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World Ecology, Indigeneity, and Epistemology in Countercultural American Literature

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

World Ecology, Indigeneity, and Epistemology

in Countercultural American Literature

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Representations of indigeneity are noticeably present in countercultural American literature and culture. In contemporary writings by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers seeking to combat oppressive mainstream American value systems like capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy, what Jodi Byrd calls "ideas of the Indian and Indianness" are often tied to a desire to change how humans relate to each other and to lively presences beyond the human. *World Ecology, Indigeneity, and Epistemology in Countercultural American Literature* focuses specifically on post-1945 American texts that deploy popular representations of Indigenous people in connection with political-ecological imperatives. My methodology throughout the project lingers in the tensions that arise when artists and critics navigate decolonizing objectives and colonial traces in the same text. Placing Indigenous studies, ethnic studies, and posthumanism in conversation, I argue that Indigenous visions of world ecology, if ethically adopted, might help to constitute a large-scale transformation of how we conceive of coalition-building in the context of ecological struggle.

The dissertation of Kimberly B. Calder is approved.

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Vita

Kim Calder is a PhD candidate in English at the University of California, Los Angeles, and holds an MFA in Poetry from the University of Maryland, College Park. Her work has appeared in *The Believer, The Los Angeles Review of Books/LARB Quarterly, ASAP/Journal, Jacket2, Unsaid Literary Journal*, and *Berkeley Poetry Review*. She is currently working on two manuscripts: *The Nervous System*, an autotheoretical work, and an academic book project, *World Ecology, Indigeneity, and Epistemology in Countercultural American Literature*.

Introduction

> *She goes through her backpack, keeps her journal and address book, throws away the muni-bart metromaps. The coins are heavy and they go next, then the greenbacks flutter through the air. She keeps her knife, can opener, and eyebrow pencil. She puts bones, pieces of bark,* hierbas*, eagle feather, snakeskin, tape recorder, the rattle and drum in her pack and she sets out to become the complete tolteca*.
>
> —Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*

In the moment above from *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), Gloria Anzaldúa metaphorizes queer Chicana mythmaking in the accoutrements of a quotidian survival pack. "This step," she explains, "is a conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions" (82). What Anzaldúa throws out of her backpack—money and maps—shows that she sees these power structures as intimately part and parcel of the colonial-capitalist order and its destruction of the earth and living beings, conceptions which echo throughout her writings. The remedy she turns to (as evidenced by what she packs), is Indigenous spirituality, which she articulates as the idea that "every cell in our bodies, every bone and bird and worm has spirit in it" (36). This assertion of all being as enspirited is directly tied to her political vision. With these new resources, "she reinterprets history and, using new symbols, she shapes new myths. She adopts new perspectives toward the darkskinned, women, and queers" (82). *Borderlands* brings forth suppressed histories of colonialism in the Americas by interrogating the myths of Anzaldúa's "Indian," "Spanish," and "Anglo" ancestors. The presence of homophobia and misogyny across all three traditions,

and white supremacy in the latter two, demonstrate the necessity of Anzaldúa's theoretical project, which seeks to develop new forms of subjectivity that resist existing identificatory paradigms and reconnect humans with the more-than-human. Anzaldúa may turn to pre-Columbian models in order to invoke different cosmological perspectives, but she is adamant that whatever arises will be entirely new because she will draw what is useful from pre-existing models (even those articulated within "oppressive traditions") while also creating "new symbols" and "new myths" that combat oppressive political realities.

Anzaldúa wants to see how the world, and the possibilities for being in it, might change if the parameters determining the shape of existence were shifted radically. Her syncretic practice—metaphorized in the content of the backpack—is not straightforward or unironized. Emphasizing an Indigenous Studies perspective, for example, we can see how Anzaldúa performs a particular kind of cultural theft and erasure in her choice of objects. Those in relation to indigeneity, for example, draw heavily on stereotypical popular representations of Indigenous spirituality (i.e. "eagle feather"). As María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo reads it, the metaphor itself mirrors the extractive logics of conquest, figuring indigeneity as something that can be claimed via a "kind of pastiche grab bag of Indian spiritual paraphernalia" ("Who's the Indian in Aztlán" 419-20). Work such as Saldaña-Portillo's points up the shifting signification of indigeneity in canonical Chicanx literature and the critical response thereto. If one focuses on the colonial legacies embedded in the objects she invokes, the metaphor points, potentially, beyond what it means to signify, encoding and even calling for further critical analysis.

Anzaldúa's claim that spirit resides in everything, drawn from her understandings of Indigenous cosmologies, has also led some critics to emphasize how her engagement with

indigeneity presages contemporary posthumanisms grounded in ecological frameworks.[1] Anzaldúa's interest in posthumanist themes is a culmination of decades of theory and autotheory by women of color; as Zakiyyah Jackson puts it, "exigencies of race have crucially anticipated and shaped discourses governing the nonhuman" (681). The posthuman landscape lingers on borders, but also points toward borderlessness—as Ursula Heise notes, Anzaldúa's portrayal of the "New Mestiza" prepared the way for the shift in critical focus from a localized to an internationalist subject that "reaches across national borders" ("Ecocriticism" 382). Across her writings, Anzaldúa expands borderwork to include passing through borders that are erected between people via dominant discourses like white supremacy and heteropatriarchy as well as the "border" between the human and nonhuman.

World Ecology, Indigeneity, and Counterculture

Representations of indigeneity are noticeably present in countercultural American literature and culture, and Anzaldúa serves as an exemplar of the complex political challenges that emerge within these formations. In contemporary writings by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers seeking to combat oppressive mainstream American value systems like capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy, what Jodi Byrd calls "ideas of the Indian and Indianness" are often tied to a desire to change how humans relate to each other and to lively presences beyond the human (xiii).[2] My project, *World Ecology, Indigeneity and Epistemology in Countercultural American Literature*, focuses specifically on post-1945 American texts that

[1] Other notable discussions of Anzaldúa as an early posthumanist thinker include writings by Joni Adamson, Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, and AnaLouise Keating.

[2] I use the term "non-Indigenous" throughout this project, following Scott Morgensen's lead, not as a signifier of racial or ethnic identity but as a (contested) location within settler colonialism (*Spaces Between Us* 21).

deploy popular representations of Indigenous people in connection with political-ecological imperatives.

I borrow the term "world ecology" from Vine Deloria Jr., who defines it as a "view of the universe as a comprehensive matrix of lifeforms" (288). In *God Is Red* (1973), Deloria Jr. proposes a collective shift from "our present naive conception of this world as a testing ground of abstract morality" to the more "mature" and scientifically valid "world ecology" represented by Indigenous epistemes (288). He offers the possibility of this epistemological shift to all readers, suggesting it might serve as a means of preventing "the imminent and expected destruction of the life cycle of world ecology" (288). Deloria Jr. argues that because the "structure of Indigenous religious traditions is taken directly from the world around them, from their relationships with other forms of life," Indigenous thought is far more compatible than Western thought with a livable future on earth (65). This is in part because the attribution of difference to the "strength of creation" does not create a framework in which homogenizing universals and hierarchical attributions of value dominate (88). A conception shared by "the majority of the tribes," according to Deloria Jr., is that other living things, even those considered "inanimate" by Western thinkers, are considered persons (88). Thus "equality is not simply a human attribute but a recognition of the creatureness of all creation" (89).

Likewise, Vanessa Watts' account of "Place-Thought," or "a theoretical understanding of the world via physical embodiment drawn from Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe cosmologies, informs my work throughout this project. Watts explains that in many Indigenous origin stories, "First Woman" falls from the sky and lands on the back of a turtle, then simultaneously creates and becomes the land (23). If we are "extensions of the very land we walk on, than [sic] we have an obligation to maintain communication with it" (23). Since land is sentient, and "all living

things contain spirit," an "ecosystem" might be better understood in "Western" terms as a "society" (23). This means that land cannot, in Lockean form, be reduced to property. Humans are the last species to arrive on earth, and their inclusion requires that reciprocal arrangements be established with animals, plants, and other nonhuman species. Indigenous visions of world ecology, if widely adopted, could help to constitute a global process of decolonization, a large-scale transformation of how we understand our relations with other beings and each other.

The above origin stories make the material consequences of language—particularly the significance of narratives and from whence they are drawn—visible. The recognition of shared personhood and creatureness they promote potentially serves as an antidote to the hierarchies that separate people from each other and humans from "nature." In Deloria Jr.'s vision, Indigenous epistemes can and should be adopted by all. However, as Philip Deloria has famously observed, non-Indigenous people's desire to "play Indian" has often "rested fundamentally on asymmetrical relations of power," and the countercultural texts I engage with acknowledge these existing power relations to varying degrees (186). My methodology throughout this project lingers in the tensions that arise when artists and critics navigate decolonizing objectives and colonial traces in the same texts.

My readings here take inspiration in part from Mark Rifkin's approach to a text like Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (1993). Despite Feinberg's commitments to "consciousness-raising, tracking differences within and among marginalized groups, and building a larger and more sustainable movement for social justice," Indigenous characters disappear quickly from the narrative once they have served a stereotypical spiritual function for the protagonist (239). Rifkin emphasizes that his objective is not "faulting the novel for a lack of political awareness" (239). He explains that the surprising lack of meaningful engagement with Native characters and Native

struggles—considering Feinberg's self-reflexivity and lifelong work in queer, socialist, and antiracist movements—works to illuminate "the extent to which non-Native opposition to heteronormativity draws on the image of Native people to figure forms of collectivity that can resist state-sanctioned violence without actually contesting the terms of settler governance" (*When Did Indians Become Straight?* 239). *World Ecology's* focus is not primarily non-Native opposition to heteronormativity, but I share Rifkin's interest in reading countercultural texts that engage with "ideas of Indianness" for what they reveal about how these popular fantasies are consumed and deployed for various strategic purposes.

In his analysis of countercultural movements, Philip Deloria demonstrates that oppositional formations (the least politically oriented of which is the New Age movement, defined simply by Deloria as "the consumption of other cultures") often depend on the "original mysteries of Indianness" to contest "national identities" (173, 4). Ironically, the character of these "original mysteries" is nearly identical to the projections of indigeneity deployed for the *construction* of national identity. Some of the writers throughout this project draw on nonsense "ideas of Indianness" that echo state logics, and some, in doing so, generate new political strategies that push against state logics more generally.

What possible forms of new political alliance around reciprocity and land, I ask, might countercultural attraction to "ideas of Indianness" potentially permit? In what ways do non-Indigenous engagements with indigeneity often reify settler colonial constructs even as they seek to generate opposition to oppressive paradigms, thereby potentially undermining the potential to develop solidarity with the very groups they ostensibly take political inspiration from? How might looking to various formulations of indigeneity in contemporary texts by Indigenous and

non-Indigenous American authors help us to generate informed coalitional projects that center anticolonial objectives alongside antiracism, anticapitalism, and opposition to heteropatriarchy?

In Rifkin's reading of *Stone Butch Blues*, the labor union is the fluid, contested space of political organizing which allows characters of different backgrounds to develop solidarity with each other (243). It is particularly useful as a narrative device because it provides a way of imagining positive identification with community without reliance on pre-existing identity constructs, and its structure also helps to reveal the mechanisms by which power seeks to fragment newfound sense of community among the workers (243-44). In *World Ecology*, ecological struggle is the space of political organizing I seek to consider as potentially accommodating of broadly constituted affinity groups.

As spaces of organizing, labor unions and ecological struggle offer similar opportunities for coalition-building. World ecology is also a space in which structures often banished to the underground of thought, such as the ongoing realities of settler colonialism, and their accompanying constructions of "the human," become visible. In particular, I read works that seek to disrupt Eurocentric understandings of the relationship between "humans" and "nature." As such, *World Ecology* is also in dialogue with ecologically focused posthumanisms and seeks to put them in conversation with Indigenous Studies, critical race theories, queer theory, and post-structuralism.

Becoming More-Than-Human

In their reflections on "queer inhumanisms," Mel Chen and Dana Luciano also observe how Anzaldúa's "onto-epistemology" anticipates the contemporary "nonhuman turn," a commonly used term for the humanities' increasing tendency to question the automatic assumption of the

human as the center of analysis (186).[3] Karen Barad emphasizes how posthumanism refuses the naturalized boundary between nature and culture and refuses to "presume the separateness of any-'thing,' let alone the alleged spatial, ontological, and epistemological distinction that sets humans apart" (136). It rejects the notion "that man is the measure of all things (136). Cary Wolfe's posthumanism does not seek an "after" to embodiment but an end to "the cultural repressions and fantasies, the philosophical protocols and evasions, of humanism as a historically specific phenomenon" (xvi).

However, as Chen and Luciano also note, the "inclination to vastness" or "hyperbolized attention to smallness" found in object-oriented ontology, speculative realism, and the work of some new materialist thinkers associated with the "nonhuman turn" has led to "uneven attention to race and related axes of dehumanization" in the posthumanities (194).[4] This critique is representative of the larger discomfort felt by scholars concerned that turning our attention to world ecology will supersede analyses of existing oppressions formulated within the logics of the unequally distributed category of the human. Since Eurocentric conceptions of "the human" came into being in large part as logics that justified colonialism, slavery, and other acts of domination on the part of emergent European world powers, there is no reason why these historical realities should not be centered in posthumanist thought. As Marissa López has argued, epistemes like planetary consciousness that seem to "move us away from racial considerations" can actually bring us back to them at the same time (19).

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[3] For these remarks, see the introduction to *GLQ*'s "Queer Inhumanisms" special issue (June 2015). As Chen and Luciano note, the "nonhuman term" is also sometimes referred to as the "posthuman turn."

[4] While Chen and Luciano's use of "dehumanization" in its familiar negative valence may seem to contradict the issue's stated focus on the "nonhuman term," it also signals that dehumanization proceeds via existing constructions of "the human," which do not simply disappear into thin air. Anzaldúa, for example, views "dehumanization as an opportunity to reconstruct what it means to be human" (186).

Genealogies of what constitutes the posthumanities, these theorists suggest, shift significantly when decolonial and anticolonial theorists join the current constellation of thinkers considered posthumanist. My project does not seek to make any claims about Indigenous peoples. Rather, I focus on how "ideas of Indianness" are mobilized in contemporary countercultural texts by Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers. While posthumanisms vary widely, I focus my attention solely on those that Chen and Luciano describe as "critical" (195).

To claim a critical posthumanism is to insist that posthumanism operate in self-critical fashion. This newly unfolding notion, as described by Chen and Luciano, is informed by a materialist approach that understands "the very possibility of making a distinction between the human and nonhuman" as "constructed by the kinds of actions and processes that we have named dehumanization" (195). That is, the production of difference is a primary tactic used for the maintenance of hegemonic control. Simply defined, it is the production of binaries in which universality/wholeness is ascribed to one term and lack to the other in the pair. Aníbal Quijano's well-known essay "Questioning Race," which speaks to the origins of global white supremacy, emphasizes how these binaries are often tied to Eurocentric ideas about "nature." According to Quijano, ever since the debate in Valladolid over whether "Indians" (the newly created racial category ascribed to Indigenous peoples) were human,

> the old notions of superiority/inferiority implicit in every relationship of domination were considered to be grounded in nature; they were 'naturalized' for all subsequent history…the foundational myth of modernity…[was] the idea of an original state of nature and a process of historical development going from the 'primitive' (the closest to 'nature,' which of course included above all the 'blacks' but also the 'Indians') to the most 'civilized' (which of course was Europe), with the 'Orient' (India, China) in between. (52)

While there is nothing inherently wrong with binary structures, when they are constructed around notions of superiority/inferiority, or "relations of domination," they invariably serve as

justification for violence against the group designated "inferior." The writings I explore in this project seek to denaturalize these various separations: nature from culture, art from life, the human from the nonhuman, people from each other.

Quijano also observes how the separation of "humans" from "nature," or what Foucault calls the "disconnection of people from the great narrative common to things and man" has served this "foundational myth of modernity" (387). Settler colonists seeking to normalize violence against Indigenous peoples whose lands they wanted, according to Quijano, gave birth to "the idea of 'race' [which] was born with 'America'; it originally referred to the differences between 'Indians' and their conquerors (principally Castillian)" (50). Quijano links the development of race itself to indigeneity, which presents the need to naturalize "relations of domination" between settlers and Indigenous peoples. Race, then, becomes linked to nature in service of justifying mass murder and the expropriation of land. Notions of "progress" freeze non-European peoples outside of modernity, relegating them to the past in an attempt to erase the political potential of Indigenous lifeways.

This section explores the potentially generative relationships among disciplines such as the posthumanities, ethnic studies, Indigenous studies and postcolonial studies in academic work seeking to move beyond or refusing to work within dominant conceptions of the human, or what Fanon called "Man in the technique and the style of Europe," which is "only a succession of negations of man" or "an avalanche of murders" (312). Foucault, in a series of related observations about the Eurocentric nature of the so-called "universal human subject," calls for the end of the episteme of "man" that emerged in the 19th century when the human sciences disconnected people from the aforementioned "great narrative common to things and man"

(387). It is my contention that these interdisciplinary conversations are crucial, as they have the potential to act as starting points for collective organizing both inside and outside of the academy.

The anti-capitalist and anti-racist aspirations of projects such as "ethnopoetics" or *el movimiento* have not necessarily kept them from deploying popular representations of Indigenous people that are projections of the white imagination. These fantasies serve non-Indigenous populations by denying the realities of settler colonialism and contemporary Indigenous presence in the Americas. Despite the destructive character of stereotypical figurations in the style of the "noble savage" such as the "ecological Indian" and the "spiritual Indian," both non-Indigenous and Indigenous writers have mobilized them to theorize how we might shift into other modes of being that honor the interdependence of all forms of life. How might we reconcile the ideological violence beneath these fantasies and their sometimes-generative potential? If these same projections of indigeneity have been essential to settler states looking to achieve cultural and physical dominance over Indigenous peoples, what have writers seeking to protest the conditions produced by racial capitalism challenged and/or reified by re-engaging these stereotypes for their own purposes?

In addition, I hope to contribute to a growing body of work that calls for us to be more critical of and less ensconced within disciplinary logics. Non-Indigenous critics and theorists need to engage with Indigenous thinkers; if, as Jodi Melamed has insisted, the contemporary moment—which she terms racial capitalism, after Cedric Robinson—is defined in part by the "complex recursivity between material and epistemic forms of racialized violence," this means that the work we do in university settings as knowledge producers has the potential to help imagine better futures for humans and those with whom we evolve in lockstep (77). Glen

Coulthard, in considering a workable formation between settlers and Indigenous Americans, recalls the words of Philip Blake, a Dene activist, in his address to the British Crown at the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry: "I believe your nation might wish to see us, not as a relic from the past, but as a way of life, a system of values by which you may survive in the future. This we are willing to share" (qtd. in Coulthard 72).[5] Were non-Indigenous thinkers willing to engage Indigenous thinkers, these shifts could open up exciting new political formations and possibilities.

Jodi Byrd's critical reading of one of the most famous countercultural texts that attempts to theorize collective liberation, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, serves as a paradigmatic example for the possibilities contained in this kind of interdisciplinary work. Byrd argues for a mnemonic methodology of reading that connects "the violences and genocides of colonization to cultural production and political movements in order to disrupt the elisions of multicultural liberal democracy that seek to rationalize the originary historical traumas that birthed settler colonialism through inclusion," an approach which she applies to poststructuralist theory (xii). Her analysis illuminates how Indigenous peoples are invoked in French critical theory as "past-tense presences" (*Transit of Empire* xx, xv). *A Thousand Plateaus* has been particularly influential for posthumanist thought because of its radical refusal of human-centered subjectivity in favor of relational processes such as the development of new forms of affinity via assemblage, so Byrd's intervention is of special importance for my project.

Deleuze and Guattari, Byrd argues, posit America and American literature as embodying a kind of revolutionary possibility that is foreclosed in a European context. This claim, she

[5] For an account of the circumstances of the inquiry, see Glen Coulthard, "Marx, Indigenous Peoples, and the Politics of Dispossession in Denedeh" in *Theorizing Native Studies* (eds. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith).

argues, relies in large part on the theorists' invocation of America's so-called "Indians without ancestry" (Byrd 11). She draws our attention to how, in their attempt to understand the "socially repressed image of the Indian," Deleuze and Guattari turn to American anthropologist Carlos Castaneda's books (along with French anthropological sources such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Pierre Clastres), meaning they rely entirely on ideas of "Indianness" drawn from a colonial archive (Byrd 16).[6] By illuminating how "the Indian" functions as an "imperial referent" in the text, Byrd demonstrates how these evocations ultimately haunt the text, acting as a Deleuzian event within poststructuralism that reveals the limits of its methodology—the refusal to confront the colonialist project that makes these ideas of "Indianness" possible:

> The Indian sign is the field through which poststructuralism makes its intervention…this paradigmatic and pathological Indianness cannot be circumvented as a colonialist trace…Every time a flow or line of flight approaches, touches, or encounters Indianness, it also confronts the colonialist project that has made that flow possible. The choice is either to confront colonialism or deflect it. And not being prepared to disrupt the logics of settler colonialism necessary for the *terra nullius* through which to wander, the entire system either freezes or reboots. (17)

Byrd describes what might be figured as a series of crisis points in thought—at each juncture, when given the opportunity to confront colonialism, Deleuze and Guattari deflect, unprepared to disrupt settler colonial logics. This deflection, according to Byrd, causes the poststructuralist "system" to "freeze or reboot." But the interplay of Byrd's analysis and *A Thousand Plateaus* itself indicates a set of possibilities enabled by the text beyond the options Byrd presents above.

In introducing *A Thousand Plateaus*, Byrd notes that a reader of the book might both retain "sympathy for the impulse to nonrepresentational philosophy that aligns in a multiplicity of regimes of signs" while interrogating the text's refusal to confront the realities of settler

[6] Castaneda was an American anthropologist who was made famous by his "dissertation," *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968), which was initially passed off as a "genuine" ethnographic account before it was determined to be completely fictional.

colonialism (13). Her own sympathies for nonrepresentational philosophy emerge at the level of style, as when she defines transit as such: "to be active presence in a world of relational movements, countermovements. To be in transit is to exist relationally, multiply" (xvii). Byrd invokes Gerald Vizenor's conception of "native transmotion" as a way of describing this movement. Vizenor says "native transmotion" is akin to his term "survivance," or an "active sense of presence, the continuation of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name" (Byrd xvi, Vizenor 126). The similarity between the passages convey their philosophical and political affinities, despite the problems Byrd identifies with Deleuze and Guattari's use of "ideas of Indianness." The affinities that emerge through Byrd's critical reading reveal a process in which Deleuze and Guattari's approach still opens up new avenues for thought despite its reliance on misrepresentations of indigeneity.

Deleuze and Guattari's propensity for non-representational theory seems to be one of the reasons Deleuze and Guattari were drawn to Carlos Castaneda's work. In a passage about Carlos Castaneda's "dissertation," *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968), which was initially passed off as a "genuine" ethnographic account before it was determined to be completely fictional, Deleuze and Guattari push back against readers' desire for the book to be a "genuine" ethnographic account. In response to the charge that the book's fictionality invalidates its content, they reply, "so much better if the books are a syncretism rather than an ethnographical study, and the protocol of an experiment rather than an account of an initiation (161-2).[7] Since *A Thousand Plateaus* is also an experiment that writes "against the book as image of the world," refusing the "tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book)

[7] There are obvious problems with this stance; in Chapter One, I explore how Castaneda's books were damaging to Indigenous communities.

and a field of subjectivity (the author)," Castaneda's lie troubles the posited symmetry of the first two categories (even as it certainly leaves all agency in the hands of the "remarkable" author) (23).

Throughout this project, I refuse elision of these colonialist traces in the literature and theory I engage with while, as Byrd does, "retaining sympathy" in regard to shared political and theoretical objectives. As a scholar of American literature interested in the environmental humanities and countercultural movements, my thinking has been transformed through my encounters with Indigenous critical theory in part because it allows me to read familiar texts like *A Thousand Plateaus* in new ways. This project came into being because I became curious about the many representations of indigeneity in texts seeking to envision revolutionary futures. What lines of flight, I ask, are opened up in these texts, and when do they crash and burn in their unwillingness to confront colonialist projects? When do they succeed in doing so? What do these deployments of "Indianness" in countercultural projects accomplish, and how have they affected attempts at coalition-building around shared concerns?

Indigeneity and World Ecology

Throughout this project, I engage with thinkers that seek to generate broad epistemological shifts by deploying, and then refiguring, "ideas of Indianness" circulating in popular culture, often for the purposes of building solidarity in the terms of ecological struggle. The environmental humanities' interest in ecological activism outside the academy has meant that many posthumanist thinkers have engaged with Indigenous struggles against dispossession in considering how to reformulate relationships between the human and nonhuman, writing about movements such as the Zapatista Army and Idle No More as well as collectively authored

documents like the 2009 Bolivian Constitution. The Constitution was drafted by a coalition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous thinkers and grants Pachamama (approximately translated as "Source of Light" or "Source of Life") the right to uninterrupted being. [8] The prevalence of Pachamama as a concept used widely throughout Latin America in political contexts gestures to the kind of large-scale epistemological shifts indigenous cosmopolitics have the capacity to produce. Additionally, as Jodi Melamed has observed,

> Neoliberalism has given us an interesting conjecture: its rapacity for natural resources…has required the current structure of domination to bring indigeneity into representation, because so much of the natural resources that still exist in the world are to be found on lands traditionally occupied, owned, belonging with, or stewarded by Indigenous people (up to 50 percent according to the International Forum on Globalization). This, in turn, has given Indigenous worldings a tremendous potential (83).

