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TRANSCENDING PLACE IN BODIES:

QUEER FEELING IN INDIGENOUS & LATINX WOMEN'S WRITING

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Abstract

Transcending Place in Bodies: Queer Feeling

in Indigenous & Latinx Women's Writing

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This paper considers the works of poets Deborah A. Miranda and Natalie Diaz, from what is now known as the U.S. West and Southwest. I argue that their explorations of feeling at a corporeal level work to map newly imagined definitions of selfhood and geography, separate from the restrictions of federally constructed notions of Indigeneity and the erasures that occur in nationally constructed ideas of mestizaje. By reading their poetry as a language of queer feeling, I argue that they communicate a bodily knowledge that translates itself through the erotic. Through this intimate realm, Diaz and Miranda create new modes of defining place beyond the familiarity of their native California and Arizona, respectively. Both also consider new explorations of Indigenous identity and the decolonial possibility while challenging universal notions of space, time, and language that work to erase their own histories and lived experiences.

Introduction

"…poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action."
-"Poetry is Not a Luxury" Audre Lorde

In Mojave, we believe that language is an energy, a verb, a happening. It has the power to change a moment, to incite movement, to resist, or to confirm. It is prophetic in many ways – what we can say, we are never far from enacting, for better or worse. Language is one of the body's many technologies, a sensuality too. To speak is to touch an other, to carry yourself to them. I've never believed more in the power of language…Its power to deliver violence or joy. Poetry, for example, is one way I have learned to love myself best. As a Mojave and an Oodtham, from a reservation that was once a military fort and eventually a boarding school – language, the English language in particular, has been the way I and my community have been injured most violently. It is a lucky thing to have learned this paradox. Language, at once, can be violent; at once can be tender.

-Natalie Diaz reading at Arizona State University 2018

Shifting from Sovereignty of Land to the Body

At a recent talk, poet Natalie Diaz delivered a 2018 commencement speech to her students at Arizona State University. A creative writing instructor at the institution, Diaz discusses risk, inclusivity, exclusivity, and offers both light-hearted and encouraging words to the graduating class. She quietly and calmly delivers powerful readings of her

poetry, which deal with statistical data on the violence and health risks present for Native populations living on reservations. But the most interesting part of her speech is in her theorization of language, quoted above. Introducing herself hastily in Mojave, Spanish, and then English, she delves quickly into her ruminations while thinking about the connecting and erotic power of language when it is spoken. According to Diaz, language has the ability to both connect individuals and to wreak violence on them. She recognizes that language has acted as a tool of colonialism and of empire, historically and systematically marginalizing Indigenous populations in the Americas. Most worth pausing to reflect on is that Diaz does not choose to refer to language universally. Those that know the Mojave language, she states, believe that it is "an energy, a verb, a happening." To think of language as a technology or a tool that communicates energy leads me into a line of questions that will inform this project. But before I begin to address those questions, it is important to point out that Diaz immediately makes a distinction between Mojave and English. Mojave – not English, or Spanish, or a homogenized idea of all languages – is defined as a "an energy, a verb, a happening." The emphasis, for Diaz, is not placed on language itself but rather on how language is used. She does not focus on Mojave as a language that is somehow better than English, but rather names the ways in which the English language has acted as tool of colonialism and empire. When it is not used to subdue and erase populations, there is great potential for what language might communicate. By focusing on the possibilities of language, the "energy" that it might communicate, Diaz begins to theorize a poetics of corporeal feeling – one that is not materialized by language but by action and embodiment. In this paper, I consider Diaz' efforts of recovery, not solely as a speaker of her Native language

of Mojave, but as her text shows what I call corporeal knowledge, a bodily way of knowing and understanding the world.

This paper thinks about the possibilities for the decoloniality of language through Indigenous feeling by looking at the creative work of two mixed Indigenous women writers, Natalie Diaz and Deborah A. Miranda. In order to do this, I think through these poets as producing alternative ways of knowing and being while challenging the spatial boundaries of the settler nation-state through corporeal knowledge which emerges from the body. By focusing inward as they develop their own understandings of language and its capabilites, both queer perceptions of time and space while questioning the stability and universality of imagined borders. Reading my primary texts as theoretical approaches to non-Western feeling, I develop my argument that these poets explore layered colonialisms and alternative spatiotemporalities through the pluralization of time, space, and language; in so doing, they inform increasingly new and fluid definitions of Indigeneity, mestizaje, and sexuality which challenge definitions made by settler nation-states.

To begin to think about a contemporary Indigenous poetics, the theoretical frames of this thesis come out of the intersections of queer Indigenous studies, decolonial theory, and women of color feminism. As settler colonial thinker Patrick Wolfe has defined it in his 2006 article "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the Native", settler colonialism is an ongoing, multi-layered and continuous process - not a single event.[1] Through this idea, I further interrogate the temporal and spatial pressures

[1] For more on Wolfe's development of the term, see also *Settler colonialism and The Transformation of Anthropology* (1999).

of land-based identity within the writing of Diaz and Miranda both of whose works bring up questions about the intersection of mestizo and Indigenous peoples of the U.S. West and Southwest territories.

In the field of Native/Indigenous studies (resulting out of settler colonial critiques) there has been a shift from sovereignty of land to alternate kinds of autonomy that unsettle the nation-state, in particular for those Indigenous peoples with no claims or official associations to their tribally-affiliated lands. For instance, in his 2014 book *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition,* political scientist Glen Coulthard argues that with the institution of colonialism in the Americas, "colonial rule…rests on the ability to entice Indigenous peoples to *identify*, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly *assymetrical* and *nonreciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the settler state and society." (25) Promises to land rights are usually what entice Indigenous peoples to identify according to state/federal recognition. This forces them to adhere to settler colonial logics, perpetuating universalized notions of spatiotemporality and language.

Because land is the focal identifier of U.S. and Canadian Indigeneity (according to federal laws), this brings up the question of authenticity. When these complicated standards of authenticity arise, Indigenous peoples are forced to perform in order to become counted as "real." In response to these problematic notions of Indigenous authenticity, a different methodological approach has emerged out of queer approaches to settler colonial critiques. In their 2006 anthology *Queer Indigenous Studies Critical Intervention in Theory, Politics, and Literature,* editors Driskill, Finley, Gilley, and Morgensen call for queer approaches to Indigenous studies, a "methodological turn to Indigenous

knowledges [which] opens up accounts to the multiplicity, complexity, contestation, and change among knowledge claims by Indigenous people. (4) Driskill et al call for a wider scope to include different perspectival orientations towards understanding Indigenous knowledge. At stake in their proposal is the centering of Indigenous knowledge by Indigenous thinkers, writer, poets, activists, thinking of theory that emerges out of the everyday. Their proposed shift also aspires to further critiques of settler colonialism by including GLBTQ2 Native/Indigenous studies of gender and sexuality. [2] While Diaz and Miranda do not always center their own gender and sexuality in their writing, it is in their consideration of what is erotic that space and time are "queered" through language – by making it unfamiliar. In doing so, their writing transcends settler colonial definitions of belonging and nationhood by focusing instead on an individual idea of sovereignty as felt through the body which opens boundaries as opposed to enclosing them.

To sharpen an understanding for this methodology, I call attention to Sara Ahmed's idea on how queer orientation helps to discover new directions and perceptions of being. In her 2006 book, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Ahmed thinks about spatiality and the orientation of bodies and objects, asserting that the ways we position ourselves in different directions or orientations might allow us to encounter new ways of being and knowing across space and time. I think about how different

[2] Driskill et al remain invested in the ambiguity of gender and sexuality that the word queer represents. Two-Spirit is a term developed by queer Indigenous peoples of Canada and the United States who also identify according to tribally specific terms in their Indigenous languages. "When linked, *queer* and *Two-Spirit* invite critiquing heteronormativity as a colonial project and decolonizing Indigenous knowledge of gender and sexuality as one result of that critique" (*Queer Indigenous Studies* 3) For more on the trajectory of the term see also pp.13-18.

spatial orientations allow Diaz and Miranda to rethink and reshape their understanding of place. Thinking of the way that migrating bodies are disoriented and reoriented as they move into new and unfamiliar spaces. She describes how certain bodies are thought of as "out of place" even though those who are accepted as belonging must have arrived at some point in time.

> The disorientation of the sense of home, as the 'out of place' or 'out of line' effect of unsettling arrivals, involves what we would call a migrant orientation. This orientation might be described as the lived experience of facing at least two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home. (10)

While Ahmed considers diasporic subjects in her book, I find it relevant to extend those ideas to think of the temporal, spatial, and linguistic ways in which Indigenous populations have been displaced. In the following chapters, I consider how both Diaz and Miranda rethink spatiality both in terms of their own bodies, as well as in the mapped and borders space they recognize as "home." Miranda embarks on a recovery project in order to learn about her tribal history, while Diaz rethinks home as a way of rejecting the colonial and imperial violence she knows from growing up on the reservation. While both reshape what they know as home in different ways, what interests me is in the process through which this happens. Ahmed goes on to state that if "orientation is about making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space, then disorientation occurs when that extension fails." (11) I take up this same interest in the process that is disorienting and reorienting space for Diaz and Miranda arguing that it happens through their sexuality, a reclaimed erotic and intimately internal

realm that becomes externalized in its materialization as writing. While I call their writing queer, I do not necessarily focus on their queer sexuality or imply that their writing is queer simply because both sexually identify as lesbian and/or queer. By inhabiting newly defined and imagined, Diaz and Miranda queer space by creating different perceptions of home.

Native studies scholar Qwo-Li Driskill proposes an intervention in the field of Native/Indigenous studies with queer critiques of settler colonialism, conceptualizing the erotic as a site for decolonial possibility. In doing so, s/he calls for the furthering of a potential for a new kind of collective sovereignty, in rejection of a heteropatriarchal and heteronormative settler nation-state. (Driskill "Stolen from Our Bodies") [3] In his 2012 book *The Erotics of Sovereignty: Queer Native Writing in the Era of Self-Determination,* Native studies scholar Mark Rifkin thinks through the idea of the queer erotic as a path towards a new kind of selfhood. In his investigation of queer Native writers, Rifkin imagines the ways in which queer Indigenous sexuality opens up new individual understandings of selfhood.

The possibility for new definitions of Indigenous sovereignty and selfhood, along different perceptions of space, time, and language comes out of Glen Coulthard's critical concern, which primarily has to do with the limitations of federal recognition for Indigenous peoples of the United States and Canada, as well as challenging settler colonial logics of temporality. In his 2016 book *Beyond Settler Time*, Mark Rifkin pushes

[3] Driskill goes by pronouns s/he and hir. These are gender neutral pronouns used for those who identify as Two-Spirit.

against a universal understanding of temporality, arguing that multiple universes are made more visible when other understandings of time are considered.

