

‘HERE IS THE STORY’:  
WEAVING KINSHIP IN HEMISPHERIC  
AMERICAN LITERATURES

by

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Well into the late-twentieth century, monolingualism persists as an organizing principle for national community even as the intrinsic multilingualism of the Americas nourishes interconnected histories and political imaginaries. My dissertation—*‘Here is the Story’: Weaving Kinship in Hemispheric American Literatures*—is a comparative study of a transnational and multilingual Americas. Across three chapters, I compare three authors’ works in which narrations of kinship unsettle a monolingual imaginary and disrupt settler colonial patrimonies. I explore English interlaced with Nahuatl and Spanish in Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987); French woven with Antillean Créole in Gisèle Pineau’s *L’Exil selon Julia* (1996); and English-language narration imbued with Laguna Pueblo language and cosmologies in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* (1977). The features of these multilingual texts imagine interrelated histories among hemispheric American languages, cultures, and ecologies and at once articulate differing shapes of kinship: a linear shape in Anzaldúa’s invocation of hybrid Aztec (Nahua) and Spanish ancestry; a networked, rhizomatic shape evoking eco-feminist relationality in the Creolized French of Pineau’s memorial novel; and multi-scalar webs of matter-energy wovenness in Silko’s narrative that produce a spiraling shape of kinship inclusive of more-than-human relations and nonlinear temporalities. This project centers on a study of language and epistemology through which I analyze postcolonial and decolonial modes of affiliation in familial, political, historical, and ecological imaginaries, and which ultimately promotes a practice of comparison that asserts hemispheric literariness in terms of epistemological (re)weavings of self, ancestry, and place.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Weaving/Reading Hemispheric Land and Literature

*Perhaps some of us make poetry, music, and art because the ancient story still dwells inside our body, as does a feeling from the old ways of seeing and knowing the world. I see it in our work, our circles of Native science conversations and the popularity of our books. We also know it in some quiet moments, intimations that surface from deep in the marrow as a brief yearning. [...] we still feel our animal kinship, our own animal life, and the primordial green and dirt-rich odor of our world connection as a reminder. The kinship and relationship between human and nonhuman others rise from inside to seek what is relevant in a changing world.*

— Linda Hogan, *The Radiant Lives of Animals*

In Linda Hogan's collection of stories and essays, *The Radiant Lives of Animals*, the Native poet-scholar coordinates the creation of poetry, music, and art with a deep desire for story. However, Hogan's words intimate story alternatively than the view that stories and storytelling are for entertainment, diversion, or even spectacle. To Hogan, story is a repeating practice of telling and retelling ways of seeing and knowing that make sense of the human relationship with the nonhuman—or, I prefer, more-than-human—world. Storytelling in this context is driven by a deep sense of relationality *with* the world. In her words, Indigenous storytelling in our times draws from the resiliency of that “ancient story” dwelling in the body. Hogan's words describe a kind of speech and literacy activated by the residual memory of a deep and enduring sense of kinship relation with the more-than-human in a persistently changing world; and, she says, Indigenous poetry, music, and art continually generate and regenerate this story (and science) of multispecies kinship.

In other parts of the hemisphere, the story is the same: outside of, or beyond, or perhaps nested deep within the perspective that tells a story of a nonhuman world made up of resources for human use, the (ancient) story of the material-energetic entanglement of human and more-than-human persists in languages, literatures, and reading practices that articulate multispecies kinship relations. Writing in *Ecological Applications* at the turn of the millennium, ethnographer Enrique Salmón articulated for the English-speaking scientific world the meanings and uses of the Indigenous science concept of iwígara. Continuously inhabiting a mountainous region in the

Mexican state of Chihuahua, the Rarámuri, or Tarahumara, conceive of “the total interconnectedness and integration of all life in the Sierra Madres, physical and spiritual,” understood through this expansive term (Salmón 1328). Salmón explains:

The *iwí* [...] translates roughly into binding with a lasso. But it also means to unite, to join, to connect. Another meaning of *iwí* is to breathe, to inhale/exhale, to respire. [...] Plants, animals, humans, stones, the land, all share the same breath [and] there is a whole morphophysiological process of change, death, birth, and rebirth associated with the concept of *iwí* [...] that all life, spiritual and physical, is interconnected in a continual cycle. (1328)

*Iwí* tells the story that “all life, spiritual and physical” forges, weaves, cycles in continual connection; *iwí* tells the story that matter-energy (already always inseparable in the Tarahumara language) respire, shuttles, transforms. The language draws this root of *iwí*—in all of its spectral, cyclical, respiratory materiality—into the expression *iwígara*, describing a *kincentric ecology*: a theory of relationality that substantiates kinship bonds between all beings and the earth and between shared activities on multiple scales. More than a phenomenon of traditionality or cultural primitivity, this breathing-weaving of *iwígara* proposes a dynamic relationality based in millennia of ecological knowledge and literacies and that exceeds the figurative—that exceeds kinship metaphors. It is a “morphophysiological process” of matter breathing, respiring, and shuttling itself energetically across, among, within, and during the various and related animal, plant, and mineral bodies that share ecological networks. The language survives in its speakers, as Salmón asserts, yet this concept of kincentric ecologies seems so alien to the conventions of Newtonian physics, Enlightenment Reason, and globalist narratives of progress and literacy—these are stories that tell of the earth as dead matter and of the human as progressing from superstitious tribal savage to secular scientific individual citizen. And yet, the kind of “ancient story” of matter-energy wovenness that persists in both Hogan’s essayist prose and Salmón’s ethnography proposes a form of scientific literacy at which quantum physics are just now arriving.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, ways of knowing through the old story precede and circumvent the boundaries of generic, disciplinary, and social evolutionary categories of becoming-human (and becoming-literary).

Theories of matter-energy wovenness emerge in other stories and languages of the hemisphere, as well, in terms that equally invoke a persistence of alternative epistemologies shared in oral, pictorial, and ecological knowledge systems and that also mark the rupture that

was (is) the colonial encounter in the Americas. In the US-Mexico borderlands, the Chicana feminist reiteration of *mestizaje* tells a story of empowered hybridity and orients a new *mestiza* consciousness toward post-nationalist futures written through the body-land connection and figured through reclamation of Aztec heritage. In the Francophone Caribbean, political-aesthetic literary praxes embrace creolization—the crossings or (re)weavings of language, culture, and political belonging—and, through Creole women’s voices, tell a story of a wovenness of body and place that exceeds the universal humanism of the postcolonial. While these two sites, languages, and storytelling practices may initially index wholly distinct ethnic and linguistic traditions, and do not immediately map relationally to *iwígara* or Indigenous orature, I read the conjunction of land, body, and writing or literature in all three sites of reading. From this conjunction, I situate a hemispheric network of practices—as theories—that tell the story of the Americas alternatively than the official colonial-modern History of American becoming and that each tell a distinct yet related story of kinship relations. Gathering these *mestiza* and Creole sites with the Indigenous Americas thus tells a transnational and multilingual story of the hemisphere that neither extracts the embodied experiences from their respective loci nor attempts to render their stories transparent or paradigmatic. In other words, weaving/reading these stories together and as heterogeneous histories of the hemisphere forms a challenge to the colonial-modern (globalist) narrative of progress emanating from Western Europe that so commonly positions kinship economies (kincentric ecologies) and oral knowledge (the “ancient story”) as vestiges of a primitive past, destined to vanish under the empirical force of a universal linear flow of time.<sup>2</sup> But scholarship that merely demarcates *mestiza*, Caribbean Creole, and Indigenous storytelling practices as artifacts of discrete cultures of literacy outside of science and knowledge-power likewise temporalizes alternative epistemologies as pre-modern, primitive, and thus inherently un-scientific *and* fails to apprehend the stretch and composition of the long, resilient, and heterogeneous histories of such alternative ways of knowing and knowledge in the Americas—in particular those epistemologies associated with the Indigenous Americas.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, a transnational, multilingual, and *trans-corporeal* story of the Americas encourages a comparative practice sensitive to the hemisphere as Indigenous production—with which I incorporate *mestiza* and Creole indigenities—that transits, circumvents, resists, and unsettles colonial-modern ontologies of division, difference, and universal (linear) time. I propose to weave/read hemispheric land and (as) literature within and across three distinct yet related sites to sense

patterns in the ways that different narrations—or shapes—of kinship relations evoke differing embodiments, ancestries, and place-based practices with regard to anti- or de-colonization.

In order to tell this story of weaving kinship in the hemisphere, I want to orient my reading first in concerns of translation. As a matter of articulating the framework for this project, I begin by speaking through Eric Cheyfitz and his seminal work *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (1991). Cheyfitz reads Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) in conversation with Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and toward a new and reclaimed consideration of the relationship between translation and metaphor, a relation that Cheyfitz argues had not yet (at the time of his writing) been considered in work on language and colonization (such as by Stephen Greenblatt and Tzvetan Todorov) (xxiii). One of Cheyfitz's primary critiques of Todorov's work addresses the ways that foundational translation studies tend to treat Indigenous, oral, and pictographic literacies as primitive, inferior, "not advanced" (according to Todorov) (xxiv). This evolutionary scheme of relation thus overlooks the political force of writing as a technology (as a vector of politics) and privileges the Western democracy that Todorov ideologically ascribes to the figure (that is, the metaphor) of advanced or *modern* literary and cultural practices. But Cheyfitz asserts that such linear evolutionary models of intercultural communication "are political models that produce politics" (xxv). This is to say that within the domain of the humanities—and literary studies generally—the written word has been and continues to be popularly and academically privileged as an absolute form of recording ostensibly objective absolutes in discourses of law, history, and anthropology—in opposition to supposedly subjective narrative and poetic forms—as well as for avowing the naturalness of generic categories and for naturalizing such ideologies *as* absolute natural orders of human history and evolution. Cheyfitz's concerns for translation locate these naturalized figures as discourses authorized in part through colonial-imperial translations of Indigenous ways of knowing and being—and not empirical or absolute natural orders. Such an "evolutionary process of translation," Cheyfitz urges, is not simply a cultural phenomenon but rather an apparatus, a tool, used "to naturalize cultural places, that is, to naturalize the literal or proper by placing these cultural forces in the realm of the absolute or natural" (120, 150). By the eighteenth century, Cheyfitz finds, "the natural became implicitly equated with the individual" to the extent that political models based in forms of communalism, in kinship economies, or in place-based

practices have been (and continue to be) translated by and for naturalized discourses of law, history, and anthropology into primitive cultural forms occupying a static place in the past of that evolutionary continuum (151). Cheyfitz goes on to say that “translation, then, is inseparably connected with a ‘civilizing’ mission, the bearing of Christianity and Western letters to the barbarians, literally, as we have noted, those who do not speak the language of the empire” (116). It is this act of translation that enables the evolutionary hierarchy where European, bourgeois, liberal, secular humanist ideology to take shape as the telos of human intelligence and becoming (of the mission to “civilize” Indigenous worlds, that is). Translation is not simply an act of moving a universal meaning across a gulf between disparate code-languages, where the words are but distinct containers for shared absolute truths. Instead, Cheyfitz’s work signals the fundamental translation of illegible otherness into legible terms of empire. That is, translation (in this context) is a practice of rendering transparent, archetypical, and de-humanized the narrative markings of that otherness in service of that civilizing mission. This kind of translation simultaneously proposes liberal humanist individualism as a civilizational telos and communalism and kinship economies as primitive stages anachronistic to progressive ideas of liberation, sovereignty, and prosperity.

With Cheyfitz’s work in mind, I begin this story by thinking through the translation of kinship relations into various forms of political alliance. On the one hand, an evolutionary process of translation strikes me as heavily indebted to the same kind of paternal anxieties as patrilineal inheritance—that is, the idea (or ideology) that transmission of an essence (in the text as well as the body) occurs naturally and inherently through the linear descendancy of blood (of the absolute Word). This would be the kind of translation and evolutionary thinking that characterizes Todorov, according to Cheyfitz, and that colors Walter Benjamin’s “Task of the Translator” and its obsession with origins and ends—origins in the metaphysical Word and ends in the messianic essence shared, he argues, by all languages. What that position overlooks, with political effects, is that languages shape perception not simply in grammar and syntax but also in the ways that differently differentiated literacies shape relations with abstract concepts such as time, space, and kinship. This is all to say that, as Cheyfitz reads through Silko, “the proper and property act together within the *translatio* to force individualism on the tribe” (Cheyfitz 137). The essence that this kind of translation pursues is a universal individualism—a kind of singularity of time and space that suggests the individual Man existing in linear historical

(evolutionary) time and moving across empty space. Space, or place, becomes the backdrop of human activity, and the colonial tool of translation naturalizes linear time as a shared absolute truth, ontologizes space as empty and inert, and coordinates kinship exclusively with blood lineage. Cheyfitz draws out how this kind of translation is not the transfer of absolute natural truths but rather a vector for a particular politics—a politics by which the land and literacies of the Americas have been overwhelmingly subsumed into dominant discourses of law, history, and anthropology and by which Indigenous peoples and lifeways (worldwide) have been and continue to be written into such discourses as illiterate, unscientific, and in need of the civilizing hand of modern individual liberty, sovereignty, and prosperity. *That* story of the Americas positions oral language (storytelling) as an evolutionary stage from which the individual thinking subject can then advance to literacy and thus, ideologically, to political sovereignty in part by disavowing communal, oral, and kincentric ecological assertions of knowledge, sovereignty, and relationality. In other words, the space between the body and the nation is, in the evolutionary process of translation, rendered at once finite, where the body and the nation are delimited as individual sovereign bodies, and infinite, where this notion of individual sovereignty conceives both the body and the nation as absolute and natural within the progressive linear flow of time. Cheyfitz offers a sort of corrective to that theory, finding that oral language and storytelling instead materialize an “inalienable notion of land grounded in kinship economy” (140). In this theory, the body and the nation are experienced in terms of the relations that maintain connection with place. These are kinship relations, not limited to the human body or to blood or to linear temporal history; and these are place-based solidarities that, along the axis of kinship—or of kincentric ecologies, to consider Salmón’s language—persistently create and recreate the possibility of political alliances beyond the limiting framework of nation-state sovereignty, individual agency, or evolutionary time.<sup>4</sup>

In affinity with Cheyfitz’s work, Lisa Lowe stages an alternative reading of colonial-imperial archival materials that emphasizes relationality and reads against teleology or comprehensiveness in her *Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015). Lowe aligns her work with Saidiya Hartman’s rememorative fabulation, Walter D. Mignolo’s alternative literacies, Jodi A. Byrd’s comparative empires, and Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic*, among others, in an interdisciplinary study that argues that “liberal philosophy, culture, economics, and government have been commensurate with, and deeply implicated in, colonialism, slavery, capitalism, and



empire” (2). Citing historians Stephanie Smallwood and Orlando Patterson, Lowe’s work resonates with Cheyfitz’s in saying that “property was the idiom that defined the slaves’ new condition, replacing kinship and location as cultural media that bound person to society” (11). The idiom of property marks the (colonial) translation of kinship and community into figures—metaphors, narrative markers—of a pre-modern, non-sovereign mode of knowing and being within the dominant discourse of history. Or, as Lowe puts it, reading *against* that idiom of property and across the generic and discursive borders of archival memory enables a reading practice that “unsettles the discretely bounded objects, methods, and temporal frameworks canonized by a national history invested in isolated origins and independent progressive development” (6). The discursive—that is, ideological and translational—neutralization of relationality, kinship, and nonlinear epistemologies is an act that privileges violent colonial-modern canons and traditions based on the translation of a system of classification into an absolute of human progress, a process that Lowe questions in terms of “historical forces” (21). Much like Cheyfitz, Lowe’s work is invested in reading practices—to “contribute to a manner of reading and interpretation” that reshapes the displacement and natal alienation integral both to settler colonization and to modern liberal philosophies of progress and sovereignty into a scholarly practice by which place-based and kinship politics are experienced and known as alternative pathways to liberation, sovereignty, and prosperity (21).

One of the ways that Lowe’s work conjoins my own is in her reading of autobiography. The three sites that I read cannot be classified as autobiography; however, as my chapters argue, these literatures narrate heterogeneous rememorative histories intimately connected to the lives and experiences of the writers that I read in each and thus challenge the generic delimitations of manifesto, memoir, and novel. Lowe reads Olaudah Equiano’s autobiography as quintessential to the “narrative of progress” promised by the liberal democracies that wrote the laws of emancipation, abolition, and the rights of Man (17). That promise has not been kept—but this is not a failure of the application of such laws. Indeed, Cheyfitz and Lowe together demonstrate that the failed promise is part of the project of liberal humanist discourses of law, history, and anthropology that situate the possibility of political alliance solely in the singular narrative of becoming-political as a becoming-human that is also a becoming-individual and modern via the aforementioned evolutionary process of translation. Lowe offers a corrective reading practice of intimacy, or a way of reading “those processes that are forgotten, cast as failed or irrelevant

because they do not produce ‘value’ legible within modern classifications” (18). Lowe’s assertion that autobiography is “the predominant genre for the narration of the liberal life” addresses this effect of reading practices within which the categorial thinking of modern classification systems—which also inhere in dominant discourses of law, history, and anthropology—proposes not only a singular process of becoming-human and becoming-political but also attempts to naturalize the kind of linear temporality that characterizes (social) evolutionary history and time (51). Through Equiano’s autobiography, Lowe locates the translational absolutism of linear temporality, saying that “as the autobiographical subject writes his life, and comes to possess the meaning of slavery as his own ‘past,’ the genre does the work of subjugating the history of the collective enslaved within a regulative temporality in which slavery is only legible as a distant origin out of which the free modern subject can emerge” (50). The genre does the work, she says. The narrative markers of genre pre-determine the reading (as translation) of that life into one legible in and for empire—a life rendered transparent and paradigmatic of a (linear temporal) move from savagery to civilization, as it were. That story of becoming-human translates political alliance into a matter of individual, sovereign subjects in national alliance mediated by official discourses of law, history, and anthropology. There is no room for collective, communal, kincentric economies or politics—these are all discursively rendered without value in the context of the move toward individual liberty and prosperity, disregarding the ways that kincentric politics sustain modes of being and knowing in which liberty, sovereignty, and prosperity are collective endeavors collectively realized for and by the collective. In this way, too, re-reading autobiography outside of empire—or considering texts beyond and across generic delimitations and liberal humanist demarcations—means enacting a collective subjectivity and collective re-remembering that is not of a past historical state or object but of an otherwise temporality through which the collective is re-articulated as a site of liberation, sovereignty, and prosperity against the historical forces that seek conquest of lands and bodies to be put to use for individual interests. This is a story told collectively.

I want to take care here to reiterate that these considerations of reading practices are not simply questions of erudition. These are material matters. Moreover, in the context of indigeneity in the Americas, these are existential questions. Simón Ventura Trujillo articulates this point with clarity, concision, and monumental force in his “‘So that the Thieves Will Not Inherit the Earth’: Writing and the Fugitive Translation of Indigenous Land Reclamation” (2017). Like

Cheyfitz and Lowe, Trujillo is concerned with readings and translations of lives and lifeways in the context of autobiography and empire (or settler colony). Trujillo re-reads Reies López Tijerina's 1978 *Mi Lucha por la tierra*—commonly taken up as a paradigmatic autobiography in the context of Chicano nationalism—through and against Leslie Marmon Silko's 1991 *Almanac of the Dead* and toward “a method of translation that detours the totalizing, monolinear logic of secular time” (61). The translational concern here, again, orients toward the relationship between settler colonization (and imperialism) and the ways that Indigenous lives and lifeways have been and continue to be rendered in both academia and popular imaginary as static forms of primitive or pre-modern modes of knowing and being. This, Trujillo argues, is the effect of colonial-modern ways of seeing and being that “rely on a mode of translation that decimates the incommensurable temporal and spatial heterogeneity of Indigenous life under the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space” (66). The “monolinear logic of secular time” is both a translation of a particular (colonial-modern) worldview into an absolutism *and* an act of translating alternative (heterogeneous) worldviews into the generic parameters of that linear, social evolutionary time that characterizes articulations of individual and nation-state sovereignties in the (postcolonial) Americas. But, Trujillo argues, Silko's *Almanac* “dismantles this hemispheric matrix of sovereignty by subverting the modern cultural technology of the book into a performance of what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney call ‘fugitive enlightenment’” (67). Silko's storytelling escapes that monolinear logic by taking knowledge production out of the confines of hierarchical dichotomies or categorial thinking, a claim made in part here through Moten and Harney's voices. The story escapes. And, importantly, the story escapes because it is a storytelling mode issuing from communally generated (not absolute) truths and from an enunciative position of collective authorship. Trujillo resituates Tijerina's text outside of the generic and material tyranny of that singular horizon by which his life has been translated into the paradigmatic movement familiar in Lowe's reading of Equiano's autobiography. By re-reading Tijerina's story through Silko's epic of *transnational Indigenous revolution centered on land* (a phrasing borrowed from Shari Huhndorf and to which I will return), Trujillo unleashes a new and reclaimed practice of translation-as-reading oriented in “the sensation of relinquishing the sovereignty of private property and individual authorship to the life of the land and words” (67). It is a sensation. It is a relinquishing. It is collective authorship authorized by the life (the liveness) of the land and of words. This is to say that Trujillo's fugitive translation of

Indigenous land reclamation articulates modes of becoming, belonging, and relating that are activated in collective and kincentric political, social, and ecological economies. Citing Reid Gómez, as well, Trujillo explores how what he calls the “generic fugitivity” of Silko’s formal and thematic challenge to anti-Indigenous and anti-black epistemes of modern secular time “performs an escape from the temporal ‘boundaries of reality, authenticity, accuracy, and validity’ which ‘stay and contain Native American mobility in colonial narratives and language’” (62). I will come back to Gómez’s claim momentarily, as well. First, I make note here of how the boundaries of reality, authenticity, accuracy, and validity that Trujillo locates via Gómez’s voice operate in language and reading practices to naturalize a limited and limiting narrative of becoming-human, in linear time (and on empty space). That narrative that Trujillo names as tyranny thus confines heterogeneous rhythms, movements, and processes of becoming (belonging) within fixed monologic categories drawn in linear temporal sequence—a spatial structuring that enables the narrative marking of certain genres of bodies and lands as racialized, gendered forms of property. By contrast, Trujillo’s translation-as-reading of a nonlinear Chicano subjectivity and of a “collectively authored” borderlands life experienced beyond those limits, and woven with Silko’s novel of transnational indigeneity, opens “multiple, irreducibly distinct worlds where life dwells in objects, symbols, beings, and people typically classified as dead, immaterial, inanimate, or un-incarnated under epistemes imagined as monologically colonial” (65, 67). The collectively authored life noted here, Trujillo argues, persists in spite of and in direct challenge to ongoing colonial encounter and occupation in the hemisphere. But land reclamation is not a matter of acceding to a common level of (universal) humanity within the monolinear logic of secular time—it is not about literal and proper land *ownership*—no, that would be a mode of assimilating into the narrative markers of genre, history, and literacy that already always underwrite the possibility of expropriation and displacement where it maintains the apex of private property (or properness) in the individual who owns the land. By contrast, Trujillo’s translation-as-reading (and Silko’s storytelling practice) conjoin authorship (or authority) *with* the land, sovereignty *with* the land, sovereignty *with* human and more-than-human kin, and sovereignty beyond the teleological limits of that tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space for Indigenous life in the Americas.