Ironically, then, despite ongoing global efforts by settler states to erase Indigenous presence in the Americas, in creating the conditions often characterized as the Anthropocene, global-capitalist practices of extraction and accumulation, continued from the age of high imperialism, have put indigeneity and Indigenous peoples front and center. If there is any positive aspect of this moment, then, it might be located in the fact that, as Mark Rifkin and others have argued, "[i]ndigeneity puts the state in crisis by raising fundamental questions about the legitimacy of its continued existence" (*When Did Indians Become Straight?* 37).

Centering indigeneity in discussions of U.S. empire is an important intervention at this historical moment in which the "conflation of racialization and colonization . . . masks the

[8] For discussions of the Zapatistas, see Joni Adamson, *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place* and María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*. For Idle No More and the Zapatistas, see Jodi Melamed, "Racial Capitalism." For Indigenous activism throughout the Americas, see Joni Adamson, "Indigenous Literatures, Multinaturalism, and *Avatar*: The Emergence of Indigenous Cosmopolitics," Marisol de la Cadena, "Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond 'Politics,'" and Jorge Marcone, "The Stone Guests: *Buen Vivir* and Popular Environmentalisms in the Andes and Amazonia."

territoriality of conquest by assigning colonization to the racialized ['Indian'] body" (Byrd xxvi-xxiv). By obscuring historical processes, global capitalism naturalizes its destruction of land, Indigenous relationships to land, human relationships to the nonhuman, and relations between human groups.

However, the notion of Indigenous peoples as "close to nature" looms in the background of this theorizing, and this misrepresentation has painful ties to colonial dispossession. As Mishuana Goeman has stated, the assumption of Indigenous peoples' "naturalness" is particularly violent because it mirrors abstract state logics that were central to the "historical, mental, and physical fragmentation of [Indigenous] people from land" (85). The "doctrine of discovery" invented by Justice John Marshall in order to justify dispossessing U.S. Native peoples of their land imported Lockean ideas figuring land as property, a conception that runs counter to Indigenous relations with homelands (Barker 7-8). This colonial definition of land provided a rationale for the violent theft of Indigenous lands by the U.S. government and settler populations by refiguring Indigenous land as *terra nullis*, "a landscape miraculously emptied of the accumulated human labour… that has made it what it was" (Wolfe, *Traces of History* 23).

This project articulates the tension between the "tremendous potential of Indigenous worldings" in contemporary discussions of world ecology and the painful history associated with Indigenous peoples' figuration by settler states as "close to nature," (and therefore less human). This conflict must become a crucial point of inquiry for posthumanisms and the environmental humanities. By examining these tensions in contemporary decolonial and anticolonial literature, I work both to offer a reading of how coloniality has operated in countercultural American literature and to establish some general principles for ethical engagement with Indigenous cosmologies. Considering Indigenous relationships to land that challenge the property-relation, I

argue, opens up space for understandings of people and land as interdependent that go beyond "close to nature" fantasies.

Critical Ethnic Studies disciplines like Critical Latinx Indigeneities have emerged in large part from a greater awareness of misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples across non-Indigenous Studies disciplines. These critical paradigms seek to acknowledge the ways stereotypical depictions of indigeneity and/or silence about Indigenous people have previously circulated in Ethnic Studies disciplines. This is essential bridging work, for, as Jodi Byrd has noted, the "conflation of racialization and colonization" and reduction of "indigeneity into racial categories dependent on blood logics" makes it difficult to address the conditions of settler colonialism, since the state is then able to promise "increasing liberty through pluralization" (xxvi). Strategies of incorporation and assimilation like "liberal multiculturalism," in Jodi Melamed's terms, which promise to make existing notions of the human more inclusive, pull focus from the need to transform dominant conceptions of the human itself (*Represent and Destroy* 818).

Despite greater conceptual engagement with indigeneity across disciplines, engagements with Indigenous thought or the lived struggles of Indigenous people are often lacking, and a number of critics have critiqued this aspect of posthumanist thought in particular. Danika Medak-Saltzman argues that in the absence of any real engagement with Indigenous thinkers, invocations of indigeneity become just another twenty-first century example of cultural theft, and "even the best-intentioned scholars often end up producing work that is interventionist in its own discipline by beginning conversations that Indigenous studies has had resolved for decades" (18). Likewise, Juanita Sundberg suggests that posthumanist theory would benefit from a greater willingness to engage directly with Indigenous (and other) epistemes that do not split nature from

culture nor ontology from epistemology. To speak about these divisions as though they are universal, Sundberg argues, exposes unexamined Eurocentrism in the work of posthumanist thinkers (36). She also identifies the same tendency in feminist new materialisms: Jane Bennett, for example, expresses "an anxiety that fostering vital materialism via the 'capacity for naiveté' risks—and here she cites W.J.T. Mitchell—'the taint of superstition, animism, vitalism, anthropomorphism, and other premodern attitudes'" (37). According to Sundberg, Bennett's logic exposes her need to identify a nonhuman "Other" against which to uphold notions of progress and the superiority of "modern" Western thought.

Despite these issues, posthumanism, has, in some cases, brought thinkers in the Western epistemological tradition closer to Indigenous thought. Particularly in ecologically minded posthumanisms, increasing emphases on the liveliness of all matter, the falsity of imposed divisions like nature/culture and animal/human, and the interconnectedness of life on earth have to some degree shifted modes of thinking in numerous disciplines away from the model of the "universal" liberal human subject. Whether indigeneity is evoked or not, critical posthumanists come to many of the same conclusions as Indigenous thinkers. This is a potentially exciting convergence that might help to shift how in how the formation of coalitions in ecological struggle is approached. The "overlap" of material Sundberg describes can also be seen as a sign that the grip of humanism has in fact begun to loosen, and that generalized desire to foster relationality with the nonhuman seems to be growing.

Karen Barad, for example, has coined the term "ethico-onto-epistem-ology" in order to describe "the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being" in her theory of agential realism, a formulation which resonates with aspects of Indigenous thought (90). Cosmologies vary widely throughout Indigenous communities, but "the human" and "the individual" as they are conceived

of in Enlightenment philosophy are not constructs that generally resonate with Indigenous thought. As Kim TallBear states in a roundtable for *Critical Ethnic Studies* on "late identity," both the "individualistic part" and the "human-centric" aspects of identity make it a relatively meaningless concept for her, as to say "I am Dakota" invokes an entire set of social relations with the human and more-than-human world—"If it is just people, you do not get Indigenous peoplehood" (101-02).

Indigeneity and the Anthropocene

Since the early 2000s, discussions of ecological thought have inevitably become associated with the Anthropocene, defined as a new geological epoch in which humans act as a force of nature generating global environmental change. Anthropocene discourse has been influential in literary studies for the last half-decade, taking the form of a call to read and write texts with a greater attention to both planetary scales and nonhuman presences. Despite the seeming anthropocentrism of the category, the idea of the Anthropocene has been extremely influential for posthumanist thought. Because Anthropocene conditions indicate that the entire planet is responsive to human actions, "nature" cannot so easily be rendered as inert and separate.

While I find these developments compelling and useful, as critics like Rob Nixon have pointed out, the seemingly "equalizing" gesture of the Anthropocene can act as an ideological paradigm that glosses over the unequal ways in which human populations are responsible for and affected by large-scale changes to our planet. Nixon notes that "the environmentalism of the poor is frequently catalyzed by resource imperialism inflicted on the global South to maintain the unsustainable consumer appetites of rich-country citizens" (22).

If a major issue with the Anthropocene paradigm is that it operates from the perspective of dominant cultures in the global North, the problems that emerge from this characteristic go beyond its failure to accurately characterize processes of ecological degradation. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues in *Allegories of the Anthropocene* (2019), the lack of engagement with postcolonial and Indigenous thinkers "has shaped Anthropocene discourse to claim the *novelty* of crisis rather than being attentive to the historical *continuity* of dispossession and disaster caused by empire" (2). Indigenous epistemes, that is, collide with the Anthropocene paradigm in two important ways. Firstly, they do not assume the current ecological crisis represents a rupture, as it emerges from extant histories. Secondly, the ongoing existence of Indigenous lifeways and theoretical paradigms means that humanism has never been the starting point for Indigenous cosmologies.

Kyle Whyte, for example, argues that some Indigenous peoples already "inhabit what our ancestors would likely have characterized as a dystopian future," since the environmental impacts of settler colonialism have engendered disruptions in Indigenous lives that prevent access to local relation with "many of the plants and animals that are significant to them" (207). Therefore, some Indigenous peoples "consider the future from what we already believe is a dystopia," a perspective that emphasizes the ongoing horror of colonial occupation (207). Zoe Todd discusses the need to "indigenize" the Anthropocene by fully accounting for "[h]istorical consciousness, ethical relationality, and Indigenous Métissage [Dwayne Donald's term for an ecological and relational understanding of the world that fosters reciprocal discourse between colonizer and colonized]" (250).

The chapters that follow seek to help reconceptualize our contemporary ecological crisis by investigating how theorizations of indigeneity have the capacity to change/have changed how

we approach the world and understand our place in it. My ultimate goal is to theorize how coalitions seeking to resist our species' current trajectory on arth organize around Indigenous epistemes. Accordingly, the final chapter ends where the first begins—at the contested space of a convention. A convention is not an ideal place to build coalitions, but it is a place in which different groups gather with people who are like-minded in at least one regard. As such, in the three chapters that follow, I look to texts and movements which attempt to model this possibility in order to theorize how such organizing buts up against questions of appropriation, as any engagement by non-Indigenous people with indigeneity—this project included—is rightly always open to being charged with.

Conclusion

Haunting the margins of this project is the question of appropriation. In 1998 Louis Owens wrote that there is more "wrangling" over authenticity, identity, and appropriation in Native American literature "than in any other nook or cranny of contemporary literature" (xv). In an anthologized email conversation with AnaLouise Keating, Deborah Miranda attributes this tendency to the unique situation of federally recognized U.S. Native peoples: "U.S. Indians learn to essentialize our Indianness because to do otherwise is to vanish completely, legally erased" (*Bridge We Call Home* 206). Keating and Miranda are discussing the issue of whether Miranda is comfortable including Chicanas in the category of "Indigenous women" (203). Miranda ultimately decides against doing so on the basis of U.S. Native sovereignty. However, she frames her decision to exclude Chicanas from the "Indian Rolls" as her own refusal to "come out" as *mestiza*, which she understands (after Gloria Anzaldúa) as "much larger than simply blood or genetics" (207).

This exchange gestures to the way "being Indigenous" in itself is a contested space. Questions of appropriation are necessarily more complicated in the case of *mestiza* or "mixedblood" (in Owens' terms) people with some Indigenous heritage.

Zoe Todd's essay on seeing the "*Great Latour*" lecture in 2013 demonstrates, however, that wrestling with appropriation is complicated even when no claims to Indigenous heritage are being made. Todd relays the experience of hearing Latour discuss the climate as a matter of "common cosmopolitical concern." Because recent environmental justice struggles had been centered around the similar and well-known formulation of *Sila*, the Inuit conception of spirit that is also translated by non-Inuit people as "climate," Todd is disappointed that Latour never mentions it ("Ontology" 5-6). She wants to hear Latour "credit Indigenous thinkers for their millennia of engagement with sentient environments, with cosmologies that enmesh people into complex relationships between themselves and *all* relations, and with climates and atmospheres as important points of organization and action…It never came" (5).

Certainly, Latour's work has admitted the influence of Indigenous cosmologies since the column he wrote for *anthropology today* in 2009 on the work of Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who seeks to transform anthropology by subjecting the discipline itself to critique via the elaborate philosophical system of the Tupinamba. In the editorial, Latour asserts that Viveiros' turn to "Amazonian thought—in particular his conception of multinaturalism—makes the discourse around "the search for a common world immensely more complex now that so many modes of inhabiting the earth have been freed to deploy themselves" (2).The phrasing of this latter statement is strange; surely Indigenous people have been deploying these modes of inhabitation for quite a while on their own without needing to have them freed by anthropologists! Todd notes that the only time she hears Indigenous thought referenced in

European lecture halls is when it is "filtered through white intermediaries" (as in the case of Viveiros) (7). This tendency might help to explain the odd phrasing around "modes of inhabiting the earth" being "freed to deploy themselves."

Todd ends the essay by contemplating what might have happened if Latour *had* referenced the conception of *Sila*, though, asking herself, "[s]hould I welcome his silence: better that he not address Indigenous thinking than to misinterpret or distort it?" (9). The issue, Todd explains, is not so much Latour in particular but the way academic structures make it possible for European thinkers to "advance and consume arguments that parallel discourse in Indigenous contexts without explicitly nodding to them" (8). The solution to this problem, she suggests, is for European critical theorists to engage Indigenous scholars and to cite them (18).

So why don't they? Audre Lorde's "An Open Letter to Mary Daly," published in *This Bridge Called My Back*, considers the costs of non-engagement as a strategy. In it, Lorde thanks Daly for sending a copy of her new book *Gyn/Ecology* (1978). Lorde describes reading the book and finding herself in agreement with Daly's commentary on goddesses, which was consistent with Lorde's own study of African myth. But, Lorde observes, there are no celebrations of African goddesses, or any non-Western European goddesses at all, anywhere in Daly's book. Lorde speaks to Daly as a fellow queer woman and an admirer of her previous work: "[w]hat you excluded from *Gyn/Ecology* dismissed my heritage and the heritage of other non-european women, and denied the real connections between all of us" (95). Perhaps Daly did not include African goddesses because she worried that the material was not "hers" to engage. But Lorde makes it clear that non-engagement is not a viable option. As Louis Owens says:

> To survive on this globe, it has become clear that we must achieve a transition from egocentrism to eco centrism. More and more we will be required to read across lines of cultural identity around us and within us. It is not easy but it is necessary, and the rewards

> are immeasurable. Finally, it is quite clearly the only way the community we call life will survive. (11)

World Ecology, Indigeneity and Epistemology in Countercultural American Literature reads texts that attempt to build coalitions through Indigenous paradigms in order to offer some provisional answers to this question. We begin in the 1960s and 1970s, at the height of the American counterculture's very public performances of "playing Indian."

Chapter One: Beats, *Curanderas*, and Whiteshamans

The Counterculture "Plays Indian"

Many of the major countercultural events of the 1960s and 1970s made use of "Indian" imagery and practices, or "playing Indian," to borrow Philip Deloria's term. For the largely white, middle-and-upper class young people who identified as the American "counterculture," "the wearing of the symbols of the Indian…signified that one's sympathies lay with both the past and the present targets of American foreign policy. To play Indian was to become vicariously a victim of United States imperialism" (*Playing Indian* 160-61).

These identifications were rarely based on any in-person contact with Indigenous Americans or engagements with Indigenous thinkers. The idea of the "Indian" was often mobilized outside the presence of any Indigenous people, leading to a paradoxical centering and de-centering of Indigenous struggles. There were moments in which hippies and New Left radicals joined up with AIM (American Indian Movement) activists, providing support, for example, during the AIM occupation of Alcatraz in 1971 and the 1968 Poor People's Campaign, which brought Black Power, Chicanx, U.S. Native, and white radicals together. For the most part, however, the American counterculture were content to play with "Indian" symbols in the absence of any real political engagement. While there were important factional splits in what now, largely due to the unifying force of anti-war sentiment, can seem like a single countercultural movement, the accusation of cultural appropriation has been applied in varying degrees to various subgroups that might be identified within the movement.[9]

[9] In *The New Age in the Modern West: Counterculture, Utopia, and Prophecy From The Late Eighteenth Century to the Present Day*, Nicholas Campion helpfully breaks the counterculture down into three distinct strands—the New

For example, one of the posters for the 1967 "Human Be-In," meant to unify Haight hippies and the more radical East Bay New Left contingent, featured an image of an "Indian chief" in full headdress holding a guitar. The event was framed as a "gathering of the tribes" (Campion 116). At the "Be-In," Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder chanted Buddhist mantras. That same year, prominent underground movement newspaper *The San Francisco Oracle* published an "Indian issue" featuring primarily white contributors ostensibly representative of "a generation, considered by many to be the reincarnation of the American Indian [that has been] born out of the ashes of the slightly-psychedelic zeit-geist of this brand new Aquarian Age" (Campion 116). During the acid-free first night of Ken Kesey's "Trips Festival" (1966), photos of "Indians" taken at Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon by Stewart Brand, the future creator of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, which marketed reading materials such as the Castaneda quartet as "Native American literature," were projected as a means of giving the viewers a drug-free transcendent experience (Smith 4).

These examples are indicative of the superficial engagement of the Haight-Ashbury set with "Indian" iconography, the best takedown of which came from U.S. Native folk singer Buffy Sainte-Marie in a July 1967 *Berkeley Barb* interview with John Bryan entitled "Buffy on Hippies…They'll Never be Indians." "It doesn't make any sense to me, these kids trying to be Indians," Bryan quoted Sainte-Marie saying. "The white people never seem to realize they cannot suck the soul out of a race. The ones with the sweetest intentions are the worst soul suckers" (10). Sainte-Marie goes on to advise white hippies to focus on acknowledging and

Left (for whom the struggle for social justice and racial equality was at the center), the hippies (who privileged individual rights and spiritual advancement over collective action), and the consumerist wing, who was just there for the fashion (100-102).

working to remedy the wreckage their own culture has caused rather than attempting to identify with those their ancestors colonized.

These appropriative logics characterized by the "sweetest intentions" also come under fire in subsequent critiques of the beat writer Gary Snyder and other "whiteshamans" by U.S. Native writers Geary Hobson and Wendy Rose in *The Remembered Earth* (1979). Hobson coins the term "whiteshamanism" as a way of identifying a "new version of cultural imperialism" (8). Some of the primary culprits identified in Hobson's essay are Jerome Rothenberg and his "translations," Gary Snyder's "shaman songs," and "other neo-romantic writers posing as Indians and/or Indian experts/spokesmen, such as Carlos Castaneda" (103). The presence of Castaneda, as Rose will note in her later article, "The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections on Whiteshamanism," makes it clear that "not all whiteshamans are Americans, poets, nor even white" (404).

The story of Castaneda's ascendency to fame and the consequences it held for Indigenous communities convey much about how acts of misrepresentation can act as a kind of, to borrow Saint-Marie's phrasing, "soul sucking." Castaneda's "dissertation," published by UC Press as *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Life*, became a bestseller among a reading public with a burgeoning interest in all things "non-Western." While initially presented as ethnography, *Don Juan* was later proved to be a fiction by other suspicious anthropologists.[10]

The Teachings of Don Juan focuses on a young man named Carlos who undergoes an apprenticeship with a "shaman" named Don Juan Matus that requires him to ingest a series of

[10] Detailed discussions of the controversies within the anthropological community surrounding Castaneda's work can be found in *Seeing Castaneda: Reactions to the 'Don Juan' Writings of Castaneda* (Daniel C. Noel, editor), *The Don Juan Papers: Further Castaneda Controversies* (Richard de Mille, editor), and Jay Fikes, *Carlos Castaneda, Academic Opportunism, and the Psychedelic Sixties*.

psychotropic plants. Castaneda aligned himself with a counterculture eager to throw off the fetters of rational Western consciousness by making Carlos's journey in part about becoming aware of the "all the perceptual possibilities of man" (1998 author's commentary on *Don Juan* xix). Throughout his time of study with Don Juan in the book, Carlos transforms into a dog and a crow in addition to connecting with the "spirit-manifestation" of "Mescalito," or peyote (15-18, 129-131, 69). These experiences lead him to cast off his belief in the disciplinary suppositions of anthropology. As the books progress—Castaneda wrote seven more about Carlos's journey—the representations of so-called "shamanism" cease to resemble Indigenous spirituality whatsoever. Carlos's own specialness is further and further centered. These developments contributed to Castaneda's fame as a reclusive millionaire guru (de Mille 13).

Castaneda's books were damaging to Indigenous people. Their popularity led masses of non-Indigenous "seekers" to flock to Indigenous communities seeking access to psychotropic plants and "shamans." Fans of Castaneda's initially searched for don Juan among the Yaquis, but when the Yaquis disappointed their expectations of transcendent experiences they descended on Huichol communities (Castaneda wrote *Don Juan* with the unacknowledged help of Huichol healers and ethnographers) (Fikes 134-41). Upon closer inquiry, readers searching for Don Juan discovered that the ritual use of hallucinogens as described by Castaneda does to some extent match up with aspects of Huichol spiritual practice, since Castaneda wrote the book with the unacknowledged help of Huichol healers and ethnographers (140). His books, then, have also been destructive to this community, since seekers often turned to Huichol communities. Then Castaneda groupies intruded upon Mazatec communities as well, since Castaneda claims that Don Juan's teacher was Mazatec in order to account for inconsistencies between Don Juan's "teachings" and Yaqui practices (59). The increased interest in psychedelics for non-ritual uses

produced by Castaneda and other figures like him resulted in newly strict regulations regarding access to sacred plants that have interfered with Indigenous spiritual practices (138-39).

Some of the most famous Beat writers were also the first ayahuasca tourists.[11] In the early 1950s, when a good deal of the American counterculture hadn't yet entered into a full-blown obsession with ideas of Indianness, William Burroughs, already exiled in Mexico City, journeyed further south to Peru in hopes of having the ultimate drug experience. Burroughs' trip foreshadows the ayahuasca tourism prevalent today among Western seekers. He was one of the first people from the West to take ayahuasca, as well as the first to correctly identify the genus of one of the plants local healers would mix with the vine to enhance the drinkers' experience (xxii).[12] Allen Ginsberg followed his lead in 1960, and Burroughs published an epistolary novel called *The Yage Letters* (1963) that was loosely based on their experiences (yagé is another term for ayahuasca). Most readers assumed the "letters" in the novel from Ginsberg to Burroughs and vice versa were drawn from actual correspondence, but everything in the novel, likewise, is of Burroughs' own invention.

The Yage Letters is an interesting text in relation to countercultural appropriations of Indigenous "spirituality." Ginsberg claims his trip to Peru is a spiritual quest, a framework Burroughs finds questionable. If most countercultural figures saw "playing Indian" as a means of transcending the limitations of capitalist desire and Western thought, Burroughs acknowledged

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[11] "Ayahuasca tourism" refers to the popular practice in which Western spiritual seekers travel to the Peruvian Amazon and adjacent areas to take yagé with local shamans. See Macarena Gómez-Barris, "Andean Phenomenology and Settler Colonialism," (Chapter Two of *The Extractive Zone*) and Michael Taussig, *Ayahuasca and Shamanism* and *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*.

[12] Burroughs' graduate training (both at Harvard and Columbia) was in anthropology, and in an unpublished "Appendix Summary" to the novel, Burroughs gives a short bibliography on yagé (accented correctly, unlike in the title), including everything published between 1911 and 1924 in English and Spanish. "The most complete collection of material on *yagé*," the end of the appendix notes, "is to be found in the Botanical Museum of Harvard University" (*Yage Letters Redux* 100).

his complicity with these systems and took Ginsberg along for the ride. The manuscript includes, for example, a "letter" from Ginsberg to Burroughs in which Ginsberg writes to Burroughs from Peru pleading for guidance regarding his ayahuasca "journey." What he gets, instead, are instructions explaining that Ginsberg is to cut the letter up line by line in order to generate a new text.[13] This response allows Burroughs to posit that Ginsberg's letter is not motivated by a genuine crisis, but the desire to construct a worthy self through literary adventures. Burroughs refuses to let the trips to Peru "in search of yage" follow the stereotypical framework of countercultural Western seeker becoming enlightened by an ennobling Indigenous spiritual guide, a blueprint which the character of Ginsberg attempts to imitate, to no avail. Burroughs' skepticism about the "spiritual" adventures of his fellow Beats is an anomaly. His ability to articulate this critique stems from his willingness to identify the place he occupies in existing global structures of power—perhaps because he takes such pleasure in exposing the depravities of the West/global North.

Burroughs identifies an impulse in his fellow countercultural writers akin to what Macarena Gómez-Barris has referred to as "New Age Settler Colonialism," which is characterized by interactions between foreign visitors and Indigenous peoples in which well-off tourists, typically from the U.S., "extract" from shamans in order to be relieved of the "alienation characteristic of consumer capitalism" (53). Gómez-Barris's critique of extractivism applies not only to ayahuasca and other literal forms of spiritual tourism but to many of the countercultural paradigms of resistance I discuss in this chapter more generally. In *Ayahuasca and Shamanism* (2002), the anthropologist Michael Taussig connects spiritual seekers to colonial fantasies writ

[13] Burroughs made the "cut-up" method famous, but it was developed by his friend Brion Gysin.

large, positing that non-Indigenous middle-class people's engagement with Amazonian "shamans" results in:

> [I]ncredible fantasies about the powers of shamans…For me that's where the principle damage is done: in constructing (as anthropologists do, perhaps with more caution, but equally guilty) an 'Indian culture' by which to make sense of their drug experiences. (14)

Gómez-Barris comments on how spiritual tourism in Peru's "Sacred Valley," for example, has caused local property values to soar as moneyed foreigners build luxury eco-retreats, pushing Indigenous peoples further toward the margins of their lands and the local economy (53-55). Likewise, by focusing on an abstracted indigeneity with little to no regard for contemporary Indigenous existence, much of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture further marginalized Indigenous communities by disseminating misrepresentations of Indigenous life. Settler colonial fantasies about the "spiritual" qualities of Indigenous people, particularly as imagined through the use of ritual plants and shamanism, serve to abstract Indigenous communities' material circumstances and circumscribe Indigenous lifeways in the realm of the "cultural," somewhere outside of politics and history. The damage done to Indigenous communities in the U.S. and Mexico by the popularity of Carlos Castaneda's books is just one example, then, of how these "fantasies about the power of shamans" can have negative material consequences for Indigenous communities.

