-long legal exclusion of trans health care from public insurance, inevitably leading to shortened life spans among trans people who were and are disproportionately impoverished" (Awkward Rich 827). Raymond's comments did a world of harm, not only to Stone, but to countless trans people.

While Stone makes explicit that she is not necessarily advocating for a third gender, she is hoping to form a *genre* of trans experience (Stone 165). Intertextuality implies a negotiation of the "troubling and productive permeabilities of boundary and subject position" (Stone 166). This means letting go of the "wrong body" language that was foundational to describing the transsexual experience in the 1950s and onwards (Stone 166). Pride over "incongruent" and intertextual bodies should be foregrounded as well. The self-pathologizing that many trans people had to do in order to receive care from medical institutions was a necessary but harmful act, and now it is time that the trans community push back against such narratives. Stone writes, "under the binary phallographic founding myth by which Western bodies and subjects are authorized, only one body per gendered subject is "right." All other bodies are wrong" (Stone 166). Having a body that can be read in many ways is a power, a radical act of intertextuality. The obsession to "pass" limits trans people to the binary, a binary that does not exist; it is a fabricated fiction by the state. The Western identity machine limits expression to binaries of

normative and non-normative identity, limiting the capacity for exploration and play. If gender is abolished, humans will reach a more liberated epistemology that is not as anal retentive about identity. Concepts such as “non-normative identity” will cease to exist, and the violence towards these individuals will decrease as well.

Gender must also be abolished due to its oppressive history of violence towards women. How was gender, as we know it in Western Civilization, constructed? Why was the sex binary associated with certain gendered traits? In her remarkable book of gender theory, Silvia Federici documents the creation of modern gender through the transition of feudalism to capitalism. A Marxist theorist in the vein of Foucault, she writes extensively on the role of women in the worker uprisings against the feudal lords of medieval Europe. She writes about the witches actively resisting enclosure, and how they, along with the workers in the feudal uprisings, were called “villains” by the feudal lords (Federici 101). Enclosure was the process of privatizing land that lay the groundwork for capitalism in the transition from Feudalism. Federici writes that Feudalism was under attack, and in order for the feudal lords to maintain their power and control over their workers, Feudalism had to be phased out for a new economic system that would stymie the worker rebellions. The answer: capitalism.

In order for capitalism to work, Federici writes that “the continuous expulsion of farmers from the land, war and plunder on a world scale, and the degradation of women are necessary conditions for the existence of capitalism” (Federici 13). This is “primitive accumulation,” a term coined by Marx in *Capital* Vol. 1 “to characterize the historical process upon which the development of capitalist relations was premised” (Federici 12). A relation exists between the witch-hunt, which happened concurrently to the rise of capitalism, and the development of a new sexual division of labor confining women to reproductive work that was paid little to none; a

labor devalued and a labor that helped capital's gains flourish (Federici 14). So gender, according to Federici, was created in order to strengthen patriarchy and capital, resorting women to a place of diminished power.

Gender, then, is a violent fiction stemming from state control. Much like homosexuality, gender is a creation by the state in order to control the flesh. What would it mean if we lived in a world that did not have the language for gender and sexuality? Andrea Abi-Karam is a radical trans-masc poet that engages with this violence and fiction in their newest collection *Villainy*. They argue for a radical unbecoming of gender, sexuality, and society. They decry the state and its violence. They write “THE END OF FASCISM LOOKS LIKE CENTURIES OF QUEERS/ DANCING ON THE GRAVE OF/ 1.) CAPITALISM/ 2.) THE STATE/ 3.) COLONIALISM/ 4.) NAZIS/ 5.) RACISM/ 6.) OPPRESSION” (Abi-Karam 1). This section in particular is a riff on the manifesto, which is a way for queer and femme individuals to assert themselves as subject of their own history, not as passive objects that patriarchal society often fashions them as. The speaker of this poem directly addresses the state and Nazis and the histories of capitalism, which include colonialism, racism, and oppression. The speaker is in direct dialog to these institutions that Foucault and Federici enumerate on. Through direct address to the state, through punk typography and diction, through the shameless enunciation and celebration of their body and their sex, Abi-Karam subverts the centuries old history of state oppression and state sponsored shame, of state othering of queer and trans bodies.

Abi-Karam, then, writes about collective freedom and the need to coalesce as a community towards emancipation in the face of state violence, an emancipation that will occur through *unbecoming*. They write, “*imagine the possibility of singularity unbecoming/ imagine the possibility of unbecoming*” (Abi-Karam 33). Karam underscores the importance of the

unraveling of individualism. To “unbecome,” to unlearn all the toxic forces that have molded us-
Karam presses the reader to tap into radical imagination. However, the poem continues, and
Abi-Karam reconciles with the fascism and state violence the trans body must face every day:

It is imagined because

A nazi who shot a protester in seattle is let out of jail within a couple days

It is imagined because

A bounty is placed on the head of the person who punched Richard Spencer on J20

It is imagined because

The gay face of the alt right is coming to Berekeley next week

It is imagined because

Civil disobedience just got banned in 5 states

It is imagined because

A mosque got torched in seattle on MLK day

It is imagined because

They have the \$\$ to take us all down

It is imagined because

A bulletproof vest costs 400-700\$ (Abi-Karam 33-34).

