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**SAIL Special Section:
Indigenous Intersections in Literature:
American Indians and Chicanos/Chicanas**

Introduction

Inés Hernández-Avila

First of all, I want to thank Domino Perez for inviting me to be her co-editor for this volume. When I first heard of the project, I was intrigued that she had initiated the idea and I was also impressed that SAIL had agreed to do it; after all, the topic is not a particularly prominent or compelling one for most scholars working in either of the two disparate fields. Domino and I conferred and we agreed on a call which would seek to foreground the indigenous intersections manifested in Chicana/o and Native American literature, including the shared cultural, creative, historical, political, economic, and spiritual concerns of American Indians and Chicanas/Chicanos. We noted in the call that we were especially interested in nuanced articles that focused on the (overt and implicit) dialogues taking place between the two groups, through Native American and Chicana/Chicano literature, in terms of identity, community, culture, language, activism, representation, and continuance. Ambitious? Perhaps. But between the two of us we had a vision of what was possible.

We are both happy to have the writers included in this volume: Reid Gomez, Domino herself, Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson, and Yolanda Chavez Leyva. We are equally pleased that both Simon Ortiz and Gloria Anzaldua agreed to do email interviews with us. All of the pieces work provocatively with each other to highlight often painful, exceptionally problematic, and sometimes deeply personal areas of inquiry. The intertextual weave takes readers through a back-and-forth movement to consider questions of our identities as peoples indigenous to these Americas, and how our identities are fervently and often concurrently marked, subverted, belabored, rejected, despised, honored, celebrated, re-called. Simon Ortiz's interview, tellingly brief, provides one of the crucial frames/refrains to keep in mind: land, culture, community. Yolanda Chavez Leyva gives us the concept of face-and-heart, in *ixtli* in *yollotl*, which is the term used to mean education, and pedagogy itself, from the ancient Nahuatl tradition. Land, culture, community, face-and-heart. The face-and-heart of the peoples who are original to the land now known as the Americas.

What are the threads that reveal a grounding, any grounding that might bring these two (really multiple) communities together? Is there any possibility of a break-through in the centuries-old antagonisms that

keep these communities apart? For whatever reasons, Ortiz does not mention once the word "Mexican," or Mexico. He links Chicanas/Chicanos to Spain and to Spanish heritage. Yet it is the Mexican cultural heritage of *mestizaje*, I believe, which makes Chicanas/Chicanos most suspect to Native peoples in the U.S., and it is Mexico's history of colonization and the attendant consequences to indigenous peoples over the course of centuries that creates an invisible but palpable wall between the two communities. From an indigenous perspective, this history is what makes it difficult if not impossible for Native peoples to swallow (*tragar*) theoretical perspectives that purport solidarity but actually perpetuate critical stances which assume the right to re-conquer. Reid Gomez says, "I see *mestizos* as children of *the fall*," as she posits indigenous frames that contest and overturn what Robert Warrior calls "a theological assumption that tribal people lived an ossified, unchanging existence until crossing a line into dynamic existence." Ortiz's challenge is pertinent, "Will Chicanos join with indigenous people to fight against loss?"

Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson's essay seems to respond to Ortiz's position that "coalition is possible" when indigenous and Chicano peoples recognize the "total and absolute loss of their lives" through the "total and absolute loss of land, culture, and community." In the development of her idea of the "poetics of loss" as a comparative methodology, Rodriguez y Gibson states, "Loss itself becomes its own sort of presence," and that "the loss and the grief [are] from identifying with the survivors of genocide and the dispossessed." She also says, however, that Joy Harjo and Lorna Dee Cervantes "imagine a community that does not demand the presence of an authentic origin," a point that perhaps would be contested by Harjo (Muscogee) herself and possibly Cervantes (Chicana/Chumash), given the significance of creation stories for indigenous communities (even as both writers might indeed reject the notion of "authentic"). Also, Harjo would, I think, recognize her own dynamic rootedness (not at all stasis) in her Native and other traditions/places as well, even though, yes, "home for [her, and for Cervantes] emerges in a constant state of travel." Rodriguez y Gibson's notion of how these two writers create "traveling, mobile model[s] of emplacement" does affirm the ways by which they both create community through their politically conscious indigenous/feminist movement over actual and metaphorical places and land(scape)s.

Yolanda Chavez Leyva's essay tells the story of how she took her students to Mexico to begin to re-connect with their indigenous faces-and-hearts, offering them a healing mechanism (and work of the heart)

by which to unlayer the multiple levels of intergenerational historical trauma. She shows her students how to re-cord (as Reid Gomez would say) to the land, to themselves, to an indigenous culture that can help them find their path(s); she shares with them the “home” that she has found in the libraries and archives, and in the oral tradition to which she has connected in Mexico. Her inspiration comes from the ancient Aztec tradition, which she is taking the time to study, and to re-present to her students. Are she and they all Aztec? No. But she has discovered, like many Chicana/Chicano scholars, artists, intellectuals (such as Gloria Anzaldua in this volume) the richness of Nahuatl philosophical traditions which contribute to our understandings of humanity and the universe. In *ixtli in yollotl*, *rostro-y-corazón*, face-and-heart, is a *difrasismo* (a “two-phrased term”) which by its very construction recalls the concept of duality that is central to Aztec philosophy. In *xochitl in cuicatl*, *floricanto*, flower-and-song, is another *difrasismo* that represents poetry, the creative act, and in its ancient Nahuatl elaboration, the path to truth.

How does an individual find his or her face-and-heart? With the help of the wise teacher(s), and, as Chavez Leyva says, by going through the interior reflection necessary to truly know oneself; this interior reflection, contemplation, and dialogue of the self with the self, and of the self with the Supreme Being, takes place in the heart, thus the importance of Chavez Leyva’s holistic work with her students, taking into account not only their intellectual growth, but their emotional and spiritual growth as well. When I think of Ortiz’s comment about how Indians see Chicanos, I think of the faces-and-hearts of these students and others like them, young people who are searching within themselves and through formal study for their indigenous origins. It is not an overnight process, but a careful, thoughtful one that requires consciousness, discipline, and contemplation, as Chavez Leyva indicates, step by step.

Chavez Leyva also mentions the work of the late Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, and she is right, his work is now seminal (although in the U.S. it does not appear to be so well-known). Bonfil Batalla posits the Westernized/ing “imaginary Mexico” (striving furiously to forget itself, to ignore its antecedents, and to construct a national narrative of progress that perpetuates old patterns of subjugation) against “Mexico profundo”, which is the indigenous Mexico, that, far from disappearing, is emerging powerfully to assert and insert itself in a highly articulate manner into local, regional, national, and global discourses having to do with autonomy, politics, the economy, social issues, culture(s), and

the land. The world noticed when on Jan. 1, 1994, the EZLN, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, issued its call to consciousness and resistance on the international stage. Bonfil Batalla did not live to see the emergence of the Zapatista movement, but his work has influenced many an indigenous intellectual from Mexico, and his call for the “reindianization” of deindianized Mexicans, has contributed immensely to the work of decolonization and revitalization in that country, specifically in the ways in which Native peoples have discovered allies who are in solidarity with them at the different levels of academia, community, and government.¹

Domino Perez’s essay on Gloria Anzaldúa’s “My Black Angelos,” recalls for me the Many Faces of the Mother/Sister/Daughter that emerge in Chicana feminist reconfigurings of ancient Mexican indigenous sacred beings, such as Coatlicue and Cihuacoatl from, again, the Aztec tradition. The fascination that many contemporary Chicana (and Chicano) intellectuals have with concepts and figures from this tradition has many complicated layers of return, inquiry, and embrace. The distinct historical trajectory of colonization of Chicanas and Chicanos in contrast to Native Americans has influenced Chicana and Chicano perceptions of (or lack of) a land ethic. This distinction contrasts Native peoples in the United States, and their historical struggles for sovereignty as actual legal nations, with the Chicano/Chicana community, which has its own blend of diverse components but whose history of struggle is and has been translated culturally mostly through the interpretation of *mestizaje* and perceived through the lens of Mexican cultural nationalism.

As Rodríguez y Gibson has noted, the utilization of the story of Aztlán in an attempt to reconstruct, re-member, and reclaim a particular “place” as descendants of Aztecs often blurs Chicana and Chicano memory of more recent times. Chicanas/Chicanos are not all of Aztec descent, and, when some claim to be, others vehemently reject such notions as hopeless nostalgia, and the actual indigenous heritage(s) of the people remain vague, if not completely unrecalled. Ortiz states that “Chicanos . . . consider Spanish heritage as a big part of their origin,” yet for many in the Chicano movement, the aim was to “de-privilege” the Spanish drops of blood (often in vehemently passionate rejection), in favor of foregrounding and nurturing the indigenous ancestry(ies) that comprise Mexican identity; many writers, artists, intellectuals, activists ardently reconnect(ed) through the Aztec link, which may or may not particularly pertain to them. Their loss, then, is the actual indigenous heritage (however muffled, however silenced, however erased

over the centuries) which belongs to them by birth, by lineage, by connection to specific (and specifically dynamic) lands/places and culture(s). This loss is the grievous one, because it is the one which would/could provide the true space/place for solidarity.

Reid Gomez's essay is about the power and fluidity of language and of story, language and story coming from and related to the land, to the people, to continuance; she writes about how the land lives on as witness and recorder. She notes how a mestizo origin story "accepts, in some way, the initial and continual erasure of tribal peoples and tribal memories"; she speaks of how this mestizo story makes a "small moment" something that is "defining, finalizing, and destroying." The mestizo origin story gives rise to other stories as well, such as what she calls the "immigrant mythology" of the U.S., which posits that the "immigrant is the one that moves across the land, and the Indian is the one who never moves." The alternative, she suggests, is to "identify as an indigenous de-tribalized person moving into and onto new linguistic wor(l)d views." Here is where the possibility of solidarity would emerge, both locally and hemispherically. In this vein, Gomez notes (as did Rodriguez y Gibson) the problematic of succumbing uncritically to nationalist narratives; at the same time she reminds us of the importance of Native nations within the U.S. and signals that the "metaphysical relationship between the tribe, the land and the language that exists between them [is what] Non-Indians and the U.S. government do not understand." The continuing vicious assault on this relationship foments the disempowerment of Native peoples, yet the assault is met with tremendous resurgence of spirit and intellect, informed always by that metaphysical relationship.

Gloria Anzaldua, right at the beginning of her interview, says,

To have an Indian ancestry means to fear that la india in me that has been killed for centuries continues being killed. It means to suffer psychic fragmentation. It means to mourn the losses—loss of land, loss of language, loss of heritage, loss of trust that all indigenous people in this country, in Mexico, in the entire planet suffer on a daily basis.

In the face of the grief, Anzaldua notes how her work contributes to psychic integration. She does feel comfortable, however, in merging lo indio with lo mestizo in what she calls a "new tribalism," which for her is more inclusive than one based "solely on race" (although later in the

interview she acknowledges that “maybe identity depends more on which community you identify with, how you were reared, and less on the drops of blood in your veins”). This “new tribalism” is what she considers fruitful for coalition work between peoples, yet she argues quite candidly that the new tribalism (and the forging of a mestiza nation) is necessary because “the original tribes are all but gone.” Anzaldúa openly addresses the problems of identity(fication) vis a vis Chicanas/Chicanos and Native peoples. She is one of the leading Chicana intellectuals looking at these issues. But here is the crux of the matter: the original tribes are not all but gone. As Gomez says, the mestizo origin story “asserts that the site of memory and story is containable in the head/body of a single individual or even a single generation, believing that the destruction of that individual, or that generation, brings the destruction of the memories and stories of those people as well.”

We have taken a journey with this issue. We (Domino and I) hope that this special issue will provoke further dialogue about these matters, as hopefully the violence is transformed consciously, *de liberada mente*.

NOTES

¹ For a discussion of Bonfil Batalla’s influence on contemporary indigenous intellectuals from Mexico, see my “The Power of Native Language(s) and the Performance of Indigenous Autonomy: The Case of Mexico,” in *Native Voices: American Indian Identity & Resistance*, eds. Richard A. Grounds, George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins (Lawrence: UP of KS, 2003), 35-74.

Speaking Across the Divide

In Sherman Alexie's "Indian Education," which appears in the collection *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993), the Indian narrator states: "Sharing dark skin doesn't necessarily make two men brothers" (178). His statement is in regard to a Chicano schoolteacher who wrongly and authoritatively assumes that the narrator passes out during a basketball game because he is drunk. The Chicano teacher says, "What's that boy been drinking? I know all about these Indian kids. They start drinking real young" (178). The assumption, both ignorant and racist, serves to underscore the gulf that exists between American Indian peoples and we who identify as Chicana/os, though inherent in the identification of Chicano is the assertion of an Indian identity, one made problematic by the simultaneous acknowledgement of our Spanish, African, etc. heritages, our *mestizaje*. In an attempt to speak across this divide, Inés Hernández-Avila and I asked a similar set of questions to writers Gloria Anzaldúa and Simon J. Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo). We would like to thank both authors for agreeing to participate in this special issue of SAIL and taking the time to answer the following questions.

Email Interview: Gloria E. Anzaldúa

In much of her now seminal work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa explores the ancestral Mexican indigenous raíces [roots] that comprise a large part of the legacy of contemporary Chicanas and Chicanos. Along with many Chicanos and Chicanas, she subscribes to the term "Aztlán" to designate the original landbase that, for her, was Indian, then Mexican, and now Chicana, even though she does admit that it "will be Indian again."¹ In the essay section of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa draws upon ancient Aztec philosophical/cultural traditions to revision and represent her critical/creative mestiza framework(s). However, in the second section, *Ehecatl/Un Viento Agitado*, many of her poems address the grievous loss that she sees within her original Mexican (and I would say Mexican Indian) community of South Texas. It is this grounding in her people's history of lived violence that has given her writing the strength and consciousness she has consistently manifested. In this interview, she sets up some assertions that are predictably (from an indigenous perspective) combustible as she claims *mestizaje* for herself,

and for “us” (Chicanas/os and Native peoples), and as she calls for a “new tribalism,” a mestiza nation.

1. How did you come to an understanding of your indigenous identity?

I don’t call myself an india, but I do claim an indigenous ancestry, one of mestizaje. I first became aware of la india in me when I was a child. When I came out of my mother’s body, Mamagrande Locha told everyone that I was “pura indita” because I had dark blotches on my nalgas (buttocks). Because I have a face como una penca de nopal, because I was a dark brown girl who had darker skin than my siblings and other Anzaldúas, my family started calling me la “Prieta,” the dark one. People said I had the demeanor (whatever that is) of los indios as I used to lie down on the bare earth to soak up the sun or crouch over the holes of snakes waiting for them to slither out. I would watch las urracas prietas fluff their feathers and caw. I learned that these images had power, these images allowed me an awareness of something greater, an awareness of the interconnectedness of people and nature and all things, an awareness that people were part of nature and not separate from it. I knew then that the india in me ran deep. Later I recognized myself in the faces of the braceros that worked for my father. Los braceros were mostly indios from central Mexico who came to work the fields in south Texas. Esos hombres were quiet, respectful, humble. I recognized the Indian aspect of mexicanos by the stories my grandmothers told and by the foods we ate. Still later I realized that making art is my way of connecting to the tribe, to my indigenous roots. Creative work feeds my soul, gives me spiritual satisfaction.

2. What does it mean to you to have Indian ancestry?

To have Indian ancestry means that mi cuerpo (my body), soul, and spirit have raíces (roots) in this continent. El árbol de mi vida has indigenous roots. I think that about 75% of DNA is an amorphous record of all past lives and past lives of ancestors. If this is true la india in me will never be lost to me.

To have an Indian ancestry means to fear that la india in me that has been killed for centuries continues being killed. It means to suffer psychic fragmentation. It means to mourn the losses—loss of land, loss of language, loss of heritage, loss of trust that all indigenous people in

this country, in Mexico, in the entire planet suffer on a daily basis. La gente indigena suffer a loss that's cumulative and unrecognized by the masses in this country, a loss generations old, centuries old. To have Indian ancestry means to bear a relentless grief. To have indigenous ancestry also means to bear the promise of psychic integration. As broken and shattered people we are driven to re-gather our spirits and energies, to reorganize ourselves. To have Indian ancestry is to envision a moon that is always rising, to see the sky rear up, to have entry into new imaginings.

I think it's not enough for me to be a Chicana or an Indian, it's not enough for anyone to base their identity on race, gender, class, sexuality, or any of the traditional categories. All of us have multiple identities. Besides lo indio el mestizaje that I'm comprised of includes the biological mixtures of Basque, Spanish, Berber Arab and the cultural mix of various cultures of color and various white cultures. I call this expanded identity "the new tribalism." In 1991, I "appropriated" and recycled the term "new tribalism" from David Rieff ("Professional Aztecs and Popular Culture", *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Winter 1991) who used it to criticize me for being "a professional Aztec" and for what he sees as my naïve and nostalgic return to indigenous roots. He takes me to task for my "romantic vision" in *Borderlands/la frontera*. He claims that Americans should think a little less about race and a little more about class. I use the term "new tribalism" to formulate a more inclusive identity, one that's based on many features and not solely on race. In order to maintain its privileges the dominant culture has imposed identities through racial and ethnic classification. The new tribalism disrupts this imposition by challenging these categories. The new tribalism is a social identity that could motivate subordinated communities to work together in coalition.

3. Why do you think there is such resistance from some individuals to see Mexicanos and Chicana/os as Indians? What kind of resistance do you see? In other words, when someone resists seeing Mexicanos as Indians, what are they resisting?

There is definitely resistance from both sides. Some Raza (Mexicans and Chicanas/os) hate the Mexican (and therefore the Indian) in themselves. They only acknowledge their Spanish blood. Muchos tienen an unconscious verguenza for being Mexican, for being part Indian. I think this self-hatred is projected onto Native women when

Chicanas treat native women *sin respeto* (disrespectfully). When Chicanas and other *mujeres de color* treat Native women and their issues as less important, we demote them to pawns for our *movimientos*. We make *las indias* the other. *Nosotras* gets divided into *nos/otras*, into an us/them division. The us/them dichotomy locks us into a who-is-more-oppressed dynamic. Internalized racism and internalized shame get played out. We all re-enact the colonialism and marginalization the dominant culture practices on Native and people of color.

Then there's the question of who is "Indian." It would take a book to even begin to deal with this. Some Native Americans don't accept Chicanas as *indias*. Some think of Chicanas (and other women of color) as "appropriationists." During the "Color of Violence" conference in Santa Cruz organized by Andy Smith, *la caca* between Chicanas and Native women surfaced with a lot of finger pointing, basing the conflict on "intra-racism at the Kitchen table." They saw it as a continuation of the abuse of native spirituality and the Internet appropriation of Indian symbols, rituals, vision quests, and spiritual healing practices like shamanism. Some natives put Chicanas/os on the side of the dominators and claim our fantasies are similar to those of "whites." Similar conflicts between Chicanas and Native women surfaced in the "Conference Against Violence of Women of Color" in Chicago.

Right now Chicanos/as and Native Americans in ethnic studies departments like that of UC Berkeley are experiencing internal rifts and have polarized into separate groups, each entrenched in their positions. People on both sides are angry and bitter. Both are passionate about their cultures. Emotions run deep, but also close to the surface, and often gush up in anger and frustration. We open old *heridas*, wounds of genocidal colonization and marginalization that have never formed scabs because they've continued to bleed for centuries. Each group reinforces its borders in automatic defense mechanisms. *Estos pleitos* are hard to witness because both Native Americans and Chicanos share a long history of theft of entitlement. What sets off these bursts of contention are issues related to resources, teaching positions, grant distributions, power in decision making. On many campuses the battles between the different ethnic groups are reaching critical mass.

4. What's behind the fighting? Why do you think the rift is happening?

The underlying cause is systemic racism and internalized racism. The infighting manifests itself as verbal and emotional violence. What's particular about this violence is that it doubles back on itself. Instead of joining forces to fight imperialism we're derailed into fighting with each other, into maneuvering for power positions. Each struggles to be heard. Chicanas want to present their side of the indigenous narrative, so we take over the table. Chicanas and other people of color further silence Native women, already rendered invisible by the dominant culture and the corporate universities. Internalized racism gets "gendered" or "sexed" between native women and mestizas, people who historically were the most chingadas (fucked). This history of oppression erupts with violence toward each other. This doesn't just happen between native women and Chicanas. It's happening between other ethnic groups, between Chicana/os and Asians, between Afro-Americans and other groups. Ethnic groups are thrown a few crumbs in the form of teaching positions, grants, decision-making in hiring, etc. and we fight each other for them. It's the old divide-and-conquer strategy. There are some instances in which the different ethnic studies programs work in solidarity with each other, particularly when they are independent of each other.

5. Why do you think there aren't more Chicanas doing Native American studies and more Native Americans doing Raza studies?

One reason may be because we construct identity differently. Another reason may be because each group is defending their identities and territories against the encroachment of the other. Who has legitimate right to do scholarship dealing with identity, language, and other areas pertaining to both groups? The issue of "blood quantum" (the measuring stick this country beats the Indians with) is one of the most explosive in the discussion of what constitutes tribal identity and indigenous legitimacy. In an email, Inés mentioned the viciousness of the "assault on blood." Cuales gotas me van a quitar para "delegitimarme?" she asks. This makes me think about the "one drop" of black blood that makes you an African American, the one-eighth of Native American blood that makes you an Indian. In the case of Chicanas/os where una nueva raza of mixed-bloods was created when Spaniards raped Mexican Indian women, the number of drops of blood don't seem to matter because most of us identify as mestizas. We weren't raised in reservations, nor were we raised identifying as Indian. Some

Chicanas/os are angry at having to state the obvious—that biologically we have Indian blood.

I come from a state (Texas) that decimated every Indian group including the Mexican indigenous. I don't look European, but I can't say I'm Indian even though I'm three-quarters Indian. But the issue is much more complex than how many drops of indigenous blood Indians and Chicanas have. I've always claimed indigenous ancestry and connections, but I've never claimed a North American Indian identity. I claim a *mestizaje* (mixed-blood, mixed culture) identity. In participating in this dialogue I fear violating Indian cultural boundaries. I'm afraid that what I say may unwittingly contribute to the misappropriation of Native cultures, that I (and other Chicanas) will inadvertently contribute to the cultural erasure, silencing, invisibility, racial stereotyping, and disenfranchisement of people who live in real Indian bodies. I'm afraid that Chicanas may unknowingly help the dominant culture remove Indians from their specific tribal identities and histories. Tengo miedo que, in pushing for *mestizaje* and a new tribalism, I will "detribalize" them. Yet I also feel it's imperative we participate in this dialogue no matter how risky.

Chicanas are damned for ripping off Native culture if they claim their Indianness and they are damned for going over to "whites" when gringos crook their fingers saying, "Come over to our side, you too are Caucasian." At other times "whites" will point their finger and say, "You belong over there with the dirty Indians." Chicanos weren't raised in reservations, nor were we raised identifying as Indian. I grew up in a Mexican ranch community, not an Indian community. Chicanas cannot claim to be members of indigenous people of *norte américa* unless their particular mix pertains to US tribes. We can't represent Indian women, nor tell their stories.

Native women and Chicanas construct their *indigenismo* differently. It's a question of how you identify. Some Chicanas may have more Indian blood, but they might not identify with their indigeneity. Other Chicanas do not acknowledge their mixed-blood. Unless it's culturally nourished, what's in the blood lies dormant. People who biologically may have less Indian blood than Chicanas, like Louise Erdrich or Paula Gunn Allen, are able to claim their Indianness (they both acknowledge their mixed-blood as well). Deborah Miranda (Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen Nation—non-federally recognized tribes) claims that if mixed-blood Indians identify as *mestiza* and not Indian their indigeneity would vanish completely. ("Footnoting Heresy: E-mail Dialogues" with AnaLouise Keating, *this bridge we call home*.) This is

tantamount to suicide/genocide. Until the indigenous in Indians and Chicana/os are ensured survival, establishing a new tribalism, a mestiza nation, remains merely a vision. But dream we must. The mestizaje and the new tribalism I envision adds to but does not dispossess Indians (or others) from their own history, culture, or home-ethnic identities.

The question is how much is nature, how much nurture, how much culture. Maybe identity depends more on which community you identify with, how you are reared, and less on the drops of blood in your veins. But roots are important, who was here on this continent first does matter. The Indian in all of us is indigenous to this continent and has been here for thousands of years; the white, Spanish, Black, Asian aspects of our heritage are diasporic and came later.

Yet we're all mestizos. Mestizaje in Chicano identity and mestizaje in indigenous identity are two branches of the same tree. Mestizaje is the chief metaphor in the construction of both Raza and indígena identities. I fault Raza for ignoring the underlying Indian aspect of mestizo identity, for not embracing the Indian in our mestizaje in ways that don't misuse the appropriation of lo indio. Many of us are aware that we can't continue to claim indigenous origins and ignore what's happening to indígenas in Mexico and in the US. Though Chicanas, like Indians, emerged from a colonized history, we can't ignore the fact that Indians are still under the imperialist thumb, are still undergoing colonialism. When Chicanas (and other women of color) take up the cause of silenced Native women, we don't hold ourselves responsible for how we use the history of colonization of Natives, a colonization that's forced on real bodies. We don't acknowledge or examine the human, treaty, and land rights violations that are happening before our eyes. We shut our eyes to how Natives are forced to live out past and present day violations.

6. You have been accused of appropriating indigenous identity in your work. How would you answer such objections?

My own indigenous knowledges have been crucial to my work. I have used certain Mexican indigenous cultural figures and terms to formulate concepts such as the Coyolxauhqui imperative, the new tribalism, nahualismo, spiritual activism, and various other procesos de la conciencia. In this respect sí rescribo algunos aspectos de la mitología nahuatl. For me to bring up these cultural figures and terms is more of a remembrance, an uncovering, and an exploration of my own indige-

nous heritage. I do it with a keen awareness that we're living in Indian land. I do it knowing that native people in this country suffer from environmental racism, incarceration, alcoholism, foster care system, no health care. I'd like to think that I do it for my own growth and healing, that I do to promote social transformation. I try to do my remembrance (recordamiento) reflectively, I try stick to my own indigenous antepasados and not "borrow" from North American Indian traditions.

According to Chicana scholar Josefina Saldaña Portillo in "Who's the Indian in Aztlán? Re-Writing Mestizaje, Indianism and Chicanismo from the Lacandón" (*The Latin American Subaltern Reader*, ed. Ileana Rodríguez, Durham: Duke, 2001, 416), by focusing on Aztec female deities and incorporating into contemporary mestiza consciousness I exclude and erase contemporary indigenous subjectivity and practices on both sides of the border. I appreciate her critique but my sense is that she's misread or has not read enough of my work.

I think it's important to consider the uses that appropriations serve. The process of marginalizing others has roots in colonialism. I hate that a lot of us Chicanas/os have Eurocentric assumptions about indigenous traditions. We do to Indian cultures what museums do—impose western attitudes, categories, and terms by decontextualizing objects, symbols and isolating them, disconnecting them from their cultural meaning or intentions, and then reclassifying them within western terms and contexts. In my own work I've experienced both a colonization and a decolonization by first being marginalized then by being elevated into the "mainstream." But it's an elevation that reproduces the dynamics of colonialism since that mainstream continues to control, to give or withhold what's labeled art or theory. I'm included in the canon, in the Norton and the Heath Readers, as a token. I am cited by "whites" mostly for my work in *Borderlands* and *This Bridge Called My Back*, but often it's a mere referencing and not a deep exploration. I'm glad that others have borrowed and expanded on my ideas.

Some things are worth "borrowing." We are all on a **spiritual journey** and yearn for a Polaris star to guide us in a search for a spiritual "home." We're all looking for spiritual knowledge, for inner knowledge, the alchemist's quest for the philosopher's stone. If we don't have an inner spirituality we try to re-root ourselves in other people's spiritual rituals and practices. The goal of spirituality is to transform one's life. In order to achieve this goal we "borrow" Native American spirituality and apply it to our situation. But we often misuse what we've borrowed by using it out of context. Chicana/os are not critical enough about how we borrow from lo indio. Some Indian

Americans think all Chicanas/os plunder native culture as mercilessly as whites. Who does the appropriating and for what purpose is a point to consider. Russell Means, former AIM (American Indian Movement) leader, calls those who rip off Indian traditions “culture vultures.” (Ward Churchill, “A Little Matter of Genocide” in *From A Native Son: Selected Essays on Indigenism, 1985-1995*. Boston: South End Press, 1996; 321.) If you appropriate indigenous knowledge, shamanic or whatever, because it’s marketable and will make you tons of money and give you fame, why bother with the consequences of your “borrowing.” We need to scrutinize the purpose and accountability for one’s “borrowings.”

7. Do you see any difference between Chicanas and Chicanos recovering and claiming an Indian identity and detribalized urban mixed bloods who do the same?

Yes, I do see a difference. But “detribalized urban mixed bloods” according to whom? Indians, “whites”? There are strong pan-Indian, intertribal urban communities throughout the country. These communities come together to help each other, to remember, to honor, to reconnect. In the case of Chicanos, being “Mexican” is a race not a tribe. So in a sense Chicanos and Mexicans are “detribalized.” We don’t have tribal affiliations but neither do we have to carry ID cards establishing tribal affiliation. Indians suffer from a much more intense colonization, one that is even more insidious because it is covered up, and white and colored Americans remain ignorant of it. Natives are really invisible; they are not even put on the map unless the US government wants to rip them off. And mixed-bloods are even more invisible. Chicanos, people of color, and whites choose to ignore the struggles of Native people even when it’s in right in our caras (faces). I hate that all of us harbor *este desconocimiento*. It’s a willful ignorance. Though both “detribalized urban mixed bloods” and Chicanas/os are recovering and reclaiming, this society is killing off urban mixed bloods through cultural genocide, by not allowing them equal opportunities for better jobs, schooling, and health care. Or as Chrystos (Menominee) puts it, “the slop syphilization cooks up” is killing Indians (“Vanish Is a Toilet Bowl Cleaner” *in this bridge we call home*).

8. The focus of this special issue is Indigenous Intersections: American Indian and Chicana/o Literatures. Although some people might see this as redundant, what *are* the intersections that you see between these literatures?

Alliances, literary, spiritual, and otherwise, have been created and sustained by many writers who are identified as Chicana or Native American. Raza and American Indians share many cultural, creative, historical, political, economic, and spiritual concerns. Both groups are mestizos, although most Native people would reject this terminology. Both lead hybrid lives. Our historical lives have intersected in numerous places. We have many issues in common; we fight against similar oppressions. Both struggle against subordination, racism, etc. Both struggle against internal colonialism. Temas and questions important to American Indians and Chicana/os are political/historical memory, indigenous connections, health issues such as diabetes, and the restoration of traditional foods and diet (before the advent of fast foods), and environmental racism. Raza feminism and mainstream feminism must include among its issues the erasure of the cultural practices of native people, land rights, sovereignty, and self-determination. Less obvious areas to work together on are dealing with cumulative loss and trauma, generations suffering from post traumatic stress syndrome.

Dialogue and collaborations between Native Americans and Chicanas/os are necessary. We need to dialogue about identity, community, culture, language, activism, representation, and continuance. We need to do collaborative work that reveals how connected our past histories and present situations are. We need to explore how our legacies of colonization and displacement have given us a traumatic history, give outlet to our grieving for what we have lost, find ways of healing our damaged psyches and for the effects on individuals by trauma inflicted on the group. Edén Torres talks about this in her book *Chicana Without Apology: The New Chicana Cultural Studies* (Routledge, 2003). We need to amicably and respectfully talk about these mutual concerns. Yes, I know that collaborative political movements are difficult to carry out when two groups of people are in conflict and in desconocimiento. Such work is being done by nepantleras. We just need more written and published accounts by the very people who are doing this kind of trabajo.

9. **How do you see the relationship of your writing to spirit, to the spirit of the land, to the spirit of the ancestors, to your own spirit?**

When I stand before the abyss and am unable to leap; when my inspiration has deserted me and I hit a wall, feel wiped out, gutted; when el cenote, the source of my guiding voices, seems to have dried up; when I want the seas to part, rain to fall but nothing moves—when all of these happen, pierdo las ganas (I lose the will, desire, hunger, drive). Depression results. Depression is a loss of spirit. I get depressed when my creative efforts don't generate enough force and energy to make a difference in my life and in the lives of others. I have to surrender to the forces, the spirits, and let go. I have to allow el cenote, the subterranean psychic norias or reserves containing our depth consciousness and ancestral knowledges, to well up in the poem, story, painting, dance, etc. El cenote contains knowledge that comes from the generations of ancestors that live within us and permeate every cell in our bodies.

Each piece of writing I do creates or uncovers its own spirit, a spirit that manifests itself through words and images. Imagination takes fragments, slices of life and experiences that seem unrelated, then seeks their hidden connections and merges them into a whole. I have to trust this process. I have to serve the forces/spirits interacting through me that govern the work. I have to allow the spirits to surface. Nepantla, el lugar entremedios, is the space between body and psyche where image and story making takes place, where spirits surface. When I sit and images come to me, I am in my body but I'm also in another place, the space between worlds (nepantla). Images connect the various worlds I inhabit or that inhabit me.

Nature is my source of sustenance and support. It offers images—I usually start each piece with a visual or other sensory image. Invisible energies whisper to me, visions from the subtle realms within me and from nature appear. I follow where the whisperings and images lead. I take their energies and transmit them to the reader. An **exchange of energy** is what the process of creation is all about. Art is an exchange of energy and conocimientos (knowledge and insights). Writing, nature, and images gives me a deeper connection to the sources of life, enables me to connect to certain energies. Every essay, fiction, poem I write is grounded in the land, the environment, the body and therefore in the past/ancestors. Every piece enacts recovery.

10. How do you see the work you are doing as healing work, as work of recovery and recuperation?

The path of the artist, the creative impulse, what I call the **Coyolxauhqui imperative** is basically an attempt to heal the wounds. It's a search for inner completeness. Suffering is one of the motivating forces of the creative impulse. Adversity calls forth your best energies and most creative solutions. Creativity sets off an alchemical process that transforms adversity and difficulties into works of art. All of life's adventures go into the cauldron, la oya, where all fragments, inconsistencies, contradictions are stirred and cooked to a new integration. They undergo transformation.

For me esta oya is the **body**. I have to inhabit the body, discover its sensitivity and intelligence. When all your antenna quiver and your body becomes a lightening rod, a radio receiver, a seismograph detecting and recording ground movement, when your body responds, every part of you moves in synchronicity. All responses to the world take place within our bodies. Our bodies are tuning forks receiving impressions, which in turn activate other responses. An artist has to stay focused on the point of intersection (nepantla) between inner and outer worlds through her senses. Listening to an inner order, the voice of real intuition, allows it to come through the artist's body and into the body of the work. The work will pass on this energy to the reader or viewer and feed her or his soul. The artist transmits and transforms inner energies and forces, energies and forces that may come from another realm, another order of intelligence. These forces use the la artista to transmit their intelligence, transmit ideas, values that awaken higher states of consciousness. Once conocimiento (awareness) is reached you have to act in the light of your knowledge. I call this spiritual activism.

All of my work, including fiction and poetry, are healing trabajos. If you look at my central themes, metaphors, and symbols, such as nepantla, the Coyolxauhqui imperative, the Coatlicue state, the serpent, el mundo zurdo, nos/otras, the path of conocimiento, you'll see that they all deal with the process of healing. You'll find all these themes in "Now let us shift . . . the path of conocimiento . . . inner work, public acts" *in this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation* (Routledge, 2002.)

11. How do you see your work in relationship to autonomy and creativity? How does this relationship interweave with indigenous notions of individual visioning on behalf of the community?

I don't write in a vacuum. I have helpers, guides from both the outer realm like my writing comadres and invisible ones from the inner world. I write in-community even when I sit alone in my room. Whatever I do I have to put my trust in a deeper order, an unknowable trapo (fabric) of divine and creative plan. I must trust in unseen helping guides, must surrender to the mysterious forces that guide me. I rely on the part of myself that has this ability to connect with these forces, to the imaginal world. I call this daimon "la naguala." I rely on others who access esta facultad.

Las nepantleras, modern day chamanas, use visioning and the imaginal on behalf of the self and the community. Nepantleras deal with the collective shadows of their respective groups. They engage in spiritual activism. We need the work of las **nepantleras** to bridge the abyss between native people and Chicana/os. Nepantleras are the supreme border crossers. They act as intermediaries between cultures and their various versions of reality. Las nepantleras, like the ancient chamanas, move between the worlds. They can work from multiple locations, can circumvent polarizing binaries. They try not to get locked into one perspective or perception of things. They can see through our cultural conditioning and through our respective cultures' toxic ways of life. They try to overturn the destructive perceptions of the world that we've been taught by our various cultures. They change the stories about who we are and about our behavior. They point to the stick we beat ourselves with so we realize what we're doing and may choose to throw away the stick. They possess the gift of vision. Nepantleras think in terms of the planet, not just their own racial group, the US, or norte américa. They serve as agents of awakening, inspire and challenge others to deeper awareness, greater conocimiento, serve as reminders of each other's search for wholeness of being.

Nepantleras recognize that the heart of the continent is indigenous, that the heart of the planet is Indian. I know that el árbol de la vida of all people has indigenous roots. But I also know that the past cannot be captured, but it must be remembered. Yet there is a cultural and linguistic revitalization movement going on with strong intertribal exchanges and negotiations. Planetary, indigenous movements have multiplied. The original tribes are all but gone, but a new tribalism is

emerging. Even though it may be the hardest thing we'll ever do, we have to come together, work with each other, learn about each other, listen to each other, value each other. We stand before the abyss between our worlds psyching ourselves to leap. We have to use every means to transform ourselves and our society. I watch Coyolxauhqui the moon, I see her rise. And I wait for the sky to rear up.

NOTES

Questions 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8 were formulated by Domino, questions 9, 10, and 11 by Inés, and questions 4, 5, and 6 by Gloria.

¹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: spinsters/aunt lute, 1987), 91.

E-mail Interview With Simon J. Ortiz

1. What are the intersections between Chicana/os and Indians?

There is one main intersection and that is our interconnected history since shortly after 1492. A common history of struggle against European empire that was bound up with the quest for gold and slaves. Today, the struggle is still against empire, this time the Evil Empire of the USA.

2. Any connection between Chicanos and Indian people?

There always was a connection between Chicanos and Indians although Indian people tended to see the Chicano as Spanish since Chicanos do consider Spanish heritage as a big part of their origin. So to some degree, Indians see Chicanos as Spanish and they regard the Spanish as the enemy and oppressor, liar, thief, killer.

3. Any difference between Chicanas and Chicanos recovering and claiming Indian identity and detribalized urban mixed-bloods who do the same?

The big difference is land, culture, and community. Connection to land is ultimate. Living within the culture is ultimate. A thriving Indigenous community is ultimate.

4. Why resistance to see Mexicans and Chicanos as Indians?

Land, culture, and community. Indigenous peoples are the land, culture, and community. Chicanos claim Spanish culture as their origin and heritage. Indigenous people have fought against the loss of land, culture, and community for a long, long time. Will Chicanos join with Indigenous people to fight against loss?

5. Coalitions of “American Indians” and Chicanos building to address concerns?

When Indigenous peoples and Chicano people really see the total and absolute loss of land, culture, and community as the total and absolute loss of their lives, then a coalition is possible. Fighting in solidarity against the liars, thieves, and killers which foster that loss is possible then.

6. Why Spanish as one of the languages in *The Good Rainbow Road*?

Land, culture, community. Indigenous culture, with Indigenous language as a main component, is the beginning of how we in the Americas exist as a human culture and how we see ourselves. Without Indigenous culture, there is no culture in the Americas. Along with English, Spanish is one of the main languages of the Americas.

NOTES

Ortiz and Anzaldúa were asked the same questions. The numbered questions included here were rephrased by Ortiz in his email response.

**Imagining a Poetics of Loss:
Notes Toward a Comparative Methodology**

Everything was as we imagined it. The earth and stars, every creature and leaf imagined with us.

The imagining needs praise as does any living thing. Stories and songs are evidence of this praise.

The imagination conversely illumines us, speaks with us, sings with us.

— Joy Harjo “A Postcolonial Tale” (*Woman* 18)

The manner in which Harjo conjugates the word “imagine” across these six lines reveals the multiplicities of meaning and of radical possibility that the imagination engenders. The imagination figures prominently not only in this poem, but as an ethos of truth throughout Harjo’s work. More precisely, the word *imagine* comes from the Latin *imaginare*, “to form an image of, represent, fashion” (*OED*). It means to conceive in the mind as a thing to be performed. Imagination, then, shapes understanding. If we understand the nation is an “imagined community,” then literary representations fundamentally shape our senses of belonging.¹ Because of a nationalist impulse to claim and affirm distinct cultural and historical legitimacy, both Chicana/o and Native American tribal and pan-tribal nationalisms often obscure one another in their imaginations—in effect ignoring each other’s presence. These discursive lacunae displace each other and perpetuate anxieties of authenticity and belonging in both communities.