Jerome Rothenberg and the Ethnopoetic Project

I direct the majority of my attention in this chapter on ethnopoetics as a case study of the American counterculture's relationship to indigeneity for a few reasons. Firstly, according to Jerome Rothenberg, its founder, ethnopoetic redefines poetry with "an emphasis on those alternative traditions to which the West gave names like 'pagan,' 'gentile,' 'tribal,' 'oral,' and

'ethnic'" (*Symposium of the Whole* xi). Ethnopoetics is a conception that was entirely formed by artists and anthropologists working in an academic context, making it an important formation for cultural workers to consider. In addition, while the movement is not particularly well-known, the First International Ethnopoetics Symposium asked notable participants like Fredric Jameson and Sylvia Wynter to address the question "what is ethnopoetics?" By inviting thinkers from outside their circle to contribute, the core promoters opened their work up to critique, which Wynter and Jameson in particular were happy to provide. I focus primarily in this section on Wynter's talk "Ethno or Socio Poetics," which offers an important counterpoint to the other responses as well as to posthumanist thought more generally.

The collective orientation of the symposium creates a useful relational element, and the differences among the diverse thinkers' answers to this question are helpful in terms of weighing how different theorists engaged indigeneity in an academic/artistic context during this time period. A conference, as noted in the introduction, is an excellent place to consider the question of how to build coalitions in situations where many different individuals and groups may have a shared focus but quite divergent perspectives. I then focus on Rothenberg's experiences with the Mazatec *curandera* [wise one] María Sabina in order to introduce a material element to the theoretical conversation—in order to see what happens when his version of ethnopoetics exits the "ivory tower."[14]

Leslie Marmon Silko's two-part contribution to the aforementioned anthology *The Remembered Earth* begins by reflecting on the way in which white ethnologists' intrusions into Indigenous communities to "collect prayers, songs, and stories," and the subsequent publication

[14] I translate *curandera* as "wise one" in accordance with Sabina's description in her *Vida*, which I discuss later in this chapter.

of these lootings, have resulted in the dissemination of "implicit racist assumptions" about Indigenous literature and culture. The presence of this material in the world gives rise to "imitation Indian poems" or "translations" of Native songs and poems that Silko sees as mere rearrangements of ethnographic material; she sees this tendency most prominently in Jerome Rothenberg's anthologies (195). The second part of what Silko terms her "old fashioned Indian attack" focuses on another member of the ethnopoetics circle, Gary Snyder. In particular, Silko takes issue with *Turtle Island,* the collection of poems for which Snyder was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1975. Silko here echoes Buffy Sainte-Marie's earlier critique of white hippies "playing Indian," exhorting Snyder to fully come to terms with the history of his own ancestors and "create new myths" out of this fuller reckoning (213). Silko's linking of ethnography and "ethnopoetics" with Snyder's "whiteshamanism" makes the case that whiteshamanism acts as an extension of anthropologists' cultural thefts. For example, Snyder's later claims to be "born-again Native American," and his assertion that "ultimately we can all lay claim to the term native" indicates that he was unwilling or unable to take critiques from Indigenous writers such as Silko seriously (Gray 274-75). In Silko's estimation, by refusing to subject their own methodologies to self-critique, and to consider their position within global power structures, proponents of ethnopoetics like Rothenberg and Snyder end up simply reproducing tired and inaccurate representations of Indigenous peoples.

An avant-garde movement focused on articulating a more interesting definition of "poetry" in the contemporary "Western" context, ethnopoetics was spearheaded by the poet Jerome Rothenberg. As Rothenberg explains in the preface to *Symposium of the Whole: A Range of Discourse Toward an Ethnopoetics*, the term felt to the movement's originators like a natural extension of terms such as ethnomusicology. In his introduction at the "First International

Ethnopoetics Symposium," Rothenberg explains that the term ethnic is derived from *ethnos*, emphasizing an older meaning of the term that does not function as "an expression of what we are as groups in isolation" (*alcheringa* 6). He chooses to focus on *ethnos* as it was understood in ancient Greece, where it meant not "*this nation* ('us')" but rather "*those nations* ('them' or 'others')" (6). This latter formulation, Rothenberg claims, was used to refer to "people of the countryside," or "primitives" and thereby also poets since Plato asked they be driven from the city (6). Poetry, then, in Rothenberg's terms, is the language of the "other" (6).

Comprised of Rothenberg and other primarily white avant-garde poets and critics such as Snyder, David Antin, Michel Benamou, Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), George Quasha, Nathaniel Tarn, and Anne Waldman, ethnopoetics championed a redefinition of American poetry that emphasized "ancient" Indigenous oral literatures printed in translation. The range of anthologies in this tradition edited by Rothenberg—*Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poems from Africa, America, Asia, & Oceania* (1968), *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americas* (1972), *America a Prophecy: A New Reading of American Poetry from Pre-Columbian Times to the Present* (1973), and *Symposium of the Whole: A Range of Discourse Toward an Ethnopoetics* (with Diane Rothenberg) (1983) give a sense of the scope and ambition of Rothenberg's project. If an anthology is one way of drawing or redrawing the boundaries of what constitutes poetry, or American poetry, then Rothenberg's anthologies certainly gave the appearance of centering Indigenous "literatures" far more than most American literature anthologies.

As the titles indicate, *Shaking the Pumpkin* was limited to works by Indigenous writers, whereas the other three anthologies, *Technicians*, *America a Prophecy*, and *Symposium* are also notable for their desire to link the modernist and contemporary avant-garde Rothenberg affiliated

to Indigenous literatures. Canonical European writers like Ezra Pound and Antonin Artaud were placed alongside new "translations" of Indigenous works. Since the links between Indigenous oral poetry and experimental poetry are not exactly self-evident, Rothenberg and those affiliated with his project found themselves tasked with articulating them.

On the one hand, Rothenberg explains the pairing by emphasizing how these "modernist/experimental" writers are engaged in "a re-viewing of 'primitive' ideas of the sacred" which represent "an attempt—by poets and others—to preserve and enhance primary human values against a mindless mechanization that has run past any uses it may once have had" (*Symposium* xxi). "Primitive" models, Rothenberg explains, are "classless societies" with "a long subterranean tradition of resistance to the twin authorities of state and organized religion" (xxi). Rothenberg's second statement, which exceeds the usual logics of primitivist modernisms, also shows the influence of thinkers that Fredric Jameson terms "new anthropologists," like Stanley Diamond and Pierre Clastres (*alcheringa* 110). Clastres, for example, theorizes that the difference between "primitive" and "non-primitive" societies is that non-primitive societies are ruled by the State, which splits them into two categories: the dominating and the dominated (*Archeology of Violence* 88). Through these rhetorics, Rothenberg suggests a connection between the "otherness" of "primitive models" and the "otherness" of experimental poetry.

On the other hand, Rothenberg sees "contemporary poets as the 'marginal' defenders of an endangered human diversity and poets of other times and places who represented that diversity itself and many of the values being uncovered and recovered in the new poetic enterprises" (xv). Rothenberg's choice to equate the marginalization of Indigenous peoples in the Americas and the distaste of mainstream American poetry for more experimental forms reveals that he represses important differences between the material lives of Indigenous peoples and

bourgeois white intellectuals, projecting a hazy multiculturalism that erases present-tense oppression.

Rothenberg's primary claim to an affinity between seemingly different sets of materials is that the experimentalists have "seen the light," so to speak, and understand that the best critique of postmodern capitalist society lies not in "the advocacy of some particular system" but rather in a reverential turn to these "non-Western" models: as Rothenberg's mentor Robert Duncan phrased it, "the old excluded orders must be included" (xxi). In this sense, some of the stated goals of the ethnopoetic project are shared by many of the other writers discussed throughout *World Ecology*. These affinities, along with a belief in poetics as a vehicle for transcending the limitations of mainstream Western thought, drew Jameson and Wynter to contribute to a useful definition of ethnopoetics despite their obvious reservations about the movement.

The First (and Last) International Ethnopoetics Symposium

In April 1975, Rothenberg and literary critic Michel Benamou hosted a number of well-known scholars at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for the first "'academic' gathering in ethnopoetics (tentative definition: 'the intersection between poetry and anthropology in our time" –N. Tarn)' (Benamou, *alcheringa* 5). Nathaniel Tarn explains his explicit formulation of the anthropological character of the ethnopoetic enterprise in his contribution to the conference as emerging from experimental poetry and anthropology's shared interest in "societies which have a heavy investment in 'techniques of the sacred'" (24). Similarly, Rothenberg's introductory remarks articulate a desire to "break with the immediate, inherited past & find resources for our search, our meeting with the future, in something vastly older: the 'nature-related cultures,' as Snyder calls them, with their roots back to the Paleolithic and the Dream-time" (7). Rothenberg's

reference to “the Dream-time” echoes the name of the magazine he then co-edited with Dennis Tedlock, *alcheringa*, which published a portion of the conference proceedings.

“Dreamtime” is a conception advanced by anthropologists who studied Indigenous cultures in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Wolfe 61). In his essay about the concept, Patrick Wolfe argues that Australian “Aboriginal Dreamtime” is “a settler-colonial discourse par excellence” (58). By figuring the Dreamtime simultaneously as “a sacred, heroic time long ago when man and nature came to be as they are”—a description that also befits “the Paleolithic”—and a timeless “everywhen,” anthropologists generated a conception that disconnected public perceptions of “Aboriginal” peoples from concrete historical and economic contexts (77-78). By focusing on the “distant origins” and “spiritual presence” of Indigenous peoples, settler colonial discourses substitute “an ideal horizontal relationship—'encounter’—for the vertical reality of incorporation” (76). That Rothenberg and Tedlock would choose *alcheringa* as the name of their magazine suggests these critiques are potentially applicable to the ethnopoetic project as a whole.

Rothenberg and Snyder in particular seem to relegate global Indigenous presence to the past and to a disembodied eternal present. Rothenberg’s introductory remarks characterize the “remnants” of “hunting and gathering peoples” as “an endangered and ultimately doomed ‘fourth world,’” a term popularized by Dene (Navajo) writer George Manuel. Manuel became involved in internationalist organizing for Indigenous self-determination and recognized the need for a term like “third world” that could assist in producing global solidarity among Indigenous groups living under settler colonial governments (*The Fourth World* xvi). Considering this meaning, it is certainly ironic that Rothenberg invokes this term directly before barreling right into the cliché of the “vanishing Indian,” which works to diminish Indigenous resistance and survival in the face

of settler colonial terror and strategies of containment. "Fourth World" also refers to the world beneath this one in Laguna and other Indigenous cosmologies, suggesting the ability to pass between worlds, a conception which likely appealed to Rothenberg's understanding of himself as a poet-shaman. Gary Snyder's contribution to the symposium also invokes the anthropological sentiment of Indigenous cultures as "endangered"; Snyder, in discussing the anthropogenic destruction of human cultures, other species, and the biosphere itself, compares ethnopoetics to "some field of zoology that is studying disappearing species" (*alcheringa* 13).

In addition to the "vanishing Indian" trope, Rothenberg also utilizes the commonly adopted frame of writers as the contemporary equivalents of "shamans" (despite the continued existence of Indigenous healers Rothenberg would characterize as such). The shaman, according to Rothenberg, becomes the prototype for the poet in that they are both "solitary, inspired religious functionaries" engaged with the "visionary and ecstatic" and "the communal" (11). Like the shaman, the poet is a seer who goes off alone, brings back visions, and performs them for the community in a public "act of madness" that heals the tribe (11). Even Keats' formulation of the "chameleon poet" is akin to the "vision of the shaman-trickster" (7). Rothenberg's understanding of the poet as a kind of shaman, uniquely responsible for healing society through the practice of art, is a ridiculous projection of "Indianness" onto himself. Taussig's concern about how non-Indigenous desire for "the other's" spirituality can produce damaging fantasies about indigeneity seems founded, in this case at least.

Despite these problems, there are also a number of compelling aspects to the ethnopoetic approach. Rothenberg, echoing many other thinkers discussed throughout this project, identifies the ideological paradigm of coloniality par excellence as separation—in nature, in species, and in self (7). He also articulates ethnopoetics as one particular approach to what Nathaniel Tarn calls

"totalization," or the coming together of "human beings who share between us multiple origins and identities"—one that has the advantage of "not needing to invent a strategy" (7). It is true that the continued existence of Indigenous lifeways, and any available knowledge of them, is the result of generations of survivance on the part of Indigenous peoples. In this sense, turning to Indigenous thought as a resource for ways of conceiving being that lie outside mainstream Western philosophical and political frameworks does seem efficacious, in part because simply the amount of energy settler states have put into eradicating and erasing Indigenous communities suggests that Indigenous ways of conceiving relationality pose a significant political threat to colonial-capitalist logics. The term "totalization" raises alarms, but Tarn's conception seems to leave space for multiplicity, "totalization" meaning a process of coming together in new ways b bb while retaining distinctness, rather than becoming a singular "totality." Rothenberg refers to this possibility as "an intertribal, universal culture" (11).

This question of how to generate planetary solidarity is central for many thinkers engaged in theorizing world ecology. Dipesh Chakrabarty's "negative universal history," Ursula Heise's "eco-cosmopolitanism," Gayatri Spivak's "planetarity," as well as Franz Fanon and Sylvia Wynter's attempts at reinventing and revalorizing humanism, for example, all seek to develop global processes of non-universalizing solidarity "without the myth of a global identity" (Chakrabarty 222).[15] Rothenberg disagrees with the notion that "you can only destroy other cultures in the attempt to bridge them"; his use of an ambiguous "you" referring to no one in particular conceals the power relations at hand (*alcheringa* 7). He doesn't say "white academics can only destroy Indigenous cultures in the attempt to build bridges to them," the greater

[15] See Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," Ursula Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, Gayatri Spivak, "Planetarity," Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, and Sylvia Wynter, "Ethno or Socio Poetics."

specificity of which might provide an opportunity for self-reflection on the part of the largely white, well-educated ethnopoetics circle.

At the rest of the Symposium, George Quasha, for example, an artist who co-translated many of the "Indigenous" materials found in Rothenberg's anthologies, presented a paper that primarily discussed the works of Carlos Castaneda—particularly *Tales of Power*, which, oddly enough, is also the text Deleuze and Guattari are most drawn to in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In it, he heralds Castaneda as "our Ethnopoetic hero" (68). Castaneda receives this title in part as a result of his desire to critique the discipline of anthropology through the lens of "Indigenous" thought. In a final assimilative gesture, Quasha imagines a multiplicity of "tribes and anti-tribes" that "collide, mix, change, and move out toward an optimum membership of *one*" (76).

Gary Snyder, despite also concluding his talk with a quote from *Tales of Power*, seems to find such a formulation disturbing, as he refers to some comments during the conference that assumed a kind of "one-world assimilation…desirable" (17). Despite his constant figuration of Indigenous peoples as non-existent presences that need the assistance of the ethnopoets to spread Indigenous messages (i.e. "we're just starting, in the last ten years here, to make songs that will speak for plants, mountains, animals, and children"), Snyder formulates a scenario of being in community with other people, including nonhumans, that at least does not seek to produce a kind of undifferentiated totality (20). In all of the above statements, there seems to be a faith in the notion that, despite our differences, something exists that might bring us together; it seems difficult, however, to come together if not everyone is invited to the gathering.

For the ethnopoets, moving beyond "Man" means shifting not only our relationship to the Earth but to our own being-in-the-world and the practice of art. Rothenberg's circle also sought to emphasize process—the poem as "everything-that-happens"—through ethnopoetics (10).

Differences among members of the ethnopoetics circle led to very different articulations of this "impulse toward the oral" that characterized the movement (10). Rothenberg makes reference to the oral "living tradition of the Jews," which says that "even in an age of writing, the word must be renewed by processes of speaking and sounding" (9). Interestingly, there are no mentions of the living oral traditions of contemporary Indigenous peoples, so Rothenberg is able to posit himself as the modern shaman-poet who has been called to trace a line back to "THE FIRST MYTHOLOGIZED SHAMANS OF THE LATER PALEOLITHIC CULTURES" [caps are Rothenberg's] ("Dialogue" 529). It would seem to me that a movement interested in "oral literatures," performance, and embodied presence might see more value in inviting Indigenous participants from various communities to perform work, but Simon Ortiz, already a member of the circle, was the only Indigenous performer.

David Antin, who also performed one of his "talk poems" at the symposium, defines ethnopoetics as "People's Poetics or the poetics of natural language" ("Talking to Discover" 112). Antin explains that his poetics are based in this process, which he conceives of as "linguistic acts of invention and discovery through which the mind explores the transformational power of language and discovers and invents the world and itself" (112). Antin expresses concern about the "historical legacy of the term *ethnos*, a kind of anthropological commitment to exoticism, to whatever is remote from us and somehow different" (112). He attempts to avoid this "poetics of the Other" by translating *ethnos* instead as "people" or "human."

Like Antin, Jameson and Wynter were sympathetic to the ethnopoets' desire to revise mainstream Western understandings of poetics but were less convinced by the "ethno" component of the project. Fredric Jameson's very short contribution to the conference references the original title of Sylvia Wynter's paper, "Ethnopoetics versus Sociopoetics" (*alcheringa* 108).

Ethnopoetics, in Jameson's estimation, is a sociopoetics, and that makes it exciting (108). He is also sympathetic to the potential for ethnopoetics to be a "powerful instrument designed to reawaken the sense of difference within this society" by bringing forth again the sense "that it is really not necessary to live in this particular way, and that people have been able to live otherwise" (108). What Jameson refers to as the "new anthropology" (Pierre Clastres, Stanley Diamond, Marshall Sahlins) has helped to revive "the vision of 'societies before history," helping us to remember that the point of revolution must be to create some "qualitatively different social form from this one" (110).[16] He sees the use of other societies' poetic forms as "an implied commentary on our own society," but is concerned that when a critique is implicit, it can be hard to know if it accomplishes its task (109).

Jameson then offers the critique he might leverage if he were "a hostile critic" (he insists that he is not): what if ethnopoetics' use of "native American poetry" is in fact a symptom of "the increasing vocation of the system to absorb and to integrate the last of its hitherto irreducible ethnic minorities?" (109). In referring to "Native Americans" as "hitherto irreducible ethnic minorities," Jameson refuses, as per Jodi Byrd's analysis in *Transit of Empire*, "the conflation of racialization and colonization" (xxvi). While he states that he would not necessarily answer his question in the affirmative, he also posits it would be irresponsible for the conference attendees not to consider this possibility. Jameson's real issue is with ethnopoetics' failure to (despite their inclusion of Ezra Pound in anthologies) follow the "old Poundian injunction to

[16] Jameson's reference to "societies before history" seems to contradict his criticisms of the ethnopoets. For context, Jameson is borrowing from Pierre Clastres' formulation of "primitive societies" as "societies without a State." In Clastres' work, the emergence of the State coincides with two major ruptures: firstly, the divide created between the dominating and the dominated within State-administered societies, and secondly, between "Savage and Civilized man…for on the other side, Time became History" (*Archeology of Violence* 88). If the "history of peoples who have a history is the history of class struggle…the history of peoples without history is the history of their struggle against the State" (*Society Against the State* 218).

'include history'" (110). It is disappointing, Jameson says, that a poetics which claims to work in relation to other social forms would elide history to such an extent.

Despite his reservations, Jameson does end on a semi-positive note, noting that the "ecological thrust" of ethnopoetics is a useful "popular front strategy" that "has the added merit of reminding us that genuinely primitive social life is a complete system which organizes nature rather than destroying it" (111). He worries, however, that it is too easy for the viewer to lose sight of how the attack on the exploitation of nature is linked to the more important project of combatting the exploitation of human beings (111). Jameson finds it particularly ironic that a poetry associated with Indigenous culture would forget the relationship between this "politics of nature" and "a politics which aims at the basic imperializing mechanisms of our own socio-economic system" (111).

Jameson's critiques—which seem to apply most to Rothenberg, Snyder, and Quasha—come out of his frustration regarding the abstract formulations around "the sacred" and "nature" espoused by these thinkers. As evidenced by many of the previous examples, their contributions to the Symposium often demonstrate profound incoherency because there is no recognition of contemporary Indigenous existence nor the potential problems that might arise from either the "translation" and/or "performance" of Indigenous materials by non-Indigenous artists. If the three men operate, in Gayatri Spivak's terms, as "first-world intellectual[s] masquerading as the absent nonrepresenter who lets the oppressed speak for themselves," how does Rothenberg in particular, who regularly performs his Indigenous "translations," act as an "absent nonrepresenter?" ("Subaltern" 292)

Snyder, Rothenberg, and other writers who utilize Indigenous thought and culture under the rubric of "ethnopoetics," with its claim both to the authority of "ethnography" and the

"freedom" of artistic production, elide contemporary Indigenous voices while appearing less directly guilty of appropriation under the auspices of "translation." If translation can be conceived of as channeling, then Rothenberg's invocations of the sacred allow him to present himself as a shaman-like figure tasked with keeping Indigenous art alive. Since larger spiritual agencies ostensibly control the performance, the nature of the body delivering the material is made to matter less. In addition, because Rothenberg does not account for the contemporary existence of Indigenous people, by his logic he must use the power he has been invested with to reach back into the "Dream-time" and bring forth these "lost" materials, like the "shaman" who brings them back to the community. Jameson objects in particular to Rothenberg's deployment of "the sacred," noting how the concept "seems indeed to hold out the possibility of a critique of our own system, but in fact ends up projecting values and a social nostalgia which are equally regressive" (110).[17]

Sylvia Wynter's Counterhumanist Socio Poetics[18]

Wynter's contribution to the Symposium blows the entire enterprise of ethnopoetics wide open. While she was much in sympathy with some of the modes of thinking and art making being promoted by the ethnopoets' circle, she also saw their methodology as flawed. Wynter's paper expresses solidarity with the attendees while asking them to change their approach dramatically. She frames ethnopoetics as "an event in our readiness to think about certain problems not necessarily called up by literary history or Western cultural history as we are used to viewing it"

[17] I disagree with Jameson that invocations of the sacred necessarily represent ineffective critique or project nostalgia, but in the case of Rothenberg, the accusation lands.

[18] I refer to Wynter's work as "counterhumanist" in accordance with Katherine McKittrick's designation in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (11).

(78). In particular, ethnopoetics offers an opportunity to consider how ethnocentrism has structured the world economy. Ethnopoetics is the "focal point of our *poetical/political* assumption of *Otherness*, an assumption…which alone can negate the *we/they* dichotomy" (79). Wynter sees the "assumption of *Otherness*" as a countercultural impulse; what George Quasha (whose paper Wynter frequently quotes) refers to as "a sort of permanent subculture, what I am calling (and will speak of later) as the Other tradition" (66).

Wynter then pivots to ask who constitutes the "we" in George Quasha's definition of ethnopoetics. She points out that the "we" gathered at the conference could be broken into two categories: people from the first world and people from the third world (78). Despite her dislike of mainstream usage of the term "third world," Wynter uses it nonetheless to show how these ranked (1st, 2nd, 3rd) categories in fact define a relation between a "*We* and an *Other*" (78). If the question of who constitutes the "we" of a given utterance is important, then how are we to simultaneously conceive of the dissolution of the we/they dichotomy? If poetry, as Wynter submits, contains certain possibilities for the assumption of "otherness," then how do we understand the position of non-Indigenous artists performing Indigenous materials?

Wynter's sympathy for poetry informs her position regarding the possibilities for ethnopoetics and the Symposium's significance (87). She posits that when Western man—which means "ALL OF US, SINCE IT IS NO LONGER A RACIAL BUT A CULTURAL TERM" [caps in original]—massacred Indigenous peoples and "penned them up on reservations," he also penned up a "MODE OF COGNITION…WHICH WESTERN MAN…REMAINS AWARE OF ONLY THROUGH POETRY" (84). Wynter's faith in poetry comes out of her sense that it is the "inventor/guarantor of the concretely human"; poetry is the "agent and product by which man names the world, and calling it into being, invents his *human* as opposed to his 'natural' being

(86-7). I understand "natural" here to mean "naturalized," or supposedly given, conditions of being which are determined by, in Wynter's terms, the Western bourgeoisie. She argues that naming the world also means conceptualizing the world, which requires an active and creative relation to the planet (87). This "active and creative relationship," however, does not preclude the existence of power dynamics—Adam naming all the animals to establish dominion quickly comes to mind.

The real trouble according to Wynter begins with Columbus, who gained the power to name other men, thus designating them as "other." The programmed overvaluation of Western man's being is enabled by this devaluation of so-called "primitive man" (86). Humanism—the new dominant ideology of the Western bourgeoisie—thus depends on some humans being "defined and forced to accept their definition as SUB-HUMAN" (86).The "discovery" of the New World and the concomitant emergence of a "world economy" leads to an anomalous mutation that results in the first total commodity culture (79, 87). Poetry, Wynter asserts, with its "imperative to dereify the market-created signs" is thus a valuable weapon in the struggle against the colonial-capitalist order (88).

The epistemological mutation Wynter describes emerges from the sixteenth-century "retotalization" in which "European man was transformed from Christian man to Western man, the other peoples of the earth were transformed into *negroes* and natives"—with the classification "negro" functioning as "a particular form of the generic 'natives'" (79, 82). This massive shift from religious to secular ideology also required a radical change to definitions of the "natural," situating

> Western man as the NORM OF MAN and non-Western man as THE OTHER, the not-quite, the non-men who guaranteed the Being of the Norm by his own non-being. In creating themselves as the norm of men, the Western bourgeoisie *created* the idea of the

Primitive, the idea of the savage. (83)

The "Primitive" signifies *ethnos,* i.e. otherness—or the idea of the Western bourgeoisie's negation (83). As Wynter emphasizes, this image of the "savage" is a sign deployed by the dominant culture, upon which it is dependent for its own self-conception. In addition to human groups deemed not-man, nature in the New World, once under collective stewardship, "became mere land, to be exploited" (82).