This story (my project) thinks in part through Hogan, Salmón, Cheyfitz, Lowe, and Trujillo on questions of alternative literacies, alternative spatialities, and alternative

(heterogeneous) modes of seeing, being, and relating—alternative being a clunky word that I use to denote that these are modes that precede and circumvent settler colonial, colonial-modern, and liberal humanist frameworks privileging the individual moving in linear evolutionary time across empty de-animated space. They are alternative, *otherwise* modes that persistently challenge the *samewise* modes naturalized by and for settler colonial, imperial, and dehumanizing discourses of life in the Americas. My project asks: what do these alternative epistemologies *do* with the body or the self? What do they *do* with the ancestor or with memory? And what do they *do* with senses of space or place? Beyond the translation of kinship into lineal blood relations, such as conveyed by kinship as metaphor or idiom of social and consanguine relations, the story that follows here re-reads alternative epistemologies embedded in three distinct yet related shapes of kinship—modes of seeing and knowing *kin* that in turn shape relations with the self (body), with the ancestor (memory), and with space (place). In the chapters that follow, I gather together storytelling practices in works by Gloria Anzaldúa, Gisèle Pineau, and Leslie Marmon Silko that respectively narrate distinct yet related expressions and experiences of the self, of ancestry, and of senses of place. I offer this triptych as a framework for thinking through what it means to conceive of different shapes—different roots and routes—of kinship; how languages and literacies inform those conceptualizations; and how place-based studies and practices emphasize the local as more than territory (more than a not-yet-global way of being). Arturo Escobar says it better than I, really, when he articulates in *Territories of Difference* (2008) how “despite the pervasive delocalization of social life, there is an embodiment and emplacement to human life that cannot be denied. [...] Thus, there is a need for a corrective theory that neutralizes this erasure of place, the asymmetry that arises from giving far too much importance to ‘the global’ and far too little value to ‘place’” (7). With this emphasis on “place,” Escobar calls for a scholarly practice oriented in “spatially grounded” experience and knowledge production because, he says, “power inhabits meaning, and meanings are a main source of social power; struggles over meaning are thus central to the structuring of the social and the physical world itself” (Escobar 14). To be precise, struggles over meaning are at once questions of translation, cognitive mapping, and reading practices or literacies, all of which bear material effects through the enactment of different kinds of social relations. While I am not the first to consider alternative epistemologies through Silko, and it may initially appear abstractive to situate my reading of kinship in this constellation of mestiza, Creole, and Laguna Pueblo epistemologies,

my project bundles Anzaldúa and Pineau together with Silko to tell a story of *differently differentiating differences* in modes of seeing and being—that is, to tell a story of temporal and spatial heterogeneities of Indigenous life in the Americas that are open to multiple, irreducibly distinct worlds of (and) meanings. I find provocative resonances, as well as some strange affinities, across and between these three sites of reading. These are three sites in which the writing practices themselves refuse generic boundaries and defy the monolinear logic of secular time. I will add that, in order to intimately participate in reading and retelling these stories, I am called to account for the materiality of these experiences—it is not simply a matter of erudition: it is a matter of unsettling the tyranny of that singular horizon of time and space which stays, contains, and attempts to eradicate Indigenous (and mestiza and Creole) modes of knowing and being. In this way, I am grateful for the grammar of Karen Barad’s *Meeting the Universe Halfway: The Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), which offers the expression “mattering.” Barad argues that “matter is agentive, not a fixed essence or property of things. *Mattering* is differentiating, and which differences come to matter, matter in the iterative production of different differences” (137, my emphasis). Barad’s new materialist study offers a vocabulary for thinking through how “difference patterns do not merely change in time and space; spacetime is an enactment of differentness, a way of making/marking here and now” (137). Barad’s work speaks through quantum physics yet offers a vocabulary for translating alternative epistemologies into multiple horizons of possibility. While I do not borrow from Barad as a means of confirming Indigenous science as such, I borrow this language of *differently differentiating differences* for the way that it attunes readers to the heterogeneous possibilities of the marking and making of *here* and *now* and which I take up as a matter of re-translating space-time out of that colonial-modern frame of absolute (civilizing) truth. This is about a struggle over meanings of space or place and about how those meanings come to inform social relations between and among human and more-than-human kin.

So, here is the story of weaving kinship in hemispheric American literatures. This is a collectively authored story—I speak through the scholars and thinkers and creators gathered together in this project. And, critically, I think through the rememorative materiality of weaving. In a volume of essays derived from a roundtable addressing “Art and Writing: Recording Knowledge in Pre-Columbian America,” Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter Mignolo edit, introduce, and close out the 1994 collection *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in*

*Mesoamerica and the Andes* with attention to and calls for broader conceptualizations of writing and knowledge in scholarship on and in the Americas. In the afterword to the collection, Mignolo addresses the “connections between writing, weaving, agriculture, and distribution of labor according to gender” (295). In his sense of the stakes of the meaning(s) of literacy, Mignolo argues that “writing in colonial and postcolonial situations requires, more than a grammarology, theories of the materiality of reading and writing cultures and their relevance to understanding colonial expansions and ideologies of domination” (309). Not only does Mignolo locate literacy in alternative practices such as weaving textiles and cultivating plant and animal ecologies, as well as in pictographic writing, but Mignolo likewise asserts that alternative literacies are “*alternative politics of intellectual inquiry and alternative loci of enunciation*” (303, orig. emph.). Or: *otherwise* modes of knowing and being in relation with place. I will add that weaving is not limited to the human practice of interlacing threads twisted from plant and animal matter—weaving is, first and foremost, the work of the spider. With sensitivity to the kind of multidimensional weaving of the spider’s web, I weave/read patterns that bespeak such alternative politics of intellectual inquiry by seeing and knowing Spider as teacher—by weaving/reading land and (as) literature. The more-than-human world is full of such alternative politics and alternative loci of enunciation—it is a matter of sensibility to their stories. Where dominant discourses of comparison conventionally determine analysis by beginning with discrete categories of national literatures, areas of study, genres of textuality, and linear temporally sequenced periods of study, across which these units can then be compared, weaving/reading through alternative epistemologies informed by place-based and multispecies kinship solidarities instead constellates enduring yet differently differentiating political, social, and ecological relations. These sensibilities, I contend, are shaped by language and storytelling.

Thinking through Salmón’s expression of iwígara as an episteme of woven matter-energy, nature-culture, and politics-aesthetics, I propose weaving/reading land and (as) literature toward a decolonial practice generated in and by the persistent indigeneities in the hemisphere—as histories told *differently* of American becoming. Weaving/reading land and literature takes ecological relations held in language and storytelling practices as literacies. Weaving/reading as method likewise takes the relations in the place-text as the so-called object of study, rather than taking an object as such. It is the *relations* that constitute the form and character of the text, the story, a body. Resonating with Barad’s new materialist work, Stacy Alaimo’s feminist

materialism theory of “trans-corporeality” elaborated in *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010) describes how “the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world” (2). Alaimo asserts that “things, as such, do not precede their intra-actions” (21). Transcorporeality is then a theoretical-praxical site within which science, the body, ecology, and literacy “meet and mingle in interesting ways.” In this way, transcorporeality makes sensible the view that the *things* that populate human social landscapes are not a collection of objects existing outside of time and space and human perception. These are things that take shape as such in their transcorporeal relations and through their translation into legible (readable) terms by the storyteller (or the scholar). Alaimo’s work extends alternative epistemologies that persist in Indigenous modes of knowing and being—not as absolutes or essences inherent in Indigenous bodies and blood, but as *practices* of making (and remaking) and reading (and re-reading) meanings in the structural axes of human and more-than-human materialities. This story (my project) weaves/reads land and literature through a transcorporeal focus on the ways that languages and storytelling practices enact different experiences of what Trujillo described in terms of “fugitive enlightenment.” To think of land as a form of literature, and kincentric ecologies as literacies, draws attention to the ways that the matter-energy wovenness of bodies, memories, and senses of place collides or pulls apart; how the wovenness binds beings together to form a textile with weight and duration, or with stories as inverse images on opposing sides; how languages enter or forbid one another, how tongues both take up all of history and echo it otherwise with each time and place of utterance; and how the “ancient story” of the Americas takes kinship relations as the epistemic root shaping practices (as theories) of woven political, familial, and ecological formations.

The method of weaving/reading compares the relations that constitute a text (a book, a body, a place) as such. Weaving/reading likewise branches from an episteme of multiplicity through which multiple scales of perception are held in view simultaneously. It is activated by theories of matter-energy or space-time relationality and, as an intervention in the discipline of comparative literature, speaks to a timely turn in translation studies, ecocriticism, and hemispheric American studies—a turning toward decolonial feminist theories that unsettle linear temporalities, fixed borders, and homogeneous genres (genders). In the chapters that follow, I draw from the decolonial turning in eco-criticism and translation studies in my reading of kinship while yet intervening on the ways that such turning is commonly incorporated into literary



studies as an artifact of a multicultural world literature.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, weaving/reading shapes of kinship dislocates the linear historicity that sequences literariness in terms of a social evolutionary conceptualization of writing (and reading). This is to say that whereas postcolonial literatures of the Caribbean and Latin America, as Trujillo argues, tend to be read in relation to colonial-modern articulations of individual and nation-state sovereignty (and are circumscribed by the global), decolonial literatures and women of color feminisms escape that circumscription-as-delimitation and challenge settler colonization in part by situating critique in local nexuses formed where body meets land (that is, earth *and* water, to be clear). That local circumscription, in the context of literary practices and studies, tends to subordinate the local to the global to the extent that the alternative forms of knowledge production that Hogan and Salmón's work maintains are conventionally inscribed in world literature in terms of exogenous alterity or linear historical underdevelopment of those places that maintain multispecies ontologies and nonlinear epistemologies, in particular in orature. In patrilinear historical form, fathered as it were by the colonial, postcolonial literature's position as egress out of colonization through humanism, alphabetization, and national sovereignty superposes yet other narratives of the literary, the global, and the anti- or decolonial. While I am not arguing that postcoloniality is a failed revolutionary project, I am invested in analyzing the *differently differentiating* ways that anti-colonial (and anti-imperial) epistemes follow or diverge from that colonial translational mode that transfers heterogeneities into liberal humanist secular time. The differences in those struggles over meaning outline the material stakes of acceding to a social evolutionary thinking that already positions alternative epistemologies as inherently pre-modern and, critically, as incapable of meaningful political power. The discursive disempowerment of those epistemologies is one effect of legal, historical, and anthropological teleology.

Throughout my readings, I consider the relations between politics of intellectual inquiry alternative to those already circumscribed by global-local dialectics, postcolonial nationalisms, and liberal humanist doctrines. I locate my reading of kinship—of kincentric ecologies—within a decolonial network of alternative epistemologies for the reason that narrations of nonlinear and ecological forms of knowledge production bespeak an ecodelic sensibility that holds in assemblage shared tendencies between Latinx environmentalisms, Afro-Caribbean eco-feminism, and Indigenous decolonial feminisms.<sup>6</sup> My weaving of kinship in the hemisphere is grounded in multimodal and interdisciplinary literary, ecological, and re-memorial networks

situated in the multilingual and transnational hemispheric Americas. I contend, as well, that English-language American studies, English literature studies, and area studies would more fully heed the call for the decolonial turning through their enrichment by multilingual, transnational, and decolonial perspectives—not simply by including these as artifacts of that exogenous alterity, on the margins of the global, but in the reorientation of the monolingual nationalist parameters of literary studies generally toward the local as a heterogeneous site of alternative productions of planetarity. Or: toward decolonial place-based literacies and practices that likewise create and recreate collective, kincentric forms of alliance and sovereignty centered in land. In this way, reading heterogeneous genre in multilingual literatures within their (hemispheric) American context and for their nonlinear and ecological literacies opens English-language literature studies to spatial restructuring in hemispheric relations. Through such openness, alternative epistemologies persistently materialize liberatory pedagogies in the turning to the body-place entanglement as the site of everyday decolonial practices and to nonlinear and ecological literacies that re-member sustainable and ethical modes of relating kincentrically to other people and the planet. In this sense, as well, my weaving/reading of shapes of kinship dislocates American literariness from its Eurocentric historicity and re-locates the Americas as Indigenous production, in excess of application as critical practice and from within networks of a decolonial, eco-critical, and translational turning where women of color and Native feminisms ultimately theorize, re-translate, and re-map (or is it un-map?) heterogeneous histories of hemispheric American becoming. While this may not sound very literary, weaving/reading kinship in the works that I include here situates literariness within a notion of literacy that moves beyond linear writing in part by retaining a sense-ability for the material, historical, and linguistic relations by which ideas of the literary are (re)produced.

I use the term decolonial in coordination with María Lugones's "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" (2010) and with Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill's "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy" (2013). Lugones reads Silko's *Ceremony* within a cluster of women of color writers and toward "a new feminist geopolitics of knowing and loving" (756). Arguing that gender is a colonial imposition and drawing on Anibal Quijano's notion of the colonality of power, Lugones "want[s] to mark the need to keep a multiple reading of *the resistant self in relation*" (748, my emphasis). This is to say that, in resonance with Trujillo, Lugones is invested in sustaining heterogeneous

expressions of self, memory, and place not only as a matter of plurality but more importantly as a matter of defying the coloniality of thought by which bodies, histories, and places are categorially hierarchized and maintained in uneven distributions of power and privilege. To Lugones, it is not enough to identify and name the sites of privilege; it is about rethinking the languages and discourses through which certain bodies and certain modes of knowing at once accede to and naturalize their own power and privilege. In this way, Lugones asserts: “In thinking the methodology of decoloniality, I move to read the social from the cosmologies informing and constituting perception, motility, embodiment, and relation” (749). So reading the struggle for meaning adjudicated in *differently differentiating* kinship relations—relations that likewise constitute senses and enactments of place—entails reading beyond and across the generic delimitations that codify texts, bodies, temporalities, and places in the colonial-modern idiom of individualism. Lugones maintains that “[decolonial] possibilities lie in communality rather than subordination; they do not lie in parity with our superior in the hierarchy that constitutes coloniality” (752). In a similar way, Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill argue that “Native feminist theories offer new and reclaimed ways of thinking through not only how settler colonialism has impacted Indigenous and settler communities, but also how feminist theories can imagine and realize different modes of nationalism and alliances in the future” (9). The resonance here, the affinity, locates imagining and realizing alternative modes of alliance in (re)reading the social through non-modern cosmologies—a human and more-than-human social locus likewise legible (or not) in relation to shapes of kinship, I add. These are modes of knowing and being that precede and circumvent the categorial, monolinear logic of secular time and settler space and are non-modern in the sense that are activated through modes such as dreams, spirituality, and embodiment and are uncontainable to a colonial-modern teleology that calls them “pre-modern.” This collectively authored call argues as well that “recognizing the persistence of Indigenous concepts and epistemologies does not mean blindly copying or performing them oneself, nor does such recognition require excavating ‘authentic’ Indigenous traditions out of a distant past; instead, feminists must recognize Indigenous peoples as the authors of important theories about the world we all live in. Native feminist theories make claims not to an authentic past outside of settler colonialism, but to an ongoing project of resistance that continues to contest patriarchy and its power relationships” (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 21). In other words, Native feminist theories are not limited to the participation of those who are Native,

feminist, or woman-identifying—nor are they concerned with archiving and repeating with exactitude a delimited set of “authentic” traditional practices. What these two articles tell their readers is instead that decolonization is a matter of everyday practices, of enacting heterogeneous and place-based solidarities in the everydayness of living, eating, breathing, sleeping, and engaging social relations with human and more-than-human alike. Place-based practices sustain memory of the body-place relation and nourish collective forms of sovereignty through a persistent process of relentless (everyday, in little ways) motion.

And, importantly, decolonization is not a metaphor: it is material. It is about the land.<sup>7</sup> To retain this sense of relationality and of networks of material-energetic processes is to orient the decolonial turning in scholarship toward the sensation of the land as kin relation. In “The Storyteller’s Escape: Sovereignty and Worldview” (2005), Reid Gómez reads discourses of law, history, and anthropology alongside Indigenous literatures and in the context of Indigenous sovereignty, critically locating “sovereignty as motion” (147). Gómez argues that “understanding sovereignty as motion allows for important process-oriented theorizing, calling forward the need to experience language and land instead of ‘understanding’ them” (152). Gómez’s work helps articulate some of the underlying threads of my project where I am leaning on this idea of decolonization as a matter of everyday acts of resistance—or, better: persistence. The idea of weaving/reading land and literature is not possible in my thinking without this alternative locus of enunciation for thinking sovereignty beyond the limits of the legal definition and in relation to the stakes of what it means to engage reading practices in this way. This is to say that weaving/reading enacts this kind of “process-oriented” theorizing. Moreover, weaving/reading shapes of kinship relates an experiencing of language and land through intimately dwelling in these textual sites. This my attempt at cultivating and sustaining modes of seeing, knowing, and being conceived through Indigenous cosmologies—through dreams, spirituality, nonlinear temporality, and the liveliness of the land and words. But this is not an attempt to replicate or perform an authentic Indigeneity; rather, decolonial feminist theories gathered together with Gómez’s work enable my project to move and be moved. That is, “an orienting toward process as a way of life informs how we approach the changing world. It does not try to stop it from changing” (Gómez 155). This locus of enunciation sustains a mode of knowing that already always sees the network of processes of mattering in and at the transcorporeal site and in persistent everyday challenge to the coloniality of gender (power) that attempts, as a means of

expropriating Indigenous lands, to write the ending of Indigenous lives and lifeways. Again, decolonization is not a metaphor: it is about land. In Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill's collective voice, "land" is also (in the same breath) water. It is life and it is *living* (it is lively). Gómez agrees, saying that "no single person or group of people is exempt from the responsibility we have toward each other and the places we inhabit. Primary in this is to exist in relation to, not as separate from" (147). This is kincentric ecologies incorporating human and more-than-human social and political relations. Indeed, epistemologies that shape perception of the world as separate things or objects enact an everyday form of colonization through which those living lands and more-than-human kin are (discursively) dehumanized and allocated to categories (genres) that then enable their (material) exploitation, extraction, or annihilation. I speak through Trujillo when saying that the story that says that Man stands separate from animalia and as master over the natural world is the story that makes possible the kinds of social, environmental, and discursive violences against racialized and gendered bodies and lands.

The land is a living kin relative. But such a sensation is largely untenable within ways of seeing through a (colonial-modern) categorial logic. Gómez reiterates a similar point (and this is the part previously cited by Trujillo): "Boundaries of reality, authenticity, accuracy, and validity are regulated in ideas of genre, as products are categorized into areas that inform and in many cases determine analysis. There is no space or opportunity here for vision—either for artists or those participating in artistic moments. Instead, scholars carefully write for an audience that passively reads and at times consumes information for later reiteration and recitation" (151). Here Gómez addresses the stakes of modes of scholarship that maintain the categorial logic underpinning colonial-modern power-geometries. In collective voice with Lugones, Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, and Trujillo, this claim then addresses the material stakes for living Indigenous folx—as well as women, queer, and people of color generally. A scholarly practice that reads alternative epistemologies through the same categorial logic and the same singular horizon of time and space of "monoliner" becoming in "secular time" is a practice that over-determines Indigenous knowledge production in terms narratively marking it as an incomplete science where it seems to fail to conform to the exigencies of Newtonian linear temporal historicity and individualism. Or, in other words, that kind of reading pretends that Indigenous knowledge production is a temporally affixed feature of a universal flow of time and history. By contrast, Trujillo and Gómez collectively articulate Indigenous knowledge (and sovereignty) in excess of

and challenge to that ideological framework of universalism. Gómez and Trujillo both theorize through Silko's textual strategies that, like Hogan's invocation of Lakota astronomy given in the epigraph here, bespeak modes of knowing and being animated outside of and beyond the dominant colonial-modern worldview that imagines things—bodies, places, texts—as static timeless objects in a universal flow of time across empty space. But an individual body is not simply *an individual* separate from the material relations and discursive frameworks that shape social and political areas of movement and possibility. A text is not simply a text. A text (a body) is always already seen and experienced as such by means of an act of translation-as-reading. Reading (translating) alternative epistemologies calls for a practice that sustains that entanglement of matter and meaning because, as Gómez argues, Indigenous “stories are not packets of information that belong to everyone. They are living powers that offer protection as well as destruction” (162). This story is alive. To weave/read Silko with Anzaldúa and Pineau thus means to engage the texts as living beings written as such to offer and enact different forms of protection for Laguna Pueblo, Chicana, and Creole communities (at once local and planetary).

To take up my project in this way means as well that what follows here are readings that emerge not through situating these authors' works in demarcated fields of Indigeneity, Latinidad, or Créolité—although, my readings are attuned to a sense of these as contexts (as con-texts: in relation *with* the texts). Instead, my weaving/reading of kinship in these three sites articulates new and reclaimed modes of imagining and realizing decolonization through a relational logic (or a logic of coalition, as Lugones calls it). It is ultimately in literature (in forms of literariness) that this relational logic makes and remakes alternative possibilities of political alliance (or inquiry), enunciative positions, and spatial structures. In *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (2013), Mishuana Goeman likewise asserts that literatures “provide imaginative modes to unsettle settler space. That is, the literary [...] tenders an avenue for the ‘imaginative’ creation of new possibilities, which must happen through imaginative modes precisely because the ‘real’ of settler colonial society is built on the violent erasures of alternative modes of mapping and geographic understandings” (2). Those boundaries of reality, authenticity, accuracy, and validity that are regulated in ideas of genre and that regulate readings (translations) of alternative ways of knowing and being are, as Goeman asserts, the means and the ends of settler colonial translations of alternative epistemologies. Through maintenance of the generic boundaries of settler colonial reality and validity, alternative worldviews are

discursively dehumanized, rendered obsolete and unscientific, and subjected to the tyranny of that singular horizon of time and space—which is also a set of social relations ensuring the annihilation or assimilation of all ways of seeing and being that fall outside of and/or that threaten the supremacy of that singular horizon of time and space. Goeman makes clear that “respecting the environment is not encoded in the DNA,” so this is not the claim of alternative epistemologies natural or romantic in Native American relationships to land; but it is to say that “alternative conceptions of borders, nations, and place are subversive to the masculine project of empire building” (28, 29). There is no US nation (empire) without the dehumanization of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. But to conceive of the more-than-human world as kin—as materially and energetically and socially entangled—makes violence against the land and water a violence against the self, the other, and the whole community. Decolonizing the land is a (re)turning to relatedness (kinship) *with* the land. This is an alternative conceptualization of freedom than the more globally legible view of liberation as freedom *from* and is grossly at odds with the kind of liberal humanist imaginary of the free individual exercising his free agency as a historical subject acting on the backdrop of earthly matter that exists (in this view) solely for the assurance of his (patri)lineal continuation. On this point, Goeman makes clear that “forging a freedom based on the oppression of others results in further destruction of humanity” (201). And this because, she says, citing Mignolo, “the effect of organizing discourses in genre formats is pivotal to issues of authority, power, and the colonization of memory” (172). This reads with remarkable affinity to what Gómez (and Trujillo) argue on the question of translating or sustaining Indigenous sovereignty in collectively authored sites. Forging freedom based on the oppression of others means first demarcating and delimiting otherness—and depends on narrative markers of inherent (as in social evolutionary) difference within categories of hierarchical becoming and belonging. Resonating with Trujillo, this is the idea that freedom can only ever be imagined and realized by means of categorial separation, isolation, and temporal historicity in the way that “the story of the nation-state circumscribes relationships to the land, disrupts already existing relationships, and defines human beings in narrow categories that isolate people from one another, such as by race, sexuality, gender, and nation,” (Goeman 201). By contrast, Goeman argues, citing geographer Doreen Massey’s 2005 *For Space*, space is not “an expanse we travel across” but is a “meeting up of histories’.” This definition of space, or place, Goeman says “moves us from essentialism, a common accusation made of Native scholars

as we labor to maintain tribal traditions, political ground, and our lands, in that alternative spatialities are not mired in individual liberalism, but maintain their political viability. Alternative spatialities [in *Mark My Words*] imagine that many histories and ways of seeing and mapping the world can occur at the same time, and most importantly that our spatialities were and continue to be in process” (Goeman 6). This is all to say that Trujillo, Gómez, and Goeman substantiate the possibilities of modes of knowing and being by which *differently differentiating differences* are sustained in heterogeneous assemblage beyond a spatial configuration that seeks to realize and authenticate authority in a singular position at the expense of all others. Alternative spatialities make possible the coexistence of heterogeneous temporalities and all are sustained in flexible, contingent, and persistent relations within epistemologies that conceive of the wovenness of kinship between self and other, between ancestor and descendant, and between space and time.