> If one's perception of the world might be quite different depending on where one turns, we might understand the paths traced out by one's orientations – following those particular paths in those specific ways – as giving rise to a kind of temporality, qualitatively distinguishable from other experiences of time… Developing such notions of temporal orientation and multiplicity opens the potential for conceptualizing Native continuity and change in ways that move beyond the modern/traditional binary; that do not take non-native frameworks as the self-evident basis for approaching Indigenous forms of persistence, adaptation, and innovation; and that enable consideration of temporal sovereignty, how sensations and articulations of time take part in Indigenous peoples' operation as polities and their pursuit of self-determination.
>
> (*Beyond Settler Time* 3)

When Rifkin refers to temporal sovereignty as "sensations and articulations of time," he already begins to challenge the notion of universal time. That is, different perceptions and experiences of time are important to projects of unsettling settler colonialism because they offer alternate knowledges and ways of being. While Western notions of time have tended to maintain the limiting binary of modern/traditional, Indigenous temporalities have existed with the knowledge of those limitations while also maintaining their own understanding of time as something that is "felt." As the chapters will show, poets Diaz and Miranda both consider their own marginalization along temporal lines as Indigenous peoples considered "extinct."

In order to consider how space is reordered and reimagined, I turn to Mishuana Goeman's 2013 book *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations.* In it, she contends that Native women's writing allows us to witness the fluidity of the social structures of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Arguing that empire building is a masculine colonial project, she seeks to think about the ways in which story and women's writing subvert colonial structures by alternatively mapping spatiality as it pertains to the constructions of nations and borders. In addition, "colonialism is not just about conquering Native lands through mapping new ownerships, but it is also about the conquest of bodies, particularly women's bodies through sexual violence, and about recreating gendered relationships" (33). Like Goeman, I intend to continue a line of scholarship that further questions the parallels between how land and bodies inhabiting land are conquered through colonial structures of power.

My first question, then, is what would be this process of turning in a different direction and towards changing perspectives that challenge universalized settler colonial notions of time? Throughout this thesis, I argue that Diaz and Miranda turn inward towards feeling as a way of knowing and then communicating. What is required for them to realize that doing so enacts gestures towards the decolonial? To think of the significant role that gendered and sexual violence have played in colonialism and in the masculine project of nation-building, I am interested in the ways that Diaz and Miranda imagine sex as the site for decolonial possibility. I am interested in taking that idea further to think about these writers' conceptions of their own corporealities to defy the ways in which they map feeling according to alternate spatiotemporalities.

I develop a similar approach to Rifkin's in order to continue thinking about the constantly shifting nature of nationhood, borders, and perceived identity. It is from Rifkin's interest of the limiting binary of real/unreal, material/non-material that I begin my own investigation of feeling transmitted as knowledge according to the body. While Rifkin does an extensive psychoanalytic reading of Miranda's poetry through loss, trauma, and memory, I take a slightly different approach by furthering his questions of the erotic as a mode of materialization for Indigenous feeling. This paper is also interested in the exploration of gender and sexuality in the writings of Miranda and Diaz, the ways in which they undo the geopolitical mapping and bordering of space.

While Diaz and Miranda are two poets who happen to also be scholars and university professors, I refer to them as writers throughout this paper. [4] At the risk of speculating, I find it likely to assume that they have studied Indigenous theory and other fields of academic thought concerning decolonization and decoloniality. However, I do not focus primarily on their scholarly work. Instead, I center their creative work as exemplary of an already-existent epistemology emerging from an internal and bodily places of feeling. For the sake of clarity, it also worth mentioning that I refer to the speakers of their poetry as Diaz and Miranda. While Miranda's memoir *Bad Indians* is easily interpretable as autobiographical, her collection of poetry *The Zen of La Llorona* and Diaz' *When My Brother Was an Aztec* both bring up the question of whether it is fair for me to treat their poetry as autobiographical. I fully acknowledge that creative liberties

[4] Natalie Diaz teaches creative writing at Arizona State University and holds an MFA in Poetry and Fiction. Deborah Miranda is a Professor of English at Washington and Lee University and holds a PhD in English.

could certainly have been taken within their collections of poetry and do not mean to interpret their poetry as autobiography. But, in order to maintain the idea that these writers produce knowledge that is already theoretical in their creative work, I refer to the speakers as Miranda and Diaz themselves. In other words, I consider the writings of these poets as theoretical approaches to corporeal feeling, as queer approaches to unsettling settler colonial time and space.

The first chapter is on poet Natalie Diaz, of Mojave and Oodtham descent, and an enrolled member of the Gila River Indian community. In her 2012 debut collection *When My Brother Was an Aztec*, Diaz reckons with her experiences of the changing dimensions of space and time through language. An avid supporter of language recovery, Diaz inhabits a world where language, time, and space are pluralized to include difference without erasing or blending it. Writing in Mojave, Spanish, and English, she writes from a place of invisibility made visible. From early memories of life on the reservation to the Arizona desert, Diaz' collection works to decenter a central place. While she pluralizes space in order to reconsider the places that she knows as home, she employs language as a tool that portrays the embodiment of feeling – what I call corporeal knowledge – which exists at a corporeal level. Writing in colonial and imperial languages – English and Spanish - I argue that Diaz enacts decoloniality in her imaginings across time and space, delayering and revealing coloniality in its many forms.

The second chapter is on writer and scholar Deborah Miranda, an enrolled member of the Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen Nation of California. I closely read her cross-genre memoir *Bad Indians* (2012) alongside her collection *The Zen of La Llorona* (2005). Miranda's memoir offers a spatial, temporal, and linguistic alternative to the often

historicized complacent and peaceful depiction of California missions. It is my argument that in the recovering of her family history, Miranda forges a new spatial and temporal understanding of California and a different kind of selfhood, evident in both *Bad Indians* and *The Zen of La Llorona*. By confronting wounds of the past in her own personal history as well as the collective history of Esselen & Chumash peoples, Miranda thinks of healing as something made possible when those wounds are made visible. Through the erotic and her own theorizations alongside other scholars' concepts that Miranda develops her own practice of decolonial sexuality, as a way of reimagining borders and limitations and healing through a bodily way of knowing.

As I will later argue, Audre Lorde's imaginings on the possibilities within the erotic are foundational to Deborah Miranda's. I found it fitting to introduce Lorde's ideas on poetry in the epigraph to this introduction and paper. While I don't set out to answer the question of what poetry as a genre is accomplishing in these works, I lead with her theorizations on writing as political act, which begins the genealogy of thinking on the erotic that I consider here. Imagining that language allows ideas to be made "tangible," Lorde solidifies the power of language, in particular for those whose voices have not been heard. As the following chapters will show, I am interested in thinking further about how seemingly intangible feelings come to be understood as knowledge. When this is realized, then a decolonial sexuality can be enacted, allowing the erotic self to be awakened. Through the self-subjectivity in their writing and the re-imagining of space in relation to their sexuality (erotic space), both writers offer new kind of poetics emerging out of the complex intersections of contemporary Indigenous and Latinx women's writing.

Chapter One

Finding the (De)coloniality of Language in Natalie Diaz's *When My Brother was an Aztec*

> My brother finally showed up asking why
> he hadn't been invited and who baked the cake.
> He told me I shouldn't smile, that this whole party was shit
> because I'd imagined it all. The worst part he said was
> he was still alive. The worst part he said was
> he wasn't even dead. I think he's right, but maybe
> the worst part is that I'm still imagining the party, maybe
> the worst part is that I can still taste the cake. (Diaz 69-70)

In this poem titled "No More Cake Here", Natalie Diaz recounts the funeral of her brother as a memorial service turned celebration, turned confrontation. The party is filled with images of balloons spilling out the front door every time someone enters, hired clowns running around while playing toy bugles, one hundred guests in attendance, each of whom takes a turn licking the cake bowl with their fingers. In the final stanza, Diaz' brother mischievously returns only to inform everyone that he was never actually dead.

At times hilarious, light-hearted and playful, the tone in this particular poem is one that weighs just as heavily against the violence of displacement in her 2012 debut collection *When My Brother Was an Aztec*. Balancing the playfulness of her magical and surreal imagery with the weight of addressing the turbulences of her family life and

childhood, the collection quietly unfolds as an exploration of multiplicities of place, temporality, and language. While the individual voice of Diaz bears the weight of a brother struggling through an addiction to crystal methamphetamine, the collective voice that emerges is one that grapples with the spatial and temporal tensions existing in the past and present for contemporary mixed and Indigenous peoples of the U.S. Southwest. An enrolled member of the Gila River Indian Community, of Mojave tribal ancestry, and mestiza, Diaz explores questions of identity at the intersection of mestizaje and Indigeneity, while furthering pluralized notions of the space, time, and language.

In this chapter, I think about how Diaz' use of language develops a poetics of feeling from the body that emerges onto the pages of her collection. While it is useful to consider the multilingualism in her work, I focus on how the pluralization of space and time allows her to recover a voice lost to the coloniality of the English language. I argue that by multiplying space, time, and language in her poetry, Diaz decentralizes central knowledge, while opening up the boundaries of bordered space, universal time, and monolingualism. As one of the main subjects of her collection, the dominant and ominous figure of her brother brings to attention the friction between multiple temporalities as an Aztec with historical associations to the past yet who continuously haunts those living in the present. Arguing through Walter Mignolo's ideas on decoloniality, I consider how Diaz opens up a poetics of corporeal knowledge within the space of the poem, by materializing feeling before it becomes written. Since she writes in the English language, Diaz demands visibility within a colonial structure, while also making different ontological and epistemic notions of space, time, and language known. She does so by reshaping the known borders of both place and its importance for

identity, questioning the heteropatriarchy of settler nation-state building through her brother, and theorizations on language as extensions of embodied feeling.

In a 2018 interview given by Diaz with *Sampsonia Way Magazine* titled "Back to the Body", Diaz discusses her interest in thinking beyond what she perceives to be the limitations of language. When prompted to discuss what lexicon means to her, she responds:

> I think I'm still trying to figure out what that landscape is, and also trying to defamiliarize the word lexicon, to let it be something new. Usually when you think of lexicon it's just that vocabulary list. Considering that my tribe's language was silenced for so long, what I realized, through my language work, is that people had collected those vocabulary lists, our Mojave lexicon, and then left with it. They went to their universities and left our bodies behind…I think I am always trying to return back to the body because as an indigenous person, as a Latina, as a queer woman, I haven't been given the permission or the space, to be fully in my body. Things like pleasures, and the autonomy of pleasure and ecstasy – those things weren't allowed for us. (Meinen 3)

It is from this interview – Diaz' own view of her writing - that I situate the foundation of my own argument of her poetry as a theoretical approach to knowledge based on the body. Considering the ways that she forces both precolonial and imperial languages to come into contact with one another and the embodiment of feeling to transcend place, I build my argument from her later statements regarding language and its limitations. "They went to their universities and left our bodies behind" – a critique of the

exploitation of Indigenous knowledge within academic institutions, Diaz writes from a positionality that has been layered beneath white ways of being and knowing. That is, she writes from the position of having been made invisible to an academic institution as a brown, female, queer person. Since Diaz has been in the academy since 2007 when she earned her first degree, her statement that "they left our bodies behind" implies loss of something in a figure that has been. That loss is arguably what Diaz thinks of as knowledge, in this case being the loss of her Native Mojave language. Nevertheless, Diaz states that she is "always trying to return to the body", to the place she has never been allowed to fully inhabit. So, it is from within that space where language has been lost that she develops a different kind of knowledge. This knowledge emerges from the body, giving possibility to a corporeal sovereignty that has been denied.