In the face of these anxieties of creating and imagining communities, alternative ways of engaging these historical losses, of life and of land, need to be explored. Rather than creating or recovering a structure to stand in as an alternative historical presence, (such as Aztlán) one might imagine a transfiguration of the very loss that leads to the historical absence. Instead of maintaining a Chicana/o nation that obscures sovereign tribal nations, we might regard the common histories of loss and dispossession as a way of creating connections, of building communities within a common context of struggle.

This essay traces the contours of a comparative methodology, and suggests that reading Chicana and Native poets together offers an important comparative methodology, allowing for the necessary complication of female figures so readily appropriated by cultural nationalist

discourses. Chicano cultural nationalism's imagining of Aztlán and its attendant figure of the indigenous mother are key examples of structures that strive to reconstruct elements lost because of colonization. Feminisms of color have provided critical interventions in the discourses of cultural nationalisms, interrogating patriarchal and heterosexist frameworks. Chicana feminism in particular has interrogated masculinist narratives of Aztlán and its Mexican nationalist legacy, specifically the family romance that imagines its mother as the violated Indian woman and its father as the raping Spaniard.² Norma Alarcón's essay, "Anzaldúa's Frontera: Inscribing Gynetics," for example, takes up the goal of "hybridizing the textual field" in order to come to terms with

the formation and displacement of subjects, as writers/critics/chroniclers of the nation, and with the possibility that we have continued to recodify a family romance, an Oedipal drama in which the woman of color in the Americas has no "designated place." (43)

Alarcón's critique raises important questions about both nationalist and feminist approaches to the figure of the indigenous mother that either vilify or vindicate her.

The way we imagine our relationships to genocidal and cultural losses clearly inform how we read history and culture. I pair Lorna Dee Cervantes, a Chicana poet, and Joy Harjo, a Creek poet, both writers who embrace this loss, not only because both poets are critically acclaimed and address similar thematic concerns, but also because both have been described as cultural nationalists by different critics, a critical focus I find limiting, at best.³ Kaplan, Alarcón and Moallem suggest in their introduction to *Between Women and Nation: Nationalism, Transnational Feminism, and The State* that national models of identification rely on dualisms, such as the margin and the center, which are inadequate for analyzing the "complex and nuanced manifestations of transnational circulation of people, goods, and information in the present moment" (4). I read Harjo and Cervantes within the contexts of U.S. Third World and Transnational feminisms in an attempt to account for these kinds of enforced and voluntary circulations. These two writers create categories of identification, senses of belonging, based on a traveling, mobile model of emplacement. Place takes on a defining significance not at a static relationship in one geographic region, but in an ongoing renewal with different places, and different communities, in

large part because “home” is a category that for Native Americans and Chicana/os, has been historically disrupted.⁴

Reading Harjo within the context of Chicana feminism, we can see the problems with patterns of reading shaped by claims of authenticity; often, they rely on narratives of indigenous motherhood, complicating the critical status of claiming “the native woman” as a touchstone of struggle.⁵ Reading Cervantes in the context of Native American feminism suggests that hemispheric concerns are integral to local ones; the struggles against the military and sexual violence inflicted on women in Chiapas and in Colombia are part and parcel of struggles against neocolonialism and global capitalism. Reading both of these poets with an attention to their cross-cultural and international feminist commitments provokes difficult questions about the critical frameworks that Chicana feminism takes for granted. Can current models that recover the figure of the indigenous mother account for contemporary Native American women? Can this model account for contemporary Native men? What of the indigenous father? Or brother? Or son? Elizabeth Cook-Lynn suggests that to ignore the indigenous father “dismisses the centuries of our modern American Indian histories when our fathers fought and died and made treaties in order to save us from total annihilation” (147). U.S. Third World feminisms, and Chicana feminism in particular, have stressed the importance of including a concern for men of color in their struggles; these then, are significant questions. What of women who resist the framework of *la familia*? What of women who resist or reject motherhood or their mothers?⁶

These questions must shape a reading of and engagement with Harjo and Cervantes. Their work is important because it resists readings that are overdetermined by nationalist narratives of maternity for women. The reclamation of the indigenous mother and the feminized landscape as homeland are tropes of Chicana analytics that shape how we read Chicana writing. The authentic as a mediator of legitimacy authorizes these tropes, and therefore by extension the frameworks in which we read writing by women of color. In reading Chicana and Native feminisms against each other I hope to enrich both. By engaging Native feminists, we can see the limitations of the Chicana feminist exultation of the indigenous mother as the primary (read: authentic) source of culture and tradition. Conversely, Chicana feminist critics offer some insights about the ways that the Earth as mother trope in Native American discourse (another marker of authenticity) can inscribe women within essentialized frameworks. Harjo and Cervantes are important poets because their work suggests alternative ways to

imagine the meanings of historical loss and these aforementioned questions of belonging that resist a singular point of origin.

This reimagining takes place not in a vacuum, but within a U.S. Third World feminist tradition of questioning what loss might mean, and by extension the ways that this historical loss shapes subjectivity. bell hooks stresses

the necessity for a poetics of lamentation, for poems that speak our grief. Women poets in the West continue to deepen our creative processes by working with grief and loss to speak sorrow against the culture of repression that would have us confine, silence, and bury pain. (297)

This expression of sorrow, she notes, is “one of the passions that binds us together” (297). Shared grief can be a point of contact and community.

How then, do critics read that building of community? Alarcón understands Anzaldúa’s articulation of shifting consciousness in the figure of “the shadow beast” as ultimately undermining “a monological self-representation”; in other words, there is no singular origin of selfhood. Alarcón sees Anzaldúa engaging feminist repossession of the land while at the same time criticizing the “scenarios of origins that emerge in the self-same territory” that rely on over-determined subject positions. Alarcón points instead to Anzaldúa’s multiple and resistant self inscriptions as a feminist alternative to establishing belonging: “Snake woman, La Chingada, Tlazolteotl, Coatlicue, Cihuacoatl, Tonantsi, Guadalupe, La Llorona, . . . the polyvalent name insertions into Borderlands are a rewriting of the feminine, a reinscription of genetics” (“Anzaldúa’s Frontera” 48). In a similar vein, Angie Chabram Dernerseian’s essay on the splitting of Chicana/o subjectivity as the splitting of Aztlán takes up this question of multiplicity in subject formation for Chicanas in the face of dispossession and historical loss of people and of homeland.

I argue that Cervantes and Harjo create a poetics that embraces loss and the grief that comes from identifying with the survivors of genocide and the dispossessed. My usage of “poetics” here follows the editors of the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* who define poetics as “a systematic theory of poetry. It attempts to define the nature of poetry, its kinds and forms, its resources of device and structure, the principles that govern it, the functions that distinguish it from other

arts, the conditions under which it can exist, and its effects on readers or auditors" (Brogan 930). I suggest that questions about how these formal and structural elements are shaped by individual and collective experiences of historical events intersect with Angie Chabram Derrésian's charge that in the manifestation of Chicana/o cultural production, "content as well as form must be re-created, if Chicana/o subjects are to speak with their own accents and populate language with their own vernacular" (36). I extend, however, the frame of reference here from Chicana/o cultural production to U.S. Third World feminist cultural production.

This poetics of loss recognizes that what is past is not merely past, but immanent in everyday experience. Loss itself becomes its own sort of presence. Loss becomes a means of connection that enables both poets to imagine a community that does not demand the presence of an authentic origin. The present cultural moment makes it impossible to access a pristine, unbroken authentic indigenous and national past. Indeed, such a singular originary source may have never existed, given cultural interactions and trade between Native cultures from disparate regions. The markers of ethnic identification in the work of Harjo and Cervantes (whether Muscogee, Chumash or Chicana) are always and already compromised by the realities of post-contact/post-conquest mixing of cultural traditions.

Models of reading: displacement and authenticity

Texts written by Chicanas and Native American women are expected to fulfill certain expectations about ethnicity and cultural authenticity. These expectations shape how we discuss the texts; conversely, these discussions further shape our readings. For example, Chicana feminist models of empowering silenced and demonized female subjects have been a boon, to say the least, to Chicano literary criticism, as well as American literary studies, because of the way they provide points of engagement with texts that might otherwise be marginalized, and most importantly because they have provided alternative models of reading and have challenged accepted interpretive practices. We expect Chicana texts to give voice to an otherwise silenced Chicana experience; likewise we expect Native texts to do the same.

Chicana and American Indian women's texts have significant points of contact: dispossession, historical violence, the recovery and healing power of myth and the establishment of historical memory

through a recuperation of a lost matrilineal line of knowledge. Narratives of belonging, of struggle to connect to ancestral roots, the anxieties of mestizaje or of being “mixed blood,” engagements and rebellions against simultaneous oppressions and the converse affirmation of identities (as gendered, sexed, classed and racialized subjects) also profoundly shape critical approaches as they are common themes in this body of work. Rayna Green’s landmark essay “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture” was one of the first to critically engage the repercussions that the story of the Indian Princess who saved John Smith has had on the American imagination. Green writes, “with her darker, negatively viewed sister, the Squaw . . . the Princess intrudes on the national consciousness and a potential cult waits to be resurrected when our anxieties about who we are makes us recall her from her woodland retreat” (16). This dualism makes for some striking parallels to the Mexican nationalist myth of Malinche as the alternatively violated or betraying Indigenous mother of mestizaje—and ultimately of the Mexican nation. Green goes on, however, to trace the ideological framework that conflates the figure of the Indian woman as the Mother figure for and representative of “American liberty and European classical virtue translated into new world terms” to, of course, the exclusion of actual Indian women (17).

The scope of this essay, however, is not broad enough to encompass a comprehensive history of these critical points of contact. Instead, I draw attention to prevalent and defining models of reading literature by Chicanas and Native American women—in particular how loss and belonging shape how we read Harjo and Cervantes. Both Harjo and Cervantes write of historical dispossession and the struggle to make a place for themselves. Home, however, emerges in their work though a constant sense of travel rather than a rootedness to one particular place. The question of belonging does not, I argue, have to entail stasis. Further, I do not want to minimize the importance of a Native world view that Elizabeth Cook-Lynn has described, namely that “the very origins of a people are specifically tribal (nationalistic) and rooted in a specific geography (place), that mythology (soul) and geography (land) are inseparable, that even language is rooted in a specific place” (88). However, because of the realities of dis-possession, the wholeness that is so crucial in this formulation is impossible. I would suggest that the connections between “geography (place),” “mythology (soul),” and “geography (land)” are more complex than a one-to-one correspondence suggested by this particular phrasing that relies on parenthetical linkages.

What, then, might be alternative ways of achieving this balance, this sense of connection between place and cultural identity? I propose that a sense of belonging to multiple places can be developed in spite of, or because of, this dispossession. Feminist geographer Doreen Massey's conceptualization of place as "dynamic, open-ended, and continually contested," formed out of constantly shifting social relations, shapes my redeployment of these terms (Massey 154). An indigenous place, then, is not one in which stasis matters most. Instead, I propose that claiming an indigenous place spatializes that process of claiming indigeneity itself, a legacy of loss, of genocide and displacement, and most importantly, as Gerald Vizenor phrases it, of "survivance" and continuity that has been shaped by flexibility and adaptability.⁷ This process of emplacement, then, intersects with larger discussions of authenticity, *mestizaje* and indigeneity—all models of reading, patterns of legibility, that Harjo and Cervantes complicate. Therefore, our interpretive practices must follow suit.

Both Joy Harjo and Lorna Dee Cervantes have addressed how not belonging to traditional Chicana/o or Native communities that are often considered authentic has shaped their poetic and cultural sensibilities.⁸ Dispossession from identifiably native places marks their work. Both Harjo and Cervantes identify with communities formed by histories of cultural and geographic dispossession at the hands of the U.S. government. Andrew Jackson ordered the deportation of the Muscogee people from their traditional lands in the Southeast to Oklahoma in the 1830s. Twenty years later, half a continent away, the U.S., though its manipulation of the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, dispossessed and displaced Mexicanos in the Southwest. While radically different, the effects of these historical events, the loss of life, of home, and of culture connect these different communities. Both poets have settled in places that are not home to their families, in either California or Oklahoma. Cervantes grew up in a *barrio* in San Jose and lives and works in Denver, Colorado. Harjo was raised in Oklahoma, in the 1980s moved to the Southwest, and has since lived in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Hawaii, and currently in Los Angeles. Both have lived in a similar landscape, the Southwest, for much of their careers, and both write of it with a familiarity that is deeply in tune with the history and sense of place of the land, and yet both of them are to some extent poets of urban places.

Cervantes was raised by her mother and her Chumash grandmother. While she identifies strongly with her grandmother, she considers her cultural orientation to be Chicana. She explains that she

wasn't raised on a reservation, was completely cut off from any traditions, from any ceremonies; her grandmother was forcibly stripped of her cultural identity by the brutalities of colonization and indentured servitude at a very young age. Her grandmother had to assimilate to survive; being Chumash was dangerous because of racist violence. Her assimilation however was to a Mexican identity, rather than an Anglo-American one. Nonetheless, Cervantes wasn't raised within the "traditional" and elusive ideal Chicano family—one supposedly headed by a strong father and a self-sacrificing Chicana mother, that includes an extended family living in close proximity to one another.⁹ She was raised primarily by her grandmother.

Harjo was not raised in a "traditional" setting either; instead of the reservation, she "remembers growing up in the lower-middle-class neighborhood of North Tulsa, an area of mixed races and mixed-race peoples" (King Dunaway 48). Her own background is a mix of Muscogee, Cherokee, Irish and French. Both her mother's and her father's families were victims of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 that forced most Indian peoples from the Southeast onto the infamous Trail of Tears. Perhaps it is because of this dispossession, and because of her own mixed cultural background, and because the Muscogee themselves have a history of intercultural interaction (with African-Americans for example), that Harjo's strategies of cultural identification are always ultimately concerned with what it is that make us human, and incorporate cross-cultural elements in order to explore this question.

Authenticity is linked etymologically to authority, deriving from the Greek for "of first hand authority, original," and its development of meaning is "involved and influenced by medieval Latin and French, combining the ideas of authoritative and original" (*OED*). Author derives from the Latin *auctor*, "to make to grow, originate, promote, increase" (*OED*). While authenticity is etymologically distinct from author, both terms refer to a singular point of origin. Authenticity's authority rests on its "first hand" and therefore unmediated point of reference. It requires not history, which is nothing if not discursive, but first hand memory. Authenticity, then, requires an impossible set of conditions for its fulfillment.

Not only is authenticity a vexing template that cannot be applied to either of these writers, but, more fundamentally, the problem with authenticity as a means of determining legitimacy and selfhood lies in its replication of colonizing frameworks. Chicano literary critic Alfred Arteaga's discussion of colonial discourse is useful in understanding

the importance of literary and discursive formations to lived experiences. Arteaga explains:

Colonial discourse aspires toward a system of representation in which the word is linked contiguously with reality, in which hegemonic story is true history. [. . .] This is to say, the hegemony envisions so contiguous a discourse that the troping collapses from consciousness and the power of discursive representation is rewritten as the power of literal representation. It eschews the chaotic relativities of dialogue and the substitution of metaphors and aims, instead, at apodeictic reference to the world. (80)

1.

The authentic as a category of meaning repeats this need for apodeictic reference. Representation can never be “contiguous with reality” because language functions, by definition, within a system of semiotics: signifiers and signifieds cannot be collapsed into each other. Because they can never fully achieve the breakdown of this discursive dialectic, attempts at authenticity are fraught with anxieties about its impossibility. Further, an identity based on authenticity locates experience and resistance outside of discursive construction, and as a result, reifies agency and naturalizes difference. Such a construction ignores the liberatory possibilities of language, given that meaning is created in every utterance and the context it takes place in. Because language is dependent upon its speakers, and because we as speakers can make language into metaphor, symbol, and dialogue, we can rename ourselves in the same discourse that tries to erase us.

Renaming and reclaiming then are only one aspect of discursive intervention. Such an intervention in language and discourse also allows for the disruption of larger ontological and epistemic frameworks of selfhood. There can be no authentic sense of self that exists outside of language; indeed that very definition depends on semiotic constructions of authenticity. If we understand subjectivity as discursively contingent, then its requirements are contingent and shifting as well. I am not arguing for a radically post-structuralist subjectivity with no point of reference, nor do I mean to engage in what Susan Bordo has called the “postmodern intoxication with possibility” that she compares to the Cartesian fantasy of transcending the body (39).

Instead, I suggest that subjectivity can come from loss as well as presence. While psychoanalytic constructions of subjectivity center on

loss (or more properly, lack), they locate it within a libidinal economy in which the fulfillment of loss is the primary requirement for self-hood.¹⁰ Lack implies that what is absent was never possessed; loss, on the other hand, assumes that what is absent was once present, possessed. My reading of Cervantes and Harjo, located primarily in a historical materialist context, argues that loss does not have to be fulfilled in order to attain full subjecthood; to argue otherwise places colonized peoples in an impossible position. Genocidal loss in the Americas cannot be compensated—discursively or otherwise. This alternative formation of subjectivity demands not only a refusal of Cartesian dualism, but also a sense of relation between mind and body, myth and history.

Indigeneity and mestizaje

Chicana feminism has a fraught relationship with indigeneity as a means of establishing legitimacy; on the one hand is the impulse to recover the indigenous mother and the subsequent celebration of mestizaje as a radically liberating model of subjectivity. This linking of the indigenous mother and mestizaje comes from the nationalist family romance of the European father and the violated Indian mother.¹¹ On the other hand, Chicana feminist analysis has voiced resistance against this over-determined position of maternity as it draws out some of the conflicts in the formation of a split subjectivity. Norma Alarcón, for example, critiques the “crisis of meaning” that ensues from a female subjectivity that “takes as its point of departure ‘woman’s’ over-determined signification as future wives/mothers in relation to the ‘symbolic contract’ within which women may have a voice on the condition that they speak as mothers” (“Making Familia from Scratch” 148).

This conflict between indigeneity and mestizaje is fraught with multiple and conflicting meanings. Indigeneity and mestizaje are best understood as a unit of meaning; each defines the other in difference. Implicit in each are the categories of authenticity and hybridity. Harjo and Cervantes maintain a productive tension between them. Neither one of them resolves the question of which takes precedence, which is the most important, because it’s an almost impossible one to resolve, given histories of dispossession and genocide. Indigeneity as a marker of authenticity is a fairly modern concept; it is the means of establishing legal and legitimate land claims. Indigeneity, in this sense, is most useful then, in establishing property ownership—something that

only need be established in the face of dispossession. Indigeneity functions, then, as a reactive and oppositional category of identification—its most powerful meanings lie in opposition to something it is not. Because it is reactive, it is flawed as an indication of authenticity, which, as I have discussed, is itself a flawed anti-colonial strategy.

Mestizaje depends on the indigenous for meaning. However, we have to remember the conflicted historical deployments of this pairing. Indigeneity as a means of establishing cultural and political legitimacy is fraught with tensions between historical event and discursive meaning. Its invocation immediately raises questions of historical accuracy, as well as questions of its use as a category for repression. Martha Menchaca's study of how indigenous status was a means of dispossession in Mexican and U.S. courts is one example of the shifting meanings of "indigenous" (Menchaca). Rafael Pérez-Torres's caution against another term of legitimacy, "1848," is instructive in understanding how a descriptive term can attain a greater discursive significance than historical fact:

Although the claims of Aztlán as original homeland and the invocation of "1848" as territorial dispossession were discursive attempts to lessen the sense of foreignness implicit in the Chicano history of migration and immigration to the United States, the reality remains that most Chicanos stand as the end result of twentieth-century Mexican migration. (105)

"1848" comes to mean something larger than itself; not only does it mark the year of the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, but, as Pérez-Torres points out, its meanings expand outward and become significant in the politics of displacement that shape Chicano cultural production. "Indigeneity" is a similar sort of discursive structure. It refers to both to the historical fact of Native presence, but also extends within Chicana/o cultural politics to an engagement with its textual representations of Mexica, Mayan, and other pre-Columbian cultures and myths. Part of its meaning then, comes from a sense of loss: Chicana/o engagement with the pre-Columbian centers on its loss. Indigeneity, in this particular context, gains meaning not in its assertive presence, but in the impossibility of ever having it again—its very conspicuous absence.

What indigeneity means is historically contingent and is largely constituted by its discursive deployment. While establishing one's indigeneity was a means of dispossession in the courts, as Menchaca

points out, this very same process becomes a means of empowerment in el movimiento. This is not to say that the personal experiences of indigenous aspects of Chicana/o culture are dependent on textual construction: as Cervantes speaks about her connections with her grandmother those ties are understood on a non-verbal plane: "working in the garden with my grandmother" is how she phrases it (Gonzalez 1997). But its communication, the way in which she can make that experience understood depends on writing. Experience is not a pure non-linguistic witnessing of the world; it is entirely understood through language; its meanings are understood through textual filters. We cannot comprehend, much less explain to someone else, what experiences mean without some sort of language or semiotic system. Experience as a category of meaning is anything but authentic and unmediated.

Like any discursive construction, indigeneity is a limited concept; it cannot speak to the specifics of historical or cultural experience, nor can it address the variegated relationships between nations, tribes, and linguistic groups that are indigenous to the Americas. It has the unfortunate tendency to homogenize disparate cultures and languages in the same way that the term Hispanic does. The history of its use is conflicted, as it is intimately linked with the uses of mestizaje and indigenismo within Latin American nationalist projects as ideological and practical means to eradicate local Indian peoples. John Reyna Tapia's study of indigenista novels of the 19th century makes this very clear. As Tapia explains, the ideologies of mestizaje and indigenismo are linked because the latter is constituted by the former. As indigenismo developed in post-revolutionary Mexican politics of the early 20th century, it became clear that within cultural and political mestizaje the erasure of the non-assimilated, non-mestizo Indian was its primary goal. That indigenismo and mestizaje functioned as ideological weapons of dominant Latin American cultural politics is not insignificant: no amount of Chicana/o appropriation can dispel its negative potential.

Philip Deloria's incisive historical study, *Playing Indian*, analyzes the conflicted history of the symbolic valorization of indigeneity. While I do not suggest that Chicana/o cultural practices mimic Anglo-America's in relation to American Indians, his insights nonetheless remain relevant. Describing white Americans "playing Indian" he writes:

Above all, they were committing cultural acts in which they sought social and political power through a complicated play of white guilt, nostalgia, and the

deeply rooted desire to be Indian and thereby aboriginally true to the spirit of the land. Among American ethnic and racial groups, Indians have occupied a privileged position in national culture, and Native peoples have often put the power that came with this exceptionalism to political and social ends. (179)

He goes on to explain, however, that “Indian play was hardly clear cut, for if Indianness was critical to American identity, it necessarily went hand in hand with the dispossession and conquest of actual Indian people” (182). The ideological validation of indigeneity is not entirely separate from a political and material evacuation of Indians from Indianness.

One way of resisting this evacuation of people from culture is to identify white American markers of indigeneity and exploit them. As Deloria explains, “if being a survivor of the pure, primitive old days meant authenticity, and if that in turn meant cultural power that might be translated to social ends, it made sense for a Seneca man to put on a Plains headdress, white America’s marker for that archaic brand of authority” (189). Chicana/o appropriation then, of archaic, rather than contemporary, Mexica and Mayan mythic and cultural artifacts, and their incorporation into contemporary Chicana/o cultural politics makes sense in this context. The names of Chicana/o rock bands, such as Calpulli and Ozomatli, and cultural dance troupes, such as Cuahtemoc, illustrate this trend.

The difference, which is not insignificant, however, is that Chicana/os have internalized what Deloria calls an “archaic brand of authority” (189). Chicana/o cultural nationalism is defined iconographically by these images, drawn primarily from a Mexican revolutionary nationalism from the early 20th century. While this appropriation of indigenismo has been useful in forging a Chicana/o cultural and political consciousness, it remains a strategy that is fraught with conflicted histories and potential meanings. Further, it limits the range of affiliations that Chicana/o nationalism can create with contemporary Indian people because it inadvertently places Indians in the past—replicating the colonial myth of the “vanishing Indian.”

While Cervantes has been claimed as a poet that of Chicana/o nationalism, her work’s engagement with structures of indigeneity complicates the nationalist romance with *lo indio*. She does at times invoke pre-Colombian imagery, but she also writes about Chumash elements of her background, most often embodied in the figure of her grand-

mother. In an interview with Ray Gonzalez, Cervantes talks about her grandmother:

My grandmother has a connection to her indigenous side. A lot of the images in my poems come from growing up with my grandmother, who taught me that Chicanos are not separate from their Indian roots. Many of us refuse to admit this fact. She taught me that things have a soul and speak to us. My numerous images of birds, my ideas, the things I see in my poems—I capture them as they present themselves, which is a gift my grandmother gave me. (Gonzalez 1997)

The imagery of her poems shapes the way Cervantes speaks this connection. Hunting appears throughout her work as a means of connecting hunter and hunted: she “captures” the images of birds “as they present themselves” as if the images of bird mimic the actions of the birds themselves. The connections, then, that Cervantes makes between her Chicanidad and her indigeneity originate from a lived matrilineal knowledge as she understands it in poetry. Cervantes describes the relationship between images in a poem and things in the world as interdependent. She is not the writer claiming mastery over the world; rather, she is the writer paying attention to the world. Her poetics depend on a quality of perception that is influenced by her Chumash and Chicana grandmother, expressed as “the plumage of poetry” (Cervantes “Coffee”).

Cervantes makes no claims to Chumash culture that establish her as authentically indigenous. Instead, her references to her Chumash ancestry are framed by literary and Chicana traditions and references, most graphically in a poem like “Pleiades from the Cables of Genocide” which combines Chumash, Chicana, Classical Greek, and contemporary American cultural and socio-economic references. While she has stressed the connections between the term “Chicana” and a political consciousness that centers on histories of land and the claims of indigeneity of Chicana/o cultural politics, that indigeneity is complicated and qualified throughout her body of work. Rather than depend on a state of cultural purity, Cervantes’s indigeneity is marked by a deeply politicized sense of place, as well as the ongoing engagement with the historical losses that indigenous peoples have faced under 500

years of genocide. This engagement takes shape most overtly in the metapoetic themes of writing and the potential power of poetry.

What can indigenous mean after 500 years of genocide and colonization? To claim indigeneity, in the work of these two poets, I argue, is to claim a legacy of loss. In this sense, then, indigeneity takes shape through *mestizaje*, not as a static state of mixture, but rather an ongoing and painful process. I propose extending the way Chabram Dernerseian posits that Chicana subjectivity resists fixity, that the way that “its axis, terms of discourse, and points of contention change in accordance to the ways in which Chicana subjects are positioned, and in turn, position themselves within the discourses of history, culture and society” to apply to Native American women as well (37).

Harjo, like Cervantes, theorizes historical loss as a means of creating community. Not only is it a pan-tribal imperative, given the genocide that Native cultures have endured in North America, but it is also an inter-racial and trans-cultural one. Harjo, like so many other ‘mixed blood’ writers, has to contend with the problems/realities of never being able to go home again, as it were.¹² The authentic is impossible to achieve; there is no pre-lapsarian cultural purity in which to take refuge. Instead, she engages the mixed, embraces the half-breed, travels from urban to rural spaces and back, honors Native cultural traditions as well as African-American ones, and complicates Creek nationalism with a cross-cultural sensibility, (one that travels within and without Native cultures). Harjo’s body of work creates community out of loss. The common experiences shared by these disparate groups (Indians, Blacks, women), in their struggles for survival against devastating historical losses, can be the basis of an oppositional solidarity.

Rather than monumentalize that sense of loss, in either elegiac or nostalgic nationalist forms, Harjo develops a means of engaging the meanings that those common experiences might produce. She begins this process by embracing aesthetic traditions like the blues that combine memory, myth, and history, that, rather than fill in the loss, develop its potential meanings. Clearly influenced by jazz and the blues, this expression of loss is not only mournful, as in Harjo’s poems that are most explicitly about grieving, but it can also be a source of beauty. This acknowledgement and validation of grief, the expansion of what this loss might mean to contemporary cultural forms, is intertwined with the relationship between writing and memory. Harjo creates sites of memory, what Pierre Nora calls *lieux de mémoire*, in this process (7). Memory depends on emplacement, and the range of places Harjo develops varies dramatically—from night clubs to deserts, from high-

ways to places in myths. Harjo's emplacement of memory, speaking to and from a specifically Muscogee history and culture, takes shape through a poetics of loss, both the written composition of this poetry and the ways we receive it.

One of Harjo's most explicit ruminations on memory begins by connecting the reader to a sense of place that depends on memory: "Remember the sky that you were born under, / Know each of the star's stories" (*Horses* 40). The poem "Remember" begins in the sky, moves through human bodies, then goes back out again to the universe, and finally to language and life in general. Memory takes on a spiral shape, and this movement between worlds in the sky, on earth, and back again is undoubtedly shaped by Muscogean philosophy. Womack describes the spiral's "three dimensional correspondence to the interaction of This World, Upper World, and Lower World in both its shape and its movement from earth to sky" (251). These aspects are all held together literally by the word "remember." Memory is the thread that holds this circle of association together.

Keeping this definition in mind, then, we can understand poetry as a kind of *lieux de mémoire*. The creation of a "maximum of meaning in a minimum of signs" is one of poetry's main characteristics (Nora 7). This particular claim about poetry, however, is not exclusive to Harjo's work; nonetheless, the manner in which these sites of memory are often created as non-physical places, in myth, and in the relativity of love, is. Nora goes on to clarify that ultimately, "memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events" (20). In his discussion, *lieux de mémoire* exist as physical artifacts and as physical places. Harjo, however, is interested in exploring the meaning of the loss of these places, the loss of these artifacts.

The structural repetition in the poem "Remember" that gives the poem its shape and its strength recalls a ceremonial structure. This is a poem for remembering one's place in the world, and how to speak about it. It is a poem that speaks to its reader, instructing one in the manner of remembrance, of creating and maintaining a history, not only for one's particular family or tribe, but for all people in relation to each other and the world in which they live. The orality of its repetition stands a reminder of how histories are made; they always exist in a specific "voice." While "voice" is used to refer to the specific articulation of a poetic persona, it of course also refers to the spoken quality of that articulation.

Native American sovereignty and feminism: homes, traditions, texts

Native American questions of sovereignty shape a Pan-Indianism that emerges from specific tribal and national sensibilities. In an interview with literary critic Laura Coltelli, Hopi-Miwok poet Wendy Rose describes the relationship as intertwined: “to be tribal and to be Pan-Indian exist side-by-side, and in fact Pan-Indianism is intended to protect those tribal identities, not to replace them” (*Winged Words* 4). Pan-Indianism exists because of the historical fact of colonization and genocide: it is a form of resistance that is necessitated by historical and political circumstance. American Indian literature, as described by Laguna critic and writer Paula Gunn Allen in another interview with Coltelli, is multicultural at the same time that it insists on specific cultures: it is inclusive of differences of language, region, and cultural custom across Indian cultures and experiences on and off of reservations (*Winged Words* 17). The sense of cultural specificity is not rooted in blood quantum, but in a conscious effort to articulate experiences. Coltelli writes that “In Native American contemporary writing, mixed bloods are reborn to dig out their roots, no longer an ambiguous cultural symbol, or as Wendy Rose says ‘a biological thing’ but ‘a condition of history, a condition of context, a condition of circumstance . . . a political fact’” (4).

Other articulations of Pan-Indianism, such as Ward Churchill’s, come close to what Lorna Dee Cervantes has described as Chicanisma—that is, an awareness of the global state of capitalist aggression and conscious land-based resistance against it. Churchill advocates a kind of Indian nationalism he calls indigenism, which he connects to Latin American indigenismo (512). Churchill’s indigenism is a pan-tribal sensibility which “draws on the traditions—the bodies of knowledge and corresponding codes of value—evolved over many thousands of years by native peoples the world over”(509). Churchill’s pan-tribalism is not only Pan-American, but global, and fitting within an “ideology of the fourth world” which he describes as encompassing the globalized state of dispossession by late capitalism and neo-colonialism (515).

Similarly, Craig S. Womack advocates an Indian-centered method of reading and writing indigenous literary culture. He insists that individual tribal nationalism is central to cultural and political self-determination. While the need for coalition-building is deeply connected to political and cultural strategies for resistance and creativity,

the need for specificity runs up against it. No one is willing to let go of her specific culture for a political strategy. Yet, as Wendy Rose suggests, the two can exist side by side. Womack argues that Creek nationalism, which historically marks Creek culture, is what allows for a strong pan-tribal sensibility, for example, in the work of Joy Harjo. Each of these examples shares common threads with other nationalisms advocated by people of color in the U.S: self-determination, cultural specificity, self-representation, historical continuity, and cultural preservation and promotion.

Womack makes explicit why the connections between Indian nationalisms and the question of sovereignty matter:

Native literature, and Native literary criticism, written by Native authors, is part of sovereignty: Indian people exercising the right to present images of themselves and to discuss those images. Tribes recognizing their own extant literatures, writing new ones and asserting the right to explicate them constitutes a move toward nationhood. (14)

That move toward nationhood is cultural as well as political. This understanding of home/land is not limited to literary constructions in poems and novels, but, as both Churchill and Womack argue, central to struggles for land rights. The fact that, in the year 2000, capitalist mining interests attempted to dispossess the sovereign Dineh nation from their lands in Big Mountain Arizona (an area that they had already been relocated to more than one hundred years ago) indicates that these struggles are not ancient history, but continuing and ever present. In *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Life and Land*, Winona LaDuke documents the ongoing fight all over the North American continent against the mass destruction of Indian people and of biodiversity. She phrases it this way:

There have been more species lost in the past 150 years than since the Ice Age. During the same time, Indigenous peoples have been disappearing from the face of the earth. Over 2,000 nations of Indigenous peoples have gone extinct in the western hemisphere and one nation disappears from the Amazon rainforest every year. (1)

The struggle for sovereignty is not only about political self-determination, but also for survival itself. This struggle, however, need not depend on essentialized or romanticized world views based on an authentic indigeneity; instead, it can draw on common experiences of being American Indian at the end of the 20th century.

Robert Warrior's intellectual history of Native America argues that essentialism has lost its grip on the production of Native Studies discourse:

Wicazo Sa Review, with its gathering together of a broad range of voices in American Indian studies, has, almost by default, reoriented the discourse—for the journal's readers, at least—from its emphasis on essentialized Indians to a sincere engagement with the variety of voices and perspectives that make up contemporary North America. (xviii)

Native American Studies in general and Native feminism in particular have stressed critical engagements with the range of experiences and, most importantly, with how those engagements shape Native American cultural production and sovereignty. Kathryn Shanley's "Thoughts on Indian Feminism" stresses the importance of individual experiences and the varying degrees to which American Indian women identify with feminist politics. Structural and historical factors shape these reasons for disidentification from the mainstream women's movement. As Shanley explains,

on the individual level, the Indian woman struggles to promote the survival of a social structure whose organizational principle represents notions of family different from those of the mainstream . . . on the societal level, the People seek sovereignty as a people in order to maintain a vital legal and spiritual connection to the land, in order to survive as a people. (214)

This survival *as a people* places the entire community's concerns at the same level as those of individual women, and of communities of women. This articulation of the simultaneity of individual and collective concerns drives not only Native women's struggles, but also Third World feminists (who have also written about their alienation from mainstream feminism).¹³

M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey offer an incisive discussion about the relationship between American Indian women and feminism. They point out that “it is women who have formed the very core of indigenous resistance to genocide and colonization since the first moment of conflict between Indians and invaders” (311). Their argument runs parallel to Paula Gunn Allen’s thesis that sexism and homophobia are relics of internalized colonialism.¹⁴ Jaimes and Halsey claim the “reduction of the status held by women within indigenous nations was a key priority” in order to “weaken and destabilize target communities” (319). They trace this reduction of status in a history of enforced education, the imposition of new forms of economy, new forms of marriage and monogamy, and a refusal by the colonists to deal with anyone but male representatives (320). The struggle for sovereignty is directly related to the improvement of women’s lives. It is in this sense that Jaimes and Halsey find powerful points of contact with Black and U.S. Third World feminisms.

American Indian feminism is a crucial and sustaining aspect of American Indian Studies because of the way it provides critical frameworks for reimagining and building communities within and without Native communities. In the introduction to *That’s What She Said*, Rayna Green traces a long literary history of American Indian women writers, who “wrote and retold old tribal stories, because they wanted to preserve tribal culture and because previous Anglo writers had gotten the stories so wrong that they wanted to set the record straight . . . they wrote their own work too—short stories, poems, a novel, autobiographies” (3). The textual production of these women is linked to both cultural and individual expression; critical engagements with them must take into account, then, their positions as individual women, as well as Native writers. Preserving communal traditions is not exclusive of individual expression. Native feminisms are critically engaged with sustaining and creating these communities. Paula Gunn Allen is perhaps the most well known for her influential engagements with feminism and North American Indigenous traditions. Her insistence that feminism is implicit within all Native cultures, and that mainstream feminists need to acknowledge their “red roots,” have provided a necessary and provocative critique of women’s studies, literary studies, as well as Native American studies. Her gynocratic thesis places feminist concerns directly within American Indian ones. The two cannot be separated. In Allen’s argument, the primary stress is on building and reimagining communities and points of contact and connection.

Beth Brant sums up the importance of the work that these women writers do in the introduction to the second edition of *A Gathering of Spirit*. She writes: “The women in this book have challenged non-Indian attitude about Indian women. We have inspired new attitudes among Indian people. We gathered our spirit and called it faith. We gathered our spirit and called it love and hope. We are a community” (15). This building of community is crucial for survival and for imagining the role of poetry, of aesthetics within struggle.

At the end of his study on American Indian intellectual history, Warrior notes how American Indian poetry had “opened American Indian discourse,” claiming that these poets are “bridging the gaps in American Indian existence, past, present and future. In the great variety of American Indian poetry we see people who try to make sense of the various factors that influence their ability to express themselves. Poets are able to give voice to an experience that links these factors” (116). He then looks to *A Gathering of Spirit* as a prime example of the power poetry has in shaping self-determination and cultural sovereignty. Warrior convincingly argues that the fact that it is a collection of women’s poetry, that it is self-consciously an American Indian feminist project, is an exercise of the “intellectual sovereignty” so crucial for the self-determination of American Indian life.

Both Chicana and American Indian feminisms are integral to my readings of this poetry and the development the poetics of loss. Ultimately, how we imagine loss shapes our sense of belonging, and when our communities end and begin. At the end of “Bananas,” Cervantes describes poetry as sustenance in the face of systematic and historical devastation:

. . . But poetry
is for the soul. I speak of the spirit, the yellow seed
in air as life is the seed in water, and the poetry
of Improbability, the magic in the Movement
of quarks and sunlight, the subtle basketry
of hadrons and neutrinos of color, how what you do
is what you get—bananas or worry.
What do you say?
Your friend,
A Chicana poet. (52)

Poetry is made up of “spirit” as much as it is by the elements of nuclear physics—hadrons and neutrinos. It is that which enables us to

imagine beauty, “the subtle basketry” that Cervantes describes here. At the end of this poem, bananas come to signify the satisfaction of friendship. Ultimately, poetry sustains the soul and makes clear the choices that are possible though every day actions. A spin on the common phrase “what you see is what you get,” Cervantes writes “how what you do / is what you get.” Not only does she link actions to “what you get,” material conditions, but she claims that poetry is its explanation, the “how” of this equation. Poetry is an assertion of agency though action, the articulation of the imagination of the poet, who at the end of this poem is “Your friend.” Reading Cervantes and Harjo together shifts how we imagine cross-cultural feminist alliances, as well as our own theoretical habits, underscoring their connections even while it draws out the critical significance of their differences.

Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson

NOTES

¹ Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation has been widely appropriated by literary scholars because of the material and political consequences for the work of the imagination, and by extension of aesthetics.

² For examples of this Chicana feminist critique of Aztlán see Norma Alarcón, “In The Tracks of ‘The’ Native Woman” and “Anzaldúa’s Frontera: Inscribing Gynetics”; Rosa Linda Fregoso and Angie Chabram’s “Chicana/o Cultural Representations: Reframing Alternative Critical Discourses”; Cherríe Moraga “Queer Aztlan”; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

³ Craig Womack claims Harjo is fundamentally a Creek nationalist, and critics such as Cordelia Candelaria and Raul Villa critics have commented on nationalist strains in Cervantes’ poetry.