Wynter uses *Robinson Crusoe* to illustrate how this power to name other men is deeply imbricated with the "world economy." If, prior to the sixteenth century, "all human cultures existed as the agent and the product of the process by which man invented himself as human," in commodity-culture "objects invent man as another object labelled human" (87). Wynter discusses Friday's submission to Crusoe in terms of Crusoe's gun; the object is what defines Friday as a servant and Crusoe as a master (87). The gun, in short, establishes Crusoe as Man, but, predictably, "Crusoe sees his mastery over the Other" as being based not in the use of force but in something divinely ordained via his superior *ethnos* (88). Naming, too, plays an important role in these newly established relations of domination: by calling "the Indian *Friday* Crusoe negates his former name, the meaning of his former culture, the architecture of significance" (87). The power to name, in short, is the power to turn persons into signs, objects, property. If poetry—as Wynter claims—"creates anew the sign," then ethnopoetics posits being human as a "praxis" rather than the occupation of an unevenly distributed category (McKittrick 3).

Wynter asserts that ethnopoetics "can only have validity, [sic] if it is explored in the context of *sociopoetics* where the *socio* firmly places the *ethnos* in its concrete historical particularity" (78). Wynter then delivers a particularly crucial reminder to the conference, one that speaks to my earlier commentary about how Rothenberg, Snyder, and Quasha in particular

erase contemporary Indigenous presence in order to center themselves:

> HENCE IT WOULD SEEM TO ME TO BE THE POINT OF THIS CONFERENCE: THE EXPLORATION OF THIS *ALTERNATIVE MODE OF COGNITION* IDEOLOGICALLY SUPPRESSED IN OURSELVES, YET STILL A LIVING FORCE AMONG LARGE MAJORITIES OF THE THIRD WORLD PEOPLES. IN THIS COMMON EXPLORATION THERE CAN THEN BE NO CONCEPT OF A LIBERAL MISSION TO SAVE 'PRIMITIVE POETICS' FOR 'PRIMITIVE PEOPLES.' THE SALVAGING OF OURSELVES, THE RECLAMATION OF VAST AREAS OF OUR BEING, IS DIALECTICALLY RELATED TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THOSE CONDITIONS WHICH BLOCK THE FREE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN POTENTIALITIES OF THE MAJORITY PEOPLES OF THE THIRD WORLD. (84)

Wynter reminds those gathered that the only thing in need of "salvaging"—which calls to mind the term "salvage anthropology"—is the Western bourgeoisie conception of being that relies on the devaluation of an "other." Working to undo this epistemological hegemony is one way of contributing to the destruction of the conditions of domination perpetuated by the first world, which interferes with world ecology as a whole.

In invoking the third world, Wynter also suggests to her audience that a movement with an "impulse to the oral" might additionally consider engaging with Black popular culture since the Black experience in the New World has been paradigmatic of the non-Western experience of Native peoples (85). While Wynter sees Black and Indigenous people in the U.S. as being subject to the same degrading logics, some of her other remarks suggest she sees important differences between the development of Black and Indigenous culture in the New World. In her account, "the blacks reinvented themselves as a WE that needed no OTHER to constitute their Being; that laid down the cultural parameters of a concretely universal *ethnos*," while the "fixed quality" of "the magnificent tribal poetry of the American Indians" is a result of "the fact that this culture and its bearers have been penned up, corralled on *reservations* while their ecology, the world of their cultural imagination, was drained away" (85, 88). While it is certainly true that many contemporary Indigenous people in the U.S. reside on reservations, some reside elsewhere,

and Indigenous people have, like Black Americans in the New World, continued to make art.

Wynter clarifies her meaning somewhat by asserting that "the real cultural changes that take place" occur in the creation of new cultural forms "as an accusation against cultural destitution, and as the dynamic of revolt" (88). She gives the nineteenth century Ghost Dance and the "Peyote cult of the American Indians" as examples, however, and does not mention contemporary Indigenous art/activism. Why the development of resistant art forms would be central to Black survival in the U.S. but not for Native peoples remains unclear. Wynter concludes her remarks with a call to approach other cultures with an eye to constructing "an alternative process of making ourselves human…transforming its abstract universal premise into the concretely human global, the concretely WE" (88). Wynter is clearly interested in solidarity, but not the pretense of solidarity being offered at the conference.

The Case of María Sabina

A paradigmatic example of the fraught nature of encounters between the Western bourgeoise and Indigenous people can be found in the interaction between María Sabina, a Mazatec *curandera* from a small town in Oaxaca who rose to fame as a healer and poet in large part through the efforts of amateur anthropologists and the intrusions of the white American counterculture, including Jerome Rothenberg.

In 1955, the banker and amateur "ethnomycologist" Gordon Wasson arrived in Mexico in search of a healer who would take him through a ritual involving the ingestion of psychotropic mushrooms. More importantly, and tellingly, Wasson's next journey to Oaxaca, in 1956, was clandestinely funded via the CIA's MK-ULTRA program under the cover name of the "Geschickter Fund for Medical Research" (Fikes 33-34). Wasson found the person he was

looking for in Sabina, and he was so impressed by the *veladas* she sang in her mushroom ceremonies that he returned in 1956 to make a recording, which was released the following year. That same year, Wasson published an article about his experiences with Sabina in the *Life Magazine* "Great Adventures Series" entitled "Seeking the Magic Mushroom," (May 13, 1957) coining a term that remains in use to this day. While Wasson used a pseudonym, referring to Sabina as "Eva Mendez," this did not prevent droves of hippies from swarming to her hometown of Huaulta, a phenomenon that, according to Sabina, led to the destruction of her calling. As she puts it in her *Vida* (1977), a text transcribed into Spanish by her fellow townsman and Mazatec speaker Álvaro Estrada (Sabina spoke only Mazatec, and did not write), then republished by Rothenberg in English in two editions (1981, 2003):

> The day I did a vigil for the first time in front of the foreigners, I didn't think anything bad would happen…But from the moment the foreigners arrived to search for God, the *saint children* [Sabina's name for the mushrooms] lost their purity. They lost their force; they spoiled them. From now on they won't be of any use. There's no remedy for it. Before Wasson, I felt that the *saint children* elevated me. I don't feel like that anymore. The force has diminished. If Cayetano [a local official and friend] hadn't brought the foreigners…the *saint children* would have kept their power. (*Selections* 68-9).

Sabina's loss of her connection with the *saint children* is a loss of the most profound nature. Her calling as a "Wise One" represents an "obligation" to allow the *saint children* to speak through her in order to heal those whose spirits have become ill (21). "After I had cured my sister I understood that I had found my path. The people knew it and came to me to cure their sick" (25). The *curandera*'s relationship to the mushrooms, then, is both artistic and spiritual, as they speak in a language that is distinct from ordinary language. Speaking of the first *velada* she heard as a child, Sabina says: "It was a different language from what we speak in the daytime. It was a language that without my comprehending [sic] it attracted me. It was a language that spoke of

stars, animals, and other things unknown to me" (12).

Sabina's notion of the singing or chanting produced through her by the mushrooms, and the particular wisdom commanded by her as a result, was of great appeal to the ethnopoetics crowd, since the centrality of language to Sabina's practice could be used to assert the shamanic function of the poet in modern life. The Beat poet Anne Waldman in particular was drawn to Sabina's work, which was brought to her by a friend who imagined she would "use" it. Waldman did, framing her engagement as shameless appropriation in an essay Rothenberg included in *Maria Sabina: Selections* (2003): "I didn't want to draw on Sabina literally or faithfully, I wanted to absorb the experience of her works (in translation) in me, and put myself into her and then let the 'text' (meant to be performed or sung) emerge as a kind of intuitive 're-working'" (179). While Waldman's nod to her conscious appropriation and seeming refusal to attempt some kind of "authentic" channeling is refreshing, the language she uses to describe her engagement with Sabina's works places her in a position of dominance and Sabina in one of invisibility.

Later in this same essay, in a discussion of her classes in "shamanic and ethnopoetic literatures" at Naropa, Waldman admits that "in some respects of course the whole shaman concept is problematic" (*Selections* 181-82) Despite her recognition that poets aren't shamans in the sense of being "enlightened healers," she still continues to draw the parallel in her work and teaching on the basis that both poet and shaman act as "antennae of the race" (181-82). Likewise, Waldman's reflections on the most famous appearance of her poem "Fast Speaking Woman" (which draws heavily on the structures of Sabina's chants) in the Bob Dylan film *Renaldo and Clara*. Dylan, apparently, shot Waldman "dressed like a postcard American Indian (not my idea)" but "[t]his scene, mercifully was not used in the movie" (179).

In a similar deflection of accountability, Gordon Wasson laments the injury he has caused

to Sabina and her community by publicizing his research in the "Retrospective Essay" that introduces the 1981 book *Maria Sabina: Her Life and Chants*. As Sabina's *Vida* attributes her loss of connection with the "spirit children" in her life to Wasson's appearance in her life, his impact on her calling could not be denied. Despite this, Wasson casts himself as the victim: "The sacred mushrooms and the religious feeling concentrated in them through the Sierras of Southern Mexico had to be made known to the world, and worthily so, at whatever cost to me personally" (*María Sabina: Her Life and Chants* 20). It is unclear what cost Wasson might be referring to, since his career was made by the 1957 article on Sabina and "the magic mushroom" in *Time*.

These maneuvers appear yet more absurd if juxtaposed with Maria Sabina and her people's lifelong material poverty, a reality that her first encounter with the mushrooms was deeply intertwined with:

> Without thinking much about it, I put the mushrooms in my mouth and chewed them up…Later we felt good. It was like a new hope in life...In the days that followed, when we felt hungry, we ate the mushrooms. And not only did we feel our stomachs full, but content in spirit as well. The mushrooms made us ask God not to make us suffer so much. We told him that we were always hungry, that we felt cold…
>
> Tears rolled down our cheeks, abundantly, as if we were crying for the poverty in which we lived. (*Selections* 13)

The reality of hunger casts the sustaining language of the *saint children* in yet another essential context. One might think that Sabina's status as a kind of celebrity for the counterculture would have altered her circumstances, but according to the Mexico City hospital she died in, one of the causes of her death was chronic malnutrition. Tellingly, when reporters interviewed Sabina upon her arrival at the hospital, she told them: "the government has always denied help for the poor, even more for the Indians. Before I die I would like to see my people get help. This is one of my dreams, to see that other Indians like me are rescued from their misery" (167).

Sabina's final state, then, is one of material and spiritual poverty, making her story a strong case for anthropological study and literary ethnography as cultural imperialisms. If Sabina's material circumstances had been impoverished by colonial invasions, what had remained to her were Mazatec lifeways, in particular her sustaining connection with the *saint children* who sang through her and enabled her to bring healing to her community. With the arrival of Wasson and most especially his publication of the *Time* article, a second wave of outsiders arrived. A banker trailing (unknowingly) with him the cronies of the deep state, Wasson, despite his professed "love" for his "subjects," commits a theft the depth of which cannot be measured.

But—putting Waldman's very superficial engagement with Sabina and "shamanism" aside—what do we make of Rothenberg and his collaborators' efforts to translate Sabina's *veladas* into written poetry, and to publish her autobiography? In his preface to the volume, Rothenberg acknowledges that by translating Sabina's calling as "poet" as well as "shaman," he "bring[s] it and her into our own generalized kind of reckoning and naming" (ix). Despite his slight hesitation, Rothenberg is willing to assert that Sabina is a "poet, in short, with a sense of both a real physical world and a world beyond what the mind may sense, or the mouth proclaim" (x). Rothenberg's two statements here call attention to some of the most interesting and fraught qualities of Sabina's "texts." Firstly, are they her "texts?" Is she the "author?" Had Wasson never come, it is possible they might have remained outside the realm of the written word. What roles did her transcribers and translators play in the text's coming into being? Are the texts as they exist on the page a theft? A collaboration? Both? Ostensibly, Sabina could have refused to tell her story or to be recorded, but we have no way of knowing the material circumstances of the text's creation.

In the *Vida*, fame is portrayed as something Sabina becomes "accustomed to" and even to enjoy somehow, despite its lack of material rewards and the spiritual devastation it brought into her life. In one scene, Sabina discusses a portrait that she has been told is on display in Oaxaca City: "[t]here's an enormous photograph of me working the earth with a hoe. The people who took that picture of me bought my hoe and took it with them. I like people to give me photographs of myself" (59). Sabina's reflections on the exchange emphasize the payment she receives for the hoe (and the photograph, presumably). Her cause of death—chronic malnutrition—suggests she was likely driven to make these "exchanges" on the basis of material necessity, and this is also possibly true of her participation in the creation of *Vida* and other documentation of her life and chants. The *Vida* does say that she likes to be given photographs of herself, a desire I would relate to her interest in other worlds.

It is impossible to know what was of her choosing. Sabina's reflections on Wasson's first visit emphasize that she was completely unaware of the future consequences of sharing a vigil with Wasson? That she did what she could within the constraints of her new situation is consistent with her life as a whole as told in the *Vida*—Sabina survives the murders of two philandering husbands and an arson possibly committed in revenge after her revelation of the sacred ceremony to the foreigners (56-57). Making do and surviving impossibly difficult circumstances were skills colonial invasion had prepared her for.

The texts that came out of this destructive exchange are undoubtedly of great value—the chants make beautiful poems when transcribed, and I sympathize with Rothenberg's desire to make them known. It is also true that by the time Rothenberg came to know of Sabina and to be curious about her work, the damage had already been done in terms of her community's exposure to the wider world of seekers. But Rothenberg's flippant rebuke of those who would

claim “you can only destroy other cultures in the attempt to bridge them” at the Ethnopoetics Symposium registers differently in light of her story (7). While he did not meet Sabina or publish her work until a few years after the Symposium, his preface about her work, reprinted in the 2003 UC Press edition, was reprinted without amendment. This suggests he has not made an accounting of his involvement in the costs of Sabina’s “fame.” Her loss, apparently, does not register. But perhaps this is unsurprising on Rothenberg’s part, being that for him Indigenous peoples seem to exist mostly in some ancient past. From this perspective, all still-existing Indigenous peoples are always already endangered.

Sabina’s work, on the other hand, is all about presence, and I so end with her:

> She is a woman who resounds, says
> She is a woman torn up out of the ground, says
> I am an Apostle woman beneath the water, says
> I am an Apostle woman beneath the ocean, says
> I am a shooting star woman, says
> I am a woman like a wolf, says (*Selections* 112)

Conclusion

In an essay published in 1990, Gloria Anzaldúa wrote that white people’s writings about Indigenous culture have the potential to displace Indigenous writers, “appropriating” the culture rather than “proliferating” information about it” (*Making Face/Haciendo Caras* xxi). But how do you tell the difference between the two? According to Anzaldúa,

appropriation "steals and harms" while proliferation "helps heal breaches of knowledge" (xxi). María Sabina's *Vida* identifies the arrival of career-minded outsiders as what caused her loss of connection with the "saint children"; although Sabina performed the ceremony for Wasson and others voluntarily, we could also characterize it as being stolen, since she did not know what she was choosing nor what it would cost her.

Wasson's essay, published alongside Sabina's *Vida*, claims that he had a duty to make sure the world could hear Sabina's chants. "Helping to heal breaches of knowledge" is an old anthropological excuse, one reflected in nearly all the papers presented at the First (and last) International Ethnopoetics Symposium. While only the central figures identify themselves as the emissaries of "doomed" cultures, even Wynter's paper proceeds as though there were no contemporary art made by Indigenous peoples, who all live on reservations—this despite her rightly faulting the participants for failing to consider Black art as an important "oral culture" operating outside the dominant white mainstream of American culture.

My next chapter explores Gloria Anzaldúa's relationship to indigeneity and ideas of "Indianness." Anzaldúa, too, has been accused of erasing contemporary Indigenous existence as she works to assert counterpublics. I consider Anzaldúa's relationship to indigeneity in relation to the pressures of navigating a white supremacist, heteropatriarchal "majoritarian public sphere" and the "burden of liveness," in José Muñoz's terms (1, 189).

Chapter Two: The "New Tribalism"

This chapter explores Gloria Anzaldúa's engagements with indigeneity throughout her oeuvre and critiques thereof in the context of queer theory, Indigenous critical theory, and critical posthumanisms. In this chapter, I consider this aspect of Anzaldúa's work in light of its disidentificatory character and connections with posthumanist thought. Anzaldúa's relationship to indigeneity was especially complex; I explore a number of factors that made this so. For Anzaldúa, Indigenous spirituality offered a different way of understanding subjectivity and thus diverging possibilities for humanity (*Borderlands* 37).

Anzaldúa's understandings of the modes of relation between humans and other lively presences in many Indigenous cosmologies, which offer an opportunity to "attend to the body of the earth" rather than exploit it for profit, guide her methodology (68). Throughout her work, Anzaldúa attempted to formulate what she called, after the title of a negative article about *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), the "new tribalism," or an "expanded identity…based on many features and not solely on race" (9).[19] Emphasizing how global white supremacy "has imposed identities through racial and ethnic classification," Anzaldua's new tribalism "disrupts this imposition by challenging these categories" (9). A "social identity," the new tribalism is useful in that it "could motivate subordinated groups to work together in coalition" (9).[20]

This chapter responds to Scott Morgensen's call for "distinct and extended discussion" of how queer-of-color led "primitivist" projects have the counter-hegemonic potential to destabilize

[19] The article in question is David Reiff's article "On Professional Aztecs and Popular Culture."

[20] Domino Renee Perez's entry for *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature*, "New Tribalism and Chicana/o Indigeneity in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa," offers a thorough critique of this conception. I discuss her approach in this chapter's conclusion.

colonial discourses by engaging with them ("Politics of Primitivity" 282). In this same piece, Morgensen mentions Jose Muñoz's conception of "disidentification," which I explore in relation to Anzaldúa's work, as well as Chela Sandoval's "acting differentially," as possible modes that might enable this process.

In later work, Morgensen offers a sustained discussion of responses to Anzaldúa's relationship to "primitivity" in her work. Engaging with well-known scholars of Latinx literature who have critiqued this aspect of Anzaldúa's theoretical project, such as Saldaña-Portillo and Sheila Contreras, Morgensen rejects interpretations that reject her work outright because she engages with colonial paradigms of Indianness (*Spaces* 250). However, Morgensen does not trace Anzaldúa's relationship to indigeneity in any extended way, which I seek to do here. I extend Morgensen's work by delving further into the question of how Anzaldúa's desire to assert her indigeneity functions in the context of what José Muñoz refers to as the "burden of liveness," or the pain of being denied history and futurity (189).

Anzaldua, Indigeneity and *el movimiento*

Anzaldúa's interest in theorizing this new "social identity" was in part based in her desire to provide an alternative to solidarity developed via shared racial "identity." As was true for many women and queer people, Anzaldúa's experience in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s (*el movimiento*), was fraught. In particular, Chicanas and other dissenting voices in *el movimiento* were disturbed by the nationalism marshaled by the idea of Aztlán [the Chicanx homeland] and learned from experience that many activists' monolithic conception of the "Chicano nation" meant difference within the movement was not welcome (*Chicana Feminisms*

2-3).[21] For this reason, Gloria Anzaldúa and other Chicana writers and activists shift the terms of discourse by highlighting other concepts, such as the borderlands, and/or seek to transform the idea of Aztlán, as in Cherríe Moraga's articulation of "Queer Aztlán." For Chicana/os, Anzaldúa argued, "mestizaje, not chicanismo, is the reality of our lives" (*Luz* 58).

However, Anzaldúa was undeniably influenced by *el movimiento's* celebration of *mestizo* [defined by Anzaldúa as "people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood"] people's Indigenous ancestry (*BL* 5). This aspect of *el movimiento* was rhetorically useful in combatting the way white supremacy within Chicanx communities had previously promoted the valorization of whiteness, but it also led to criticism from U.S. Native and Black communities. Chicanx people's claims on Indigenous threatened tribal nations' sovereignty; proudly Afro-*mestizo* people questioned why *el movimiento* was not seeking to valorize blackness as well. In addition, as María Saldaña-Portillo has argued, by claiming specifically Aztec heritage, Chicanx people "usurp the territorial claims of the indigenous inhabitants of the Southwest, including those of the Comanche who are part of the Uto-Aztecan linguistic family" (*Indian Given* 140-141).[22]

In the first pages of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa begins with a quote from Jack Forbes that figures Aztlán and *mestizaje* as material realities: "The *Aztecas del norte*…compose the largest single tribe or nation…in the United States today…Some call themselves Chicanos and see themselves as people whose true home land is Aztlán [the U.S. Southwest] (*Borderlands* 1).[23] By

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[21] As Marissa Lopez has argued, Alurista, the writer widely credited with introducing the concept of Aztlán to *el movimiento*, conceived of it as an abstract concept that could serve as a "place for all people," but other activists took it up as a material space [the U.S. Southwest] as a way of combatting the U.S. government's constant portrayal of Latinx subjects as "foreign invaders" (106).

[22] For other important critiques of and reflections on "Aztec" identification in *el movimiento* and Mexican state *indigenismo*, see Daniel Cooper Alarcon, *The Aztec Palimpsest*, Arturo J. Aldama, *Disrupting Savagism: Intersecting Chicana/o, Mexican Immigrant, and Native American Struggles for Self-Representation*, Sheila Marie Contreras, *Blood Lines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o* Literature, and Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries*.

[23] The source of the quote is Jack Forbes' *Aztecas del norte: The Chicanos of Aztlán* (1973).

spatializing Aztlán, Anzaldúa "reclaims" the U.S. Southwest for *mestizo* peoples by asserting their right of return on the basis that their Aztec ancestors potentially resided there before migrating south.

This construction is quickly followed by an unacknowledged reference to José Vasconcelos's *La Raza Cosmica* (1925), a text central to both Mexican state *indigenismo* and U.S. *chicanismo*. Saldaña-Portillo explains how Vasconcelos' essay claims that the Spanish colonial project conjoined the four "great races" [described as "red, yellow, black, and white"] in the "merging together of all races into one 'cosmic' messianic race" (*Indian Given* 202). Both "utopian and racist, democratizing and hierarchical," *La Raza Cosmica* reifies existing racial hierarchies and promotes the "eventual erasure of indigenous specificity" (202-203).

Anzaldúa's own appropriation of Vasconcelos also suggests the birth of a "new hybrid race," *mestizos*, suggesting that Chicanos are the offspring of the first "matings" of people with Indian and Spanish blood (*BL 5*). As discussed in the introduction, in *Borderlands* Anzaldúa positions herself as borrowing what is useful from existing models (regardless of whether some aspects of them are problematic) (82). After invoking (but not citing) Vasconcelos, she proceeds to emphasize the revaluation of the feminine, queer, and darkskinned, sentiments which stand in contradiction to Vasconcelos. Anzaldúa has been widely criticized for invoking *La Raza Cosmica*, but her syncretism could also be read as freeing what is useful within in oppressive traditions; reclaiming terms and shifting their meaning to serve anticolonial and antiracist purposes (82). In addition, if we consider her gesture through the lens of what Gayatri Spivak terms "strategic essentialism," we can understand it as "a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest," a reading which is supported by Anzaldúa's quick departure from *mestizaje* as a biological category ("Subaltern Studies" 205).

As Saldaña-Portillo also points out, Anzaldúa's desire for an origin leads her to fixate on the biological in her earlier work, grounding her own indigeneity in biological ties to pre-Columbian peoples rather than political ties with other contemporary Indigenous peoples in the Americas. Saldaña-Portillo reads Anzaldúa's identification with a romantic Indigenous past as echoing Mexican state *indigenismo*, which seeks to provide a heroic "Indian" past to all Mexicans while simultaneously launching an assault on the lifeways of contemporary Indigenous peoples (*Indian Given* 416). These critiques are complicated, however, by the fact that Anzaldúa is seeking to connect with her own indigeneity and therefore looks to the past as a way to avoid causing harm by appropriating Indigenous cosmologies from contemporary Indigenous peoples (*SAIL* 13-14).

As a queer Chicana subject, Anzaldúa never felt at home in any static version of "identity" and certainly not in movement politics; her goal in *Borderlands* and elsewhere was to create a "New Mestiza" subjectivity that sought to define being human in Indigenous terms. Because "the heterosexual tribe" has always most feared "being different, being other and therefore lesser, therefore sub-human, in-human, non-human," even within the Chicano "tribe," Anzaldúa found herself demoted to the status of queer outsider (18). Likewise, in the largely white feminist and queer movements of the time, there was little to no space made for the experiences of racialized participants. For Anzaldúa, then, *el movimiento* was both a source of inspiration and oppression. Most notably in the prose sections of *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), Anzaldúa borrows aspects of movement discourse while rejecting others that were heterosexist, masculinist, and nationalist.

Theory in the Flesh

In the wake of 1960s and 1970s revolutionary discourses, multiply marginalized subjects like Anzaldúa found themselves in need of new theories of alliance and subject formation. As a response to these conditions, fellow writer-activist Cherríe Moraga and Anzaldúa designed the now well-known anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Radical Writings by Women of Color* (1981). In framing the anthology's purpose, Moraga emphasizes the need for spaces in which multiply marginalized women can come together (xiv). Because the differences that regulate racialization are always coded to keep marginalized groups at each other's throats, to cut in advance any threads of solidarity, "Chicana and Black" women must earn each other's trust by passing *through* difference into solidarity, in part by understanding that this passage is never given (xiv). Coming together through difference is about "the joy of commonness, the exhilaration of meeting through incredible odds against it" (xiv). While the examples therein can be particular, the "commonness," described is not restricted to these relations within "humanity." Rather, the anthology seeks to establish a sense of "commonness" which expands "experience" to accommodate connections across different groups of humans as well as the human and more-than-human.