The state supports the seed of Nazism, of white supremacy. The state banned Civil Disobedience. Violence against Muslims is rampant. Karam balances their imagination with the real, urgent issue of fascism in this country. “They have the \$\$ to take us all down,” they write. We cannot unbecome as a collective because “we have yet to articulate a collective desire” (Abi-Karam 35). While that collective desire for some, like myself, is the abolition of gender, the abolition of prisons, this “we” is too disparate, too many threads exist. Karam reflects on how much trauma

their body can take in this fight; what their boundaries are in this war against the state. They write, “I think about the limits of what I will & will not do in order to stop this/ I have the limits of/ what my body is capable of / what my body can/ withstand/ how much trauma I can absorb” (Abi-Karam 36). The body can only handle so much; the body keeps the score.

Moreover, Abi-Karam reflects on state surveillance. They write, “I put a rush on my FBI file b/c I need to know where I stand in all of this” (Abi-Karam 37). The fear and paranoia the speaker experiences, the need to know what the state has on them, reflects a time where increasing surveillance threatens the safety and autonomy of individuals, especially those that do not fit into “normative,” hegemonic identities. This paranoia experienced by minoritarian groups exists and is unethical. An obsession takes over the speaker, as they remark, “I scroll through correspondence from ex friends before I delete them/ I scroll through correspondence from ex friends that I did performances with before I save the photos & delete the text/ I scroll through correspondence for the dead & can’t bring myself to delete them” (Abi-Karam 41). The allusion to the dead marks a community that struggles; indeed, the trans and queer community deals with many types of death. The speaker desires to leave no mark on the internet during the age of surveillance because they know that anything can be used against them. This paranoia debilitates. But it is real, and it is important for the speaker to stay safe when white supremacists want you dead and the state is the reason why the white supremacists exist.

The state, then, constructs trans individuals as the villain, like the European state constructed witches as villains during the transition to capitalism. Abi Karam knows that they are constructed as a villain, as a freak, as a monster that upsets the “good,” unattainable binary of cisness and heterosexuality. They write

A nation built up like a secret everyone knows

A nation built up like power washers that clean cum off the sidewalk

A nation built up against a simple villain

I am the villain.

But how dare u think me to be simple (Abi Karam 43)

Karam pushes back against the villain identity imposed on them by the state/nation. They critique the two-dimensionality of constructing a villain as scapegoat, but they also find power in identifying as a villain. It's the simplicity of the villain narrative they object. They also critique the state and its violence - how it covers up its secrets like sexual fluids that the machine washes away. The secrets will never be removed however because "everyone knows" they exist. Gender is violence because it constructs those who do not belong to the hegemonic, normative identity as a villain or as irrational. This violence needs to be accounted for; the violence is reason enough for gender to be abolished, as well as the state, for the state encourages the violence to be done.

Trans poetics, then, is a space of radical imagination. It is a utopian project. Indeed, that is the trans ethos - reaching a liberated epistemology and ontology through imaginative conscious building. Abi-Karam and Kay Gabriel begin their essay with "we're writing at a juncture of crisis--of longstanding roots and rapid progression, deeply embedded in economy and ecology and palpably felt at the level of everyday life... poetry bears on the project of imagining and making actual a totally inverted world (Abi-Karam, Gabriel 1-2). Trans poetics roots itself in an age of ecocide and revolution, an age where the pendulum finds itself swinging back to a fascism that is stark and insidious. It is overt and covert - whether it be Donald Trump's America or Eric Adam's New York. Trans poetics "invoke *poetics* as a category that can combine aesthetics and politics at once" (Abi-Karam, Gabriel 4). Abi-Karam writes a manifesto in

Villainy, a political and aesthetic treatise about the need to *unbecome*, about the need to *abolish*, about doing this work while the state hunts you and portrays you as the villain.

Gender must be abolished, then, as the state uses it as a tool to scapegoat individuals. Those who toy with gender and its plasticity are a threat to the state and its power. Because of this, the state encourages or ignores violence done on trans' bodies and women's bodies. State-sanctioned violence against women and trans bodies can be traced to the medieval times, as discussed above. A state that encourages or permits violence is a false state, and must be overthrown. My hope is that in the new state, the system of gender as we know it is abolished. Bodily expression amongst humans will always be diverse, but no standards should ever be enforced, and standards based on biological sex should remain highly suspect.