⁴ See Inés Hernandez Avila’s “Relocations Upon Relocations: Home, Language, and Native American Women’s Writing.”

⁵ Norma Alarcón’s incisive and important essay “In The Tracks Of ‘The’ Native Woman” identifies this trope of Chicana feminist thought.

⁶ See Alarcón's problematizing of the symbolic contract in which women are only authorized to speak as mothers in "Making Familia from Scratch."

⁷ Vizenor writes, "survivance, in the sense of native survivance, is more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence" (15).

⁸ Joy Harjo, "Horses Poetry and Music" interview with Carol H. Grimes and "The Story of all Our Survival" interview with Joseph Bruchac in *Spiral of Memory*. Lorna Dee Cervantes. Personal Interview. October 1998.

⁹ La familia de la raza came to embody everything that was positive in Chicana/o culture, everything that would give strength against racist domination. Describing the popular sentiment, Ignacio M. Garcia writes, "Chicanos had to preserve the *familia* as a social entity and not succumb to the decay of urban life. The barrio needed to return to its role as a communal refuge from the sterility of the Anglo-American world." The juxtaposition of familia and barrio here underscores their relationship: one can almost stand in for the other. Just as the figure of la madre has been romanticized and placed upon a pedestal, so has la familia. Armando Rendón, who wrote the much-quoted *Chicano Manifesto*, was one of the earliest and most popular proponents of familia as the authentic and primary means of Chicano identification. Jose Armas in a contemporary piece "La Familia de la Raza" (which was originally published as a pamphlet and distributed free, later reprinted five years later in the literary journal, *De Colores*) is another. Armas, perhaps in his focus exclusively on the Chicano family, was given to more enthusiastic musings: "The Chicano cultural concept of 'La Familia' contains the basic elements of direction and foundation for a truly human way of life which will allow people to do more than merely survive" (15). Both men, however, write about la familia as the ultimate safe harbor from Anglo domination, as the one true thing that Chicanos can go back to, the wellspring from which resistance and revolution originates. I cite these two examples, as they are typical of Chicano writings about la familia at the time. They are typical of the impulse that Ignacio Garcia pointed out, blaming "the Anglo" for the breakup of the family and the dissolution of an authentic culture.

¹⁰ Psychoanalytic theory, grounded in the works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, for example, locates the process of subject formation squarely within a libidinal economy.

¹¹ See Octavio Paz's discussion of the Mexican national character for example in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, or Rudolfo Anaya's celebration of mestizaje in "The New World Man."

¹² See Janice Gould, "The Problem of Being Indian."

¹³ Among the most prominent statements are the introductions to important anthologies: *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*; *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*; and *Making Face, Making Soul*.

¹⁴ Allen articulates this point fully in *The Sacred Hoop*.

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Words, Worlds in Our Heads: Reclaiming La Llorona's Aztec Antecedents in Gloria Anzaldúa's "My Black Angelos"

As Chicana/os continue to question and challenge our own positions and roles within "American" culture, we are continually reminded that our identities are a constant negotiation of ethnic, cultural, spiritual, educational, physical, psychological, and socio-economic borders. Often viewed as hardly Mexican, Indian, or American enough, we must choose carefully which aspects of our cultures to internalize or reject, for as evidenced in Gloria Anzaldúa's *"My Black Angelos"* (1987), the consequences of embracing, without question, part or parts of our cultural identities can be oppressive, especially to women. Anzaldúa chooses the Greater Mexican folkloric figure La Llorona, the weeping or wailing woman, as a means of interrogating patriarchal institutions that inculcate women into subservient roles. This dynamic folktale is informed by various cultural and sociological factors, including the Spanish "Conquest" of Mexico, the Catholic Church, miscegenation, popular culture, gender roles, and class conflict, but, by privileging La Llorona's Aztec antecedent, Anzaldúa is equally invested in revising La Llorona's position as a tragic mother. Moreover, Anzaldúa frees this legendary figure from the patriarchal constructions of her as a sexual and physical threat by recontextualizing her within the Aztec pantheon to create an empowered female personage, who does far more than weep and wander. This repositioning of La Llorona within indigenous beliefs is a movement away from and resistance to a European or Western male-dominated worldview. Although Aztec culture was equally patriarchal, La Llorona's cultural antecedents point to a historical time when female deities had some measure of power, especially prior to the expansion of the Aztec Empire and the Spanish conquest.

Chicana poets and authors who write La Llorona into their works assign various levels of meaning to the weeping woman and her actions, which when viewed within the context of the traditional allegory are almost wholly negative. La Llorona is best known for her wailing and wandering, punishment incurred for murdering her innocent children. The motivation for La Llorona's behavior, a cheating, abusive, or callous husband, is rarely critiqued but often included as a part of the narrative. The focus, therefore, is almost always on the "tragedy." When mothers kill their children, according to Cordelia Candelaria, "insanity is automatically assumed and usually proven to explain the horror" (93). Insanity, then, becomes a means for not only explaining

the woman's behavior but for disempowering her, leaving La Llorona without hope or agency. However, La Llorona's story within the hands of Anzaldúa in "My Black *Angelos*" becomes one of power, passion, and perseverance, characteristics that emerge more fully when La Llorona is viewed through her indigenous cultural and historical antecedents.

The conventional tale concludes with La Llorona weeping and wandering, while the male lover lives, never suffering the consequences of his own actions.¹ His life reaffirms for men the security of the patriarchy, thereby continuing the subordination of women. However, Chicana authors work to recuperate and recover La Llorona to contextualize the complexity of her situation and the lack of recourse she has against an entire patriarchal structure (the law, the Church, her community) that would condemn her. Candelaria states:

As a scapegoat and a crucible, the La Llorona legend begs for reconsideration and possible recuperation from what, in another context, historian Emma Peres calls inside '*el sitio y la lengua*' (space and language) of the female subject, rather than from a dominant/dominating patriarchal perspective. (94)

Indeed, the space and language that confine La Llorona in traditional, patriarchal narratives are informed by a colonial project that sought to displace the Aztec pantheon and the female deities in it with male-centered Christianity. From the perspective of female subjects, Chicanas begin to reclaim La Llorona as a woman of action rather than a passive object of circumstance.

Bolstering the work of these writers, cultural anthropologist and theorist José Limón argues persuasively for the adoption of La Llorona as a feminine symbol of resistance, emphasizing that inscribed within the La Llorona narrative is the possibility of her recovering her lost children "because their death by water is ambiguous, for it is also the water of rebirth" (426). This possibility of recovery is crucial to Chicana writers, for as cultural theorist Tey Diana Rebolledo acknowledges, "La Llorona represents mourning for their lost culture, their lost selves" (194). Therefore, if Chicanas can recover La Llorona, they can in turn recover a part of their indigenous cultural beliefs. As Anzaldúa reveals, reclamation leads into many dark and haunted interior landscapes.

An understanding of Chicano history, especially during the pre-conquest era, is also necessary for a culturally informed reading of La Llorona, for one must consider her historical precursors, complex constructions, and subsequent disempowerment to identify the various levels on which the myth functions.² Writers and storytellers are drawing upon this complex history as a means of restoring La Llorona's lost power and revisioning her beyond tragedy. While La Llorona is often viewed as a cultural figure symbolizing seduction and death, her origins as such are ancient, extending back into the pre-conquest Aztec pantheon.³ Anzaldúa, in "My Black *Angelos*" (1987), summons from the Aztec pantheon the once powerful goddesses Coatlicue (Serpent Skirt) and Cihuacoatl (Snake Woman) as antecedents of La Llorona to recover displaced sources of Chicana historic power. In doing so, Anzaldúa contributes to what Pérez-Torres identifies in a different context as "a counterdiscourse by which claims for agency and empowerment, scrutiny of subject positions and interpellation, examination of devalued knowledges and histories, all come into play within the aesthetic field" (176). Anzaldúa's emphasis on the historic influence of Coatlicue and Cihuacoatl on La Llorona folklore and claims for La Llorona's agency do indeed rely on previously devalued forms of knowledge.

The weeping woman derives in part from the "horrific" Aztec deity Coatlicue (Allen 239) and the dual aspects of the goddess's self, Tonantzin and Tlazolteotl.⁴ Coatlicue is perhaps the most complex Nahuatl deity because she possesses a duality of self (which in turn have their own dualities) that enable her to transform and shift aspects of her being to simultaneously seduce, cleanse, destroy, and create. Because of her plurality, Coatlicue simultaneously embodies love and sin, and harbors the power to create and destroy life: "she is both goddess and monster" (Rebolledo 51). Individuals who are at physical or spiritual crossroads are the people who encounter Coatlicue, who rewards and/or punishes travelers as she sees fit. Like this multi-dimensional goddess, La Llorona "approximates in popular folklore all those ancient Nahuatl deities who had life-giving and -destroying abilities" (76). The idea of La Llorona as a life-giver (mother/creatrix) and destroyer (murderer/ seductress) indicates a strong link between the weeping woman and Coatlicue in particular. As a feminine symbol and descendant of this powerful goddess, La Llorona has the potential to transcend binaristic dualities to create a new future for herself, one that could include the recovery of her lost children.

Even prior to Cortes's arrival, male gods such as Huitzilopochtli began to displace goddesses such as these in the traditional Aztec

pantheon, as the Aztecs grew more fiercely devoted to their military campaigns in an effort to fortify their empire, thus exalting the male war gods to aid them in their endeavors. Goddesses like Coatlicue were stripped of their power and transformed into weeping women, condemned to suffer for their strength and sexuality. As Castillo asserts in *Massacre of the Dreamers* (1995), in the aftermath of the conquest and fortification of patriarchy, Coatlicue, Tonantzin,⁵ and Tlazolteotl lose their powers and become similar to La Llorona of the traditional tale.

In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldúa offers intriguing alternate origins for La Llorona. She contends that the weeping woman is closely associated with “pre-Columbian Aztec cultural heroes such as Mocihuaquetzque, valiant women who died in childbirth” and who “were the only Aztec women to achieve afterlife in the place of the warriors” (63). The origin of this esteem, however, is their primary role as mothers.⁶ Yet in their afterlife, a more negative view of these figures emerges, for Mocihuaquetzque were known as Cihuapipiltin, night spirits who waited at crossroads to inspire lewd behavior in men or to conjure up sickness in children. In death, these women, like La Llorona, pose a threat to men and children.⁷

What remains consistent in all of these depictions is the complexity of the female image. In giving birth and dying, the Mocihuaquetzque are revered, but in their afterlife they are jealous, malevolent spirits that seek to harm. Coatlicue embodies these same qualities in the dual deities of Tonantzin and Tlazolteotl, yet as goddesses, they incur no punishment for their actions, for it is they who punish and reward. In post-contact narratives, La Llorona is “judged” for her actions, unlike the deities, suggesting the encroachment of Christian ideals on Aztec belief.

Coatlicue’s primary role within the Aztec pantheon was that of Earth Mother, from whose body emerged the celestial beings.⁸ In contrast to this maternal image, historian Burr Cartwright Brundage describes Coatlicue as “black, dirty, disheveled, and of shocking ugliness” (166). The image of Coatlicue is indeed shocking, for she is depicted wearing a skirt of snakes and a necklace of hearts and hands. Coatlicue belongs to a group of goddesses (including Cihuacoatl or Snake Woman and Itzpapalotl or Obsidian Knife Butterfly), whom Brundage identifies as hideous and bloodthirsty, similar to Medusa (166). However, as Rebolledo establishes, Coatlicue was also seen as a “goddess of love and of sin, with the power to create and devour life” (51). From this complex array of images, mother, creator, and de-

stroyer, Coatlicue serves as a likely precursor to La Llorona, who holds these same powers over her children.

An additional antecedent for La Llorona, according to Anzaldúa, is Cihuacoatl, “Serpent Woman, ancient Aztec goddess of the earth, of war and birth, patron of midwives” (35). Of the two goddesses, Cihuacoatl claims a substantial position as the most threatening and effective of all of the female figures in the Aztec pantheon. Paula Gunn Allen describes Cihuacoatl as a “grisly major deity . . . who presided over the feeding of the gods and goddesses [. . .]”(239). Her principal function in Aztec mythology was to incite war so that her son Huitzilopochtli, the god of war, could secure victory. Like Coatlicue, Cihuacoatl was a gruesome figure that hungered for human offerings:

The lower part of her face is shown as a crude jawbone, and the grisly mouth is stretched wide to indicate her hunger for victims. Her hair is long and stringy, and two knives form a kind of diadem on her forehead. She is clothed and painted in chalky white. She was referred to as a horror and a devourer: she brought nothing but misery and toil and death. (Brundage 168)

Dressed like La Llorona in ghostly white, Cihuacoatl physically resembles descriptions of the weeping woman, who is often characterized as having skull-like features or no face at all and seen dressed in white. In addition, the two figures seemingly converge in the folklore surrounding Cihuacoatl. The goddess became “a night-walking bogey, braying and screaming as if demented,” and often appeared before men as a courtly lady (Brundage 168). Moreover, she possessed the ability to change herself into a serpent or a beautiful young woman, who seduced men who later died following sexual relations with her (169). In view of her physical countenance and positioning as a sexual threat to men, Cihuacoatl, then, is a significant precursor to La Llorona.

Anzaldúa’s recovery of these feminine symbols from Chicana mythic memory enables the construction of a cultural identity and subjectivity for the narrator of “My Black *Angelos*.”⁹ In assembling a mythic memory, Anzaldúa draws upon both the negative and positive aspects of Coatlicue, Cihuacoatl, and subsequently La Llorona to construct a new myth that provides Chicanas with a means for reclaiming feminine authority. Additionally, by restoring Coatlicue and Cihuacoatl to a position of power and embracing the more horrific aspects of

these terrifying deities, Anzaldúa recuperates the goddesses who were discredited and dispossessed of their authority following the advent of Christianity. Anzaldúa does not seek to erase the darker aspects of feminine power. Instead, she presents, more fully than a patriarchal binary of angel/whore, a female continuum of archetypes from which Chicanas can draw strength, if they so choose.

In her invocation of these grisly figures, Anzaldúa immediately unveils the dark side of mythic memory with the title “My Black *Angelos*” (1987), which provides a striking contrast to traditional images of benevolent angels and protective guardians, bathed in white light. The narrator’s spirits are angels of death, dark figures who, like La Llorona, wander the streets at night. Anzaldúa draws the connection to La Llorona in the opening stanza by constructing an ostensibly traditional image of the weeping woman wandering through the night in a posture of despair:

In the night I hear her soft whimper
wild masses of hair
rustling in the silence.
Una mujer vaga en la noche
*anda errante con las almas de los muertos.*¹⁰

Aiiii aiiii aiiiiii
She is crying for the dead child
the lover gone, the lover not yet come:
Her *grito* splinters the night
fear drenches me.

La Llorona’s piercing *grito* or cry terrifies the narrator, which is consistent with La Llorona’s positioning as a menacing figure. The narrator has clearly internalized a patriarchal construction of La Llorona, one that inspires fear and casts the woman howling in the night in a predatory role. Additionally, it is La Llorona’s cry that serves as a signifier of her threatening presence, one which the narrator must interpret in terms of her own beliefs and experiences. In carefully establishing this traditional backdrop, Anzaldúa constructs a La Llorona narrative that she later subverts.

From this backdrop, Anzaldúa both foregrounds the more horrific aspects of La Llorona and begins to revise the traditional narrative. The narrator, in her fear, attracts the attention of the weeping woman, who begins to hunt her through the streets like a predator or goddess

hungry for a victim. As Anzaldúa states elsewhere, “Fear acts like a magnet; it draws demons out of the closet. . .” (“Speaking in Tongues” 171). The narrator, who is fearful and “stink[s] of carrion,” lures La Llorona from her trek through the darkness with her smell of death:

I stink of carrion,
she turns upwind tracking me.
Her teeth reflect the fire
from her rouged eyes
my black *Angelos*,
la bruja con las uñas largas,
I hear her at the door.¹¹

Like La Llorona’s children, the narrator, or at least some part of her, is dead or decaying. In this scene, Anzaldúa suggests that the narrator has let die within her the history and spirit of Coatlicue and Cihuacoatl, a death that denies her access to indigenous female figures of power, yet La Llorona returns to claim this lost child to enable a necessary and frightening recovery of what has been lost.

La Llorona, who appears like an angel of death at the narrator’s door, transforms into Coatlicue. This metamorphosis into her Aztec antecedent speaks to Coatlicue’s own dispossession of power that contributed in part to the creation of Lloronas following the advent of Christianity. Substantiating this reading of La Llorona as Coatlicue are the similarities between the ghostly specter in the poem and Anzaldúa’s description of an ominous Coatlicue statue she once saw: “she has no hands. In their place are two more serpents in the form of eagle-like claws, which are repeated at her feet. . .” (*Borderlands* 47). This description of Coatlicue parallels the narrator’s account of the menacing visitor who places a “taloned hand” on her shoulder:

Taloned hand on my shoulder
behind me putting words, worlds in my head
turning, her hot breath
she picks the meat stuck between my teeth
with her snake tongue
sucks the smoked lint from my lungs
with her long black nails
plucks lice from my hair.

While the narrator appears in imminent danger from the metamorphosed La Llorona, Anzaldúa fuses the horrific with the maternal. By “putting words, worlds” into the narrator’s head, La Llorona imparts her wisdom, her own mytho-historic past, to this lost child, while grooming her as if she were an infant. Although the images presented in these stanzas are disturbingly carrion-like, they evoke aspects of all three female figures: Cihuacoatl’s hunger for flesh, the snake-like tongue of Serpent Skirt, whose head was divided into two coiled rattlesnakes, and the long fingernails often attributed to La Llorona. Ironically, La Llorona and the black angels Coatlicue and Cihuacoatl have arrived to show the narrator how to embrace the more powerful part of herself, her Chicana history.

Through the narrator’s engagement with the various representations of La Llorona, the speaker internalizes a feminine mythic past and begins to fuse her identity with that of the multi-dimensional visitor:

She crawls into my spine
her eyes opening and closing,
shining under my skin in the dark
whirling my bones twirling
till they are hollow reeds.

Once the past has taken possession of the narrator, Anzaldúa revises the myth through the speaker, but the transformation begins with her traditional wail:

aiiiiii aiiiiiaaaaaaa
Una mujer vaga en la noche
anda errante con las almas de los muertos.
We sweep through the streets
con el viento corremos
we roam with the souls of the dead.¹²

Here the lines from the opening stanza are repeated with a substantially altered meaning. The wail from the opening stanzas of the poem is no longer a mere signifier of La Llorona’s presence; the *grito* is now liberating since the narrator no longer hides from the weeping woman. By embracing La Llorona, the narrator embraces the indigenous part of herself that she had been taught to fear.

Anzaldúa, in “La Herencia de Coatlicue/The Coatlicue State” clarifies the ambiguity of her own darkness, stating, “There is darkness and

there is darkness. Though darkness was present before the world and all things were created, it is equated with matter, the maternal, the germinal, the potential" (*Borderlands* 49). The narrator's and La Llorona's roaming in the dark together as one symbolizes the potential of cultural myth to heal and empower women. As Rebolledo states,

In spite of the fear, or the terror or disgust we feel, in spite of the desire we have to be 'safe' from this horrifying creature and all that she represents, she is part of us and of our culture. She will continue to stalk us and to haunt us until we come to terms with her. (80)

At the end of the poem, together and unencumbered, La Llorona and the narrator run with the wind. Once fear and loss are faced, they no longer command a destructive paralysis.

Although the final image is one of death, Anzaldúa redeems La Llorona, her antecedents, and the narrator, for in conjuring La Llorona and the goddesses Anzaldúa also calls upon their power. While Cihuacoatl hungered for human sacrifices, Coatlicue maintained control over death and life. The narrator may experience a symbolic death, thus satisfying Cihuacoatl, but, as Coatlicue, the figure offers the narrator the possibility of rebirth. Similarly, within the poem, La Llorona reclaims a lost child, which subverts the traditional folklore. La Llorona's power, then, lies in her potential to recover all lost children and to facilitate the end of her own suffering by reclaiming a female subject position outside the boundaries of the traditional tale.

Anzaldúa constructs the narrator's encounter with La Llorona as a terrifying confrontation necessary to recuperate a complex and dynamic indigenous mytho-historic past. The narrator, then, exorcises the patriarchal construction of La Llorona she has internalized in favor of an empowering construction rooted in her indigenous ancestry. In so doing, she illustrates the necessity of scrutinizing the legend to flesh out the layers of meaning within La Llorona's story. The female narrator represents the syncretism that can emerge when challenging and negotiating seemingly disparate lifeways and cultural influences. Anzaldúa's privileging of La Llorona's Aztecan antecedents presents a more complete and ultimately empowering view of the weeping woman and Chicanas outside the context of the traditional folklore.

Domino Renee Perez

NOTES

¹ Candelaria notes that the traditional tale often ends with La Llorona wandering across the countryside that serves “as grassroots propaganda intended to reinforce the patriarchy” (93). “Letting La Llorona Go,” *Literatura Chicana, 1965-1995: An Anthology in Spanish, English, and Caló* (New York: Garland, 1997).

² Folklorists and scholars in Mexico, such as Luis González-Obregón in *Las Calles de Mexico* (1936), Miguel Leon-Portilla’s *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest* (1959), Octavio Paz’s *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1961) and Cesar Pineda Del Valle in *Cuentos y Leyendas de la Costa de Chiapas* (1976), have investigated, cataloged, and theorized La Llorona, her stories and endurance in Mexican culture, along with other corresponding figures of femininity, including La Malinche and the Virgen de Guadalupe. However, early anthropological work done by United Statesean scholars such as Betty Leddy (1948), Bacil Kirtley (1960), and Robert A. Barakat (1965) focus, initially, on story collection, cataloguing of recurrent themes, and then move swiftly toward cross-cultural analyses of La Llorona and her possible origins.

³ Scholars, including cultural anthropologist and theorist José Limón, often cite folklorist Bacil F. Kirtley’s work, which indicates that La Llorona is European in origin, noting similar thematic elements in the story of *die weisse Frau*, the white woman. According to the story a widow wishes to marry and misinterprets the causes for her new paramour’s resistance. She murders her children to clear a path between her and her lover. The man, when he discovers her deed, is outraged and of course does not marry the woman. Kirtley and others contend that the narrative framework of La Llorona stories was introduced to Mexico by Europeans. However, Chicana and Chicano scholars and theorists, such as Ana Castillo, Gloria Anzaldúa, Tey Diana Rebolledo and José Limón focus on the significance of this cultural figure within the context of Chicano culture. For example, in a chapter from her book *Women Singing in the Snow*, Rebolledo argues the importance of myth or folklore, stating “Cultures use myths and the stories of heroines and heroes to create role models” (50). Rebolledo then reaches back into the past to show the historical evolution of Chicana cultural figures from Coatlicue to La Llorona. See Bacil F. Kirtley, “La

Llorona' and Related Themes" *Western Folklore* 19.3 (1960): 155-168; Rebolledo 49-81; and Limón 399-432.

⁴ Tonantzín is the pre-Columbian Nahuatl goddess whose sacred place of worship later became the site where Juan Diego received his vision of what Anzaldúa calls "the Mestiza Virgin." Tlazolteotl, also known as the "filth goddess," was an Aztec symbol of sin/seduction who also had the power to cleanse. Together Tonantzín and Tlazolteotl represented the dual aspects of the great goddess Coatlicue, "the most ancient of the Nahuatl deities." See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987) 50; Ferdinand Anton, *Women in Pre-Columbian America* (New York: Abner Schram, 1973) 58.

⁵ Tonantzín is the pre-cursor to the Virgin of Guadalupe, who was greatly revered by indigenous people. Some argue that the Virgin's appearance at the site of a former Tonantzín temple was no accident. The brown Virgin was instrumental in the conversion of the Nahuatl people. Many of the pagan goddess's symbols, such as the moon and stars, were transferred onto the image of the Virgin. In this way, the Nahuatl could continue to worship their goddess and the Church could bring them into the fold.

⁶ The hair and the third finger on the Mocihuaquetzque's left hand, consistent with the Christian "marriage" finger, were considered sacred totems to the Aztec warriors who believed that if they carried artifacts from these women with them into battle, they would be protected. As a result, families of the Mocihuaquetzque had to protect the gravesites of these women to prevent their bodies from being "mutilated." See Anzaldúa 63.

⁷ Because of their appearances at crossroads, these women are often associated with Coatlicue, which in turn positions them as additional precursors to La Llorona. See Anzaldúa 63.

⁸ According to Burr Cartwright Brundage, "Serpent Skirt was represented as intimately related to the Aztecs in all the events of their legendary past." See *The Fifth Sun: Aztec Gods, Aztec World* (Austin: U of TX P, 1979) 166.

⁹ The evocation of a mythic memory in Chicano poetry, as Rafael Pérez-Torres states, "can also be understood as a tool that helps construct a cultural identity. In this respect, the reclamation of myth proves sympathetic with the strategies of postmodern construction. The use of mythic figures, legends, and so forth, form a connection to discredited forms of knowledge. This connection is assembled rather than remembered, constructed rather than resurrected." "Movements in Minority Literature," *Movements in Chicano Poetry: Against Myths, Against Margins* (New York: Cambridge, 1995) 16.

¹⁰ "A woman wanders in the night/ roaming with the souls of the dead" (translation mine).

¹¹ *Angelos*, "Angels"; *la bruja con las uñas largas*, "the witch with long fingernails" (translation mine).

¹² *Con el viento corremos*, "we run with the wind" (translation mine).

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They Killed the Word

Dead: 5. wholly indifferent; insensible; 6. without feeling, motion, or power; 8. characterized by little or no activity; slack, stagnant; 10. having lost resiliency or elasticity; 11. no longer used or significant; obsolete [*dead* language]; 15. complete; total; absolute; 17. very tired; exhausted; 18. Elec. a) having no current passing through [a *dead* wire] b) having lost its charge [a *dead* battery] SYN. **extinct** is applied to a species, race. etc. that has no living member.

Deaden: 1. to lessen the vigor, intensity, or liveliness of; 2. to take away the sensitivity of; make numb; 3. to treat so as to keep sounds from going through; make soundproof¹; To make language soundproof is to remove the very possibility of response, of hearing of action and reaction.

With one language, with one story, they tried in vain to kill the word.

Hablemos el Mismo Idioma

Any utterance—from a short (single-word) rejoinder in everyday dialogue to the large novel or scientific treatise—has, so to speak, an absolute beginning and an absolute end: its beginning is preceded by the utterances of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterances of others (or, although it may be silent, others' active responsive understanding, or, finally, a responsive action based on this understanding). The speaker ends his utterance in order to relinquish the floor to the other or to make room for the other's active responsive understanding. (Bakhtin 71)

ways of viewing the world and wording those views into existence

Bakhtin offers a way of looking at the contact between people across and within time that goes primarily to what we can say to each other, what we can hear from each other, and what is left wordless. Without ignoring discussions of military advantages, the Imperial mission(s), or the effects of introducing new biological species/ substances, ships also brought new sets of words, and, with them, new sets of worldviews. Todorov begins his discussion of *The Conquest of the Americas* (1984) asking, “Did the Spaniards defeat the Indians by means of signs?” (52). I too ask that, and begin by noting why we can’t speak the same language.

Bakhtin’s theory of the utterance requires a high level of active listening and a certain willingness, desire to participate in an exchange of wor(l)ds. For the utterance is a moment of coming together, and consequently an unrepeatable utterance comes out of every unrepeatable moment. Our word choice problems and proficiencies are larger than all of us (where each word we encounter/use has a history, life, spirit that at once predates and postdates our experience of it) and smaller than all of us (given the particulars of each life we are living, we need to seriously question “our” ability to really speak the same language of a same people—ahence Bakhtin’s contention that all language is “heteroglot”). Each word carries with it other words and worldview(s):

[. . .] all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values. (*Dialogic* 291-2)

For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. [. . .] Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. (293)

For many indigenous peoples language comes also from their specific land base.

Each language brings with it a way of seeing, experiencing, and understanding the world, and with that an idea about what is or should be visible and understandable. So one person speaks a language that is many voiced, and, as you meet it, the language comes to you full, thick, and layered like rock. I, myself, cannot even replicate my own utterances. You, yourself, cannot either. This sets up a situation that requires a high level of involvement, confusion, and in this world of enmeshment (of meaning, of experience, of this air that we are breathing in and out of each other—leaf to mouth to leaf) where every One is struggling to be his or her Own individual. We are connected.

how these words unite us, give us a place to start from

I want to set some ground to walk on here, about language, about how what we call ourselves helps define with whom we align ourselves. I want to note the connection(s) between naming ourselves and how we narrate our histories, and how the context we find ourselves in affects the names we feel “free” to choose from.

[. . .] any speaker is [. . .] a respondent to a greater or lesser degree. [They are] not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe. (*Speech Genres* 69)

I am looking at the implications of the Spanish language as a point of unification, this one voice, one people, this transformative nature of language. Many Latinos are very clear about distinguishing themselves from Spain and the so-called conquest of Meso-America. Many see “Raza” as a point of departure, a uniquely *new world* people. The marking of 10.12.1492 as el Dia de la Raza reflects this. But there is no simultaneous critique of, or distancing from the Spanish language. Some of this comes from looking at the invasion of Meso-America and North America as a point of contact between Empire(s). I want to look at these moments of contact as a meeting of words, and world views, and as points of in(ter)vention: What is it we think we can write/say? Story. What are the words we think we can write/speak story with?

Too often, in some realities, the idea of knowing one’s place has come to mean knowing one’s position within a hierarchy or on its pe-

riphery. For most native peoples knowing one's place provides us with a way of locating ourselves "precisely within the universal web of [our lives], in each of its dimensions: cultural, spiritual, personal, [geographical] and historical" (Allen 207). Knowing my position in relationship to those around me—Marijuana, Aunt Cora, Red Rock Arizona, the Denver sky, and Sixth Street and Market—allows me, forces me to deal with all the complexities of my infinite differences and similarities, allows me to know that we peoples of the Americas are not one people with one vision. I myself am not with only one vision.

We are not all heading in the same teleological direction, nor are we coming from the same "original" direction. So while it is true we are walking many paths, they are not all going to converge on/in some same end point. The whole notion of telos is even questionable, for not all peoples are "going somewhere," especially not somewhere, over there. To assume so leaves unquestioned the whole idea of progressive journeys and prescriptive locations. Which ocean do all these rivers flow to?

Our placement in this world is neither accidental nor is it an artifact of evolution or migration theory. I stand inseparable from the "we" I have understood us to be. Never in all ways alone; I am walking with my own two feet. In this way I am always acting in both highly individual and highly communal ways, simultaneously. And I am always working within a reality that is at the same times local and global. There is no local concern that is not also a global concern. To believe this is to privilege the globe over the local, it is to privilege the tribal/national story over my own "individual" story, when in fact they cannot exist without each other. This one earth is not made of parts all belonging to a unified whole, but wholes in a system of parts.

the authoritative discourse of Mestizaje: or what's your mother, and what's your father?

The ideological becoming of a human being, in this view, is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others. (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 341)

More ground to walk on: If racialization is the process where arbitrary characteristics are assigned meaning and that meaning is encoded as race—mestizos by their very existence could show how arbitrary racial markers are, and the areas of slippage between them. This opens

up a lot of space to discuss the invention of race, and, specifically for this discussion, the invention of Indianness. My question is, what does the concept of Mestizaje do to the notion of Indian? Does it change it? Expand it? Or re inscribe it? Instead of interrogating the notions of identity, specifically racial identity, it could merely be the creation and elevation of a third space. Raza.

In order to begin this, I want to look at two models of Mestizaje, one descriptive and another categorical. I have no issue, in this moment, with describing the mestizo nature of much of our culture. Si somos mezclados, quien no? Instead I want to question this idea that we can have Indians, non-Indians and in contrast mestizos/mixed bloods. In this way of thinking, instead of describing who we are, and how it is we've come to be that, the term becomes categorical, and mestizos become categorically non-Indian. The assumptions underlying this are problematic, for me. It assumes the idea that you can be wholly in and/or outside of Indian, and does not question notions of "pure" peoples or "pure" cultures or time and progress. Within this, the fractional nature of one's existence becomes paramount: I become equal to quantifiable parts, one half this + one half that. In this reality every person then begs the questions: What is your mother? And what is your father? The answer to this is supposed to tell you who I am. But it is not my blood that defines me; it is the context in which that blood is understood and interpreted that provides us frames of reference from which to ask the questions, why and when is the mestizo classification used selectively and strategically?

Within this categorical Mestizaje, we have mestizos, who are no longer presently Indian, but whose ancestors were Indian. What does this type of Mestizaje mean for Indios? For peoples of Meso-America it has meant the erasure of Indian people's specific histories and specific tribal identification(s) and/or deracination. The process of detribalization works/ed within a colonial system that sought to modify/codify new structures of identification, leadership, government, and worship. Part of this project/system was the use of a category much more similar to a caste organization of society than to an evenly, or logically consistent, applied racial classification system to define and place people. Within this conceptual and linguistic organization of Mexico/Meso-America Mestizaje was used to unify diverse groups of people and to avoid the type of intertribal warfare/disagreements that aided the movement of Spanish colonization. Consequently, for many detribalized Meso-AmerIndians identity has become organized around their/our nation states. We have become Mexicanos, Nicaraguans,

Hondureños, Guatematecos, Salvadoreños, Peruanos, Venezuelanos, Costa Riqueños—the political divisions go on. With Mestizaje, people identify with their nationality instead of their people or the specific details of the displacement and deracination. Largely because they do not know who or where their people are and the possibility that their reality predates their imagined and recorded moment of hybridization has become unimaginable. Which brings me to the question, is there a Mexican Race or is it a nationality?

What does bring Latinos together is Spanish colonization. But why elevate this? This notion of Hispanic and its reference to unification through Spanish language/culture (and the equation of those two) obscures the diverse experiences and agendas (spiritually, historically and linguistically) of Europeans, Africans and AmerIndians in the Americas. It also speaks little, or over, the silencing of, or deafness to, Indigenous and African languages. Once again unity comes through erasure. Given that there are no real Indians, only tribes/peoples, what happens when you take away the tribe, the notion of the people, and become de-tribalized? This is the very question for Chicanos/Latinos?

One response to de-tribalization is ethnogenesis. With this, our existence becomes a result of Spanish colonization, as if “the Conquest of America” was so complete as to create a entirely new people, not people who experience(d) colonialism. El Dia de la Raza soon replaces our own creation stories, and time is re conceptualized to have begun, for us/mestizos, upon the collision of wor(l)ds. Within this framework of us as a new people, what happens to the old people? Los Indios are re inscribed as a pure, static people destined for extinction, purely ancestral, ancient.

For once we “modernize” (change/survive) we become mestizo, bastard offspring of our Spanish Fathers. And within this mythology our Indianness originates from rape/molestation, through the legs and mouth of our Mother/translator/traitor. My aim here is not to deny the violation of Spanish Colonization, but to note that these violations are not our points of origin.²

The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the

word of the fathers. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a *prior* discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal. (Bakhtin 342)

(an)other origin story

Our [Latino-Mestizaje] civilization, with all its defects, can be the one chosen to assimilate and convert all people into a new type. Our civilization thus prepares in itself the weave, the multiple and rich mold of the humanity of the future. This mandate of history began to be apparent in the abundance of love that permitted the Spaniards to create a new race with Indians and blacks. Spanish colonization created mestizaje, which marked the character of colonization, fixed its responsibility, and defined its future.

The fifth race will utilize the contributions of white culture and, indeed, awaits still further contributions from white genius. Latin America owes what it is to white Europe and it is not about to turn its back upon it . . . We accept the superior ideals of the whites, but not their arrogance. (Vasconcelos 26-28)

In this translation, it is clear that the concept of Raza is assimilationist and defines mestizos as the best of three worlds—red, white, and black. This model resembles the model of Hybrid Vigor: the idea that mixed bloods “inherit the best qualities of their parent groups and [are] actually [. . .] healthier, smarter and better looking than monoracial peoples” (Nakashima 171). Not only does this leave the construct of race intact, it reaffirms the idea of pure people that can be combined into new hybrids, and relies on prior notions of what it means to be white, red, and black. Over time, Raza has come to mean our Spanish Fathers and Indian Mothers, so as Raza our Indigenismo is gendered, ancestral, victimized, and the African ancestry is displaced and made into caste.³

immigrants: describing a relationship to land

Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist—or, on the contrary, by the “light” of alien words that have already been spoken about it. (276)

Asi el mestizo se encuentra con el indio. Indios who speak Spanish and are detribalized are viewed as no longer Indian, because they are not identifiably culturally pure/pre-modern/static. To remain Indio one must be unchanged and unchanging. Therefore, most Meso-American indigenous people are classified and self identify as mestizos. As de-tribalized peoples cross landscapes, mestizo nationals are moving out of and into different sets of linguistic realities, empowered and disempowered discourses; most of these realities are hostile, and some of them unwilling or unable to hear. For many de-tribalized peoples there seems to be no choice but to become a nationality. “Are you Indian?” “No, I’m Mexican.”

For indigenous, and detribalized, Meso-Americans moving into the United States, specifically from Mexico, the identity options available are increasingly limited and shaped by the political agendas and histories of those national powers. Many mestizos are entering the U.S. and accepting their place in the immigrant mythology of that country, self-identifying as immigrants and becoming another racial/ethnic minority or a Spanish Language special interest group, from their country of origin. Politically these peoples are organizing around civil rights, equal access, and citizenship issues. These identifications and political trajectories have great theoretical significance, shaping the minds of the American public as well as those engaged in the actual crossings. Leaving national borders intact by merely permeating them, these intellectual statements of community create/perpetuate divisions among Indian people who have historically been multilingual and mobile. They also perpetuate the mythology that the immigrant is the one that moves across the land, and the Indian is the one who never moves, while many Nations share histories of moving with in a specific spiritual context. These identifications and resulting agendas also create a false sense of community among all Latinos regardless of our experiences of colonialism or our ancestral lineages.

An alternative remembering and regrouping for mestizos traveling across the political landscape is to identify as an indigenous, detribalized person moving into and onto new linguistic wor(l)d views.

Politically this would require active and creative attempts to re-tribalize (resist by embracing something not offered, on either side of the border, indigenismo and re-tribalization), and participate in spiritual and intellectual sovereignty movimientos. Significantly this would mean questioning the basic theoretical underpinnings of each national narrative, the narrative in power in the place mestizos are traveling out of, as well as the place they are traveling into. Involved in this is a complex understanding and interpretation of the land the peoples are moving around on. This means developing and accessing theories of listening and speaking in addition to developing and accessing languages and stories that address the complexity of this American land base and the colonial powers that now stand on it. This is not to say that mestizos are Indios are Indians, none of which I believe exist as a category or race of peoples. This is to say that each of these names better describes varied experiences, and in these descriptions lay the opportunity for vital theory generating and regenerating.

(jungle indians) Mestizos: land bridge between

I don't mean to be tedious, but I want you to understand that these were not jungle Indians. When opportunity came to them they were quite capable of adopting new ideas. (McNickle 145)

Importantly, the significance and differentiating characteristic separating these Indians from jungle Indians is their ability to adopt new ideas. Like Carlisle's Indians they are capable of education and of somehow transcending their backwardness. United States policy makers' paternalism is aimed at these Indians, and is evidenced in the vocabularies used to discuss Indians and the problem with Indians. Mestizos like mixed "breeds" are perceived to bridge the gap between the primitive and the civilized man. They are the new, both willing and able to move out of the jungle, from underneath the blanket. They represent the idea that Indians can become part of the nation state if only they relinquish their notions about their place in the world, most important their place within and affection for the land.

Do not misunderstand me
but understand me fully with reference
to my affection for the land.

I never said the land was mine to do with as I choose.
The one who has a right to dispose of it
is the one who has created it.
I claim a right to live on my land
and accord you the privilege to return to yours.

— Chief Joseph

Federal colonists neither understand this relationship, this affection, nor are they willing or capable of living with it. Sadly, they also did not appreciate or take advantage of the privilege to return to their homelands. This observation is echoed in Silko's work *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), where travelers are suspect because they have no place, and Europeans are noted for their unusual ability to abandon the lands where they had been born. The old man notes that Europeans "failed to recognize the earth was their mother" (258). This failure, on their part, to hear the land or the people who speak from within it, is most obvious in the configuration and subsequent treatment of the Indian and the varied and distinct indigenous nations.