This sense is reflected in José Muñoz's conception of a "brown commons," in which brownness operates as an "expansive category that stretches outside of any one group formation and, furthermore, outside the limits of the human and the organic" (*GLQ* 209). For Muñoz, this speculative formulation of "queer thought" is about "casting a picture of arduous modes of relationality that persist in the world despite stratifying demarcations and taxonomies of being" (209-210). Being able to think beyond the human here means being able to think of "brownness," often imagined as biologically sutured to racialized bodies, as a force in the world. This is not to say that "brownness" is not part of embodied experience, only that living within a

"sense of brownness" that gestures beyond the taxonomies of race and the separation of the human from the nonhuman is a starting point for departure from existing constructions of subjectivity. "Within the category of human intraspecies connectivity," explains Muñoz, we feel the formatting force of asymmetrical stratifications both within humanity and outside it" (210). By perceiving this "formatting force" and bringing a "sense of brownness" to bear upon it, we become attuned to the "potential and actual vastness of being-with" (210). Muñoz's "brown commons," then, can be seen as continuing work done by Anzaldúa and Moraga which attempts to use the embodied experiences of minoritarian subjects as a springboard for moving beyond existing constructions of the human.

I use the term "disidentification," after Muñoz, to describe the strategies used by queers-of-color working to develop multiracial coalition politics. Muñoz himself foregrounds his deep debt to Anzaldúa and Moraga's work in the preface to *Disidentifications* (1999). In his account, 1980s queer woman-of-color feminists are responsible for advancing a version of "identity politics" [quotation marks are Muñoz's] which "locates the enacting of self at precisely the point where the discourses of essentialism and constructivism short-circuit" in order to enact "a radical feminist of color identity that shrewedly reconfigures identity for a progressive political agenda" (6-7).

As defined by Muñoz, disidentification describes "the survival strategies the minoritarian subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship" (*Disidentifications* 4). The similarity of Moraga's "how we cope" and Muñoz's "survival strategies" is just one of many correspondences between their work. Muñoz also borrows the term "identities-in-difference" from Anzaldúa and Moraga, understanding it to mean identities

that "use *and* are the fruits of a practice of disidentificatory reception and performance" (6). Through disidentification, "damaged stereotypes" are recycled as "powerful and seductive sites of creation" (4).

Likewise, in her original preface to *Bridge,* Moraga explains that while many people want the editors to plot a "'strategy' for Third World Revolution, the anthology is interested in a different "strategy," defined as "how we cope" (xviii). To clarify, this strategy is not assimilation to the dominant culture—even a quick skim of the anthology renders this claim ridiculous. Jodi Melamed, for example, considers the work done in *This Bridge* as part of "a race radical tradition of antiracisms" that make the violence of race-liberal orders apparent and "impel desire for something better" (*Represent and Destroy* 3).

In order to explore how *Bridge* both centers the embodied experience of multiply marginalized people while seeking to move beyond the "formatting force" of the categories which identify them as such, I consider how two key concepts—"materialism" and "theory in the flesh"—help to establish the anthology's posthumanist approach. Moraga defines the anthology's approach as "materialist," explaining that its materialism is grounded in the embodied experiences of "the flesh of these women's lives" (xviii). The phrase brings to mind Moraga's more famous coinage in *Bridge*, "theory-in-the-flesh" (23) as well as Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theorization of "the flesh of the world." For Merleau-Ponty, the representative sensation of being in the world is "affection, being a presence to the world through the body and to the body through the world," defined as "being *flesh*" (239). While his assertion might appear to privilege individual experience, Merleau-Ponty explains that "[e]ach landscape of my life, because it is not a wandering troop of sensations or a system of ephemeral judgements but a

segment of the durable flesh of the world, is…pregnant with many other visions beside my own" (123).

That is, if approaching the world phenomenologically potentially carries the danger of centering individual experience, Merleau-Ponty offers a version in which the experience of life is a "landscape" which one is part of, of which one's own vision is only one of many. Merleau-Ponty's description is also echoed by Norma Alarcón in her essay "The Theoretical Subjects of *This Bridge Called My Back*" (1997): "[c]onsciousness as a site of multiple voicings is the theoretical subject, par excellence, of *Bridge*. Concomitantly, these voicings (or thematic threads) are not viewed as necessarily originating with the subject, but as discourses that traverse consciousness and with which the subject must struggle with constantly" (365).

Consciousness, here, should not be understood as individual consciousness, just as Moraga's "theory in the flesh" and is not intended to assert the centrality of individual experience. Rather, her objective is to critique the split between ontology and epistemology, or between experience (understood as "being a presence to the world through the body and to the body through the world) and reigning epistemological modes with their pretentions to universality and sorting mechanisms. As Merleau-Ponty notes in the above quote, to become part of the "flesh of the world" is to perceive a multiplicity of visions rather than privileging one's own, which would be just another version of Foucault's Man.

To give a more contemporary example, Karen Barad's term "ethico-onto-epistemology" also helps to frame Moraga and Anzaldúa's refusal of this separation between collective experience, politics, and knowledge production. Barad emphasizes processes of intra-action, or the relation between "the apparatuses of bodily production," or discursive practices, and "*specific material phenomena* (i.e., differentiating patterns of mattering)" over interaction, which relegates

agency to the human realm and fails to account for the way our material experience is created by dominant paradigms (139). If hegemony is maintained by the assumption of sameness, difference is *what matters*; Barad is careful to explain that her theory of agential realism does not "denigrate separateness as mere illusion," recognizing it as a neoliberal position that reifies the illusion of "sameness" despite the realities of racial capitalism (136).

For Barad, mattering *is* differentiating, a process that need not yield hierarchical results: "which differences come to matter, matter in the iterative production of different differences" (137). This quote helps to clarify what is at stake in the anthology—by interrogating how their "difference" has been *made* to "matter" the writers in *Bridge* seek to construct different modes of being through the "iterative production of different differences." Both Moraga and Anzaldúa see these "different differences" as subject to that same process of breaking down as the "differences that have come to matter"—a new oppositional "identity" that simply contradicts how one has been made to matter is not the end goal. Rather, the goal is to enter into a process like that described by Barad, one which never ceases to continue interrogating the material consequences produced by discursive formations.

While Moraga's formulation of "theory in the flesh" has been criticized as essentialist, I read it along these processual, new materialist lines. Moraga's "materialism" is realized in her characterization of the assemblage of elements that make up and surround the book—the conditions that made creating it necessary in the first place, the writers and editors writing together, the conversations readers have together about the book, etc. Moraga emphasizes the anthology as a lively object in the world capable of "transforming" not only lives but life itself (xiii). Similarly, borrowing from Bruno Latour, Marissa López articulates a methodology of reading she deems the "critique by assemblage," in which texts are approached as events and

bodies as "confederations of things" (*Racial Immanence* 19). According to Lopez, this approach opens up the possibility of exploring what else Chicanx cultural production might be doing besides "reflecting history or subjectivity" (19).

Jasbir Puar's essay, "I Would Rather Be A Cyborg Than a Goddess: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory," which also seeks to bring intersectional frameworks in the tradition of Moraga and Anzaldúa into conversation with feminist new materialisms, clarifies how these two seemingly disparate discourses can exist in a productive friction with each other. As Puar argues in *Terrorist Assemblages*, "[n]o matter how intersectional our models of subjectivity…[they] may still limit us if they presume the automatic primacy and singularity of the disciplinary subject and its identitarian interpellation" ("Becoming-Intersectional" 62).

To indicate the character of these circumscriptions, Puar quotes Norma Alarcón's famous question from her essay about *Bridge*: "[a]re we going to make a subject of the whole world?" (62-3). Puar proposes that we consider intersectionality (which "attempts to comprehend political institutions and their attendant forms of social normativity and disciplinary administration") and assemblage (which "in an effort to reintroduce politics into the political, asks what is prior to and beyond what gets established") as posing different conceptual problems as well as describing co-existing modes of enforcing hegemonic control (63). I argue that assemblage does make a subject of the whole world, while intersectionality helps multiply marginalized subjects find their way into that assemblage by allowing for the rejection of dominant understandings of being-in-the-world.

New/Old Materialisms

One of Anzaldúa's solo contributions to *This Bridge*, "La Prieta," echoes Moraga's materialist focus on embodied experience. Anzaldúa begins by describing how her grandmother would inspect her buttocks looking for "the dark blotch, the sign of indio, or worse, of mulatto blood" (198). The essay, that is, opens with a literal examination of how race is "in" the body as "a form of physical, affective experience that catalyzes personal and political change in the world" (López 6). Because the young Anzaldúa is "*muy prieta*," [very dark] her grandmother tells her to stay out of the sun. Were her skin to darken further, people might mistake her for "an Indian"; she must not get her clothes dirty or risk being called a "dirty Mexican" (198). By targeting anti-Black and Indigenous sentiments within the Chicanx community at the outset, "La Prieta," like the anthology more generally, immediately shows its investment in building solidarity across diverse groups. Anzaldúa reminds the reader that, though it may not yet have dawned on her grandmother, "though sixth-generation American, we were still Mexican and that all Mexicans are part Indian" (198).

Anzaldúa follows this description of her grandmother's racist policing of her body with another way the body "betrays" her: she begins menstruating at three years old, a phenomenon the doctor calls "a throwback to the Eskimo." (199). The "betrayal," then, becomes physical evidence of Anzaldúa's Indigenous heritage. At the same time that Anzaldúa seeks to eradicate potential obstacles to coalition building that emerge from the assignation and experience of bodily difference, she also seeks to establish her own Indigenous ancestry and temperament. I read this tension as expressive of Anzaldúa's understanding that it is only through the embodied experience of race that a politics beyond "identity" might be formulated. The young Anzaldúa, we are made to understand, did not understand this possibility, feeling like "[a]n alien from

another planet…dropped on my mother's lap," lost within the family and unsure of her purpose in life (199, 208).

As Marissa López has observed, Anzaldúa then compares her body to a book by following these lines with a description of her father dropping a "25¢ pocket western" (*This Bridge* 199) on her lap:

> Equating her own body with a book, Anzaldúa connects her physical disorientation to a tropological racism that she is able to see and re-narrate because of her alien consciousness; writing about race is, for Anzaldúa, a choratic, corporeal metaphysics of 'western' political and geographic space. (131)

If "chora," described by Plato in the *Timaeus* as "both the place *in which* and the stuff *from which*" the universe was crafted, "emphasize[s] form as both the matter and energy of text," then by comparing her body to a book, Anzaldúa emphasizes what López, borrowing from Rebekah Sheldon, calls the "emergent property" of matter (17).

The body is a source of pain for Anzaldúa. It is the place in which all –isms and other betrayals of the body are experienced. The young Anzaldúa's early menstruation, and the criminalization of her queerness lead her to dissociate consciousness from the body, or the material through which others index her. This "survival tactic" allows the young Anzaldúa to cope long enough that she might enter into a decolonizing process through which she can reform her relationship to the colonial scripts which injure her (*Borderlands* 39). This process requires that the "metaphysics of 'western' political and geographical space" be engaged not through predetermined epistemological formations but through corporeal experiences (López 131).

Anzaldúa's process of decolonization is initiated by the sense of alienation she feels from herself. The experience of being denied a place in two cultures (white and Indigenous) as a queer *mestiza* leads her to understand that she must establish her own discursive "universe" in order to

survive. The parameters of this one cannot accommodate her being without producing what she later calls "*la rajadura*," [the split] or the splitting of the brain into "two functions" and reality into two realities. Anzaldúa attributes these separations to Western culture's attempt to become "objective" by making "objects of things and people" while distancing itself from them (*Borderlands* 43, 209). According to Anzaldúa, by creating a split between subjects and objects, Western culture created a set of parameters that uphold racial capitalism and heteropatriarchy, making objects of all those who do not "fit" the supposedly "universal" criteria for subjecthood (*Borderlands* 42-43).

Anzaldúa centers these "[d]ominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, [and] are transmitted to us through the culture" in her understanding of what slit her open (16). In the section on *la rajadura* she describes a knowing that she "was the mutant stoned out of the herd, something deformed with evil inside" (43). Her sense of "abnormality" produces feelings of shame, and she also registers how others' indexing of her confirms that all can see it: "[t]heir eyes penetrate her; they slit her from head to belly. *Rajada*" (43). Like her grandmother, those who do not "know" her examine her for signs of deformity in order to cast her out of subjecthood. Anzaldúa is able to perceive what Muñoz calls the "formatting force," that is, and eventually to bring a "sense of brownness" to bear upon it. For Anzaldúa, as well as for Muñoz, it is through this process that the "potential and actual vastness of being-with" opens up (210).

These themes are already present in "La Prieta"; as evidenced by this passage in which Anzaldúa rejects the "formatting force":

> *A third world lesbian feminist with Marxist and mystic leanings*. They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label…[t]hink of me as Shiva, a many-armed and legged body with one foot on brown soil, one on white,

> one in straight society, one in the gay world, the man's world, the women's, one limb in the literary world, another in the working class, the socialist, and the occult worlds. A sort of spider woman hanging by one thin strand of web (205).

Anzaldúa refuses the indexing function of these labels, insisting that we are comprised not only of what one identifies with but what we do not, which allows her to—literally—imagine a more-than-human body that far exceeds the bounds of "identity" (206). In addition to Shiva, Anzaldúa also references First Woman, who Paula Gunn Allen says is known to the Pueblo as the "Old Woman Spider who weaves us together in a fabric of interconnection" (*Sacred Hoop* 11). According to Gunn Allen, Thought-Woman is the "spirit that pervades everything… [and] informs right balance" (13-14). Leslie Marmon Silko figures "Grandmother Spider" in the Pueblo tradition as a storyteller, as "[h]uman identity, imagination and storytelling were inextricably linked to the land…just as the strands of the spider's web radiate from the center of the earth" (*Yellow Woman* 23, 15).

Anzaldúa's strategy of including both Shiva and a figure from U.S. Native creation stories is a precursor to the "backpack" strategy of subjectivity found in *Borderlands* that opens this project; Anzaldúa, Shiva-like, borrows what works from a range of traditions, taking what works and getting rid of what doesn't. As previously discussed, Anzaldúa's many-armed reaching can be understood as mirroring the extractive logics of conquest. Scott Morgensen, citing Chela Sandoval's account of "a postmodern economy of cultural difference" alongside her assertion that U.S. Third World feminists traversed oppositional movements to create decolonial feminist and queer projects, questions whether Anzaldúa facilitates or troubles "globalist logics of indigeneity and methods for their circulation" (*Spaces* 251). Considering this question in light of Muñoz's theory of disidentification allows us to understand that both can be true. Disidentification is a messy process because it is often through "damaged stereotypes" that

multiply marginalized subjects "work through the dominant fantasies of the other in a reflective way" by performing them, making constructions of the "exotic" available as antinormative options (x).

Anzaldúa's "exotic" more-than-human body is able to experience a "mixture of bloods and affinities, which she uses to create *El Mundo Zurdo* (the left-handed world), a universe in which "I with my own affinities and my people with theirs can live together and transform the planet" (209). While "mixture of bloods" might seem, at first glance, to refer to Anzaldúa's particular biological composition, the addition of "affinities" and invocation of a more-than-human body suggests "the mixture of bloods" is not meant to refer to existing paradigms of racialization, but rather the messy process of being imbricated with other bodies in the "flesh of the world."[24]

"Speaking Across the Divide"

Anzaldúa's contributions to *This Bridge* reveal her interest in how strategic essentialism might be used to construct empowered and multivalent identities from which relational understandings of subjectivity could emerge. These new epistemological models might enable humans to move beyond dependence on identity categories for self-articulation, a process she saw as useful for short-term political gains but ultimately limiting. For Anzaldúa, "identity" is a "shape-shifting activity" in which "we shift around the work we have to do, to create the identities we need to live up to our potential" as denizens of the Earth with reciprocal obligations to each other (*Anzaldúa Reader* 211).

[24] This reading is complicated by other aspects of Anzaldúa's work, such as her invocation of José Vasconcelos' *La Raza Cosmica* in *Borderlands*, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

While I find many of the critiques of how indigeneity was mobilized within *el movimiento* and then in Chicana feminism useful and salient, I am sympathetic to Anzaldúa's sense of deep connection to her Indigenous roots and her desire to build pan-Indigenous coalitions at a planetary scale. In a joint interview with Simon Ortiz in *Studies in American Indian Literatures* (2004), Anzaldúa clearly expresses her sense of solidarity with other Indigenous groups in her answer to the question of what it means to her to have "Indian" ancestry. For her, it includes not only having physical and spiritual roots in the North American continent but also to exist in a state of "mourn[ing] the losses—loss of land, loss of language, loss of heritage, loss of trust that all Indigenous people in this country, in Mexico, in [sic] the entire planet suffer on a daily basis" (9). Anzaldúa's emphasis on the ongoing losses experienced daily by Indigenous populations suggests that Anzaldúa did not substitute an identification with pre-Columbian cultures for one with contemporary Indigenous peoples. Unlike most of the participants in Ethnopoetics Symposium, Anzaldúa seems to be aware of the existence of contemporary Indigenous life.

She also outlines how the current discourse around Chicanx indigeneity within U.S. Native paradigms can make the development of pan-Indigenous solidarity in the Americas especially challenging. Anzaldúa points out that by denying Chicanx people's claims to their Indigenous ancestry, Native North Americans deny *mestiza/os* acceptance in a way that mirrors U.S. Anglos' rejection. While the comparison is incorrect in many senses (the power relations are quite different, for example) Anzaldúa conveys the feeling of being rejected by both "halves" of her ancestry. Despite the alienation produced by this dual rejection, Anzaldúa maintains an awareness of the dangers that arise for U.S. Native communities around the question of *mestiza/o* ancestry. She expresses the fear that her participation in the interview (and Chicanx claims to

indigeneity more generally) will "violate Indian cultural boundaries" and inadvertently "contribute to the misappropriation of Native cultures" (12). Anzaldúa also recognizes the danger the acceptance of *mestiza/o* peoples would present for "tribalized" but non-federally recognized Native communities.

As part of the interview, Anzaldúa includes a statement from Deborah Miranda, who expresses the concern that if her people were to identify as *mestiza/o* rather than Indian their indigeneity might disappear completely, which Anzaldúa says would be "tantamount to suicide/genocide" (12).[25] Since Anzaldúa speaks from a position of detribalization herself, her characterization of the stakes at hand illuminates why she seeks recognition of her Indigenous heritage despite her fear that it will endanger U.S. Native communities' sovereignty. Regardless of her deep desire for acceptance from other Indigenous Americans, she understands that her vision of the new tribalism must remain unrealized until "the Indigenous in Indians and Chicana/os are ensured survival"—while also insisting that is it a dream that must be pursued.

In the *SAIL* interview, Anzaldúa expresses global solidarity with Indigenous peoples and expresses her desire for a "tribalism" that might generate pan-Indigenous coalitions. As previously discussed, Anzaldúa's evocation of indigeneity echoes a central critique of *el movimiento*, which posits that foregrounding pre-Columbian worldviews perpetuates a nostalgia that erases the struggles of contemporary Indigenous peoples. In response to this objection, Anzaldúa explains why she chooses to turn to pre-Columbian models in her work. She insists that her interest in these sources does not foreclose the possibility of maintaining an awareness of the continued struggles of Indigenous peoples in the U.S.:

[25] In the bio included in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (edited by Anzaldúa), Miranda identifies as "a mixedblood woman of European and Esselen, Ohlone, Costanoan and Chumash ancestry" (599).

> For me, to bring up these cultural figures and terms is more of a remembrance, an uncovering, and an exploration of my own indigenous heritage. I do it with a keen awareness we're living in Indian land. I do it knowing that native people in this country suffer…I try to stick to my own indigenous antepasados and not 'borrow' from North American Indian traditions. (*SAIL* 13-14)

Ironically—as discussed speculatively in relation to Lorde's letter to Mary Daly, Anzaldúa's stated reason for failing to engage with contemporary Indigenous lifeways in her writings is her "fear of stepping on toes." By only writing about "ancient" cultures, she feels she won't transgress any boundaries.

Anzaldúa then expresses a desire for pan-Indigenous solidarity as well as dialogue and "collaborative work that reveals how connected our past histories and present situations are" (*SAIL* 16). In the interview, as elsewhere, she presents herself as a "nepantlera," a "modern day chamana" whose purpose is to engage in the "spiritual activism" of "bridging the abyss" between people—in this case U.S. Native and Chicanx communities—but also more generally to build bridges that undo false divisions produced by reigning epistemological modes and state-imposed borders (*SAIL* 19). Her reliance on "shamanic" paradigms in the interview shows Anzaldúa's propensity to invoke this popular fantasy about indigeneity.

Castaneda's Unlikely Influence

In light of Anzaldúa's general attempts to demonstrate thoughtfulness and sensitivity around her claims to indigeneity, the depth of Carlos Castaneda's influence on her work, only recently made visible by the publication of *Light in the Dark,* is puzzling.[26] Her reliance on Castaneda for

[26] While he did not affiliate himself with *el movimiento* due to the apolitical nature of his work, the influence of Castaneda's writings is also highly visible in early Chicano activist literature. Alurista, for example, dedicated his collection *Nationchild Plumaroja* (1972) in part to Carlos's "teacher" in the Castaneda books, Don Juan, and used an epigraph from *The Teachings of Don Juan* within the text (4, 10). Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), the

understanding *nagualismo* seems yet stranger in the context of her earlier condemnation of Lynn Andrews, a white woman who "'rips off' people of color" by passing off "fiction as fact, an act that distorts the true picture of Native peoples in a way they, as writers, would not" (*Making Face xxi*). She does laud Tony Hillerman, who she frames as a white author who "does his research" and writes about Hopi and Navajo cultures in a respectful, honest, and informative way (*xxi*). In this instance, Anzaldúa seems to see the misrepresentation of Indigenous culture as the element which either condemns or approves white formulations of indigeneity.

AnaLouise Keating notes that Anzaldúa's introduction to *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color* (1990) takes an uncharacteristically "oppositional" approach, by using "overly simplistic descriptions of 'white'-raced people and stark self/other binary oppositions and over-generalizations" (124). My take is different: Anzaldúa, it seems to me, never naïvely presents self/other binary oppositions—in *This Bridge Called my Back* and *Borderlands/La Frontera*, for example, she sees oppositional consciousness as useful and necessary for short-term political gains and self-refashioning. Ultimately, however, she sees it as replicating the same limiting structures of violence that help to enforce racist ideologies:

> But it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence…At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will need to leave the opposite bank. (*Borderlands* 78-79)

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second winner of the prestigious Premio Quinto Sol [Fifth Sun Prize] for Chicanx literature, which is likewise marked by the influence of *The Teachings of Don Juan*. Published just a few years later, it also chronicles the initiation of an apprentice into the world of nonordinary reality at the hands of a wise healer (Nieto 320). Anaya refers to Antonio's relative and teacher, Ultima, as a "curandera," but the structural and thematic similarities between the two books are undeniable.

The oppressed/oppressor binary, Anzaldúa notes, is drawn from the conceptual register of the oppressor. This means that when the oppressed become "locked in" a "counterstance," the degree to which consciousness can shift is circumscribed. This quote thus echoes the most well-known text in *This Bridge Called My Back*, Audre Lorde's "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in which Lorde argues that the "master's tools"—i.e., the forms of thought that bolster "racist patriarchy")—"may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring out genuine change" (98-99). Moving beyond paradigms of subjectivity into the mode of "assemblage," in López and Puar's terms, that is, requires "leaving" oppositional identity paradigms and refusing the epistemological hegemony of the "West."

Because "assemblages" must necessarily emerge from the process of navigating existing material conditions, Anzaldúa considers the possible differences between white writers' encroachments into representations of Indigenous life and Chicanx people's explorations of their own indigeneity. She is critical of Chicanx writers and thinkers who claim Indigenous ancestry but ignore contemporary Indigenous struggles, and she tries not to represent, as mentioned previously, concepts drawn from U.S. tribes to which she does not have known ancestral ties in order to avoid misappropriation. Since both positionality and intentionality are central in determining whether or not it is acceptable to "borrow," according to Anzaldúa, "[w]ho does the appropriating and for what purpose is a point to consider" (*SAIL* 15). While Anzaldúa looks forward to a vision of new tribalism, she also continues to insist on the necessary uses of "strategic essentialism" as long as racist ideologies continue to uphold structural inequity (Spivak, "Subaltern Studies" 205). As discussed earlier, Anzaldúa deploys select aspects of problematic texts and concepts like José Vasconcelos' *La Raza Cosmica* and a "material" Aztlán

in *Borderlands* as a means of creating a material component to her more speculative visions. I would argue that her approach to Castaneda is similar—despite his works being part of an "oppressive tradition," she takes what she needs and leaves the rest.

Anzaldúa was certainly aware of the negative impact Castaneda's books have had on Indigenous communities: in *Luz,* she specifically references the critiques of whiteshamanism by Indigenous critics discussed in Chapter One and expresses understanding that Chicanx people can collude with whites in the theft of Native spirituality. She cites Wendy Rose's famous assertion that "not all whiteshamans…are white," a remark directed in large part at Castaneda. Additionally, Anzaldúa identifies Castaneda as the pioneer of the neo-shamanic movement that has resulted in the mischaracterization of Indigenous practices, and explicitly acknowledges Castaneda's deceptive practices, describing his writings as "novels (which he passed off as anthropological field notes)" (404; *Luz* 13, 53).

Yet, despite explicitly acknowledging all of these problems, Anzaldúa uses Castaneda's writings as a primary model for many of the theoretical paradigms articulated in *Luz*, particularly *nagualismo*. *Nagualismo,* according to Anzaldúa, is "a type of Mesoamerican magic supernaturalism," an "alternative epistemology" based in "shapeshifting (the ability to become an animal or thing) and traveling to other realities"—a description that very much mirrors the conception offered in Castaneda's work (*Luz* 32). Like Jerome Rothenberg, whose "translations" and performances of Indigenous oral materials into written "poems" I discuss in the first chapter, Anzaldúa also draws on the poet-shaman equivalence in articulating the purpose of her work. The terms of her engagement with "shamanic" practices shift over time, but throughout her writings the shaman is figured as occupying liminal space, therefore having the capacity to pass between worlds and realities. Anzaldúa also shares with Rothenberg the notion that shamanic

figures then return from their travels and convey what they have seen to the community for healing purposes.