In order to think about the ways in which Diaz transcends binarized ways of thinking about the mind and body in this statement, it is useful to trace the trajectory of Western traditions of thought concerning the dichotomization of mind/body. Where they were once separated – the mind given to the realm of reason and logic, with the body given to the realms of the emotional and spiritual – these dichotomies were further complicated with the colonization and modernization of the Americas.

In her 2008 essay "The Coloniality of Gender", Maria Lugones furthers Aníbal Quijano's argument, complicating binarized notions of gender and sexuality in thinking of colonialism and imperial control of the Americas. Arguing through Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, and the work of women of color scholars, Lugones offers that heteronormative Eurocentric notions of gender, race, class, and sexuality would not have provided structures in which non-heteronormative, non-white,

non-cisgender people could be recognized. She proposes a wider lens for Quijano's concept of the "colonial matrix of power", which when expanded would allow room to account for the ways in which gender and sexuality also operate within a racial axis, colonizing female and non gender-conforming people in different ways than male bodies.[5] While I position myself with Lugones, what makes Diaz' poetry interesting is how an Indigenous, Latina, queer woman becomes visible in a language that has acted as a tool of colonialism.

Latin American thinker Walter D. Mignolo's ideas on decoloniality are also foundational to my argument. In "Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality", Mignolo proposes delinking from a modern/colonial Western paradigm of knowledge, which has controlled and subalternized other ways of being and knowing that do not fit into the categories of modern and colonial. According to Mignolo, the "rhetoric of modernity" has universalized knowledge and ways of being since the 1500s and the era of the European Age of Enlightenment. Arguing through Aníbal Quijano's conceptualizations on coloniality and modernity, Mignolo offers that part of the Westernizing project of modernity is to homogenize knowledge and experience under one common "totality that negates, exclude[s], and occlude[s] the difference and the possibilities of other totalities." (Mignolo "Delinking" 451) In order to shift away from this Western paradigm of knowledge, Mignolo proposes an "epistemic shift leading to other-universality, that is, to

[5] For more on Quijano's argument see 2007 article "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America."

pluri-versality as a universal project." (Mignolo "Delinking" 453) It is in this shift away from universalized knowledge and experience – Mignolo's ideas on decoloniality - that I argue that Diaz continues this project of delinking, by making multiple spaces, times, and languages visible in her poetry. Those different worlds come into contact with one another through her use of multilingualism, recovery of voice, and the resituating of place according to embodiment of feeling in the text.

By the final part of her collection, it has become apparent that Diaz's voice has lost itself to the primarily subjected "he", her brother. But though her voice seems as though it has been lost to the narrative of her brother's physical decline, Diaz' voice emerges out of the explored and contradictory layers of space, time, and language. This voice is not silenced by a mestiza narrative or a solely Indigenous one, but is a voice in which all parts of her exist at once. Her voice is one that retains the European, Indigenous, mestiza parts of her identity. In order to do this, she makes those layers separable and visible all at once. It is significant to think about that both Diaz' use of language creates a space in which their Indigenous heritage cannot be erased.

A tongue will wrestle its mouth to death and lose –

language is a cemetery

Tribal dentists light lab-coat pyres in memoriam of lost molars –

our cavities are larger than HUD houses.

Some Indians' wisdom teeth never stop growing back in –

we were made to bite back –

until we learn to bite first. (22)

In "Cloud Watching," she acknowledges that language is a cemetery, as the site where dead bodies are collected, and where the "tongue will wrestle its mouth to death and lose." She imagines communication in a different way through the "wisdom teeth" that "never stop growing back in" and that are "made to bite back." These body parts – the tongue, the teeth - possess the reactionary qualities, the knowledge to resist. While the tongue is necessary for communication, for speaking, Diaz imagines other parts of the mouth (the teeth) that resist in other ways.

In order to think of how Diaz recovers her voice through embodiment, it is useful to think of the instances where she actually writes in the three languages.

In "Dome Riddle," Diaz calls attention to this tension:

> this jawbone of an ass, smiling sliver of smite, David's rock striking the
>
> Goliath of my body,
>
> the Library of Babel, homegrown Golgotha, nostalgia menagerie, melon
>
> festival,
>
> this language mausoleum: *chuksanych iraavtahanm, 'avi kwa'anyay,*
>
> *sumach nyamasav,* (79)

Referencing Babel, the tower where multiple languages become confused and communication is complicated by a multilingual world, Diaz argues against the complications of multilingualism. By forcing a plurilingual world within a steadily Anglophonic universe, she embraces that tension while writing in precolonial and colonial languages all at once. While she employs the English and Spanish languages-her learned forms of communication – it is not those languages or the poem itself that work

to materialize feeling. Rather, it is feeling from within; it becomes situated in bodies that know according to their subalternized positions as people who been colonized and subjected. In this sense, place is not dependent to a geopolitical, spatial location. In the same vein of what Mignolo proposes and how Diaz speaks of her writing, it is in the acknowledgement of pluriversalities – across time, space, and language – that an opening for decoloniality is made possible.

In these re-imaginings across space, time, and language, Diaz begins this process of inciting the decolonial as she writes from her body while creating worlds that must include multiple languages, spaces, and temporalities all at once. I have considered Mignolo's ideas on decoloniality alongside Diaz' poetry because she offers a tool – embodied feeling within the poem - which shifts towards the plurilingual.

"Getting Back to the Body" Extending Feeling onto the Page

Going on to explain her relationship to letters and how she sees her writing materialized, Diaz states: "Oh, the pen is my hand. It's my body. And even though these are just thoughts or wonders, it's the energy of my body that I am trying to put on the page. So again, to think of letters as physical, as bodies" (Meinen 7). That Diaz can imagine letters on the page as extensions of herself brings into question the relationship that she forges between feeling and writing. In that sense, then, Diaz thinks of feeling as something already material before it is spoken or written. She imagines herself as producing a knowledge that is instinctive and reactionary; it is not "thought or wonders" that make their way onto the page, but "energy" (feeling) emitted from the body. So it is

in the ways that she think of her own poetics – not the poem itself – that Diaz recovers voice according to her own corporeal knowledge.

As an activist of language recovery, Diaz also serves as director of the Fort Mojave Language Recovery Program, aimed at learning and preserving Mojave. That dynamic of recovery is ever present as a close analysis of her collection brings to the surface efforts of Indigenous resistance to colonialist of subduing through language. In his 1992 essay, "On the Colonization of Amerindian Languages and Memories: Renaissance Theories of Writing and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition", Argentine theorist Walter D. Mignolo points out that the colonization of writing was easier and more successful than the colonization of speech. The alphabetization and grammaticization of languages, along with the religious conversion of Indigenous peoples erased many Indigenous languages at the time of colonization in the Americas. Mignolo characterizes verbal and graphic languages, as inscriptions in and extension of the body. While resisting the technologies of colonialism is not a new tradition within Indigenous writing, I am interested in the ways that Diaz not only subverts language but does so in such a way that that the layers of different language – English, Spanish, and Mojave - are forced to exist in the same space at once. While he implies that the materiality of books and writing acted as tools of conversion through colonialism, Diaz theorizes a similar idea but takes it further with her poetry. It is in the act of writing and the physical relationship of the letters that she finds connection. But this connection between letters and words exists because they are extensions of her corporeal self. In this way, Diaz imagines writing as an inscription of feeling at a corporeal level. Aside from the obvious limitations of the body, by inscribing feeling onto it/within it, Diaz inscribes

an inerasable kind of feeling, one that is more effectively transferred when bodies speak to each other. In this way, her use of language transcends the book, or rather language used in this way can exist without the page.

In "The Red Blues," Diaz states:

There are bulls between my legs,

a *torero*

stabbing her *banderillas*"

"There is a war between my legs,

'ahway nyavay, a wager, a fight, a losing

that cramps my fists, a battle on eroding banks (11-12)

English, Spanish, and Mojave must exist in the same space of the page, often coming into contact with each other. As I previously argued with Miranda's visual forging of colonized with colonizer, I am interested in how Diaz similarly makes space where colonial and decolonial languages come into contact with one another within the space of the text.

Similarly to Miranda, Diaz reimagines procreation as something different in "The Red Blues". From the violent and destructive images of "car wrecks between my legs" and "war between my legs", to the suggestive visualization of "martyrs between my legs" and "bulls between my legs", Diaz balances the playful with the heavy. In the opening line of the poem, she states, "There is a dawn between my legs." I read this balancing as the juggling of depth and surface. The feelings of depth and those that are allowed onto the surface are at constant war with one another. In the final stanza of the poem:

There are broken baskets between my legs,

cracked vases, terra-cotta crumbs,

…

this scarlet smallpox blanket,

this sugar-riddled amputated robe,

these cursive curses scrawling down my calves,

this rotting strawberry field, swollen sunset,

hemoglobin joke with no punch line,

this crimson garbage truck,

this bloody nose, splintered cherry tree, *manzano,*

this *métis* Mary's heart,

guitarra acerezada, red race *mestiza*, this cattle train,

this hand-me-down adobe drum,

this slug in the mouth,

this *'av'unye 'ahwaatm, via roja dolorosa*,

this dark hut, this mud house, this dirty bed,

this period of exile. (12-13)

In this stanza, external feeling- "these cursive curses scrawling down my calves" – is juxtaposed with internal feeling – "this *métis* Mary's heart."[6] This mixture allows the

[6] Similar to the Spanish derived term mestizo, métis means mixed. This French derived word originated in Canada, referring to people of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry. When capitalized, it refers to the Métis nation, which developed in the 19th century, mostly in the Western region of Canada. Because Diaz uses an uncapitalized métis, I take her to mean mixed.

reader to encounter an underlying question in Diaz' collection. The use of the word métis begins to undermine the national borders of the U.S. and Canada by hinting towards Indigenous as a transnational term. If a *métis,* a "red-race *mestiza*", experiences "this period of exile", from where does she come from and where is she exiled to?

Her Brother as the Aztec
Pluralities of Temporal, Spatial, Lingual Violence

In the opening and titular poem of her collection, she refers to her brother as an Aztec, already complicating universal notions of time by narrativizing a figure that encapsulates a struggle to balance the past with the present. A melancholic presence throughout the collection, the tension he carries comes from his associations with a violent past, and his dominance within the present.