\* \* \*

I weave/read shapes of kinship in the Americas in terms of the ways that conceptualizations of space and time shape understandings of kin networks, which in turn inform perceptions of demarcations, entanglements, or spatialities of self-other, past-future, and local-global.<sup>8</sup> Specifically, I sense patterns of linear, rhizomatic, and spiraling shapes of kinship that are embedded in the languages and enunciative positions of the texts that I gather together here because, when situated within a larger hemispheric story of the Americas, these readings of kinship relate an idea of the Americas animated by multiplicities of scales, forces, dissensions, palimpsests, and exchanges in relation to articulations of the body-place nexus. Moreover, when read in (woven) relation to the kincentric ecologies held in the expression of iwígara, these shapes of kinship likewise narrate literary and cultural geographies structured (flexibly) through transcorporeal networks of aesthetic, narrative, and ecological praxes.

In Chapter 1, I weave/read Gloria Anzaldúa’s manifesto of Chicana/o nationalism, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). Inflected by hemispheric Americanist engagements with Anzaldúa’s Chicana legacy, I address the ways that, in the service of that *new mestiza consciousness*, mestizaje in the borderlands repeats a colonial erasure of other indigenities while yet substantiating a heterogeneous mode of expressing alternative



epistemologies through embodied writing practice. Declaring that “*en 1521 nació una nueva raza, el mestizo, el mexicano*” (in 1521, a new race was born, the mestizo, the Mexican), Anzaldúa explicitly aligns her new mestiza consciousness with an originary event of colonial encounter between Spanish conquistadors and Indigenous peoples (27, orig. ital.). Despite that the Aztec had already amassed a variety of tribes under the rubric of empire, with this *una nueva raza* born from that encounter Anzaldúa instantiates the natal event as one where two singular blood *lines* converged to produce a new, hybrid, mestizo/a race (as a biological and not simply social category). Not only does this recreate the erasure of those other indigeneities already subsumed under the name Aztec, as well as those other indigeneities included in local forms of Mexicanness, but Anzaldúa essentially places mestiza hybridity on a linear continuum with that mythicized past, demarcating an individuated (and proper) Self moving across empty, teleological time. Nicole Guidotti-Hernández analyzes Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* with this slippage in mind in *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (2011). Guidotti-Hernández denotes Anzaldúa’s manifesto as a “now-canonical text” specific to the US-Mexico borderlands. *Borderlands/La Frontera* is often read in relation to the Mexican political philosophy of mestizaje that Anzaldúa cites throughout and as embodying endless possibility despite its historical imbrication in discursive forms of violence against living Indigenous communities. Guidotti-Hernández cites Rafael Pérez-Torres’s work on “critical mestizaje” as a way of analyzing the simultaneous viability and violence of Anzaldúa’s political philosophical debts, arguing: “When racial mixture is evoked as the future, as the harmonizing of disparate identities, it ignores ‘the more pernicious and hierarchical impulses behind mestizaje in the Americas’ and does not complicate the legacy of colonial violence or implicate Chicana/os in the production of racism” (17, citing Pérez-Torres). This is to say that Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* functions as “postnationalist,” moving beyond the limitations of masculinist Chicano nationalism, but also potentially “neonationalist” in the way that the *new mestiza* turns to a kind of *indigenismo* that asserts the same monolinear shape and logic of modern secular time (Guidotti-Hernández 17). In *Blood Lines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o Literature* (2008), Sheila Marie Contreras levels a similar critique, and similarly through Pérez-Torres, defining indigenism as at once the ostensibly “unproblematic recuperation of indigenous culture” and as a “complex cultural construction of self-identity” (32, citing Pérez-Torres). This is to say that Anzaldúa’s text exceeds both US and Mexican nationalist takes on indigeneity and *indigenismo*

while yet operating through that linear social evolutionary translation of an Aztec past into a mestiza/o future via a minimally revised telos of coming-to-universal humanism and literariness. This is at once radical and reificatory. Contreras argues that “Anzaldúa’s Coatlicue/Shadow Beast is the author’s attempt to construct and to claim the Indigenous in the Chicana. If we accept, however, that the indigeneity of Chicanas/os can be represented metaphorically through Aztec mythology, we position ourselves as modern anthropologists, which raises questions about Chicanas/os’ relationship to the past and the present of contemporary Indigenous communities in the United States and Mexico” (113). In other words, *Borderlands/La Frontera* leans heavily on colonial-modern discourses of history and anthropology to situate Chicana feminist futurity within a teleological idea of the nation activated in heterogeneity but to the erasure of Indigenous history *and* Indigenous present (presence). While Contreras finds value in the heterogeneous genre(s) of the text, as do I, it remains relevant to consider Anzaldúa’s debts to a problematic politics of mestizaje and biological determinism.

My reading of Anzaldúa takes up these complex and at times incommensurable threads of *Borderlands/La Frontera*’s legacy. My reading is likewise critically attuned to the ways that Anzaldúa’s embodied writing practice at once exceeds its patrilineal relation to Mexican revolutionary imagination while yet embracing the kind of linear historical time that makes possible that kind of ethno-nationalist, masculinist story of kinship defined strictly by blood (by blood quantum, moreover). Embracing the Indigenous half, where “*La cultura chicana* identifies with the mother (Indian) rather than with the father (Spanish),” Anzaldúa slips into invoking an Aztec blood lineage in terms of the impregnation of an Indigenous maternal body (space) by the conquering force of a Spanish paternity (as linear historical time) even while ostensibly rejecting that paternal inheritance (52, orig. ital.). Implicitly siting ancestry as linear in this way, as traced back along a horizontal axis of temporality (across passive, empty space), as I read it, indexes colonialism’s heteropatriarchal anxieties over proprietorship—over land rights secured through patrilineal rights, through demarcating borders, and through the linear discursive mapping of corporeal (human) biologies. Anzaldúa invokes this paternity and maternity toward making neonationalist Chicana claims to the land—to the mythicized Aztlán, a land that she sites as the origins of *el mestizo* and that she then positions as the natural, blood-borne territory of mestiza/o people. Anzaldúa then invokes the *new mestiza consciousness* that inheres, she says, in the mixed-race body, constituted in and through her shamanic writing praxis as a suturing, as “an

emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence,” resolves the internal conflict of split consciousness demarcated as such by blood quantum mixedness (101). The natal event of the hybrid mestiza/o is marked in the text as an originary point on the Christian calendar (whose ultimate origin and endpoint erect a teleology, or prefiguring and fulfillment, of an individual soul). In this way, Anzaldúa’s mestizaje reacts to a monologic US nationalism by inverting a dualistic power dynamic—emphasizing the other, the “feminine,” the dark—as a mode of affirming a feminist and in a way sovereign Chicana/mestiza consciousness, while yet retaining a (patri)linear (colonial) shape of historicity and reproducing a linear arc of transformation for an active individual (colonial-modern gendered) subject moving across a passive, proprietary landscape.

For Anzaldúa, recapturing Aztec ancestry as part of her identity as a Chicana feminist writer works toward valorization of the othered in the conflictual dualisms of colonial modernity—the dark, the queer, the feminine, the multi-lingual (multi-tongued). And her borderlands Chicana culture and languages inform the experience of existing both in a third space between opposing nationalisms—Anglo-American on the one side and Mexican on the other—and in a hybrid Aztec and Hispanic body. By narrating the pathway of the *new mestiza consciousness* through this linear filiation with Aztec empire—in a sense reappropriating the past so as to make sense of her (embodied) self in the present—Anzaldúa empowers mixed and queer identities while yet reinstating a linear, teleological theory of essential materialities and of a bordered, infinitive, and inherent Self. I map a linear shape of kinship in Anzaldúa’s manifesto through passages in which the (mestiza) body and consciousness are demarcated as direct inheritor of the history, biology, and symbology that issue from Aztec (Nahua) myth and empire already once translated by Spanish missionaries in the pursuit of claiming lands for the Spanish crown and twice translated in the revolutionary imagination of the Mexican republic and in English language social sciences.<sup>9</sup> Anzaldúa’s text performs an at once feminist and patriarchal notion of this inherent Self, organized in dualistic sets of epistemic trajectories. In part, the linearity of Anzaldúa’s mestiza dualisms reads as the residue of the colonial-modern translation of Indigenous life and lifeways—a pernicious Cartesian cartography that ontologizes the oppositions of body to mind, space to time, male to female, and that organizes intelligent life as a line from dumb matter to cognizant human (as the telos of evolutionary intelligence, as it were). At the same time, the dualisms in the text read as that very material embodied experience of

rupture that was (is) colonization, narrated as a continuity between feminized body and land. The body-land connection is at once the site of rupture and the site of recuperation—the “fractured locus” (as Lugones calls it) opening the possibility of freedom in that sense of connection, as well as ongoing oppression in the demarcation of categories of racialized biologies. Anzaldúa narrates the mestiza consciousness as a contemporary product of that past (as *passed*) rupture—as inherently wounded, yet also potentially cured by the dualism mapped equally onto the borderlands and onto her body. At times, the dualisms in the text delimit merely a new nationalism rendered (somewhat problematically) as a teleological evolution out of a history of conquest and imperialism; yet, in its inversion of the image (the textile) of dualistic power, Anzaldúa’s hybrid *new mestiza consciousness* also activates an enduring feminist aim for alternative, anti-imperial (anti-colonial), and liberatory mestiza futures.

In Chapter 2, I weave/read French author Gisèle Pineau’s memorial novel *L’Exil selon Julia* (1996). Pineau situates her Guadeloupien grandmother Julia—or Man Ya, as she is affectionately known—in a kincentric relationality in and with her beloved *jardin créole* (Creole garden) back home, an intimate sensation sustained even while enduring a kind of exile in mid-twentieth century France. While French literary conventions demarcate the genre of the work as *un roman* (a novel in the strict sense of fiction), Pineau’s text simultaneously tells the very real (autobiographical in a sense) experience of Man Ya’s exile woven with forms of fabulation and opacity that exceed legibility in and for French empire. In other words, Man Ya is left untranslated and untranslatable into that linear trajectory of secular becoming-human and becoming-literary (or literate). I trace the ways that Pineau holds space for in-betweenness and multiplicity in her literary praxis in part through emphasizing a kind of oral intelligence and ecological literacy activated in her grandmother’s Creole ways of knowing and being. Once in France, Man Ya tells her grandchildren tales in Creole about her marvelous, tangled, and beloved *jardin créole*, the lush re-narration of which hangs over the rest of the novel like a specter—like a welcome haunting, an as-yet-to-come re-membering of multiplicity. It informs a sense of desire, an expression of conjugated space-time and kinship relationality interwoven with the materiality and energy of the garden that collectively articulate decolonial and feminist futurities. Pineau’s text activates an attitude of Créolité in the play of forms—repetitions, nonlinearities, heterogeneous genre. My reading of these forms and their political aesthetic forces comes in part through the work of the Creolists, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant. In

their 1989 call for *L'Éloge de la Créolité* (In Praise of Creoleness), the authors collectively argue that to apprehend (that is, to come to know or experience) Antillean life in its American context necessitates “tourner le dos à l’inscription fétichiste dans une universalité régie par les valeurs occidentales, afin d’entrer dans la minutieuse exploration de nous-mêmes, faites de patiences, d’accumulations, de répétitions, de piétinements, d’obstinations, où se mobiliseraient tous les genres littéraires (séparément ou dans la négation de leurs frontières) et le maniement transversal (mais pas forcément savant) de toutes les sciences humaines” (Bernabé et al 22).<sup>10</sup> This is theory as an everyday process of inquiry that defies generic boundaries and that is incommensurate with a categorial logic, in particular in the way that it issues from intimate testimony and embodied experience. Pineau’s text heeds this call, while yet reconvening the Creolists’ collective authority into a kind of eco-feminist vision of matrifocal kinship indexical of body-place relations in the spectrality of that *jardin créole* and in nonlinear temporal exercises of sovereignty (as and in motion, to reiterate Gómez). It is in the everydayness and the alternative literacies of Man Ya’s relations with her garden that an eco-delic sensibility forms decolonial political viability both by rejecting that monolinear logic of universal humanism and by embracing the durable flexibility of creolizing language and theory (as praxes).

Pineau writes about arriving in Guadeloupe for the first time and experiencing her grandmother’s *jardin créole*, after having heard stories of its marvels while still in France. In the material-energetic kinship love with the site, held in her grandmother’s language and ecological literacy, the young Pineau begins to sense that Man Ya’s storytelling was not simply recounting legends circulated by (supposedly unreliable) oral tradition. Instead, in the present presence in the garden, Pineau sees that Man Ya’s oral storytelling opens alternative pathways for Creole excellence, joy, and prosperity (alternative, that is, to the singular horizon of possibility written by and for the liberty and prosperity of (white) French society):

Alors, nous comprîmes réellement ce que Man Ya nous avait apporté... Sentes défrichées de son parler créole. [...] Elle nous avait donné : mots, visions, rais de soleil et patience dans l’existence. Nous avons désigné les trois sentinelles, passé, présent, futur, qui tiennent les fils du temps, les avait mêlés pour tisser, jour après jour, un pont de corde solide entre *Là-Bas* et *le Pays*. (218)

[Then we really understood what Man Ya had done for us... Cleared the paths of her Creole language. [...] She had given us: words, visions, rays of sunlight, and patience in life. She had pointed out to us the three sentinels, past, present, future, that hold the

threads of time, had twisted them together to weave for us, day after, day, a solid rope bridge between Over There and Back Home. [165]]

Man Ya's Creole clears a pathway for her grandchildren—stretching and bounding into an Afro-Caribbean futurity enriched by the alternative literacies held in the orality of the language, in its flexibility, in their collective capacity to weave (day after day) a marvelously solid rope-bridge out of the threads of time and thereby to re-articulate (re-member) a kind of rhizomatic rootedness. It is a shape of kinship that moves and turns with the movements of peoples and waters. The rope-bridge conjoins lands (across those waters) and likewise conjoins Man Ya and Pineau, in the sense that the Pineau narrating the retelling strategizes her perspective in part through a reconfiguration of the rules of the French literary language governing the genre and form of her work. This is to say that the verb tenses in this passage codify the narration in a formal literary past tense (the *passé simple*) while yet asserting the transcreative (and, I argue, decolonial) force of her grandmother's orality in this precise local site of the *jardin créole*. Moreover, in this animate space of multiplicity, Pineau senses that Man Ya's Creole orality indexes not a primitive incapacity for scientific thought, as suggested by her *inalphabétisation* (illiteracy), but rather asserts the marvelousness of her fabulations about her garden as ecological knowledge—as a *science* rather than a simple superstition. Indeed, Pineau tells her reader at the outset, in epigraphical form that breaches generic boundaries, that “Ici, l'essentiel voisine les souvenirs adventices. / Il n'y a ni héros, ni figurants. / Ni bons ni méchants. / Seulement l'espérance en de meilleurs demains” (n.p.).<sup>11</sup> This is rememorative fabulation orienting toward (decolonial) Creole futures.

My reading of Pineau is inflected by the Creolist tradition that in part activates her project as well as by more recent interventions into that tradition where Black and Indigenous feminisms shift perspectival privilege away from a patriarchal, colonial-modern, universalist view of bodies, places, times, and materialities. Natasha Omise'eke Tinsley, for one, argues in *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism Between Women in Caribbean Literature* (2010) that “the most renowned theorists of inclusive Creoleness often do not recognize how their very neocolonial rootedness in binary gender and sexual identities undercuts the complexity that they express as fundamental to their project” (25). While Tinsley is primarily focused on stories of women loving women, in sexual and sensual modes, the work helps guide me toward considerations of the feature of desire in Pineau's text. Tinsley argues that “centering islanders' expressions of

desire disrupts the worldview of Eurocentric queer theories” (5). I add that such expressions not only disrupt Eurocentric queer theories but that expressions of desire coordinated in eco-delic sensibilities—moving in nonlinear shape toward joyous yet-to-come futurities—likewise disrupt the singular horizon of monolinear colonial-modern temporality, the proposed universality of which continues to disinvest and disenfranchise bodies of color in social relation. Tiffany Lethabo King similarly contends with the legacy of enslavement and colonization, through bringing together readings of Black and Native feminist texts and toward intervening on the ways that settler colonial studies continue to ignore or erase the fungibility of Black bodies as part of the project of occupation and enslavement. In *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (2019), King puts Leslie Marmon Silko, Haunani-Kay Trask, Andrea Smith, and Joanne Barker in conversation with Sylvia Wynter, Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, and more, “to trace the contours of a shared speech” between Black and Native feminisms (21). In an epilogue about land and water, linking desire and erotics to the project of decolonization and Black and Native futurities, King describes how “our yet-to-come notions of connectedness and relationality are capacious enough to yield something more than coalition in the end. A new relationality can imagine new kinds of Black and Native futures” (209). Echoing Eve Tuck here, King points to restructured alliances and renewed understandings of desire and nonlinear temporalities that disrupt and unsettle the universalizing discourses of universal humanism (itself enacted through Black and Indigenous death).<sup>12</sup> Pleasure, storytelling, and political thought, in King’s work, embody and inform the metaphor of shoaling in her title—as a shifting land-water formation that interrupts and slows normative discourses and doctrines of discovery through the alternative epistemologies of Black and Native feminist theories. Tinsley’s and King’s critiques allow for a decolonial (re)translation-as-reading of late-twentieth century postcolonial literatures, which I contend generates meanings that amplify the narratives as ones of decolonial desire (rather than reading them as narratives of colonial damage).

Pineau’s memorial novel forms a rhizomatic shape of kinship in the traces of relationality narrated between Pineau, Man Ya, and the *jardin créole*—who are all interwoven narratively, materially, and through an already always woven Creole language, epistemology, and ecological science. In the narration, Pineau formalizes Creole orality in a literary world while at the same time weaving together multiple voices and narrating spaces that resist translation into colonial-modern conventions of language, literacy, and ecology. Pineau describes entering the space of

her grandmother's *jardin créole* in Guadeloupe through a metaphorical pathway opened up to her by that Creole orality. In the space of the garden, then, memory is sited in relation to an oral intelligence embedded in Man Ya's Creole speech and knowledge and which ultimately recuperates Creole joy and resistance through what Pineau describes as a spatialized shape of the temporal connectivity between kinship relations—as a marvelously solid woven rope-bridge. Weaving Man Ya's voice into the narration and expressing conjugated time-space entanglements within-during the particular site of the *jardin créole*, Pineau fabulates a shape of kinship that resembles Édouard Glissant's notion of the rhizome (drawn still from Deleuze and Guattari) yet exceeds his metaphor (and misogyny) through this kind of eco-feminist desiring and multispecies ontology in and with the garden and the grandmother.<sup>13</sup> It is ancestry that has crossed and crisscrossed and crossed again. It is kinship that relates conjugated time-spaces, bodies, and memories within and during distinct yet related places along routes of unrootedness and re-rooting. This nested rhizome shape reads as a sense of self, ancestry, and place energized by a theory of relationality specific to Antillean experience yet one which equally speaks to the American space, when (or where) thought hemispherically, through the ways that it indexes perceptions of space-time that challenge colonial-modern ontologies of separation, division, linearity, and dehumanized more-than-human kin. As a counter-memorial narrative of Créolité, then, I trace a rhizomatic shape of kinship in Pineau's genre-defying memorial writing—a rhizomatic kinship that conjugates *Le Pays* and *Là-Bas*, that conjugates time and space, that conjugates hers and Man Ya's bodies and voices, and that traces the hemisphere as an unfixed, open-ended, and kaleidoscopic network of crossings and re-crossings, silences and screams, erasures and palimpsests.

In Chapter 3, I weave/read Leslie Marmon Silko's 1977 novel *Ceremony* for the ways in which the narrative structure bespeaks decolonial praxes and a common theory of woven matter-energy relationality in the Pueblo language and cosmology imbued in the English language text. Shari Huhndorf reads *Ceremony* in the context of the 1970s "Native renaissance" where such "return narratives" remarked transformations in legal frames of Indigenous sovereignty vis-à-vis the US government. In *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture* (2009), Huhndorf articulates a contemporary Native politics of transnationalism "at the intersection of Native American and American studies" and maps an otherwise story of the Americas in correlation with this shifting framework that thinks across borders, identities,



and temporalities (19). Importantly, Huhndorf looks at Silko's *Ceremony* for how "such returns [to community] provide a necessary defense against ongoing colonization, and the novel's emphasis on storytelling (both traditional stories and their revision as the novel itself) underscores the importance of culture in these endeavors" (9). This is to say that, in resonance with Goeman's view of literature as the site for contesting settler colonial imaginaries, Silko's text narrates a Laguna Pueblo realism (so to speak) that tells a story of a spiraling science of kinship and creation. The term "spiraling" here comes through Kyle Powys Whyte's work on "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene" (2018) and guides considerations of Silko's text toward the simultaneity of what Huhndorf calls a return to community and (or in) nonlinear temporalities. Whyte offers that the Anishinaabemowin term for ancestor and descendant is the same word—there is no separating out these relations into figures arranged along a linear axis of temporal transmission of blood or knowledge. Spiraling time renders scientific the experience of dialogue across generations, of the ancestor and descendant conjugated through time-space in such a way as to foreclose the kind of fatalism so popular in Eurocentric and US narrations of apocalypse, environmental crises, or patrilineal anxieties. This is to say that spiraling time substantiates everyday political and social practices where "people constantly transform[] their identities in relation to other humans and nonhumans to form new strategic kin connections and to take up the projects of ancestors who had walked on" (Whyte 228). This is Indigenous science. And, in the context of reading Silko's return to community, spiraling time animates new and reclaimed storytelling modes through which Indigenous sovereignty (as motion) can be exercised in the remapping and re-imaginings of the Indigenous real outside of and beyond that "tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space." This return to community, then, is a turning toward *the incommensurable spatial and temporal heterogeneity of Indigenous life in the Americas* (to reiterate Trujillo) and it is decolonial praxis.

And, critically, spiraling time resembles the weaving activities of the spider—the more-than-human teacher of land as literature. The ceremony that will take place during Silko's novel, as a series of local yet transecting moment-places, begins with the beginning of Pueblo cosmology and language. The narrative opens with an incantation. It is a creation story. But it is so much more than a simple fabulation. It is a theory of language. It is a cosmology. Silko's voice comes through the verse:

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman / is sitting in her room / and whatever she thinks about / appears. // [...] // Thought-Woman, the spider, / named things and / as she named them / they appeared. // She is sitting in her room / thinking of a story now. // I'm telling you the story / she is thinking. (1)

The spider weaves a story, and as she weaves the story is being told. It is continual, transcreative, intra-active wovenness. The following page bears another poetic form that initiates a ceremony, leading onto a small piece of text at the very bottom of the third page, under the negative space of a mostly blank page: “What she said: // The only cure / I know / is a good ceremony, / that’s what she said” (3). The narrative itself only emerges on the fifth page, after the word “Sunrise” alone on the fourth—in the fourth world, it seems. Silko begins by invoking ancestors, invoking all of creation in this opening incantation. The story that Silko is weaving—that Thought-Woman the spider is thinking—is still being told as I read her novel, and yet still in the time of the telling as you (my reader) read this story. And the story will still be in the time of the telling when the ceremony concludes near the end of the novel—nothing concludes, nothing ends here. Silko circumvents annihilation. The ceremony is not an event, not a moment of resolution, but an ongoing process or praxis of re-turning to or retaining sensitivity to the land as kin—of *the sensation of relinquishing sovereignty to the life of the land and words* (again speaking through Trujillo’s voice). The character in need of the ceremony is Tayo, recently returned from war to the Laguna Pueblo reservation in New Mexico. Tayo struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, natal alienation, and internalized oppression. But Tayo hesitates. He has no reason to believe that a ceremony will work. He has forgotten: he has no memory of the wovenness of the stories, he cannot sense the pattern. Tayo has internalized the same disjunction and abstraction that separates written from oral; he has been conditioned into the individuation of modern life, the unweaving of language and cosmology, the complete uprooting and alienation from the deep and immense material-energetic relationality already always conveyed through the Pueblo language-cosmology web. He has been taught to forget the stories and language of his people. Long before the trauma of the war, Tayo had been wounded by the severing of the relationality that orients Laguna worldview and that constitutes a sensible physics of entanglement. But through the spiraling motion and process of ceremony, Tayo returns to ways of knowing and being informed by Old Spider Woman and in defiance of the US residential school system that had taught him to reject the “we” of collective and kincentric beingness. The

ceremony that returns him to Indigenous ways of knowing and being is the good ceremony that will be his cure.