Throughout all of her writings, Anzaldúa centers "shamanic" paradigms. In *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), Anzaldúa describes the movement from ordinary reality into "El Mundo Zurdo" (the Left-Handed World); in her introduction to *Cassell's Encyclopedia of Queer Myth* (1996), she develops conceptions of "spiritual *mestizaje*," a shamanistic act of border-crossing and shape-shifting that "nurtures the ability to wear someone else's skin"; in *This Bridge We Call Home* (2002), she articulates the idea of "nepantla," or "the point of contact between worlds" and finally, in the posthumously published *A Light in the Dark/El Luz en lo Oscuro* (2015), she explores the epistemological dimensions of *nagualismo* (*Bridge* 172, *Anzaldúa Reader* 230, *Bridge We Call Home* 1, *Luz* 2).

Considering this centrality of "shamanic" paradigms to Anzaldúa's writings, not much had been written on this aspect of her work prior to 2009. Most critics (AnaLouise Keating is a notable exception) ignored the implications of Anzaldúa's 1990 essay "Metaphors in the Tradition of the Shaman," in which she emphasizes how the writing of *Borderlands* was her way of "practicing the oldest 'calling' in the world—shamanism…in a new way" (*Anzaldúa Reader* 121).[27] In this essay, Anzaldúa explains that she sees her role as a writer in terms of the shaman's call to heal the community: "…through my poet's eye I see 'illness'…whatever is harmful in the cultural body…" and then develop a "cure…that leads to a change in our belief system" (122). Her self-positioning as shaman, then, provides a position from which to transform thought (and

[27] Other notable exceptions to this general trend in earlier scholarship include Irene Lara's 2005 essay "Bruja Positionalities: Toward a Chicana/Latina Spiritual Activism" and David Carrasco and Roberto Lint Sagarena's "The Religious Vision of Gloria Anzaldúa: *Borderlands/La Frontera as a Shamanic Space*" (2008).

therefore reality) through her writing, as Walter Mignolo has argued in relation to her conception of "the Borderlands" (*Local Histories/Global Designs* 326).

Since the publication of *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* in 2009, however, the tendency to overlook "shamanic" theories in Anzaldúa's work has shifted, in part due to Keating's editorial influence (both in terms of her framing commentary and her selection of texts, about half of which were previously unpublished). In her introduction to the *Reader*, Keating asserts that Anzaldúa's "poet-shaman aesthetics" and "spirit-inflected approach" have been neglected, particularly in the case of her later articulations of *nepantla* and *conocimiento* (*Anzaldúa Reader* 8, 10). Keating's injunction clearly resonated, and in addition to her own comprehensive explorations of these concepts in Anzaldúa's later work in *Transformation Now!* (2014) and elsewhere, scholarly work on these "spirit-inflected" aspects of Anzaldúa's later writings has proliferated.[28] This "lag" in responses to "shamanic" paradigms in her work gesture to the discomfort felt in academic settings about "the spiritual." The emerging discipline of posthumanisms—as Keating also suggests in her recent work on Anzaldúa—has also encouraged scholarship on the more-than-human dimensions of her work as enacted through Indigenous thought (*TN* Loc 1423).[29]

Light in the Dark illuminates the degree to which Anzaldúa's understandings of *nagualismo* have been formed from her responses to Castaneda's writings. She mentions Castaneda eight times throughout the manuscript—far more, by a long shot, than any other

[28] For examples, see George Hartley, "The Curandera of Conquest: Gloria Anzaldúa's Decolonial Remedy," Martina Koegeler-Abdi, "Shifting Subjectivities: Mestizas, Nepantleras and Gloria Anzaldúa's Legacy," Sarah Ohmer, "Gloria Anzaldúa's Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento," and Kelli D. Zaytoun's "'Now Let Us Shift' the Subject: Tracing the Path and Posthumanist Implications of La Naguala/The Shapeshifter."

[29] Other recent reflections on the more-than-human and ecocritical dimensions of Anzaldúa's thought include Cordelia E. Barrera, "Gloria Anzaldúa's Ecocritical Vision: A Spiritual Journey," and Allison Steele, "Touching the Earth: Gloria Anzaldúa and the Tenets of Ecofeminism."

thinker or writer, and cites him six times, along with obscure related literature. Her citations move across many of his books, including *Tales of Power* (1974), *Journey to Ixtlan* (1972), *The Second Ring of Power* (1979), *The Eagle's Gift* (1982), *The Fire From Within* (1984), *The Power of Silence* (1987), and *The Art of Dreaming* (1993). She also borrows language from the first two books of the Castaneda quartet, *The Teachings of Don Juan* and *A Separate Reality* (1971), without citing them (as has been the case throughout her writings).

My examination of how Castaneda's writings move throughout *Luz* allow for a consideration of what perceived affinities might have led Anzaldúa to engage so deeply with them. I hold both Anzaldúa's explicit statements regarding the status of Castaneda's writings and her extensive reliance on them in her last book in mind and consider how what she borrows from Castaneda is transformed or reified in her adaptations. I also place Anzaldúa's engagement with Castaneda in conversation with the French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari's writings about the same concepts in Castaneda's work, expanding on Anzaldúa's own citation of *A Thousand Plateaus,* which she characterizes as advancing a theory of subjectivity similar to the one she articulates in *Luz* (68).

Anzaldúa's interest in Castaneda springs in part from her general immersion into the "spiritual" literature popularized by the New Age movement discussed in the first chapter, for which Castaneda's writings are central. In addition to Castaneda's books, Anzaldúa also drew on other popular literature condemned by Indigenous critics, including Gordon Wasson's writing about María Sabina's mushroom ceremonies and Jerome Rothenberg's anthologies.[30] In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa conceals the most eccentric of these references by "losing" the source of

[30] Wasson is cited in *Borderlands*, and Anzaldúa made a marginal note in a pre-draft for *Borderlands* about Rothenberg and ethnopoetics (*BL* 97).

a quote from Dane Rudhyar's book *An Astrological Mandala*, despite the fact that it is attributed in every draft of *Borderlands* in the archive. The associated footnote reads, "I have lost the source of this quote. If anyone knows what it is, please let the publisher know" (*BL* 95). This elision suggests that Anzaldúa initially wanted to hide the influence of New Age materials on her work, but by the time she writes *Light in the Dark*, she is willing to be open about it (perhaps only because the book would be published posthumously). Her willingness to make these sources visible in later works, however, also opens up the possibility to frame them as part of a colonial archive (27).

Castaneda's presentation of himself as someone who escapes the abstract theorizing of academic life by undertaking a journey into other realities resonates with Anzaldúa's sense of her own role in academic settings and as a theorist more generally (*Interviews/Entrevistas* 144). In addition, *The Teachings of Don Juan* is explicitly set up as a rebellion against the tenets of anthropology—a disciplinary coup enacted via Don Juan's demonstrations of a totally new onto-epistemology to his initiate "Carlos." Anzaldúa's own sense that she is privileging epistemologies generally excluded from academic discourse is central to her overall theoretical project, and so the affinity between Castaneda's work and her own must have been immediately evident.

In addition, because Anzaldúa sees narrative as central to the process of "doing" theory, Castaneda's disguise of fiction as truth was perhaps less important to her than the success of his fictionalization. Because Anzaldúa values the "translation" of images as "symbols for concepts and ideas" and the showing, not telling, of how transformation happens, Castaneda's success in this regard must have intrigued her (*Luz* 7, 25). Anzaldúa, like Castaneda, also theorizes through experience transmuted into narratives capable of shifting readers' perceptions. As AnaLouise

Keating puts it in her editor's notes for *Luz*, "her respect for the imagination's epistemological and ontological functions prevents her from entirely rejecting Castaneda's work (because imagination, according to Anzaldúa, gives us access to important truths—valid and useful information about reality)" (218-219). Anzaldúa's response is nearly identical to that of Deleuze and Guattari's in *A Thousand Plateaus*. This is not the only convergence between Anzaldúa and Deleuze and Guattari's engagements with Castaneda (*Luz* 65). The overlap between the two works seems to emerge from shared preoccupations with Castaneda's work as well as the authors' shared goal: to escape existing theories of subjectivity through immersion in the "flesh of the world" and the casting off of "consensual reality" (in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, "becomings"). I continue my discussion of Deleuze and Guattari in the context of Jodi Byrd's work in order to better understand the movement of "Indianness" and particularly the "nagual" or "sorcerer" in the text.

While my primary focus is Anzaldúa, I place her engagement with Castaneda's ideas in conversation with Deleuze and Guattari's. In part, I seek to remedy a tendency in Anzaldúa scholarship to read her work as providing primarily experience-based testimony, ignoring its theoretical implications. Anzaldúa sees high theory as a discourse that "bashed" Chicanas in the academy and understands her own "elevation" in academic circles as tokenism (*SAIL* 14). Her "success" still replicates the "dynamics of colonialism" practiced by the white/academic mainstream, who "continues to control, to give or withhold what's labeled art or theory" (14). She feels that her work is often included in anthologies or cited as a tokenizing gesture, "a mere referencing" rather than a "deep exploration" of her theories such as I hope to achieve here, in part by putting these two important theoretical works that draw on Castaneda in conversation (14).

Borderlands & Becomings

Another important shared characteristic of Anzaldúa's and Castaneda's work is the location of their interventions in the "borderlands," conceived of not only as a geographical location but also as space from which to think and enact transformations. The figure of the *brujo*, sorcerer, shaman, or *nepantlera*, to use various terms employed by Castaneda and Anzaldúa, is the one who inhabits the "liminal space" or "zone of impetuous transition, the point of contact between the worlds of nature and spirit, between humans and the numinous (divine) that the borderlands represent" (*Luz* 28).

Deleuze and Guattari call this border-space a "zone of proximity," or "zone of indiscernibility," formulations that reflect their sense that this liminal space, like the borderlands, exposes the falsity of separation between bodies of all kinds, land included. Within these "zones," ordinary conceptions of bounded subjectivity collapse, opening up new perceptions of our inter-relatedness. "Crossing" over into what Anzaldúa calls "El Mundo Zurdo" or into what Don Juan calls "the left side of awareness" thus represents a radical shift in perception (*Luz* 50).

In addition to traversing interstitial spaces which allow them to cross into other worlds and realities, the figure of the *nagual* is also positioned at the "zone of transition" between the human and the nonhuman. This proximity allows them to "become-animal," in Deleuze and Guattari's famous formulation, which is drawn from Castaneda's portrayal of Carlos's "becoming-dog" in *The Teachings of Don Juan*. In their construction of this concept, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that the shaman's becoming-animal is not literal: "the human being does not 'really' become an animal"

(*ATP* 238).[31] Rather "becoming" involves crossing over the borders of the (supposedly bounded and concrete) self, which is "only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities" (249).

"A fiber strung across borderlines" can stretch "from a human to an animal" along with providing other "lines of flight" from subjectification and representationalism (*ATP* 246-49). Anzaldúa's description of "becoming" her *nagual*, the snake, operates along similar lines. When she sees "*la víbora*," her body "becomes part of, merges with, 'disappears' into my surroundings…my consciousness flows into an animal" (*Luz* 27). In liminal spaces, the artificial division between self and world disappears, and a porous, flexible sense of being emerges.

The importance of starting from a liminal space is also enacted in formal terms. Castaneda's "passing off" of his first book as ethnographic material presents, for Anzaldua and Deleuze and Guattari, a compelling example of how troubling disciplinary forms can yield surprising outcomes. Anzaldúa's own hybridizing methodology of "autohistoria-teoría" can be seen as a formal manifestation of her desire to break down pre-existing genre separations, and so Castaneda's ruse appealed to her in this sense (*Luz* 206). Deleuze and Guattari, too, seem to have taken inspiration from Castaneda's disciplinary revolt.

A Thousand Plateaus is Western philosophy thrown in a blender on high. Experimental and literary, wildly anti-rhetorical, and schizophrenically interdisciplinary, the text is conceived as an "assemblage" that blurs the lines of who or what "writes":

[31]Friends of Don Juan's at the house where Carlos trips on "*Mescalito*" [peyote] describe Carlos frolicking with a dog, barking in such a manner that he "sounded so much like a dog we couldn't tell you apart" (18).

"The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* [the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*] together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd" (*ATP* 3). As in the case of Moraga's characterization of *Bridge*, a book is not conceived of as an "object" written by a subject, but rather an assemblage (*ATP* 3-4). Similarly, in *Luz,* Anzaldúa asserts: "It is the writing that writes me" (3). The emphasis on the text's subjectivity in Anzaldúa's writings and *A Thousand Plateaus* constitutes an ethico-onto-epistem-ological claim that does not separate language from the material world.

The Tonal and the Nagual

Castaneda's *Tales of Power,* the text Anzaldúa and Deleuze and Guattari focus on the most, contains the formulation that most influenced the three writers. The "tonal" and the "nagual" occupy a central position in both *Luz en lo Oscuro/Light in the Dark* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.[32] Don Juan rejects Carlos's "anthropological" understanding of the tonal and the nagual, in which the tonal is a "guardian spirit, usually an animal" obtained at birth and the nagual is the "name given to the animal into which sorcerers could allegedly transform themselves, or to the sorcerer that elicited such a transformation" (*Tales* 119). Don Juan is deeply amused by anthropology's conception of these words, a position which sets him outside the disciplinary boundaries that have shaped Carlos's thought.

[32] Sheila Contreras identifies the basic structure of primitivist thought as based in "the transvaluation of binaries" such as rational and instinctual, right-handed and left-handed, etc. (130). Anzaldúa and Deleuze and Guattari's adoption of "the tonal and the nagual" gesture to this component of primitivism in Castaneda's work. Ironically, the transplantation of this binary renders the three theorists' critiques of dualistic thinking relatively unconvincing.

Rather, according to Don Juan—who gives Carlos the "sorcerer's explanation" of these concepts, the tonal is the "organizer of the world" (*Tales* 116). While this "guardian" could be represented as an animal, it more broadly represents the classificatory force within us—its function is to "judge, assess, and witness"—which most often turns it "into a petty and despotic guard when it should be a broad-minded guardian" (123-24; 121). The nagual, on the other hand, is a force that exists outside the "island of the tonal" and "for which there is no description," but that we can witness emerging through us, another form of "becoming" that is experienced as a kind of "jolt" out of "ordinary reality" that transitions into a feeling of suspension in "nonordinary reality" (*Tales* 124-126; *A Separate Reality* 14). Unsurprisingly, these concepts line up well with the version of "shamanism" at play in all three works—only special individuals with special powers are able to traverse both categories.

In Anzaldúa's understanding of the concept, the tonal typically acts as a reifying force that holds what Anzaldúa calls "consensual reality" together; "it makes up [and then enforces] the rules by which it apprehends the world" (*Luz* 41-42; *Tales* 123-24). In this sense, the tonal is similar to what Muñoz describes as the "formatting function." In terms of one's own perception, it represents the failure to move outside the ego-based self in order to merge with the world, as the tonal fails to capture the porous and relational nature of our existence: "we are fluid, luminous beings made out of fibers. The agreement that we are solid objects is the tonal's doing" (*Tales* 236; 158).

In *Tales of Power*, Don Juan gives Carlos lessons on how to "shrink the tonal" in order to allow for the emergence of the nagual (*Tales* 242-43). According to Castaneda, the tonal is "shrunk" when it is "shocked" with information from "nonordinary reality,"

which causes it to lose its facility for automatic categorization and description of the world ("stopping the world") (*Tales* 236; 294). These moments of "shock," Don Juan says, can be dangerous, and so he emphasizes the need for balance between the force of the tonal and the force of the nagual.

Castaneda's strange explanation of "stopping the world" in order to access the nagual captivated Deleuze and Guattari as well as Anzaldúa. In Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the tonal and the nagual, the tonal is (in brief) organism, organization, significance, signification, interpretation and subject; the nagual is the "body without organs," experimentation, becomings—in short—what we know must be there outside the current order but do not have language for and which eludes interpretation (*ATP* 162).

To demonstrate the dangers, Deleuze and Guattari give examples of how consciousness-shifting experiments can go too far: Artaud's peyote experiments with the Tarahumaras carry him further into madness; Burroughs' speed-induced creativity becomes blocked by an episode of paranoia (*ATP* 164, 152). Balancing the tonal and the nagual, then, means simultaneous attention to survival in the present and radical experimentation.

Anzaldúa also pays close attention to "stopping the world" as a means of accessing nonordinary reality, and takes up the sense that there are dangers associated with these "jolts" as well. She conceives of the "shock" of the world stopping as "*arrebatos*/earthquakes" that "jerk" you out of the familiar and send you spinning into *nepantla*, Anzaldúa's term for the liminal space between realities or worlds that shamans, or *nepantleras*, occupy and the second of her "seven stages of *conocimiento*" (*Luz* 122). Experiencing such a shock results in the condition of "susto" or "soul loss," and in order

to survive this wound, "you must, like the shaman, find a way to call your spirit home" (*Luz* 125). The phase of movement that follows, the "Coatlicue state," is characterized by being "abandoned to a maelstrom of chaos…cast adrift from all that's familiar" (*Luz* 123).[33]

Being separated from the "tonal" like this turns out to literally be dangerous for Anzaldúa: while in Coatlicue, she wakes to a hypoglycemic incident and can't remember what her doctor has told her to do (130). She refers to her time "stuck" in the Coatlicue state as "blocks," the same term Deleuze and Guattari use to describe failed attempts at finding "lines of flight" away from a overdetermined and stratified reality that does not admit any conceptions beyond the rationality of the "tonal" (*BL* 74; *ATP* 152).

Anzaldúa's notion of shock or *susto* [soul loss] is one of "shamanic initiatory dismemberment that gives suffering a spiritual and soulful value…Torn apart into basic elements and then reconstructed, the shaman acquires the power of healing and returns to help the community…through the restoration of power, life force or soul" (*Luz* 29-33). When Castaneda's philosophical project is re-oriented toward collective well-being in the present, the project of interrogating consensual reality in order to reveal the contingency of the current arrangement of the world takes on potential political utility. While, for Carlos, the imperative to shift from ordinary to nonordinary realities is solely based on the acquisition of power, Anzaldúa and Deleuze and Guattari focus on collective suffering and the desire to "heal" or remedy it.

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[33] According to Anzaldúa's citation of C.A. Burland and Werner Forman's *Feathered Serpent and Smoking Mirror: The Gods and Cultures of Ancient Mexico* in Chapter Four of *Borderlands*, "*La herencia de* Coatlicue/The *Coatlicue* State," *Coatlicue* is the "[g]oddess of birth and death," and "the mountain, the Earth Mother who conceived all celestial beings out of her cavernous womb" (46). Anzaldúa also quotes María Sabina's *veladas* in relation to *Coatlicue*: "[c]ome, little green snake" (*BL* 46).

Anzaldúa—as previously discussed, sees the writer's task as shamanic and associates the "nagual" with creativity, so Castaneda's nonsense proved useful for her. As "[i]n the 'old world,' art was/is functional and sacred, as well as aesthetic," Anzaldúa calls for new perspectives on the imagination, healing, and shamanic spirituality" (*Luz* 54, 44). She terms this conception of art "Border Arte," which she defines as "a kind of making history, of inventing our history from our experience and perspective through our art rather than accepting our history by the dominant culture" (*Luz* 62). That is, art has the potential to help "heal colonialism's wounds" by reconnecting us to what has been lost and narrating suppressed histories, thus allowing us to reconfigure our futures on the basis of other kinds of imaginings and knowings (*Luz* 44).

Anzaldúa refers to this project as "decolonizing reality"; Deleuze and Guattari also seek the unraveling of Western philosophical paradigms as part of politics: "[r]acism never detects the particles of the other; it propagates waves of sameness until those who resist identification have been wiped out…Its cruelty is equaled only by its incompetence and naivete" (*ATP* 178).

In Anzaldúa's work, however, the decolonization of reality is a stage that precedes "spiritual activism," the necessary precursor to her dream of "new tribalism" (*Luz* 43, 19, 67). Spiritual activism," as she defines it, is an "amalgam" of traditional spiritual practices and the "technologies" of political activism (*Luz* 19). Fueled by the work of *conocimiento,* a process of inquiry that "refuse[s] to accept spirituality as a devalued form of knowledge," spiritual activism means "engaging the spirit in confronting our social sickness with new tools and practices whose goal is to effect a

shift. Spirit-in-the-world becomes conscious, and we become conscious of spirit in the world" (*Luz* 19).

"Spirituality," according to Anzaldúa, is the "ontological belief in things outside the body" that allows one to "become aware of the interconnections between all things" (*Luz* 38). "Activism" is defined through notions of reciprocity between humans and between the human and nonhuman: *"*According to indigenous belief, we are embedded in nature and exist in reciprocity with it…We are in partnership with the Earth, but the partnership must go both ways; we must demonstrate trust, love, respect, and reciprocity to make this bond work" (*Luz* 38). As such, spiritual activism is a theory of great utility in a time of ecological crisis because it asks us to return to seeing the world as infused with "spirit," each entity connected to all others by "invisible fibers" (*Luz* 15).

The sense of planetary interconnectedness and responsibility represented by spiritual activism also points the way toward freedom from conceptions of "identity" that limit affiliation. Anzaldúa ties her "symbol" for the new tribalism, el árbol de la vida [the tree of life], to Deleuze and Guattari's "rhizome," describing them as "similar structural model[s]" that "spread in all directions" and create networks in which all points can be connected with each other (*Luz* 68). She characterizes both figures as describing a different kind of subjectivity and being-in-the-world.

"New tribalism" is grounded in this rhizomatic conception of affinity; "like other new Chicano/Latino narratives," it recognizes that we are individual strands in a web connecting "a network of living organisms and their physical habitats" made up of this and other worlds (*Luz* 67). Anzaldúa explicitly identifies new tribalism as a rejoinder to movements based on pre-existing identity categories, emphasizing that the movement is "about working together to create

new ‘stories’ of identity and culture, to envision diverse futures. It’s about rethinking our narratives of history, ancestry, and even of reality itself” (*Luz* 7, 85).

In this rhizomatic model of self-in-relation, subjectivity is “multilayered, stretching in all directions, from past to present, vertically and horizontally, chronologically and spatially” (*Luz* 69). This “self” is never given, but created “as we interrelate with others and our *alrededores*/surroundings…we strategically reinvent ourselves to accommodate our exchanges” (*Luz* 75). Anzaldúa’s new tribalism extends her conception of *mestizaje* far beyond biologically based conceptualizations. Rather than depending on “ancestry,” she explains, “[t]he story of mestizaje must include other planetary groups” (*Luz* 76). At the text’s end, Anzaldúa asserts that “bridging the fissures among us means dismantling the identity markers that promote divisions,” a theorization that differentiates her projects from that of state *indigenismo* (*Luz* 77). The vision she finishes the book with is future-oriented, tinged with prophecy: “[w]e are becoming a geography of hybrid selves of different cities or countries who stand at the threshold of numerous mundos” (*Luz* 81).

New Tribalism or Modern Primitivism?

In her writing on Anzaldúa, Domino Renee Perez figures “New Tribalism” as modern primitivism, on the basis that Anzaldúa’s “some of this, some of that” approach promotes cultural tourism (10). If Anzaldúa is merely continuing to disseminate projections of the “imaginary Indian” at the center of Chicana/o identity without calling it into question, this undermines the decolonizing objectives of her work. Perez sympathizes with Anzaldúa’s “privileging of Indigenous thought” and her desire to develop “a way for groups to work

together in coalition and an organizational structure for bridging humanity," but argues that Anzaldúa's total reliance on metaphor and mythology renders her theories ineffective (6, 12).

Perez sees Anzaldúa as having "played Indian" with no regard for the consequences, despite Anzaldua's oft-expressed sense of solidarity with U.S. Native and other Indigenous women. If Anzaldúa's early work has been criticized for attempting to connect "material" conditions to the more-than-human, thus "essentializing" her ideas, her late work seems to move away almost completely from the former.

As a way of illustrating Anzaldúa's promotion of globalism, Perez quotes an interview where Anzaldúa explains, "New Tribalism is a kind of mestizaje. Instead of somebody making you a hybrid without your control, you can choose" (8). Perez sees this statement as an expression of cultural tourism; I read it rather as an expression of how Anzaldúa conceives of "identity politics" as a disidentificatory worldmaking performance (*Disidentifications* ix*).* By turning to the "exotic," Anzaldúa is able to perceive her being in new ways that help her to dodge the "formatting function," the gaze that splits her down the middle (*Disidentifications* x, 210; *BL* 43). Anzaldúa refuses to play the part she has been assigned, insisting on something wildly different.

But there is still the matter of Castaneda. On the one hand, Anzaldúa's propensity for fantasy may have encouraged her. Her fear about misappropriation may have led her to believe a fiction was better to draw from. If so, this means Anzaldúa forgotten her own theories about the function of art, that the caricatures of indigeneity contained in Castaneda's books, like all stories, have the capacity to affect material conditions. By featuring his ideas so prominently in her text, Anzaldúa—even if she cautions readers that she takes from here and there without demanding

perfect politics from her sources—still disseminates his damaging portrayal of Indigenous spirituality.

The subject of this project's last and final chapter is Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Almanac of the Dead*, which puts these projections into narrative play in order to destabilize Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers' ideas about indigeneity. *Almanac* is often discussed alongside Anzaldúa's work, but these analyses have not focused on how race functions in the novel in relation to broad coalition-building objectives like ecological struggle, or what Fredric Jameson termed "useful popular front strategies" in his commentary at the Ethnopoetics Symposium (*alcheringa* 111). In it, I build on my work here. Anzaldúa and Silko's approaches share much in terms of how they understand their relationships to indigeneity and imaginaries of "Indianness." Both, I argue, play with them as a means of subverting colonial fantasies about "authentic Indians" and to explore the possibilities for popular front strategies therein.