…Like all bad kings, my brother
wore a crown, a green baseball cap turned backwards

with a Mexican flag embroidered on it. When he wore it
in the front yard, which he treated like his personal *zócalo,*
all his realm knew he had the power that day, had all the jewels

a king could eat or smoke or shoot…
My parents watched from the window,
crying over their house turned zoo, their son who was
now a rusted cage. The Aztec held court in a salt cedar grove
across the street where peacocks lived. My parents crossed fingers

so he'd never come back, lit *novena* candles

so he would. He always came home with turquoise and jade

feathers and stinking of peacock shit. My parents gathered

what he'd left of their bodies, trying to stand without legs,

trying to defend his blows with missing arms, searching for their fingers

to pray, to climb out of whatever dark belly my brother, the Aztec,

their son, had fed them to. (2)

Associating the ritualistic violence of the Aztecs with her brother, she brings to attention the wounds of a patriarchal and destructive past, both before and after conquest. Since her brother initially becomes representative of that violence, the question then becomes how the Diaz' voice becomes lost to the dominant narrative of her brother, the Aztec, who continuously haunts her in the present. A similar dynamic to that in "No More Cake Here", even her parents both desire him gone yet want him to return as they "crossed fingers/so he'd never come back, lit *novena* candles/so he would." Diaz' brother is maintained as a primary subject throughout the collection, an ubiquitous and dominant figure seemingly distinct from Diaz and the rest of her family. That distinction is on the surface an obvious one – the healthy loved ones set apart from their unhealthy sibling/child. But Diaz continuously characterizes her brother as a monster who consumes her and her family. Because Diaz' brother is the primary subject of her

collection, I read their relationship as representative of her refusal of a violent past – which would erase her temporally - as well as her desire for a sovereignty of the body.

Since she associates violence and machismo with her brother, their relationship comments against traditionally patriarchal values. Diaz visually alludes to Chicano iconography with the details of the Mexican flag and the Aztec dancers. As the main subject, her brother exists as the most dominant patriarch of the collection, presiding over her parent's house as "his own personal zocalo" when he wears the "green baseball cap turned backwards/with the Mexican flag embroidered on it." It is when he wears the Mexican flag – a often worn symbol of nationalist pride within Chicano/a/x culture - that he acts like an Aztec king presiding over his realm. Through this nod to Chicano and mestizo imagery, Diaz subtly questions the nationalist and patriarchal tendencies of Mexican and Chicano culture.

In her 2016 book *Indian Given,* María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo argues that within the 18th and 19th century mapping projects resulting out of the acquiring of territories now known as the United States, Canada, and Mexico, the figure of the "Indian was never marginal to this thick archive as subaltern subject, but always at its very center" (94). Saldaña-Portillo goes on to argue that those territories that were originally inhabited by Indigenous peoples became claimed spaces in Chicano/a/x consciousness as it "embraced indigenous *ancestry* as the site of colonial violation, instrumentalizing it as a means for establishing a political identity and imaginative control of the Southwest" (204). Diaz' poetry does not necessarily reverse that usurpation of geographic and imagined territory, but her collection reclaims space (through language), situating her mestiza and Indigenous identity together so that they are both at tension without the

actual blending of one into another. Those tensions exist as visual representations of the layered colonialisms at work her use of multilingualism, the displacements of space, and tangible tensions amongst different temporalities.

The tensions that I have described so far in *When My Brother* – along lingual and temporal lines – exist because Diaz writes in multiple languages, and considers the past in the present however painful that may be. By opening up her collection to include heterogenous space, time, and language, Diaz' poetry also brings up questions surrounding Latinx indigeneity.[7] To think further of the ways that Diaz subtly questions these intersections, it is useful to think alongside Saldaña-Portillo's ideas on geography – in particular the Western/Southwestern regions of the United States – in the imagined territories of Aztlán within Chicano/a/x discourse. Referring to the racial mapping and embodiment of the imagined geopolitical space/place of Aztlán within Chicano/a/x culture, Saldaña-Portillo states that "Aztlán was produced not only through the melancholic and manic representational incorporation of lost indigeneity but also through the figurative incorporation of indigenous territoriality"(197). Chicano/a/x consciousness adopted melancholic desire for an Indigenous ancestry that was taken as a result of conquest and colonialism, their geographical mapping of an imaginary homeland of Aztlán only reiterated the very same geopolitical usurping of territories that they claimed to have robbed them of their land. Furthermore, Chicano/a/x claims to

[7] See also 2017 Special Issue of Latino Studies Journal "Critical Latinx indigeneities" edited by Blackwell, Lopez, and Urrieta. This term is coined by editors who call for a better approach that includes Indigenous populations from Latin America who migrate to the United States, changing how we might think of migrants, Indigeneity, and tribal nations.

Indigeneity further displaced Indigenous peoples of the Americas as they became "mestizo." She concludes that "As powerful and productive as this [racial] geography has been - evident in the political and cultural transformation of the Southwest in its aftermath – it was produced through an engagement with lost indigenous identity rather than through an engagement with contemporary indigenous peoples" (232). So, the questions of loss and melancholy within Chicano discourse work to displace Indigenous peoples and territories because of the ways in which they are visualized anachronistically; and Indigeneity is erased or, rather, blended into mestizo/a/x identities.

In "Mariposa Nocturna", Diaz ruminates on the ways in which his addiction has produced loss within him:

> Thaïs has burst my shirt to flames, you say,
>
> that kerosene cunt, *chingadera.*
>
> I remind you again, you are shirtless,
>
> *sin camisa, sin vergüenza, sin, sin,* sin.
>
> Brother, I am ashamed. *Me muero de vergüenza.*
>
> Your toothlessness. Your caved lips.
>
> How light flees you. *Mi hermano, mariposa nocturna.* (60)

While Diaz embodies feelings of emptiness within her brother, she also portrays loss in his subjectivity throughout the text. From his toothlessness to the way that light that flees him, to the "*sin, sin,* sin," darkness becomes embedded within her brother. He becomes melancholic in the ways he is portrayed. For Diaz, space is in constant flux, and becomes changeable as different bodies become situated within them. I read the embodiment of place within her brother – representative of the force of the past who

refuses to go away – as her efforts to understand and reshape place. Blatantly calling her brother a "mariposa" curiously questions his sexuality. As a play on words between the Spanish word for butterfly and a homophobic slur, Diaz puts her brother's sexuality into question. Whether meant to effeminize him or to call attention to his own heteropatriarchal behaviors, the word begs for a consideration of Diaz' critique. While Diaz openly identifies as queer, and she alludes to it in her later poems, it is an anomaly to imagine that she would use a homophobic slur at all. I read the use of this term as a way for Diaz to question his dominant and patriarchal behaviors, markers of his masculinity. As I have already argued that her brother is associated as a Chicano figure, a violent Aztec forcefully existing in the present, so I read her attempt to emasculate him as a larger questioning of the national and nationalist borders. That is to say that she subtly challenges the borders of U.S. imperialist map-making projects, including those made by the imagined Chicano nation of Aztlán.

Dislocations of Violence
Place-ing the Body

As I argued in the previous section, Diaz' brother signifies a temporal tension. To get at the ways that Diaz situates space, it is worth thinking about her ongoing relationship to place throughout the collection. Immediately apparent are her portrayals of reservation life – as with her memories of being racialized as a child, references to Bureau of Indian Affairs (the BIA), and the ongoing substance abuse of her eldest brother (a reference to the statistically high rate of drug use for Native peoples living on reservations). As the collection progresses, however, place transforms from what she has

experienced (the desert, the reservation) to what she imagines as embodiments of feeling in members of her family.

Battling the difficulty of watching her brother's physical decline, his bodily description becomes enmeshed with place. In "How to Go to Dinner with a Brother on Drugs", Diaz delves deeper into her brother's substance abuse, while also confounding the boundaries of her experienced spaces and transferring them to the body of her brother.

> Your brother will still itch when you are seated
> at your table. He will rake his fork against his skin.
> Look closer – his skin is a desert.
> Half a red racer is writhing along his forearm.
> A migration of tarantulas moves like a shadow
> over his sunken cheeks. (50)

From the dry and dead images of his skin to the emaciated appearance of his cheeks, his bodily shortcomings come to define him, casting him as a desert – a setting all too familiar of her native Arizona. The embodiment of space in her brother signifies both a struggle to understand the tensions of her complicated Indigenous and mestiza identity, but also to understand how she re-negotiates space. Since she likens his skin to a desert, that asks her reader to consider explorations of spatiality in her writing. Diaz continues this theme in "Formication," which she defines in the epigraph as the "sensation of insects or snakes running over or into the skin" (57). Playing with sensations of feeling

on and under the skin, she begins to explore the ideas of internal and external feeling, while also pushing against the familiarity of place.

…I wondered if we were all living
in the wrong direction. Maybe sideways is up,
and fucked up is up, and down is hanging over
all our heads. (57)

In "Formication," while detailing the progression of the culmination of her brother's addiction on his skin, she describes a journey that her father must take through town after her brother steals his truck.

…my dad walks through town
with the hoboes and train hoppers,
stray dogs, hungry accordions, the dirty-faced
and gray-heeled girls
who flock outside our gate like pigeons
after my brother's crumbs.
on these days my dad drags his feet
across my brother's skin. *Just to remind him,* my dad says,
that I am old, I am tired,
I am his father. (58)

As I already pointed out, she compares her brother to a desert; the desert continues to be embodied in her brother when her father "drags his feet/across [her] brother's skin." In addition, her brother begins to lose his memory – meaning his sense of what is familiar to him – to the point at which her father must remind him of their relationship.

Because Diaz has described an embodiment of place within her brother, I read this as a defamiliarization of place.

Also, comparisons to the zoo along with animal imagery are reoccurring themes throughout the collection, providing a visuality to her poetry and further destabilizing the familiarity of space. She introduces the zoo in the titular poem, "My parents watched from the window, /crying over their house turned zoo, their son who was/ now a rusted cage" (2). Son/brother becomes embodied in the form of a "rusted cage" which imprisons Diaz' haunted parents. (2) So, in addition to the central theme of her brother's narrative bringing up different perception of time, he also brings up different perceptions of space.

In "Zoology", Diaz writes:

> My father brought home a zebra from Sinaloa. *This house is a zoo,* my mother wept. *Ay, but this amazing creature is for you, mi vida,* he said. *You only give me beasts,* she sobbed, flinging over the bony, swayed back of the zebra. She loosened a new Colorado River of tears, so much water that the zebra's stripes melted and pooled at his ankles like four beaten prisoners. *Ay, you see,* my father howled, *you ruined it. Amor, it is no zebra. It is a burro painted like a zebra. But, don't be sad. The beasts are not beasts. They are our children painted like hyenas.* (45)

Again, place becomes embodied within a family member – her mother becomes likened to the Colorado River when she sheds tears. This river runs through what is now Colorado, Utah, Arizona, California, Baja California, and Sonora. As a body of water that runs through part of the U.S. and extends into Mexico, it seems intentional on the part of Diaz to compare her mother to this particular river. If Diaz' brother represents

questions of temporality as they pertain to Mexican and Chicano identity, then she explores questions of spatiality – the U.S./Mexico border - through her mother. The river that extends into these nationally bordered territories blurs those boundaries, making them fluid and traversable.

> With one hundred years comes wisdom, and my mother was right. We are a zoo, and we will not spare even our parents the price of admission - they will pay to watch us eat *el burro.* My father will fall on his knees like a man who has just lost his zebra. My mother will paint the thin gray bars of a cage over her skin and reach out for us.