Tayo's story narrates a Laguna Pueblo experience of moving in and through settler colonial society as an Indigenous man; but there is another scale on which her work registers, as well. It is Silko's story and yet it is also a hemispheric American story in consideration of the ways that ecocriticism and postcolonial studies are now engaging theories of the quantum entanglement of material-energetic relations that has persisted in Indigenous languages and literacies for centuries (and more). It is a story that is greater than the (individual) tribal national body. By structuring kinship as a spiral, as a spider's web entangling what are otherwise read as disparate linguistic and national stories, Silko substantiates the intra-activity of *place* and of matter-energy relations. The landscapes are characters of comparable introspection and activity as the people. And the more-than-human kin are reliable teachers. The shape of kinship that Silko instantiates in her novel shares the haunting trauma of settler colonial occupation, rupture, and extractionism where abuse, violence, and internalized oppression infect various characters as well as places; yet the novel narrates resiliency and futurity in the spiraling shape of multispecies kinship and matter-energy entanglement, culminating in the completion of a spiraling ceremony through which Tayo returns to Indigenous ways of knowing and being *and* where the novel itself performs an escape from the boundaries of reality and authenticity that attempt to stay and contain Native life. Silko's *Ceremony* is a story that speaks into being a protection for Indigenous life in the Americas.

I gather together these three works by these three authors for three critical reasons: first, my method of hemispheric weaving/reading asserts that scholarship is not beholden to a law of complementarity by which the hemisphere can only be drawn by accretion of vast and diverse places, peoples, and literatures. By contrast, with this choice of materials, I argue that localized weaving/reading generates a hemispheric practice that holds space for multiplicity—for multiple narratives of American becoming—rather than attempting to delineate one single overarching narrative. Secondly, these specific authors and works narrate epistemologies of multiplicity by which conceptualizations of time and space unsettle the linear narrative of history in which such multiplicities are affixed as archaisms, primitive animacies, and superstition. Epistemologies of wovenness instruct ways of seeing that persistently challenge that singular narrative of history and, in doing so, substantiate new and reclaimed histories of the Americas generated from within

the perspective of those whose material-literary stories they retell. And thirdly, these three works narrate stories of the self, of ancestry, and of place expressed through heterogeneous genres that relocate bodies, histories, and lands in collectivities—in relationality. Where colonial-modern ontologies do considerable epistemological violence, in this sense, is in the naturalization of a spatial structuring that affixes kincentric and heterogeneous literacies in a linear historical past (as *passed*). Colonial-modern (and settler colonial) ways of seeing attempt to organize bodies and places according to a discourse of law, history, and anthropology regulated by ideas of genre and in relation to social evolutionary notions of patrilineality. It is this same discourse that suggests that scholarship ought to accrete the local into an internally coherent (and autotelic) formation that can then be *added* to an already demarcated idea of the global or of literature. Where colonial-modern (or settler colonial) ontologies *reconvene spatial difference as (linear) temporal sequence* and prefigure the fulfillment of their own anxious, autotelic annihilation, by contrast these three authors' works narrate epistemologies of woveness in relations between body and place, self and ancestor, and that elude capture in and by colonial-modern translation.<sup>14</sup> Individualism and fatality (or finitude) are thus very real for those living and learning within the settler colonial mindset, for those whose literacies are activated by the erasure or suppression of relationality. And this linear elision of kincentric ecologies thus fulfills the heteropatriarchal colonial imaginary lurking behind notions of material proprietorship—the ongoing obsession with owning lands and bodies made possible by cutting the web of relationality. But other forms and processes of alliance—other horizons—are possible.

Where my weavings/readings address alternative forms of knowledge production, in particular relation to ecological sciences that have not been waiting around for the English-speaking scientific world or its proxies to dictate the rules of quantum entanglements, my project likewise finds that knowledge systems narrating relationality and kincentric ecologies are also substantiating scientific literacies that exceed legibility in and by settler colonial vocabularies through the ways that alternative epistemologies configure bodies and places as entangled and in ways that anticipate what postcolonial ecologies and ecocriticism are belatedly taking into account in theories of relationality. The chapters of this project coordinate affiliations and communalities articulated through collective authorship where my voice speaks through scholars whose work takes up the material stakes of epistemological (re)weavings self, ancestry, and senses of place. I gather together philosophies of history; nonlinear temporalities; place-based

literacies and pedagogies; and language and storytelling practices that all sustain memories of incommensurable spatial and temporal heterogeneities and that recuperate mestiza, Creole, and Pueblo histories toward decolonial futures.

Reading Anzaldúa and Pineau in dialogue with Silko helps sensitize readings of the hemispheric American textile toward more than a mere metaphor of weaving suggests. Well beyond the idea of looming, or a back and forth, Silko's work generates wovenness through the Old Spider Woman of Pueblo cosmology, Ts'its'tsi'nako. This network, then, is less fully mappable than is suggested in the metaphor of a two-sided woven tapestry. As a discourse of comparison, the spider's act of weaving emphasizes how various threads come together and form multi-dimensional patterns, resonances, and stories, and whose entangled shapes are sensible differently from within different intersections of the textile-web. By calling on Silko's narrative practices, activated by Pueblo language theory, the shapes of kinship in Anzaldúa and Pineau find strange (nonlinear) affinities with the Tarahumara expression of iwígara, as a spectral, cyclical, respiratory materiality. Weaving/reading kinship, then, in this context, is not simply an ethnographic or cartographic rendering of temporalized differences, the way that anthropologists historically ontologize racialized groups according to Eurocentric translations of the body-land nexus.<sup>15</sup> I weave/read a story of multispecies kinship ontologies located alongside, within, and during a hemispheric web of stories that relate persistent and old yet constantly adapting (trans-creating, translating, re-weaving) forms of knowledge and knowing.

The chapters that I have outlined above represent the primary areas of my engagement with each author and work and are meant to open up multi-dimensional scales of my project as one of local ways of seeing various intersections of the woven textile-web of the hemispheric Americas. However, to enter into the webs and worlds of these writers' works asks of me to suspend investment in scholarship as a narrative of exposure or of translatability. I do not read to reveal the damage that enslavement and colonization has wrought—and continues to wreak—on Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies and on various ecologies throughout the Americas, nor do I read for internal coherences, for cultural normativities, or for paradigmatic applications of marginalized epistemologies. Rather, this project is an immersion in the radical spatialities of these three authors' decolonial literary praxes—immersion in the kinds of narratives *otherwise* that tell stories of persistence; of knowledge-power that takes place beyond and across generic boundaries and beyond legibility to colonial-modern (and settler colonial) ways of reading; and

of transcorporeal entanglements that ultimately substantiate alternative kinship literacies, temporalities, and spatialities.

Weaving/reading kinship in hemispheric American literatures invites interdisciplinary discussion on ways not simply to include epistemologies of wovenness as cultural artifact, in an already established structure of comparative world literature, but to reconfigure the disciplines through such a heterogeneous perspective. The languages, worldviews, and body-place nexuses that these three authors elaborate in their works enable a practice that “discriminate[s] on the terrain of the original” and encourage reading with an ethics of love, reading for the traces and shadows of relationality (as Gayatri Spivak suggests of decolonial feminist work<sup>16</sup>). This project attempts to shape a transformation in scholarly focus to the local (place) as a site of relevant theoretical formulations on questions of world literature and cultural studies for the precise reason that such (hemispheric) American translocalities collectively generate a flexible, politically viable, and transcreative story of material-energetic, ecological, and sociopolitical networks. And yet, I do not weave these works together for the ways that they are potentially indexical of the writers’ cultures in a way immediately translatable to theories of world literature, ethnography, or traditional cultural studies. But, engaging literary and cultural studies within and through an analytic of wovenness constitutes a decolonial discourse of comparison for hemispheric American literacies and through which such alternative literacies become verifiable as so much more than artifacts of a prior primitive cultural inheritance—they become viable as sciences and scholarship.

The project is of course in no way comprehensive of the entire hemisphere and its inhabitants; it is an intimate immersion in the ways that these three authors narrate intersecting yet distinct and ultimately interwoven histories of the Americas and in how these three authors’ works, specifically, engage narrations of the self, ancestry, and senses of place. At once a theoretically grounded intervention into the asymmetry of global-local dialectics and a decolonial and ecocritical feminist reading of shapes of kinship that I weave/read in their works, my project attends to how these three authors narrate very intimate practices-as-theories of the body, memory, and space beyond the scale of settler colonial (or even postcolonial) materialities. Whether cut by the border, or as heir to the traumata of transatlantic crossings, or as a citizen of a sovereign nation internal to a settler colonial state, these three works narrate processes of political and corporeal becoming through languages, literacies, and ecologies and that persist

flexibly in their linear, rhizomatic, and spiraling shapes. I focus primarily on narrative engagements with intimate (for them) questions of mixedness, memory, ancestors, settler colonial and plantation violence, joy and resistance, and ecological entanglements between peoples, places, literacies, and languages. In (nonlinear) affiliation with iwígara, these stories voice the decolonial force of kincentric ecological literacies, the persistence of oral storytelling, and the revolutionary potential of quotidian political-aesthetic praxes in the ways that each incant matricultural histories and generate narratives of desire for mestiza, Creole, and Native feminist futurities.

## CHAPTER 1

### On the Borderlands/Body:

#### Mapping Senses of Self in Anzaldúa's *New Mestiza* Dualisms

*Since history and memory have to be reclaimed either in the absence of hardcopy or in full acknowledgement of the ideological distortions that have colored whatever written documents and archival materials do exist, contemporary women writers especially have been interested in reappropriating the past so as to transform our understanding of ourselves.*

— Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices*

*Here is the story.*

A woman lives in a split world. She has been taught that her family tree is rooted in the violent merging of two races, of two kinds of beings. She has been taught that her place, her homeland, belongs to one side of yet another split in her world. But she cannot stand on either side of the split and feel her (embodied) self. Her self is twice dehisced, first in the blood and then on the land. Her body feels itself the embodiment of that convergence of two warring lines. Her land embodies the divergence of one people. And she has been taught that she must get out, that she must leave her land and abandon the lines of her (inherent) Self, in order to live freely. But she is finding other lessons, other pedagogies, other modes of relating to her sense of (embodied) self and to her land. This woman is finding signs everywhere, symbols of an absented history that holds the promise of a liberated and loud future consciousness. This woman is finding a pathway to the sensation that the split self is not a broken body but rather a resilient body—that the split self is a medium for the inversion of dualistic power geometries, that her body is a medium for justice. Through an embodied practice of split consciousness, the woman is finding the repressed voice of a blood ancestry and reappropriating that lineage toward rewriting her inheritance of its lifeways as a means of progressing toward a transformed language, politics, and homeland for her and her people.

The story that I am telling here is my reading of the shape of kinship in Gloria Anzaldúa's 1987 manifesto for a Chicana feminism *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.



As suggested of contemporary women of color's autobiographical writing by the epigraph offered here, from postcolonial scholar Françoise Lionnet, Anzaldúa's story is one of reclaiming "history and memory," of (re)writing a story of the past that transforms a present condition (Lionnet 4-5). Anzaldúa narrates her experience growing up as a "*mexicana de este lado*" (Mexican woman from this side) (25)<sup>17</sup>; that is, to be a Mexican American in the twentieth century in the Southwest Texas borderlands, where she is too Mexican to be considered truly American yet cannot claim a place on the other side of the border (*al otro lado*). She feels her body as a split self, as the convergence and conflict of two blood *lines*. However, in the narration of dueling lines of ancestry and a blood-based notion of kinship, it is precisely in that linear shape of history and dualistic notion of transformation that she locates an alternative egress, a resolution to the sense of rupture and dehiscence, while yet reifying the same dualistic structure that activates the mechanisms of the colonial-imperial patrimony she otherwise decries. Much has already been said in scholarship on Anzaldúa's now-canonical text. I take up my reading in acknowledgement of the breadth, depth, and scope of studies by, for example, Suzanne Bost, Mariana Ortega, AnaLouise Keating, and Sonia Saldívar-Hull, to name only a few.<sup>18</sup> In many ways, Anzaldúa has become a beacon for the exploration of new terrain in multicultural, multilingual, feminist, queer, and borderlands experiences and studies. *Borderlands/La Frontera* is notable in particular for its narration of embodied experience as a mode of knowing (or coming to know) the embodied self outside of frameworks imposed in (post)colonial and nationalist cultural milieus while yet affirming the deep informativity of cultural practices on the formation of a consciousness.

My reading of kinship in many ways corresponds with the body of *Borderlands/La Frontera* scholarship in terms of the transformative effects of Anzaldúa's poetics of mestiza/Chicana self (as in self-identification); yet, in my reading of a linear shape of kinship, I find myself wanting to add to and intervene on that body of scholarship by mapping senses of an inherent Self (as a concept, marked with the capital S) in terms that constellate and consolidate the dualisms of Anzaldúa's writing (and embodied practice) toward an interpretation of how Anzaldúa implicitly demarcates the *new mestiza consciousness* as a way of seeing and knowing that is determined in the blood anterior to experience. While I maintain here, and throughout, that there is no one single correct interpretation of Anzaldúa's text—which is, I will add, a part of the project and part of its enduring quality—in Anzaldúa's linearized pathway to the new mestiza

consciousness I locate the reification of a colonial-modern teleology whose discursive and imaginative operations facilitate the positioning of mixedness (*mestizaje*) as a new telos of social progression within a grammar of liberal humanism, multiculturalism, and Enlightenment dualisms. At the same time, I find, these operations structure an incommensurability of the dualisms as both the source of the struggle and the source energy for overcoming the struggle by inverting the dualistic power geometry against which Anzaldúa frames the new *mestiza* coming-to-consciousness. In this way, the text at once performs an explicit call to “abandon” dualistic modes of thinking and manifests an implicit ideological framework of hierarchical dichotomies.

I begin with the notion of colonial-modern teleology and hierarchical dichotomies for two interrelated reasons: first, my reading of a linear shape of kinship in Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* draws its framework significantly through María Lugones’s “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System” (2007) as well as its follow-up “Toward a Decolonial Feminism” (2010). Lugones first reads through and against Anibal Quijano’s formulation of “the coloniality of power” in regard to global capitalism and exploitation of labor and expands that idea by orienting toward “structural axes” of race and gender as tools of analysis (similar to yet distinct from intersectionality) by which the “hierarchical dichotomies” subtending colonial-modern epistemologies are located, unconcealed, and dismantled (Lugones “Decolonial Feminism” 742). These dichotomies organize bodies and lands through a “categorical logic” that separates, hierarchizes, and linearizes *kinds* of bodies defined by the outward markings of a supposedly inherent inner nature (Lugones “Decolonial Feminism” 742). Of critical importance is Lugones’s assessment that “the invention of race [...] reconceives humanity and human relations fictionally, in biological terms” (“Heterosexualism” 190). And colonial-modern ideas of gender, Lugones urges, likewise reconceive bodies in dimorphic terms that limit communal practices and work toward the violent elimination of heterogeneous expressions of self and community. Quijano’s historicization enables Lugones to connect the production of this colonial-modern “way of knowing”—that is, the “categorical logic” subtending the fictionality of biological race and dimorphic sex—with the “hierarchical dichotomies” that organize discourses of cognition through gendering and racializing discourses of law, history, and anthropology and in ways amenable not only to global capitalism and exploitation of labor but as well to maintaining that power by controlling the narrative of what constitutes legitimate ways of knowing and being (Lugones “Heterosexualism” 192). This rationality, formed in dualistic terms

and emblematic of European Enlightenment ideas (or ideals), then becomes the grounds on which, “from within this mythical starting point, other inhabitants of the planet came to be mythically conceived not as dominated through conquest, nor as inferior in terms of wealth or political power, but as an anterior stage in the history of the species, in this unidirectional path” toward “modernity” (“Heterosexualism” 192). Lugones argues that the colonial-modern gender system, exercised and maintained in quotidian (heteropatriarchal) cultural practices, structures social relations and organizes biologized difference into categorially marked, teleological, linear (social) evolutionary terms of human progress and becoming. The second reason for beginning with this notion of teleology addresses the linear historical model and mythical origination of Anzaldúa’s new *mestiza* consciousness with particular concern for how the narrated sense of Self—of becoming self—positions mixedness as the future telos of a social evolution imagined as such through a recourse to dualisms but where the dualism facilitates the resolution by conquest of one side over the other. The inner struggle of the split consciousness, hence externalized toward transformation, becomes the site of bridging and breaking the hierarchical dichotomy while yet theorizing its own conditions of possibility in terms of an inversion of the binary that yet retains the colonial-modern power geometry in its teleological shape of history and becoming-human.

The chapters through which Anzaldúa narrates the *new mestiza* follow an internal logic that proposes a path (a *mestiza way*) out of the shame and rejection conferred by dominant white US society onto the female body of color and toward a new Borderlands paradigm in which the feminine, the dark, and the Other(ed) become empowered emblems of worship and leadership rather than oppressed, silenced, and sacrificed by and for the supremacy of the masculine and the white. And yet, not only does this fail to interrogate the biologized categories of “female,” “white,” or “mestizo/a,” but Anzaldúa maps out the basis for this inversion through invoking a linear, blood-borne (biological) patrimony of the body and the place of the Chicana/o people in the Borderlands. In doing so, in this way, Anzaldúa implicitly structures a shape of kinship—as a theory of ancestry and a sense of place—within the same categorial logic that her work proposes to unsettle and through which body and land can be demarcated as inherently possessing a kind of historical primacy, or firstness in the place, translated into a framework of individual and nation-state sovereignty. In elaborating my mapping of the dualisms that adhere in Anzaldúa’s discursive framework, I turn to Simón Ventura Trujillo’s “So that the Thieves Will Not Inherit

the Earth: Writing and the Fugitive Translation of Indigenous Land Reclamation” (2017) and Sheila Marie Contreras’s *Blood Lines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o Literature* (2008) for ways to think through the project on Anzaldúa’s terms yet with a critical eye toward the stakes of its emphasis on biological race, gender, sex, and territory. And in mapping the senses of an inherent Self through these two scholars’ works, elements of Anzaldúa’s text take on a teleological shape in relation to the figure of the ancestor as an icon animated in myth and in relation to a sense of place as a matter of neonational belonging. Trujillo reads Chicano nationalist memoir through and against Indigenous literary practices as a way of shifting attention toward what he calls the “fugitive translation” of autobiography into collective authorship of a life, which then bespeaks decolonial action in its capacity to escape the boundaries of genre (and, I add, gender) in the context of resisting colonial-modern epistemologies. I find that Trujillo’s reading of life-writing enhances Anzaldúa’s transformative calls where it points to a kind of openness and interdisciplinarity in the expression of theory derived through testimony and embodied experience. While Trujillo likewise points to Anzaldúa’s autobiographical writing as a hybrid text enacting such resistance, his argument asserts that “the hemispheric articulation of nation-state sovereignties in North America and Latin America rely on a mode of translation that decimates the incommensurable temporal and spatial heterogeneity of Indigenous life in the Americas under the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space” (66). In other words, a linear (temporalized) shape of kinship and historicity—and of becoming-human—at once produces the origin story of bodies and places (as individuals and as states) and demarcates these in linear temporal sequence with communal and place-based social relations and political formations. In this hierarchical dichotomy, the “singular horizon of time and space” foretells the only possible ending for Indigenous life—which is its vanishing, by annihilation or assimilation or both. Hybridity of text and genre resists such tyranny, unsettles its tenure; but where the articulation of liberatory struggles is framed in the language of individual, territorial sovereignty of *kinds* bound into nations, Trujillo suggests, an explication of hybridity exacts the further erasure of the simultaneity of stories of Indigenous life in the Americas by linearizing the shift from (tribal) communalism to (national) individualism as though it were a natural evolution of social relations heading toward that singular horizon. Contreras similarly takes up a nuanced reading of myth and indigenism in Chicana/o literature, reading Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* through an examination of the role and uses of

Aztec myth in the text and the recourse to mythicized Aztec bloodlines as Anzaldúa's grounds for belonging and for laying claim to lands demarcated as the blood-right of the Chicano/a people. Citing Rafael Pérez-Torres, Contreras defines the mythicized indigenism employed by Anzaldúa as at once a purportedly "unproblematic recuperation of indigenous culture" and as a "complex cultural construction of self-identity" (32). It is a hybridity that asserts the authenticity and validity of an Indigenous patrimony while yet doing so by codifying that ancestry as a prior, uncorrupted Indigeneity now and henceforth located in the split mestiza body and consciousness. Contreras focalizes her study in this gesture to Aztec inheritance:

This study is about the complications and paradoxes of Chicana/o literary indigenism, most especially the reliance on mythic pre-Columbian pantheons to advance claims of ancestry and land rights. My argument is that Chicana/o indigenism creates cultural narratives of Indianness that rely most prominently on mythic accounts drawn from anthropology and archaeology, and, as it most often does, myth here supplants history. Nevertheless, through indigenism, Chicanas/os have been able to place themselves in oppositional historical context and to generate discourses of social change because of that positioning. (40)

Contreras directly addresses the recourse to mythic imagery as a matter of identity construction, in a way corroborated by the Mexican philosophical traditions from which Anzaldúa draws. The problem as I understand it, and that Contreras identifies, lies in the way that this use of mythic imagery positions a kind of pre-modern, pre-contact indigeneity fully and firmly in the past, and where the iconography of that mythic past can then serve as the symbolic terrain on which the contemporary, modern mestiza/o actualizes Self-identification with the Indigenous *half* of the blood line. In other words, the kind of indigeneity deployed in Anzaldúa's *new mestiza* pathway functions as a use object by means of which contemporary movements for social change are adjudicated—on the one hand, this is necessary and vital and transformative; on the other hand, this is an exploitation of iconography that elides the presence and heterogeneity of Indigenous life (and lives) in the Americas *and* reasserts indigeneity as wholly located in the past, in a linear sequential relation of kinship.

On this last point, I look to Nicole Guidotti-Hernández's *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (2011) and Adriana Nova's "Places of Resistance, Bodies of Assimilation: Spanish American History in Gloria Anzaldúa's Thought" (2014) to sort through the terrain of the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of Anzaldúa's canonicity. Guidotti-Hernández argues that "the evocation of mestizaje and the

border masks inequalities and is essentialist, identifying a single, Chicano/a identity that equates with ‘the’ indigenous (Aztec) to the exclusion of all else” (14). The sense of Self evoked in Anzaldúa’s new mestiza consciousness asserts itself as representative of a totalizing category of mestiza-Indianness that displaces heterogeneous expressions and identifications of indigeneity that bear little relation to Aztec mythology. In a similar vein, but with non-identical inquiries, Novoa situates Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* in the context of Mexican nationalist philosophies, analyzing “how [colonial-modernity’s] historical narrative of space and time that characterized Spanish American thinkers was influential in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa through her interest in the writings of Mexican intellectuals” (103). This is to say that Novoa locates Anzaldúa’s philosophical and ideological framework in the language, vocabulary, and worldview of those thinkers who, as María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo likewise asserts, appropriated select myths and symbols of Indigenous Mexican heritage as a means of organizing an ethno-national sovereign political body united in mestizaje.<sup>19</sup> I will address mestizaje more fully later in this chapter through Rubén Medina’s skillful analysis of Anzaldúa’s interpretation of José Vasconcelos’s *la raza cósmica* in “El mestizaje a través de la frontera: Vasconcelos y Anzaldúa” (2009). With Medina’s critique in mind, both Guidotti-Hernández and Novoa’s works offer affinities, dissensions, and configurations that substantiate my critique of Anzaldúa’s recourse to blood, biology, national myth, and Mexican revolutionary thought in her invocation of Aztec ancestry and place, while also allowing me to maintain that this recursive logic likewise functions as a means of subverting the totality and absolutism of the hierarchical dichotomies by which her queer woman of color identity has been categorized as inferior, deviant, and out of place on both sides of the border. It is indeed through the very terms of the power geometry of center and margins—through colonial-modernity’s historical narrative of space and time—that Anzaldúa voices her challenge to that authority.<sup>20</sup>

From this constellation of thinking on Anzaldúa’s text, I extend my reading of linear kinship toward analysis of the stakes of corroborating such colonial-modern teleology—even if inadvertently—by way of a consideration of how the dualisms in the text construe spatial and temporal epistemologies as a dualism inherent to the physics and metaphysics of individual, national, and historical becoming. My aim is not to interrogate Anzaldúa’s experience of her self as Gloria. Rather, I am invested in drawing out how a linear shape of kinship defined by blood acts as a modality that demarcates an inherent Self through linear temporal relation to an

iconized ancestor—as icon of a past (and pure) blood origin—and through a sense of place as a demarcated surface on which the Self actualizes as a thinking historical subject. The internal logic of Anzaldúa’s chapters—at times contradictory, at times numinous—proposes a method for reading the mestiza pathway in terms of the languages of philosophy, history, testimony, and theory that frame the resolution of the internal struggle by means of externalizing the split consciousness through embodied (shamanic) writing practice. At the same time, the shape of this internal logic is teleological: aimed at the telos of a new paradigm and effected through dualistic sets of relations. I consider the internal logic of the text to be a guide toward a woven, transnational reading of the dualisms by which Anzaldúa historicizes an indigenized *new mestiza* future but where the dualisms likewise, contradictorily, reinstate a colonial-modern teleology conflating social evolution with ontologies of race, gender, and individual consciousness.