Chapter Three: The War Against the Destroyers

In *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), Leslie Marmon Silko presents global capitalism as a "somewhat weak and very cruel" male epoch known as "Death-Eye Dog" in which a cult characterized by its greed and love of others' suffering, the Destroyers or Gunadeeyahs, has come to reign (250-51, 760). The Destroyers, who first appear in Silko's novel *Ceremony* (1977), are motivated by the devaluation and objectification of all life, and since their unleashing of European capitalism upon the world, are "all around now. Only destruction is capable of arousing a sensation, the remains of something alive in them" (*Ceremony* 230). *Almanac* collects the histories of the ways in which these "blood worshiping" individuals—usually men of European descent who have acquired power through the exercise of brutality co-signed by the settler colonial state, or anyone drawn in by the Destroyers' ways who has managed to assimilate—have profited from centuries worth of atrocities (570). That is, Silko's novel shows how, in Jodi Byrd's words, that "[t]he story of the new world is horror, the story of America a crime" (*Transit of Empire* xii).

Published in anticipation of the quincentennial of Columbus's arrival in the Americas in 1492, the novel expands our understanding of the histories and contexts of settler colonial violence in the Americas by exposing the falsity of Eurocentric narratives, mapping suppressed histories of anti-colonial resistance, and emphasizing the ongoing need to fight the colonial-capitalist orders perpetuated by the Destroyers. *Almanac* articulates a fictional spiritual counter-history of resistance to the Destroyers that precedes the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. The novel mobilizes prophecies found in the surviving Maya codices that strongly resemble Laguna stories—as well as the new almanac being generated by the novel's characters—in order

to foretell the end of the Destroyers' reign.[34] The temporal scale of Silko's novel, as well as its insistence on time as inexorably connected to place, reminds us that "Native American people have been on these continents thirty thousand years, and the Europeans have been here for five hundred" (739). By reframing "history" in this way, Silko asserts that it is far more naïve to bet on the long-term success of global capitalism than it is to insist that it will fall.[35]

In this chapter, I will trace Silko's tale of the war between the Destroyers and those who fight them—a coalition of human and more-than-human warriors—in order to show how, through her narratives, Silko models a way forward to a shared future centered on the retaking of the Americas by coalitions of Native and non-Native people driven by and brought together by forces beyond the human. The warriors in *Almanac* are summoned by ancestor spirits that speak to them in dreams and that will reveal the moment when all the "scattered crazies and their plans" will converge to create the necessary shift away from the living death of global capitalism (755). The story the novel tells is a faith-giving story, one that allows readers to hold out hope for revolutionary futures regardless of how strong the Destroyers' hold over the world seems to be. It shows us not only how to prepare to defeat the Destroyers but also how not to become one

[34] A number of critics have engaged closely with Silko's use of the codices: Antonio Barrenechea traces Silko's engagement with the four surviving Mayan codices (*Dresden*, *Madrid*, *Paris*, and *Grolier*) and notes that in *Almanac* "Silko adds to the Mayan archive by inventing a fifth codex" (*America Unbound* 116); Channette Romero and Dorothea Fischer-Hornung note that Silko only names the first three codices in the novel (the *Grolier* is considered "unauthenticated") and refers to the new almanac being generated by the novel's characters as a "fourth almanac" ("Network" 2, "Economies" 212). In a 1993 interview with Laura Coltelli, Silko says her sources for the old Mayan almanacs were "fragments of old stories I've heard here and there…and to this, I combined what I could recall from some books…In fact, I really did not spend much time with the Popol Vuh because so many of the stories are almost identical to the Laguna stories" (*Conversations* 122-126).

[35] An early negative review of *Almanac* by Sven Birkerts claimed the novel was "naïve to the point of silliness," because the idea that "oppressed of the world should break their chains and retake what's theirs…is so contrary to what we know both of the structures of power and the psychology of the oppressed that the imagination simply balks" (41). Birkerts' confidence in the everlasting power of capitalism perfectly exemplifies the "blindness to the world" that characterize the Destroyers in Silko's novels (*A* 224).

of them, for as Yoeme, the Yaqui woman who passes the ancient almanacs down to her grandchildren Lecha and Zeta, says, the possibility "trails each one of us" (256).

Silko's invocation of the relatively short duration of global capitalism and her constant reminders of Native American and slave rebellions in the Americas and beyond does far more than just expand the scale in which "history" is thought in *Almanac*; it also denaturalizes the colonial-capitalist state of mass suffering in which the few commit atrocities and accumulate wealth with impunity by reminding us that the existing arrangement of the world is only one stage of existence, or one possibility. Silko's novel reminds us that alternatives to capitalism exist and have existed far longer than capitalism has named itself ruler of the earth, and mobilizes the prophecy—or the story that, if told through the generations, will come true—found in Laguna and Maya cosmologies: "all things European" will disappear, and the land stolen from Native Americans by the colonizers will be reclaimed (503, 532). A number of potential ways in which this prophecy might play out are explored in the novel; Silko imagines not only *a* coherent alternative to the logic of "capitalism until the earth dies" but multiple ways in which the end of capitalism might come to pass.[36]

The novel not only offers an exhaustive critique of colonial violence, history, and logics over the last five hundred years in the Americas, it also offers a way forward, showing us how we can prepare for the moment the dispossessed, guided and aided by ancestor and earth spirits

[36] Joni Adamson helpfully enumerates the possible (and potentially overlapping) events leading to the "disappearance of all things European" as follows: "either the arrival in North America of an army from Chiapas, the violent overthrow of national and state governments by the mafia or ecoterrorists, the interruption of the national electrical power system, or the collapse of the international computer networking system, and possibly more than one of these events" (146). The collapse of global digital networks as the Korean hacker Awa Gee notes, could result in the disappearance of the international banking system and an instantaneous redistribution of power (*A* 680). In addition, if there is any central event that anchors the prophecy, it is the arrival of the people walking North. The question regarding the latter is whether the U.S. government will fire on the people, an outcome for which the novel's militant women, like La Escapía, will be prepared (*A* 740).

and pushed forward by the "tidal wave of history," rise up against the Destroyers (518). If the use of force is the means through which the Destroyers rule, Silko demonstrates that there are other forces their technologies of destruction are no match for.

Almanac exhaustively catalogs the atrocities committed in the Americas since the arrival of Europeans on the basis of classificatory logics born of so-called "Enlightenment" thought, exploring the way in which European thought systems developed in tandem with the emergence of global capitalism engender a world where profit and the sadistic pleasures of the wealthy take priority over living relationships.[37] I will explore how Silko's definition of the Destroyers and analysis of their logics of division in *Ceremony* and *Almanac* allow her to offer a model of coalition building which shows us how to reject these divisions and defeat the Destroyers without falling into common pitfalls that often accompany attempts to bring disparate groups together in the struggle against this common enemy.

Firstly, she rejects what Byrd refers to as the "conflation of racialization and colonization," in which the ability to transcend racialized divisions is located in an ahistorical false universal that ignores the context of settler colonialism (Byrd xxvi). This crucial refusal allows her to cut through the settler colonial narrative in which Native Americans are framed as "another minority". That is, *Almanac* not only speaks to the importance of connecting across difference as a means to reject classificatory logics, it also considers the context of settler colonialism and asserts that the return of the land to the people—not only in the Americas but globally— is equally crucial if we are to build a shared future on earth together. Secondly, her model of coalition building is based on radical, feminist, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist

[37] Mishuana Goeman advocates understanding the patriarchal and racist categories imposed on Native people by settlers as well as other forms of classificatory separation as "stemming from the project of Enlightenment," a claim which is central to my understanding of how the Destroyers operate (*Mark My Words* 15).

activism rather than in a vague celebration of multiculturalism, which posits itself as a solution to a worldview made up of divisions while simultaneously naturalizing and disconnecting them both from their capitalist foundations and the material and psychological suffering they produce.

I will focus on Silko's broad theorization of how the Destroyers' primary weapons for creating divisions are classificatory discourses that work to generate artificial separations between what is in fact interconnected and shared. The novel shows that refusing these false separations and the versions of being-in-the-world that coalesce around them is crucial to defeating the Destroyers. The novel opens up "possibilities for anticolonial action that emerge outside and beyond the Manichean allegories that define oppression" by demonstrating other ways of thinking relationality (Byrd xxxv). However, unlike many contemporary attempts to think relatedness in a frame outside of mainstream European epistemologies, *Almanac* is grounded in Native struggles to reclaim stolen land. I turn first to this important difference by reading Silko's *Almanac* in relation to Wai Chee Dimok's conception of "deep time." My analysis here is inspired by Jodi Melamed's argument regarding the presence of "a race radical tradition of materialist antiracisms"—whose roots are readily found in literary texts themselves (in contrast to liberal multicultural literary studies discourses), which disconnect race from material conditions. (*Represent and Destroy* 4, 219).

"We Want Our Mother the Land"

Silko's insists that the future relies on the return of the land to the people, or the abolition of land as property. This assertion works in opposition to thinkers whose attempts to move away from anthropocentric constructions of the human and history in the context of "geological time" in order to center planetary concerns who ignore the particularity of lived histories when they

move into the theoretical realm (Dimok 176). In particular, Wai Chee Dimok, who invokes *Almanac* in her much-cited discussion of "deep time" as a concept that might productively shift discussions around "American literature," misses as much as she finds to admire in Silko's novel. The turn on the part of non-Native theorists toward "planetarity" often mines indigenous knowledge for the ways in which it avoids Eurocentric suppositions about being-in-the-world while failing to recognize land reclamation as a central ongoing concern for indigenous peoples and for anyone who would like our shared future on earth to be removed from the hands of craven profiteers.[38]

Silko's novel offers an important corrective to this philosophical trend toward expanding the temporal scales through which we consider history and being-in-the-world while eliding historically grounded and place-based understandings of so-called "deep time" that rightly center indigenous land rights. Jodi Byrd characterizes this elision as central to the "transit of empire," in which a "postracial and just democratic society" in the United States "is always already conceived of through the prior disavowed and misremembered colonization of indigenous lands that cannot be ended by further inclusion or participation" (xxvi). In *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2006), Dimok seeks to restore the "longer history" or "*longue durée*" of American literature in order to push against the borders of the nation, decenter and deconstruct mainstream Western conceptions of the human, and forge connections between place and history (3-6). The *longue durée* as interpretive context, according to Dimok, might

[38] "Planetarity" is Gaytri Spivak's conception that "'the planet' is…a catachresis for inscribing collective responsibility as right," which she sees as "best imagined from the precapitalist cultures of the planet" (101-102). There is no recognition in her description of the many living peoples who have ways of imagining the world outside of a European capitalist framework. As T.V. Reed observes in his 2009 article on *Almanac*, the novel "was already doing global decolonial environmental justice cultural criticism many years before the field was named," and "critics still need to catch up with Silko" (25).

allow us to "weave our history into our dwelling place, and…take our place as one species among others" (6).

Dimok cites *Almanac of Dead* as an example of a text that illustrates what the concept of "deep time" can do for literary studies, observing that the novel narrates the "longer history" of the Americas. According to her reading of *Almanac*, Silko's invocation of the 18,000 years the Pueblo people have inhabited these continents exemplifies the way in which "using geological time as a human measure…compels us to rethink the phenomenology of race itself" by acknowledging the existence of a "preracial planet" (176-77). Dimok invokes non-linear temporality as expressed by Silko ("the past is not left behind and the past is not dead") alongside non-Native writer Gary Snyder's appropriation of Native phenomenology in which he posits the "ancient world" as "both a point of departure and a point of return, the undifferentiated unity of the species gesturing toward a unity yet to be born" (Dimok 176-78). Dimok understands Snyder's remark that "[a]nyone is, metaphorically speaking, a Native American who chooses, consciously and deliberately, to live on this continent, this North American continent, with a full spirit for the future, and for how to live it right" in the context of this notion of recursive time (177-178). Her notion of a "preracial planet" echoes Byrd's observation that [in poststructuralism] "the Indian" functions as an "ontological prior" that erases the genocidal history of the Americas and the ongoing struggle on the part of indigenous peoples to reclaim and restore the land violently wrenched away by European colonists (xxxiv). In addition, Dimok's push for an "undifferentiated" unity, a universal paradigm that cannot accommodate difference among its inhabitants, can only lead to more of the same.

Both Dimok's inclusion of Snyder's telling erasure of the non-Northern parts of the Americas, and her placement of Snyder's "undifferentiated unity" that gives rise to a "unity yet

to be born" alongside *Almanac* are deeply contradictory. Snyder's focus on metaphorical "nativeness" forecloses the notion that invoking deep time "allows us to weave history into our dwelling place"— precisely what Silko achieves in *Almanac*, and what Snyder tramples in his ahistorical universalism. In invoking a "preracial" past, Dimok intends to remind her readers that race is a recent construct in order to denaturalize it as a given with stable signifying power. Silko, as evidenced by her commitment to coalition building across these artificial divisions, shares the desire for a future in which these constructs cease to be the lens through which we see each other, but the erasure of centuries of colonial violence will never get us there. *Almanac*'s model of coalition building posits the opposite: only a full reckoning might bring us on to a healing path.

Indigenous Americans have emphasized the importance of practicing right relations with the earth for millennia before the coming of Europeans, and Native academics have been theorizing the link between colonial-capitalist mentalities and human actions that do not honor our relationship with the planet for many decades. [39] As Glen Coulthard notes, for the Dene Nations land is defined relationally and therefore encompasses all living elements: "Seen in this light, we are as much a part of the land as any other element. Furthermore, within this system of relations human beings are not the only constituent believed to embody spirit or agency" (80). Coulthard explains that in this reciprocal understanding, human beings have ethical obligations not only to each other but to all beings. If these obligations are met, other beings will reciprocate, "thus ensuring the well-being of all over time" (80).

[39] Shari Huhndorf observes that "postnationalist American Studies tends to devote little attention to Native America, since "Native Americans present the most radical challenges to U.S. nationalist myths and imperial practices…[and] implicate[s] all nonindigenous people in conquest" ("Picture Revolution" 368). The same erasure occurs in English, Comparative Literature, and other humanities disciplines.

This way of thinking is inimical to capitalist logics, and in addition to the initial push on the part of settlers to acquire land, the strong opposition Indigenous ways of life present to profit-driven models of existence is central to the settler colonial state's ongoing attempts to destroy Native lives.[40] Indigenous ethics present an alternative to life under the misery of capitalism by refusing to make profit the highest priority. These ethical principles must be treated as inseparable from material concerns.

As Mishuana Goeman observes, detaching "land" from the idea of "property" is a crucial component of re-centering the collective good. The conflation of the two terms is born of the colonial project of land acquisition, as property "is distinctly a European notion that locks together (pun intended) labor, land, and conquest. Without labor to tame the land, it is closely assigned the designation "nature" or "wilderness" ("Land as Life" 77). This colonial definition of land as property serves to perpetuate capitalist ideologies around the primacy of European "civilization" and the accumulation of wealth as the driver of all recognizable action. In the settler colonial formulation, land becomes something that is "acted upon" in order to obtain further wealth, or as Goeman puts it, "colonial logics are always those of 'possession,' the 'act necessary to lay the basis for property….[that] include[s] only the cultural practices of whites'" ("Land" 74).

Justice John Marshall's deployment of the "doctrine of discovery" in the first of the three cases known as the "Marshall Trilogy" is a paradigmatic example of how redefining land as property served colonial interests and enforced European capitalist values in North America and beyond. In the first case, Johnson vs. McIntosh (1823), Marshall imported Lockean ideas about

[40] I do not intend to suggest that all Indigenous Americans reject capitalism—only that Indigenous lifeways can represent alternate political models.

hunter-gatherer societies, who "might have property in what they found or captured…but not in the land over which they traveled in its pursuit" (qtd. in Barker 7). Marshall defined "discovery" as "the appropriation of the lands for agriculture," meaning, of course, forms of agriculture recognizable to Europeans (Barker 8). Marshall's machinations are just one of the "processes of the state's abstractions and the historical, mental, and physical fragmentation of people from land" that are central to the Destroyers' project of possession of the earth for profit and are born of settler colonial violence and domination (Goeman, "Land" 85).

"A Story of Witchery": The Destroyers in *Ceremony*

The division of people from the land is a central strategy the Destroyers use in working their "witchery" in the world in both *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead.* Silko uses the story of the genesis of Europeans and capitalist-colonialism in *Ceremony*, which narrates how the Destroyers came to dominate the Americas, as a starting point for her more in-depth exploration of Destroyer mentality and the means available to resist it in *Almanac*. Silko conceives of both novels as her attempts to "figure out where injustice comes from. Injustice I pretty much equate with evil, an imbalance and unwellness" (*Conversations* 105). The phenomenon of global capitalism with its undergirding logics of patriarchy and white supremacy is reframed in *Ceremony* as the objectification of all life at the hands of the Destroyers. European capitalism is a reality generated by a story told by an indigenous witch of unknown ancestry that brings Europeans into existence and sets the Destroyers' "witchery" to work in the world in new ways (132-138). As Silko observes in a 1998 interview with Ellen Arnold, her novels end up "accidentally" being about capitalism because "capitalism is so much in the forefront of the destruction of community and people and the fabric of being, and always was—I mean, slavery

in the Americas, the destruction of the tribal people, of the world and animals" (19). In her commentary here, Silko identifies slavery, colonialism, and the separation of "human beings" from the earth as direct consequences of capitalist logics. "Big Capitalism" is "flat out evil" and *Almanac* tells us how to dismantle it (24, 21). What we learn in *Ceremony* about how European capitalism came into being acts as a starting point for Silko's articulations of how the Destroyers work and think, and how we might stop them, in *Almanac*.

Ceremony centers around the healing journey of Tayo, a young Laguna man suffering PTSD after serving in World War II, being held in a Japanese prison camp, and witnessing his half-brother Rocky's death at the hands of Japanese soldiers. The Laguna elders in Tayo's community send him to Betonie, a mixed-blood medicine man, in hopes that Betonie might help Tayo to create a new healing ceremony that will benefit the community as a whole. In preparation for the ceremony, Betonie tells Tayo that although the desire to make things right in the world by taking back everything the white people have stolen is strong, the Laguna people "have done as much fighting with the destroyers and the thieves, as much as we could do and still survive" (128). Betonie also explains that indigeneous people have the ability to "deal with white people," as the whites themselves are a product of "Indian witchery" (132). He tells Tayo the story of how the Destroyers unleashed their witchery on the world: at a "witch contest" in which Native people from many tribes participate, where the unknown witch tells a story they say "will begin to happen" and that "cannot be called back" (135, 138):

> *Caves across the ocean/ in caves of dark hills/ white skin people/ like the belly of a fish/ covered with hair.// Then they grow away from the earth/ then they grow away from the sun/ then they grow away from the plants and animals./ They see no life/ When they look/ they see only objects./ The world is a dead thing for them/ the trees and rivers are not alive/ the mountains/and stones are not alive./ The deer and bear are objects/ They see no life.// They fear/ They fear the world./ They destroy what they fear./ They fear*

themselves…They will fear what they find/ They will fear the people/ They kill what they fear. (135-136)

The witch's spell brings Europeans into existence and "sets into motion" the five hundred years of bloodshed, theft and suffering the indigenous people of the Americas will endure. Through Betonie's stories, Tayo also learns that the forces set into motion by the witch affect all of us and, in truth, could bring us together: "[h]uman beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of us, for all living things" (246). The Destroyers, however, distort the reality of this shared fate through creating separations that "destroy the feeling people have for one another," what Silko refers to as "Cartesian dualities" that cut the human off from the natural world and set people against each other: "the starving against the fat, the colored against the white" (*C* 229, *Yellow Woman* 31, *C* 191).

In *Ceremony,* Betonie teaches Tayo how to temporarily thwart the Destroyers. While *Almanac* features a host of Destroyer characters, in *Ceremony,* Emo, a fellow Laguna veteran, is the primary representative of the Gunadeeyah clan. Emo hates Tayo because Tayo's father is white, and carries around a bag of teeth that he knocked from the mouth of a Japanese solider after killing him (57-61). Emo is one of those, who, as Silko says of Montezuma and Cortés in *Almanac*, is a natural member of the Destroyer clan, a "blood worshiper" who is aroused by violence: "Tayo could hear it in his voice when he talked about the killing...Emo fed off each man he killed…Emo liked what they [the military] had showed him…He understood them right away; he knew what they wanted" (*A* 570, *C* 61-62). Tayo stabs Emo in the stomach with a broken bottle one night at the bar when Emo's playing with his bag of teeth and bragging about the lives he's taken, an act of violence that emerges from Tayo's feeling that "his own sanity

could be destroyed if he did not stop them and all the suffering and dying they caused…He would rather die himself (53-63, 252).

But towards the end of the novel, Tayo completes the healing ceremony by resisting the impulse to kill Emo with a screwdriver "the way the witchery had wanted" (253). Tracked down by Emo, Tayo conceals himself between some boulders in the same location that *Almanac of the Dead* ends: the Laguna emergence place where the whites dug their uranium mine, and where the snake looking South in the direction from which the nonviolent religious pilgrims committed to retaking the land are walking appears in *Almanac* (*C* 246-248, *A* 762).[41] The appearance of this sign in *Almanac* is presaged in *Ceremony,* when Tayo sees a yellow spotted snake emerge "out of the damp earth into the sunshine…carrying this message [that in all directions the world is alive] on his back to the people" (221). In resisting his impulse to stab Emo, Tayo is able to keep the stories Betonie has told him and that he has gathered on his journey "out of the reach of the destroyers…[so] their witchery would turn, upon itself, upon them" (247). Tayo's refusal to succumb to the witchery's desire enables him to return to the village elders with the stories, complete the ceremony, and enable the witchery to be "dead for now" (261).

He also comes to understand the broader effects the witchery has on the people:

> The witchery would be at work all night so that the people would see only the losses—the land and the lives lost—since the whites came; the witchery would work so that the people would be fooled into blaming only the whites and not the witchery. It would work to make the people forget the stories of the creation and continuation of the five worlds; the old priests would be afraid too, and cling to ritual without making new ceremonies as they always had before… (249)

[41] In "Silko's Blood Sacrifice: The Circulating Witness in *Almanac of the Dead*," David L. Moore takes the recurrence of the emergence place in *Almanac* as a sign that *Almanac* extends the "act of witness" that Tayo performs at *Ceremony*'s end (151-154). Silko, on the other hand, has cautioned against seeing *Almanac* as merely an "'exploded' version of *Ceremony*, as to do so ignores the way in which *Almanac* engages more deeply with the influence of spirit and animal beings, the power of narrative (by Silko's account, through her exploration of the writings of Marx), and the influence of dreams, through which more-than-human beings can speak, on human consciousness (*Conversations* 131).

Silko's message to the people throughout *Ceremony* is that their connection with the earth remains and cannot be taken away, and that it is of far greater value than what the capitalist Destroyers say is valuable. Young Native people must understand that the "white things they admired and desired so much" are "stolen, torn out of Indian land: raw living materials for their ck'o'yo manipulation," or the "witchery" of capitalism (255, 204). As in *Almanac*, the people must also understand that ceremonies are always evolving and in motion, and what they call for is dependent on the contemporary reality we inhabit. If, as Silko observes, *Ceremony* is about Tayo, who "was ill and wanted to get well," and *Almanac* is a collective text about "the whole earth trying to save herself," then *Almanac* will call for different processes: not only healing but also justice (*Conversations* 131, 120). The "continuation of the five worlds" is the project at hand in *Almanac*, where Silko considers different possible outcomes that could bring about the end of capitalism. One possible outcome is that humanity will simply disappear from the earth, a trajectory associated with further violence: "Rain will not follow if La Escapía is forced to use her hand-held rockets to protect the Twin Brothers and the people from attacks by the U.S." (*Conversations* 132).

However, *Ceremony* does begin to identify the larger structural forces set loose by the Destroyers that affect us all. The Destroyers' lies "fooled everyone, white people and Indians alike; as long as people believed the lies, they would never be able to see what was being done to them or what they were doing to each other" (191). If the people must recognize, must feel, that the land is still theirs because European "deeds and papers" do not matter to the earth, Tayo goes on to say that settlers must see that "theirs was a nation built on stolen land" in order to perceive how they are being used by the witchery (128, 191). Witchery, as Betonie tells Tayo, existed

before white people did; the witch's story simultaneously brings whiteness into being and sets into motion the power relations organized around exploitation and profit that affect us all. As Silko observes, "who did capitalism start destroying first? White people in Europe. The poor factory workers that got ground up in the spinning machines that Marx wrote about" (Arnold interview 19).

Silko uses Emo's racially motivated hatred of Tayo to demonstrate how destroyer mentality is based not only in the love of others' suffering but also in the madness for taxonomic logics that separate people from each other. In both *Ceremony* and *Almanac*, Silko pushes back against these classificatory systems that allow for the novel's historically located violence to occur in the first place, insisting that we must find ways to reject discourses of racialization, misogyny, and anthropocentrism if we are to build a shared future. *Almanac* articulates forms of affinity and resistance that bridge what Mishuana Goeman terms "abstractions of difference" created by the expanding colonial nation state, which attempted to contain "the Indian in a certain time frame, geographical location, and social hierarchy" ("Land" 83). More generally, as Goeman observes, "[m]odernity's conquest of space was driven by the trajectory of taxonomic descriptions of people, plants, and animals; symbolic and physical violence; geographical 'truisms'; and a separation of histories (time) and space" (83). Goeman echoes these insights in her landmark writing on *Almanac* when she asserts that colonial-capitalist logic "defines human beings in narrow categories that isolate people from one another, such as by race, sexuality, gender, and nation" (*Mark My Words* 201).