Mestizos are thought to be able to bridge, through translation, these "two" approaches. This leaves the colonist safely in their epistemological frameworks and validates their monologic and monolingual approach to the Americas and the people of the Americas. It assumes the possibility to translate from one language to another without giving over to the possibility of being shaped by language and the learning of language. This is especially significant for Meso-Americans who have had the image of the Indian and the translator solidified in the body and mouth of one Indian woman, Malinche. This racialized woman then takes the place of a long period of colonial interaction and transformation and comes to stand in as the site of incubation for Raza. A narrative of her betrayal then comes to stand in place of the continuous narrative of Indigenous resistance to colonial occupation.

The bridge between seems liminal, akin to a state of displacement, when the only way to be without place is to refuse to make a relationship with the land and one's movement across it. This is what Silko is getting at with interior migrations; this is the task for each and every contemporary Indian, for as the landscape has changed so have we, whether we are reservation dweller, urban resident, or landless and forgotten. Momaday says the biggest failure is to go unimagined. I say, here, the biggest failure is to be without place (on the landscape and in the stories of that landscape). To live outside of the song that they are singing is to live in a dry isolated space with no meaning.

ethnic Indians remain, to some extent, in the jungle

Tribal identity was another strong point of the traditional Indians. They did not, in many instances, even bother to use the word Indian unless they used it in a derisive manner; it was too broad and generalized a definition. Uninformative about social and kinship responsibilities, it seemed only an ethnic label that the whites had pinned on their tribe. Anyone could act like an Indian; it took a certain amount of self-discipline and knowledge of the customs to act like a Lakota, a Navajo, a Nez Perce, or a Crow. (Deloria and Lytle 235)

No one is going to allow Chicanos to be Indian; no one has allowed American Indians to remain tribally identified. To think so is to adhere to a romantic notion of what it means to survive the consistent attacks on our selves, our lands, and our prayers. Just as the mestizo meets the Indio, the Indian meets the mestizo. Many North and Meso-American people conflate Spanish Language speakers with Spanish origin people, just as many Meso-American people conflate English Language speakers with “Anglo” origin peoples. (Think about the whole discourse around *pochos y agringadas*). Within this, concepts of the People get lost, and, in the north, Congressional and judicial discourse on Indianness become the authoritative points of view from which all Indian identity and authenticity is judged.

Our political unity as Pan-Indian “ethnic Indians” is centered on the language of the courts and our own means and terms of surviving that legal discourse. Part of this has involved resisting civil rights, inclusion and U.S. citizenship despite their imposition on us, and embracing both continued tribal affiliation and Pan-Indian political unity. America’s Indians face similar struggles with notions of Indianness, as Meso-America’s mestizos.

We too are faced with identity options, in light of our movement across the American landscape. (I will say for now, all movement is now coerced, whether your family is a relocation family, or your father was simply following the railroad to California.) For the person moving between the Sovereign Nation of the Diné and San Francisco County it is possible to identify as a Non-Indian American, with no sense of tribal or Pan-Indian identity, only a recognition of unspecified Indian ancestry. Alternatively this person may also identify as an Ur-

ban Indian, Diné Nation with a strong tribal or Pan-Indian identity. Like the Indigenous Meso-American this person would also actively participate in spiritual and intellectual sovereignty movements and somehow create peace (come to a relationship) with displacement and identity policing.

developing relations not false origins

The only discourse available around de-tribalization is the authoritative, “if you have no tribe you are not Indian”; particularly because most “Americans” and Meso-Americans lay claim to Indian ancestry. For example, “my great grandma was a Cherokee princess, y Los antepasados eran Azteca.” Currently, we have no languages to make sense of our de-tribalization or racialization, in North or Meso-America. Our only hope is to try to articulate our relationship to the languages that have come to define us and our experiences with the genocidal policies of both the United States and New Spain/Mexico.

some stories die, while the land lives on

Whatever the event or the subject, the ancient people
perceived the world and themselves within that world
as part of an ancient, continuous story composed of
innumerable bundles of other stories. (Ortiz 8)

I begin here discussing the continuous story of the land and the indigenous resistance and survivals that make up, in part, the history of the land. For each mouth returned to the earth’s surface, and each mouth emerged from the earth’s surface, there is a story not heard within the singular framework and recording of an Indian experience, a mestizo origin story, or Deloria’s ethnic Indian. As Silko writes in reference to ancient Pueblo culture, “the collective knowledge and beliefs comprising ancient” American culture is then incomplete. In important ways the legitimated, authoritative, terminal discourses of Indian identity leave little if any room to account for the forced deracination occurring daily in the removals of peoples from their land bases and the stories being remembered and made to understand them.

This echoes Kimberly Blaeser’s sentiments when she recalls and reaffirms the need to

[. . .] know the stories of other people—stories from the American and world canons—especially the stories told about Indian people; and we must be aware of the way our own stories are being changed: “re-expressed” or “re-interpreted” to become a part of their story or their canon because [. . .] stories have political power. (Armstrong 53)

A mestizo origin story erases the very continuity of which Silko points to the significance. In making a categorical break with pre-colonial origins this story also breaks with contemporary colonial survivals and resistance movimientos, giving the illusion that the story has ended when in fact the telling is still a beginning set in motion.

[. . .] a ritual circuit or path marks the interior journey: a journey of awareness and imagination in which they emerged from being within the earth and all-included in the earth to the culture and people they became, differentiating themselves for the first time from all that had surrounded them, always aware that interior distances cannot be reckoned in physical miles or in calendar years. (Ortiz 14-15)

Interior distance is measured from some point of emergence, in a tale of migration. A mestizo origin is in part a mistaken emergence, a misplaced origin. It accepts, in some way, the initial and continual erasure of tribal peoples and tribal memories. This story also asserts that the site of memory and story is containable in the head/body of a single individual or even a single generation, believing that the destruction of that individual, or that generation, brings the destruction of the memories and stories of those people as well. These beliefs give over, to colonial powers, the life forces that created and continue to recreate us, the very land itself.

It speaks of a refusal of responsibility, to listen to, be informed and restored by the land. This responsibility requires a continued communal remembering and retelling, and with this retelling, relationships between ancestors, landscape, language and the people are recognized and that recognition provides a means for survival. A mestizo origin story takes a small moment in tribal histories and claims, with authority, that it was the defining, finalizing, and destroying moment. The story itself severs relationships and the possibility within them. It gags the mouths of the ancestors, and the descendants of the ancestors.

There is no single migration in this, no narrative journey all have taken in this process of becoming. In some senses survival rests in this knowledge, on the weary legs of the removed, be they detribalized Meso-Americans, boarding school survivors, urban Indians, or the Diné of Big Mountain. The people survive in their ability to re-cord themselves to the earth. Like the Jackpile Mine at Laguna, colonialism “[b]y its very ugliness and by the violence it does to the land, insures that, from now on, it too, will be included in the vast body of narratives that makes up the history of the Laguna [Indigenous] people and the Pueblo [American] landscape” (Ortiz 22). There is no end to the telling. In each stone, face and spirit resides another version and another trace of the journey and its interior.

drums and a certain drumming

To provide/allow the reality of Indian survival and existence in these United States would mean a restructuring of the immigrant mythology and the processes available to become “American.” To acknowledge the remaining “foreign” domestic nations in the United States would require a de-stabilizing and re-spatialization of mappings within the national discourse. The prevalent belief that the US/Mexico and US/Canadian borders are the two membranes that must be protected from foreign invasion and/or unauthorized crossings ignores the existence of Nations within the official National boundaries. The current law of the land acknowledges Indian Nations as domestic dependent quasi-sovereign nations; nations both inside on the inside and outside on the inside.

From the Indian reservation to the governmental
school
Well, they’re goin’ to educate me to the white man’s
Golden Rule
And I’m learnin’ very quickly, for I’ve learned to be
ashamed,
And I come when they call “Billy,” though I’ve got
an Indian name
And there are drums beyond the mountain, Indian
drums that you can’t hear
There are drums beyond the mountain And they’re
gettin’ mighty near. (La Farge, “Drums”)

The United States has remained deaf to these drums, deaf to the languages of the land, and its spirits, deaf to calls for moral obligations to land/people and deaf to Indian critical discourse around legal rights: "Although Indians surrendered the physical occupation and ownership of their ancestral lands, they did not abandon the spiritual possession that had been a part of them" (Deloria and Lytle 11). It's this religious mission, this metaphysical relationship between the tribe, the land and the language that exists between them that Non-Indians and the US government do not understand. It is the same relationship that says I/we do not exist without or outside of this (very specific) land base, and simultaneously that I/we carry our Indianness with us where ever we go.

Peter La Farge, in "Drums," speaks to the construction of a political identity for North American Indian peoples centering on two things: drums and the language of Pan-Indian lineage. He refuses to give primacy to the "markers" of Indianness: hair and pedigree.

And when they think that they'd changed me, cut my
hair to meet their needs,
Will they think I'm white or Indian, quarterblood or
just half-breed?
Let me tell you, Mr. Teacher, when you say you'll
make me right,
In five hundred years of fighting, not one Indian
turned white. (La Farge)

He speaks strongly of and to US assimilation and de-tribalization policies, noting that we may not "look" like Indians, nor fit the definition of Indianness (especially in relation to blood quantum). Sometimes our survival doesn't look like survival and sometimes we don't look like "Indians."

Over time we have faced the question of defining ourselves solely as one people on one land. Alternatively, we could look at relationship(s) to the colonial powers across time and our coalitions as Peoples who share similar experiences and legal relationships with the United States of America, but who come out of very diverse and specific land bases, worldviews, and ways of understanding and expressing that.

Although the figure of the "Authentic" Indian is a
figment of the imagination [. . .] it has real conse-

quences [. . .] the most obvious of these is that we must respond to the question of Indian identity in terms of that figure. (Sequoya 435)

Consequently, there is a tremendous amount of prejudice within and among Natives: Hang Around the Forts, Uncle Tomahawks, Mixed Bloods, Full Bloods, the documented/recognized and the undocumented/unrecognized. All of these identifications are tied up, intimately, with the idea of what it means to be America's Indian. Many people can only imagine a nineteenth century plains type Indian. A static, Lakota (usually) with a homogenous way of experiencing the world, a warrior extinct because he was unable to adapt to Modern society, or a "squaw" who married a white man and had little mixed blood children.⁴

The material conditions of being Indian have changed over time, while the images of Indianness have not. The conditions of being Indian have changed, of course, for a variety of reasons, and many of those changes are directly relational to differing degrees of access to land and resources among Native American people, as well as to corresponding restrictions of traditional religious and economic practices which depend on such access. (Sequoya 455)

Natives within the United States have survived British, French, Spanish, American, and Mexican colonization; consequently there are many different ideas of what being Indian is. Each colonial structure only recognizes and legitimizes its own Indian. And so intertribal and international (Lakota and Pomo, Canadian and American, Mexican and Navajo) prejudice and distrust have been accentuated.

For North American Indians political organization has not centered on ideas of shared racial or ethnic characteristics. We were and continue to be an extremely diverse group. We share two things: 1.) the land and 2.) the documentation of some of our peoples and some of our histories in legal discourse. The languages that have described the United States government's reaction to (and conceptualization(s) of) us are found in Supreme Court opinions, congressional acts, public laws and the U.S. Constitution. This discourse has been and continues to be empowered.

The language that has been disempowered is the language of The People, the language of the land.

Well, you may teach me this land's history, but we
taught it to you first.
We broke your hearts and bent your journeys; broken
treaties left us cursed. (La Farge)

As a result, this language, the land, has been the subject of much U.S. public policy. The goal has been to sever U.S. national duty and responsibility to native peoples and our continued existence by attempting to sever ties to the land and indigenous languages. As this fails they continue with attempts to destroy the land itself; without it, there are no People.

How did we The People become we the people? Indigenous peoples of the U.S. were made citizens twice, originally as a result of the General Allotment Act of 1887 and again with the passage of the 1924 Citizenship Act. Both of these "gifts" of citizenship were unwanted by Indians and both altered the languages Indians could now legitimately use to discuss their experiences in the U.S. and their options within an increasingly narrow reality of acting as sovereign peoples (given material conditions and access to resources).

Citizenship partially removed from People their ability to remain, for instance, Shawnee, Seneca, Kiowa, and placed us further away from being able to articulate our realities in languages other people would listen to. We are no longer heard when speaking in the language of foreign nations under U.S. occupation, and as members of a settler colony; instead, we are national subjects. The U.S. now owned us, as well as the land of this continent, and we became its Indians.

Our identity, in theory, could now be possessed and molded, just as the land has been coming under increased control of the United States government (public land) and its citizens (private land). Along with this, Indians were racialized, and treaty rights and obligations began to be reinterpreted as the obligations of racial superior parents over their racially "backwards children."⁵ Indian peoples have understood and articulated their relationship to the U.S. as a relationship between nations; the U.S., however, has never understood this.

Living with the invention of Indianness in el Norte has meant remaining tribally identified (and, for some, reservation bound) at all costs. To slip, or to be forced, into that place of de-tribalization will leave a person groundless. U.S. relations with tribes are firmly planted

in issues of Sovereignty (land and culture). To merely be Indian here means little, if anything, legally. This has been the consistent choice offered Natives from the U.S. government: become American or die off. There is no understanding of the tribe and no discussion without it.

Reservation life, assimilationist forced forgetting, and Urban Relocation programs have created new communities. Pan-Indianism developed as a response to this colonial experience/relationship.

[. . .] to articulate the conditions existing all over the country as an “Indian” matter was not only natural for concerned Indians in the cities but wholly justified in terms of their understanding of their situation. [. . .] The Merging of many tribal identities and histories in the urban setting meant the adoption of a common, albeit artificial, heritage. (Deloria and Lytle 236)

In response to the contemporary realities for North American Indian peoples it has become important to define and articulate a coalition around struggle and responses to those struggles. As a result, many “ethnic” Indians developed a heightened sense of tribalism and traditionalism, in an attempt to re-tribalize culturally and intellectually/spiritually and politically. I hear this as an alternative to the category of mestizo, and the perceived terminal state of de-tribalization and deracination.

At this point there is a reality to the concept of Indian.

What is of crucial importance here is [. . .] recognizing the necessity [. . .] of overcoming what amounts to a theological assumption that tribal people lived an ossified, unchanging existence until crossing a line into dynamic existence. [. . . doing this does two things]. First, it opens up the continuity between American Indian experience before contact with Europeans and after. [It is clear] that the situation in which American Indian people find themselves is radically different from that before contact, but to manufacture a fallen nature is to slip into western, Christian assumptions. (Warrior 79)

I see mestizos as children of *the fall*. I see People with an Indian identity as folks trying to word out a story, a way of understanding, a theoretical construct that allows them to deal with the specificities of their (dis)placements here on this land called America. For

[o]ne may speak of another's discourse only with the help of that alien discourse itself, although in the process, it is true, the speaker introduces into the other's words his own intentions and highlights the context of those words in his own way. (Bakhtin 355)

We hear La Farge constructing a lineage, by naming a figures defined in terms of their resistance to white America:

Well, you thought that I knew nothing, when you
brought me here to school.
Just another empty Indian, just America's first fool.
But I can tell you stories that are burnt and dried and
old.
But in the shadow of their telling walks the thunder
proud and bold.

Long Pine and Sequoia, Handsome Lake and Sitting
Bull,
There's Mangus Colorado with his sleeves so red and
full;
Crazy Horse the legend, those who bit off Custer's
soul;
They are dead, yet they are living, with the great
Geronimo. ("Drums")

He maintains here knowledge of the oppression and resistance to that oppression, in a pan-Indian way that relies on tribalism, story and memory.

the authoritative discourse of Blood Quantum: or what's your mother, and what's your father? part II

American Indians are the only group of people "required" to "prove" both their identity and continued existence. In this way blood (the notion of it as a biological reality, a subsurface liquid property

right) and identity are properties we inherit. We can prove our right to claim with one or more of the following: 1.) Blood Quantum: at least 1/4, as recognized and recorded in specified paper trailing; 2.) tribal enrollment in a recognized tribe; 3.) residence: allotted or reserved land, or; 4.) with affiliation or recognition by a recognized group of Indians.

Many understand this as demographic genocide consistent with the immigrant mythology of America and the desire to sever the trust relationship that exists between Indian Nations and the United States. Currently, definitional power remains in the hands of the colonial powers that be. The termination of Indian identity is an act of Congress away, and Indians do not want to be just another racial/ethnic minority. As a result the “scientific” reality of blood quantum and phenotype has become and continues to be very important. The problem with this is that it reinforces biological essentialism. And for Indians, the problem has been the dilutability of our blood. This notion reflects the strategic uses of scientific properties i.e. genetics, chemistry. Indian blood/people becomes absorbable, dilutable—yet Indian blood/people cannot absorb other peoples/cultures.

For Chicanos, blood has never been enough. It is legally impossible for a Chicanos to be recognized as Indians; we have no common language to dialogue with the United States or its “Indians.” The hispanization of our community is doubly divisive, for AmerIndians and detribalized African Americans. It also creates a false sense of community among Latinos who do not share a pre-Cortezian/Colombian relationship to this land, and it obscures connections between landed peoples across the national boundaries of Canada, U.S., Mexico, etc.

Identity is more than being or becoming; it is a theory of relatedness. One cannot just say, “I’m Indian, look I’ve got ‘the blood.’” Indianness is not something one has and then goes about living her life. It is a complex system, a language that moves as we move, and exists beside, beneath, and above an existence in relation to the land and the people.

citizens: describing a relationship to land

One product of colonialism is [. . .] the controlling of
Indigenous people through law.

The importance of a land base is interwoven with the feelings Natives have regarding tribal sovereignty: to be sovereign is to have authority, responsibility for the land. (Ross 51)

United States' legal discourse has sought to clarify, create, and describe who is a man (*Standing Bear v. Crook*), who is a race (*United States v. Sandoval*), and who is allowed to change his mind and the terms of an agreement (*Lonewolf v. Hitchcock*), for Indians and Indian America. My concern with federal policy is a concern with the power of its story to shape reality that then shapes all story, especially the one story it tells about us, all of us. I am not focusing on a history of federal policy, but instead on the positions and possibilities created through the enactment and imposition of that story, and the way it shapes relationships between tribes, between tribes and their access, spiritually and physically, to ancestral homelands, and between tribes and their ability to remember and express themselves.

Indian citizenship is as much about access to the territory of the United States as it is about the Indian itself. Access to land is epistemological and spiritual as well as physical. Much legal discourse has sought to alter access to land by altering and defining the relationships possible with land and the language available and recognized to discuss those relationships.

Once the tribes were brought into "civilized" society, there would be no reason for them to "usurp" vast tracts of "underdeveloped" land. And membership in a booming nation would be ample compensation for the dispossession they had suffered. But most important, the extension of citizenship and other symbols of membership in American society would reaffirm the power of the nation's institutions to mold all people to a common standard. (Hoxie 15)

American colonials were interested first and foremost in their own relationship to the land. Central to this idea was changing property relationships and the ability to access ownership rights.

Social evolutionist blueprint: separate Indians from their homes and their past, divide their land into indi-

vidual parcels, make them citizens, and draw them into American society. (24)

The idea here was to sever the Indian from the land, change the existing metaphysical relationship to one of ownership or dispossession, simultaneously institute a system of education that replaced tribal epistemologies and languages with a common “American” standard history and dictionary, and finally provide for the Indian a new position in society as American citizens. This involved constructing narratives for reconceiving, defining, and implementing, through policy and popular culture, the position Indians were to have in relationship to their homelands and in relationship to the colonial structures in power.

As citizens, Indians no longer stood outside of the national narrative. They stood inside it, as domestic dependents. The question of who the Indian was and where he or she came from was then answered. With a complex shift in story, over one hundred diverse collections of people then became a single relic people and remnant of a pre civilized American past. Indians became the first immigrants across a Bering Straight, a people who must either fade away or be uplifted.⁶ This particular telling reconceived the Peoples as one people with one problem, namely their conceptions of the land and the cosmos. Placing Indians within the national narrative, as citizens, further developed the concept of Indians as a race of people, effectively erasing pre-colonial origin stories and establishing a continued refusal to understand tribal people on their own terms, with their own relationships to colonial structures, to each other, and to the very land that was being contested.

Each telling describes a different problem, colonialism or Indians. Citizenship was an aggressive act of racialization and an attempt to change a people by changing their access to land (language and metaphysical practice). With the threefold attack against land, systems of knowledge, and defining of community (creation, illusion, and changing of allegiances), Indian citizenship attempted to change who they could be and shaped the language available for future discussions. The change in relationship also provided both the need and ability to rework, and reword the real reason moneys, and governmental responsibilities, were being owed to tribes. The significance, legally and metaphysically, of indigenous existence on the Americas prior to and outside of the immigrant mythology of an American colony could then be elided and U.S. governmental reparations and responsibilities could then be refigured as support for Indians. The newcomers and intruders could then re conceive of themselves as protectors and elders, in an

evolutionary narrative, benevolently giving instead of receiving and taking aid and land rights.

The refusal of tribal peoples to participate fully or willingly in this narrative strand left open the need to develop and complicate this relationship of Indian and citizen. Both citizenship and education failed to eradicate the Indian or the land, explanations for this failure rose from the logic available to the national narrative. Indians were incapable of being uplifted and as such would occupy the permanent position of child under the white man's parental authority and protection, the authority to write the story and the need to protect that very story. The problem then with the Indian became the problem of the Indian: the ability of a single modifier to reconceive the conquering and subjugation of diverse peoples and cultures into the need to help (assimilate and preserve) a large and backwards racial grouping. As citizens, Indians along with Indian land, became America's to have and to manage.

Racial backwardness, for tribal people, has continually been characterized by the manner in which the people related to and expressed themselves in relationship to the land. In the refusal to exploit, secularize or assume a position outside of the land tribal people have been seen as not using or developing their land's "resources." To be included in the national framework, Americans needed to change the position the Indian occupied from within a homeland to people atop a territory. A vital question for each person here is the question of place.

[. . .] assimilation did not imply wide-ranging social change; it was simply a label for the process by which aliens fit themselves into their proper places in the "white man's" United States. (Hoxie 210)

Instituting and detailing Indian citizenship allowed for an important shift in history: the basis for federal guardianship moved from treaty obligations to Indian backwardness. The federal colonist made a change in acting according to obligation and duty to supervising Indians and their property.

Once the courts had freed the doctrine of guardianship from the idea of treaty obligations and had redefined it as an instrument for defending Indians from members of the "superior race," it could be applied to a wide range of situations. (217)

The dismissal of treaty commitments reveals the unwillingness and inability of American colonials to truly hear, with full appreciation and understanding, the terms of the treaty negotiations and the positions those terms were being spoken from.

As the natives' power over their own lands was reduced and their "place" in white society defined, their political rights were altered and the list of their freedoms was shortened. Their legal status, like their economic and social position, became fixed [. . .] (236)

[. . .] assimilation had come to mean knowing one's place and fulfilling one's role. (242)

The questions around how to speak about Indian citizenship and guardianship began to form careful descriptions of the character of the Indian within the great colonial drama: knowing one's place and assuming a well-defined and increasingly small position upon the American landscape and within the national discourse. The place, then, for Indians, was to be one of permanent and unavoidable displacement. This particular narrative process of becoming American Citizens is quite different from Ortiz's call to become Americans in *From Sand Creek* (1981) and La Duke's call to become a patriot of the land in *Marxism and Native Americans* (1983).

THE TOURISTE and the People

The problem with this whole discussion of mixed race and mestizaje is that we lack a vocabulary that doesn't create and recreate simplistic notions of identity based on "blood" or definitions that only have meaning as they relate to whiteness or colonial projects. We are unable to communicate without using a different vocabulary, and listening skills, that do not name, rename, or hear identity as a fixed/stable category. Creeds and legislative acts destroy the word. Nationality destroys relations, and the People have always been defined by their relationship to the world as they were given to it.

In almost every treaty, however, the concern of the Indians was the preservation of the people, and it is in

this concept of the people that we find both the psychological and the political keys that unlock the puzzling dilemma of the present and enable us to understand why American Indians view the world as they do today. When we understand the idea of the people, we can also learn how the idea of the treaty became so sacred to Indians that even today, more than a century after most of the treaties were made, Indians still refer to the provisions as if the agreement were made last week. The treaty, for most tribes, was a sacred pledge made by one people to another and required no more than the integrity of each party for enforcement.

The idea of the people is primarily a religious conception, and with most American Indian tribes it begins somewhere in the primordial mists. (Deloria and Lytle 8)

This peoplehood is usually defined by land and the way in which one prays, which includes the language of the tribe, the language of the land, and the language of the prayer.

Out on the Navajo reservation there was a tourist fellow hung all over with cameras and he was wearing one of these bright sport shirts and he stopped out there in that Navajo reservation and he went up to a hogan. There was an old man sittin' there and he said to him: "Are you an Indian?" and the Old Man said: "Yes." And he said: "Why don't you teach us some Indian Words. For Instance, what is that?" "That is a rabbit." "What about that mountain over there." "That is a sacred mountain." And the tourist said: "What about those little fuzzy things out there." And the old man said: "Those are sheep." "What about that fellow who taking care of those sheep." He said: "That's my son." And the tourist said: "I can't learn from you here. At least I know what Navajo means. It means Indian." And the old man said: "You're wrong there, Navajo means people." (La Farge, "The Tourist")

The touriste comes with his little knowledge, his camera to freeze a single image in time, and the Navajo man replies: don't define me. The touriste comes to consume the nation by knowing it, but refuses to listen to it, to speak its language. He wants access to the culture and worldview, but in/on his terms. There is no exchange of language, no event to which he, the touriste, is open to experiencing, for neither eye nor ear opens to receive an impression of light or sound. He cannot learn because he cannot hear or see. The land stands there vocalizing all around him and he is left unaffected, dead to the words around him. The old man speaks in his Navajo English: I recognize what you think of me (and I'm Indian in the pan-Indian sense), but I'm going to name myself—what we mean is People. There is no such thing as an Indian—that's your word, not a Navajo word. In his process of articulating himself, he gives his explanation of what it means to be Navajo on the Reservation.

survival this way⁷

Speaking solely with one language, Spanish or pan-Indianism, obscures the connections shared between African Americans and Meso Americans, continental Africans and Indigenous Americans, the Americas and Africa, Meso Americans, American Indians, and Canada's First Nations. All these words seek to categorize us and limit the vocabulary we can then envision ourselves and our relationships in. They kill the word and the movement in the words. They place our theories in containers of fixed, static and homogenized identity, instead of allowing and setting in motion our thoughts and our speaking. Living language and living story require movement and energy, constant change and memory, multiple sources of power and understanding, and above all the ability to hear and speak back.

This is what we hand down, in part, our ears.

Survival, I know how this way.
This way, I know.
It rains.
Mountains and canyons and plants
grow.
We traveled this way,
gauged our distance by stories
and loved our children.

We taught them
to love their births.
We told ourselves over and over
again,
“We shall survive this way.” (Ortiz, *Woven Stone*
167-8)

Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language defines heritage as, “1.) property that is or can be inherited. 2.) a. Something handed down from one’s ancestors or the past, as a characteristic culture, a tradition; b. The rights, burdens, or status resulting from being born in a certain time or place, birthright.” Indian and mestizo describe common heritages; these words do not name origin stories and races. In this knowing, there resides the responsibility to survive this way, gauging the distance we travel in story, and in teaching and loving our births. We hand this down, the storytelling and the stories, from one ancestor to another.

Many contemporary discussions of the Indian relate to being Indian, or being The Indian, as property. In the contemporary world of cultural appropriation and multicultural politics Indian identity is a commodity. In the narrative of Indian citizenship this category of identity was a means of instituting ideas of property and the desire to categorize lands and determine ownership rights. During this coupling of citizenship with private property, the land was object and backdrop, not living context. We inherit this narrative framing as well, along with the paper trail defining the Indian in the need to define Indian land and public and private lands. This way a notion of blood becomes a sort of property as well, one like the land over-determined by legal and scientific attempts to classify and quantify.

An important side of what we inherit is the survival, this way. The something handed down, living language and a way of relating to the land, responsibly telling each story of the changing landscape, the changing people, and not to privileging one version or one teller. Do not kill the word and in doing so kill ourselves with category and amnesia. Learn and love our births, do not to mistake them or see them as sites of rape and betrayal. Surviving this way, making story of place, making story in land, Ortiz and Winona La Duke demand that people become American in the sense that they make a relationship with the Americas, as part of them and not a master over them. This is our heritage, as Indians: a story we pass through—a place within a clan struc-

ture and within a landscape. It is a return to speaking and listening to who we are, for we are where we come from.

A Good Journey⁸

Why do you write? Who do you write for?

Because Indians always tell a story. The only way to continue is to tell a story and that's what Coyote says. The only way to continue is to tell a story and there is no other way. Your children will not survive unless you tell something about them — how they were born, how they came to this certain place, how they continued. (Ortiz 153)

Contemporary narrative practices give standard and authorized versions of this land and its peoples. More often than not, within these frameworks the land's story is diminished and simplified, then offered up as the nation's story. This attempt to replace a complex living language bundle with a single narrative (or even four or five terminal creeds) threatens our ability to make a good journey and set order and well-being in motion. It is a failure, first and foremost, of the people to act responsibly in the face and presence of the land.

The stories of this land, across international boundaries, are multi-layered. Often, in the U.S., we speak of ourselves solely in relationship to the U.S.'s continued and current occupation. We discuss U.S. genocidal policies and the resulting treaty paper trails. In order to accept the risk and responsibility to account for birth, movement and continuance we need to also find the words and the stories that speak of and to the deracination, de-tribalization, and effects settler colonialism has on the land and on the bodies and spirits of those indigenous to the land.

We are all called forth in this to act responsibly and with commitment towards all relations and the land from which we as distinct beings emerge. Winona La Duke writes, "Without addressing the history marked indelibly in the land [. . .] no theory can be anchored" (LaDuke ii). Neither American Indian hegemony nor the authoritative discourse of *Mestizaje* address the history marked indelibly on the land. The history of the United States does not truly account for Euroamericans displacement from their homelands, nor their ability to live with and accept that displacement, and more significantly it falls short of

exploring and developing the rich presence and interaction of African and Indigenous people that predates European arrivals and self-centerings.

As the land from which we emerge is vast, so too the theories we remember and remake to address that land and our presence on it need be vast and many-voiced, as well. The responsibility for telling and remembering cannot lie in one person, one community, or in one story—however long and complicated. We survive with the numbers of stories, the disagreements and remembrance of differing versions, and the listening and responding to the earth's recordings of stories for which no current narratives exist.

La Duke reminds us to “look to the psychic or spiritual damage suffered . . . to the land as well [. . .] (iii). We do this when we make a good journey, when we address origin, movement, and continuance, and when we address this in a story that shows “the energy that language is, the way that the energy is used and transformed into vision, and the way this vision becomes knowledge which engenders and affirms the substance and motion of one's life” (Ortiz 151). As we gather, and we must, we need be capable and committed to telling each of our stories and in doing so tell each of our ancestors' stories. We must listen, and be willing to be changed and affected in that process. Addressing the earth in this manner we enter in right relationship to and responsibility towards the land itself. Without this connection there is no life.

Reid Gómez

NOTES

¹ Guralnik, David B. ed. *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* 2nd college edn. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980).

² This creation of a mythic mother and father, for our race, underscores the fact that “hybridity as a cultural description will always carry with it an implicit politics of heterosexuality, which may be a further reason for contestation its contemporary pre-eminence.” Robert J. C. Young,

Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race (London: Routledge, 1995) 25.

³ For more information concerning Malinche I recommend Norma Alarcon's essay "Chicana's Feminist Literature: A Re-vision through Malintzin/or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object" in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Color*, eds. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table, 1983) and Inés Hernandez's essay "An Open Letter to Chicanas" in *Without Discovery: A Native Response to Columbus*, ed. Ray Gonzalez (Seattle: Broken Moon Press, 1992). Taken together these essays provide a starting point for looking at the complexity of Malinche's mythic betrayal of the people in light of her being a woman of Meso-American Indian descent.

⁴ Due to the increasing commodification of Southwestern, specifically Navajo rugs and Pueblo pottery, art/relics the stereotypes are changing. These images are gendered with most people thinking of Plains type men and Southwestern type women and they cater to the commodification of artifacts and collection of relics of a people seen to be dying. For more information see *Dances with Wolves*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Geronimo*, *Squanto* and Disney's *Pocahontas*.

⁵ For more information I recommend Frederick E. Hoxie, "Redefining Indian Citizenship." *A Final Promise: the Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Mass: Cambridge UP, 1992).

⁶ There are numerous discussions of the Indian's importance in the American mind, especially in the need for an Indian origin story. For more information I recommend Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr.'s *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*, Roy Harvey Pearce's *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind*, and Larry J. Zimmerman's "Anthropology and Responses to the Reburial Issue" in the edited collection *Indians and Anthropologists: Vine Deloria, Jr. and the Critique of Anthropology*, eds. Thomas Biolsi and Larry J. Zimmerman.

⁷ This section is an abbreviated version of a longer section called "going home, survival this way" that addresses Black Indian relations. "survival this way" is a line from Simon J. Ortiz's poem which can be found in the collection *Woven Stone, Sun Tracks: An American Indian*

Literary Ser. 21 (Tucson: U of AZ P, 1992). This line has also been used for the title of a collection edited by Joseph Bruchac, *Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets*, highlighting the role of language and writing in the continued existence of Native peoples of the Americas.

⁸ Ortiz, *Woven Stone* 149.

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In ixtli in yóllotl/ a face and a heart: Listening to the Ancestors

“Before we can mount a credible resistance to the culture of the Other,
it is necessary that we experience how our indigenous culture
instills in us a wise face and wise heart.”

Martha Ramírez¹

As I read the email from my graduate student, Nancy Soto, I felt elated: “Unbelievably, my life makes so much more sense now after taking the course. This class grounded my knowledge in a concrete place, both literally and in an abstract sense” (15 June 2003). My history students from the University of Texas at El Paso had recently returned from spending two weeks at Náhuatl University in Ocotepéc, Morelos, learning about ancient and contemporary Mexican indigenous cultures, philosophy, history, theater, food, and healing.² While I knew that, in a two-week period, we would only scratch the surface of such a complex web of knowledge, I believed as I designed the course that this class had the potential to provide a foundation for decolonization, one that could aid in the process of healing from intergenerational or historical trauma that embodies the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual consequences of a traumatic event on a group of people. Examples of traumatic events affecting indigenous people in the United States are plentiful, ranging from land loss and cultural and physical genocide to the creation of the reservation system and the imposition of boarding schools. Consequences of these traumatic occurrences are apparent in the cases of substance abuse, depression, suicide, and domestic violence. In other situations, the effects are subtler.³

I designed the course to center, both in content and pedagogically, on indigenous Mexican knowledge. Ancestral teachings gleaned from Náhuatl literature provided me guidance as I identified my goals and expectations for the class. The concepts of *in ixtli in yóllotl*, a wise face and a wise heart, underpinned my vision of the course.

As I spent the previous year planning the class, “Indigenous Histories/Indigenous Knowledge,” I had thought often about my goals for the students and for the class. Fundamentally, I hoped that students would develop a more holistic, inclusive understanding of indigenous and Chicana/o histories, one that allowed them to understand our history from different perspectives and that permitted students to make connections, across geography and across time.⁴ I also hoped that students would see the connections among literature, history, myth, theater, music, and culture. I also believed that the course would provide

an environment where students could raise questions about their own knowledge of indigenous history. I anticipated that students would engage with the course on many levels, including intellectually, but also emotionally.

As a historian who teaches classes that investigate very painful histories—histories that speak to the ways in which gender, race, sexuality, power, resistance, and oppression have played themselves out in people’s lives—I have seen how emotions are an integral part of the learning experience. I have seen the effects of these painful histories on students who on a day-to-day basis engage these histories intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Over the years, I have sat in my office many times with students as they cried, or spoke in anger, or experienced overwhelming grief at learning the history they had never heard before. In fact, because of this, I begin each semester with a discussion acknowledging the role of emotion, power, and respect in the classroom.

It was only in the past several years, however, that I became conscious of the connections between that deeply felt pain and intergenerational historical trauma. Over the past decade, American Indian scholars such as Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart, Eduardo Duran, and Bonnie Duran, have undertaken research in Historical Trauma Response (HTR) in American Indian communities and among native women specifically.

Over the past years, I had begun to look for the ways in which historical trauma manifested itself among Chicana/o students in my classroom. For Chicana/os, layers of historical trauma have tangled themselves insidiously into our worldviews, our identities, and our lives for over five hundred years. Our indigenous ancestral identities ripped from us through Spanish and U.S. colonization, we now talk, sometimes apologetically, about being in this country for “only” a generation or two when our roots in this continent go back thousands of years. We laugh in self-deprecating ways about not knowing English or Spanish anymore, sometimes unaware that government policies and educational practices on both sides of the border have shaped our languages. The processes are both historic and contemporary. Scholars and educators have not yet fully recognized the extent of historical trauma experienced by people of Mexican origin in the United States.

The selective ways in which we understand and conceptualize Chicana/o history, both in academia and in the community, have hampered our understanding of our history and historical trauma. Although there is a small body of work emphasizing the indigenous heritage of Chi-

cana/os, it is an underdeveloped paradigm.⁵ Scholars frequently conceptualize Chicana/o history and identity in the United States in two ways: One is grounded in the immigrant experience. The second positions us as a people colonized by the United States following the U.S.-Mexico War of 1848. In fact, a favorite Chicano movement era chant, "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us," alludes to both. Each of these paradigms ties Chicana/o history and identity to the concept of a nation-state. While both paradigms provide valid insights and relate an important component of Chicana/o history, they are not adequate for understanding our histories fully or the total effect of historical experiences on our contemporary lives.⁶

A full understanding of our history is further clouded by the idea of *mestizaje*, typically defined as the mingling of Indian and Spaniard, which displaces and makes invisible our history and identity as peoples native to this continent. It is common to hear both Chicanos and Mexicanos describe ourselves as the mixture of Spaniard and Indian, with the Spanish part dominating and the African part invisible.⁷ During the course, one student commented that, "It has been ingrained in our heads to shun, reject, and be ashamed of our native roots/ heritage. References to Indian or *indio* are generally negative and derogatory. ¡Qué lástima!" (Eva Solis 15 May 2003). Another student contended that, "The Spanish influence and presence has been overly emphasized while our Indigenous roots have been downplayed [. . .] This course is part of a solution to rectify the situation and provide a full picture of Chicano history" (Raymond Muñoz 12 June 2003).

The history of this internalized denial is complex. Its roots lie in the colonial system of racial categorization where being indigenous placed a person at the bottom of the hierarchy. Yet, it has been strengthened by more recent events. These include the Mexican government's post-Revolution emphasis on *mestizaje* as a national identity, Mexicano resistance to U.S. laws defining Mexicans as Indian in order to segregate us legally, and even the Chicano Movement's embrace of Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelo's concept of *la raza cósmica*, the cosmic race that incorporated all of humankind. More recently, young people's acceptance of the government-imposed label Hispanic has virtually erased our Indian-ness. Added to this is Chicana/os' often-painful rejection by other native peoples in the United States who do not recognize us as their relatives. Clearly, the concept of *mestizaje* is one that is less biological than socioeconomic and political. As Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla writes in his classic work, *México Profundo*, mestizos are "de-Indianized Indians" (17).

Listening to the Ancestors

The *huehuehtlahtolli*, the ancient word found in Náhuatl literature, delineates the ancestral teachings regarding the role and responsibility of a teacher. According to these texts, the *tlamatini*, the sage, was in charge of preserving and transmitting the ancient testimonies. A section from the *huehuehtlahtolli* describing the characteristics of the *tlamatini*, the scholar, reads:

El sabio: una luz, una tea, una gruesa tea que no
ahuma.
Un espejo horadado, un espejo agujereado por ambos
lados
Suya es la tinta negra y roja, de él son los códices, de
él son los códices...
Pone un espejo delante de los otros, los hace cuerdos,
cuidadosos; hace que en ellos aparezca una cara.
(Léon-Portillo 9)⁸

As a Chicana living in Texas in the early twenty-first century, I cannot pretend to understand fully the profundity of what these images meant for the ancient Mexican people. However, as a Chicana historian, I draw on this concept developed by the ancient people of the Americas to make sense of my own life and my work as a scholar and a teacher.

My roots are in this continent, and, as descendents of Mexican Indians, we have what cultural activist Tezozomoc calls “a legitimate right to reclaim [our] indigenous resources.”⁹ Indigenous language has become for me one of the most critical of resources. Náhuatl, the lingua franca of ancient Mexico, is related to languages throughout what are now Mexico and the United States. The languages of the peoples of Chihuahua and Durango, where my people are from—the Tepehuanes, the Tobosos, and the Rarámuri—are relatives of Náhuatl. Because of this relationship, I look to Náhuatl to help me understand the world and to connect me to my relatives.