*Borderlands/La Frontera* opens with an origin story of the beginnings of the “mestiza race” rooted in the mythicized Aztec homeland of Aztlán.<sup>21</sup> The first chapter of Anzaldúa’s manifesto, “The Homeland, Aztlán / *El otro México*,” aligns contemporary Chicanas/os in the US-Mexico Borderlands as the direct descendants of the aboriginal inhabitants of an ambiguously defined US southwest region. The origins of the *new mestiza* thus demarcate the blood of these Aztec and the soil of this Aztlán as a national body and a geographic territory that bridge the opposition between the US and Mexico.<sup>22</sup> This site of origination forms the foundational shape of the internal logic of the text as a whole—a shape at once linear and dualistic. The second chapter then takes the reader through Anzaldúa’s experience of coming to know her self as an essentially rebellious Chicana whose behavior was at odds with her culture’s norms. Titled “*Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan*” (movements of rebellion and cultures that betray), the second chapter extends the historicization from the Aztec origins in the first into contemporary Chicano culture where Anzaldúa asserts a kind of individualism in opposition to the traditional patriarchal community familiar in her upbringing. This then transitions into explanations of Aztec symbolic meanings of the figure of the serpent, claiming these symbols as a source for *new mestiza* empowerment. Transitioning into the third chapter, “Entering into the Serpent,” Anzaldúa iconizes the figure of the Virgin of Guadalupe (entangled with the Nahuatl-language figure named Coatlicueh) as the symbolic mother of mestiza/o Mexicans. As a part of the pathway she pursues, mythicized figures of Nahua-Mexica history form the imaginary toward which her passage aims. Accordingly, through claiming genetic and

cultural inheritance of the goddess Coatlicue, the mother of the Aztec gods, as both idol (for worship) and model (for the *mestiza Self*), the fourth chapter, “*La Herencia de Coatlicue / The Coatlicue State*,” narrates the inheritance of the split (*la rajadura*) of these feminine figures in a way mirrored in the split consciousness that Anzaldúa describes of her own mestiza identity. The Coatlicue state, as a shamanic writing process and state of split consciousness, will form a vital throughline from that inherited indigeneity to the future arrival at a new mestiza consciousness, which I will discuss more fully in the concluding sections of this chapter. Moving from symbolic images to language, Anzaldúa then narrates struggling to speak under a regime of silence and linguistic terrorism in the fifth chapter “How to Tame a Wild Tongue.” Here, Anzaldúa locates multilingualism as, in part, an access point for the new mestiza, albeit a multilingualism arranged as a linear sequence of developments and identifications drawing on that past indigeneity. From here, Anzaldúa invokes the linguistic heritage and writing traditions of Mesoamerican codices whose pictographic and pictoglyphic systems convey complex histories and lexicons in red and black ink.<sup>23</sup> This also becomes an explication of her method of shamanic writing, where the sixth chapter “*Tlilli, Tlapalli / The Path of the Red and Black Ink*,” asserts nonlinear and embodied forms of knowledge and literacy while yet narrating them as artifactual of and inherited from a linear historical origins, the inheritance of which is written here in terms of the ritualized icons of that mythicized past. Finally, chapter seven delineates “*La Conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness*” figured as a return to the homeland (to Aztlán), as a physical homecoming, as a movement toward a consciousness of the material and spiritual history of this *home* (the body, the place), and as a conscious performance of inherited Aztec blood and soil. The chapters and their sequencing map a straight line from the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire to the homeland by birthright (Aztlán) of the *new mestiza* as a new nationalism imagined as the insurgency of Chicana feminism in opposition to US imperialism and Chicano traditionalism.

The internal logic shaped by this sequence of chapters positions the project in relation to heredity drawn in a line from Hernan Cortés and his Indigenous translator, Malinche or Malintzin, who is said to have betrayed her Mexica children by taking him as a lover, and on down (so to speak) to all those on both sides of the border demarcated as mestiza/o Mexican, including Anzaldúa herself. Throughout this sequencing, the *new mestiza consciousness* is structured as a telos, as a future endpoint to be arrived at once the dark, feminine side wins out over the light, masculine side. I find as well that the linear sequencing depends on



epistemological dualisms that co-constitute the lines of logic toward mestiza enlightenment and liberation despite the ways that such dualisms—as hierarchical dichotomies—gird the same colonial-modern structures of domination against which Anzaldúa positions her project. At the same time, Anzaldúa’s writing of the new mestiza consciousness *as process* and by her embodied self as medium or mediating force of transformation enacts and embodies shamanic vectors of Indigenous ways of knowing and being that work to reclaim history and memory toward decolonial, matriarchal futures. While I contend with the messy, contradictory, at times maddeningly uncritical recourse to myth, linear historicity, and biological determinism, I likewise remain in reverent awe of the ways that Anzaldúa’s self-narration twists and stretches and positions her body as/in a borderlands and which becomes the material and spiritual location of bridging the dualisms in order to expose and dismantle the imperialist regimes regulating the lives of this people in this place.

In this chapter, I ask: In what ways do the dualisms in Anzaldúa’s project mark generative contradictions, transformations, or feminist challenges to the postcolonial? In what ways do these same dualisms retain a contradictory patrilinear logic? And how do these dualisms’ marshalling of a linear shape of ancestry then bespeak sensations of the self/Self and to what effect, degree, or register of decolonial, feminist, and materialist valences? In the sections that follow, I map a linear shape of kinship in Anzaldúa’s manifesto through passages in which assertions of blood, biology, and linear temporal history are the devices by which to demarcate the mestiza body, ancestor, and place. Anzaldúa narrates the mestiza Self as the product of a historical rupture in the moment of colonial encounter and merging blood lines—as inherently wounded yet potentially cured by a dualism mapped equally onto the borderlands and onto her body, her body written as a “cross-pollinization” (as though it were a hybrid species of human) (Anzaldúa 99). At times, this dualism delimits merely a new nationalism rendered (somewhat problematically) as a teleological evolution out of a history of conquest; yet, in its inversion of the poles of dualistic power, Anzaldúa’s *new mestiza* consciousness also activates an enduring aim for alternative Chicana feminist futures in the Borderlands.

## **On the Borderlands/Body**

The manifesto opens with an invocation of the true Chicano homeland of Aztlán, given through epigraphic quotes. The reader is first given a Spanish language song verse naming the “*territorio*

*nacional*,” “*el otro México*,” (national territory, the other Mexico) and calling it “*el esfuerzo*” (the strength) of the people, followed by a didactic explanation of how the “*Aztecas del norte*” (Aztecs of the North) are the “largest single tribe” in the United States. Citing scholar, activist, and creative writer Jack D. Forbes, Anzaldúa is telling her reader that, of this “tribe,” “some call themselves Chicanos and see themselves as people whose true homeland is Aztlán” (23).<sup>24</sup> From this opening, we (the reader) gain the sense that the Spanish is marked, in italics, and the English unmarked—the normative. This manifesto is for readers of English literature.<sup>25</sup> This manifesto is telling a story of a people whose homeland is in one place but whose sense of becoming, as a people, has been ruptured and split first by their becoming-mestizo and second by the border. The poetic verse that follows these epigraphs further emphasizes the spaces of difference between these languages, inscribed as competing nationalisms across which this people overlap, clash, cross, walk, run. Their homeland is cut by the border drawn between the US and Mexico. Anzaldúa’s verse here describes the border as an open wound “dividing a *pueblo*, a culture, / running down the length of my body, / staking rods in my flesh, / splits me splits me / *me raja me raja*” (24). Anzaldúa sites her body as the land, the land as her body, on a continuum: the US-Mexico border cuts her body and the land in the same stroke. The poetic text stretched out on the page positions her body as a medium between these competing nationalisms, as a figure of Chicana/o national identity and as a device, in a way, for the analysis of this rupture as well as its future suturing.

The simultaneous placement (in Aztlán) and displacement (split by the border) writes the body/borderlands as a site of dualisms, a site of struggle, and a site of a rich cultural patrimony that both substantiates and constrains the possibility of Indigenous futurity in the region. Anzaldúa’s writing process here, weaving poetic verses, languages, testimony, and scholarship into a multilingual, heterogeneous genre text, asserts at once a legitimacy (in both the patrilineal sense and the social justice sense) in multilingual and mixed cultural identities as well as a demarcated homeland with renewed cultural patrimony of and for this people split and ruptured in colonial-imperial geopolitics. Aztlán is named as such in an anthropological and historical frame promoting historical primacy while yet oscillating through a radical poetics of what scholars of Anzaldúa have called her “auto-historia teoría” or a theory of self-knowledge (Norma Élia Cantú and Aída Hurtado, “Introduction to the Fourth Edition,” in Anzaldúa 10). The opening poem finishes with “*Yo soy un puente tendido / del mundo gabacho al del mojado, / lo*

*pasado me estira pa' 'trás / y lo presente pa' 'delante, / Que la Virgen de Guadalupe me cuide / Ay ay ay, soy mexicana de este lado"* (Anzaldúa 25) (I am a bridge stretched / from the world of the gringo to that of the wetback, / the past stretches me backward / and the present stretches me forward, / may the Virgin Guadalupe watch over me / Oh oh oh, I am a Mexican woman from this side).<sup>26</sup> The dehiscence of the border is bridged by the mestiza body thence split and stretched across the two sides and stretched between past and future. Here, “mexicana de este lado” thus functions as a distinction of kinship in the sense that it writes a notion of heritage dialectically as incommensurably ruptured yet contradictorily unified—*este lado y el otro lado*, this side and that side, as a single people (single body) both severed (in the past) and sutured (in the future) by the physical space of the borderlands. The mestiza/o body is a bridge between the two sides (between past and future), drawing together the two oppositional totalities and, by virtue of their prior rupture, transcreating a new possibility for restoring a sense of wholeness of Self and nation that dispels the opposition altogether. Anzaldúa writes her body as a bridge (“un puente”) between competing nationalisms, her body as a third space between the Anglo US and the mestizo Mexico, and as a site in which the yet-to-come externalization of an Aztec patrimony promises to yield a wealth of symbolism and spiritual practice through which to articulate the historical grounds for this new mestiza consciousness. Anzaldúa writes her body on a continuum with land. As in the verse cited above, the border divides the people, the culture, and runs down the length of her body. More will be said in later sections about the slippage in this articulation of the female body on a continuum with the land. For now, I want to focus on the ways that Anzaldúa structures the body-borderlands as a figure and how it activates an insurgent space of multiplicity that breaks down that dialectic heritage at the same time that it institutes a teleological framework that then blueprints the path of the new mestiza consciousness pursued in her project and from which my reading of a linear shape of kinship begins.

The text moves from the epigraphic quotes in differentially marked Spanish and English; to a multilingual, woven poetic verse invoking the author’s body as metonymic of the borderlands—as split by the border; and, finally, to the primary narrative mode of the text, prose:

The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. (Anzaldúa 25)

Where these two nations meet is a bloody, bleeding wound caused by their meeting. Here it is not simply the cutting of the border that wounds but rather the repeated grating of one “world” against the other (in a presumed hierarchy of lateness to capitalism). And in the hemorrhaging, Anzaldúa says, the “lifeblood of two worlds” merges to form a third: her body and the borderlands cultural world formed in the bloody, grating encounter. This is the third space of mixing that proposes to bridge and break the hierarchical dichotomy of epistemological dualisms. But it is not so much the violence of Spanish colonial encounter that grates and wounds here; rather, it is the more recent history of US expropriation of the southwest from the Republic of Mexico that is the source of the wound. Anzaldúa is not writing back to Spanish empire and its conquests; she is writing back to US empire and its biopolitics—focalizing the bodily in this demarcation of a borderlands third space. Of particular importance, Anzaldúa emphasizes the “lifeblood of two worlds merging” in this hemorrhagic space, and in this way the third space of the body/borderlands is written as a singular entity born of the mixing or convergence of two *lines*—a “new country” sited as a unified mestiza/o body politic and a sovereign Aztlán (Aztec) territory. While the authors of the fourth edition introduction to Anzaldúa’s text contend that her idea of third space collapses the binary, I read this instead as implicitly framing the synthesis of opposites in that third space (Anzaldúa 6)—so not as a collapsing of the binary so much as a weaving of opposites into an inherent twoness (dualism). My reading comes through the way that this opening section invokes Aztec myth as a point of origin of the mestiza/o-Chicana/o and then proceeds by means of the simultaneous placement and displacement within a space explicitly demarcated by and for a hybrid (mixed-race) people thence grouped as such by their blood relation as also a story of historical primacy in a place as territory. It is a demarcated body/borderlands and not, after all, a fluidity of flesh and land.

The mestiza/o body and the Chicana/o homeland—Aztlán, the Borderlands, the US Southwest—are formed as such in the moment of mixing, in this story of becoming, yet this moment of origin repeats itself endlessly, repeatedly rupturing and bleeding, and where wholeness (healing) seems impossible (at this point in the text, anyway). The wholeness of this body/borderlands is repeatedly refused, foreclosed, at the same time that the flesh and the land, in Anzaldúa’s formulation, incarnate the merging, the bridging, the weaving together of Spanish and Aztec blood *lines* into a synthesized mixedness. That a third culture is formed in this space is notable for the ways that it indexes Anzaldúa’s experience of feeling at home neither in the

(Anglo) US nor in the (mestizo) Mexico because of the ways that both demand assimilation to a monolingual and monocultural national imaginary. The third space is the space of multilingual and multicultural imaginings. However, to express the formation of this third space as a matter of converging blood lines (the lifeblood of two worlds *merging*) takes the body and the land as originally pure except in the instance of this kind of merging, this grating and bleeding. In other words, it says that the space of difference—the third space, the mixed-race body, the borderlands—comes into being through the violent encounter between two otherwise differentiated and narratively marked *kinds* of bodies and nations, formerly singular and now mixed. The body/space of multiplicity is a product with historical origins proceeding from a point of un-mixedness to, now, a state of mixedness, and aiming toward a future point when the wound will finally be healed—when the mestiza writer will have arrived at the new mestiza consciousness. María Lugones writes of this paradox in Anzaldúa in terms of what she calls the “fractured locus”—that is, drawing from Walter Dignolo, Lugones sees the liminal space of borders drawn through colonization (globally) to inform the enactment of border thinking. Anzaldúa’s locus is fractured as a result of that history. In reading the fractured locus, Lugones argues that modes of resistance generated in and by this experience of the grating and bleeding borderlands zone “are always performed by an active subject thickly constructed by inhabiting the colonial difference with a fractured locus” (Lugones “Decolonial Feminism” 754). This is a very real experience of rupture and bleeding and grating in the experience of merging lifebloods. While I find the distinction of the fractured locus helpful in considering the decolonial valences of Anzaldúa’s framework, or how the fractured locus is the site of both rupture and suture, I keep coming back to the way that the text structures a linear temporal pathway toward this enlightened consciousness in and of multiplicity. That is, my inquiry looks beyond the precise body/borderlands of Gloria’s life experience in order to interrogate the temporal epistemology that the framework of the text constructs where the split body/borderlands is written as a product of encounter to be recuperated in the future into a singular body politic and national territory. This is to say that in Anzaldúa’s emphasis on blood and origins I read an ideology of belonging that orients the formation of a body/place in terms of linear historical primacy, blood quantum, and the impulse to restore wholeness (to heal the fracture).

The temporal event of merging life blood of two worlds proposes that the body and the borderlands are the products of two singularities that come together to form a new one (a new

nation, a new body). This says nothing of the breadth of distributive agencies that comprise a body or a nation as such. But it does say that a homeland, and by extension, on this continuum, a body, bears a linear heredity—this says that the “authentic” “nature” of the body-borderlands figure is in direct linear temporal relation to an older ancestral sameness and only potentially differentiated by a bloody encounter with an Other. While this clearly speaks to an intimate personal experience of fracture (rupture), as a shape of kinship metered by blood relations the linearity in this framework acquiesces to a colonial-modern story of the world structured in biological determinism and organized into hierarchical dichotomies—female/male, dark/light, past/future—and where a third Self/space is only possible by the progressive movement of active time across passive space. The Indigenous can only become modern by synthetic mixture with the European, it seems. This framework then raises questions about how a linear shape of kinship materializes in social relations that in turn shape modes of political formation, processes of becoming, and epistemologies of race, place, and gender. My sense of this is that to take the mestiza body-place as a subject “thickly constructed” by the fracture of a past (ancestral) colonial encounter posits multiplicity of Self/place as the product of a mixture of two otherwise singular *kinds*. Moreover, this framework temporalizes the formation of a body/borderlands in a linear relation to an original moment or event of formation and suspends the fluidity or flexibility otherwise activated in the idea of multiplicity and heterogeneity. This also strikes me as a reductive framework, in the context of decolonization and feminism, where the linear narrative of kinship is deployed in the interest of authorizing a (post)colonial subject’s conscious (and ritualized) resistance to apparatuses of control. The border that splits the body and the land demarcates ownership and national belonging of a space—a throughline retained in Anzaldúa’s recourse to Aztlán as inherited space. And, here, this heredity lays claim at once to Mexicanness—as the exclusive admixture of an Aztec bloodline and a Spanish bloodline—and to the Borderlands as the homeland of a people whose subjectivity is formed in fracture yet whose project is aimed at restoring wholeness of the body/borderlands *as* a unity. This, to me, reads like the synthesis of multiplicity into a singularity. Underneath this claim to a Chicana/o homeland and originary mestizaje, the text (inadvertently) uses mixedness as a device for activism toward the future (re)claiming of an historical primacy within the progressivist language of what Trujillo calls the “monolinear logic of secular time” (66).

In the opening chapter of the manifesto, “The Homeland, Aztlán / *El otro México*,” which I have been describing, Anzaldúa narrates a history from which she draws authority for her new mestiza consciousness. Anzaldúa suggests that the oldest evidence of humans in the Americas was found in Texas, dated 35,000 years ago, and that “in 1000 BC, descendants of the original Cochise people migrated into what is now Mexico and Central America and became the direct ancestors of many of the Mexican people” (26). This claim places Aztlán in the US southwest and as the original place of the myriad peoples that Anzaldúa identifies as Aztec-Mexican. Citing John R. Chávez, Anzaldúa grounds her articulation of the mestiza/o body/borderlands space in the story of a later return to that original homeland. The blood of the Chicana/o people is the *same blood* as that which flowed through the veins of the people of the Cochise culture—sited as originary human inhabitants of what the Aztec called Aztlán as their own origin myth. I raise this point not to dispute the continuity of cultures, languages, and genetics of the peoples; rather, what is striking here is the emphasis on genetic *linearity*: Anzaldúa asserts that “many of the Mexican people” are direct descendants of originary human inhabitants of North America. And this is asserted in the context of demarcating Mexicanness as hybrid Aztec and Spanish genetics, cultures, and languages in such a way as to authorize the rightful territorial sovereignty of Aztlán for this specifically demarcated, genetically mestizo-Mexican people in the Borderlands. As a logic, the unstated assumption here is that the direct (blood) descendants of the original people of the Americas are the rightful inheritors of the land. Even if vaguely inclusive of other groups of Native North Americans, who she describes as also having mixed with Spanish colonists, the claim directs an understanding of the formation of the Aztec and then the Chicana/o peoples in linear sequential and genetic relation to the “original” peoples of that land. The claim ultimately sequences Indigenous Americans into a hemispheric totality based on a biological determinism that proposes a blood-borne singularity of Indigeneity now carried exclusively, in Anzaldúa’s formulation, by those remaining mestizo-Mexican inheritors of Aztec blood. But this cannot apply to a vast array of Indigenous groups, many still living in North America today, whose histories bear no relation to Aztec empire. Elided in this story are, to begin with, the Maya Mexicans who inhabit the Yucatán peninsula and surrounding regions, as well as further south into what is now Guatemala, but whose languages are not the Uto-Aztecan that Anzaldúa cites.<sup>27</sup> Are they not included in the term Mexican? Or in the term mestiza/o? Is there a different demarcation for admixtures of Indigenous and European blood that fall outside the totalized

“Aztec” and “Spanish” nomenclatures? The demarcation of Mexicanness is so clearly aligned here with the convergence of the blood lines of already reductive categories of “Aztec” and “Spanish” that Anzaldúa lays claim to a patrimonial—patrilineal—heritage based on blood, biology, and genetics, and whose logical underpinning takes race as biology, positions purity and mixedness as two sides of a hierarchical binary sequenced into a linear progressive model, and suppresses Indigenous heterogeneities under the rubric of a neonationalist mestizaje.

The history that Anzaldúa cites here is largely drawn from early- to mid-twentieth century English language scholarship on the various codices that Spanish missionaries compiled following conquest. The missionaries’ project coincided, naturally, with burning the numerous and voluminous libraries maintained by Indigenous societies throughout Mesoamerica. The codices that survive, then, are those whose texts and re-illustrations reflect Spanish translation, via Native informants, of Mesoamerican histories, peoples, practices, and languages.<sup>28</sup> Anzaldúa retells the story recorded by these official sources, the story of how the Mexica people who came to call themselves Aztecas (the people whose “true homeland” is claimed as Aztlán, in the southwest borderlands) moved south in the (Christian) year 1168 and founded the site at Tenochtitlán (Anzaldúa 26). Indeed, “Aztec” is the Nahuatl language word for “people of Aztlán” and was the name used by the Mexica only *after* they settled in central Mexico alongside the numerous Tolteca, Chichimeca, and Nahua groups already inhabiting the area. Contreras confirms this point in her study, where she identifies how “although Anzaldúa strives to give expression to the indigenous elements of Chicana identity in the present, her persistent appeal to an Aztec pantheon represented by Coatlicue/Serpent Skirt, Tlazolteotl, the snake, and smoking mirror effectively dehistoricizes the relations between Chicanas/os and Natives” (116-17). I will think through some of these symbols as my reading moves through the sections of Anzaldúa’s text. For now, Contreras’s findings inform my sense that the pipeline of Anzaldúa’s argument follows a body of sources that tend to ground her method in such appeals to myth to the extent that contemporary indigeneity is included only in terms of past, ancient, and pure indigeneity now and henceforth synthesized into an Aztec-Spanish mestizaje. Contreras goes on to suggest that, while Anzaldúa’s text has generated profound movement in contemporary scholarship, “the pre-Columbian gods and goddesses that people her text, however, have been made available not by the local folklore of Chicanas/os in South Texas, but rather by a modern archaeological discourse that has long concerned itself with documenting and interpreting the Aztec pantheon”



(119). To call the Aztec the direct lineal ancestors of “many” of the Mexican people is to appeal to a Chicana/o nationalism via that archaeological and anthropological discourse already displaced from Indigenous histories and modes of knowing. Although the story of Aztec migration, along with those retelling of Aztec greatness generally, is understood by contemporary scholars to reflect a certain mythologizing effort in the interest of centralizing Aztec imperial power in the centuries preceding Spanish conquest, Anzaldúa retells the story of genetic lineality as a total historicism of all indigeneities and links an already totalized imagining of Aztec identity in lineal kinship relation to contemporary Chicanas/os in the US southwest.<sup>29</sup> While Contreras finds that Anzaldúa’s text has generated significant activism and has informed numerous scholarly inquiries in terms of hybridity, gender and sexual fluidity, and Manichean dualism, Contreras maintains as well that, in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, “Aztec mythology provides a specifically ethnographic basis for asserting the indigenous side of mestiza consciousness, which is depicted as the site of cultural contact and confrontation. Consequentially, indigeneity exists most forcefully in Anzaldúa’s text as myth and signifies the denied or unconscious side of mestiza consciousness” (116). On the one hand, this makes clear that Indigenous ways of knowing have been denied and suppressed and must therefore be reclaimed in absence (or fabrication) of record. On the other hand, this makes clear that Anzaldúa’s text demarcates an ethnographic basis for accessing Indigenous ways of knowing but orchestrated through the meanings ascribed to Aztec myth and symbols by the “modern anthropologists” (as Contreras calls it) who have translated it into the grammar of contemporary social sciences. In other words, the renewed origin myth aims at a historical discourse within which Anzaldúa finds the materials for authorizing a bodily and geographically demarcated place of mixedness—for asserting the historical primacy of Chicanas/os in the US southwest; yet, in this space of mixedness, contemporary Indigenous identities are denied and suppressed under the weight of a linear temporalized history of Aztec-Chicana/o descentance that maps Indianness as a relic or artifact of the past and mixedness (mestizaje) as the figure of the future. And, once again, it is only by recourse to that “ancient” indigeneity that the new mestiza consciousness can activate the Indigenous way of knowing locked in the blood of the as-yet-unconscious half of her body (Self).