In *Ceremony,* Silko begins to explore the difficulties that arise around navigating the connections between white supremacy, white people, and injustice more generally as a central challenge of coalition building through its exploration of the effects of settler colonialism and the

race and gender-based violence it has naturalized. Tayo notes that the group of Native veterans in the novel "never thought to blame white people" for the loss of their land or for anything else because they want "white people for their friends," a sense of connection the vets experience during the war that then disappears once they're no longer in uniform (43). The Native vets fail to understand "it was the white people who gave them that feeling and…who took it away when the war was over" (43). *Ceremony* challenges the false promise of liberal multiculturalism, which never includes any actual justice, only the kind of "inclusion" we see killing the Native characters in *Ceremony* who seek it. The novel refuses to turn away from the ways in which racialization and colonization have structured our world and rejects assimilationist strategies for "coming together," as this always means submitting oneself to the control of capitalist logics.

Ceremony also begins to consider how parallel forms of oppression such as patriarchy complicate any easy analysis along race-based lines. While Emo's hatred of Tayo is ostensibly based in Tayo's father having been white, Emo's war stories celebrate both the killing he has done and his wartime sexual adventures with white women (57-59). Through Emo's gendered differentiation regarding what kinds of racial mixing are laudable and which are "disgraceful," Silko points to the hypocrisy Native men demonstrate when they shame Native women who date non-Native men and valorize their own sexual encounters with white women, introducing a critique of gendered violence alongside the novel's critique of violence committed along racial lines. This critique is also explored in the narrative trajectories of Tayo's mother and Norma Jean, two Native women characters who are destroyed by the sense that they can't return home as a result of the "disgrace" of having slept with white men and their attempts to escape that feeling by drinking heavily. Like Tayo, they both try to run from the pain they feel, but, in *Ceremony*, only Tayo gets the chance to heal and to follow a different path. Silko's choice to

make a young Laguna man the primary representative of the Destroyers in *Ceremony* both echoes Betonie's advice to Tayo: "Nothing is that simple…you don't write off all the white people, just like you don't trust all the Indians" and exposes the way in which conceptual apparatuses like white supremacy and culturally widespread misogyny affect all of us in our ability to see each other clearly and become invested in collective survival (128). In *Almanac*, it is the women characters who take center stage in the change to come, a shift that represents Silko's increasing desire to show that patriarchy is as inherent to colonial-capitalist ideologies as white supremacy. Her increasing emphasis on the intersecting and various modes of classificatory logics that provide the Destroyers with a blueprint for enacting violence is also at the heart of her vision of coalition-building in the novel.

The War Against the Destroyers in *Almanac*

The yellow snake Tayo sees in *Ceremony* carries the message that "the earth is alive," a direct corrective to destroyer logics: "*The world is a dead thing for them*" (*C* 221, 135). In *Almanac*, the stone snake that appears in the novel must necessarily be read as having (in part) the same message, considering the symmetry that exists between the Destroyer mentality regarding the earth and other living beings in *Ceremony* and in *Almanac of the Dead*. Echoing the witch's description of the Europeans in *Ceremony*, Lecha, one of the keepers of the old almanacs, which are passed down to her and her sister Zeta by their grandmother, Yoeme, finds that all the affluent white people who seek her out during her tenure as a psychic:

> come to her with a deep sense that something had been lost. They had all given the loss different names: the stock market crash, lost lottery tickets, worthless junk bonds or lost loved ones; but Lecha knew the loss was their connection with the earth. (718)

But *Almanac* goes further than *Ceremony* in narrating how the Destroyers "set" European whites on a course of destruction in the Americas. As they have no ancestor spirits in the Americas and the violence of the Spanish Inquisition and colonialism show them their God is dead, they arrive in the New World in "precarious spiritual health" (*A* 313, 717, 718, 417). As they have been created by the Destroyers, they are perfectly formed to lapse into Destroyer mentalities and practices such as capitalism, a sickness which they spread into the Americas and beyond once the "wind blow[s] them across the ocean" (*C* 136).

Angelita La Escapía, another of the novel's powerful Native women characters, observes a similar phenomenon in European consciousness, which she is shocked to find Marx identify, since he is the only European she has heard speak the truth about capitalism, even if he has misunderstood some other important things. La Escapía, who is fascinated by her readings of *Capital* when attending the Marxist "Freedom School" in Cuba in order to secure weapons and aid from the communists there for the purposes of retaking tribal land, asserts that Marx and Engels, who "stole their ideas from the Native Americans" (310-11):

> had not understood that the earth was mother to all beings, and they had not understood anything about the spirit beings. But at least Engels and Marx had understood the earth belongs to no one. No human, individuals, or corporations, no cartel of nations, could 'own' the earth; it was the earth who possessed the humans and it was the earth who disposed of them. (749)[42]

Marx, at least, understands that land is a living presence to be respected, not divided as property. In *Almanac*, Silko makes a clear distinction between the Destroyers, who see the land as

[42] For detailed explorations of La Escapía's engagements with Marx, see Deborah Horovitz, "Freud, Marx, and Chiapas in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," Tamara M. Teale, "The Silko Road from Chiapas or Why Native Americans Cannot be Marxists," and Amanda Walker Johnson, "Silko's *Almanac*: Engaging Marx and the Critique of Capitalism."

something inert to be exploited, and those who understand themselves as part of the land, existing in reciprocal relationship with it.

Europeans, with their dangerous obsession for cutting up the land and defining it in ways that fit their worldviews, suffer a kind of "blindness to the world" that the Yaqui smuggler Calabazas, who works with Zeta, says "the elders used to argue…was one of the[ir] most dangerous qualities" (224). The separation performed by Europeans when they identify something as "outside" themselves through the vehicle of naming makes them "unable ever again to recognize the thing itself" (224). Calabazas, who has many years of experience navigating the deserts of the borderlands between Arizona and Sonora and who will never abandon "what he called 'the war that never ended,' the war for the land" knows that each place is "like a living organism with time running inside it like blood" and each rock has its own unique being (178, 628, 202).[43] Calabazas' position presents a sharp contrast to the narrative around Lecha and Zeta's father, the geologist, who dies by simply drying up, having been drained of spirit just as his study of "rocks" drains them of spirit (123). Calabazas' lecture to Root, that survival "depends on differences," is also intimately linked in the novel to racialization and other forms of categorization employed by the Destroyers to justify their violence (202). Root, Lecha's half-Mexican and half-white lover who divests from whiteness after a near-fatal motorcycle crash, observes that "if you weren't born white, you were forced to see differences; or if you weren't born what they called normal, or if you got injured, then you were left to explore the world of the different" (202-203).

[43] *Almanac* has been often written about as a borderlands novel. See, for example, Francisco Delgado, "Trespassing the U.S.-Mexico Border in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*, Bernie Harder, "The Power of Borders in Native American Literature: Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the* Dead," and John Muthyala, "*Almanac of the Dead*: The Dream of the Fifth World in the Borderlands."

Silko's considerations of the way "difference" can be understood and deployed are central to her ideas about coalition building in the novel. Europeans are "blind" to the actuality of the world there in front of them. Having created "difference" in the form of division, through what Silko refers to as "Cartesian dualities" in order to set other beings apart as objects without life that can be destroyed for pleasure, they miss the actuality of difference, or the lively uniqueness of each being (*YW* 31). This blindness, for one, makes them unable to see the value in any being they place outside the position of the European white male subject. In her 1998 interview with Ellen Arnold, Silko says:

> That's what's so special about the Americas and about the tribal ppl of the Americas—that impulse to say, no, wait, we'll keep what we can. The people who do that [argue for exclusion] become like the Destroyers. Then you've become like them, starting to see things just like them. And there are Native Americas out there who see things that way too. And there are Anglo Americans. That's why it's not valid to use race or skin color, and never has been. What matters about human beings, and that's what the old folks knew, what matters is how you feel and how you are and how you see things, and not who you are on the outside…That's why in *Almanac* the only hope for the retaking of the Americas is that it's done by people of like hearts and minds. (26)

In the sense that Audre Lorde famously pointed out that "the master's tools cannot dismantle the master's house," the Destroyers' tools, according to Silko in this interview, cannot defeat the Destroyers (*Sister Outsider* 74). Silko asserts that "including everybody" is "the only way that the kind of peace and harmony that this earth of the Americas wants is going to happen" (Arnold 11). However, as she also points out in a 1993 interview with Laura Coltelli, not everyone will be included because the Destroyers, and in particular the host of destroyer characters in *Almanac*, "are ill and they revel in their sickness; they don't ever want to get well. The enslaved ones seek to break free before they sicken and die" (*Conversations* 132).

Importantly, however, just because the earth wants peace and harmony doesn't mean the end of capitalism will be peaceful and harmonious: in this sense, *Almanac* is a warning. Many of

the Native women characters in the novel are highly suspicious of the possibility of a peaceful end to the Destroyers' reign and are not afraid to fight their violence with violence. The same is true of other characters who join the coalition against the Destroyers such as the "Green Vengeance" eco-warriors and Awa Gee, the Korean hacker. These latter characters are seen as useful tools even if their penchant for destruction and some of their other tendencies are questionable at best, but the Native women militants are simply realists who will meet violence with violence if absolutely necessary for the collective good.

For instance, Lecha stays for a time in a Yupik community in Alaska where she witnesses an older woman generate static electricity on a TV while she summons "all the energy, all the force of the spirit beings furious and vengeful" in order to crash planes that are flying over the tundra to scout for resources (157).[44] The Yupik woman's claims are confirmed by an insurance adjustor who is a fellow passenger on Lecha's flight when she leaves, and Lecha incredulously observes that the man "really believed there was no life on the tundra, nothing of value except what might be under the crust of snow and earth" (158). The insurance man is just one of many destroyer characters who see the earth as a dead thing; Leah Blue, the real estate tycoon who wants to develop an enclave for the super rich outside of Tucson known as "Venice, Arizona," doesn't "understand why the Indians or the environmentalists had bothered to sue even if her deep wells *did* harm other wells or natural springs…what possible good was this desert anyway? Full of poisonous snakes, sharp rocks, and cactus!" (750). Leah could care less that the salt water the deep wells will pump into the city's network of canals might "ruin the last of Arizona's potable water" since she can simply "provide bottled water from the Colorado Rockies" (660).

[44] A detailed reading of the scenes involving the old Yupik woman can be found in Eva Cherniavsky's "Tribalism, Globalism, and Eskimo Television in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*."

The Destroyer characters' drive to work against the collective well-being in order to line their pockets makes the act of combatting their violence with violence a potentially life-giving rather than life-taking action (Moore 175).

The cast of Destroyers in *Almanac* is massive, incorporating eugenicist gay men who murder babies and envision a world where reproduction can occur without women, whom they despise and torture, corrupt and powerful men who generate and consume disgusting forms of pornography that target the vulnerable, mafia men who can only experience pleasure by orchestrating murder from the golf course, characters with visible indigenous heritage who strive to be white through the accumulation of wealth and the denial of aspects of their history and self, and so on and so forth.[45] If we get a glimpse of the Destroyer mentality in the character of Emo and the "story of witchery" in *Ceremony*, in *Almanac* Silko shows us how the Destroyers, who inhabit all the positions of power in the novel, are able not only to indulge but to profit from their perverse desires. Most of the destroyer characters are white men, because Silko's novel is at heart a realist novel. A few are white women. All are greedy capitalists.

Silko's discussion of destroyer art in *Almanac* calls attention to the way in which everything the Destroyers touch becomes mere commodity, art included. Silko's novel itself refuses the separations made between "art" and "life" and "story" and "history" in Eurocentric thought, a strategy which helps to explain how her enspirited novel tends to "prophecy" historical events to come. In *Ceremony,* the "sterility" of destroyer art is the primary place in which the hidden effects of the Destroyers' witchery on white people can most clearly be seen

[45] Silko's negative depiction of gay men in the novel, ostensibly deployed for the purposes of interrogating misogyny and white supremacy, is one of the more upsetting aspects of the novel. See Dorothea Fischer-Hornung, "'Now We Know that Gay Men Are Just Men After All: Abject Sexualities in Silko's *Almanac*," Tara Prince-Hughes, "Worlds in and Out of Balance: Alternative Genders and Gayness in *Almanac of the Dead* and *The Beet Queen*," and Janet St. Clair, "Cannibal Queers: The Problematics of Metaphor in *Almanac of the Dead*."

(204). White art "feed[s] off the vitality of other cultures" and operates as "the dissolution of their consciousness into dead objects…Hollow and lifeless as a witchery clay figure" (204). In *Almanac,* Silko most tellingly represents destroyer art in the story of Eric, who responds to a call from his former lover David threatening suicide not by rushing to stop him, but by hurrying to Eric's apartment with lights and camera to photograph his dead body.[46]

The art market goes crazy for the photos; "art" as they understand it is simply another vehicle to profit from others' suffering, a point which Silko also drives home by cataloging the other Destroyer characters' production of and obsession with torture porn (107-109). As La Escapía observes in her readings of *Capital*, Marx "understood what tribal people had always known: the maker of a thing pressed part of herself or himself into each object made…the value of anything came from the hands of the maker" (519). Marx's refusal of the shifting of "value" both away from people into objects and the notion of "art" as a series of dead objects alienated from their makers pushes against what we see of destroyer "art" in *Almanac*: more fodder for the investment playground the rich see everything outside themselves as. Silko's conception of the relationship between art and life acknowledges that the world we live in is in large part a product of the stories we tell and that are told to or about us. That is, language makes, rather than representing, the real.

Just as the Americas are filled with furious bitter spirits in *Almanac of the Dead,* so is the novel itself. The novel—a living work of art—is as much a part of "history" as NAFTA, the colonization of the Americas, or any other "real" event it engages or anticipates. Various critics, as well as Silko herself, have been struck by the novel's prediction of the Zapatistas' declaration

[46] For an extended analysis of Eric's destroyer art, see Horovitz, "Freud, Marx, and Chiapas."

of war on the Mexican government in 1994 through the La Escapía storyline. In her essay "An Expression of Profound of Gratitude to the Maya Zapatistas, January 1, 1994," Silko explains that the Laguna elders she grew up with said "the stories are alive; the stories are our ancestors. In the very telling of the stories, the spirits of our beloved ancestors become present with us" (*YW* 150). The Destroyers are the enemies of the stories, telling the people the "old stories are ended, the old stories don't matter anymore (151). Addressing the Zapatistas, Silko says they "very well know the story, the history that they are living as they rise up against the genocidal policies of the Mexican government, tool of the greedy profiteers who violate Mother Earth and poison her children" (151). The war they are fighting is "no new war; this war has a five hundred year history; this is the same war of resistance that the indigenous people of the Americas have never ceased to fight" (151-152).[47]

Most recently, the novel's connection to history has been echoed again by the recent violence committed by the Mexican police and U.S. military against the people of the migrant caravan walking north from Guatemala toward the U.S. In *Almanac*, The militant women like La Escapía go against the wishes of the caravan of the peaceful religious pilgrims led by the twin brothers Wacah/Tacho and El Feo, amassing weapons and preparing to protect the people because they are well aware the U.S. government may likely fire on them as they approach the border.[48] This event complicates earlier readings of the novel (supported by statements by Silko regarding the desirability of not using destruction against the Destroyers) that see *Almanac* as

[47] For interesting reflections on the connections between Silko and the Zapatista Army, see Kyle Bladow, "Timely Objects and the Revolutionary Formerly Known as Marcos: Rereading *Almanac of the Dead*," Horovitz, Romero, and Rebecca Tillett, *Otherwise, Revolution!*

[48] https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/19/world/americas/caravan-mexico-guatemala.html, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/agents-fire-tear-gas-asylum-seekers-mexico-border-190102082249473.html

echoing *Ceremony*'s message that the best way to resist the Destroyers is the refusal of violence, elevating the "radical patience" practiced by the religious pilgrims in *Almanac* (Moore 153).

Almanac already moves away from *Ceremony* in its complication of the significance of violence by forcing the reader to consider the difference between the Destroyers' "love of bloody death" and *Almanac*'s "voices of righteous violence" (Moore 156, 175). In considering this difference, David L. Moore sees the possibility for revolutionary violence to serve as a "making sacred" (175). However, Moore sees both the continuities between *Ceremony* and *Almanac* regarding the best way to defeat the Destroyers, as well as Silko's own exit from law school, as proof of conviction that "the only way to seek justice is through the power of the stories," and sees Silko's statement as her choosing, unlike La Escapía, "the power of the word" over the power of the sword "for very similar political purposes" (Moore 156**).**[49] For Moore, who equates story with nonviolence, *Almanac* suggests the radical patience displayed by the nonviolent members of the resistance is "a slower but surer strategy" to defeat the Destroyers (156).

Silko potentially echoes this idea when she says the "[r]ain will not follow if La Escapía is forced to use her hand-held rockets" but, like the militant women in the novel, Silko forecloses neither the possibility that violence might be necessary nor denies that story and violence can be as intimately linked as story and healing. The effects of the witch's story in *Ceremony* make this more than clear, and *Almanac* repeatedly insists on the connection between story and the "angry spirits" of the Americas who "only listen when the bloodshed is royal from the rich": La Escapía pities Marx because he "did not understand the power of stories belonged to the spirits of the

[49] My examination of the passage from *Yellow Woman* Moore quotes to support his argument that Silko's choice of "power of the word" over the law leads me to understand that Silko's departure from the law is about her sense that the law always favors the Destroyers rather than about her dedication to nonviolence: "The Anglo-American legal system was designed by and for the feudal lords; to this day, money and power deliver 'justice' only to the rich and powerful, it cannot do otherwise" (14).

dead," who, according to Clinton, the war veteran and leader of the "Army of the Homeless" assembling in Tucson, are "nurtured on bitterness and blood spilled since the Europeans had arrived" (592, 520, 418). Clinton may call his religion "ancestor spirits" to avoid any of the negative associations that might accompany the word "Voodoo," but Silko does not shy away from the term, referring to *Almanac* as "a sort of voodoo spell" (*Conversations* 120).

As previously mentioned, *Almanac* warns us that the epoch of "Death-Eye Dog" can come to an end in several different ways. If we are warriors in the fight against the Destroyers, we must let go of "all things European" and listen to the spirits of the earth and ancestors who will tell us when to rise up (710). Silko's prophecy calls readers to join the novel's revolutionary characters, asking those who have been too weak or lazy to join the fight to begin their preparations and warning the Destroyers that they will suffer violence and bloodshed at the hands of vengeful earth and ancestor spirits fighting in conjunction with the warriors if they use force and do not allow the people to retake their lands peacefully (723). The remedy for the "story of witchery" in *Ceremony,* and for the witchery of global capitalism itself, is another story found in the section of *Almanac* titled "Fragments From the Ancient Notebooks": "One day a story will arrive in your town…when you hear this story, you will know it is the signal for you to prepare" (135). *Almanac* itself is this signal to readers. The story we hear is that "all things European" will disappear, and the land stolen from Native Americans by the colonizers shall be reclaimed by the dispossessed of the earth and "never again be held as private property, but as lands belonging to the people to protect" (503, 532). How this will happen is yet to be determined, but, in Silko's words, "it has to be done with the help of everybody" (Arnold 10).

"Meeting in Room 1212": Almanac's Networks of Resistance

Despite the fact that Destroyer logics have separated people from each other, and people from the earth, since colonization and slavery came to the Americas, Silko's *Almanac* works to show that coalition-building across these constructed forms of difference is the only way to stop the Destroyers while simultaneously calling capitalism to account for its crimes against humanity and the earth. That is, the novel does not stop at exposing the Destroyers' horrible deeds or offering a diagnosis of the ways in which the Destroyers have made us all sick, it also offers a remedy based in indigenous ways of knowing and being-in-the-world to all those who want to be healed. As Silko says in her 1993 interview with Laura Cottelli, "Tucson [where much of *Almanac* is set] has harsh stories and harsh lessons but sometimes desperate conditions call for harsh medicine" (*Conversations* 130). The stories Silko includes in *Almanac* are stories that, as Mishuana Goeman says of indigenous narratives more generally, "teach us how to interact, how not to act, how to survive, and our responsibilities to each other and the earth" ("Land" 83).

Almanac concludes with the coming together of many of the novel's "warriors," or those who resist the destroyer "foes" in different ways (628, 561). This collective "squaring off" of those who would destroy all life and those who respect the sanctity of life on earth is the conflict at the center of the novel, and the characters' building of resistance networks is meant to inspire the reader to make their own. The coalition capable of taking down the Destroyers is made up of "human" agents (including some whites, as Betonie advises Tayo in *Ceremony*), ancestor spirits seeking justice that are summoned by the stories, earth spirits capable of setting landslides and earthquakes into motion, lively objects like opals that show the future and bleed, sacred macaws, and electricity (*C* 150).[50] The human members of this coalition are far from perfect and anything

[50] For in-depth analysis of the "lively objects" in *Almanac*, see Jane Olmstead, "The Uses of Blood in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*."

but idealized: some of them take a lot of hard drugs, some are bad parents, all have lessons to learn throughout the course of the novel, but they all share the conviction that the earth belongs to no one and that capitalism must end.

This conviction is not delimited by race. White and white-passing characters like Calabazas' employee Root; Seese, who seeks Lecha out in a coke-driven haze after one of the novel's cruelest characters steals her infant and ends up becoming the transcriber of the ancient almanacs; and Roy, the homeless Vietman vet who teams up with Clinton, a black vet, to form the Army of the Homeless also demonstrate the ability to divest from whiteness and European values and to join in the fight against the Destroyers. As Silko notes in response to a frenzied *Time* reviewer who believed *Almanac* advances the idea that the white race is a cancer on the earth, "[t]he cancer is the secret Gunadeeyah clan…Almanac treats Marx and Jesus w/respect, although it is harsh w/their inheritors" (*Conversations* 130). *Almanac* is simultaneously realistic about how rare it is for those shaped by the Destroyers to abandon their values, but it is also optimistic that there are those who want to get well, as evidenced by the many young white people who flock to the International Holistic Healers Convention where many of the novel's bands of revolutionary characters come to meet each other (734).

Almanac is clear that the disappearance of "all things European" and the return of indigenous land does not necessarily mean the expulsion of all settlers from the Americas; rather, the stewardship of the land is returned to Native people, ceases to become private property, and is held in common again (710). La Escapía even travels to the International Holistic Healers Convention to deliver a message from the twin brothers who are walking North with the people from Mexico: all beings willing to live in harmony with the earth are welcome" to stay in the Americas when the indigenous people reclaim their land (710).

The ancestors speak to the people in dreams, and those with the ability to listen to these messages and perceive other important signs from more-than-human will know when it is time to rise up: "All at once people who were waiting and watching would realize the presence of the spirits…the spirits would assemble and then the people of these continents would rise up" (425). Wacah, one of the twins who serves the sacred macaw spirits and who (along with his brother El Feo) leads the pilgrimage north, says "the pilgrims would be protected by natural forces, forces raised by the spirits. Among these forces would be human beings, warriors to defend the religious pilgrims. These warriors were already waiting far to the north" (712). La Escapía, who is one of these warriors, tells us that she hears from spirits too—"only her spirits were furious and they told her to defend the people from attack" (712).

Silko's understanding of the power of particular stories, and her positive portrayal of militant women in the novel, already refuse the separation between "word and sword," even before La Escapía has been proven right. Stories can heal; they can enact unjustifiable violence; and they can also enact justice. What a story does depends on who is telling it, and for what purposes. The stories collected in the almanacs and in *Almanac of the Dead* itself are stories that summon the souls of the sixty million Native Americans murdered by the colonizers, souls that "howl for justice"—to retake the land (723). This force behind the stories collected in both "almanacs" suggests that Silko is one of those "militant women" Moore dismisses as secondary voices within the novel—a grave error, as the men in the meeting in Room 1212 where the warriors assemble at the International Holistic Healers Convention quickly realize (740). As Clinton notes, it's the women he speaks to who aren't afraid to die fighting the Destroyers: "They'd rather burn down the city, take a police bullet, and die quick, because that way they died fighting, they died warriors, not slaves…because if they didn't fight, they would be destroyed

and Mother Earth with them" (747). If the pacifist male characters in the novel prefer the strategy of "radical patience" exemplified by Tayo, it is clear that the alliance of the furious spirit and living warriors will have to be at the command of these militant women.[51]

In the fifteen years that passed between Silko's writing of *Ceremony* and *Almanac*, it is clear that Silko herself became open to violence if it is necessary to protect people from the Destroyers and if might end their evil reign, even if humanity as a whole is wiped out by the earth (*A* 718). The prophecy carried by the almanacs (both the ancient almanacs in the novel and *Almanac of the Dead* itself) requires all who love the earth and their fellow beings to resist the Destroyers in every way possible. Silko's "tribal internationalism" articulates a global network of resistance based in coalition building across different groups of dispossessed people connected by enspirited forces summoned by storytelling (515). *Almanac* also destabilizes the notion that one's tribe is determined entirely by blood, locating connection and affinity in shared experiences that produce affection. The novel shows us both how colonial-capitalist logics can be found in those who are oppressed by these logics, and how white settlers can divest from white supremacy and join indigenous people in the Americas in their quest to retake the land. Underlying this project is Silko's insistence that Western colonial systems of classification—racialization and the hatred of women that fuels patriarchy in particular—are central driving forces behind capitalist logics, and that dismantling them is essential to revolutionary possibility.

The characters in *Almanac* are more than characters, as story has the possibility to instruct and to show us how to live rightly, and Silko's project in the novel was to "give history a character" (*Conversations* 108). The stories in Silko's novel, like the stories in the title almanac,

[51] For more on *Almanac*'s militant women, see Leslie A. Wootten, "'We Want Our Mother the Land': Female Power in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*."

have the ability to help us shift into a new epoch in which the Destroyers no longer reign, whatever form that shift may take. In addition to coalition building focused on interpersonal relations, Silko also stresses that the great change to come will be driven by coalitions between the human and the more-than-human. This mode of refusing the divisive logics of the Destroyers, particularly the separation of "life" and "art," means that Silko's "possession by narrative spirits" has created a novel that will surely prove itself to be part of history again and again (*Conversations* 108).

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