Language is critical in shaping our realities and in helping us to understand ourselves. From childhood on, each of us experiences the power of language. Today, in my mid-forties, a writer and a historian, I understand the power of words and language even more deeply. I use language to write history, but I also use language in the processes of recovery and interpretation. When I teach, I tell my students not just to

read the historical documents, but also to listen to them. I ask them to listen to the pauses, the intonations, and the silences. I invite them to think about the ways in which words are used to enforce power relations or to challenge them.

Because I grew up on the border of Texas and Chihuahua, where Spanish and English live together in intimate ways, I understood from a very young age that language was beautiful, fluid, changing, sometimes confusing, dangerous and often the site of conflict. I knew that language must have power when elementary school teachers punished my cousins for speaking Spanish on the playground and I was required to take Spanish classes. When my parents began to insist that I, at age five, speak only English in the household where they spoke only Spanish, I knew that language must have power. Perhaps I did not have the words then to name that power, but I lived the reality of that struggle over language daily.

When I moved to from the border to Austin to attend the University of Texas at age nineteen, I began to learn more about the power of language. In the university, I came across a library full of books that documented the *huehuehtlahtolli*, literally “the old word,” of the ancient peoples of the Americas.¹⁰ Of course, as a Mexicana/ Chicana, that legacy was and is part of my everyday life. I lived that legacy when, as a child, my father and I stood outside in the evenings and he would point to the rabbit in the moon, repeating a story told for millennia among the peoples of this continent. I lived that legacy when I ate a corn tortilla and benefited from thousands of years of patient labor on the part of our ancient grandmothers and grandfathers who worked with the seeds over the course of tens of generations. I lived that legacy when I heard my mother complain in her border Spanish about the *esquincl*s bringing *zoquete* into the house, using Náhuatl words along with the Spanish, evidence of the linguistic wealth of this continent. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla writes that using indigenous terms to name items that have common names in Spanish is evidence of the fundamental Indian-ness of Mexicanos (14).

However, as a detribalized, or, as Bonfil Batalla would write, a de-Indianized Mexicana/Chicana, I had lived that legacy without fully understanding the richness of our intellectual traditions. It was in the libraries, with the books documenting the *huehuehtlahtolli* that for the first time I saw that legacy on the printed page. Reading the old word, the *huehuehtlahtolli*, touched me in profound ways. Thinking back, I still remember the feelings that engulfed me as I sat in the library reading the poetry, histories, and songs recorded in the years following the

arrival of the Spaniards in 1519. It was like visiting my grandmother's house as a child. There were photos everywhere of family members whom I knew and of people whom I had never seen before. It was a combination of the familiar and the unknown. Nevertheless, there was enough of the recognizable in those photographs in my abuela's house for me to know that we were family. That is what it was like for me to discover the *huehuetlahtolli*. The *huehuetlahtolli* were the linguistic photographs of my relatives from long ago.

In ixtli in yóllotl: creating a wise face and a wise heart

In the past few years, I have returned to studying the culture and the philosophy of the ancient peoples, the ancestors of *Mexicana/os*. It was in these studies that I stumbled upon a phrase that immediately resonated with me: *in ixtli in yóllotl*/ la cara, el corazón/ a face, a heart. I can't say what drew me to that phrase initially or why it touched me so deeply, but as I began to explore the layers of its meanings, I saw the ways in which it connected not just to my personal beliefs but to my academic work, which looks at issues of identity, community, memory, and epistemology.

Western thought and medicine are just beginning to explore what ancient peoples knew—that the body, the mind, and the spirit are interconnected in the most fundamental of ways. To compartmentalize them is to divide artificially what is organically a whole. The concept of *in ixtli in yóllotl* speaks to this interconnectedness. Alfredo López Austin writes that *in ixtli in yóllotl* is “that part of man [sic] where sensation, perception, understanding, and feeling unite in order to integrate a complete consciousness that is found in communication with the outside world” (197). *In ixtli in yóllotl* was central to Meso-american education and philosophy; to develop a strong face and heart was to acquire intellect, morality, and a sense of community responsibility.¹¹

To possess a face and a heart represent much more than the biological fact of having a face and a heart. To develop a face and a heart involves acquiring knowledge, through a variety of means. By looking at the linguistic meaning of *in ixtli in yóllotl*, we can begin to see the connections between perception, feeling, and knowledge. *In ixtli in yóllotl* has become for me a way to examine my ideas on how we acquire knowledge and how we share that knowledge with others. As someone with a strong commitment to teaching, these are important questions.

For these reasons, *in ixtli in yóllotl*, that connection between heart and mind has become a valuable concept for me. For the Nahuas, the word *ixtli* meant both face and eyes, depending on the context. *Yóllotl* meant heart. The two worked together to create insight. To open up one's understanding was to "open my eyes, my heart" or *tlapohui inix in noyollo*. The heart was the guardian of knowledge. In the ancestral teachings, the mother tells her daughter, "Hijita mía, tortolita, niñita, pon y guarda este discurso en el interior de tu corazón. No se te olvide; que sea tu tea, tu luz, todos el tiempo que vivas aquí sobre la tierra . . ." (Léon-Portilla, *Huehuetlahtolli* 21).¹²

In Náhuatl philosophy, the heart was intimately tied to matters of memory. The heart stored memories. *Tlayollotia* meant entrusting something to your heart; whereas, *yomaxiltia*—"I make something reach the heart"—meant to remind someone of something they had forgotten. The heart was the site of consciousness—*neyolichimachica*, what is given to the heart to understand (López Austin, *The Human Body* Vol. 2 213-217). The eyes, *ixtli*, were also connected to acquiring knowledge. To see clearly and perfectly was *ixacicaia* or "I see it, making it reach to the eyes." *Ixlamati*, to know things in the eyes, denoted being experienced in using reason (236-239). Both the eyes and the heart helped us gain knowledge by allowing us to form perceptions, to understand and comprehend the world around us, to gain consciousness, to use our imagination and our reason. These concepts have been important in clarifying my own role as a teacher of forgotten histories.

As I began to explore the idea of *in ixtli in yóllotl*, the concept of the teacher in helping others to be human, to possess a face and a heart drew me in. For the Nahuas, like modern day Mexicanos and Chicanos, teachers held respected positions. In my life, the recovery of Chicana and Chicano history and the writing of that history are intimately tied to the teaching of that history. Teaching is not only what I consider my calling. It is a part of my spiritual path. Moreover, it is a political activity. Education is never a neutral process.

In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes the culturally specific ideas associated with ethical research among and by Maori people, based on the concept of reciprocal respect. In similar ways, the *huehuetlahtolli* provides traditional knowledge regarding the responsibilities and ethics of an educator. Reclaiming our indigenous ethical heritage is essential to researchers and teachers. It is essential that our communities look toward and validate our own indigenous frameworks, theories, and understanding.

The *huehuehtlahtolli* provide important teachings regarding the role of the teacher and education, with its two goals of instilling discipline and promoting self-knowledge (León-Portilla, *Filosofía Náhuatl* 223). The teacher was central to this process. The etymology of the Náhuatl word for teacher, *temachtiani*, demonstrates a straightforward understanding of the teacher's role: the one who makes others know something, to know what is on the earth (*Huehuehtlahtolli* 9). The five attributes of a teacher are more difficult to understand, based on the idea of developing a "wise face." In Náhuatl philosophy, the *temachtiani*, the teacher, had five attributes (*Toltecayotl* 194-5). First, the teacher was *teixtlamachtiani*, "que-a-los-rostros-de-los-otros-comunica-la-sabiduria-sabida," the one who gives knowledge, especially traditional knowledge, to the faces of others.¹³ Secondly, the teacher was *teixcuitiana*, causing others to take a face.¹⁴ Thirdly, the teacher was *tetezcahuiani*, "que-a-los-otros-un-espejo-pone-delante," putting a mirror in front of the faces of others. Miguel León-Portilla writes that "putting the mirror before someone's face" allowed students to understand themselves and to become owners of themselves.¹⁵ Fourth, the teacher was *tlayolpachivitia*, "making others' hearts strong."¹⁶ Moreover, finally, the teacher was *netlacaneco*, humanizing love for people, and tempering relationships between people.¹⁷ The English grammar may be awkward but the concepts are elegant.

Looking Back: What We Know

It was with these realities in mind—Chicana/os as peoples native to this continent, the five hundred year old attacks on our culture, and our loss of connection to the past—that I asked students to think within a paradigm of indigenous history and knowledge. The Chicana/o students, primarily from the Master's program but including undergraduate and doctoral students, ranged in age from twenty to sixty.¹⁸ Before enrolling in the class, several already identified as indigenous and were involved in traditional activities such as *danza* (ceremonial dance) and the *temaskal*, the Mexican indigenous sweat lodge, but most were simply beginning to explore the connections between Chicana/o history and indigenous history and identity.

First, I asked students to consider the following questions: How does it change our view to know that this is the year 5724 (according to the indigenous Mesoamerican calendrical system that we would be studying) rather than 2003? How does it alter our perspective if we

think of Chicana/os as indigenous people rather than immigrants? What happens to our understanding of history if we explore Chicana/o identity as being rooted in Anahuac (called the Americas by Europeans) rather than in the nation states of Mexico and the United States, which are recent creations? How does the narrative change if we look at history from a broader continental indigenous perspective rather than a Western-centered perspective? What happens to our view of history if we explore the historical links among the indigenous peoples of Anahuac rather than looking at indigenous history as divided by the border (in other words, American Indian history versus Mexican history)? What if we acknowledge that indigenous culture is something that is lived every day *today* and is not just something we learn about in history books and museums? How do we evaluate knowledge whose roots lay in indigenous sources rather than Western archives? I developed these questions with the hope that they would draw students into thinking differently from the ways in which the U.S. educational system had trained them. I hoped that they would de-naturalize Western centered thinking.

Before the class began, I attempted to ascertain where students were in their understanding of indigenous history and the connections between indigenous and Chicana/o history by asking them to write in their journals about what they already knew. What I found was what I anticipated based on my years as a teacher—that most students knew little. One student's comment that, "Sadly, I really only had a superficial level of study concerning indigenous peoples," described most of their responses (Raymond Muñoz 12 May 2003). Students also demonstrated conflicted emotions about their lack of knowledge and about their relationship to indigenous history. Additionally, students understood the political reasons behind their lack of knowledge and longed for the knowledge that had been denied them.

In commenting about her lack of knowledge, one student wrote: "It is really sad to see that I don't know much about indigenous people. These people have a big history, one in which part of my past is included." (Veronica León 13 May 2003) Within one sentence, she both distanced herself by relegating indigenous people to a group outside of her own experience and history by writing "these people" and then claimed them as a people connected to her past. This was common in students' journal entries as they struggled with identity and the question of whether they should they write "they" or "we" when writing about native people.

For one student, her experiences in Ciudad Juárez, across the border from El Paso, defined her understanding of indigenous Mexicans. She wrote,

A few years ago, my idea of indigenous Mexico revolved around “Las Marias,” the ladies with lots of kids that would ask for money at the *punte* (the bridge connecting El Paso and Ciudad Juárez). Later on, my idea was able to expand. With the Zapatistas, I saw a different side of the indigenous Mexicans. (Sandy Alvarez 12 May 2003)

Now a growing city of over two million people, Juárez was founded in the 17th century as a mission for the people whom the Spanish labeled “Mansos” or docile Indians. Today, indigenous people, especially Tarahumara or Rarámuri women and children are increasingly visible in the downtown area, sometimes asking for money from tourists, other times selling herbs or beautiful handmade baskets. In recent years, indigenous people from other areas of Mexico have come to Juárez since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has damaged the Mexican rural economy.

Another student wrote that he had learned about indigenous history from pre-contact to post-conquest, but that his knowledge had focused on “the two highly advanced and prominent civilization of Mexico—Azteca and Maya,” particularly accentuating their advanced knowledge “of science and mathematics, [their] architecture, and [their] oral/cultural traditions.” He asserted that in his education, “some of the prestige is tainted by Eurocentric perspectives, which devalue, erase, and reinterpret aspects of the state of pre-conquest civilization. The Eurocentric perspectives have been used to divide, dominate, and conquer indigenous civilizations/peoples throughout Mexico” (Jose Lopez 12 May 2003). His vision of indigenous people, although more comprehensive than other students’, situated indigenous Mexicans as a people in the past rather than a contemporary, living culture.

Other students also reflected on the political meaning behind what they knew or did not know. For example, one student wrote,

This reason I know little about indigenous history is because I have just begun taking initiative to learn. Of course, living in the United States reinforces the lack of importance of learning about indigenous cul-

tures. The school system teaches little to nothing about indigenous people let alone indigenous people from Mexico. From a very young age, children are programmed by the public school system [regarding] what history entails. Very seldom do indigenous people play that part. The school system, media, society perpetuate stereotypical ideas about indigenous people marking them as “prehistoric” and synonymous with the land Indigenous people are not seen as a living, dynamic people. More readily, they are part of the backdrop of a pastoral Mexico. (Josefina Marquez 12 May 2003)

Students expressed little knowledge of indigenous Mexico, but expressed optimism that they would begin learning through this course. In the face of the realization that they knew little about indigenous history, students expressed hope. Even before the class began, they also began to write about their search for self-knowledge.

Early on in the process of their reflections on the connections between indigenous and Chicana/o history, students had begun a process fundamental to the ancient teachings, the Náhuatl idea of the looking at the mirror in front of our faces. One student expressed the following wish: “I hope to learn counter-narratives to the dominant stories of conquest and history. I hope to learn pre-conquest history and I hope to learn more about myself in the process” (Marisol Luna 12 May 2003). In an additionally poignant passage, another student wrote:

Before embarking on what should be a journey of multiple dimensions, spiritual, education, and personal, I have been dwelling on my prior experience with indigenous knowledge. Sadly, I really only had a superficial level of study concerning indigenous peoples [. . .] I remember in [my previous university], one course in particular taught by a very talented professor dealt intensively with Mesoamerican peoples. Although the course was mainly anthropological and geographical in nature, some cultural aspects were discussed. The most relevant aspect of that class was that people strove to unearth memory. In the class, this meant anthropologists were attempting to reconstruct Mayan structures such as stairways

whose steps were found to contain histories, and steles whose tables told narrative of events that once unfolded. In this journey to Ocotepéc, we are trying to do a similar task, but instead of great structures and steles, we are using ourselves, language and culture. We are trying to reconstruct a past hidden by conquest and deemed unworthy of existence. For me this is a relatively new mode of thought. (Raymond Muñoz 12 May 2003)

Numerous students talked and wrote about their intentions to experience the course with open minds and open hearts. For example, in her first journal entry, one student wrote, “I don’t ‘expect’ anything from this trip, rather I open myself to new ideas and experiences to better understand myself and the world around me” (Josefina Marquez 12 May 2003).

In ocutl in tlahuilli/ el ocote, la luz: The Course

I designed “Indigenous Histories/Indigenous Knowledge” as an eleven-day long graduate course held at Náhuatl University in Ocotepéc, Morelos. Ocotepéc, an autonomous indigenous town, which maintains a traditional system of local government over communal lands, was a predominantly Náhuatl-speaking town until forty years ago. Ocotepéc is over seven hundred years old, and its glyph, an *ocote* tree on top of a mountain, can be found in the ancient Náhuatl codices. *Ocote*, a pine tree whose resinous wood is used to light ceremonial fires, fills the hills surrounding the university. It was noteworthy that the class’s physical surroundings would be representative of the ancient Náhuatl metaphor for knowledge, *in ocutl in tlahuilli—el ocote, la luz* (López Austin, *La Educación* 107).

Universidad Náhuatl is a private educational institution dedicated to preserving, investigating, and teaching indigenous history, culture, and knowledge. In 1990, members of the award-winning Mexican theater group Los Mascarones founded the University. The community of Ocotepéc provides the land for the University, and the support for the institution is evident from the affection and recognition its teachers receive from other residents of the town. From Grupo Mascarones’ inception in 1962, first as a high school drama class and later as a professional theater group, until the present, the group has addressed issues

related to the lives of disenfranchised communities. They have taken their work to villages and towns throughout Mexico in order to make it more accessible to those who cannot afford to attend theater.¹⁹

The instructors of Universidad Náhuatl work with both Náhuatl-speaking communities (including bilingual teachers) and non-Náhuatl speaking people in Mexico and in the United States. Locally, they work with schools to re-introduce the Náhuatl language among children and to help revitalize Náhuatl culture. In addition, they work with university professors and students from across the United States, sharing critical information on Mesoamerican history and culture alongside traditional teachers whom they regularly invite to join the faculty. Their relationships with traditional communities ensure that the University's knowledge base remains grounded within indigenous perspectives and knowledge.

The campus of Náhuatl University is organized around the four directions. There are four beautifully and brightly painted pyramids around a central courtyard. To the west in the region of *zihuatlampa*, the region of women and the feminine force of transformation, is a *temaskal* incorporating the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air. Each part of the campus is set intentionally according to the Mesoamerican vision of unity and harmony. The *temaskal*, for example,

exists within the context of a ceremonial center, surrounded by four pyramids painted with murals and other artwork. The vision that emerges is one of wholeness: as an act of healing the fragmented identity, individual and collective, the *temaskal* reunites its participants with their natural, cultural and spiritual heritage. (Oropeza Ramírez 37)

We started the class on the day *Mahtlactli Huan Ce Ehecatl* (Eleven wind) in the Náhuatl calendar, a day connected with Quetzalcoatl, wisdom, and thought. Since we would not travel to Morelos until the second day of the class, we met the first day at my home, discussed a chapter from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* and an interview with the coordinator of Náhuatl University, Martha Ramírez, viewed the documentary *Going Back to Where We Came From* (2002) by Roberto Rodriguez and Patrisia Gonzales, and shared a meal.²⁰ I hoped that the students would begin the bonding process that I knew would enrich their experience.

Although I expected students to read several articles during the course, my greatest expectation was that they would engage completely with the material and with Náhuatl University's instructors. I asked that they write in journals daily in order to reflect on each day's events and on their learning process. It was an remarkable experience to walk outside of the teachers' quarters in the early morning, with the sun rising in from behind the mountains filled with *ocote* trees and the hummingbirds flying between the delicate *sábila* flowers and the gigantic banana tree flowers, to see students sitting on the steps of the *Ometeol* building, a brightly painted pyramid dormitory building to the north, writing in their journals.

An interdisciplinary and holistic approach guided Mesoamerican education, and instructors at the University organize classes in order to reflect that tradition. In the codices and the *huehuehtlahtolli*, the teacher is described as someone who knew and taught the codices, which contained knowledge about the divine, the calendrical system, science, human destiny and history. In addition, the *tlatimini* knew music and poetry (Léon-Portilla, *Huehuehtlahtolli* 11). The classes in Ocotepéc followed this pattern. Students studied critical history, music and poetry, theater and myth, nutrition, and traditional foods. We met with *curanderas* (traditional healers) Doña Filomena Cedillo Parra and Maria from Amatlan and entered a *temaskal*. Although students engaged on many levels with each class, each class seemed to touch students in a particular way. The students engaged with their indigenous histories physically (acting in *teatro*), intellectually (debating history and studying the scientific basis of the calendar), emotionally (learning from *curanderas* and painting a mural of *Tlazolteotl*, the feminine energy of transformation and renewal), and spiritually (entering the *temaskal*).

The interdisciplinarity of this education, incorporating the balance of mind, body, spirit, and emotion, impressed students. One student wrote in her journal,

What is exceptionally unique about this great experience is the encouragement of a well-rounded education—there is a challenge for those always outside of the arts to engage fully in theater, music and painting and there always to be a balance of philosophy and history. (Marisol Luna 19 May 2003)

The indigenous philosophical foundation of the classes was also evident as one student noted, "I can definitely see how the strands of Náhuatl culture are all interconnected in maintaining space and time, spiritual ceremonies, music, dance, art and theater" (Jose Lopez 14 May 2003).

Looking In the Mirror

The first morning in Ocotepec, maestra Ramírez conducted a welcoming ceremony, calling in the four directions, asking the teachers to speak, and welcoming the visitors to talk. One student described it this way: "The welcoming ceremony this morning touched me as well. The drum, smell of copal y caracol, calling out to our ancestors with such fuerza. It's like home" (Josefina Marquez 15 May 2003). Another student's journal entry reinforced this. "From the beginning welcoming ceremony I have felt a spiritual connection since our arrival at Náhuatl University" (Nancy Soto 14 May 2003). Later, she was to write about the "very strong connection [she had developed to herself] and to the earth and stars and to my classmates, new found friends and professors" (19 May 2003).

The course in Ocotepec provided students exceptional opportunities to look at themselves in the mirror. The first night in town, a group of students walked down the hill from the University to the town in search of dinner. They immediately began to interact with the people of Ocotepec, who responded with generosity and curiosity. One student related:

Last night we walked talked into town briefly and were able to talk to people on the street. At a restaurant three children sang for us the *himno nacional* de Mexico and they told us about the school they are going to. Of course, they could tell we were not from the area or Ocotepec but rather at the University. One lady we bought food from was very interested in where we came from. As we spoke in poor Spanish, or at least talking about myself in particular, she asked us if people spoke Spanish where we came from. After we said that they did, she asked why we could not speak it well then. She was also interested in how we labeled ourselves. She also asked us if we

were gringos, we said we hoped we were not, and then told her what we called ourselves such as Chicana/os or Latinos. (Raymond Muñoz 14 May 2003)²¹

Language was an issue for many of the students and this encounter emerged in numerous journal entries. On the second day in Ocoatepec, one student wrote, "I go back and forth between feeling like a total *pocha* to finally feeling like I'm getting somewhere" (Marisol Luna 14 May 2003). There were also opportunities to make connections between the experiences of Chicana/os in the United States and indigenous people in Mexico. During one class, maestra Isabel Quevedo told us the story of Doña Modesta Lavana Pérez, a well-known curandera from Morelos. As a child in Hueyapan, teachers washed Doña Modesta's mouth out with soap in order to stop her from speaking her native Náhuatl. Remarkably, maestra Martha Ramírez had the same experience as a child in California when teachers washed her mouth out with soap for speaking Spanish (Oropeza Ramírez 13-45). Testament to the resistance of both women, Doña Modesta retained Náhuatl and Martha Ramírez cites this incident as one of her motivations for helping to found Náhuatl University. Hueyapan continues to be known as a Náhuatl-speaking town whose residents have retained traditional ways. While students were challenged to think about language, they also felt that Náhuatl University provided a respite from the emotions and politics of language. One student wrote that she could

sense [the instructors'] love for us and it's incredible that they had such a vision for this place. . . . We need this as Chicana/os. It is the place where it's perfect and natural to be both Chicana/o, Mexicana/o, and indígena. None are looked down upon, all language and people are accepted. It's a good feeling. (Eva Solis 20 May 2003)

The critical history class conducted by maestro Mariano Leyva, with its foundations in indigenous perspectives and its use of indigenous sources, also challenged students. Precisely because the class presented the story of the European invasion, and the subsequent Eurocentric documentation of the invasion, in a powerful way, students responded strongly. Some students felt uneasy at having their perspectives questioned. For example, one student wrote, ". . . hopefully we can start learning more about the history, not on how we can convert to

something from another thing because I do feel that they want to change me, the way I think or feel and that makes me feel strange" (Veronica León 17 May 2003). The experience served to "put a mirror in front of her face," however. Several days later, the same student wrote, "I learned how I really am and that I need to go out and fight for what I want and what I want to be. Like I said before, I realized how much I love my God and how proud I am to be an American, even though I am also proud to be a Mexican girl" (Veronica León 19 May 2003).²²

The new information, with the many questions it raised, was a frequent topic of conversation among the students, most of whom studied history at the graduate level. They grappled with finding their own beliefs as they weighed what the U.S. schools had taught them about Mesoamerican culture and what they were learning at Náhuatl University. Ultimately, one student wrote about the desire to find balance between what traditional history courses had taught her and what she was learning in the critical history class in Ocotepéc:

I just want to find the balance of embracing and even really reclaiming our culture and history while at the same time critically analyzing what we learn from that as we analyze other history and what we're told by others and especially when it comes to the Christian and or Spanish perspective (colonizing). We can not just accept one and reject the other because the one is fitting to our desires while not evaluating that also... Sometimes because these new understandings or lessons are so new to us that it's difficult to critique them because there is not a lot of reference from which to do so. (Eva Solís 18 May 2003)

A particularly challenging course was the one taught by maestra Ramírez about the *tonalpoualli*, the 260-day calendar found within the *tonalmachiotl*, or the Sun Stone. In this class, students learned about the cycle of twenty days and the energies associated with each day. Again, a mirror was placed before the students in order for them to view themselves through a different lens, one that required them to think metaphorically, scientifically, and deeply. The importance of learning the different levels of meaning behind the calendar is clearer with an understanding of how that knowledge was suppressed. Fray Geronimo de Mendieta, a 16th century priest, describes the ways in which the Catholic Church attempted to wipe out the memory of the

ancient calendar by eradicating any vestiges of the day or month counts. In his work, he goes on to say that the calendar “was a dangerous thing among the Indians, bringing to their memory the things of their infidelity and idolatry . . . because of this, it was ordered that the calendar should be eradicated from everywhere . . .” (López Autin, *La Educación* 78-79). Mendieta went on to claim that the memory of the calendar had been destroyed, yet in the same paragraph declared that there existed elders who retained the memory of the calendar and who continued to paint the symbols of the calendar, even on the convent at Cuatinchan.

The *tonalmachiotl*, derived from the Náhuatl words for energy (*tonal*) and model (*machiotl*), represents an astonishing scientific, mathematical and astronomical model. Students learned, often for the first time, that the so-called “Aztec Calendar” has profound meaning. As one student wrote,

Reconnecting to our indigenous roots is also more difficult because it has been even more distorted. That is why our first class with Martha [Ramírez] was great in the sense that it dispelled the myths with the “Aztec calendar.” She taught us the basis of the calendar, which seems to try to make sense of life. For me it seems to be the Mexica trying to figure out the nature of life. (Raymond Muñoz 14 May 2003)

Throughout our time in Ocotepéc, we each confronted the search for the meaning of life and our place in the world. During a class on indigenous nutrition and survival in the 21st century, maestra Isabel Quevedo asked us to talk a little about ourselves. Sitting around the tables in the classroom building, the Huitzilopochtli building representing willpower, each person talked about him or herself. Many cried, expressing deep emotions. The first student to speak talked about her powerful need to reconnect with her roots:

Last night during Isabel’s class, as I recounted my story I began to cry. I don’t know why I cried. I didn’t intend to do it but apparently, it allowed everyone to feel safe to let their feelings show. At first, I was a bit embarrassed but when I saw that everyone had feelings they were holding back. I said that coming here has made me so happy to finally find what I

was looking for. The spiritual connection I have made here with myself and my history is so profound and special that there are no words to describe them. (Nancy Soto 19 May 2003)

Although one student observed that some students simply saw Ocotepc as a “cool place to be,” she also commented that many students saw this as a “transformation of their life, a journey they must take” (Marisol Luna 15 May 2003). One student wrote: “During class the energy and atmosphere made some people feel comfortable enough to share their feelings openly. I felt it was a great moment, and it felt as if we were truly together” (Raymond Muñoz 15 May 2003). Another student described the event in terms of healing:

The circle during Isabel’s class was good. Chicana/os, Mexicana/os: we carry a lot of pain and that was necessary to be able to talk and share to let go—even a little. I was somewhat amazed at how everyone shared and cried and were obviously emotional. It was special that they were able to open up in that way and let us in to their soul, their heart. (Eva Solis 15 May 2003)

The pain in the room was apparent. However, the relief to discuss that pain, that feeling of loss, that anger that our traditions and our history had been stolen, was also manifest. One student commented in his journal,

This is what I love about this trip. It is not just about articles or classes but about rediscovering myself and my past. Things that happen here relate to things about our lives and make us think about them, relate to them and contemplate them. I really like that aspect about the time in Mexico. It’s about examining who we are to find out who we are going to be. (Raymond Muñoz 17 May 2003)

The past was intimately tied to the present and the present to the future.

The classes did much more than simply present information. They spoke to the two of the fundamental philosophical purposes of indigenous education: generating a sense of humanity and creating a place

where people could make decisions about themselves and for themselves. One student concluded that

I've always had limited introductions to the Mexica culture in terms of astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, history, language, music, art and its theatrical roots. As a Chicano from Texas, the information presented to us so far substantiates my existence/my humanity. It is important to maintain [balanced] perspectives when it comes to interpretations of culture, histories, and theories. At some point, however, I realize one must take positions, a stand on specific accounts of creation, the cosmos, or history. (Jose Lopez 15 May 2003)

Reenacting the Creation Story: Quetzalcoatl Creates Humanity

Founded by a theater company, it was no surprise that performing a play became an integral part of our time at Náhuatl University. Under the direction of maestro Fernando Hernandez, students rehearsed and eventually performed "Quetzalcoatl in *Miktlan*," the story of Quetzalcoatl and the creation of the people of the fifth sun. One student described the play as "a history and mythology lesson" (Nancy Soto 15 June 2003). Indeed, it was, for the play represented the creation story of our ancestors, as told through *in xochitl in cuicatl*, through flower and song. Through the re-enactment of the creation story, students became the people described in the *huehuehtlahtolli*, the "artists of lip and mouth," "those who have flowers on their lips" (Yañez 12).²³

The students, *con flores en sus labios*, intermingled English, Spanish, and Náhuatl to tell the story of Quetzalcoatl's journey to the land of the dead, *Miktlan*, in search of the precious bones of the dead from the previous four ages, which were later ground together by Cihuacoatl, snake woman to make humanity (León-Portilla, *La Filosofía* 183). One student labeled performing "a challenge for [him] because it was a new perspective on the creation of woman and man" (Eva Solis 15 May 2003).

Although students were hesitant to perform, in part because many felt uncomfortable performing in Spanish, they stood up to the challenge and the rehearsals and eventual performance built community among them. One student described it this way:

In Ocotepéc, we had other courses that were more physically demanding but for some people in the group and for myself, acting was one of the toughest things to do. It takes a lot of confidence to stand in front of people and act a role. After a while it does get more comfortable because of the support of the fellow students and being more accustomed to the roles and the lines. (Raymond Muñoz 12 June 2003)

The performance also connected students to the past and to each other. As one student wrote,

[The theater class] challenged us in different aspects than other academic courses do. This type of class asks the student to utilize an interaction between classmates that no other class can. To act out our creation story and work together in physical and dramatic space allows for personal connections to our history and tradition that in turn connects us to each other as a people and a community. (Marisol Luna 16 June 2003)

The sense of community and connection created by the theater piece was undeniable.

Mexico profundo in the United States

In 1987, Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla published *México profundo, una civilización negada*. In this now classic work, he argues that there exist two Mexicos, side by side. An imaginary Mexico and the true Mexico, which is indigenous in nature. Bonfil Batalla writes,

The *México profundo* is formed by a great diversity of peoples, communities, and social sectors that constitute the majority of the population of the country. What unifies them and distinguishes them from the rest of Mexican society is that they are bearers of ways of understanding the world and of organizing human life that have their origins in Mesoamerican

civilization and that have been forged here in Mexico through a long and complicated historical process. The contemporary expressions of that civilization are quite diverse: from those indigenous peoples who have been able to conserve an internally cohesive culture of their own, to a multitude of isolated traits distributed in different ways in urban populations. The civilization of Mesoamerica has been denied but it is essential to recognize its continuing presence. (2)

Mexico profundo exists in the United States as it does in Mexico.²⁴ If Mexican indigenous culture and heritage are repressed and made invisible in Mexico, *moreso* in the United States where internal and external factors have led to a de-Indianization of Chicanos. Internally, Chicana/os deny the extent of our Indian-ness in order to claim white privilege. In fact, much of the history of Mexican American civil rights struggles in the twentieth century revolves around our claims to whiteness. Externally, we are divided from indigenous peoples north of the borderline because the authenticity of our claim to Indian-ness is questioned. The Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s brought our indigenous heritage to the forefront, but its legacy is often a set of little-understood cultural icons.

Martha Ramírez argues that Chicana/os are closer to our indigenous roots than much of the urban mestizo population of Mexico. According to Ramírez, throughout the twentieth century, but particularly in the early part of the century, Mexican immigrants coming to the United States were rural people, *campesinos* whose traditions maintained their indigenous character. The children of those rural immigrants were raised with those traditions. She cites language as evidence: "Many Chicanos speak Spanish as indigenous people speak Spanish. There is the confusion of gender in the language, because neither English nor Náhuatl has the articles -la, el- that Spanish does. In English it is 'the' and in Náhuatl it is 'in'" (Ramírez 28 June 2003). She argues further that because exploitation and discrimination against Chicanos is similar to that against indigenous peoples in Mexico, both groups use cultural maintenance in order to survive.

Traditional medicine is a "perfect example," according to maestra Ramírez, of cultural maintenance. Both working class Chicana/os and indigenous communities rely on traditional medicine, particularly the use of herbs, because this medicine is "cheaper and less intrusive." In contrast, the majority of urban Mexicans prefer doctors and hospitals.

She adds, "The very rich think that our wise healers are witches and charlatans" (28 June 2003). During the workshop with Doña Filomena and Maria, several students related the women's work with herbs to that of their grandmothers. As one student noted that the importance of the course lay in that, "[The course] presented the traditions that have survived in Xicana/o families as well as teaching the traditions that have not" (Marisol Luna 16 June 2003)

Bonfil Batalla argues that physically it is difficult to distinguish a great part of the mestizo population in Mexico from the population that is acknowledged as indigenous. The differences between indígenas and mestizos, then, do not derive from "a radically different history of racial mixture. The problem," he writes, "can be better understood in different terms: the mestizos are the contingent of 'de-Indianized' Indians." The process of de-Indianization "is not the result of biological mixture but of the pressure of an ethnocide that ultimately blocks the historical continuity of a people as a culturally differentiated group" (17). De-Indianization, a traumatic process, forces indigenous people to change culturally and socially.²⁵ The majority of Chicanos living in the United States have been cut from the historical continuity of our people. For many Chicana/os, this discontinuity and separation represent a painful reality.

The process of historical discontinuity in Mexico has been exacerbated in the United States where the imposition of borders, the creation of the reservation system, and federal recognition of who is indigenous and who is not (including blood quantum), have further divided peoples native to this continent. In the early to mid 1990s, I was a teaching assistant for a summer course that brought together students from community colleges throughout Arizona and southern California who were transferring to the University of Arizona. The students were American Indian, Chicano, and African American. The course was grounded in history, yet, despite efforts to demonstrate the connections among peoples of color in the United States, student papers revealed the insidious ways in which colonization had created wide gaps among students. Each group claimed to be "more oppressed" than the others. One summer, the divisions between indigenous people became painfully clear. While American Indian students bonded with each other, they excluded the one Yaqui student in the class, telling me "he was just a Mexican." One young Apache/Navajo man spent much of the summer telling me that I was "just a European." The experience was very traumatic for me and reminded me that colonization, the imposition of the border, the reservation system, and capitalism have done

much to divide indigenous peoples from each other. For Chicana/o students to claim an indigenous identity and history is both radical and intimidating.²⁶

One student highlighted the inter-related issues of colonization and survival in a journal entry in which she wrote,

We must look at things with more complicated eyes and when we discuss the effects of colonization, let's really understand how that seeps into everything. Let us see it for what it is and not be divided and conquered by these tools we know are weapons of destruction—of community, of our history, of our culture, of our language, of our families, of ourselves. This is what I saw...more than anything is the urgency that we must make these connections, that as Chicana/os we must celebrate that we are still alive—meaning that we carry a tradition in our communities and our brothers and sisters aquí en Mexico do as well. (Marisol Luna 17 May 2003)

Connecting, across borders and across the limits of space and time, is an act of survival. Not allowing divisions to exist is an act of survival. One student wrote, "I always felt a disconnect between myself and Mexico. Now I feel a real connection and I think from this experience I will be able to [continue making] those connections" (Nancy Soto 18 May 2003). Another student asserted: "Our ancestors are all the people of this continent" (Marisol Luna 15 May 2003)

Claiming a Face and a Heart

According to Batalla, "The peoples of *México profundo* continually create and recreate their culture, adjust it to changing pressures, and reinforce their own, private sphere of control" (xvii). To claim and reclaim ancient indigenous Mexican concepts, as roadmaps we can use in the 21st century, attests to this. Such acts keep *México profundo* alive on both sides of the border. *In ixtli in yóllotl*, the idea of a wise face and a wise heart, is both a profound and functional model for education. Although I had not shared the idea of *in ixtli in yóllotl* with students, their writings often spoke to the idea of a mind and a heart. In her journal entry, one student thanked the teachers of Náhuatl Universi-

ty “por ayudarme abrir mi mente y mi corazón para conocer lo que es mío y lo que es sagrado de nuestra cultura tan preciosa” (Nancy Soto 16 May 2003).²⁷

The responsibility of the teacher to impart knowledge, to put a mirror in front of people so that they may see themselves truly, to encourage students to take a stand, to make their hearts strong, and to engender in them a sense of humanity are fundamental to this model. Although the students’ experience in Ocotepec was short, the effects of this type of education on the intellect, the emotions, and the spirit of the students were evident in students’ journal entries. Students wrote about the connections they had made, about their self-reflections, about their hopes for the future, and about the new sense of critical thinking that the course had stimulated. In writing about connections, students discussed both their connections to the past, to the present, and to the future.

In writing about the past, one student commented, “This has been the most eventful, enriching course I have had in the history of my academic career. Intense and challenging, all of us were able to learn and teach each other the ways of our *antepasados*” (Josefina Marquez 21 May 2003). For some students, learning the ways of the ancestors satisfied a longing. One student wrote that “[t]he course helped me make sense of a lot of previous knowledge I had already. It was like completing the puzzle for me. I only knew half of what I thought I knew. Now I feel I have a more complete and accurate perspective and insight on things that directly relate to my life” (Nancy Soto 15 June 2003). Learning about the ancestors also created a new critical vision for some students. For example, weeks after the completion of the course, another student wrote,

[The course] gave me a different perspective on our history and philosophy. It challenged what I thought I knew about our history, even that written by other Chicana/os. Now I can’t even read literature on our indigenous history without comparing it to what we learned in Mexico and if it differs, I want to know why. I think this has shaped my thoughts on Chicanismo and what we have accepted to be true as compared to what our indigenous ancestors have told us in the oral tradition, which is valid. (Eva Solis June 2003)

Students also reflected on the future and their own responsibilities, with one student stating, “We must share this knowledge with others” (Josefina Marquez 16 May 2003). Another student, a teacher, shared a similar sentiment, describing his experience this way,

Everywhere I turn, I find myself bombarded with sights, sounds, and scents which embrace me. The realization of my coming to Mexico City/Ocotepec, Morelos to rediscover and connect with my ancestors, rooted tradition, and history is an overwhelming experience...I’m committed to responsibly educate myself in and teach what I learn from Náhuatl University in my community and at the high school. (Jose Lopez 13 May 2003)

Finally, this course allowed students to see themselves in the mirror and to claim this continent as home. The course empowered students, for, as one student eloquently wrote, “We as Chicana/os are an indigenous people who seek to identify with the severed, erased, and silenced stories of our ancestors. We choose to be the writers and curators of our past, present, and future stories” (Jose Lopez 14 May 2003).

Yolanda Chávez Leyva

NOTES

¹ This chapter is part of a manuscript in progress titled *Calling the Ancestors: Historical Memory, Indigenous Identity, and Chicana/o History*. Funding for this research was provided by the University Research Institute and the University of Texas at El Paso. Students’ real names are not used in this article in order to protect their privacy. Martha Ramírez Oropeza. “Huehuepohualli: Counting the Ancestors’ Heartbeat.” *Community, Culture and Globalization*. Rockefeller Foundation. (New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 2002), 41.

² Thanks to our maestras and maestros, Martha Ramírez Oropeza, Mariano Leyva, Isabel Quevedo, Conchita Díaz, Fernando Hernández, Doña Filomena Cedillo Parra, Maria, and Paco Liera. Thanks also to the Department of History and the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at El Paso for their assistance in making this course possible.

³ In recent years, the subject of historical trauma or intergenerational trauma has been the subject of study by scholars in psychology and literature. Historical trauma first became widely acknowledged with the work on the Nazi Holocaust survivors and their children. For important work on Native Americans and intergenerational trauma, see Bonnie Duran, Eduardo Duran, and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, "Native Americans and the Trauma of History," in *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*, ed. by Russell Thornton (Madison: U of WI P, 1998); Maria Brave Heart Jordan, "The Return to the Sacred Path: Healing from Historical Trauma and Historical Unresolved Grief Among the Lakota" (Ph.D. diss., Smith College, 1995); and Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran, *Postcolonial Native American Psychology* (Albany : State U of NY P, 1995.)