Anzaldúa’s emphasis on the conflict between the two warring sides of the mestiza/o Self may be linked to her understanding of Aztec symbols, in terms of contemporary English-

language social scientist interpretations. The recorded story of Aztec migration tells of how the people were guided to the future site of Tenochtitlán by a figure described as god-like, Huitzilopochtli.<sup>30</sup> It is said that the Mexica people followed Huitzilopochtli to:

where an eagle with a writhing serpent in its beak perched in a cactus. The eagle symbolizes the spirit (as the sun, the father); the serpent symbolizes the soul (as the earth, the mother). Together, they symbolize the struggle between the spiritual/celestial/male and the underworld/earth/feminine. The symbolic sacrifice of the serpent to the “higher” masculine powers indicates that the patriarchal order had already vanquished the feminine and matriarchal order in pre-Columbian America. (Anzaldúa 27)

The remarkable central valence in this retelling is the enunciated struggle between two figures arranged in opposition. The eagle—the masculine, the solar—is the “higher” power in this hierarchy. The serpent—the feminine, the terrestrial—is of a lower order. There is no mixing, no merging of these forces here. One is subject to conquest by the other—the masculine is said to have already vanquished the feminine, thus it seems that the natural (naturalized) remedy for this past patriarchal win is for a new matriarchal win. Anzaldúa reads this symbolic ordering as historicism, made apparent in the conclusion she draws about “pre-Columbian America.” The logic of the passage follows a pathway that begins with the myth of origins of Aztec (Mexica) power in central Mexico and that culminates with an empiricism about Indigenous lifeways in the hemisphere having already succumbed to (hetero)patriarchal dominance. This arrangement denies the persistence of matriarchal orders in living Indigenous societies *and* positions the matriarchal as a primitive (as in historically and anthropologically *first*) form of social organization. Mishuana Goeman (among many others) discusses the persistence of matriarchal and matricultural communities in *Mark My Words: Indigenous Women Mapping Our Nations* (2013), which I will discuss in subsequent areas of this project. For now, while the specific history of Aztec empire denotes significant decline in matriarchal power, the decision that the patriarchal had already won out entirely is one that comes through English-language social scientists and in many ways weaponizes that history toward centralizing colonial-modern power by declaring the matriarchy to have naturally already been vanquished—by declaring matriarchy generally to be a primitive form of sociopolitical relations. The Indigenous, female, and terrestrial—a feminized body and a feminized land—are all indexically primitive by means of this historiography and thus remain discursively incapable of the production of knowledge. In this discursive site, Anzaldúa seems to recognize how the symbolic order here upholds a

patriarchal power through the way that the story of Aztec becoming aggrandizes the masculine powers of the eagle. Yet the text accedes to the logic of hierarchical dichotomies in its linear arrangement of Indigenous, feminine, terrestrial as symbolic of a past, purely ancestral order. Moreover, the logic in the passage decides that the symbols of the eagle and the serpent, locked in combat, likewise symbolize an eternal struggle between dichotomies of masculine and feminine, sun and earth, the spirit and the body. It is a perpetual struggle, yet one that inspires the idea of the feminine and Indigenous winning out over the masculine and European in order to conceive and produce the new mestiza consciousness. Here is a contradiction. Anzaldúa has positioned her mestiza body/borderlands as a bridge—her body like the slash in-between two poles of a hierarchical dichotomy—yet this retelling of Aztec origins replicates a not dissimilar brand of empiricism in which the masculine and the feminine (the solar and the terrestrial) adhere to heteropatriarchal categories of uncrossed purity. This side, that side. In opposition and locked in perpetual struggle. Perhaps the figure of Huitzilopochtli colors this logic, his symbolic valences directing an underlying philosophy of inherent dualisms. Is there no in-between? While it is made clear that this historicization is aimed at the return to the serpent (the feminine, Indigenous, terrestrial) as icon of futurity and knowledge-power, the hybrid body and inherited Borderlands in the text are based on a fundamental struggle between two opposites (as opponents), and transformation is written as possible only in repeated grating conflict between the two. The logical relation here between the figures is then one in which the victorious earns the right to the land—to the place and the identity of Aztec inheritance. Where the eagle with the serpent in his mouth is here said to symbolize the vanquishing of the matriarchal, at the moment of Mexica settlement at Tenochtitlán as well as in the atemporality of the Aztec myth, Anzaldúa stages a call for claiming the site for mixedness—for the Chicana/o, for the (new) mestiza consciousness. In resonance with Contreras, Adriana Novoa identifies the philosophical lineage in this historical framework of Anzaldúa's text rooted in Mexican nationalism and anti-US-imperialism. Novoa argues that “the narration of the Borderlands reproduces the experience of a place that resists unity” (116). It is the site of the mixing of the eagle and the serpent, the masculine and the feminine, the European and the Indigenous—of mestizaje. But, Novoa goes on to say, “Historical mestizaje [...] connects to time, blood, and vertical evolution in a temporal sense. It is not a coincidence then that this process is almost always related to genealogy, blood, and biology. The references to evolutionism in Anzaldúa serve the purpose of providing a

historical role for those people who were historically marginalized” (Novoa 116). This is to say that the split (*la rajadura*) at the origin of the Chicana/o people is the source of the marginalization of all people and things Indigenous; the curative here then as well is to suture the split by drawing together the oppositions into a single Self (body) and space (Borderlands) that now inhabits the center. At the same time, by the same gesture, as Novoa makes clear, the linear historical framing of origins based in genealogy, blood, biology, and (linear) evolutionism speak through the grammar of the same social sciences that define what has been historically marginalized as also destined to vanish because it resembles a social order determined to be incommensurate with futurity within that linear discourse of history and anthropology.

This all sounds like Anzaldúa’s project is deeply flawed in its feminist aims or at least that it misses the mark in terms of its use of myth as historicism. But there is another way to consider the project, one in which the incongruences between Anzaldúa’s aims and the way she uses her source materials are actually contradictions that advance her aims by embracing the kind of ambivalences that simultaneously unsettle the totalizing effects of her oddly heteropatriarchal historicization. In this way, I follow Novoa’s and Contreras’s interpretations of the text while still searching for the conduits and pathways of Anzaldúa’s implicit notion of (linear) kinship. Contreras argues that “[Anzaldúa’s] schemata finds its effectiveness in a reversal of the binary in which all of the attendant assumptions about female subjectivity, such as diminished rationality and heightened sexuality, are refigured as the positive and unique aspects of women’s knowledge” (122). This is the means to ascendancy for the new mestiza consciousness. This is the denotation of femininity as power and as equally capable of dominance. This is a feminist aim. But Contreras likewise sees how “these inversions of accepted conventions, however, ultimately do not challenge radically the grammar of patriarchy” (122). My reading of linear kinship rooted in this kind of linear temporalized history of an Indigenous past and a mixed future corresponds with and speaks in part through Contreras’s argument that:

*Borderlands* reproduces the modernist association of the primitive with “uncorrupted” expressions of the body. When the Indian as pre-Columbian goddess is made to represent “deviant” sexualities and the primitive body, Anzaldúa’s text shows how even a radically divergent Chicana discourse can depend upon a symbolic landscape predetermined by the dominant narratives of archaeological investigation and literary primitivism. (123)

In its contradictory structure, the text expresses the value and importance of the feminine, terrestrial, and spiritual while framing these through the discourse that decides their linear

historical primitivity. The residue of what Lugones describes as the heterosexual colonial-modern gender system and the hierarchical dichotomies—rooted in a categorial logic—of colonial-modern ways of knowing linger in Anzaldúa’s text in modes that discursively construe bodies and lands in dualistic relations of past/future, solar/terrestrial, along teleological coordinates and biological determinism and that at times selectively elide contemporary expressions of heterogeneous (and hemispheric) indigeneity. The primitivism that Contreras identifies demarcates the feminine, terrestrial, and spiritual as already always pre-modern even if suggesting that it should represent the new future. And, again, this is said in a grammar distinctly coordinating a biological framework of gender, sex, and race and that further borrows from the linear social evolutionary determinism of colonial-modern ontologies organizing bodies and lands into global capitalist use.

In the text, the body is the borderland and the borderland is the body. Anzaldúa makes an accounting of the 25 million Indigenous people in Mexico and Yucatán, pre-contact, who were reduced to seven million following Hernán Cortés’s conquest of the Aztec empire. She says:

By 1650, only one-and-a-half million pure-blooded Indians remained. The *mestizos* who were genetically equipped to survive small pox, measles, and typhus (Old World diseases to which the natives had no immunity), founded a new hybrid race and inherited Central and South America. *En 1521 nació una nueva raza, el mestizo, el mexicano* (people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood), a race that had never existed before. Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, are the offspring of those first matings. (Anzaldúa 27)

Initially, these numbers merely suggest the scale of genocide enacted in the region by the colonizing Spanish. But there is much more being said—some of which helps and some of which hurts Anzaldúa’s feminist aims in the ways that it insists on biological race not only as a matter of origins but also as a matter of qualifying the inheritance of mestizo-Mexicanness (as a body and as a land, as Aztlán, here extended to all of Central and South America in a gesture of strange elision of Indigenous peoples who remain marginal to this historicization despite their ongoing tenure, languages, and practices in the hemisphere<sup>31</sup>). By 1650, she says, only one and a half million “pure-blooded Indians” remained. It is unclear where this number comes from as this (and many statements like it) do not include sources or notes. And, really, I am not seeking to verify her numbers here. But I find it noteworthy that the frame of reference is “pure-blooded Indians” who were, she says, not equipped to survive “Old World” diseases. In the context of historicizing “people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood,” this statement presupposes that

Chicanos, or Mexican-Americans, are a genetic *hybrid* (as though a cross-breeding of two species) who are then considered more biologically fit and therefore more inherently capable than “pure-blooded Indians” of assuming that inheritance of the hemisphere. The “pure-blooded Indian,” in this story, was (or is) doomed to vanish. While I am no virologist, suffice it to say that the diseases Anzaldúa names are viruses to which any person must be exposed or inoculated in order to form immunity to those viral pathogens—immunological resistance is not an inheritable trait. Immunity to “Old World” diseases is not conferred by “Old World” blood. Indeed, Anzaldúa tells her reader that the Chicanas/os are the rightful inheritors of Central and South America by virtue of this heredity—that *only* the “people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood” survived to inherit the now Spanish-speaking Americas, and this survival is credited to the presence of European blood in the bodies of this “new race” founded in the (Christian) year 1521. A strange totalization of hemispheric indigeneity, to say the least, and one which essentializes indigeneity in the same ways that colonial-modern biopolitics marshal bloodlines using terms derived from animal husbandry to demarcate varying purities of blood—the root of *mestizo* in the first declaring that those offspring of Spanish and Indigenous mixing were a mixture derived from two separate species of beings. Regardless the apparent benefit of mixedness that Anzaldúa strangely asserts here, the discourse of bodies (and lands) that she employs quite specifically historicizes a pure past and a mixed future along a linear axis of (evolutionary) development and whose relative position in the hierarchical dichotomy is adjudicated by (determinist) blood *lines*. It is through recourse to this lineal consanguine kinship and the corresponding attribution of inherited fitness that Anzaldúa stages the pathway to the new mestiza consciousness.

There is more to this linear historical arrangement of blood lines that shades the body/borderland nexus in the text. In the context of the dualisms of masculine and feminine (eagle and serpent) that direct the text, this passage emphasizing biological race and heredity seems to argue that Spanish and Indigenous peoples had a purity of blood line that, in the precise moment of 1521 when she says that the mestizo race was born, were woven together to form a new race—a new singularity, as it were. It is no coincidence, as Novoa suggested, that the coordinates of the dualism place the maternal and terrestrial on one side and the paternal and celestial on the other, in the sense that the celestial seems to index temporality here—it is the movement of stars across a passive surface of earth. Here is another biologically determined

dualism. Implicitly, the masculine energy is the (paternal) force of linear time that transforms the feminine terrestriality, the otherwise unchanging material (maternal) space. This seems to become the basis of the sense of struggle between dualistic oppositions, as well, where the mestiza/o Self is formed in a single moment of conception and it is thence a matter of struggle between the two sides or oppositions that animate from within (the “Third world” grating against the first, masculine subjugating the feminine, Spanish conquering the “Indian”). As a struggle between two mutually exclusive figures, mapped onto a linear history of Chicana/o heredity of the hemisphere, the structure of this logic makes the unstated assumption that the body (race, land, nation, nature) is inherently (as in, by inheritance) pure and whole until mixed through struggle, conflict, contact—and that this transformation occurs along a linear axis of temporal progress or development. In this dualistic structure, the Indigenous body can only ever be whole in its primitive past—a primitive past determined in colonial-modern discourse and toward suppressing Indigenous claims to land—or by this discursive process of re-signifying mixedness as a new wholeness. The hybrid mestizo race is the rightful inheritor of the hemisphere, and the Chicano nation is the direct descendant of these “first matings” and thus (patri)lineally legitimate in the claim to the ancestral land sited in/as Aztlán. Moreover, she says, “Indians and *mestizos* from central Mexico intermarried with North American Indians. The continual intermarriage between Mexican and American Indians and Spaniards formed an even greater *mestizaje*” (Anzaldúa 27). With a broad stroke, Anzaldúa paints Indigenous North Americans as also part of this new mixed race—an even greater *mestizaje*, but one which erases the multiplicity of persisting Indigenous culture and language groups whose histories may or may not be tied to Spanish conquest—and in a gesture linking fitness and survival with the carriage of European blood. The greater *mestizaje* here sounds like a gesture toward greater inclusivity; yet the monolinear temporal logic underpinning Anzaldúa’s demarcation of body/borderlands in terms of historical primacy, genetic heredity, and linear social evolutionary thinking seems to instead assert a mythical Aztec history as patrimony—as rights to the land—in a way that slips into a repetition of discursive and ontological elisions of Indigenous multiplicity, diversity, and transnationalism, while aiming at a decolonial praxis for contemporary Chicana/o identity and territory. The history that Anzaldúa recounts here structures a linear (teleological) transmission of inherent qualities in the (re)production of national belonging and identity—a linear shape of kinship demarcated selectively by blood lines. This history then informs a sense of legitimacy in

making a proprietary claim to the land (Aztlán) but through a totalized category of “Indigenous” that remains in a pure form affixed to a primitive point in the timeline of human becoming and from which a contemporary Indigenous-as-mestiza/o then evolutionarily issues (in this history). To position the symbols of that indigeneity as signposts to a future return of (or to) pristine pre-modern Indigenous ways of knowing, as I read it, merely reinstates the teleology of colonial-modern biological determinism and does little to materially or discursively unsettle the structures of power that continue to deny and suppress Indigenous sovereignty in the Americas. In Anzaldúa’s framework, the Indigenous is still doomed to vanish despite that this inheritance of Indigenous blood likewise promises to be carried forward by those who arrive at a new consciousness of their primitive, Indigenous, feminine, terrestrial, unconscious, blood inheritance.

The body/borderlands framework that I am mapping here ultimately resembles a social evolutionary model of becoming. All this says, to be fair, is that “certain features of the primitive have changed surprisingly little in the migration from Anglo and European textual projects to a Chicana indigenist manifesto” (Contreras 131). In other words, Anzaldúa’s project remains indebted to the “monolinear logic of secular time” (to reiterate Trujillo’s language) that ontologizes a social evolutionary grammar within which bodies and lands are discursively mapped and materially organized in the pursuit of a kind of power over bodies and lands. Nicole Guidotti-Hernández agrees with this assessment and argues that “when racial mixture is evoked as the future, as the harmonizing of disparate identities, it ignores ‘the more pernicious and hierarchical impulses behind mestizaje in the Americas’ and does not complicate the legacy of colonial violence or implicate Chicana/os in the production of racism” (17, citing Pérez-Torres). Guidotti-Hernández reads Anzaldúa’s text as “postnationalist”—moving beyond the limits of the masculinist Chicano nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s, which Trujillo has similarly addressed—but also potentially “neonationalist” in the ways that it reinstates an icon of national identity, as both nostalgic past and future telos, and does so expressly through this recourse to myth and historical primacy in the assertion of territorial land claims.

The mestiza path that Anzaldúa has laid out begins in the myth-as-historicism of an inherited (hereditary) homeland and then moves into a discussion of how her rebellious nature disrupted Chicano normativity. This is worth emphasizing as a way of transitioning from discussion of the body/borderland discursive axis in the text to a more focused close reading of



the ways that Anzaldúa maps her senses of self/Self. Anzaldúa's experience of her Chicano culture is marked by its rejection of her queerness and her spirituality. The Borderlands, and the mestiza body, are demarcated as sites of convergence, mixture, violent encounter, and intermediation. The Borderlands and the mestiza body are third spaces between two otherwise pure or distinct spaces. In this space (body) of difference, the hierarchical dichotomy collapses or is synthesized into a new whole. This is an ambivalent body/place. Anzaldúa testifies to her experience that "a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and the forbidden are its inhabitants" (25). The body/borderlands as third space is produced by the diametric positions of two entities seen as disparate and whose merging "life blood" discursively arranges their differences as incommensurable—as a constant grating and rupture. And it is in the third space of constant transition (bleeding, overlapping, splitting, crossing) that Anzaldúa begins to show their opposition to be discursive and not absolute. While there may remain residual elements of colonial-modern ontologies affixing bodies, places, and times—arranging them in linear sequence from primitive to modern to the future as the fusion of the other two—in the direct enunciations of her testimony of inhabiting *this* mestiza body/Borderlands, Anzaldúa asserts the contingency, transcreativity, and persistence of the materiality of the embodied self and place. The suggestion of "a constant state of transition" affirms at once the contradictions in her project as well as the decolonial feminist charges of her testimony as manifesto. This is to say that the expression of her experience fills the third space with a force of transcreativity despite the ways that she demarcates the body/place by means of the categorial logic that the third space claims to dispel. I find as well that the collocation of "state" (as stasis or fixity) and "transition" (as movement between sites) in this third space/body forms a sort of emphatic center of Anzaldúa's project: the US-Mexico Borderlands is a space of mixing that is enunciated as a place where the marginalized (the rebellious, the deviant, those cast out of the center of colonial-modern society) all have a home. And this home therefore changes in relation to its inhabitants. The third space may be neatly demarcated (neonationally bordered as such), but its contents are in a constant stasis as constant transition. It is a fundamental dualism—or contradiction—and, at once, these proposed inhabitants of the third space are demarcated as static bodies originally formed with an inherent (internal) nature that is locked in constant struggle against an adherent (external) culture.

Even while apparently arguing against the dualistic structure of binary oppositions, a categorial logic girding hierarchical dichotomies subtends Anzaldúa's enterprise. The ambivalence in this experience of dueling dualities calls to Anzaldúa for resolution, for one side to win out over the other—for the serpent to succeed the eagle. Indeed, Anzaldúa's text is loaded with such ambivalences and contradictions, many of which work toward unsettling the dominance of normative masculinity in Chicano nationalism. And yet, the presence of contradictions does not inherently disrupt hierarchical dichotomies—the merging of life bloods to form a new race still implies the inherent prior purity of those two blood lines and retains the dualistic shape. However, in my reading of the linear shape of kinship, I find that the contradictions in Anzaldúa's text offer that literature is messy and not necessarily internally coherent—a form of logical illogic that immanently disrupts any implication of an inherent nature internal to any body or place. The heterogeneous mixture of social scientist calque, scholarship, and testimony (or “auto-historia teoría”) performs and substantiates a radical amplification of the contingency of cultural productions of gender, race, place, and body. At the same time, nested in this salutary contradictory messiness, Anzaldúa's text reiterates a kind of kinship demarcating difference and sameness according to blood lines equally mapped in a linear social evolutionary logic, the structure of which retains pieces that (in my reading) uphold the very systems it seeks to dismantle. To be clear, where Anzaldúa's project erects a teleological framework for revolution, change, and Self-actualization in her narration of this shape of kinship, I find an uncritical discourse and politics of linear historicity and heteropatriarchal power in the way that the foundation of the project takes the impregnation of Indigenous bodies and lands as the point of origin through which the new mestiza way is authorized and legitimized as a “true” inheritor of the land—of the mythic Aztlán. As a claim, this suggests that the race—as a Spanish and Aztec mixedness—is characterized by a fixed identity, an inherent set of qualities born in that moment in 1521, exclusively formed by violent encounter, and which can be changed only by another encounter (or conquest, as inversion of the dualism). Advanced as part of a project with very clearly stated aims, a concept of change as event—of transition as a “state” or point in time—signifies residual heteropatriarchal obsessions with origins and ends; with linear temporalized History (the monolinear logic of secular time); and with upholding (even unconsciously) an epistemology of the body/borderlands that at once articulates *becoming* as a series of cause and effect events and sovereignty as a matter of demarcating a new, third space

(national homeland) in the in-between of two abutting nationalisms. As a new paradigm that neglects to dissociate from the linear shape of kinship based on bloodlines by which heteropatriarchy justifies itself in the first place, the contradiction strikes me as a remarkable reification of colonial-modern power geometries configured through a categorial logic of gender and a social evolutionary hierarchy of biological determinism; but as a new paradigm that arises out of the embodied experience of in-betweenness in a Chicana-mestiza body/Borderlands, the contradiction orients toward bridging (and aiming to break) naturalized colonial-modern ontologies of race, gender, and national territory—a contradiction that unsettles the empirical grammar of its own processes of belonging and becoming.

### **Mapping Senses of Self (in two parts)**

Anzaldúa tells a story of how her sense of an inherent Self developed in oppositional relation to the strict patriarchy of her community and culture, during her upbringing in *El Valle*—the Rio Grande Valley in the southernmost part of Texas. Feeling herself the rebellious girl child, she describes suffocating under the pressure to conform to Chicano, *mexicano* ideals of a good woman defined in the first through the emblem of sexual purity and then largely through Christian patrilineal kinship relations—women and sexual deviants occupying the lowest rungs of the social order she describes. Anzaldúa says:

Much of what the culture condemns focuses on kinship relationships. The welfare of the family, the community, and the tribe is more important than the welfare of the individual. The individual exists first as kin—as sister, as father, as *padrino*—and last as self. (40)

This is what “kinship” means to Anzaldúa. This was her very real experience, narrated here in the context of issuing a call for a new mestiza consciousness—a mestiza way. The Christian lens of kinship starkly outlines the frame of reference here, in that the shape of kinship relations is blood-borne and follows a pattern in which the collective is defined by its figurehead: the patriarch, the father, God. The duties of the daughter are to honor the rule of the Father and to maintain her (sexual) purity—and, it can be presumed, to eventually marry a respectable man and reproduce the patrilineage. The collective in these terms can only ever reflect Him and conforming to the “well-being” of the tribe, in this configuration, expressly means following the prescribed path of virtue, honor, and obedience that upholds his tenure (or his image—his status as patriarch). This is Anzaldúa’s experience of kinship. The implication is that the Self is

constrained by kinship relations. In this experience of kinship, the Self is individual but can only exercise that internal sense of a “true” individual Self by a process of becoming that is enacted in opposition to the demands of the figurehead—or in cardinal order, at least: He is “first” but as reflected by the identity of the group, and any One who falls outside this identity is “last.” The linear structure subtending this social ordering is worth noting, especially considering its unquestioned presence in the kinds of relationships that Anzaldúa evokes (which I have already begun to discuss). In this narration, then, Anzaldúa concomitantly develops (or extends) a sense of the Self and of processes of becoming that situate the individual in opposition and conflict with the communal while the language of her text takes the linearized ordering (linear kinship issuing from the father) as natural and inherent.