Gender and sexual variation have been etched into the fabric of our natural world for years. It is a hidden history, a history that has been erased over and over again by the colonizing state. We are told to be trans is to be unnatural, to be gay is to be unnatural. But as Roughgarden writes in her book *Evolution's Rainbow*, countless examples exist across time and culture of trans and nonbinary identities being cherished as an integral part of the community. Take for example the indigenous American peoples and the two-spirit identity (Roughgarden 330). Two-spirited peoples held an important position in Indigenous American culture, as artists, weavers, healers, and warriors (Roughgarden 330-335). In religious liturgy, two-spirit people were important deities, as the Navajo believed the survival of their community was contingent on the ingenuity of two-spirit people (Roughgarden 331). Examples exist of two-spirited female-bodied warriors who participated in manly pursuits and had a voice at the Chief Council (Roughgarden 333-334). Many of these two-spirit warriors who would dress like the male members of society were married to women (Roughgarden 334). Osh-Tisch, a two-spirit woman who belonged to the

Crow tribe, was a shaman, artist, and medicine-woman (Roughgarden 331). While she had male sexual organs, she did womens' work and wore womens' clothes and was attracted to men (Roughgarden 331). As Roughgarden writes, "two-spirit people do not 'pass' physically as members of the gender they identify with--their bodily state is known to everyone. A two-spirited woman is accepted as a woman, however, even though she is generally larger than a one-spirited woman and can't breastfeed" (Roughgarden 331). Osh-Tisch, like other two-spirit women, would sometimes be enlisted to fight due to her body height and strength (Roughgarden 331). When a Bureau of Indian Affairs agent from the settler-colonialist United States tried to interfere with Osh-Tisch, forcing her to cut her hair and wear men's clothes, the chief of the Crow Nation told the agent to leave (Roughgarden 332). This is a telling story, because it shows how deeply the indigenous Americans cared for their two-spirit community members, while also underlining the violence of the colonizing Global North nations in the realm of gender and sexuality.

Two-spirits, however, do not need to present as gender-variant in order to be considered two-spirit. Take, for example, the Navajo two-spirit Hastín Klah, who was not outwardly gender-variant (Roughgarden 332). He dressed in men's clothes but was considered two-spirit because he wove blankets (women's work) and was romantically interested in men (Roughgarden 332). The two-spirit category, as Roughgarden writes, "spans people who in Western society probably would identify as lesbian, gay, or transgendered" (334). The language between cultures is different, and this is significant. By collapsing the language to encapsulate many identities as in the case of two-spirit, it creates a richer fodder for *intertextual possibilities* and the varied genres Stone advocates for.

Clearly it is Western civilization that takes issue with trans ways of being. Indeed, when the Spanish conquistadors of the 1500s came to the Americas, they brutally killed and attacked two-spirit people (Roughgarden 335). The rationale behind Catholic Spaniards' colonization revolved around the "rational," which they defined as "possessing a combination of reason, intelligence, and morality, as defined by the Catholic Church" (Roughgarden 335). Homosexual behavior would be "irrefutable evidence of irrationality," so "the Spanish explorers had a vested interest in establishing that gender-variant people practiced same-sex sexuality, thereby justifying their conquest" (Roughgarden 335-336). While this violence angers and disturbs me, I find these alternative histories inspiring. It reminds me that humanity has loved and accepted in the past, and that it can be once again. Indeed, it happens today with the indigenous communities here in America that continue to survive and fight, and amongst the queer communities throughout the United States that continue to be, unapologetically, themselves.

Gender is a social construct. The gender we experience in the colonized European world is a social construct created from the violent history of colonialism and capitalism. While it may seem natural and easy to organize society around biological sex, something found in all societies and cultures throughout history (but performed in different ways), in today's world of technology, it is simply too reductive and ineffective. As Donna Haraway writes, "by the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology" (Haraway 104). In the technological epoch we find ourselves in now, many of us have reached the status of post-human. My iPhone is now an extension of my consciousness and being. The radiation that spills from it into my pores hijacks my body and brain. The microplastics I consume every day makes me something post-human - I am biological matter mixed with synthetic. "The cyborg is a

creature in a post-gender world;” Haraway writes, “it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity” (Haraway 104). “The cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate... the cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family,” the cyborg is a new ontology that contains its own, new epistemological concerns (Haraway 105). In this new age, what does it mean to be human? Cochlear implants, titanium knees, animal hearts, technologies that have become important extensions and guides to our consciousness - the “human” experience of today resembles little of the human experience 200 years ago. With this understanding that the human is changing, we should accept that some epistemologies can go out the window, like our insistence that modern binary gender (with its fraught, fraught history) is a needed way of societal organization. As Haraway writes, “there is nothing about being ‘female’ that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as ‘being’ female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices” (Haraway 107). The same applies to “male.” As we move deeper into the 21st century, gender becomes more of an outdated human invention that applies little to nothing onto our post-human bodies.

Therefore, gender must be abolished. I see no use for this system, except the privileging of certain subjects over others by the state so it can continue to exert control through the threat of violence. Cisgender does not exist, just like heterosexual does not exist. Once we allow ourselves to experience the vast spectrum of expression, words like heterosexual and cisgender will become obsolete. We are all nonbinary. We are all pansexual. The state does not want you to realize this. One final note - to be trans begins with the mind. It does not begin or end with

“passing.” It begins with a heightened sense of consciousness. It begins with an understanding that gender is a construction, and you can break that construction. You can live liberated from it. As long as you imagine yourself as more than your assigned gender at birth, I don't care how you present. You are trans, and you will make decisions, however fast, however slow, that will dance in the “intertextual possibilities” as Stone writes.

When I think about language and its ties to identity, I think about its comfort and its limitations

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