⁴ Other goals included: To gain a basic introduction to indigenous Mexican history and culture, especially Náhuatl history and culture; To observe and reflect on examples of historical continuity and change; To develop an understanding of the complex ways in which history is defined and used; To practice leading and participating in discussions of interdisciplinary work related to indigenous history.

⁵ In his historiographical essay, Antonio Rios-Bustamante categorizes this body of work as a subset of the "natives of the land" paradigm. In his comprehensive essay, Bustamante cites only four books, one article, and a secondary school textbook. See Antonio Rios-Bustamante, "A General Survey of Chicano(a) Historiography," JSRI Occasional Paper #25, The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 2000.

⁶ Exceptions include the works of Patrisia Gonzáles, Roberto Rodríguez, Inés Hernández Ávila, Cherrie Moraga. See Delberto Dario Ruiz, "Tekio Lenguas del Yollotzin (Cut Tongues from the Heart): Colonialism, Borders, and the Politics of Space," in *Decolonial Voices: Chicana and Chicano Cultural Studies in the 21st Century*, ed. Arturo J.

Aldama and dnaomi H. Quiñones (Bloomington: IN U P, 2002), 355-365, for an analysis of poetry incorporating an indigenous identity.

⁷ Because of this, students read Martha Menchaca. "Chicano Indianism: A Historical Account of Racial Repression in the United States" in *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 20, Issue 3 (August 1993). See also, Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: the Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Austin: U of TX P, 2001).

⁸ Author's translation: "The sage: a light, a torch, a stout torch that does not smoke. A perforated mirror, a mirror full of holes through both sides. His is the black and red ink, his are the ancient books, his are the ancient books. He puts a mirror in front of the faces of others, he makes them sensible, careful; he makes a face appear on them." In Náhuatl philosophy, red and black (*tlilli in tlapali*), representing the duality of darkness and light also represent knowledge. Miguel León-Portilla, *La Filosofía Náhuatl Estudiada en sus Fuentes* (México, DF: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1979), 392.

⁹ Tezozomoc, "Revernacularizing Classical Náhuatl through Danza (Dance) Azteca-Chichimeca," *Teaching Indigenous Languages*, ed. Jon Reyhner (Flagstaff: Northern AZ U P, 1997, 56-76). Accessed through http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/TIL_7.html on February 25, 2002.

¹⁰ Several Spanish chroniclers gathered the *huehuehtlahtolli*, the ancient teachings that were passed on from one generation to the next. One can find them in the Florentine Codex and in Bernardino de Sahagún's *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*. In his 1991 book, Miguel León-Portilla writes that the *huehuehtlahtolli* are una "herencia de quienes han brotado en tierras mexicanas. Literatura y sabiduría, son asimismo legado que se abre para los hombres de los cuatro cuadrantes del mundo Forman ya parte de las literaturas clásicas de todos los tiempos." *Huehuehtlahtolli*, 45.

¹¹ J. Guillermo Domínguez Yañez, "In Ixtli, in Yóllotl: La Educación en Mesoamérica," 11. Logo (September-December 1996) accessed at <http://www.hemerodigital.unam.mx/ANUIES/lasalle/logos/72/sec_8.htm>.

¹² “My little daughter, my turtledove, my child, put this talk inside of your heart, guard it. Don’t forget it, may it be your torch, your light, all the time that you live here upon the earth.” (Author’s translation)

¹³ Spanish translation from *Toltecayotl*: “que a los rostros de los otros da sabiduría.”

¹⁴ Spanish translation from *Toltecayotl*: “que a los otros una cara hace tomar.”

¹⁵ Spanish translation from *Toltecayotl*: “que a los otros un espejo pone delante.” Also see León-Portilla, *Filosofía Náhuatl*, p. 223.

¹⁶ Spanish translation from *Toltecayotl*: “hace fuertes los corazones.”

¹⁷ Spanish translation from *Toltecayotl*: “gracias a él, se humaniza el querer de la gente.”

¹⁸ While I am using the label Chicana/o, some students in the class identified as Mexican, Latino, and Mexicana.

¹⁹ See Oropeza Ramírez, “*Huehuepohuall*” for a history of the Mascarones and Náhuatl University. In fact, shortly after the course ended and most of the students had returned to the United States, I remained in Mexico and had the experience of attending a play in the town of Amatlan, Guerrero celebrating the birth of leader Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl over a thousand years ago. Children and youth from the village and members of Mascarones performed the play, now in its second decade.

²⁰ “Martha Ramírez Interview” (October 27, 2000) from *In Search of Aztlan* (www.insearchofaztlan.com) and Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. “Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory” from *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.

²¹ Another student also wrote about this encounter, including the details that the children had sung the Mexican national anthem in both Spanish and Náhuatl. She added that she asked her fellow classmates to reciprocate and the three sang the U.S. national anthem.

²² One of the most compelling consequences of my reading students' journal entries privately was to see the ways in which they were grappling with the same questions. While one student was asserting her pride in being an American (Veronica León), another (Marisol Luna) was asking, "What does it mean when Chicana/os are so proud of being American?"

²³ Domínguez Yañez, "In Ixtli, in Yóllotl: La Educación en Mesoamérica," 12.

²⁴ A recent testament to this is Miguel A. Gandart, *Nuevo México Profundo: Rituals of an Indo-hispano Homeland* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Museum of NM P; Albuquerque: National Hispanic Cultural Center of New Mexico, 2000).

²⁵ Bonfil Batalla, *México profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*, 17

²⁶ This situation is painfully common. Over the past thirty years, I have seen Mexicana/os and Chicana/os rejected as "just Mexican" and thereby not indigenous by "recognized" indigenous people at conferences, ceremonies, within native organizations, and in small day-to-day interactions. The other side to this, as mentioned in the body of the text, is the refusal of Chicana/os to claim an indigenous identity and to claim instead either mestizaje or whiteness as a road to gaining security, rights, and privilege.

²⁷ Author's translation: one student thanked the teachers of Náhuatl University "for helping me open my mind and my heart to know what is mine and what is sacred about our precious culture."

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Adjusting the Margins: Locating Identity in the Poetry of Diane Glancy

For Louis Owens

Molly McGlennen

In whatever medium an artist chooses to use, the shifting involved in defining and re-defining oneself is an ever-constant act. For the artistry of contemporary women of mixed heritage—a doubly marginalized group as both female and of color—outlining the self becomes an even more arduous concentration, for the very act of delineation brings fixedness and thusly, boundaries; moreover, the creation of boundaries contradicts the necessary fluidity embedded in the creative act. In *When the Moon Waxes Red*, scholar Trinh T. Minh-ha says, “Working creatively always entails change. To create is not so much to make something new as to shift. Not to shift from a lesser place to a higher or better one, but to shift, intransitively” (108). The artist, Trinh suggests, experiences her creative process as “a working out of an old problem and a formulation of a new question” (108). Diane Glancy, mixed-blood poet and scholar, is an artist whose work challenges all limiting systems and defies stagnant representations of identity through repeated articulations of self. Glancy’s poetry acts as a counter-discourse to what feminist and post-colonial theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty sees as the “construction of the ‘third world woman’: a homogeneous ‘powerless’ group often located as implicit victims of particular socioeconomic systems” (“Under Western Eyes” 177).

A study of the poetry of Glancy demonstrates ways in which the poet resists marginal spaces of existence. In re-tracing of bloodlines to a mixed Native American and European lineage, Glancy explains her work as an encounter with fragmentation:

I am German/English as well as part Cherokee. And that “Indian” part is further fragmented by the fact I was not raised with tradition. The concept of “Indian” I learned in school was Plains Indian, yet when we visited my father’s people, I saw no buffalo, teepee, feather bonnet, etc. but a widow who was my grandmother and other rural relatives who had a few pigs and a row of corn. Not only was it hard to have two heritages, but those two heritages were further fragmented. When one’s sense of self or identity is fractured, it makes a difference in one’s way of seeing and way of being” (Personal correspondence).

Through an examination of her poetry, it becomes apparent that she writes as a means to form a community, a community she has never had. She writes to understand differences between and among cultures as she mends the fracturing senses of self. Thus, each act, each poem, works to re-assemble an identity that appears not only fluid but distinct and altered from one poem to the next, from one utterance to the next. Glancy's poetry, then, exemplifies the pliant nature of women's identities that are flung to the peripheries of dominant structures of power, culture, and language. The speaker in Glancy's poetry resides in a space that both connects with and disconnects from the center's hegemony and the border's struggles. Therefore, by moving back and forth across the border, expanding the border, allowing the boundaries to flow rather than restrict, Glancy's poetry operates in a way that broadens the border-zone, and allows power to emanate from these so-called edges. Glancy's poetry illustrates how words are a device that permits shifting representations of identity, ultimately lifting marginalized categories of women out of constructs of weakening dichotomous structures onto new platforms with voice, legitimization, and power.¹

Glancy's published poetry, thirteen collections in all², is abundantly preoccupied with the question of identity. For Glancy and many other mixed-blood poets, art is a means by which areas of fragmentation, areas that at times seek delineation and at other times shatter enclosure, find restoration, if for only a moment. In her poetry, Glancy is insistent upon tracing and retracing her bloodlines, literally spelling out her genealogy, and this has something to do with identity on a broader level—that is, how identity is “constructed” both for and by indigenous people. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, says that the hegemony of the west is preoccupied with nineteenth-century views of race and racial difference including questions like “who is a *real* indigenous person.” This positioning, as it manifests itself both in social and scholarly forums, keeps Native people out of the conversation (as Natives can only be defined by dominant culture), and reduces Native people and their tribal identity to a fixed, one-dimensional status. Smith explains:

The purpose of commenting on such a concept is that what counts as ‘authentic’ is used by the West as one of the criteria to determine who really is indigenous, who is worth saving, who is still innocent and free from Western contamination. There is a very power-

ful tendency in research to take this argument back to a biological 'essentialism' related to race, because the idea of culture is much more difficult to control. At the heart of such a view of authenticity is a belief that indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. Only the West has that privilege (74).

Glancy's work repudiates Western patterns of reduction that make Native people invisible; quite the opposite, her work exemplifies the mutability, the fluidity, and the complexity of Native people and their traditions—groups of people, as Smith suggests, that have had to constantly adjust, recreate, and accommodate in order to survive hundreds of years of colonialism.

Not surprisingly, Glancy's work is impacted by the cross-fertilization of her cultural backgrounds. A mixed-blood may have no immediate Native community; for Glancy, her Cherokee heritage is something entitled to her in blood, but not necessarily linked to a nation of people. She often writes in isolation, of being in isolation, and it is these almost mantra-like unfoldings of her heritage that act as calls to her ancestors that *give* her community. Glancy creates community by calling on her ancestors, her pieces of heritage. This is why it is so important for her to repeat within her poetry the make-up of her heritage. In "Who Can Speak as an Indian?" the speaker opens, "The issue makes me *squirm*. My great-grandfather was Cherokee. My grandmother probably half. My father a fourth. Me an eighth. I could be more but I'm not sure. But what part's Indian? My feet? My hands? No—I think it's a voice in my chest" (*The West Pole* 9). I see her physically piecing herself together again and again because, for her, nothing is fixed; there is no one location for her to point toward as home, and there is no one group of people she calls her own. There is indeed constant motion and shifting and a need to assemble and assemble again her identity. It is not only a personal identity, but a search for a connection to a communal one.

In one of her earlier collections of poetry, *Offering* (1988), restlessness and uncertainty preoccupy her work. She calls to her Cherokee great-great-grandmother for enabling in her first poem, "her small words say to me / speak" (3). In "Short Night" she is "left squirming in the darkness" (7). In "Five Loaves, Two Fish," the uncertainty is heightened, the wrestling apparent. The speaker looks to language,

individual and abstract words that exist to create meaning, that translate what we know into what we can say. Yet, even language fails her at times. She begins, "I have to look up ubiquitous again" (35). She rattles off words like "visceral," "loquacious," "inimical," "inchoate" as markers of utterances that locate nothing concrete. It is here, within the play and use and contemplation of language—her very tool as a poet—that she experiences the slippery nature of what words can and cannot do, the irony of it all. Words' ability to translate succeeds only as far as one places and locates an affixed meaning, or has an association to which the memory re-calls a myriad of analogies. Yet, the speaker is seeking something more particular. She says, "The abstract word, no matter how common, is hard to remember. The Indian is rooted in the concrete. Prairie grass is everywhere. Buffalo" (35). What seems certain to her is what she can see. She makes a distinction: The white man has a "disembodied language and rail-cars of reference" while the Indian sees that "to have nothing tangible is wealth. To acknowledge animals without language is to bear their dignity" (35).

The speaker sets up two distinct cosmologies: In one, ideas and objects accrue meaning *only* through the word attached that contains and shelves them, and, within the second, ideas and objects can stand autonomous and real without identification—things can exist without the acknowledgment of another thing. The speaker sees and feels the discord because after this she says, "I am not all Indian. My great-grandfather was the last full-blooded Cherokee relative I have. But the intangible, Indian quality is tenacious as cockleburs on socks" (35). The speaker admits she is a divided person. Both cosmologies pertain to her, reside in her. Her identity as a mixed Cherokee woman is both untouchable and extremely visceral. And yet, words elude her, the very means she has to create as a poet. The dilemma is clear. She ends, "The involute Indian, the diverging white world. Parcenary: But I am not two heirs of the same inheritance, but one heir of two inheritances. I am sure they have a word for it" (35). She is not a joint owner of something nor in partnership with herself. She has within her two distinct heritages/inheritances, and has no word to mark them or to define such an existence. This for her, though, does not make it somehow unreal or false. There is no locational term she can ascribe, but that does not negate who she is. Her pluralistic heritage is the marker, and this is something she re-calls upon consistently, a myriad of tangents and lines. It is perhaps what the title suggests: The Christian myth of 5 loaves and 2 fishes is of something very small and singular, dividing and feeding thousands. The speaker sees the endless configurations

possible when the unit is not fixed. There is no one term that language can ascribe to her personal identity, though she will keep searching.

Although here Glancy ends somewhat hopefully, her identity accumulates a level of determination; her position as mixed-blood still resides within the parenthetical nature of women of color. Trinh, in *Woman, Native, Other*, explores the question of roots, gender and authenticity for the “other.” Academia insists that the woman-of-color first prove herself legitimate and assert that “difference” in order to be heard. She says, “as a product of hegemony and a remarkable counterpart of universal standardization, [planned authenticity] constitutes an efficacious means of silencing the cry of racial oppression. We no longer wish to erase your difference, We demand, on the contrary, that you remember and assert it” (89). The “We” Trinh writes of, the “We” with a capital w, is the collective hegemonic power that resides, always, in the center. From there, all voices that line the edge, the margins, are the difference and the “other.” Often, for the voice of the other (e.g. women of color) to join in the discussion, it must play into what the dominant power or dominant discourse beholds as the image of the other. For instance, for Native American women, the image is constructed by a stereotype of the full-blood *indian*, replete with the “regalia” that marks her as “authentic.” This stereotype, then, marks her as the “other”; thus, when she is included in the discussion, she fulfills the quota the center has set for creating diversity and multiplicity of perspectives. Even “full-bloods”³ do not necessarily fit the stereotypical image defined by the center. Blood quantum says nothing about one’s “Nateness” and one’s commitment to community. Even so, what about the woman who does not fit this “full-blood” representation whatsoever? What about someone like Glancy who simultaneously sees herself positioned both within and without Native community? Trinh states:

The differences made between *entities* comprehend as absolute presences—hence the notions of *pure origin* and *true self*—are an outgrowth of a dualistic system of thought peculiar to the Occident (the “onto-theology” which characterizes Western metaphysics). They should be distinguished from the differences grasped *both between* and *within* entities, each of these being understood as multiple presence. Not one, not two either. ‘I’ is, therefore, not a unified subject, a fixed identity, or that solid mass covered

with layers of superficialities one has gradually to peel off before one can see its true face. 'I' is, itself, *infinite layers*." (90-94).

Trinh goes on to say that despite the center's tendency to separate and classify groups, these categorizations always "leak." She quotes Vine Deloria, Jr. ("not even Indians can relate themselves to this type of creature who, to anthropologists, is the 'real' Indian") to argue that authenticity as equated with the undisputed origin is nonsensical. Difference is the colonizer's, the hegemonic center's, tool: Post-colonial scholar Homi Bhabha argues in his essay "The Other Question" that "the stereotype, which is [the discourse of colonialism's] discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" (37). In other words, the affixed image with which the center outfits the other both maintains the center's power—by keeping the other in the margins as different and thus less than the norm—and locates the other within a stagnant location by recognizing the other as only and precisely the stereotype. Trinh says that the "code of representation" cannot coincide with the lived or the performed (94).

It is precisely within this space of ambivalence in Glancy's work—where senses of self merge and veer, where Native identity is honestly complex—that I read her poetry.⁴ In the title poem of Glancy's 1990 collection *Iron Woman*, the speaker begins by saying "I knew I came from a different place, / a story cut apart with scissors." The lines, running directly below the strength-filled title, signify subversive undercurrents in relation to the title, a fragmented construction of self. However, it is the verb within the phrase—"I *knew*"—that connotes an understanding of her puzzling position. She says "a *story* cut apart" suggesting that there is a potential completeness to whoever she is, as "story" expresses authenticity, fulfillment, and comprehensiveness, or at least a part of a larger story cycle. Despite the fact that a good portion of the poem depicts a fractured self, a close reading suggests the strength within the fragmentation. Throughout the body of "Iron Woman," the speaker juxtaposes ambivalence with clarity. This abrupt shifting back and forth illustrates the speaker's tenuous yet lucid state:

I would find a piece of rust in the morning
or a shape in a field through a fog.
I would hear a broken language

as if spoken by a woman
 with a bird's nest on her head,
 long pieces of iron welded for her buckskin.
 She wears a mosquito mask,
 a crooked twig for a nose.
 Her teeth sewn together with close white threads.
 (61)

Images that imply aggregates ("rust," "fog," "broken language," "iron welded," "mask," and "teeth sewn") are overturned by images that denote fullness and wholeness ("woman," "bird's nest," "buckskin," and "twig"). The subversion is subtle, though the strength felt in the shifting is distinct. Images begin to merge as the poem comes to a close and the "I" and the "she" become indiscernible: "Her voice rises in the trail of smoke / and mixes with mine in air" (61). Each of the "personae" gives the other strength, and yet, the reader still is uncertain who each is. In the last line the reader is unable to guess who is talking, which "I," which self, but a resolution is felt nonetheless: "It takes a while to speak with these two voices / as it takes a while to walk on two feet / each one going the other way" (61). The resolution, the wholeness, the completion, is found in the contradictory state that emerges; two feet are going in opposite directions but a balance is achieved and learned. Two voices coalesce in synchronization; an equilibrium is felt. Trinh's description of the infinite layered "I" is both a performed and lived manifestation within Glancy's poem. The speaker in "Iron Woman" legitimizes an identity that is unfixed, shifting constantly. Glancy, then, is acute in unhinging affixed-difference from identity, depolarizing representations of women's identity and Native women's identity, and mixed-bloods in particular. Difference and identity have so often been seen as the same idea that identity for those on the margins *becomes* the romanticized and stereotypical "other" the center composes. The speaker in "Iron Woman," however, places strength in a "non-position" that endures independent of polarizing opposites and dependency upon the center.

The strength found in "Iron Woman" provokes me to read Glancy's poetry as an act of "border gnosis," which Walter D. Mignolo articulates in *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* as work that seeks ways of deconstructing hegemonic epistemologies and structures of power which act to legitimize the difference found in "other" or "subaltern" knowledges of subjugated people. In his text, Mignolo examines the epistemologies

inscribed by western hegemony as perspectives that form a globalism, a world network, that is run by channels of power that surge only one way—from the center to the edges. It is out of this critique that he champions scholars from all fields (from literature to linguistics to critical theory) who propose “border gnosis” as the means to construct ideologies that consider all voices, that represent the voices from their particular location, and that help break down hierarchies of knowledge that erase the periphery. Glancy’s poetry works within this vein, whether consciously or not. The speaker in many of Glancy’s poems seeks this “border identity,” often the entire poem being about the movement toward such a space. From her 1992 collection *Claiming Breath*, the poem “Ontology & the Trucker / or, The Poem is the Road” is the epitome of the movement felt in much of Glancy’s poetry. The first stanza ends, “The largest part of my work / seems the travel, & the loneliest part of the road is when / there is no trucker” (11). The poem’s “driver” speeds along between the draft of two trucks on her long journey home from a conference. But even as she gives tribute to the truckers who allow her to follow, she remembers her father:

They are the ones who, if you show the slightest whit
of intelligence about driving, let you know when to
slow down & when to go fast. It’s like finding broken
pieces of my father along the road. Part Cherokee,
intuitive, he was the surest guide I ever had.

I don’t have a CB to talk to the truckers I follow. I
don’t want one either. There is something basic in
being cut off as I travel. It reminds me I am between
the way life was before I was born & how it will be
after I die...

That’s the way it is cut off from relationships, left
with the memories of them. But these ghosts are always
here. I feel surrounded by them yet not really
attached (11-12).

The pace of the poem as the speaker drives along the highway allows for the mind to unravel, to wander. The speaker muses “all of us migrating by instinct, knowing somehow where we are going” as if her journeying is purely innate. The motion propels her but also allows her to mend her cut past—the speaker somehow creating a stream that, like drafting, causes a current of air, a traction of a load. Within this motion

the “I,” in one ribbon of memory and thought, construes her past which necessarily thrusts her forward. Even so, the movement is not entirely linear: She says, “in the dark you see more clearly sometimes if you look off to the side. That’s where the poem is.” Therefore, it is within an internal motion that she grasps her past, her father’s Cherokee heritage—but this motion is a movement conceived of spirals, not lines. She moves forward along the highway by the draft created between the two trucks; her mind locates perspicuity from that which is not ahead, but rather, to the side.

In the introduction to her anthology of writers with mixed heritages entitled *Two Worlds Walking*, Glancy renounces the idea that the metaphor “walking in two worlds” is a matter of blood. Mixed heritage, she states, is “a new order of migration, in which the going is the journey itself, rather than arrival at a destination” (XI). It seems important that one examine spaces of motion within her poetry, then, as a means to uncover how the speaker grapples with or begins to see the matter of identity. If it is the movement itself that defines a state of understanding or at least allows the opening, then the idea of arriving at a destination as the endpoint is in error. A destination implies a definitive, fixed location. This is not at all how the speaker in Glancy’s poems seems to position herself; she, instead, is as Mignolo argues—in a position of “border gnosis.” Most importantly, however, this migration, this non-positioning, indeed, the status of “border gnosis,” relates to the speaker being a mixed-blood Cherokee woman. For the Cherokee as well as most indigenous people, “border crossing” and “identity construction” are no new phenomena; they have always been incorporated in tribal memory. In Cherokee creation stories, Selu, or Corn Mother, transforms her body into corn to feed her hungry children by rubbing her stomach; indeed, she can be viewed as a “literal piece-meal of identity”⁵ that nourishes the Cherokee people. In addition, Craig Womack’s chapter on the Creek poet Joy Harjo in his book *Red on Red* explains how much of Harjo’s later work becomes more “interiorized, riskier, complex, and fluid in breaking down boundaries between mythical and personal spaces” (224), meaning Native boundaries are alterable, one’s actual location and one’s “homeland” as a position of the heart and mind, one’s ties to culture and community. Womack explains that Harjo (and presumably Native poets in general) —being away from her Oklahoma Creek landscape for so long—has words, her poetry, as a way back:

It seems, then, that Harjo is already trying to get back to Oklahoma, and for her the journey will always be more than a physical return—the physical return, in fact, always being preceded by first trying the waters through language and imagination. If she can get the words right, she *will* be home, having incorporated Oklahoma into her sphere of experience (224).

Similar to Harjo, the “return” for Glancy is her words, the motion in and of itself as the contour of self. In her essay “Two Dresses” in *I Tell you Now*, Glancy says, “Poetry is the ghost dance in which one world seeks the other. Though the two worlds are opposed, they long to be united. Poetry is a road, a highway” (172). Her work literally carves a space that allows for flexibility and the piecing, the migration that brings her home, or at least the stability found in the sense of belonging to a community of people and to a set of stories.

Still, this is a space not easy to occupy, a space that resists neat categorization. Mignolo argues that the western hegemonic and cosmopolitan viewpoint, since the onset of colonialism and westward expansion, is one of a homogeneous whole, a conviction that modernization demands a hierarchy of language and culture; thus, globalization is the inevitable ends to imperialism. Mignolo continues that homogeneity, then,

subsumes the emphasis placed on borders, migrations, plurilinguaging, and multiculturalizing and the increasing need to conceptualize transnational and transimperial languages, literacies, and literatures. Transculturation, in other words, infects the locus of enunciation (220).

It is precisely within this problem of structures-of-power overarchingly polarizing the “other” that one can find Glancy’s poetry assembling an identity that both resists dichotomous constructions and re-addresses colonial categories. Glancy’s poetry performs the multifaceted “I” (of which Trinh writes) by resisting fixation within classifications. Mignolo echoes this shifting location of the “I” and places it in a position of empowerment; this voice can undo structures of hegemony that erase the periphery. In his closing lines, Mignolo concludes:

Inside and outside, center and periphery are double metaphors that are more telling about the loci of enunciation than to the ontology of the world. There are and there aren't inside and outside, center and periphery. What really is is the saying of agents affirming or denying these oppositions within the coloniality of power, the subalternization of knowledge, and the colonial difference. The last horizon of border thinking is not only working toward a critique of colonial categories; it is also redressing the subalternization of knowledges and the coloniality of power. It also points toward a new way of thinking [for border theorists at least] in which dichotomies can be replaced by the complementarity of apparently contradictory terms. Border thinking could open the doors to an other tongue, an other thinking, an other logic superceding the long history of the modern/colonial world, the coloniality of power, the subalternization of knowledges and the colonial difference (338).

Because mixed-blood identity is especially marginalized and invisible, Glancy—in searching for “definition of that misfit identity” (personal correspondence)—constructs a mutable location in her poetry that, in turn, devises a space to be heard and be seen by taking apart the structure that ultimately works to keep her distanced.

If the process of self-creation is necessarily in flux, it is no wonder Glancy's use of and reliance upon language enacts constant movement and motion. In one of her more current collections entitled *(Ado)ration* (1999), the speaker sees the world from her childhood eyes through a series of reflections: a bus window, a car window, in the hospital room at the foot of her dying father's bed. The poem “The Revenant” is a riddling of impressions, both psychological and physical, events speeding by as fast as the short lines fall down the page. Glancy begins her poem by stating, “The landscape meshes past. / The reflected one slower / from its point of departure on the window / of the bus. / The real one passing through the glass” (32). The odd juxtaposition of “landscape” both buzzing by and “meshing” into a set perception and reality arranges a blurred and multifaceted stance for the speaker. Her landscape both escapes her and begins to amalgamate. From the onset, there is an image of what is real and what is imaginary, what is tangible and what is an apparition, and the whirl of it all blending.

The poem's landscape quickly changes as the speaker's mind unravels or travels, re-visioning its perspective again and again: "Our landscape taking off over the other / the way memory unfolds. / The clutch popping in the old Dodge / on the hill from our house" (32). Visions and memories are reinventing themselves as abruptly as they are released. The speaker's focus turns in on itself, bringing the reader back to intimate and quite literal places of reflection. In an instant, the reader is back in a car: "My brother and I in the backseat / crossing that invisible line / and he lifting his hand, / trying to turn to the backseat / to hit us in the head...How his face / looked like his Indian mother's that night / as though fighting against this last trip / she turned saying, *behave now, / here, give me your hand*" (33). The speaker re-collects a memory of her father, and, in doing so, conjures her grandmother, her Native bloodline. The poem later reveals that the speaker's father is dying, the "last trip" being inevitable. Within this context, her grandmother speaks; the "revenant" brings consolation in that moment and in that memory. This point is the crucial crux of the poem; italicized, as if the grandmother has indeed spoken at that very moment in the poem's lines, the words launch the second half of the piece with a renewed calm. The poem slows down for the only time in the piece as if healing has taken place, a healing that is *ad infinitum*, the grandmother's words as testament.

But the poem does not end here; the lines click off again and the narrative thickens into the hospital room, into the minister saying her father's last rites. The reader only gets pieces of story, as one's memory works: "The fields passing / in overlaps at different paces.... The bus window / stretched like a rubberband" (33). The speaker's reinvisioning meshes and blurs, pieces of grief and healing; reflection expands and reverberates in a constant fluctuating motion. Within this poem, the indeterminable and ever-changing state does not appear chaotic; nor, however, does it seem to provoke apprehension. By the end of the poem, a restoration has taken place: "The brightness centering through glass. / My father's mother / waiting somewhere. / Finally she could come for him. / The bus pulling onto the road / tossing us, / his hand jerking back in reflex action / turning back to life / one last time / letting go" (33). Life goes on as it has, speeding by, but a clarity is present; the glass is not reflecting, but clear. Perhaps, for the speaker, identity is made unclouded through this conjuration—her poetry as a means to reintegrate identity, a framework that allows the fragmentation to begin to mend. The speaker's words, the poem, simultaneously and limitlessly address her fractured state, but it is the words them-

selves that act to cohere the pieces. Both spirit and memory engage the speaker's sense of serenity.

In a collection of lectures, essays, and poems, *The West Pole*, Glancy writes in the essay "Diffusionism" that in order to combat loneliness and ultimately deal with survival, her urge is toward "the migration to *otherness*" (1). Later, in an essay titled "Genealogy," she writes

I think I speak for a lot of Native Americans who have mixed blood and who know little of their culture and language. But the heritage shows up now and then like the Indian ancestors, whom I know sometimes, when I wake in the morning, have been there in the night (12).

The condition of *otherness*, then, becomes embodied for her, for mixed-bloods, by lineage. She assimilates the antinomy by "trying to walk in both worlds" that "don't go together" and says "but incongruity and paradox are a part of life" (24). She creates a new space of existence: "Instead of one foot in the white world and one in the Indian, maybe I need three feet to explain this" (31). In an essay "Comment," she offers much more than quick remarks about how she positions herself:

We have to understand not by Western, but by tribal-centered criticism. Its continual de-formation. Re-formation. A moving process of saying a story. Letting it go in the act of being. A dehegemonized setup. What we know runs contrary to Western tradition. It violates our tradition. We must transform from within Native American literature into a *bicult*. Not giving them ours in their own way. Which is what they want. We need a code-switching, mixed-blood metaphor. A buffalo convoy conveying the interpreted transport...I want language to stomp dance the dry ground of my heart. That's literary theory in the cosmos of Coyote (63-64).

Here, Glancy is suggesting that Native American literature ought to act in defiance of the hegemonic Western tradition. At least in this section, however, she runs the risk of perpetuating the same dichotomous network that keeps the center in place, only in reverse. When she says

“what we know runs contrary,” she is slightly off. Glancy’s poetry suggests that “what we know” is not “contrary”—as in opposition—so much as it is distinct. Her poetry argues that peripheral voices can indeed be parallel to voices in the Western canon, be commingling in the center, and still remain different. When she states that what is needed is “code-switching,” a “mixed-blood metaphor,” or a “buffalo convoy,” when she envisions a “cosmos of Coyote” she is more accurate. This position is much akin to what scholar Gerald Vizenor views as trickster hermeneutics, the mixed-blood (or “crossblood,” as he would say) as the ultimate space of liberation.

In his introduction to *Crossbloods: Bone Courts, Bingo, and Other Reports*, Vizenor states that “Crossbloods are a postmodern tribal bloodline, an encounter with racialism, colonial duplicities, sentimental monogenism, and generic cultures” (vii). They are the ultimate trickster because they can move back and forth between worlds and separate themselves from the representations set by the dominant culture. They understand their real identities while being able to constantly shift and therefore defy location. They are, as Vizenor points out in *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*, the “‘double others,’ the discoveries of the ecstatic separations of one other from the simulations of the other in the representations of an ‘authentic’ tribal culture. Truly, the shamanic double others are the ironic absence of romantic antiselves” (45). They are the ones who produce the “shadow words” that in turn “are the hermeneutics of survivance” (68). *Survivance*, for Vizenor, is the condition of resisting stereotypical representation, resisting victimry, and forging an existence of empowerment. The mixed-blood is in a position to turn ascribed-representation, therefore fixation, into a platform for articulation and mobility.

In Glancy’s *Claiming Breath*, in the poem “Ethnic Arts: The Cultural Bridge,” the speaker perhaps comes the closest to capturing this “act of survivance.” Early in the poem she positions herself: “Maybe something in the Coyote-trickster tradition. I started writing from a middle ground. Between 2 cultures” (59). And later she says:

The artist makes a land between 2places. I
wasn’t Indian having been raised separate from the
culture. I wasn’t white either. There was always
a gulf between the parts of myself, & a gulf
between others. I had to create a place from which
to create a place (60).

Here, she attempts to define an “irreferencable” space; there is no place one can point to, a place within a place. Language enables the speaker to find a “middle ground” between the worlds, but even this term is vacuous. The in-between nature of “middle ground” connotes a neither/nor figuration, and, thusly, one of negation: This is not the “Coyote trickster tradition” that one extrapolates from Vizenor’s argument, placing mixed-blood identity on a platform of strength, a platform that has the power to erase boundaries. Through pushing language further and further, however, Glancy arrives at the place she seeks. Again and again in her writing, the language itself mobilizes a position, ever shifting, that allows for resolution and brings her community. In each poem, it comes differently, though this only mirrors the motion of her mixed-blood identity.

A search for identity, then, comes not through merely jumping back and forth between “borderlines,” but rather from standing amongst them all with “hyphenation.” This, of course, demands that one find ways of pulling these borders together, close enough, to be able to create, and this demands that one be constantly active in her assemblage of self. In his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” Stuart Hall suggests, “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact...we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production,’ which is never complete, always in process” (110). The process of pulling together also creates a space that begins to open, grow larger, a zone that withstands cultural simulations of the stereotypical *indian*. Glancy recuperates a cultural identity that stretches far into history, a heritage that is of both Euro-American and Native American ancestry. She says in her essay “Culture and Environment: Voices in the Wind” from *The West Pole*, “I come from a Cherokee father and a German-English mother whose parents farmed in Kansas all their lives. I think some of my writing is an attempt to keep those ties to the land. To record some of the stories of the land so I don’t forget my responsibility” (22). Each of these bloodlines conceives an urgency within her to write—charged by a responsibility to tell her stories. In her poetry, one feels the piecing together of an identity that constantly and obsessively reconstructs itself. The speaker in Glancy’s work articulates the importance of knowing her past, of searching it out, of celebrating it, for it is this past that mends the loneliness and fragmentation that she feels in the present. By bringing it all in, all together, the speaker finds continual, albeit temporary, restoration. And it is by this act that Glancy constructs a way of “border thinking” that empowers an identity that could otherwise be cast into the remote edges of *otherness*.

NOTES

¹ I will manipulate the term “mixed-blood” as a way to speak collectively about a group of people of mixed ethnic heritage, and, in particular, people of both Native American and non-Native ancestry and/or different tribal affiliations. I am conscious of the fact that the term mixed-blood is in and of itself part of the racist nomenclature that defines people, especially Native American people, by blood quantum and thereby assesses one’s validity as a “real Indian.” However, I am using the term “mixed-blood” within an argument that has nothing to do with blood quantum, and everything to do with an attempt to define identities that do not fall neatly into socio-politically ascribed categories of race. Therefore, I am taking great liberty in appropriating the term “mixed-blood” in order to subvert the idea of percentages of blood having anything to do with “Nativity” and defend the term as a space that enables many people to write and create. For instance, is a “full-blood” Dine writer like Luci Tapahonso (meaning both her mother and father are Dine) any more “Native” or “Indian” than a “Half-breed” (another derogatory term) Nez Perce/Chicana writer like Ines Hernandez-Avila? To ask the question “who is more Indian” is absurd, racist, and counterproductive. Still, for mixed-blood people, there is the question of what to do with the half, or quarter, or eighth of themselves that is not Native, or the part of themselves that is not represented by tribal affiliation. How do people begin to articulate identity when, for example, only one of their great-grandparents is Native American like poet, writer, and scholar Diane Glancy? I look to her poetry for answers.

² Diane Glancy has four more collections of poetry since her ninth (*The Relief of America*, Tia Chuca Books, Northwestern University Press, Evanston Illinois, 2000) that are not included in my works cited list. They are: *The Stones for a Pillow*, National Federation of State Poetry Societies Press, Stevens Poetry Award, 2001; *The Shadow’s Horse*, University of Arizona Press, 2003; and forthcoming spring 2004 *Primer of the Obsolete*, 03 Juniper Poetry Prize from University of Massachusetts Press, as well as forthcoming *Asylum in the Grasslands*, University of Arizona Press.

³ The author understands that “full blood” and “mixed-blood” are both racist terms that say nothing about one’s involvement in her Native community, her family, her name.

⁴ The author understands that for many Native American writers, and Native people in general, identity is a non-issue. Moreover, it is often overly theorized and discussed by non-Native scholars, the dominant voice creating categories of race, insides and outsides. Being of mixed heritage myself (Anishinaabe, French, and Irish), this has been topic that I *personally* investigate, though for some of my elder, extended family members, it is nonsensical to question or scrutinize identity.

⁵ Thanks to my colleague and friend Jane Haladay for her ideas and suggestions on this paper.

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Reasserting the World: The Convergence of Mythic and Modern Realities in Enactment Narratives

Shawna Thorp

In *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko creates an environment in which the mythic and material worlds interact as a matter of course; this convergence is the natural law by which this particular Pueblo culture is created and sustained. In Louis Owens's novel, *Nightland*, a rush of events follows a dramatic opener that clearly marks a similar relationship between the natural and the Cherokee conception of the supernatural. In both cases, the protagonists find themselves within events explained by their own culture's stories, and their success or failure is dependent upon their ability to (re) enact the myths of their culture effectively. Both of these authors, by not only incorporating culturally specific stories into their novels, but also making these stories the driving force behind the unfolding of events, affect an ideological shift that displaces Western rationalism in favor of culturally specific Native American teleologies. Thus, while both writers create novels that are culturally specific rather than pan-Indian, both novels reject the rules of operation constructed by Euro-American paradigms and replace them with alternate worldviews that dictate the reality operational within these novels. In so doing they form a distinctive genre that displaces paradigms of the colonizer in favor of culturally specific models; this genre I shall designate by the term enactment narrative.

American Indian scholars have been calling for a more rigorous intellectual debate of how, as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn describes it, "the American Indian novel may have theoretical importance for the Third World in the defense of indigenism" (50). Robert Warrior has observed, with a good deal of justice, that issues of identity and authenticity still dominate American Indian and Native Americanist discourses and that "forums in which complex critical problems of audience, reception, and representation are worked through—rather than producing critical judgments—remain few and far between" (xix). In proposing a new genre definition, this study attempts to engage issues of representation and audience in order to investigate one possible avenue through which American Indian writers seem to be able to eschew essentialist portrayals of the contemporary realities of American Indians in favor of tribally specific depictions of modern life. Issues of audience and reception become bound up in this discussion because enactment narratives displace readers who approach such texts from outside the tribal perspective. This exploration of genre provides a space in which one approach to the production of tribally specific literatures celebrating the

continued survival of living cultures can be identified, and the implications of that portrayal can be hypothesized.

There are two important characteristics that define enactment narratives. First, in these works ancient stories belonging to a specific cultural group are invoked, either by the similarity a current situation bears to its mythic predecessors, or by the direct inclusion of the original stories themselves. The protagonist must then decide whether or not to act in accordance with the cultural teachings embedded within the story or set of stories that have been invoked; he or she may choose to correctly enact the myth or reject that course. The decision of the protagonist does not change the rules by which the world operates; if he or she enacts the myth, the protagonist and the world itself will be rejuvenated, while rejection of the myths and actions counter to their dictates brings both personal and environmental ruin. The world is thus shown to operate in accordance with the explanations provided by the myths, regardless of whether they are followed or not. The term "myth" is used here to designate a story situated within a particular belief system; it is not meant to imply that the events recounted therein are inherently fictitious. On the contrary, enactment narratives reaffirm the reality of the myths not as abstract concepts, but as lived experience.