Playing with the idea of spectacle and the voyeuristic qualities of zoos, Diaz captures a shortcoming on the part of her and her siblings which causes disappointment for her parents. That her mother inherits and begins to embody the same qualities of imprisonment is worth analyzing.

To think more carefully about what is meant by the image of her mother painting bars over her skin and becoming a prison, I spend the remaining pages thinking about the sparse appearances of her mother, in contrast to the more frequent appearances of her brother. In "Why I Hate Raisins", Diaz recounts living off government-issued food and bingeing on raisins when that is all there is to eat. Regretful when her stomach is upset, Diaz recalls that what turns out to be most upsetting is when she realizes her mother was hungry too. (9-10) Her mother exists, then, as a weeping, sacrificing matriarchal figure, as evidenced in "Zoology" when she is embodied as a river and cries while claiming "*This house is a zoo"* (45) as well the sacrifice she makes to feed her daughter in "Why I Hate Raisins."

In "Hand-me-down Halloween", Diaz recounts wearing a handed down "Indian" costume as a child, questioning what it means to be an "authentic Indian."

& a two-piece / Tonto / costume

turquoise thunderbird on the chest

shirt & pants

the color of my grandmother's skin / reddish brown /

My mother's skin / brown-redskin /

My mother's boyfriend laughed

said now I was a / fake / Indian

look-it her now yer / In-din / girl is a / fake / In-din

My first Halloween off / the reservation / (6)

Coming to terms with her identity as wearable and thus removable, Diaz chooses to fixate on the skin of matriarchal figures (her mother and grandmother). But unlike a costume, that mask (the "reddish brown", "brown red-skin") is worn differently. Diaz imagines an unremovable part of the body, thinking of her Indigeneity as something that also cannot be removed. As she admits that this is the first Halloween off the reservation, she must rethink what place means for her – someone who feels identity in the color of her skin, but has been removed from the only place she knows as home. When she describes an experience of space that is not dependent on location, but one

that is experienced by corporeal embodiment, she traverses space by making geopolitical borders fluid.

I end with a reading of one the final poems of her collection "When the Beloved Asks, 'What Would You Do If You Woke Up and I Was a Shark?'" I have shown through this chapter that Diaz challenges settler notions of space and time by blurring the boundaries of past and present, as well as transcending bordered territories of land through her brother and her mother. I return to the question of how Diaz explores embodied feeling; that is, how she thinks of the boundaries of the body and how she imagines her own transformation beyond what she perceives as limitations of language and corporeality.

In response to her lover who supposedly poses this question, she responds by admitting:

> My lover doesn't realize that I've contemplated this scenario,
> fingered it like the smooth inner iridescence of a nautilus shell
> in the shadow-long waters of many 2 a.m.s…
> …I'd place my head onto that dark altar of jaws…
>
> …slip into the glitzy red gown of penance, and it would be no different
> from what I do each day – voyaging the salt-sharp sea of your body,
> sometimes mooring the ports of sighting the sextant, then mending
> the purple sails and hoisting the masts before being bound to them.
> Be-loved, *is* loved, what you cannot know is I am overboard for this
> metamorphosis, ready to be raptured to that mouth, reduced to a swell

of wet clothes, as you roll back your eyes and drag me into the fathoms. (85-86)

Imagining her beloved's mouth as an abysmal and sharp crevice, she confesses that she would willingly enter it. The sexually suggestive language of fingering "the smooth inner iridescence of a nautilus shell" and slipping "into the glitzy red gown of penance" alludes to penetrative and oral sexual acts. She imagines transformation happening – "metamorphosis" to be exact – when she willingly enters the mouth of her beloved, a hypothetical shark. When she claims that she is ready to be "reduced to a swell/ of wet clothes", she claims a new kind of corporeality, one that is shapeless like water. In this sense, she imagines sex and sexuality as more than pleasurable but something transformative. Through these willing acts, she embraces the fluidity of bodilessness, allowing her to easily traverse the mapped borders of places familiar to her.

Chapter Two
Eroticizing Feeling in Deborah Miranda's *Bad Indians* and *The Zen of La Llorona*

"Our bodies, like compasses, still know the way."
Bad Indians

> as a mixed-blood "Mission Indian," I have spent my lifetime being told I'm not a "*real* Indian" – in large part because I do not have the language of my ancestors, and much of our culture was literally razed to the ground. I refuse to believe that the absence of language meant my culture was nonexistent, but since even other Indians thought 'all you California Indians were extinct,' it's been a tough road. Along the way, I've learned a lot about stories, their power to rebuild or silence. I'm not saying the old adage 'language is culture' is completely off-track. Reclaiming our languages is a sacred and beautiful act. It is deceptive to pin our survival on language. If a language is destroyed, as many Native American languages have been, that does not decimate the culture. Culture is ultimately lost when we stop telling the stories of who we are, where we have been, how we arrived here, what we once knew, what we wish we knew; when we stop our retelling of the past, our imagining of the future, and the long, long task of inventing an identity every single second of our lives. Culture is lost when we neglect to tell our stories, when we forget the power and craft of our storytelling. (xiv)

In her 2012 cross-genre memoir, *Bad Indians,* Deborah A. Miranda shares the process of recovering her family history, including her tribal heritage and language.

Language, she claims, has not lived on because it has been remembered by few tribal members and even exists in some archives. What Miranda suggests is that it is ultimately in the *telling* of story that it has been preserved. Placing emphasis on the action sets her up to focus on the corporeal sensation through which language is felt.

In this chapter, I closely read passages from *Bad Indians* alongside her 2005 collection of poetry *The Zen of La Llorona,* focusing on the ways in which she thinks of location and space according to corporeal feeling. Miranda writes about her process for *Zen* in her 2012 memoir. Not only do those references offer insight into *Zen* but these two texts speak to each other in an intimate way regarding how Miranda thinks of geography, feeling, language and culture. Furthering Miranda's claim that it is in the "telling of stories" that something is preserved, I read the feeling at work in Miranda's writing as a mapping onto individual and corporeal then collective and geopolitical sites. Similarly to Diaz, she unsettles place not to new geopolitical spaces, but as erotically materialized feeling which extends from the body. In order to think about the ways that Miranda materializes and translates feeling through the erotic, I read through the ways that Miranda theorizes her own poetics towards a translation of feeling that happens corporeally. By furthering Audre Lorde's ideas on the erotic, she unfolds a different kind of consciousness, one that is layered in the narrative of her memoir and explorations of her mixed identity through language and geography in her poetry.

Sensations of Orality

During graduate school, Miranda finds herself struggling through intensive language courses in Spanish, as well as in her Native language of Esselen.

> Every time I learn a Spanish word I want to know the Esselen word it replaced. Between my teeth I clench the Unholy Trinity: English, Spanish, Esselen:
>
> *Water. Agua. Asanax.*
>
> *Bear. Oso. Koltala.*
>
> *Earth. La tierra. Madsa-no.*
>
> I laugh and *la profesora* looks up from her desk, asks with her eyes if I need help. I shake my head, glance down again at the page of words to be translated. How can I shape a third language to describe a second language that destroyed the first language? (*Bad Indians* 139)

While it is obvious to state that these three languages exist in visible tension for Miranda, those tensions also make reveal layers of lingual, spatial, and temporal colonialism and imperialism. Within the same plane, space and time become heterogenized, speaking to the ways in which she rethink spatiality in her writing.

In the chapter titled "Home" Miranda thinks of the ways that she has experienced colonialism through language.

> Silence is a long story, a complex art left to descendants of Native speakers…A thousand tongues that don't move, yet exist whole and fully formed. Sometimes I dream in Spanish. My mouth moves in all the proper patterns: the rolling "r," delicate placement of tongue against teeth, subtle slip of consonants. But in the morning I taste a tide of blood, slick iron in my traitorous mouth. (138-139)

Rather than thinking of silence as a passive act, she redefines it into active action. According to her, silence has replaced Native languages, their ability to communicate

with one another; but they still "exist whole and fully formed." Isolating parts of the body associated with speaking and communicating, she thinks about how they feel greater emotions, such as the guilt of a "traitorous mouth." In the same way that three languages can exist together on the same page, she imagines the violence of colonialism isolated within certain parts of her body, yet still belonging to the whole of her being.

In "Tongues":

> My daughter can't speak. I ask her to open her mouth. She reveals a small, sharp piece of white paper embedded in the side of her tongue. When I begin to pull it out, her tongue splits open all along the length; as I pull, an entire piece of paper emerges. I expect her to scream with pain, but she doesn't. I pull and pull. At the back of her tongue, the paper has grown into her muscle. I must reach in with two hands and rip the flesh of her tongue away from the paper. Still, it doesn't hurt. When I have removed the paper, I stand back, wordless, breathless. My daughter and I look at one another. Her mouth is still slightly open; the separation of her tongue is clear. It is laid open like a sole, like a fillet. I cannot imagine how she will manage to speak. I cannot imagine what language she will need to learn, or already knows. (*Zen* 40)

In the same way that she has inherited imperial languages, she thinks about passing those traditions down to her daughter. The image of the paper connotes an object that is not supposed belong to her daughter's mouth, yet it attaches itself to her tongue and her muscles. Paper, as a material object necessary for writing and literacy, becomes associated with her daughter's ability to speak. To that end, Miranda calls attention to the

relationship of orality to the written word, to the complicated relationship between Western and Indigenous forms of knowledge and communication. That she acknowledges she is left "wordless, breathless" and that her daughter already knows an unlearnt language signifies something deeper, however. It alludes to the possibility of knowledge before speaking and materiality of the word through language; she suggests that a knowledge exists that is felt and transmitted through the body.

In the poem "Teyheypami Achiska Giving Honor", she writes :

Eni micha elpa mishmaxanano,

I feel you in my blood,

nishiyano nishiti'anaxno, nishahurno.

in my bones, my gut, my teeth.

...

"Nishwelel, lexwelel:

My language, our language:

maksiri maknoco.

breath of life. (147-148)

After being in intensive classes to learn her Native language, Miranda reimagines different aspects from orality that allow her to communicate in different ways than speaking. While she acknowledges that it is not necessary for survival, the experience of struggling to recover a seemingly lost language allows her to situate its potency differently. In order to give honor to Esselen, Miranda places it onto her own corporeality, "*in my bones, my gut, my teeth.*" Visceral and primal, her language hints slightly

towards the sexual, but what is significant about those body parts is how sensory they are. In this sense, she puts her own theory into practice- that knowledge of language is not what preserves story- rather, stories are preserved by the bodies that carry them.