In the first part of this section, I map iconographies through which Anzaldúa imagines the ascendancy of Indigenous, feminine, terrestrial, and sexually “deviant” identities enacted in opposition to the European-American, masculine, solar, and heteronormative markers that she associates with a collective kinship identity. Recall that the third space of the body/borderlands promises a place for all marginalized others, thence accorded the right to power and to a sense of belonging. Yet, to position a feminine Self against this patriarchy proposes by inversion a matriarchy whose rules are the same but whose figurehead is an iconized woman (rather than an iconized man)—a form of (r)evolution that reproduces the power-geometries it seeks to dismantle. In other words, the feminine figure used as icon of the new mestiza consciousness functions as a model for the identity of those “others” marked woman, deviant, and marginalized who can now identify with this icon and find a place in the social order—in the third space of the borderlands. But in this iconography, and in relation to Anzaldúa’s insistence that the individual Self is necessarily sacrificed to the kinship network, I find a dualistic structure that arranges ancestor-descendant relations into categories of belonging metered on the one hand by blood lines and on the other hand by myth as historicism (by the ritualized iconography of a romanticized past). Those ancestor relations metered by blood are announced as constrictive, as hindering the true expression of an inner (inherent) Self—even while these blood relations propose the legitimacy of Chicana/o national belonging in the Borderlands; those kinship relations metered by myth as historicism are announced as liberatory, as enabling the expression of a true (inherent) Self—even while these aesthetic-political relations implicitly frame processes of individual and (neo)national becoming in terms of reenacting the rites, traits, and impulses of

an iconized image of a ritualized past ancestor to the extent that the inner true Self will come to be actualized through a use relation with that iconized image and, after all, through a process of contingently externalizing a static internal nature.

There are two key threads to twist in this two-part section: first, to look at the ways that Anzaldúa narrates new mestiza processes of becoming as rooted in individualism (as a break with tradition) and as a matter of securing rights for socially marginalized identities (as social justice); and second, to look at the ways that this sense of Self-ancestor relation is inscribed in the language of the text and to consider the ways that it potentially operates through recourse to the same (hetero)patriarchal dualisms against which Anzaldúa articulates her own sense of a marginalized self-identity. But, I confess, I want to take up these threads together—rather than to separate them out. I want to feel the texture of how they are woven together—to map the pattern of rights and reifications that form in their intersections. I will undertake this dual reading of dualisms in two parts, while not really addressing them as separate. I am not invested in synthesizing the twoness nor in disentangling the dualism. I am invested in acknowledging the ways that what is woven on one side of a two-dimensional textile always already simultaneously weaves an Other side of the pattern. This reading of twoness, conducted through and against Anzaldúa's narration of incommensurability between individual and kin network, attempts to map how the Self-ancestor relation is always one of co-constitution. This reading likewise amplifies a principle of translation that reiterates the intertextuality (intersubjectivity) of languages as part of a practice that reads interrelations in the formation of self and ancestor, as well. This is to say that the kinship metaphors of ancestor and descendant index *the relation* by which both are constituted as such in a simultaneity of a present presence—a nonlinear temporal-material relation of becoming self-ancestor. By contrast, where the Self is understood as the reproduction of inherent qualities conferred by linear sequential (blood) relation of ancestor to descendant, processes of becoming are reduced to the event of an individual selectively identifying with an already always Other mapped across a linear temporal space of differentiation (not dissimilar to the linear social evolutionary logic discussed in the preceding section). Even if identifying *as* the reproduction of an ancestral Indigenous otherness, an otherness denied in the context of Chicano heteropatriarchy, the Self in the linear individualist model instantiates the ancestor as a static form locked in a perpetual past and whose ritualized (distanced) image is then put to use in the pursuit of a future unification of identities within a

neonational site of belonging. Contradictorily, as well, the individual must (in Anzaldúa's formulation) reject patriarchal (paternal) traditionality in order to excavate the repressed matriarchal (maternal) inherent qualities carried in that Indigenous blood—she must choose nature over culture, one as a static and ancestral purity and one as the moving force of rupture (or corruption) and transformation.

### **(Part One of Two)**

Anzaldúa primarily works through the linear model. Immediately following the above citation about kinship as oppressive, Anzaldúa tells her reader:

Tribal rights over those of the individual insured the survival of the tribe and were necessary then, and, as in the case of all indigenous peoples in the world who are still fighting off intentional, premeditated murder (genocide), they are still necessary. (40)

Tribal rights are configured in a vertical hierarchy “over” individual rights, but this is ascribed to a “then”—this is the past, this is traditionalism. Even where acknowledging the presence of Indigenous peoples persisting in their resistance to colonization, the assertion is that the individual can only ever exercise individualism outside of or beyond the constraints of tribal and kinship relations (relations voiced here as a unary tribal identity). Inverted, the individual accedes to that vertically hierarchical position over the tribal or communal. On the point of this configuration, Novoa interprets Anzaldúa's philosophical tendencies in lineage with Mexican and Spanish American thinkers and with the intimate connection between the idea of “modernity” and the formation of Spanish American national imaginaries. Novoa analyzes “how this historical narrative of space and time [of modernity] that characterized Spanish American thinkers was influential in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa through her interest in the writings of Mexican intellectuals” (103). What I bring forward here from Novoa relates to the attitude of modernity that declares a break with tradition—or the story that the modern individual is the natural successor to the traditional collective, and this as a liberatory unfolding in progressive time. Traditionally, this is to say, the survival of the collective depended on the suppression of individual impulses or deviations. This kind of ostensibly pre-modern group-think is presented in the text as antithetical to ascending (vertically, in the hierarchy, and linearly, in social evolutionary time) to the actualization of Self, equally associated here with a true and natural liberated-ness or subjective autonomy. Only by overcoming the collective can the individual be free to be the individual, in this story of becoming modern—of becoming the new mestiza. Only

by severing kinship ties can a person be their true Self—that is the story of the Self in this telling. To be clear, this experience is very real for many folx. I do not dispute the experience and testimony of a kind of traditionality that stifles heterogeneous expressions of identity. Rather, I am homing in on a narrative of becoming that is articulated through the supposition that the traditional is inherently heteropatriarchal (a supposition that María Lugones has already contested). As historicism, Anzaldúa’s claim ultimately suggests, discursively, that the Chicana feminist fight for equal rights for marginalized people is a fight for the rights of an individual *and* that the individual accedes to these rights only by taking a position against the (old) collective, here defined as synecdoche of the heteropatriarchal family. In this story, kinship is already always heteropatriarchal and blood based *and* the constraints it imposes on the individual are naturally transgressed by the exercise of an individual (colonial-modern) sovereignty.

In this model, the idea of liberation maps the individual and the nation-state as sovereign only by rupture with the predecessor body or state—a notion of individual and nation-state liberties that Trujillo locates in relation to a narrative of linear temporal becoming-sovereign, exemplified in the ways that autobiography and manifesto distill the collective authorship of a life (a nation) into a neat and singular linearity. Trujillo analyzes non-canonical Chicano life story through transnational heterogeneous genre to describe ways that individual and nation-state sovereignties “rely on a mode of translation that decimates the incommensurable temporal and spatial heterogeneity of Indigenous life under the tyranny of a singular horizon of space and time” (66). This is to say that the “monolinear logic of secular time” operates (discursively and materially) on processes of becoming to the extent that a life (or a nation) becomes identifiable as such, within a worldview shaped by such linear temporal logic, by recourse to the secular humanism and social evolutionary thinking of colonial-modern social scientific discourse. But this is not the only way of knowing and being in and with the world, Trujillo asserts (and I agree). Of Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* specifically, which is not the focus of his study, Trujillo makes note of her “borrowings of pre-Columbian Indigenous spiritual icons, narratives, and symbols” put to use to “challenge nationalism’s secular and heteropatriarchal investments” (65). I would add to Trujillo’s commentary that, imbricated in that challenge, the operations in Anzaldúa’s text reassert a linear temporal historicity by erecting those “spiritual icons” in a distant past from which the present and future descend in a linear shape of time and toward a manifest future telos of arrival at a state of transformed-ness that will take place as a result of a

rupture or break with Chicano tradition. This, to me, affixes a romanticized indigeneity in the past and as a ritualized image put to use for the purpose of shaping a future (if feminist) identity and place of belonging. In this way, albeit indirectly, Trujillo's work helps clarify my intervention in Anzaldúa's canonicity where I am mapping the relation between the language of kinship in Anzaldúa's text and the temporal and spatial dimensions of her vision of new mestiza futurity effected in part through her rejection of Chicano traditionality and her use of mythicized figures of Aztec indigeneity in pursuit of a neonational mestiza place of belonging. With Novoa's assessment of Anzaldúa's philosophical route in mind, I find that the challenge to secular and heteropatriarchal investments is voiced in a homologous discourse of time and space and that relies on the ancestor as icon of a distant (and lost) past to be recuperated by a sort of nostalgic reenactment of that iconicity already once translated by social evolutionary discourse.

In the enunciation of new pathways for the free exercise of mestiza (and queer) identity, Anzaldúa narrates how her culture condemns individuality. At the level of the particular, this makes good sense: this is Gloria's experience, explained in a hybrid multilingual manifesto drawn from testimony. As a general claim, Anzaldúa critiques the homogenizing forces of Christianity in the community and culture and advances a liberal humanist argument for individual rights. Yet in this configuration, the tribal (kinship) is affixed to an anterior state of oppression and un-freedom while the individual is accorded the position as emblem of freedom in a linearity that displaces contemporary indigeneity in favor of an ostensibly fitter mestizaje. What makes this narration of experience remarkable is not precisely the content but the way that the figures of individual and community, and deviancy and normativity, are deployed in Anzaldúa's text:

Deviance is whatever is condemned by the community. Most societies try to get rid of their deviants. Most cultures have burned and beaten their homosexuals and others who deviate from the sexual common. The queer are the mirror reflecting the heterosexual tribe's fear of being different, being other and therefore lesser, therefore subhuman, inhuman, non-human. (40)

Normative and queer are two sides of a hierarchical dichotomy here. "Deviance" is the state of turning away from the designated path—"deviance" being whatever is condemned by the collective, she says, whatever is condemned in the *traditions* of "most cultures." This says that communal assertions of processes of becoming already always index a singular path, a normative route to an inauthentic self, and the individual who defines her Self in opposition to that



normative path is *deviant* but is also, here, the figure against which the communal (kinship) normativity defines itself. Again, I am not disputing the phenomenon to which Anzaldúa testifies in the context of experience. Instead, I am drawing out the way in which this narration manifests a linear model of time and kinship—a model that then shapes the possibilities of revolution, change, and becoming (becoming-human as well as coming to political corporeality). In this passage, Anzaldúa is citing Francisco Guerra’s *The Pre-Columbian Mind: a Study into the Aberrant Nature of Sexual Drives, Drugs Affecting Behaviour and the Attitude Towards Life and Death, with a Survey of Psychotherapy in Pre-Columbian America* (1971). Guerra, Spanish bibliographer and historian of medicine, “has presented the divergent evolution of Western European civilizations (through its Iberian variant) and Aztec, Maya, Peruvian civilizations along essentially biological lines” according to a 1973 journal review at the time (by Hugh M. Hamill, Jr., for the *Journal of the History of Medicine*). Guerra’s collection of essays thus offers analysis of the “aberrant nature of sexual drives” studied through what Guerra dubs the pre-Columbian mind in a gesture then used to index a totalized “Amerindian” kind of people (or: species) evolutionarily distinct, he is saying, from Western European biology and defined by this Spanish scholar’s observations and analysis of extant records of Mesoamerican and equatorial Indigenous cultural practices such as human sacrifice, anthropophagy, sodomy, and ritual hallucinogenic consumption. This is Anzaldúa’s (problematic) source for the claim that “most societies” are inherently heterosexual to the point of persecuting “aberrant” queerness. María Lugones, as well as Mishuana Goeman and Arvin Maile, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, among others, hotly contest the myth that heterosexuality is the historical (and biological) norm and importantly contend that it is the heteropatriarchal, colonial-modern gender system that encourages the systematic persecution of nonbinary and non-heterosexual expressions of gender and sexuality. Lugones, for one, extends and intervenes on Anibal Quijano’s “coloniality of power” by thinking through “the logic of structural axes [which] shows gender as constituted by and constituting the coloniality of power” (“Heterosexuality” 193). Lugones argues that colonial-modern discourses of law, history, and anthropology assert the biological normativity and historical primacy of heterosexuality and binary gender through defining sex (and race) without accountability toward historical people whose bodies cannot be neatly fit into “unambiguous sex categories” (194)—discourses that likewise dehumanize those bodies and cultures that acknowledge, authorize, and even revere such heterogeneous expressions. In other

words, Lugones makes clear that the historical and continual existence of intersex bodies, sexuality outside of procreation, and cultural embrace of bodies and orientations unassimilated to the binary are features of humankind that colonial-modern discourses then translate into aberration and deviancy in order to legitimize the persecution of bodies and behaviors that challenge the coloniality of power. Controlling the narrative of human biology by writing it in terms of linear social evolutionary theories where heteropatriarchal, monogamous, nuclear families and individual nation-states represent the telos of human becoming, Lugones finds, is part of the apparatus of that power over bodies and lands in the Americas. The “unambiguous categories” of binary gender and (hetero)sexual dimorphism constitute and are constituted by, for, and within the coloniality of power, also understood as global capitalism. This is to say that “what is understood to be biological sex is socially constructed” (Lugones 194). And, importantly, it is constructed as a biologically determined dualism. The above passage from Anzaldúa reveals “deviance” as a *state*—a fixed position—positioned against or oriented away from the designated path and characterized first by its opposition to the normative center. This says that the queer person deviates from a normative center in a way that Anzaldúa leaves undefined as far as the construction of this normative center. That “the queer” reflect to “the tribe” a difference that stokes fear, as I read it, simply naturalizes the hierarchical dichotomous relation of *normal* and *deviant* to the extent that it fails to interrogate this spatialization as a matter of power geometries with historical dimensions. This is to say that Anzaldúa naturalizes heterosexualism as the normative center defined by “most societies” and implies that the true Self can emerge only by progressing toward a more autonomous individualism—an individualism categorized as an unambiguous category oppositional to the other unambiguous category of the heterosexualist traditional (collective). A contradiction runs undercurrent to this framework. Anzaldúa’s experience of the onus of tradition certainly shapes her analysis—identifying as queer of color in deviation from her culture’s norms—yet, in the way that the analysis of Chicano traditionality is framed through a discourse of evolutionary time and ahistorical biological sex (dimorphism as well as procreation), the text likewise positions a body as the product of a biological determinism that Anzaldúa then historicizes through a colonial-modern discourse of becoming-human.

But there is another angle here to consider—I am not intervening on the formation of particular identities, nor on experiences of social and political marginalization. Rather, my focus

is the way that the opposition between kinship-network and individual at once naturalizes and universalizes an oppositionality between normative-deviant and past-future and that then differentially informs the narration of processes of becoming and differentially enacts modes of resistance. This angle arises in part out of the contradictions in the text, as the coexistence of opposing forces where at times Anzaldúa calls for resolution—for one to win over the other—and at other times evokes this twoness in an individual body as a source of Chicana feminist resistance. Describing bodies—not identities, but bodies—as “Half and Half” or “*mita’ y mita’*,” Anzaldúa asserts both a sense of deviancy and a sense of empowerment in a biologically framed dualism:

[N]either one nor the other but a strange doubling, a deviation of nature that horrified, a work of nature inverted. But there is a magic aspect in abnormality and so-called deformity. Maimed, mad, and sexually different people were believed to possess supernatural powers by primal cultures’ magico-religious thinking. For them, abnormality was the price a person had to pay for her or his inborn extraordinary gift.  
(41)

This doubling, or “work of nature inverted,” is presented as unnatural, abnormal in the context of the traditionalism in “most societies.” What is natural and normal, in her (ahistorical) analysis, is cis-gender bodies. She may be asserting a value and power in this kind of twoness but does so within a framework that describes such twoness as also “maimed, mad, and sexually different” and situated in a vague past-tense of “were believed” to be so. In Anzaldúa’s analysis, queerness has always been seen as a difference from the norm—yet where the categorial markers of that normativity arise remains unquestioned. Here, to be fair, Anzaldúa is explicitly suggesting that “*mita’ y mita’*” bodies were (in the *past*) recognized as possessing a “gift” but she says this by way of demarcating how it was in “primal cultures’ magico-religious thinking” that such bodies were understood in this way. Because they were primal cultures—primal as in *primitive* in a unidirectional evolutionary temporality—to see this twoness as a gift was a matter of an ostensibly inherent “magico-religious” thinking tethered to the aforementioned assertion of tribalism. That was a past condition of possibility, in this passage—the magico-religious inhabiting a primitive state of human development but in a way iconized here as a desirable future point of arrival for Chicana/o culture. Yet, in that prior passage, tribalism was equated with a kind of group-thinking that made individual expressions of sexual difference impossible or at least earning of ostracization, at a perhaps slightly later date on the linear temporal axis of

history and evolution that informs Anzaldúa's analysis. Even while valorizing such twoness, implicit in this arrangement is the idea that the evolutionarily *primitive* cultures recognized queer identity and sexuality as already always abnormal deviations from tribal normativity—they simply treated it differently, apparently by virtue of pre-modern “magico-religious” ways of seeing. But this assumes that it was categorically determined to be abnormal, aberrant, and deviant—which strikes me as incongruous with the ways that Lugones describes dimorphic sex and binary gender as colonial-modern constructions, as a system that took shape in the colonial encounter between the coloniality of power and Indigenous assertions of cultural, intellectual, and political sovereignty. The language—the discourse—of linear temporal history and anthropology intervenes on Anzaldúa's explicit aims to honor such “deviance” and, along with conflating homosexuality and intersexuality, borrows from modern social sciences' ways of seeing to promote Indigenous ways of seeing. This is a contradiction that undermines the challenges her text poses to Chicano nationalism's heteropatriarchal investments. And, within that contradiction, Anzaldúa argues that “primal cultures' magico-religious thinking” determines that bodies born with such twoness “are not suffering from a confusion of sexual identity, or even from a confusion of gender. What we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other. It claims that human nature is limited and cannot evolve into something better” (41). Agreed. Twoness is not a confusion. Full stop. Dualism itself is not an incommensurability—or at least, the contradiction in dualism is not the same as a confusion. A multiple self is not an aberration. Yet, if this is so, what does this then say about her own descriptions of the mestiza body suffering from the internal struggle and conflict between the two “halves,” between the Indigenous mother and the Spanish father's blood? The duality is “despot,” she says, and it demands total adherence to one or the other side of the duality—one side must win. The half and half body—the double identity—is compelled to take one or the other side, which she reads as despotism, yet the explicit call in the text is likewise for the Chicana new mestiza to identify with the Indigenous mother and reject the Spanish father. The Indigenous “half” promises the conduits of “magico-religious thinking” as a means to “evolve into something better” (linearly) and the Spanish “half” proposes the heteropatriarchal traditionality—yet both are designated as such through recourse to biological determinism and colonial-modern temporality. And both sides of the dual identity struggle with the coexistence of the other—the dualism is at once a burden of (linear) ancestry and a liberating (linear) ancestry:

the one as the material conditions of becoming, the other as an icon of the possibility of becoming *different*. Anzaldúa positions traditionality (collective, communal thinking) as inherently heteropatriarchal and social modernity (individual, intrinsic Self thinking) as inherently liberating yet a liberation achieved through selectively identifying with one half or the other at the same time that she describes this twoness as the site itself of liberation. In a sense, then, the path of *difference* is equally designated (and no longer deviant). The pathway to individual liberty of self-expression is laid out in a line issuing from a past reverence for twoness and aimed at a point in the future when the twoness will be synthesized into a singular (greater mestizaje) sense of Self. Anzaldúa's explicit aims carry implicit weight in the underlying structure of this teleology, marshalled by duality, in which (r)evolution follows a linear path predetermined by biology yet open to selective identification with one or the other half. At the same time, this contradiction positions a sense of Self defined through kinship relations as inherently conditioning the maintenance of heteropatriarchal power, but which as a discursive structure issues from the very same (linear) framework whereby a teleological theory of change refuses the coexistence of multiple temporalities, multiple bodies (or the multiple "I"), and suggests that forward movement is both naturally ameliorative *and* contingent on individuation (on the resolution of multiplicity)—a sense of Self that ultimately reinstates the same power geometry as that which it opposes.

### **(Part Two of Two)**

I would like to now take another angle on the above passage concerning the expression of "primal cultures' magico-religious thinking." Implicit, as I have been saying, is the linear evolutionary structure and biological determinism shaping her understanding of sex, gender, race, the human species. In explicit terms, Anzaldúa invokes this phrasing in her chapter titled "Entering the Serpent" and as part of elaborating an Indigenous inheritance—a new mestiza consciousness activated in and by Aztec myth and symbols. This inheritance is sited as drawing both from "ancient" practices—that is, from what is written in Spanish language codices about the tribes of Central Mexico—and from a totalization of hemispheric indigenities into a category of "primal cultures."<sup>32</sup> This is to say that Anzaldúa uses terms for indigeneity interchangeably with the specific Indigenous group who called themselves Aztec *after* migrating

southward into Central Mexico, as discussed in the opening section of this chapter. Anzaldúa declares:

My Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman's history of resistance. The Aztec female rites of mourning were rites of defiance protesting the cultural changes which disrupted the equality and balance between female and male. (43)

“The Indian woman” is a singular, an individual who, in this phrasing, acts as metonymy for a category (demarcated in the blood)—and here she is specifically Aztec as well, specifically temporalized and affixed in the historical moment of the mourning rites protesting cultural changes. This last part references something mentioned earlier, that Anzaldúa writes as the vanquishing of the matriarchal in the Indigenous Americas prior to Spanish conquest. I will say again that this generalization ignores the myriad matricultural Indigenous groups who thrived well into the nineteenth century, and in some places persist today. Nicole Guidotti-Hernández analyzes Anzaldúa's text in terms of this tendency for “romanticized images of a single Indian tribe that later became Chicanos, a system of representation that erases historically accurate indigenous subjectivities” (16). Insisting on Aztec as direct ancestral lineage romanticizes an “ancient” Indigenous identity and, presented in biological terms, inscribes that ancestor in a primitive state of unchanged-ness. Guidotti-Hernández goes on to argue that “nationalist narratives, grounded in biologically based terms of mestizaje and a national romance of a unified indigenous past, do not recognize Indians other than Aztecs as inhabitants of this continent, so that in such narratives, mestizo and therefore Chicano means Indian” (16). Not only does Anzaldúa firmly affix “the Indian woman” as a relic of the past, written in past tense verbs, but she likewise allocates “the Indian woman's history of resistance” to Aztec rites. This becomes the basis of Anzaldúa's understanding of a singular Indigenous feminine ancestor whose iconized practices inform the recuperation of her Indigenous heritage but through a process that, as Guidotti-Hernández asserts, supplants heterogeneous indigenities with a universalized mestiza/o indigenism.