There are several elements which, combined effectively, evoke such a world. In enactment narratives both the contemporary space experienced by the protagonists and the space defined by the ancient stories are invoked, and the myths concomitantly overlay present experiences, creating a circularity of time. In other words, there is the time in which the myths were first enacted, the time in which the characters in the novel live, and an overlapping wherein the modern characters actually become the actors in the myth. The actions of the characters in such narratives are therefore at once a repetition of that which has gone before and the realization of the myths themselves. In order for this to happen, it is essential for the characters to know the original stories. This is necessary because a tension exists between the differing worldviews, and because the "right" and "wrong" paths, while clearly marked for the reader, can be hard to find or follow from within the story itself. The proper choice, and proper enactment, ensures both personal and environmental regeneration. The wrong choice leads to death, either literal or metaphorical. The combined effect of these elements is to give the narrative a sense of inevitability; there is a knowable epistemology at work in which predictable effects have specific causes. The world produced is therefore not one of fragmentation and

uncertainty, but of a unity that follows definite rules. These rules are at variance with Euro-American explanations of the ways in which the world functions; within the context of these novels, empirical reality is displaced. In enactment narratives, therefore, the rules of operation are not those defined by the colonizers, but by specific Native belief systems, which itself enacts a radical shift.

It is precisely because these novels effectively produce such a dramatic paradigmatic shift that a specific genre designation becomes a useful tool for understanding how such a shift can be achieved. While there is always a danger in creating generic definitions for existent works of literature, such endeavors, as Adena Rosmarin has shown, also provide substantial benefits. Through the admittedly artificial use of generic definitions, elements of literary concern can be brought to the forefront. In this case in particular, the framework provided by such a discussion can help to highlight and clarify elements at work within these novels that audiences unfamiliar with the specific cultural myths surrounding the works might otherwise have difficulty recognizing. Generic categories are admittedly artificial constructions; furthermore, there is an inherent irony in creating a generic definition that seeks to describe a pan-Indian approach so clearly centered in cultural specificity. Here, the danger is that generic definitions might blur the cultural specificity that the enactment narratives themselves celebrate. Nevertheless, the use of a generic category to describe this phenomenon can help articulate the ways in which culturally specific Native American myths can be employed to displace both Euro-American paradigms and readers who embrace them. It may also help to highlight one way in which writers seeking to produce materials specifically relevant to their own cultures might effectively do so.

A close study of enactment narratives will best illustrate the benefits of creating this generic distinction. This study will focus upon Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, and Louis Owens's *Nightland*. Although the two novels represent a span of nearly twenty years, they both produce a paradigmatic shift that displaces Western rationalism, and use remarkably similar means to do so. While these novels are not the only two such narratives that utilize these practices or effect this sort of shift (it exists not only in other works of both Silko and Owens, but also, for example, in the work of N. Scott Momaday, and, to a certain extent, Anna Lee Walters and Susan Power), these novels provide perhaps the most comprehensive examples of these phenomena. This study is in no way intended to be proscriptive of all Native American novels, in which can be found a wealth of variety in both form and sub-

ject matter. Nor is it suggesting that this approach represents the only way that tribally specific contexts can be invoked. What it can do is further articulate one trend within Native American literature that seems to provide a means of eschewing the “pan-tribal blur,” as Craig Womack has described it, that is all too often generated by, “a kind of genericism [. . .] which becomes ‘Indian’ to the exclusion of any real exploration of just what that means in terms of locals, treaties, languages” (51).

Enactment narratives produce two important effects. They invoke and contemporize traditional tribal literatures in ways that celebrate the continued importance of tribal philosophies while simultaneously proving that it is indeed possible to produce meaningful tribal literature in translation. They also force readers who are accustomed to reading in terms of Euro-American rationalism to re-examine those premises in light of material that refuses to be subjugated to a perspective that is completely unequipped to handle the realities embraced by the text. For such readers, it is tempting to try to read *Ceremony* as a novel about a veteran returning from war who is having a hard time readjusting to life within Laguna society. Similarly, *Nightland* is initially approachable as a novel about two mixed-bloods who find a suitcase full of money that could, potentially, end their struggles with poverty, if they handle the situation effectively. On the surface, both of these novels present images of the maladjusted Indian struggling with questions of identity; for readers with limited experience with Native American literature it is thus tempting to read these characters in terms of stereotypes that remain all too prevalent. Their lives, at first, seem complicated but not governed by systems of culturally specific beliefs at odds with the Western world in which they live and from which many readers approach these texts.

To be sure, myths are incorporated that run parallel to the daily lives of the characters and have a separate, tangible existence of their own. In *Ceremony* the myths, while embedded within the prose portion of the text, are presented in verse form, a move that initially seems to emphasize their division from the experiences of Tayo and those around him. The mythic world seems to be one option, but not the only one, available to those who are looking for a system of belief. The relevance of traditional forms is questioned by several of the characters who try to turn the apparent remoteness of mythic reality into disassociation. The rituals his family perform for the dead deer embarrass Rocky, and even Tayo is occasionally forced to question the reality of the traditional stories. “In school the science teacher had explained

what superstition was, and then held the science textbook up for the class to see the true source of explanations. He had studied those books, and he had no reasons to believe the stories anymore" (94). Yet while Western education discredits the stories on the basis of reason, Tayo is never able to shake the traditional beliefs from his heart. This is fortunate for Tayo, because it is eventually the old stories that save him; by extension it can be assumed that Rocky's disbelief contributes to the complex set of events that lead to his death.

This seeming separation of the world of stories from the modern world creates a parallel between the ancient stories and the modern, lived experiences. The myths related in Silko's verse sections are applicable to events unfolding in the novel. The loss of rain in the mythic stories, for example, is mirrored by the current drought. The myth explains how the people grew neglectful of their prayers and followed the Cho'ko'yo medicine man instead. In Tayo's world, many of the people, like Rocky, Emo, and Pinkie are disassociating themselves from the old ways and consequently seem to have difficulty negotiating their social role. Consequently, they spend most of their time drinking and reminiscing about their participation in the war, a time during which, at least according to their romanticized representations of their actions, they had a clearly defined role that seemed to provide them with social acceptability in the world at large (although, as their own stories reveal, this is an illusion). By memorializing this epoch of seeming social acceptance away from the reservation, they are perpetuating the attitudes that help erode traditional culture and lead to a decline in the participation in traditional culture. They represent one of the forces that has led to the neglect of important duties like the retouching of the cliff painting of the she-elk A'moo'ooh.

Yet reading the myths as separate and unrelated to the reminiscences of Emo and his buddies overlooks a crucial fact, namely that mythic and contemporary realities not only parallel one another, they also intertwine. *Ceremony* starts with the myth:

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman,
is sitting in her room
and whatever she thinks about
appears (1)

the unnamed speaker declares, adding, "I'm telling you the story / she is thinking." This opening strategically places reality on two planes at once; Thought-Woman is creating a story, and the story she is thinking

is simultaneously enacted. Thus, a situation arises wherein the mythic figure is a very real part of the modern story—she invents it. Coexistent with Thought-Woman are the characters themselves, who live very real lives in New Mexico. Both are real; both exist in the same moment. Bernard Hirsh has noted this convergence in Silko's bear story in *Storyteller*. In that story he recognizes a "voice that carries the old stories into the present and locates the present within the cycle of mythic time" (157). Enactment narratives foster this convergence of present and mythic time, whereas Western rationalism would insist, for example, that either Tayo and those around him are real and living in the New Mexican desert, or they are figments of Thought Woman's imagination. Yet within this type of narrative no such dichotomy exists. Here both things are true at once and the world's rules of operation follow laws inherently at odds with Euro-American paradigms.

This convergence is most evident in Tayo's reunion with Ts'eh. Ts'eh's character is so closely linked to Thought Woman that it is at times difficult to see her as part of the human world, but she is nevertheless a physical reality to Tayo; he spends his summer with her. The myth tells us "Arrowboy got up after she left. He followed her into the hills up where the caves were" physically locating the site where Tayo and Ts'eh camp (247). Like Arrowboy, Tayo follows Ts'eh into the mountains and spends the summer as her consort. The relationship with Ts'eh, who is "the manifestation of the creator of the waters of life that flow from a woman and bless the earth and the beloved with healing, with rain" (Allen 234), marks the highest moment of realization in the novel, where both realities finally meet and are fully coexistent in the same time and space.

Tayo's experience on Mount Taylor is representative of this sort of convergence as well. It is the appearance of the mountain lion, the hunter's helper, which inspires Tayo with the confidence he needs to continue his hunt for the lost cattle; Tayo also learns where to seek the cattle from the encounter. When he is found by the cowboys it is only the tracks of the mountain lion that entice his captors to let him go free. Within the context of the ancient stories this mountain lion is both the hunter and the hunter's helper. As he is coming down the mountain after the cattle Tayo encounters him again, this time in human form. It is the hunter who directs Tayo to his cattle waiting in the corral below. As Colleen Shapiro has noted "the traditional hunter acts as a connection between the past, present, and future, just as Silko's Hunter serves to connect the circle of Tayo's ceremony" (117). His role as Tayo's helper is evident.

The fact that Tayo receives this sort of “supernatural” help underscores the two-way relationship between Tayo and the world he inhabits; it gives him aid that he might, in turn, restore the natural balance. He has a responsibility to the land to set things right again. The issue of reciprocal responsibility is at the center of the epistemologies presented in enactment narratives. Whether or not the characters themselves understand that they must live up to the demands of this symbiotic relationship, their world functions in the manner defined by the stories that explain this partnership. Success, which comes in the form of proper enactment, is certainly much easier when this connection is realized by those called upon to take responsibility for it, but that recognition does not play a role in calling these rules of operation into being. Central to the dynamics of the world of Native American ideologies represented in enactment narratives are the old stories themselves; not only do they serve as guides for the correct way to act, they literally make the world. As with Thought-Woman, the world comes into being through the stories, and is maintained through their remembrance and revision. Louis Owens proposes that “implicit within Silko’s prefatory ‘poems’ is the Indian certainty that through the utterance of stories we place ourselves within and make inhabitable an ordered universe that without stories would be dangerously chaotic” (169). Thus, to forget is to fall into that chaos, and it is the loss of the stories that threatens the health of the community.

The stories not only explain the way the world operates, they literally bring it into being. To tell the story is to make it real; it becomes a literal presence as it is spoken. The preservation of the stories is thus the preservation of the world. This is a heavy responsibility; it must be undertaken with care. The correct presentation of the stories is crucial. The ceremony Ku’oosh performs for Tayo is representative of this.

It took a long time to explain the fragility and intricacy because no word exists alone, and the reason for choosing each word had to be explained with a story about why it must be said this certain way. That was the responsibility that went with being human, old Ku’oosh said, the story behind each word must be told so there could be no mistake in the meaning of what had been said. (35-36)

Understanding the stories equates with understanding the way the world works and what is requisite for keeping everything in proper balance, and this recognition is essential for survival.

Alongside the individual stories themselves, therefore, are the events as part of a continual unfolding of a larger story. The ancient stories and the lives of 20th century persons are linked because they are part of this continuous unfolding and reassertion of the world. Leslie Silko has explained the role of the stories as follows: "When I use the term *storytelling*, I'm talking about something that comes out of an experience and an understanding of that original view of Creation—that we are all part of a whole; we do not differentiate or fragment stories and experiences" (50). Tayo has been a part of the story from the very beginning; he is a part of something much larger than his own individual experience; he is caught in a web that touches the entire community, and interacts both with the past and the future. He is a part of the unfolding of Thought Woman's narrative. Kenneth Lincoln, exploring the world of *Ceremony*, articulates this point:

All peoples stand accountable to all other peoples, the old ways hold; the mixed breed is living testimony to the transitions, the changes, the old ways evolving constantly into new variables. The ceremonies promise renewal out of the 'end of temporary life forms: continuity from one generation to the next [. . .]. The ancestral belief in natural benevolence through time order this the-ways-things-are, even when life seems lost in the moment. (248)

This continuity enfolds characters that are at the center of enactment novels. They, too, are part of the process, and have been in the design since before they were born. Old man Betonie tells Tayo: "You've been doing something all along. All this time, and now you are at an important place in this story" (124). Later, Tayo and Ts'eh discuss the ceremony that is unfolding, and Ts'eh confesses that she worries at times because the success of the ceremony is dependent upon people who are not yet born. Tayo's role in the mythic story is only one thread among the many that are interwoven, continually, into fabric of the whole; each thread is essential to the integrity of that fabric.

The unfolding of the stories happens in a proscribed order. Tayo must wait until he sees the star pattern in the sky shown to him by Betonie before he can start his search for the cattle. Events do not occur

randomly, nor are they the result of individual choice; they were laid down long ago and must unfold in the order proscribed. The Mexican woman with green eyes must be taken to Descheeny so that Betonie can help Tayo find the right path two generations later. When Tayo reaches the uranium mine, he finally understands this:

He cried the relief he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was still being told. He was not crazy; he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time. (246)

Tayo finally comes to understand the interrelatedness of all actions past, present, and future, and that his life and actions are connected to the entire world, just as he had suspected since he first cursed the rain away. He is not re-enacting some parallel of the time immemorial stories; he is a part of them; he is a part of what they set down. There is a convergence of mythic and modern worlds that erases the seeming duality. They are both real and they are the same.

Like his predecessors who made mistakes in their relationship with the earth, Tayo must also find the proper way to live. The months he spends in the mountains with Ts'eh go a long way toward helping him to discover this, but he still must face and reject the false medicine of Western forms of resolution. At the uranium mine he stands poised to kill Emo, but carrying that act of violence through would have been succumbing to the witchery; Tayo would have been destroyed and the drought would not have ended. But "Tayo [. . .] will live on" Simon Ortiz explains "[. . .] because he realizes the use and value of the ritual story-making which is his own and his people's lives in the making" (68). Because of the interconnectedness of humans with one another, the land, and their own mythic past, the success or failure of those in the process of enactment reaches far beyond personal success to affect the entire world. In the case of Billy's parents in *Nightland*, their failure dries up the water. For Tayo success stimulates a regeneration of the land. He has successfully acknowledged his role as caretaker of the world, and the earth has in return acknowledged its reciprocal responsibility.

In *Nightland* a pattern of development similar to that of *Ceremony* is evident. In this novel, the old stories are told by Siquani, who has

accepted the responsibility of remembering and passing on the old stories. So old that none of his family fully understand his past and do not know his true age (Billy guesses that he must be about four hundred years old), Grandpa Siquani's stories seem antiquated and no longer important to his grandson Billy, who consistently denies their relevance. When Will reminds him of the warnings the myths provide about things from the West, Billy responds dismissively, "'Sure, I've heard the stories, but in case you haven't noticed, it's damned near the twenty-first century. I don't pay a lot of attention to superstition and fairy tales'" (8). Billy doesn't pay attention, but he should, for those stories prove to be more than fairy tales and his rejection of them is fatal for him. Billy's skepticism is reflective of the bias that would dismiss the power of the Cherokee world as mere fantasy, a bias that those readers who are more familiar with the strictures of modern science than Cherokee religion are likely to share. As in Silko's novel, the truth of the Cherokee teleology is established as the events unfold.

In Owens's work, Grandpa Siquani tells the stories of mythical and physical Cherokee history repeatedly, tracing a different sort of repetition wherein the parallels repeat multiple times. Through this process, it becomes easier to understand that repetition is more than a coincidence; it is an inevitability. The Cherokees were removed by means of the Trail of Tears, and later the parents of Will and Billy effect a second removal from Oklahoma to New Mexico. The experience of the Cherokees has been one of enforced westering, particularly significant because each removal moves them toward the Nightland, the symbolic place of death for the Cherokees. Taken as a mere parallel to the modern, the mythic world seems at first relevant only as moral compasses by which people can, if they so choose, find their way.

Yet, as with *Ceremony*, this explanation ultimately proves unsatisfactory as mythic and modern experience converge. A scene from *Nightland* serves as an excellent illustration of this union. In this scene, retold in the novel as a memory, Will and Billy discover Billy's white mother in the corn shed apparently praying "in some kind of Indian way" (111). Confused by her actions, Billy decides that she must be a witch. This encounter is a direct parallel to the actions of the mythological Thunder Boys. In the myth, the boys, curious to learn where she gets the corn she has been cooking them, spy on their mother Selu and find her shaking corn from her body in the smokehouse. Horrified by what they have witnessed, they are no longer willing to eat the food she cooks for them. Their refusal to eat the food she has provided for them causes the mother to become ill and die, but, as she tells the boys,

if they bury her and tend her grave in the proper manner, corn will grow from that spot. As Marilou Awiakta explains, although versions of the myth differ as to specific facts (i.e. grandmother instead of mother, hut instead of smokehouse), the use of this story as a guide to the right relationships remains constant. "What cannot be changed," she explains, "are the spiritual base and the spine of the story, which include Selu's identity, the grandsons' (or sons') disrespect, and the consequences of it, and Selu's teaching of how they can restore harmony for their own good and the good of the people"(16). The fundamentals remain intact, if partially occluded, in the case of Will and Billy. The insertion of the story of Billy's mother praying in the shed creates a clear reference to the story of the Corn Mother, and the subsequent reaction of the boys is in keeping with the fundamental logic of the original. As Linda Helstern has noted, the figure of Grandpa Siquani undergoes a similar linkage to Cherokee myth; his identity is closely linked to Kanati. He alludes to this relationship himself, telling Arturo Cruz: "Sometimes when Billy is gone and I don't see no one for a long time I feel like Kanati, the hunter, back in time immemorial when he was all alone on earth, before First Woman come" (156). A convergence is thus effected in which identities of the modern characters are brought into such a close relationship with their mythic predecessors that they merge and become identical.

There exists at once a circularity of time and a continuum. Characters are the same as their mythic predecessors, but they are also part of a story which has been unfolding and is still unfolding. This concept of circular time is hard to grasp. Paco Ortega, the drug dealer hunting Will and Billy, explains it to his colleague thus:

Again, Duane, you're showing typical white man impatience. That's because like all white people, even brown-skinned ones, you exist within what you conceive of as entropic linear time. You need to think about time differently, Duane, about the way everything exists in the great continuum, everything related to everything else in the unending cycle of time. You have to stop believing in the terrible European lies of fragmentation and progress [. . .]. (164)

The key here is to discard the notion of progress. Life is not progress; it is enactment. It is specifically enactment rather than re-enactment because the latter implies the notion of progress, but as Tayo comes to

understand, "This night is a single night; and there has never been any other" (192). The stories remain the same; what changes, what causes an unfolding, are the decisions individuals make about their actions. Both the "real" person and the mythic figure can make mistakes but those mistakes can in turn be rectified, and must be if people are to remain in harmony with the earth. Because the world is cyclical, all things must be enacted repeatedly. There can be no one-time commitment to the earth from which people move continually forward; that commitment must be continually renewed as part of the responsibility humans have to the natural world.

In *Nightland* the main characters, Will and Billy, are marked as the Cherokee Thunder Boys from the opening scene. They are described as "identical in height" and both are marked with scars which look like lightning bolts, Billy on his face, and Will on his hand. To further assert their relation, Will's wife Jace comments that they are not only "like brothers" but are "maybe even closer than brothers" (148). Finally, as Grandpa Siquani points out, "Both them boys was born in a thunderstorm" (95). Through these circumstances and observations, Will and Billy are thus clearly marked as the Thunder Boys. This connection with mythological figures is important because they are immediately confronted with the myth in new form. A briefcase containing nearly a million dollars in drug money has fallen from the sky into a remote region in the Cibola national forest, virtually landing at their feet. All they have to do is take the money, but there is, of course, a catch. The money is marked; a man fell out of the Western sky with it, seeming at first to be a giant buzzard as he makes his descent. The man, who is impaled on a tree, is no problem, but the fact that the money has come from the West, the Cherokee land of the dead, and was delivered by one who looked like a buzzard is more problematic. Buzzard was a powerful figure in the Cherokee creation story; he was responsible for drying the land that Water beetle brought to the surface of the lake. Grandpa Siquani reminds Will of this, remarking "Old Buzzard was real important back in the beginning," but he ultimately adds "There's other kinds of buzzards too" (48-9). While the significance of Arturo's appearance as he falls from the sky can only be contextualized as events unfold, the experience is powerfully marked for Will and Billy with signifiers from their cultural heritage.

The situation Will and Billy find themselves confronting at the beginning of the novel is a close parallel to the traditional story of the Thunder Boys and the Uk'ten, as related (by the informant Siquanid') to Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick. In this version, the boys find a small

snake who asks them to feed him. The boys do so and the snake grows quite large, becoming an Uk'ten who promises its friendship to the boys. The day comes, however, when the boys discover the Uk'ten and Thunder fighting. Both parties ask for help and promise loyal friendship. After some hesitation, the boys help Thunder defeat the Uk'ten and Thunder becomes their loyal helper for life (53-6). This story of nurturing evil but ultimately assisting good has strong resonance with the unfolding of events in Owens' novel. The drug money is clearly the product of evil, and, by deciding to take that money for themselves, Billy and Will are committing themselves to a fickle friend who cannot be depended upon. The choice Billy and Will make will ultimately determine whether or not Thunder will be a helper to humans. Linda Helstern has noted that the original myth is "a story of the power of reciprocal responsibility" (63), and this is true for the modern version as well. As with most, if not all, of the old stories that inform enactment narratives, the idea of mutual caretaking between humans and the earth is central here. To oversimplify only slightly, the old stories are designed to help humans remember their intimate relationship with and responsibility for the earth.

Siquani has accepted this heavy responsibility. During his removal on the Trail of Tears, Awi Usdi, the Little Deer, gave him the task of remembering everything that happened, so that one day the Indians and the deer could be strong again. His job is to lay the pathway through the stories so that this regeneration may take place. Siquani can only act through the stories; he can't do anything to change what is taking place. It is not his place to warn Billy directly of the danger represented by Odessa Whitehawk; he can only tell the stories and watch as the listeners decide whether or not to allow the ancient stories to inform their actions. Everything is interconnected; Siquani tells the stories, the listeners take action, and the earth responds.

The fact that the story continues to unfold, and thus continues to live in the form of those currently enacting their own roles within this larger story, means that the world is continually remade and reaffirmed. The young Will understands this. "He came very early to believe that the Cherokee world was made of spoken words, told into being with living breath" we are told, and that "To his young mind it was as if the Indian world was always new, made again and again when his father or Billy's grampa told the stories" (24). Even at a young age, Will is able to appreciate the importance of renewing the world. Stagnation breeds death, but because the stories continually remake the same world it is at once representative of mythic and present realities. The iteration of the

stories confirms their presence while adapting to new influences. Both the mythic and modern characters face the consequences of not enacting the story properly; the only things that change are the specifics of the challenges that face them. If they fail, it is the people themselves and not the world that is destroyed, and they are destroyed, or at least punished, because they have violated the rules of operation for the world.

There are very real consequences that result from not recognizing one's part in this reciprocal responsibility between the natural and human world, consequences that come from enacting the story incorrectly, or, rather more to the point, not enacting the crucial elements of the old stories, the parts in which balance is restored. Both individual lives and the life of the land are dependent upon proper enactment. This is something Billy's parents failed to do. Although it is not clear exactly what went wrong with them, it is clear that they breached their promise to remain friend and helper to Thunder. They are killed when lightning hits the fuel tank directly outside their bedroom window, setting fire to the house. Grandpa Siquani is cognizant of the reasons for their death and comments upon their failure to learn the stories. After their death, nature no longer works in partnership with people and the land dries up. Understood within the context of the mythology surrounding the Thunder Boys, it is thus very clear that Billy's parents (and possibly Will's) have improperly enacted the stories and have suffered the inevitable consequences. This context is essential, for it is the way the world actually operates within these texts, whether we as readers recognize the cause and effect at work here or not.

For the characters within the novel, however, recognition of the laws that govern the workings of the world is essential, but sometimes difficult. Just as Tayo was tempted to respond to Emo with violence, the proper response to the money Will and Billy have found is clouded by external pressures. Grandpa Siquani explains the importance of remembering the stories and recognizing one's role to William: "They been piling up things to hide it for all these years now. But our world is still here Willum. Sometimes we forget because we got to look so hard to see it, and people get tired and forget how to look. But the animals know; they don't forget. We got to listen" (214). Listening is imperative because it is through this that the stories can be known and the world successfully negotiated.

The actions of Will and Billy further illustrate the importance of proper enactment. Billy refuses to take the old stories seriously. He listens to his Grandfather only unwillingly, and turns to money for a

solution to his problems rather than to the rituals that would keep him in harmony with the land. In attaching himself to Odessa Whitehawk he is furthering the distance between himself and the old ways. Odessa is consumed by anger at what has been done to her people by the whites, and this hatred poisons her. She is divorced from her traditions and ultimately wants to set herself up in the role of the rich colonizer in South America. As she herself is aware, she will thus become, ironically, the very thing of which she is so critical. It is appropriate that Billy is destroyed by Odessa in the end for she stands as representative of all the things which blind people to the old stories, that make them forget.

Will, on the other hand, remembers well. He always listens with care and respect to Grandpa Siquani, and is informed by the stories that have been taught to him. He continues to grow corn every year, even though there is barely enough water to support even the few scrawny stalks he tends, because Selu, the Corn Woman, is the mother of the Cherokees, a fact that Will's father took care to teach him. Will ensures that his own children learn the stories. Importantly, he is never attached to the idea of what the money can do for him. He hides it in the well and leaves it alone, continuing to live as he always has. And he listens to the animals, as Siquani has told him to do. It is ultimately his dog Maggie's dislike of Odessa that first alerts him of the danger she represents. Without listening to and finally understanding the dog's warning, he too would have been dead.

Enactment narratives are uniquely positioned to re-affirm the dominance of native worldviews. Although a tension exists with Euro-American scientific explanations of the mechanics of the world, a tension that the central characters must negotiate and reject, the world in which they operate is *not* dependent upon a choice made by anyone as to what actually constitutes reality. The law which requires that humans live in a reciprocal relationship with earth is non-negotiable; it is as solid and real for this world as the law of gravity is for Euro-American models. The worlds depicted in these novels enforce specific rules of operation based exclusively on the particular beliefs of the tribe represented therein. There is no hybrid reality here; while individual characters may struggle with questions of identity and even reject their native culture, the world that controls the unfolding of events is not debatable and reflects no such merging of variant worldviews.

This refusal to enter into a dialectic with the Euro-American worldview sets enactment narratives apart from other Native American novels exploring the tensions between Indian and Western worlds, in

which the specific rules governing the way the world function are not conclusively situated within either context. It also makes a clean break with the genres of magical realism and the fantastic, a break that is important because it thus denies the legitimacy of outside explanations of internal realities. Enactment narratives create a world in which the beliefs of the colonizers are invalid and have no effect. Paula Gunn Allen has noted that "American Indian literature is not similar to western literature because the basic assumptions about the universe, and therefore, the basic reality experienced by tribal peoples and westerners are not the same" and that "This difference has confused non-Indian students for centuries, because they have been unable or unwilling to grant this difference and to proceed in terms of it" (*The Sacred Hoop* 174). The act of ascribing a generic definition to narratives that enact, and through that enactment embrace tribal beliefs, may, it is to be hoped, help readers unfamiliar with culturally specific epistemologies distinctively at odds with the premises embraced by Western scientific knowledge recognize and acknowledge the basic realities evoked in such novels. As the protagonists in these novels must recognize the rules of operation that govern their world in order to successfully negotiate it, readers must also learn relevant aspects of cultural background in order to fully understand the complexity at work within these novels.

However, while readers must recognize the operational belief system at work in the novel to understand the dynamic at work, all of the important definitional characteristics of enactment narrative take place within the novel independent of this understanding. The re-affirmation of the worldview at work is not dependent upon recognition on the part of the reader of the legitimacy of the myths being enacted, and the success of the novel is not dependent upon the acceptance on the part of the reader that these myths actually control reality within the world of the novel. This separation between reader and protagonist is important because Native American novels are read by a wide variety of audiences, many of whom may not know enough of a specific culture's mythic framework to recognize the signifiers which invoke it as the operational system of the novel, and some of whom, as Louis Owens has noted, will "approach the novel with a completely alien set of assumptions and values" (14). If the success of these narratives were to depend upon recognition and acceptance of the *ideologemes* advanced within the novel by this group of outside readers, then it is highly unlikely that this form could effectively survive.

Furthermore, the positioning of the audience marks one of the most important distinctions between enactment narratives and the similar,

already established generic category of the fantastic, a genre that also invokes apparently supernatural elements. In defining the fantastic, Tzvetan Todorov marks territory specifically opposite to that of enactment narratives as essential. In the fantastic, Todorov argues, the text “must oblige the reader to consider the world [. . .] and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation” (33). It will often be the case, he continues, that this hesitation will be reflected in the hero, but this is not a necessary condition for the fantastic. Enactment narratives occupy an inverted space in relation to the fantastic; in enactment narratives the definitional characteristics happen within the interior of the novel, whereas they are found exterior to the novel in the fantastic. These oppositional qualities can be traced further. While hesitation is essential in the fantastic, it is incidental in enactment narratives; characters are likely to experience a hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations (that is, Euro-American and tribally specific world-views), but that hesitation does not affect the reality that is being played out, and it is not an essential element of the genre. Any such hesitation on the part of the reader is likewise incidental.

The tension produced as characters are forced to choose between scientific and culturally based explanations and subsequent courses of action might also suggest an alliance with magical realism, a genre that is itself a close cousin of the fantastic. However, these novels move beyond the sort of dialectic between opposing world views commonly found in magical real texts. While the interaction of natural and supernatural worlds in these novels is reminiscent of the dynamic evoked by magical realism, enactment narratives transcend the conventions of that form. A quick examination of magical realism will provide a better understanding of the ways in which the new genre defined here not only evokes non-Western traditions, but also places them in a position of dominance. Particularly, magical realism is important as a definition of what is not going on in *Ceremony* and *Nightland*, the ways in which these novels diverge from this form. As Stephen Slemon defines it:

The term “magic realism” is an oxymoron, one that suggests a binary opposition between the representational code of realism and that, roughly, of fantasy. In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two world are incompatible, neither one

can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the "other," a situation that creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, reading them with gaps, absences, and silences. (409)

The magical real text, because of its marginality, can never fully legitimize the magical aspects; they retain an aura of the fantastic, and are therefore remain dismissible to readers resistant to ways of thinking which challenge the rules of Western rationalism. As Slemon has explained, no discourse becomes dominant in the magic real text; the ground rules of neither system are legitimized. Enactment narratives, by contrast, do legitimize one system over the other, which is precisely why a separate genre designation is useful.

This is the case in both *Ceremony* and *Nightland*. In each, there is a very clear dominance of the Native American belief systems represented, Pueblo and Cherokee respectively, which excludes the ground rules of Old World philosophy. Although both Euro-American and Native American epistemologies are indeed coexistent in these novels, there is no battle for which worldview actually embodies the true reality. Indeed, there is no need for such a battle, as the hero's decision neither determines nor defines reality. Characters are free to choose which system they will follow, but it is unequivocally clear that the world itself is operating in accordance with the native myths that explain it and that there are consequences for making the wrong choice. It becomes impossible, therefore, for the characters to dismiss the mythic elements as factitious without suffering the repercussions of that rejection. In turn, it becomes equally difficult for readers, at least those with an adequate understanding of the myths in operation within the narrative, to deny the fact that these are the real rules by which the world of the novel works. Louis Owens has suggested that it is possible for "the American Indian writer [to] place the Eurocentric reader on the outside, as the "other," while the Indian reader (a comparatively small audience) is granted, for the first time, a privileged position" (*Other Destinies* 14). In these narratives, it is the reader whose knowledge base is situated in Western tradition that needs to learn and adapt in order to understand. Furthermore, such texts can actually function, as Robert Nelson has suggested in the case of *Ceremony*, as acts of repatriation by recovering ethnographic texts that have recorded the ancient stories out of context and restoring them to their original use.

It is the cultural specificity of that self-definition which marks enactment narratives as a specific group within Native American literature. While enactment narratives are often involved with the same sorts of issues found in the literature at large, the hierarchical establishment of native teleologies over Euro-American models situates this genre within tribally specific contexts. The reality created is not hybrid: it does not take aspects from the multiple cultures that interact within the narrative and combine them to create a new reality; instead, it enacts the teachings of the myths designed to guide and inform specific communities. Thus, even while many of the primary actors are mixed-bloods, the reality they embrace is culturally specific. Survival comes not through adaptation but through re-affirmation. Even though each cycle of enactment will vary in specific details, the reality enacted remains the same.

Enactment narratives, like narratives that employ the fantastic or magical realism, engage two different representational codes. Unlike these other genres, however, these narratives require no choice on the part of the reader, and enforce a clear primacy for the Native American belief systems they draw upon. The fact that these belief systems utilize culturally specific tribal beliefs makes these novels evocations not of a pan-Indian reality, but that of the specific cultures they portray. This cultural specificity marks an important point of resistance in a world which all too often overlooks these important cultural distinctions in favor of a stereotyped definition of Indianness which is not truly representative of any one group, and makes a significant contribution to the struggle for the right of self-definition by providing an approach to narrative that is unique to Native American tribal fiction.

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Encounters with Deer Woman: Sexual Relations in Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer* and Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife*

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How contemporary authors make use of narratives from the oral tradition is of interest to scholars and readers of Native American literature. James Ruppert suggests that the goal of Louise Erdrich and other Native American writers is to "shift the paradigm" (150) of Native and non-Native readers so that both have an appreciation for each other's perspectives. The Native storyteller's text mediates between its Native and non-Native audiences by "bring[ing] the oral into the written, the Native American vision into Western thinking, spirit into modern identity, community into society, and myth into modern imagination" (Ruppert 7). Two recent novels draw upon the traditional stories of Deer Woman to accomplish this task. This essay explores the use of the Deer Woman stories in Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer* and Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife* to weave cautionary tales about the kinds of relationships between men and women which are needed to sustain the community while delineating those which destroy group cohesiveness.

The Lakota¹ versions of the Deer Woman stories were recorded by Ella Deloria and published in 1932. Traditionally, Deer Woman narratives were used to help community members to understand the behavior expected of them, particularly through the difficult period of courtship and marriage. Both men and women were not to give way to individual passion, but were to establish relationships that would add to the stability of the tribe. Men could not afford to be distracted from hunting and protecting the community, nor could women afford to have their attention wander from activities of sustaining the community. As cultural lessons, the stories formed part of the Lakota child's education and stressed right relationships and "the proper forms of expression between fellow beings" (Rice 120). They also show that mistakes could "be overcome by resourcefulness" (Rice 126) and that the power of Deer Woman could be used for the good of the community.

Current references to these stories by Native American writers point to their being well-known among many contemporary tribal groups. For instance, in the introduction to *Through the Eye of the Deer, An Anthology of Native American Women Writers*, in which one of Deloria's Lakota Deer Woman stories is reprinted, Carolyn Dunn (Creek/Cherokee/Seminole) and Carol Comfort (Cherokee/Choctaw) refer to "the traditional Deer Woman spirit" as "the spirit we are

warned about as children, the spirit that bewitches those who are susceptible to her sexual favors and who can be enticed away from family and clan into misuse of sexual energy" (xi).²

Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer* draws upon elements of traditional Deer Woman stories³ in her exploration of sexual behavior on a Sioux reservation. Using the character of Red Dress (Èuwignaka Duta) from the 1860s and her descendant, Anna Thunder, Power warns her readers about the use and "misuse of sexual energy." The Deer Woman spirit does not appear in Power's novel except as a manifestation of the disruptive behavior of Anna Thunder. In order to examine this behavior, one must first place it into the context of nineteenth-century Dakota kinship rules, which Deloria details in *Waterlily* and *Speaking of Indians*. As Deloria comments:

[T]he ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. . . . In the last analysis every other consideration was secondary — property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself. Without that aim and the constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakotas in truth. They would no longer even be human. To be a good Dakota, then, was to be humanized, civilized. And to be civilized was to keep the rules imposed by kinship for achieving civility, good manners, and a sense of responsibility toward every individual dealt with. Thus, only was it possible to live communally with success; that is to say, with a minimum of friction and a maximum of good will. (*Speaking* 25)

In Power's novel, the Deer Woman stories are an example of how myth lives on, bringing "spirit into modern identity" (Ruppert 7). For the contemporary residents of the Sioux reservation, the deeds of Red Dress (Èuwignaka Duta) from the 1860's serve as a model of behavior. As a dutiful and accomplished daughter, Red Dress learns English from the local missionary Priest in order to translate for her father, the chief, and the sub-chiefs to satisfy their curiosity about the Priest's words. However, she remains loyal to her people, never wavering in her allegiance to the traditional ways. It is clear that she does not think her people should covert to Christianity, but she keeps this knowledge from

the Priest by mediating between the Priest and her people, softening the Priest's words.

The story of Red Dress occurs in the time period of "an Indian War of no mean proportion" as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs noted in 1863 (quoted in Marks 183). The US government was increasingly moving to contain the Great Plains nations in reservations as white settlers and gold hunters flooded the area and the inevitable clashes ensued. Resisting this containment, many of the Great Plains nations refused to have anything to do with the treaty process, moving on and off the reservations and often drawing their reservation kin to them. As Sitting Bull said, "You are fools to make yourselves slaves to a piece of fat bacon, some hardtack and a little sugar and coffee" (quoted in Marks 192). Red Dress' village is one of the bands which still lived in the old ways, hunting and trapping as they would. Thus, when she has a dream directing her to go to the Fort Laramie, "the key military outpost in the campaign to subjugate the Sioux nation" (Wright 41), it is to be expected that the carrying out of her dream is a part of the war against the encroaching whites.

Coming from a Dakota band that had rebuffed the encroaching Euro-American culture, Red Dress acts out her dream in traditional Dakota ways in deference to her kinship obligations. Dreams were seen as messages from the spirits and were important to maintaining the balances in Dakota society. Dreams were taken so seriously that it was decided that Red Dress "would travel to Fort Laramie after the spring thaw," even though she does not know for what purpose (Power 224).

Red Dress is joined on her journey by her younger brother, Long Chase, in the mutually dependent relationship Dakota brothers and sisters have for one another—his to protect his sister and to be her "invincible mainstay" (Deloria *Waterlily* 61) and hers "to uphold his honor and defend him in all phases of his life" (Deloria *Waterlily* 180).

Their journey becomes a ritual from the time she and her brother leave the camp: "We stepped into a dream, into a world governed by spirits" (228). They encounter no enemies, no people, "only passing herds of elk and antelope" (228) for the two weeks it takes them to get to the fort. They do encounter swallowtail butterflies which number so many they leave "in a rippling cloud" and Long Chase refers to them as "ancestors" watching over them (228).

Dressed in their ceremonial clothes, Red Dress in the color of life and her brother in the color of sky, they first journey through a village of pitiful, shabby Dakotas who ask if they are "the ghosts of . . . ancestors" (229). According to the kinship rules of hospitality, they ex-

change gifts and the village Dakotas seem to bless their unknown mission, literally singing their praises.

When Red Dress and Long Chase meet the fort chaplain, a Reverend Pyke, they find him shooting at live bull snakes nailed to a cottonwood tree. Red Dress has to look away as her serpent spirit helpers⁴ would most certainly be upset by this treatment. Thus, Red Dress meets what will be the focal point of the carrying out of her dream, Reverend Pyke. He becomes the entry into fort society for her. Pyke, who believes that nature is "an evil disorder requiring the cleansing hand of God," (Power 233) is the representation of Anglo America whose vision is that America should be "a place where animals were bred for food behind neat fences, mountains were leveled, valleys filled, rivers straightened, and grass trained with a ruler" (233).

The spirit helpers, the red stones, and Spotted Dog⁵ play important roles in the carrying out of Red Dress' mission. The fact that Red Dress is accompanied on her journey by numerous spirit helpers is an indication of her "right behavior" and her high standing in her community. Spotted Dog accompanies Red Dress every day into the fort to watch over her in lieu of her brother. Long Chase spends his time teaching the young men of the Dakota village who subsist on white man's rations to hunt in the old way. Although Red Dress has been an exemplary model, the behavior that is in question concerns her actions at the fort. When one of the fort soldiers becomes interested in Red Dress, the stones spring into action. Although Red Dress had left them back in her lodge, "some hidden force had . . . propelled them through the air, and tucked them into" her quilled bag (Power 243).

What happens next is the stuff of dreams, of Red Dress' immersion into the ceremony of her dream. Red Dress "place[s] the stones beneath a clump of weeds, not knowing [she] . . . will do it" (Power 243). Later she finds herself at the river; the young soldier is drawn to her, the stones clutched in his hand. She takes them and puts them in her pouch and uses a lock of her hair wound around his jacket button to bind him. She instructs him and the next morning Pyke finds him dead, hanging from the very tree upon which he had shot the snakes.⁶

This part of the ceremony is repeated twice again with the painted, sacred stones manifesting the power of the rock nation⁷ to eliminate two more enemies. Red Dress realizes that her mission is to be "at war," (Power 244) not only with the soldiers, but also with herself. She is acting like a Deer Woman, i.e. using her sexual power to lure young men away from their duties. The proscription against an honorable Dakota woman acting in such a manner is so strong that even though

she is acting for the good of her people, Red Dress is conflicted about her behavior. However, she must carry out the mission of her dream or face even worse personal consequences.