Visualizing Layers of Feeling in the Text

Near the end of her memoir, Miranda recounts the painful and traumatic rekindling of her relationship with her father. In December 1974, as a self-described "moody seventh grader in raggedy-edged bell-bottoms", Miranda confides to her teacher that she misses her father, whom she knows little about. Upon learning this information from Miranda's teacher, her mother is encouraged her to track down Miranda's father and let him know that his daughter exists. "Testimony" begins as the innocent longings of a pre-teen girl to meet her father, who at that point only knows he is "Indian, dark, handsome, and had been sent to San Quentin for eight years" (*Bad Indians* 152). By the end of this chapter, Miranda is a 40 year-old writer ruminating on the tenuous relationship endured between her father and the rest of her siblings. Miranda writes about the domestic abuse that her family suffers from him during his ongoing battle with alcoholism, as well as the difficult realization that her father eight years in prison for the rape and beating of a woman. (171) Thinking about the ways that violence can be inherited, Miranda thinks about what will be passed on to future generations, what she will pass on to her daughter. This weaving of temporality, the careful consideration of the past in the present and what that means for the future, is one that she accomplishes skillfully in her writing. By developing a deep understanding of temporality in terms of her own family history which is personal to her, she uncovers a narrative that speaks to an extensive history of California Native peoples.

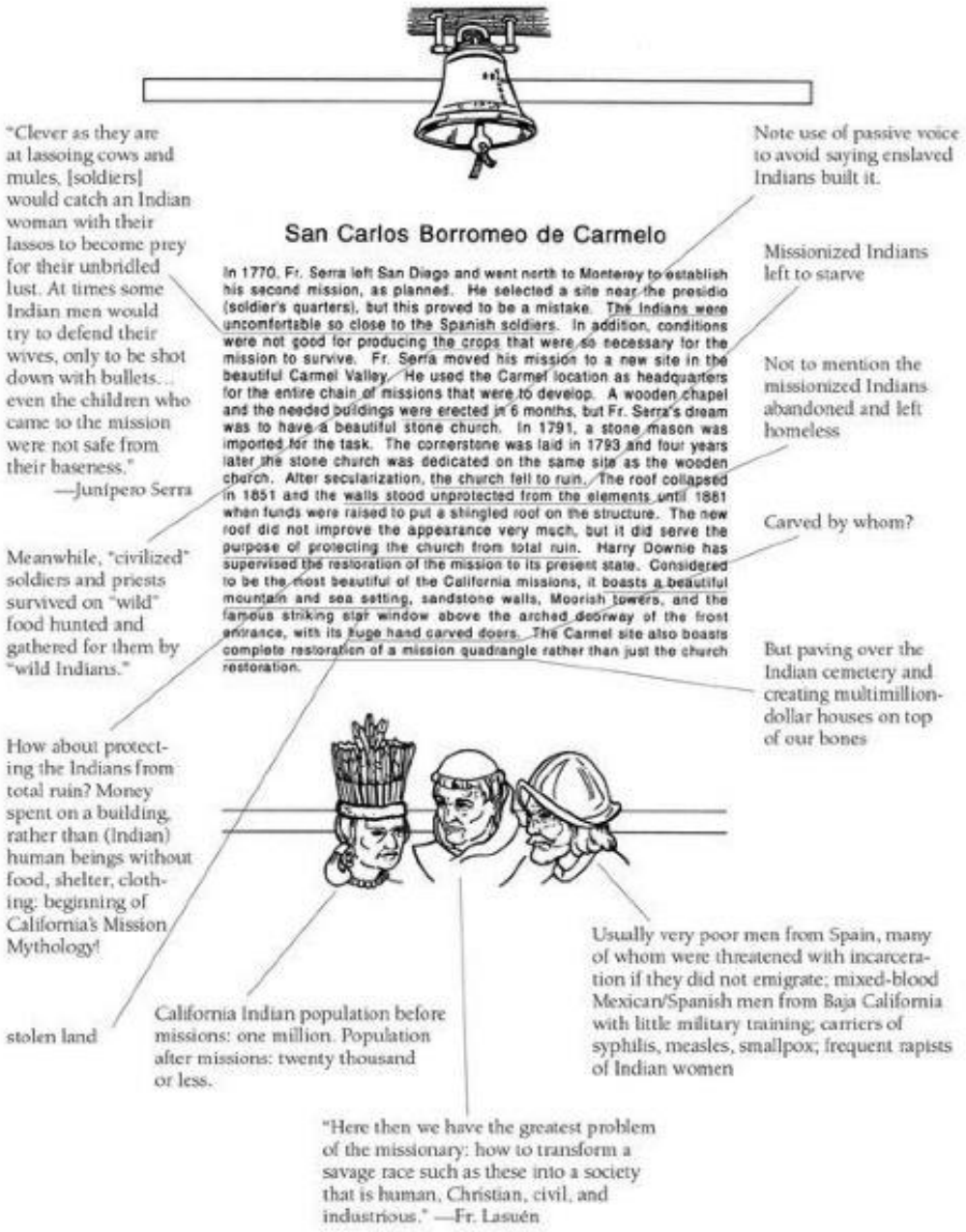


Figure 1 Children's Coloring Book

In "A Few Corrections to My Daughter's Coloring Book", she recounts helping her daughter with her 4th grade school project (a California statewide lesson taught up

until recently). [8]As Miranda reflects on the ways that California Native people have been perceived as people of the past, she thinks of settler perceptions of time. Facing this friction between past and present, Miranda thinks about who gets counted as real and who is granted the permission to mourn. In her 2006 book, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence,* Judith Butler imagines the political potentiality for collective mourning, particularly in response to violences of the state. Also concerned with the distinction between grievable lives and non-grievable lives, she thinks about the limitations of national mourning. When thinking of those lives not considered worthy of grief, she states that "the derealization of the 'Other' means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral." (33-34) Miranda writes from this space of ungrievability, as she thinks about the absurdity of the institutionalized erasure of the violence at the California missions, as taught to nearly every California fourth grader for many generations of students. Comparing the Mission Project to other insensitive possibilities, Miranda identifies that some lives are considered more grievable than others within state politics.

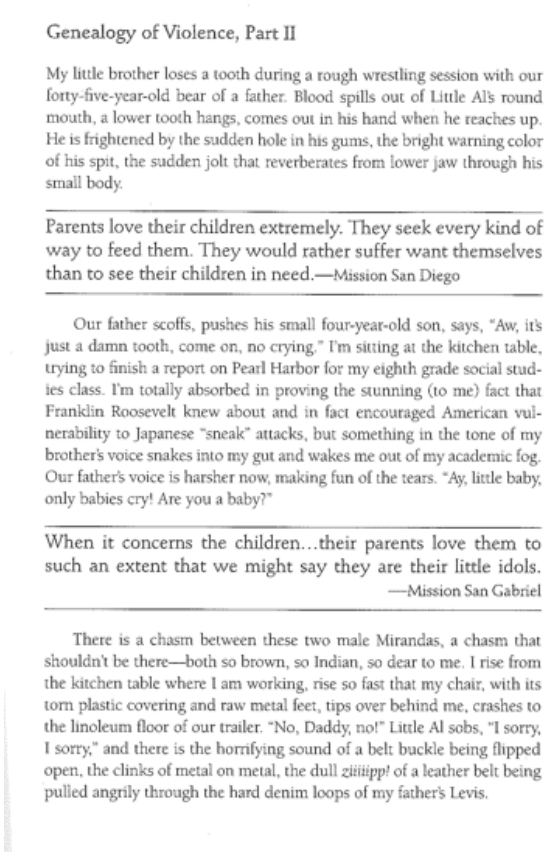
Thinking about the ways in which California Native peoples have historically been displaced according to settler colonial perceptions of space and time, the continued disacknowledgment of the state – in this case through educational institutions - has rendered them temporally unreal and as ghosts of a distant past. Miranda recognizes that

[8] See 2017 Los Angeles Times op-ed article. In it, contributor discusses a 2016 educative measure which strongly discourages the traditional California Mission project required of fourth graders. Reason given "run the gamut from serious concerns about the message they send and the history they glorify to the less weight complaint that they have long been a time-wasting pain in the neck."

many Native peoples who lack direct connections or affiliations to land are made unreal to even themselves. Writing from a space of recovery according to cultural memory, trauma, and loss, she unfolds a narrative that balances what is widely recognized and told from an outsider perspective versus what is known to be true amongst Indigenous populations – their survivance amidst the violent atrocities of the colonial Mission projects, as well as a historicized erasure by the state. The task for Miranda, then, is to realize and acknowledge that her feelings of loss are real. In doing, so she grants herself the permission to mourn.

Working through the trauma due to erasures of temporality and exclusions of mourning, Miranda theorizes a corporeal knowledge of feeling out of loss. She implores the visual and the textual in order to call attention to the ways in which Native populations are anachronized, made presently unreal in the ways they are historicized in the past. In this particular illustration, the visual of the palimpsestic text works as a layering of what Miranda knows to be true underneath and against information given out regarding California missions in a children's coloring book. As lines cross through parts of the images and text, leading to new facts that Miranda inserts in the margins of the paragraph, a visual mapping occurs which force the reader to spatially visualize the layered narrative. One caption reads "California Indian population before the missions: one million. Population after missions: twenty thousand or less." This information, presented as statistical data, but juxtaposed alongside the image of a Native person works in tension with the visual grouping of the Native person, a Friar, and a Spanish soldier. This grouping of the three can suggest that the Native was not a threat nor was threatened by missionization. Next to the Friar reads the inserted caption: "Here, then

we have the greatest problem of the missionary: how to transform a savage race such as these into a society that is human, Christian, civil, and industrious. -Fr. Lausen" (21) Again, the added text also works in tension alongside the image of the friar, a religious figure supposed to promote peace and faith via the mission, as violently portraying Indians as non-human, secular, and invaluable laborers. While I have used the term palimpsest to describe Miranda's experimental memoir, perhaps a better way to describe the layered narrative is more like a horizontal layering rather than a vertical one. Each layer remains visible to the eye as separate, yet they also touch one another at the same time, connected by lines stretching across the paragraph.



Genealogy of Violence, Part II

My little brother loses a tooth during a rough wrestling session with our forty-five-year-old bear of a father. Blood spills out of Little Al's round mouth, a lower tooth hangs, comes out in his hand when he reaches up. He is frightened by the sudden hole in his gums, the bright warning color of his spit, the sudden jolt that reverberates from lower jaw through his small body.

Parents love their children extremely. They seek every kind of way to feed them. They would rather suffer want themselves than to see their children in need.—Mission San Diego

Our father scoffs, pushes his small four-year-old son, says, "Aw, it's just a damn tooth, come on, no crying." I'm sitting at the kitchen table, trying to finish a report on Pearl Harbor for my eighth grade social studies class. I'm totally absorbed in proving the stunning (to me) fact that Franklin Roosevelt knew about and in fact encouraged American vulnerability to Japanese "sneak" attacks, but something in the tone of my brother's voice snakes into my gut and wakes me out of my academic fog. Our father's voice is harsher now, making fun of the tears. "Ay, little baby, only babies cry! Are you a baby?"

When it concerns the children...their parents love them to such an extent that we might say they are their little idols. —Mission San Gabriel

There is a chasm between these two male Mirandas, a chasm that shouldn't be there—both so brown, so Indian, so dear to me. I rise from the kitchen table where I am working, rise so fast that my chair, with its torn plastic covering and raw metal feet, tips over behind me, crashes to the linoleum floor of our trailer. "No, Daddy, no!" Little Al sobs, "I sorry, I sorry," and there is the horrifying sound of a belt buckle being flipped open, the clinks of metal on metal, the dull *ziiiiipp!* of a leather belt being pulled angrily through the hard denim loops of my father's Levis.

Figure 2 Texts Layered

Here, Miranda interweaves two different sets of texts, a first-person recollection of her brother's corporal punishment, the traumas of domestic abuse intertextually set with mission statements on child-rearing. The two texts are neatly laid out on the page and in alignment with one another, both in tension with the other. As Miranda goes through the process of reliving and working through these memories of her childhood, she becomes conscious of the settler colonial structures of time through which she has historically and institutionally been defined.

> The arc of leather, sharp edges of cured hide, instrument of punishment coming from two hundred years out of the past in a movement so ancient, so much a part of our family history that it has touched every single one of us in an unbroken chain from the first padre or the first *soldado* at the mission to the bared back of the Indian neophyte, heathen, pagan, savage, who displeased or offended the Spanish crown's representatives.(34)

Two different narratives very much at tension with one another fuse here to create a tangled and complex statement. Miranda's account seems to inherit the perspective that Indians are a "neophyte, heathen, pagan, savage."

Sara Ahmed argues in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* that "emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time, as through orientation towards and away from others." (4) The focus here is not so much in what emotions are but rather in what they do. How might we consider the power of emotions as we think of how they materialize from the seeming unreal to real? Ahmed goes on to comment on the importance of contact or touch. "Contact involves the subject, as well as histories that come before the subject. If emotions are shaped by

contact with objects, rather than being caused by objects, then emotions are not simply 'in' the subject or the object." (6) It is important to keep in mind that space and time contribute to the ways in which emotion is triggered. An emotion carries with it memories from the past and different meanings according to space. Furthermore, "emotions are both about objects, which they hence shape, and are also shaped by contact with objects." (7) When a person comes into contact with another object or person, an emotion is produced by having touched that person/object's history and meanings. So, if we focus on the ways in which emotions are entities interrelated to objects and subjects, then we can perhaps begin to see more clearly how they move and act in the world, as well as in relation to the object and subject. In this section, the content of the text shows the ways in which the historical and historicist have come into contact with one another, blending in ways that make it difficult to separate them from each other. Finally, "reading testimonies of injury involves rethinking the relation between the present and the past: an emphasis on the past does not necessarily mean a conservation or entrenchment of the past." (33) So, Miranda's narrative is not necessarily inheriting and inhabiting these historicist sentiments, but she calls attention to them by bringing them into contact with her family history.

By digging into the past for relics of her family history, Miranda begins a process of healing that happens in the present. To give life to the past through her archival research of newspapers, anthropological fieldwork, and oral histories, she puts ideas similar to Sara Ahmed's statements into practice - that "the past is living rather than dead; [it] lives in the very wounds that remain open in the present." (*Cultural Politics* 33) The visual play at work in *Bad Indians* conveys that awareness of mapped erasure of

Native peoples, in particular California Indians. By forcing the reader to confront the images of Indians, set from a settler colonial gaze, we encounter these complicated and layered perspectives all at once. To understand the significance of the mapping of text within Miranda's memoir, it is worth putting her text in dialogue with Saldaña-Portillo's concept of racial geography, "a technology of power" which "indexes the series of techniques used to produce space in racial terms" (17):

> our paranoid apprehension of the racialized geography of the border today depends – however unwittingly – on these colonially given figures of the Indian. This palimpsestic relationship then is not exactly historicist, although it is temporal and historical; it requires a spatialized understanding of time, rather than a developmentalist or teleological notion of history. (24)

The ways that Miranda thinks of temporality in *Bad Indians*– by tangling the past and the present and putting them into contact with one another – allow her reader to experience a "spatialized understanding of time" within the text. To think of mapping as a technology of power used in the imagining, claiming, and bordering of spaces means realizing the significance of this tool in the acquirement of U.S. territories from Indigenous peoples of these regions.

> Understanding racial geography as an unfinished geo-graphing defamiliarizes the maps of Mexico and the United States as well, allowing us to see these maps not as the given cartography of closed and settled nations, but as *ongoing* palimpsests of spatial negotiations amongst colonial, national, and indigenous populations. (19)

That spatial dynamic becomes apparent in Miranda's text, further unsettling the mapped borders and claims laid by the United States and Mexico. The spatiality of the page and the text explores a relationship between the visual and the textual, allowing the reader to see the spatiotemporal processes of territories as opening, closing, and then reopening.

Translating Indigenous Feeling Through the Erotic

Thinking of mourning and the recovery of memory might allow us to better get at the ways in which the uncovered self surfaces in Miranda's poetry. In order for mourning to begin, one must realize what has been lost. Judith Butler argues that when "one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly forever…mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say *submitting* to a transformation)." (21) In order to begin the process of mourning and working through, one must acknowledge that they will have become a new person. For Miranda, who mourns her loss and the traumas of violence, transformation happens when she realizes new perceptions of space and time in her settler colonial critique of California Missions.

In this final section, I think about Miranda's process of materializing feeling in her collection of poetry titled *The Zen of La Llorona*. While thinking of feeling as knowledge that precedes language. I refer to her process as a translation of feeling. In order for feeling to be realized as something tangible, it is first rendered more real through what she names as the erotic. In her introduction, "The Legend(s) of the Weeping Woman", Miranda writes of the legendary folktale figure:

> Her grief is so powerful that she can reach out of her pain and
> draw others into it, where they will never escape. I agree that her

> grief is very real. But I think there's a still deeper loss that La Llorona knows: Only after murdering her own children does she see the Spaniard's true victory. He has stolen more than her land, her body, her children. He has stolen her power to create; he has transformed her into a destroyer like himself. (1)

Here, Miranda identifies the power to create as the most grievable loss, while also naming a transformation from destroyed to "destroyer." When she thinks of what has been taken – "her land, her body, her children" – she seemingly limits the capabilities of what her body can accomplish. Children are an obvious symbol for life and "the power to create" is a typical way of thinking of the female body. But though this named power to give life is restricted to those biological and cisgender females who are able to bear children, Miranda goes on to imagine other ways in which life can be created.[9] She goes on to think about how she employs the erotic as a force that brings together different worlds: "Grace, or what I call an indigenous erotic, has a particular context for this particular continent: the perpetual act of balanc*ing* – always working toward balance through one's actions, intent, and understanding of the world." (3) So, for Miranda, the erotic can be thought of as a reciprocal way of interacting in the world; that is, of thinking of one's actions and intents as related to the worlds in which one inhabits. If feeling is treated as an internally existing force that can be externalized and materialized via the erotic and the power to procreate can be rethought beyond the biological ability to give birth, then power can be understood as available in newly imagined forms.

[9] For more on Rifkin's reading of the poem, see *The Erotics of Sovereignty* pp. 139-141

Miranda thinks of power as coming from an embodiment of feeling. In "A Trick of Grace", for instance, she plays with the idea that emotions are carried within bodies:

I move toward you
as if I know how to carry
this thing in my heart,
as if my body can bear
desire and trust, want and faith. (61)

While admitting that her body cannot bear the weight of these named emotions - "Desire and trust, want and faith", it is through grace (the act of balancing, the "indigenous erotic") that she copes with this.

But I'll learn this honest walk –
How to sway, wait, balance.
The secret lies in letting
What has the power to crush
Pull me forward, instead. (61)

In order to carry the weight of everything, in order for her body to reach its capacity, grace is achieved in the balancing as she previously defines it. Instead of imagining herself being crushed beneath the weight of intense emotion, she allows herself to be moved by them. Encapsulating this movement of body also suggests that something else has been moved, or rather, that the body contains more than just the tangibility of skin, organs, muscles, tissue. What are also in need of balance are the powerful forces existing within – those I have identified as feeling.

She admits the difficulty with which she maintains balance, with a located place as her goal:

I move toward you,
though it takes years.
I relish this weight,
what my body cradles:
transformation
in all her intimate aspects.
O, I want to be graceful for you!
I want to arrive
at my destination… (61)

She further puts her idea of the "indigenous erotic" into practice, hinting that "transformation" is the climax, the actual "place" that she wants to arrive at. In this sense, the addressed "you" of the poem – presumably her lover – becomes her destination, thereby transforming the idea of place, making it accessible in a female body.

In his 2012 book, *The Erotics of Sovereignty* Mark Rifkin reads the work of Miranda and other queer Native poets, imagining the realm of the erotic as a place of intimacy and possibility for new ways of defining Indigeneity beyond federal recognition. For my own purposes, I am interested in the corporeal aspects of the erotic – that is, the process by which feeling becomes recognizable as knowledge within the erotic. Thinking through both Driskill's and Miranda's definitions of the erotic, Rifkin states: "The erotic in these accounts speaks to a sense of embodied and emotional wholeness that includes but

extends beyond the scenes and practices of physical pleasure and gratification usually termed 'sexual.' " (27) As both writers refer back to Audre Lorde, it useful for me to do the same.[10] In "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power", Lorde emphasizes the potentiality of unused power existing within the erotic. "There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling." (53) According to Lorde, what exists within this realm is the not yet materialized. If there are *unused* and *unacknowledged* forces existing within the body, what is the process by which those forces become recognized? Miranda's definition parallels Lorde's in the sense that they are both situated in a "deeply female and spiritual plane." By imagining her female lover as destination/place, it is not my intention to argue that she essentializes space as female; rather, she opens up a potentiality for creating life and imagining connection to land in non-traditional, non-biological ways. Lorde further states, "But when we begin to live from within outward, in touch with the power of the erotic within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and illuminate our actions upon the world around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense." (*Sister Outsider* 58) For Lorde, the erotic is something that exists as part of an internal self that must be conjured from within and externalized in its translation. While Miranda does not necessarily define it differently, her practice focuses on that process of translation, specifying the actions that are required in order to incite

[10] In Miranda's 2003 article "What's Wrong with a Little Fantasy," she discusses women of color feminism and its shortcomings to include Native women. In particular, she mentions Anzaldúa and Moraga's *This Bridge Called My Back*.

an externalization of feeling. In Miranda's definition of the erotic, she describes a process of balancing between understanding, intention, and action. Constantly striving for balance amongst these three things, the "Indigenous Erotic" materializes feeling from within to outside of the body.[11]

Lorde further states that "the erotic offers a well of replenishing and provocative force to the woman who does not fear its revelation, nor succumb to the belief that sensation is enough." (54) Miranda thinks similarly in her poetry but refuses to allow sensation to remain as an individually experienced feeling within her. She materializes feeling through the erotic, making it legible through language.

In "Husband," Miranda begins to map externalized feeling which comes from her corporeal self.