Red Dress and Long Chase continue to support each other as brother and sister in the Dakota way: "I was proud of my generous brother, who spent so many hours with the children of our cousins, teaching them to do things the old people in their village only talked about. But it was not our way to fuss over one another; my terse praise was enough" (Power 247). However, in the private nature of the acting out of a ceremonial dream, Red Dress and Long Chase never discuss that part of Red Dress' activities. As a good brother, Long Chase pursues his occupation of providing for her, not knowing of the danger in which the acting out of her dream has placed her, and leaves to pursue a buffalo. He does, however, leave Spotted Dog with her.

When Reverend Pyke comes that evening to "subdue" Red Dress as a manifestation of evil nature, Spotted Dog leaps in front of the shot from his revolver and is killed. Red Dress calls to the dying dog as "her flesh" (251). Pyke's second shot kills Red Dress, but the stones work their magic and cause Pyke to shoot himself. When Long Chase returns with "enough buffalo meat, tallow, and winter hides to last us through the winter" (251-2), he finds Red Dress dead. He removes the words Pyke had pinned to her dress alluding to her as the snake in the Garden of Eden, but unknown to Pyke the words also allude to Red Dress' serpent spirit guardians. The clash of these two concepts—the snake as evil and the snake as a powerful natural force are symbolic of the clash between Western and Native American spiritual perspectives and an example of how Power's text mediates between its Native and non-Native audiences. As Wright puts it:

Pyke's views of man as the organizer and administrator of the earth, of the earth itself as evil, of his own voice as a projection of God's are absolutely irreconcilable with the tribal belief in humankind as children of nature, in the earth as the sacred Mother, in one's own voice as the humble projection of oneself. (42)

Still a good sister, but now a ghost, Red Dress scouts for Long Chase as he brings her body home. She tortures his "adversaries with flung rocks and snowy twisters until they change direction" (Power 252). Even though the spirit of Red Dress is kept for a year in the traditional Dakota way, Red Dress is not released from the earth at the end

of the year. She remains with the Dakota, "hitched to the living, still moved by their concerns" (255). She becomes their collective ancestral memory.

As a further example of bringing "spirit into modern identity . . . and myth into modern imagination" (Ruppert 7), Power brings the myth of Red Dress and Deer Woman onto the twentieth-century reservation. Red Dress is an ancestor spirit of Anna Thunder, a contemporary Dakota, now living on the reservation. However, Anna is conflicted as to how to use her legacy. Was Red Dress a Deer Woman causing conflict among the people and using her power selfishly or did she use the power of Deer Woman as an acclaimed warrior woman to destroy the enemy? Like other spiritual gifts, the power of Deer Woman can be used for the good of the community as well as the bad.

Anna claims, "Medicine pulsed within me, shot through my veins. . . I . . . had potent blood inherited from my grandmother's sister, Red Dress" (Power 151-52). However, by 1935, Anna had linked Red Dress negatively with Deer Woman rather than as a warrior woman using the attributes of Deer Woman positively:

I had heard her insistent voice, crackling with energy, murmuring promises of a power passed on through the bloodlines from one woman to the next. I had seen her kneeling beside a fire, feeding it with objects stolen from her victims: buttons, letters, twists of hair. She sang her spells, replacing the words of an ancient honor song with those of her own choosing.
(204)

At first, Anna avoids using any inherited power. However, traditional kinship rules break down on the reservation in which all adults "should have been thoroughly devoted to their children's future" (Rice 21) and being a good relative means reflecting on how behavior will affect one's kin and one's self.⁸ When Anna's child dies because of what she believes to be the selfishness of her cousin, Joyce, she uses the power to take revenge. She fails to see the difference between using the power as Red Dress had to protect the community and using the power to act like a deer woman to destroy the community.

In the Lakota creation story, the first couple of the Lakota nation have a beautiful daughter who conspires to ignore her husband, the wind, and to marry the sun instead. Because of her treachery, she is banished and is known as Double-Faced Woman (Anukite) with "one

side of her face forever ugly" (St. Pierre and Long Soldier 37).⁹ According to the stories, "[w]hite-tailed deer are thought to have a special relationship to courting men and are said to be manifestations of the influence of Anukite' in punishing men" (51). Therefore, Deer Woman is an aspect of Double-Faced Woman who "is very dangerous to men and can influence women to be promiscuous as well as artistic" (St. Pierre and Long Soldier 45).

Double-Faced Woman is also the patron of women's arts, and Anna spends two days beading moccasins for Joyce's daughter, Dina. She calls on Red Dress in a horrifying ritual and the thirteen-year-old Dina dances herself to death in the red-beaded moccasins.

From that time, when Anna Thunder "let the magic loose," (215) she misuses the medicine power of Red Dress, "practic[ing] selfish magic, liv[ing] her own doctrine of Manifest Destiny, until her power extend[s] across the Dakotas" (21). She renames herself Mercury Thunder after that element which has a benign appearance but which is deadly—another version of the Double Face. Mercury uses the Deer Woman medicine to charm young men into becoming her love slaves, even though she is old enough to be their grandmother. When she is thwarted, she causes even greater havoc, forcing the object of her desire, Calvin Wind Soldier, to have an affair with his wife's twin sister. She says, "The only thing I knew for sure was that I had filled these young people with hurtful desires, changed the course of their destinies, because after all, I could do it" (167).

Within her own family, Mercury's focus is to pass on the Deer Woman/Double Face power she believes she has inherited from Red Dress. When her daughter, Crystal, refuses to behave as a Deer Woman and wants to marry the father of her child, Mercury will not release Crystal unless she turns over the infant. Leaving her child, Crystal escapes to Chicago, marries, and uses the power of Double-Faced Woman artistically instead of promiscuously, creating a huge beaded extravaganza. She beads "a tapestry twelve feet long and six feet high, weighing forty-five pounds" (274) of da Vinci's Last Supper.

The child, Charlene, is raised by her grandmother.¹⁰ Mercury again tries to get her granddaughter to behave as a Deer Woman. Charlene watches her grandmother bewitch young men into bed, and finally tries an experiment of her own. She puts a spell on five boys in her high school class and wakes unhappily the next day with "sore muscles and injured flesh" (270). However, Dakota culture offers young people opportunities to learn from their mistakes and become responsible members of the community,¹¹ and Red Dress, the warrior woman, ap-

pears to Charlene and admonishes her: "You misused the medicine because you have a bad example. If you are selfish with it, someday it will be selfish with you. We do not own the power, we aren't supposed to direct it ourselves. . . . Give it up. . . ." (271).

Red Dress appears once more in her guise as a warrior to Harley Wind Soldier, a grass dancer, as he fasts for a vision. She tells him that he is "dancing a rebellion," (299), even though the old ways are gone and the grass and "pretty fringes" of his costume no longer hide "blood and flesh and captured hair" (299). The message is not to forget he is a Dakota warrior. Harley finds his voice and is restored to the community and the power of Deer Woman is broken for the moment. Red Dress' reputation as an honored warrior is restored. Harley becomes another example of how the old spirits/stories can aid in discovering modern identity to help the community.

Although Deer Woman seems to feature prominently in stories of the Plains Nations, particularly the Lakota, Louise Erdrich¹² also draws upon this figure in her story of the Ojibwa in *The Antelope Wife*.¹³ Erdrich uses the Deer Woman stories to illustrate the harm obsessive love can do to the community versus ordinary, stabilizing love.

Erdrich draws upon the Lakota spirits, Deer Woman, and her counterpart, Elk Man,¹⁴ connecting the sexual obsession identified with them to the cannibalistic hunger of the Ojibwa ice monster, the Windigo.¹⁵ The beading power given by Double-Faced Woman becomes, in turn, an obsession. White dogs appear throughout, and, in Erdrich's novel, they even serve as narrators. One is identified as part Dakota, part Ojibwa. One is a windigo sent by Deer Woman, and a number sacrifice themselves for humans.¹⁶ In Erdrich, the Deer Woman becomes that most elusive figure, Antelope Woman.

Like the Dakota, the goal of traditional Ojibwa life was to keep things in balance and to maintain "good relations with human and other-than-human persons. . . . [E]xcessive greed and failure to share one's food and belongings, excessive pride and misuse of power" were among the actions causing disruption in the human community and "disrespect or neglect of the manitouk and the mistreatment or misuse of animals and plants" were causes of disruption of relationships with non-humans (Smith 105).

In Erdrich's novel, the encroaching Euro-Americans also affect Ojibwa culture, and the novel covers about the same time period as *The Grass Dancer*, late 1800's through the 1990's. One of the earliest manifestations of the obsession typified by Deer Woman in the novel takes place when a young cavalry officer, Scranton Roy, participates in

a massacre of an Ojibwa village “mistaken for hostile during the scare over the starving Sioux” (AW 3). Roy had been lured away from his peace-loving Quaker family by an actress—a woman like Deer Woman who is not what she seems. When the actress fails to meet him at the appointed spot, he joins the army and finds “pleasure in raising, aiming” and in his “frigid hate” (an echo of the windigo) as he destroys the village (4).

Roy follows a baby on a cradleboard bound to the back of a dog—a child of Blue Prairie Woman who has had a deer husband. Blue Prairie Woman was once called So Hungry (Apijigo Bakaday) because “she was always eating, always hungry, but never full” (AW 55). She was suspected of being a windigo because she showed such greed, even eating the food left for the dead. Her story parallels a vision quest in which supplicants fast and literally “hunger” for a vision. However, So Hungry is never satisfied until she takes a deer husband (a version of an undesirable spirit guardian).¹⁷ Finally, her brothers come for her and shoot the deer husband. However, like the men who are seduced by Deer Woman, a woman who is seduced by Elk Man or, in this case, Deer Man, is never the same. When Blue Prairie Woman loses her baby daughter on the cradleboard, she becomes obsessed with finding her. Although she eats nothing but dirt and leaves for six months, she never grows any thinner. She has obsessive sex with her husband “until they became gaunt and hungry, pale windigos with aching eyes, tongues of flame” (13). From such obsessive sex, a long line of twins extend, and in these descendants of the Blue Prairie Woman, humans and antelope/deer people become intertwined, causing Cally Roy Whiteheart Beads’ twin grandmothers to say that Cally and her sister are “part deer” (55) in the mid 1990’s. Erdrich says that humans are “[n]o more and no less important than the deer” (73).

Antelope Woman herself seems to be a descendant of Blue Prairie Woman’s lost daughter who was adopted by the antelope after her mother’s death. Klaus Shawano sees the Antelope Woman and her three daughters at a powwow in Elmo, Montana, at the place where “[e]arth and sky touch everywhere and nowhere, like sex between two strangers” (21). This is surely a mystical site, between worlds. Klaus is drawn to them; he is “witched” (29). One might say that the myth of Deer Woman comes into Klaus’ “modern imagination” (Ruppert 7), but he ignores the old stories:

In her right hand she holds a fan of feathers of a red-tailed hawk. Those birds follow the antelope to fall

on field mice the moving herd stirs up. Suddenly, as she raised the fan high, my throat chills. I hear in the distance and in my own mind and heart the high keer of the stooping hawk—a lonely sound, coldhearted, intimate. (24)

In the Lakota stories if the object of Deer Woman's seduction can "perceive a 'deer' trait before they have intercourse, he will temporarily capture her until she gives him her power. . . . Usually, . . . he will become a better horse taker or warrior" (Rice 29). Otherwise, "he will be insane for the rest of his abbreviated life" (29). Klaus seems to know that she is an Antelope Spirit Woman. He seeks help from an old medicine man, presumably not an Ojibwa, but from one of the Plains Nations because Klaus claims that because he is an Ojibwa, "a woods Indian" (AW 26), he doesn't understand the ways of the plains. The medicine man, Jimmy Badger, warns him that "[f]ew men can handle their love ways" (29) and that the women are needed by his tribe. However Klaus overestimates his spiritual powers and lets his arrogance blind him to the real nature of the Antelope Woman. He believes he can be one of the "few."

His interaction with the Antelope Woman is true to the form of the Lakota story of Deer Woman. Once he sees her he becomes obsessed until he "only want[s] to be with her or be dead" (AW 22). Despite the warnings of his dream in which he is "running, running and still must run" (25) and of Jimmy Badger, he persists. He is caught in the process of catching the Antelope Woman: "But in my heart, I knew I was already caught. The best hunter allows his prey to lead . . . just lets himself be drawn to the meeting" (29). Once Klaus steals the Antelope Woman, she takes over this life, even trying to kill him with sex. He calls Jimmy Badger who tells him to return her and again warns that "[t]hey appear and disappear like shadows on the plains. . . . Some men follow them and do not return. Even if you do return, you will never be right in the head" (33).¹⁸ Jimmy says that with the loss of Antelope Woman, terrible things are happening—roofs caved in with snow, people out of work, diseased fish—testifying to the spiritual power of the Antelope Woman and her daughters.

Just in case Klaus doesn't understand that he is obsessed, the Antelope Woman sends a windigo dog with "wolf paws" (AW 126) and deer ears to Klaus—a "[b]ad spirit of . . . out-of-control hunger. Hunger of impossible devouring" (127). However, it is not until Richard Whiteheart Beads accuses Klaus of stealing the Antelope Woman and

turning her into a wino that Klaus remembers the ceremony for obsession and tries to free himself: "to paint the red stripe of the drum down the middle" of his face and to "*send half of yourself in each direction*. West, east. Let her go with the western half, free" (AW 155).

Klaus is unable to complete this ceremony until another spirit dog intervenes, saving him from having his head decapitated by a lawnmower as he sleeps in the bushes in the park. He is left with "a neat bloody crease down the exact middle" (AW 255) like the drum stripe of the ceremony. In a dream, he obtains the ability to quit drinking and release the Antelope Woman. This intervention of the spirit dog who "[b]ounced off a tree and vanished" (225) follows an Ojibwa belief that one must humble oneself before the spirits to be given a vision. The spirits might take pity on a supplicant and lend their power. Klaus finally admitted to himself that he in his arrogance set out to do what should not have been done. "We all have it in us. . . . It is longing makes us do the things that we should not. . . . Longing is the bliss of thieves that getting kills" (227).

The Antelope Woman, who is called Sweetheart Calico after the piece of cloth Klaus uses to attract and bind her, appears in other lives in the story, usually signaling sexual obsession. Sometimes she is followed by Elk Man or Deer Man. Sweetheart Calico appears to Rozina Whiteheart Beads, and Rozina is lured into Frank Shawano's bakery. Frank, acting as a Deer Man, "catches" Rozina by feeding her "bits of a cinnamon roll from his bare fingers" (AW 37). Later Rozina's children see their mother in the park with a "dream of a deer man. Deer head on his shoulders. . . . Hooves striking flames from the tree roots" (53-54). One of Rozina's daughters, Cally, identifies her mother as a "deer mother" (59).

When Rozina's husband, Richard, discovers that she has been drawn into the twilight world of the Deer Man, he tries to kill himself. Richard has been so obsessed with Rozina that "[s]he had begun to plot" from the first year of their marriage "how in the world she would get away from him" (181). Even in marriage, sexual obsession is to be feared because one cannot then act responsibly and in balance. Richard's attempt at suicide results in the accidental death of one of his twin daughters, Deanna, thus illustrating again the harm that can result from sexual obsession. This action, however, pulls Rozina out of the Deer Man's grasp, and out of Richard's, too. Richard's obsession eventually leads to his suicide.

After the death of her daughter, Rozina gives up her obsessive love and turns to beading¹⁹—that other gift of Double-Faced Woman—

working out her grief in “four roses of hearts . . . in a burst of dangerous pinks” (85). Erdrich tells us that in the old language the word for beads means “little spirit seed” (91). Beading and beads throughout the novel are linked to obsession and unbalance. Indeed, the mythic beading twins at the beginning of the novel are “trying to upset the balance of the world” (1). Part Four opens with the story of a twin who gambles away her children’s blankets for the prized ruby-red whitebeads. She takes after her children with a knife when the hungry children swallow the precious beads she needs to finish her design—illustrating the ultimate obsession. She has allowed her obsession to destroy what should have been the most important part of the community—her children.

Zosie and Mary, twin granddaughters²⁰ of Blue Prairie Woman, are an example of this obsession. They spend their evenings beading with the “glittering heart reds” (206). Indeed, they “upset the balance of the world” with Zosie’s husband, Augustus Roy, so that Rozina never knows which of them is her mother. The story is that Zosie laid out the pattern of Mary and Augustus’ passion in her beading: “The two never saw the stitch work that kept them sewed to her side. They never saw the fabric upon which their passion was marked out in chalk” (209).

The sections which record the story of Zosie, Mary, and Augustus’ triangle are titled as windigo stories with images of the lustful greed of the cannibal. Augustus had traded the ruby red whiteheart beads for Zosie, the modest one, but they were a “set of ravenous gentle-eyed twins” (239), and Augustus falls “in love with the enigma of his wife’s duplication” (209). The windigo stories end with the Augustus’ biting Zosie’s earlobe in order to tell the difference between them. When the now elderly twins are questioned about what happened to Augustus, they “spoon the dark juices of the pies into their mouths, eat daintily, and smile their slightly windigo smiles” (212).

Blue beads are connected throughout the story with the deer people. The baby in the cradleboard, probably born of her mother’s liaison with her Deer Husband, is accompanied by blue beads (5). The child who is eventually adopted by the antelope people is naked wearing “blue beads around her neck” (20). Zosie Roy craves the blue beads from the time she was a child. Blue Prairie Woman comes to her in a dream, and Zosie gambles her life and those of her unborn twins for the beads and for Blue Prairie Woman’s name. Blue Prairie Woman tells her that “without the name those beads will kill you” with “longing” (217), admitting the obsessive, irresponsible behavior of Zosie, but trying to counter it with another gift.

At the end of the novel, we learn that the Antelope Woman owns the blue beads and she has been hiding them under her tongue which has prevented her from talking.²¹ She offers them to Cally, daughter of Rozina Roy and Richard Whiteheart Beads, if Cally will set her free. The twenty-one year old Cally has been on a quest to find the meaning of her Ojibwa name since she was eighteen.²² As in the old stories, Cally is able to use the deer power that Antelope Woman offers and is unaffected by Antelope Woman's duplicity in that Cally recognizes her for what she is: "I have always been afraid of her. She is not just any woman. She is something created out there where the distances turn words to air and thoughts to stone" (AW 218). As Cally attempts to aid the Antelope Woman, what she is given in turn is the end of her vision quest—she is given the blue beads—"a hook of feeling in the heart" (219). She acknowledges her connection to "my mother, her mother, all the mothers before her who dug in the dirt" (219). Cally no longer feels unbalanced from the death of her twin sister, Deanna. Instead of being seduced into obsession by Antelope Woman, she is able to use the power to feel whole. In Cally's journey, Erdrich shows clearly how the old stories can be used to lead to identity in the modern world.

Rosina, too, is able to overcome obsession and use the deer power to have a non-obsessive love relationship. At her wedding to Frank Shawano, her guests compare him to her first husband, the obsessive Richard Whiteheart Beads. Even Richard's name suggests obsession for he is named for the red beads which bead-ers covet because the cranberry color of the beads is obtained by the addition "of twenty-four carat gold" (AW 183). Frank "was seemingly normal. There was passion . . . [b]ut so far no self-destructive weirdness involved. Not yet, that they had seen. A relief" (159).

After Richard commits suicide immediately following her wedding, Rozina has to exorcise his spirit and that of her dead daughter, Deanna, who cling to her. She sets out food for their spirits and Windigo Man, "the ice spirit of awful hunger" (AW 190), appears to her, trying to "[p]ull his cold sky-colored skin around her like a grave" (190). Just when she is ready to accede to him, Frank appears in her dream, giving her the Deer Man power to ward off the deathly grip of the windigo:

Suddenly he slides down, limp and heavy in her arms, a suit of leather Brown leather. Warm She straps him on like body armor. Wears him like shields and breastplates. He has given her the gift of

his, big, warm, strong body to hide in from now on as
she walks forward in the world. (191)

During the unexpected events of Rozina and Frank's first anniversary party, guests still look for signs of obsession: "The party waited. The hiccups sounded like the prelude to a bout of hysteria" (236). Instead, Rozina and Frank burst out laughing. Their love is seen as ordinary love which maintains its ties and obligations to the community and not as obsession, that place of the deer people—"the band of light at the world's edge" (19)—removed from the obligations to friends and family.

In both *The Grass Dancer* and *The Antelope Wife*, the mythic figure of the Deer Woman is an important touchstone for the continuity of traditional values in contemporary Native American life. Jonathan Little claims,

In *The Antelope Wife*, Erdrich implicitly suggests that Native American survival depends in part on extending traditional epistemologies that stress reciprocity, interdependence, and revision to the idea and practice of multiculturalism. . . . Through the application of the Ojibwa sacred metaphysic to the contemporary multicultural world, Erdrich outlines ways of improving the broader collective society while also providing a sense of an empowered Ojibwa identity (523).²³

In these two novels, both Power and Erdrich make clear that whether it is the Dakota or the Ojibwa, Mercury Thunder or Klaus Shawano, it is the responsibility of the individual not to give way to obsession, but to support the good of the larger community. This is the way of survival in an era of cultural disintegration.

Both Power and Erdrich illustrate how the old stories can influence identity and the individual's place in the modern community. The myths can be used to fuel imaginative responses to the problems of the community. Their texts show that even in the face of Euro-American encroachment, the relevance of the old stories has not been muted. As Ruppert notes, when the texts of Native authors operate "to shift the paradigm," allowing Native readers to become "recharge[d]" and non-Native readers to become "inspire[d]," "perception expands beyond the boundaries of the text, overcoming otherness, and the universe reveals itself as timeless and mythic" (150).

NOTES

¹ The terms Nakota, Dakota, and Lakota were the three divisions of a confederation that came to be known as Sioux by Euro-Americans. Susan Power is an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and uses Dakota in her novel. While Deloria is Nakota (Yankton), she lived on the Standing Rock Reservation as a child and also uses Dakota, except when she is the recorder of the Lakota Deer Woman stories. Erdrich uses Dakota in *The Antelope Wife*. Because they seemed to have a common culture and belief system, the Deer Woman and Elk Man stories seem applicable to all three. It has been suggested that because Deloria was a Christian her versions of the Deer Woman stories might have been influenced by her faith. It is true that her father was one of the first college-educated Dakota to be ordained an Episcopal minister. Deloria, herself, graduated from Columbia University and worked under Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict in collecting the stories. Julian Rice praises Deloria's work as she did not have to have an interpreter to set down the stories from her informants unlike such recorders as James Walker or John Neihardt because of her considerable bilingual talents. However, whether or not Deloria's Christianity influenced her recordings of the stories, my argument is that the basic premises of the stories have survived and are now being used by contemporary authors—loyalty to group cohesiveness rather than individual aggrandizement or desire.

² See also a modern version, "Deer Woman," by Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux) in *Nothing but the Truth, An Anthology of Native American Literature*, 255-62. Evelina Zuni Lucero (Isleta/San Juan Pueblo) records a Deer Man story in the center of her novel, *Night Sky, Morning Star*.

³ See Julian Rice, 33-46 and 161-62, for a discussion of the Deer Woman story.

⁴ As she left on her journey, Red Dress was given a shield of buffalo-bull hide embellished with a picture of her "in a red dress clutching an arrow of lightning in her hand" (Power 227). Her serpent spirit helpers (who came to her as she lay on a buffalo hide as an infant) are represented there in the form of "twenty-one rattlesnakes" dangling "from the bottom edge of the shield." Neil Wright points out that "Red dress is a variant of the serpent goddess, represented in North American In-

dian lore by the While Buffalo woman, who is supposed to have brought the sacred rituals and the rules of civilization to the Sioux" (note 3, 43). Roland Walter gives Red Dress the "archetypal status" dependent upon her "eternal return as generative spirit-agent." She "embod[ies] the past that haunts the present, the lingering destructive effects of colonization, the ruins of imperialist barbarism retranslated into the ongoing struggle of indigenous peoples against marginalization, oppression, and racism" (69).

⁵ For the Lakota, dogs can also be "powerful spirit helpers" (St. Pierre and Long Soldier 119). White dogs were sometimes offered to appease "monsters" (Walker *Lakota Belief* 116) and Sunka, who was the "Spirit of the Dog [who] presided over friendship and cunning" (121).

⁶ Wright sees the battle that Red Dress carries out at the fort as mostly symbolic in the way of counting coup since she cannot eliminate the threat of the fort by her actions. The soldiers whom Red Dress kills are actors playing the part of MacDuff, Banquo and Macbeth. He says, "The execution of these legendary white 'chiefs' constitutes a symbolic victory of tribal magic over white military prowess and immortalizes Red Dress as a historic medicine woman" (42).

⁷ Dakota culture includes kinship relations not only with human beings, but also with everything. The most frequent Lakota prayer is translated as "I acknowledge everything in the universe as my relations" (St. Pierre and Long Soldier 47). Deloria notes that to pray and to address a relative are the same words (*Speaking* 28-9). In the Lakota creation story, Iyan, the rock, generates Mother earth with its blood, so that stones are "the oldest form of creation" (St. Pierre and Long Soldier 97) and are seen as having spirit and special power. According to Mark St. Pierre and Tilda Long Soldier, "[S]mall, round rocks may be charged with great power and attach themselves to a living person, returning to them even when discarded" (108). Before Red Dress leaves on her journey, she goes to pray and falls, finding two "impossibly round" stones (Power 227). The reader is led to believe that the stones cause this fall, wanting her attention. They adopt Red Dress and will serve as spirit helpers. She paints these newest relations of hers red for the sun, the color of life.

⁸ See also the discussion in Ruth Helflin of Deloria and kinship on page 157.

⁹ See also James Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual* pages 30, 289-96 for discussions of Double-Faced Woman.

¹⁰ Also among the characters on the contemporary reservation is the Dog Spirit, now incarnated in an orange dog named Chuck Norris. The dog is the only one on the reservation who is unafraid to take on Mercury's granddaughter Charlene.

¹¹ See the discussion in Rice of young women making mistakes, 126.

¹² Although Erdrich is Ojibwa, she had contact with the Dakota from early in her life. She "grew up near a Sioux Indian reservation in Wahpeton, N. D., where her parents taught at a Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding school. The family lived on the school's small campus" (Passaro 158). Additionally, she notes that her reservation, Turtle Mountain, "is an interesting place. It hasn't been continuously inhabited by the Turtle Mountain Band. It was one of those nice grassy, game-rich places that everybody wanted. So it was Sioux, it was Mitchiff, it was Chippewa" (Erdrich quoted in Bruchac 99). Later, while researching for a TV movie, Erdrich "learned a few words of Lakota and spent some time with a friend at the Crow Dog's [sic] place in South Dakota" (Quoted in Chavkin 223). Historically, the Ojibwa and the Sioux occupied the same territories and would have had much opportunity for cultural exchange.

¹³ I will be using the abbreviation AW for references to *The Antelope Wife*.

¹⁴ See Rice's discussion of the erotic power of Elk Man, 74-76.

¹⁵ Teresa Smith notes, "The windigo acts as both a specter of starvation and a warning to those who are excessively greedy. Gluttons may be eaten by windigos or become windigos themselves" (Note 2: 123).

¹⁶ Smith discusses the significance of the sacrifice of white dogs to the Ojibwa in Note 9, page 125.

¹⁷ See discussions of the vision quest in Smith 55-59, Vecsey 121-43, and Van Dyke, "Questions of the Spirit" and "Of Vision Quests and Spirit Guardians."

¹⁸ This passage is also quoted as a preface to Erdrich's poem "The Strange People" (*Jacklight* 68) and credited to Pretty Shield (Linderman, 114). Pretty Shield tells a story of four Crow girls who are playing ball and see two "beautiful strangers." These girls are discovered to be antelope people because they smell like "deer-people" and show their "hind-ends." No harm comes to the Crow girls because they discovered their identity before getting too involved with them. Pretty Shield says, "[T]he antelope are deceivers not helpers" (117).

¹⁹ Erdrich notes that she went to study with Delia Beboning on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, to learn traditional porcupine quilling. Michael Dorris, her then-husband, says that quilling (or beading) "is a kind of a metaphor for writing. You take quills and you lay them down one by one. Using the natural colors, you create a pattern that emerges in the course of laying them down. That is what you do with dialogue or with anything" (quoted in Wong 50).

²⁰ Sarvé-Gorham explains sacred twins as not always appearing as actual twins in myth, but sometimes as sisters with contrasting personalities. In this case the mythic twins and Zosie and Mary who are featured prominently in *The Antelope Wife* may be patterned after Matchikewis and Oshkikwe, daughters of Nanabozho. In *Grandmothers of the Light*, Allen portrays one of these sisters as "boisterous or seductive" and the other as "reserved and modest" (143-44).

²¹ Julie Barak suggests that the voice of the Antelope Woman is loosed "because the grandmother acknowledges her power, her essence . . ." (17).

²² I am indebted to Peter C. Beidler and Gay Barton's *Reader's Guide to the Novels of Louise Erdrich* in helping me to keep the complicated chronology of *The Antelope Wife* straight.

²³ While I agree generally with Little, I think he fails to notice that *The Antelope Wife* is even more "multicultural" than he admits, as Erdrich draws not only from her German, French, and Ojibwa heritages in its plot, but also on the lore of her neighbors, the Dakota, in creating the "sacred metaphysic" of this novel.

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***The Decipherment of Ancient Maya Writing.* Edited by Stephen Houston, Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos, & David Stuart. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8061-3204-3 (alk. paper). xx + 551 pages.**

The forty-eight texts herein (all translated into English) constitute the most essential eyewitness accounts of the progress of decipherment of what the editors call “arguably the most complex form of writing ever devised in antiquity.” Rather than restating an account of Maya script and its mechanics, this collection aims to complement such accounts by documenting the intellectual history of its uniquely collaborative decipherment. (The editors point out that Maya decipherment had no single great breakthrough, no Champollion nor Ventris; it was more gradual and accretionary.) Houston, Chinchilla, and Stuart categorized their choices into seven sections, by intellectual approach. The first section, “Discovery,” for example, includes descriptions of ancient Maya writing by the conquistadors, friars, and other chroniclers (constituting virtually every mention from this era), as well as seven pioneering attempts to make sense of it. The former includes the expected passages from Avendaño and Bishop Landa, but also much more obscure passages such as those of Peter Martyr d’Anghiera (who so accurately described the figbark-screenfold books sent to Charles V that we can discern that they were Maya rather than Mixtec or Aztec). Another is the Anonymous Isagoge, which describes, in 1711, inscribed reliefs from Tonina with prescient accuracy: “. . . each of these figures is placed in a little house, with its lines distinct from each other, and each house has too much labor to be a single letter . . .” and

. . . it seems they tried to indicate that they had subjected some great prince, or cacique, or some Indian nation, because the man shown tied, nude and with his hair in the manner of the Indians, seems to signify (one of these) tied and violently subjected. (p. 44)

The other seven pioneers include Rafinesque, de Rosny, and the lesser-known James H. McCulloh, who first discerned (1817, 1829) that the Dresden Codex was written in the same writing system as carved texts from Palenque.

The later sections, titled “The Nature of Maya Writing,” “Principles of Decipherment,” “Time,” “History,” “Supernaturals,” and “Objects,” each contain a handful of excerpts from the most important contributions to decipherment from later eras. Here are two articles by Cyrus Thomas, who over a century ago argued for the glyphs’ phonetic

character. Here too we find Seler and Knorozov and Thompson on phoneticism; Beyer and Schellhas and Goodman and Thompson again on the Maya Calendar; and David Stuart's breakthrough Ten Phonetic Syllables. We find Morley, Förstemann, Pio Perez, Teeple, Berlin, Bowditch, Spinden, Genet, Proskuriakoff, . . . all the great early lights of our field. We can witness brilliant insights and lucky guesses, prejudice and open-mindedness, near-misses and wrong turns and dead-ends and scales falling from their eyes.

Selecting from the post-Knorozov and post-Thompson eras must have been difficult. Notwithstanding the prodigious output of some early authorities, contributors such as Linda Schele, Peter Mathews, Michael Coe, and the editors themselves have each produced prodigious bibliographies several pages long. For example, which one of Nikolai Grube's many pithy contributions to include? The editors chose a 1990 article deciphering the "stela-erection" glyph, partly because it was heretofore unavailable in English. Like most of the articles in this book, it is but one example, a single brilliant facet to lure us to seek out the rest of these authors' rich writings. One hopes that these tantalizing examples will inspire the collection and publication of "Complete Works of . . ." compendia for Schele, Lounsbury, Knorozov, and the rest.

Many of the articles, especially in the early part of the book, are mere excerpts, a page or two, sometimes a single paragraph, from much longer accounts. Even focusing on strictly relevant texts, the editors were forced to leave out a good deal. Certain pivotal articles are missing. The authors explain

. . . we decided not to include the superb, but recently reissued, articles in *Phoneticism in Maya Hieroglyphic Writing* (Justeson and Campbell 1994). No sourcebook can go without contributions from Berlin, Lounsbury, Proskuriakoff, and Thompson. Nonetheless, because of its relatively easy access, we exclude Lounsbury's seminal article "On the Derivation and Reading of the 'Ben-Ich' Prefix" (1973); the released space allows us to include some of Berlin's articles . . . (p. 17)

As is universally necessary in any work about Maya writing, this book is well-illustrated, mainly with careful drawings designed to elucidate essential legible elements of the glyphs. Because the main

method of disseminating these drawings has been, for the past thirty years, by photocopy or fax, many of these drawings have lost clarity, become muddy and sometimes even illegible through repeated copying. Several illustrations herein suffer from this syndrome (and as such, accurately reflect the chronic state of the original literature!). Usually these degraded images are merely annoying, filled-in or too-dark, as the bejeweled monkeys of Figure 43-10 on p. 443 or the distributed-analysis of glyphic phrases of Figure 39.8 on p. 377. Sometimes, however, the degradation renders the picture nearly useless, such as the images on pages 341, 350, 442, and 481, whose captions refer to details which are utterly invisible in the pictures. Luckily, these illustrations for the most part can be found elsewhere in better quality, and they are ultimately not crucial to the *raison d'être* of the book.

Houston, et al., introduce each contribution with a page or two of background, cogently and adroitly integrating the various articles into the greater narrative. It is to their credit that this volume hangs together so well. It satisfies the criteria for an essential reference: condensed, meaty, compendious and broad, fully referenced to lead one to deeper sources. I shall place it on a shelf within easy reach, since I know I shall refer to it often. The editors have unearthed some rare gems; I found much of interest that I had heard of but never read, and a few items with which I was (dare I admit it?) completely unfamiliar. It is a great satisfaction to sit back and read from the pioneering and sometimes lyrical work of the discoverers in a field; one is reminded just why they were so important. There glimmers here and there a touch of wonder, of joy, of the palpable pleasure of discovery. This book provides this in addition to its scholarly purpose, and I warmly recommend it to anyone interested in Maya writing.

Mark Van Stone

***How Should I Read These? Native Women Writers in Canada.* Helen Hoy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001. 080-2035-19X. x + 264pp.**

How Should I Read These? is a careful examination of seven texts by Native women writers in Canada, from Beatrice Mosionier (Culleton)'s *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) to Eden Robinson's *Traplines* (1996). Like earlier books of criticism such as Louis Owens's *Other Destinies* (1992), it seems to be aimed primarily at non-Native academics who want enough background and theory to do a reasonable job of teaching a work or works by Native Canadian women writers. The focus shifts back and forth between analyses of the texts themselves and analyses of the pitfalls of being a privileged white academic in a predominantly white university trying to talk about the texts without appropriating, exoticizing, or patronizing them, without affecting to speak "for" Native people, and without constructing a community that excludes Native people as professors, teachers, and authorities.

Like Helen Hoy, I have been challenged by students who have read Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* or Ruby Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun* as "interesting" books about Indigenous peoples but clumsy or failed novels. The most useful part of Hoy's text, it seems to me, is her articulation of an aesthetic based on community, reconciliation, information transmission, and oral narrative style in terms that are familiar and comforting to literature students steeped in theory. Because most of these texts are written primarily for Indigenous readers—with the secondary goal of educating ignorant but inquiring non-Natives—they can seem opaque to university audiences. *Slash*, for instance, is a four-part cyclical narrative based on an aesthetic of the land and the allusive structure of the Okanagan sacred year. It is also a realistic novel of the Red Power movement in Canada and the United States. Most of all, it is an indirect story showing young Indigenous men how to make life-affirming choices. Non-Native readers rarely see all this on first reading. *Honour the Sun* requires the reader to learn to "listen to the silence." Students who are puzzled by recurrent instances of violence with no blame—and sometimes without even a clear identification of a perpetrator—can learn to understand the Ojibway values of not condemning community members but seeking always to rebuild and support community. *In Search of April Raintree* always evokes such a strong personal response in at least one member of the class that students less frequently challenge it aesthetically, but Hoy's evaluation of

much of the criticism and response to the novel is valuable. One should not see the book as a naive attempt at realism that somehow succeeds just because of its “honesty” but rather as a well-crafted fiction that uses popular culture models to present vivid and painfully observed images that affect readers. Hoy’s criticism is most valuable for these three novels because it shows readers how each author structures her novel. Thus we see how oral tradition, respect for the entities that share the planet—land, animals, trees, hills, lakes—and the reintegration of community are central. One should also note that, as Kimberly Blaeser has stated in *Looking at the Words of Our People* (1993), the literature itself is criticism, and repeated readings teach one how to read.

Hoy’s discussions of Linda Griffiths and Maria Campbell’s *The Book of Jessica* and Lee Maracle’s *Ravensong* focus mostly on the cultural and ethical conflicts between Native-descended and European-descended individuals and cultures. The economic underpinnings of the communities seem to be overshadowed by Hoy’s concerns about appropriation and the responsibilities of the individual. For instance, is the question so much about whether Linda Griffiths, as an individual, takes over the production of *The Book of Jessica* or about what happens to Native voices when middle class white artists are more likely than Native working class activists to be able to afford the time to edit a book? Discussions of Beverly Hungry Wolf’s *The Ways of My Grandmothers* and Eden Robinson’s *Traplines* focus most on questions of voice and on the different kinds of authenticity rising from talking about periods from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries.

Hoy’s questioning of her right, as a privileged person of European descent, to teach and write about these texts is nuanced and appropriate, but somewhat circular. It would perhaps be useful for her to include strategies for putting her white privilege to use for the rebuilding of community that all the writers are advocating. A middle-class car can be useful for taking an elder to a doctor’s appointment—or to a beauty parlor. A white professor’s power can be useful for encouraging and finding funding for Indigenous students interested in attending university or graduate school or scholarly conferences. Just washing dishes or stacking chairs or wiping tables after a meeting or powwow can be a wonderful opportunity for listening to an Indigenous community from the inside. (It also provides a venue for leaving one’s comfort zone and making a fool of oneself, a very educative process.) The pragmatic reality-centered nature of the works under consideration seems to call

out for these sorts of responses, and I wonder if perhaps editors discouraged Hoy from using her own such experiences as part of the text.

For United States academics who might be less familiar with these works than Canadians are, I would strongly second Hoy's advocacy of the texts, especially *Slash*, *In Search of April Raintree*, and *The Book of Jessica*, all of which I have had students read in many classes in the US and Canada. It is perhaps particularly important for US teachers to learn about the Indigenous nations in the books—the Theytus Press book on Okanagan history *We Get Our Living Like Milk from the Land*, which Hoy cites, is a particularly useful resource. Because some of these books are published by small Canadian presses, American textbook distributors are not always capable of supplying them. Be sure to tell your bookstore to order directly from Theytus Press, for instance, or you may never see your books. *How Should I Read These?* (a University of Toronto Press book easily available in the US) is a useful introduction to some fine novels. I hope its publication will bring them many new readers.

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MAJOR TRIBAL NATIONS AND BANDS MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE

This list is provided as a service to those readers interested in further communications with the tribal communities and governments of American Indian/Native nations. Inclusion of a government in this list does not imply endorsement of or by *SAIL* in any regard, nor does it imply the enrollment or citizenship status of any writer mentioned; some communities have alternative governments and leadership that are not affiliated with the U.S., Canada, or Mexico, while others are not recognized at this point by colonial governments. We have limited the list to those most relevant to the essays published in this issue; thus, not all bands, towns, or communities of a particular nation are listed.

We make every effort to provide the most accurate and up-to-date tribal contact information available, a task that is sometimes quite complicated. Please send any corrections or suggestions to *SAIL* Editorial Assistant, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Department of American Thought and Language, 235 Bessey Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1033, or send e-mail to sail2@msu.edu.

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