> remember this ruptured moment when something
> unbidden and passionate emerged from my body
> as if we gave birth one last time together.
> Can we heal, is this strange labor a cure?
> My desire demands a life of its own, sucks air,
>
> gives tongue to words you swear you can't hear. (51)

The "ruptured moment", becomes that moment in which feeling emerges from the realm of the unsurfaced. Miranda imagines it as both "unbidden and passionate,"; so a

[11] Miranda also draws attention to the lack of Indigneous erotic literature in her 2002 article "Dildos Humminbirds and Driving Her Crazy."

subconscious and powerful feeling having existed within her body, makes its way out as a named "desire." Understanding desire as present in Miranda's poetry helps to understand eroticism as an awakening of self. In the lines "my desire demands a life of its own, sucks air,/ gives tongue to words you swear you can't hear," desire is its own being, capable of sucking life and speaking; desire becomes am emotion materialized by actions. She imagines a sexual act – beyond the purpose of conception – as the moment in which she gives birth to desire. Created out of an embodied loss, it is through the feelings of fantasy and desire that the erotic is made translatable through the body. What Miranda describes here is the process by which the feeling is recognized, then made understandable in its naming. By doing so, she begins to plant the seeds for her own healing which has the potential to be performed on a collective level.

It is in the naming of the erotic and the subjecting of self that Driskill and Miranda queer questions around Indigenous authenticity. In hir idea of the "Sovereign Erotic", Qwo Li Driskill thinks about the potential for ways to see more clearly the power of self-subjectivity or self-representation. Driskill writes, "I have not only been removed from my homelands, I have also been removed from my erotic self and continue a journey back to my first homeland: the body" (Driskill "Stolen from Our Bodies"53). Here, Driskill imagines hir body as the homeland. To hir, the body carries the realm of the erotic which means that a body denied its sexuality means that a person has been denied their erotic self. Returning to the body, that is, to one's sexuality means awakening a new selfhood or discovering a self that has not been granted the chance for being. The ways in which self, the body, and land are intertwined and an awareness of

those ties allow them to reconnect with and reclaim their bodies, as well as their relationship to land.

Reclaiming the body is also shedding the history of sexual violence, which has worked to remove Native peoples from their land, thereby also stripping them of selfhood. "A colonized sexuality is one in which we have internalized the sexual values of dominant culture. The invaders continue to enforce the idea that sexuality and non-dichotomous genders are a sin, recreating sexuality as illicit, shocking, shameful, and removed from any positive spiritual context. (Driskill "Stolen from Our Bodies" 54) In claiming this new sense of selfhood and situating oneself deep within that third space, foregrounding queer perception of being and knowing might begin to enact a different kinds of sovereignty. When this is realized and understood, then a decolonial sexuality can be enacted, allowing the erotic self to be awakened.

Rifkin thinks of Miranda's poetry as an embodiment of loss through melancholia and mourning. Stemming out of rigid federal definitions which demand land-based identity for Native peoples, he argues through Freud that in mourning the loss of an object (land), a blankness is produced. This production of blankness acts as a response to the notion that Indigenous people have lost their identity because of their separation from land. While I do not deny the mourning as being present, I argue that a melancholic subject might possess the knowledge that Rifkin seems to suggest is not present. So how is it that this part of the self is awakened? States Rifkin:

> considering and representing the nexus of emotional and bodily sensation both produces knowledge about survival under continuing settler occupation and

> articulates experiences that can serve as generative principles in negotiating among competing accounts of Native identity. (27)

While Rifkin makes a case for Indigenous ontologies and knowledges as challenging of hegemonically Eurowestern discourse that erase their continued survivance, I suggest that these writers theorize beyond Freud's ideas on melancholia and loss. That is to say that it is not blankness that is ever in existence. Rather, loss is a feeling or force in existence that is not in need of replacement, but one that works alongside memory in order to recover knowledge. While I would agree that naming emotional and bodily sensation helps to articulate experience, I would argue instead that that bodily epistemology has always already been present for Miranda and Diaz, as evident in their poetry. The erotic, then, acts not as producer of knowledge but as translator of knowledge that has been submerged.

In "The Place Where Grief and Rage Live":

> It's big, that space.
> Measure it in years
> instead of inches-
> four decades high,
> one memory wide,
> five centuries deep.
> Multiply by
> time lost to find
> the total area.
> Grief and Rage

live down there

as punishment…

(48)

It is significant to think of the ways in which Miranda think about the relationship between space and time, redefining their limits. Here, time is what is measured; time is what takes up space. While reimagining a world where feeling such as grief and rage are materialized, Miranda challenges universalized understandings of space and time according to settler colonialism. She goes on to think about how emotion takes up space:

Grief and Rage live in the lining

of your womb,

clotted walls of your artery."

unleashed cells growing

into your children's lungs-

you won't know

where it is

until it's too late." (49)

The almost suffocating nature of grief and rage in the womb (the space where life is usually nurtured), cause time to move differently. The ways that space is occupied "in the womb" and "into your children's lungs" creates a stagnancy of time: "too late to execute,/ too late for anything/ except Regret."(50) By calling attention to the interrelatedness of space and time (the ways in which they elicit one another), Miranda

transforms herself, as an extension of her own corporeal knowledge, while also challenging the limitations of biological procreation.

Since I find myself addressing Rifkin's notions of materialization in a different way, it becomes necessary to begin to develop a vocabulary for how Miranda theorizes a different kind of feeling. It is through her explorations of different possibilities of relationships to land, her reimaginings of space according to a bodily epistemology, that Miranda develops Indigenous feeling. In a similar sense to how I argued in chapter one that Diaz thinks beyond the limitations of language, I focus on the evocation of feeling in Miranda's poetry. Not to deny the potency within the political trajectory of poetry and writing for U.S. women of color, but what if we think of Miranda's poetry not as materialized through language or words themselves, but through embodiment of feeling? "Grief and rage", the two emotions characterized in her poem, are found in the lining of the womb. She calls attention to their interrelatedness, while challenging their status as fixed entities through the translating and emotional forces of grief and rage. As soon as Miranda attaches those emotions to the womb, "grief and rage," abstract emotions become more material in their new bodily associations. In thinking about embodiment of self in land and in the poem, it is not necessarily about entering those beings as separate entities, it is about internal knowledge of survivance that becomes externally known on the body and shown in the poem.

In "Home," Miranda rethinks place, mapping it onto the body of her feminine lover:

Ah, sweetheart, this pillaged continent's not

What I've lost, not the sanctuary searched for since birth.

All lusts ever harbored, each stolen deed of desire –

These fantasies aren't native land. Where's home?

I can't draw a map, but I've wandered each curve and hollow.

The place that knows me is a woman. (*Zen* 93)

Land acts here as the vessel for settler colonial desire. While land and space remain unmappable to Miranda, she can still *feel* "each curve and hollow." But rather than land or desire for reconnection to it, the desire is mapped onto a feminine corporeality. Rifkin states that desire acts

> as less an emotional state contained within the psyche than a force that enters into the world, possessing a vitality and set of relations all its own. It occupies and reorganizes space, particularly that of heterohomemaking, but that transformation arises out of what initially appears to be merely internal. (*Erotics* 142)

What Rifkin begins to articulate is the transmitting of desire (as internalized "emotional state") to an emotional force that acts upon the world, interacting with space and time while pushing on their perceived boundaries. The question, then, is whether Miranda's desire is for love or for self. While I cannot deny the desire for a female body in this passage, what if we push that reading further to think of desire for herself? The speaker notes that a connection to land is not what she desires. Rather, she desires a familiar place which she identifies as a woman. The desire for connection to land is replaced by female desire. If we read Miranda as a writer that subjects herself in the poem, then we can take her shifted desire for another female as a desire for individual sovereignty.

In "Old Territory. New Maps," Miranda displaces the borders of geopolitically mapped places to the corporeality of her lover.

After twelve hundred miles together
we enter green forest thick along a fearless river.
This dense topography we can't see through,
can't find the horizon to judge distances
or the arc of the sun to know east from west.
There at last you clasp my hand, guide it
to a place beyond maps,
no universe I have ever known.
It is raw landscape; we are the sojourners
overcome by the perilous shock of arrival.
We stop the car, walk by the river,
clumsy, frightened by desire. I wish
for more than body or soul can bear. (76)

This is not to say that newly imagined spaces are then confined to the body; rather, it is in the translation of feeling through the erotic that the limitations and borders of the body are also opened up. In this sense, Miranda opens up decolonial possibilities for the unbordering and unsettling of spaces, both geopolitically and corporeally situated. She transcends place as she understands it, being guided by her lover to somewhere like "no universe [she] has ever known." In order to arrive at this undiscovered place, she must transcend her own bodily limitations.

…Here, the place we wandered off the map,

moved deep into a land without scars
where every direction took us home
But no place could give us shelter.
I don't know how to survive awakening
in a woman's body with a child's
broken heart. I fall on my knees, our love
a bare stone on the windowsill between us.
How can I learn this trick, will your body
back to the other side of my skin? Help me
translate loss the way this land does –
flood, earthquake, landslide –
terrible, and alive. (76-77)

She implies that the body has traveled to that other universe of the erotic, when she asks: "How can I learn this trick, will your body/ back to the other side of my skin?" She continues to imagine that alternate space as a "land without scars," a place where she has been given the chance to completely heal. To return to what she establishes in the poem "Home," a translation of feeling occurs through the physical act of sex, and the suggestion is that the location of home is now found in the body of her female lover. For Miranda, the feeling is where home is. It can be transferred to land or to bodies; but the importance lies in the ability to translate that feeling, to allow herself to be moved to alternate universes in space and time.

Coda

This project began with a deep interest in the intersections of Latinidad (mestizaje) and Indigeneity. While that interest remained at the core of chapter one, my explorations began to veer towards the direction of questions around language, universality, and decoloniality. As a way of addressing lingering thoughts in my analysis, I return to the title of this paper, which proposes to consider Indigenous and Latinx women's writing. It became apparent that the title already brings about a tension which remained with me until the final version. While I don't mean to speculate on aspects of their identity (that's not for me to decide or to decipher), this paper shifted to an interest in how both Diaz and Miranda think of different ways to use language and story in order to complicate definitions of Indigeneity and U.S. mestizaje. Reading their works, it becomes clear that they are fully aware of what that mixture means, that layers of colonialism are complicated to undo but must be made visible in order to begin healing. Closer readings reveal the contemporary moment of questioning the intersections of mestizaje and Indigeneity. In chapter one, I argued that Chicano/a/x consciousness is both complicated and layered in its erasure and negligence to acknowledge Indigeneity as regionally specific but also temporally situated in the present. I do not consider it coincidental to have chosen writers from the regions now known as the U.S. West and Southwest. Due to missionization and colonial rule under Mexico and then the U.S., the mixture of Indigenous, Black, mestizo, and European people resulted in constructions of identity that erased Black and Indigenous peoples through mestizo nation-building, including Chicanismo. I conclude by naming these frictions and along with those that come with transnational, transhemispheric approaches to the fields of Native &

Indigenous studies, Chicanx & Latinx studies. Those tensions must be named as well as worked with and against in order to continue the work of unraveling the layers of painful loss, violence, and erasure.

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