What is important here is to think through the convergent figures of the ritualized “ancient” Aztec woman, as ancestor, and contemporary Indigenous women, plural, whose diverse belongings and pathways of becoming not only disappear in this telling but also all suddenly refer back to “primal cultures” and their “magico-religious thinking” in the way that “the Indian woman,” singular, represents a pure historical indigeneity affixed in time. “The

Indian woman” then exists as a romanticized image of Indigenous women everywhere and everywhen. Indigenous feminist scholars such as M. Elise Marubbio and Joanne Barker have addressed the material and epistemological violence produced in and by such totalizing, ahistorical, and narrow representations of Indigenous women (in film, literature, art, history, social sciences, and on and on).<sup>33</sup> While Anzaldúa of course does not intend such violence, upon asserting “the Indian woman” in this way her work inadvertently participates in a politics of representation and settler colonial violence. In this odd totalization, Anzaldúa’s text linearizes and temporalizes indigeneity as always already a thing of the past, and correspondingly mixedness as the thing of the future, where the text affixes indigeneity in time as a (linear) precursor to Chicana/o identity and culture and positions the future new mestiza consciousness as the surviving trace (by linear kinship relation in the blood) of a vanished “Indian” past.

To refer to “the Indian woman” as denotative of a past Indigenous (Aztec) culture is to retell a story of indigeneity that historicizes Indigenous ways of seeing and knowing and being as pre-historical (primitive, “magico-religious”) cultural and biological *natures*—as though as yet uncorrupted by that force of time (as culture). Change, in this model, comes through the merging (the grating, bleeding) of two otherwise separate and distinct *kinds* whose linear historical moment of convergence produces a state of transformed-ness. The ancestor here can only ever be this kind of pure, romanticized image of a mythic past—or else the ancestor represents the paternalistic tribalism of Chicano traditionality, and thus of Indigenous inheritance conquered in the Self by Spanish inheritance. In both scenarios, “the Indian” is always already a thing of the past. Contreras confirms this finding, in resonance with Guidotti-Hernández’s analyses, saying that “similarities that may surprise us exist between the discourses of modernist primitivism, as evidenced by [DH] Lawrence, Chicano indigenist nationalism, and the Chicana feminism consolidated by Gloria Anzaldúa, and make clear the fact that these discourses drew from and were even propelled by a fascination with pre-Conquest Mesoamerica” (Contreras 38). Here, Contreras alerts readers of Anzaldúa to the similarities between linear social evolutionary thinking and the Chicana feminism at the heart of the new mestiza consciousness. Both are derived through the perception of a distance between that ancient (ancestral) past and the modern moment, a distance made possible and real by the “monolinear logic of secular time” that “decimates the incommensurable temporal and spatial heterogeneity of Indigenous life in the Americas under the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space” (to repeat Trujillo’s

compelling argument). Contreras weaves analysis of Anzaldúa's invocation of the rebellious "Shadow-Beast" together with analysis of "the Indian woman's history of resistance" (both invoked as parts of the new mestiza consciousness), arguing that "these two assertions are connected by their invocations of rebellion, which Anzaldúa appears to claim as the legacy of her Indian blood" (121). Central in this analysis, then, is the assertion that Anzaldúa takes rebelliousness to be an essential quality of Indigenous blood, and that "the Indian woman" is also the Aztec woman is also the mestiza inheritor of the Americas. A rather unambiguous category, as it turns out. Moreover, Contreras asserts that "[Anzaldúa's] schemata finds its effectiveness in a reversal of the binary in which all of the attendant assumptions about female subjectivity, such as diminished rationality and heightened sexuality, are refigured as the positive and unique aspects of women's knowledge" (122). I have also been making this claim in relation to the explicit aims of Anzaldúa's project—that its noble telos is in the transformation of marginalization and persecution into centralization and power. But I find, and Contreras confirms, that "these inversions of accepted conventions, however, ultimately do not challenge radically the grammar of patriarchy" (122). Using the terms that appear to authorize that power to challenge that power, Anzaldúa's project retains the dualistic structure by which that power is consolidated in and for a particularly demarcated identity imbued with essential qualities determined as such within a problematic discourse of biological determinism.

The grammar of the coloniality of power—materializing, in Lugones's words, through linear temporal historicity and biologically determined sex and gender as a central mechanism of global economics—naturalizes both a linear shape of time and a hierarchical dichotomy by which bodies and lands in the Americas are produced as *primitive* and without history.

Contreras's argument clarifies this point:

*Borderlands* reproduces the modernist association of the primitive with "uncorrupted" expressions of the body. When the Indian as pre-Columbian goddess is made to represent "deviant" sexualities and the primitive body, Anzaldúa's text shows how even a radically divergent Chicana discourse can depend upon a symbolic landscape predetermined by the dominant narratives of archaeological investigation and literary primitivism. (123)

This is to say that Anzaldúa narrates "the Indian woman" as the figure of resistance, but the figure is relegated to a symbolic terrain in which she must remain in "uncorrupted" form or else she loses her potency as mythic icon for neonational (r)evolutionary identity. These discourses propose that the primitive body and land *was* uncorrupted—until a linear temporal event of



rupture, that is. This sort of artifactual use of indigeneity aligns with what I have been drawing from Novoa's work on the philosophical lineage of Anzaldúa's project, as well, in the sense that the Mexican revolutionary imaginings with which *Borderlands/La Frontera* aligns commonly treat Indigenous cultural patrimonies as a fund from which to selectively borrow myth and symbols toward the construction of a modern national identity (Novoa 103). This political philosophy is made possible by (and for) a narrative of time and space that organizes bodies and lands in a linear evolutionary order from primal (savage, uncultured, uncorrupted) to modern (civilized, cultured, corrupted). In the way that Contreras attributes this aspect of the project to interpretations of Aztec symbolism already "predetermined" by modern social sciences, the figure of Indigenous ancestor in Anzaldúa's text arrives not through an experience of that relation but rather through a distance and ritualization of the *image* of that ancestor—the ancestor as object, not as relation. And it is by this linear, ritualized relation that Anzaldúa formulates the epistemological grounding for Chicana identity (Self) in that ancestral icon of a now-vanished "Indian woman."

In many ways, Anzaldúa's text conducts the Self-ancestor configuration through her understanding of the development of one of the most central figures in Chicana/o iconography: *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. Anzaldúa describes this figure (the woman as symbol) as "the virgin mother who has not abandoned us" and the "single most potent religious, political and cultural image of the Chicano/*mexicano*" (52). The story goes that the Nahuatl-speaking Aztec worshipped a female deity who they called Coatlicue but whose name the Spanish missionaries misunderstood (not the only instance of mistranslation, naturally).<sup>34</sup> The Spanish heard "Guadalupe," the patroness saint of a part of southeast Spain from where Anzaldúa says that many of them had arrived. The figures merged, at least in the Spanish-language mestizo imaginary following Spanish conquest. Anzaldúa declares:

She, like my race, is a synthesis of the old world and the new, of the religion and culture of the two races in our psyche, the conquerors and the conquered. She is the symbol of the *mestizo* true to his or her Indian values. *La cultura chicana* identifies with the mother (Indian) rather than with the father (Spanish). Our faith is rooted in indigenous attributes, symbols, magic and myth. (52)

Anzaldúa takes this figure as icon for the new mestiza, as an embrace of twoness. In her image is the fusion of opposites—a duality. Guadalupe is then the *symbol* of the oppositions coming together in the mixed-race body—a *dualism*, the "synthesis" of old and new, conqueror and

conquered, Aztec and Spanish, made figurative. In the same expression, Anzaldúa asserts that this synthetic figure arrives in the mestiza consciousness through the Indigenous *line*: through identification with the mother, “the Indian woman,” rather than the father. Indeed, the Spanish and masculine side is explicitly rejected here, despite that the figure is activated by its image as a fusion of these as opposites. Anzaldúa explicitly says that the synthesized image of Guadalupe is the symbol of the new mestiza yet implicitly says that the new mestiza necessarily denies or rejects one half of the fused Self. This side wins over that side, the feminine and the masculine in opposition and struggle. The two sides (halves) of the mestiza/o Self are in contrary conjunction—in constant struggle. The new mestiza pathway with freedom in its future follows the Indigenous, feminine *line* as a deviancy from following the European, masculine *line* yet by that same simple inversion that retains the dualistic structure of the (hetero)patriarchy decried for its stifling constraint on the expression of so-called deviance. The two are brought together but only up to the point at which the state of transformed-ness will have been achieved and then one side must be rejected, disclaimed, disavowed.

This is a very real material experience of living in a society that, as Anzaldúa said, demands adherence to one or the other side of a binary opposition—but, in the same breath, the project calls for the new mestiza to adhere to only one side of the opposition. Chicana feminist futurity in this story, then, is contingent on rejection of Spanish paternity; yet the Indigenous maternity that it claims is here, first, written as a symbolic and totalized female figure affixed in time (as “the Indian woman” and as “the mother” of the mestiza/o-Mexican) and, second, written as a synthesis of both *lines* but whose name bears that of the father—the Spanish Guadalupe. Patrilineal onomastics retain “Guadalupe,” subsuming her homologue Coatlatlopeuh, the synthetic symbol of Chicana twoness forming the “single most potent religious, political, and cultural image of the Chicano/*mexicano*” in the simultaneous, contradictory avowal and disavowal of her twoness. I don’t dispute her status, to be clear. How Anzaldúa uses this symbol is what is worth considering: Anzaldúa crafts the “deviant” new mestiza pathway out of an oppressive patriarchal traditionality by ritualizing this icon of feminine duality, gesturing toward a future where “the Indian woman” as symbol is once again revered. Yet, in this pursuit, in this *use*, Anzaldúa likewise affixes that same “Indian woman” in a kind of stasis, in the “ancient,” “primal” temporality that can only ever exist in anterior linear relation to the new mestiza consciousness. This, I find, is the saliency of Contreras and Guidotti-Hernández’s assertions that

the new mestiza becomes “the Indian woman” when Anzaldúa explicitly declares la Chicana “rooted in indigenous attributes, symbols, magic and myth.” The Indigenous is the root—the route—and the progenitor (ancestor) of the new mestiza. *La cultura Chicana* chooses the Indigenous (maternal, material) side, rejects the European (paternal, cultural) side—rejects the coexistence of two sides while yet ritualizing the coexistence of two sides in the Chicana Self rooted in the image of Guadalupe/Coatloapeuh.

There are two interpretations that I would like to offer toward focalizing the role of the ancestor in this second part of this section. First, on the point of drawing together two apparent opposites (conqueror and conquered, masculine and feminine) in the figure of Guadalupe/Coatloapeuh, interpreted in relation to other places in the text that take up similar dualisms; and second, on the point of Chicana faith rooted in Indigenous (feminine) symbols, interpreted in relation to Mexican nationalist philosophies of revolution and transformation. First, Anzaldúa openly critiques this precise species of dualism in an endnote corresponding to a passage following the above passage on Guadalupe as symbol. Citing June Nash, Anzaldúa asserts that “Levi-Strauss’ paradigm which opposes nature to culture and female to male has no such validity in the early history of our Indian forebears” (53).<sup>35</sup> This is to say that Anzaldúa is reading the shift in Aztec empire from matriarchal to patriarchal, a transformation produced in part through the eagle and serpent imagery mentioned earlier—the oppositional forces of masculine and feminine thus discursively produced as incommensurable dualism. In Anzaldúa’s project, the fusion of opposites in the symbolic Guadalupe/Coatloapeuh reflects a post- or de-colonial return to a cultural paradigm in which these oppositions have “no such validity.” This says that the rupture that split the two forces into a dualism, in the past, will be fused back together, in the future, in the hybrid mestiza body and consciousness. It is a restorative gesture while at once activated by a monilinear logic and structured in dualisms. Joshua Lund, for one, reads theories of hybridity in part through Anzaldúa’s work in *The Impure Imagination: Toward a Critical Hybridity in Latin American Writing* (2006). Lund asserts that “the concept of ‘hybridity,’ including its long association with the (re)production of bodies, forces us to confront identity, discourse, and representation in the context of the tenacious naturalization of colonial structures of power and social (re)production” (xv). For Lund, the purpose of his critique relates to the ways in which the theories of hybridity that he reads signal a persistent “tenacity of historicist teleology” constructed by and for the colonial-modern biopolitical apparatus (32). This

is to say that the hybridity that activates Anzaldúa's Chicana Self rooted in "the Indian" woman/mother-as-symbol writes a theory of becoming simultaneously (and contradictorily) through her own mestiza testimony *and* through a historicist teleology—one in which the ancestor exists at once as the source of inherent qualities carried in the blood and as the distant relic of a past state from which the descendant *descends* in a linear universal flow of time. There is no room for intersubjectivity, dialogue, or transcreativity between ancestor and descendant here, only the biological predetermination of that singular horizon of time and space that, in colonial-modern ontology, prefigures the natural and eventual vanishing of Indigenous lives and lifeways in the Americas. At every turn, as I read it, Anzaldúa falls back on an implicit structure in which the dualisms—even as hybridity—naturalize a linear historical relation of kinship and in which dualisms govern the conditions of possibility of becoming, a process marshaled by fealty (or faith) to one blood-kin *side* over the other and as a temporal progression of individual Self-actualization that necessarily deviates from that other (rejected) blood-kin side.

The second interpretation to offer here addresses the relations between the new mestiza consciousness and la Virgen de Guadalupe as ancestral mother. On the one hand, in the immediacy of kinship metaphors, there is a sense that the "mother" is necessarily female, feminine, and a powerful source of the creation of new life. This is true in terms of the etymology of mother through the Latinate *mater* concomitantly indexing the matter of life. On the other hand, the superposition of the kinship metaphor "mother" over a body called *woman* because of an a priori determination of dimorphic sex characteristics as the defining measure of the role of mother (or of the act of mothering) affixes otherwise heterogeneous material forms within an unambiguous category through this figurative language and assigns these forms to a particular function (*use*) in relation to heterosexuality and what Lund calls "social (re)production." This is to say that the narrative markers of the feminine simultaneously lock bodies sexed female into the function of reproduction and determine that function as such via the same discursive systems that associate linear evolutionary time with the possibility of transformation. Lugones and Trujillo, among others, confirm the relation here between temporality and possibilities (or horizons) of becoming and belonging, possibilities regulated by ideas of genre (gender). The potency of the icon of Guadalupe—the single most potent symbol, Anzaldúa insists—functionally regulates femininity within the narrow frame of reproduction and specifically here as mother to the mestizo-Mexican. This is Anzaldúa's critique of patriarchal

Chicano traditionalism. Yet the new mestiza likewise puts the figure to use in the social (re)production of *La cultura Chicana*, the fractured locus of those who identify with the Indigenous mother (matter). Now “the Indian woman” is both the anterior material source for the bodies of the new mestizo race (*la nueva raza*) and the symbolic source material for the new mestiza consciousness (as Guadalupe/Coatloapeuh). But neither of these services function as transformations of substance or form—both affix the figure in a perpetual state of giving her material self to the (re)production of the (mestiza/o) social. Guadalupe is affixed as the symbol of a life-giving *woman* strictly defined as such through the myth of dimorphic sex characteristics and her ability to materially (pro)create the mestizo-Mexican race and symbolically (pro)create the new mestiza consciousness. She inhabits an unambiguous category of biologically determined (essential) qualities of femininity and indigeneity and in the realm of faith, symbol (metaphor), and primitive (uncorrupted) “magico-religious” taxonomies of that earlier history where dualisms have no validity. Except, here, dualisms persist.

Where Anzaldúa emphasizes the potency of the image of Guadalupe/Coatloapeuh in terms of a fusion of opposites, I locate dual materializations of her form—one, generative in relation to notions of mediation (as transformative in-betweenness), and the other problematic in relation to the same. As mediator (“*mediatrix*”), Coatloapeuh/Guadalupe occupies an in-between space—she is the medium through which matter is transformed into bodies, the medium through which the new mestiza crafts a liberatory pathway. In the implication of cyclical transcreation (or revolution), as the idea of constant struggles through which new forms can be produced in bloody encounter, the figure is potentially generative. This is the site in which the binary collapses, but a site that can only do this mediating work in constant motion. In rooting the new mestiza in a singular “Indian woman” and a ritualized Guadalupe, using this affixed-in-time (“ancient”) figure as a device for the actualization of neonational mestiza/Chicana consciousness, Anzaldúa positions the figure as a use-object existing outside of time and locked in the perpetual labor of unambiguous femininity—as a vessel for the (pro)creation of the *nueva raza*. In this sense, the figure reads as a static form rather than a cyclical transcreativity. Used in this way, as immaterial metaphor, or Guadalupe as a figure of passed (past), if desirable, indigeneity, evacuates her of that transcreativity except in the ways that her affixation in a particular point in a linear evolutionary History is useful as a representation of a singular category of the “Indian woman.” She exists as an icon whose meaning is (pre)determined by the naturalization of her

image *as* the icon of unambiguous feminine Indigenous qualities defined in opposition to unambiguous masculine qualities.

In reading the ancestor-as-use-object in the context of a linear shape of kinship, my sense here is that senses of Self in Anzaldúa's text map contradictorily onto a biological determinism of essential consanguine qualities and onto a theory of becoming in which an individual self actualizes in part by choosing to identify with a distant, ritualized image or symbol. As a theory of transformation (or (r)evolution), this contradictorily says that essence is unchangeable and also that change is a conscious choice—that the social and the corporeal is (re)produced in linear temporal sequence until an event in which a singular agent enacts a willful transformation, a rupture. This also reads like the conventions of autobiography within which the individual Self is converted (actualized) along a linear temporal axis of development, an axis structured by an obsession with origins and ends—a teleology. By working through a categorial logic and within a teleological episteme, this theory of transformation forecloses heterogeneous Indigenous futurities in its insistence on Guadalupe as a means toward that desired end of a mestiza-as-“the Indian woman” future, a quest manifest in part through staging the ancestor-descendant relation through at once selectively rejecting immediate material kinship and selectively ritualizing distant symbolic kinship—the myth organizes the (neo)national identity (Self) and promises individual actualization in (linear) time.

Explicit in the text, and in contradiction with what I have been saying about the implicit structure, Anzaldúa expands on a methodological impulse for embodied knowledge in the chapter titled “*Herencia de Coatlicue*,” in particular in the sub-section she calls “Coatlicue State.” Coatlicue is the name of the Aztec “creator goddess” and the mother of Huitzilopochtli, the hummingbird figure symbolizing war, empire, and consolidation of the tribes of Central Mexico. Coatlicue—the Serpent with Skirt of Feathers—is, in Aztec myth and Spanish codices, in charge of the mourning rites (or “sweeping” rites) that grieve the transformations associated with the vanquishing of the feminine to the masculine (the serpent in the mouth of the eagle). This is “the Indian woman” whose history of resistance Anzaldúa heralds as icon of the new mestiza consciousness. Coatlicue symbolizes the vestiges of that ancient matriarchy, and it is her mourning rites that Anzaldúa considers her inheritance of the rebellious blood of “the Indian woman.” “Coatlicue State” begins with a poem:

no lights just mirrorwalls obsidian smoky in the / mirror she sees a woman with  
four heads the heads / turning round and round spokes of a wheel her neck / is an  
axle she stares at each face each wishes the / other not there [and] she listens to the /  
seam between dusk and dark. (Anzaldúa 63)

Obsidian mirrors are a well-studied Aztec technology, situated here as cultural inheritance. For my reading, noteworthy in this passage is the way that Anzaldúa uses this mirror as a symbolic terrain for the construction of the Self, the mirror figured doubly as cultural (biological) inheritance and as a consciously chosen method of accessing an unconscious state. This passage (poem) reads like a choice *must* be made—the imperative denoting a kind of expectation or ideology, as I read it. The multiple self—the *resistant self in relation*, writing from within the *fractured locus*, from within *la rajadura*—stands at this frontier between light and dark, seeing the inherent Self reflected in this obsidian mirror, each head of the shared body trying to vanquish the others. Anzaldúa has already used the mirror metaphor in her critique of the heteropatriarchal (“Western”) tendency to define the (rational) Self through the reflections of an (irrational) Other. The obsidian mirror is at once different and the same as this critiqued tendency, in the sense that Anzaldúa uses the mirror both as a mediating space for crossing over or accessing a hidden or repressed history of her intimate embodied self and (contradictorily) as a device to reflect back to her the image of a “true” Self. The ancestor, in that image, once again furnishes the means (the immaterial metaphor) by which the Self (the soul) proposes to access a *natural* essence of the Self in this event of crossing or passing *through* a present state of multiplicity (“four heads” on one body) and into a future state of restored wholeness (as a singularity of Self). In this location, wholeness is also a kind of uncorrupted “primitive” body iconized by both Guadalupe and now also Coatlicue—and these expressly as “mothers” imbued with essentialized feminine and Indigenous qualities. The mirror is, here, ostensibly unconcerned with the politics of looking—where to cross through the mirror is to access an essential truth rather than to self-identify by opposition to the image on the surface of the mirror. And yet, contradictorily, Anzaldúa asserts that it is indeed a question of “seeing and being seen. Subject and object, I and she. [...] These seemingly contradictory aspects [...] are symbolized by the underground aspects of *Coatlicue*, *Cihuacoatl*, and *Tlazolteotl* which cluster in what I call the *Coatlicue* state” (64).<sup>36</sup> It is a triple Self now, exceeding dualism. Yet the dualisms stubbornly persist. Subject and object, Self and Other—dualistic figures framed at once as unambiguous categories (as oppositions) and as contradictory parts of the same whole figure. A messy (il)logic

that, in its contradictions, enables Anzaldúa's writing practice here to escape the hierarchical dichotomies of the colonial-modern epistemologies against which she stages her challenge.

In Anzaldúa's formulation, the body and the image in the mirror that beholds it are contradictory aspects held together, gathered, in this Coatlicue state—in the encounter between the material self and the immaterial metaphor. And this, as a mode of accessing the unconscious, the dream-state, the space on the other side of the mirror. For Anzaldúa, to access such unconsciousness necessitates crossing or passing into this state of multiplicity, this Coatlicue state, at the same time that to even narrate such a process necessitates that prior formulation of twoness—of an irreconcilable dualism. The unconscious here can only be accessed by opposition to the conscious, in this method—by fusion of opposites already always spatially organized as inherently separate. In my reading, the pathway to this kind of embodied self (re)materializes a colonial-modern epistemological separation between body and soul to the extent that the contradictory aspects fused in the Coatlicue state—subject/object, Self/Other—organize embodied knowledge as a matter of accessing essential (ancestral) qualities in the blood. These qualities borne in the blood yet located in the unconscious (the soul) are then oddly attributed to a higher plane of knowing associated with an essential Self that ostensibly exists separately from the body and into which the body can enter and become a knowing body only by this process of crossing into that out-of-body space of the mirror/soul. Anzaldúa warns that these are “seemingly” contradictory aspects, so I make this claim with awareness that she is expressing how body and soul (or Self and Ancestor) are perhaps not so oppositional after all. And yet, I will say again, that the contradiction between what she says and how she says it simultaneously works as a mode of disrupting the neat logic of that decried rational duality *and* reifies the epistemological pathway of becoming—or of coming-to-knowledge—in a linear shape of development. The mestiza Self cannot fully be rid of the European way of seeing, it seems, at the same time that this sense of a split self arrives at a mode of transcreativity through entering into the state of Indigenous and feminine Otherness that persistently rattles the supposedly absolute foundation of heteropatriarchal social (re)production. The seemingly irreconcilable dualism fused in the Coatlicue state is called, in the text, the split self: “*la rajadura*” (Anzaldúa 64). This name calls back to the opening of the manifesto where Anzaldúa lyricizes the way that the Border splits her body and the land in one cut. Here, elaborated further, she tells us that same story but about the ancestral figure of Coatlicue or of the Coatlicue state (or both): “The gaping



mouth slit heart from mind. Between the two eyes in her head, the tongueless magical eye and the loquacious rational eye, was *la rajadura*, the abyss that no bridge could span” (Anzaldúa 67). The split cannot be bridged; the gulf between the magical (Indigenous) and the rational (European) eyes, or ways of seeing, cannot be reconciled—in this story. This is, clearly, the felt reality—the generational trauma of her mestiza-Chicana self. But the Self must choose one side or the other because they cannot be bridged, in this expression. Interestingly, Anzaldúa narrates these sensations of rupture and incommensurability along a linear pathway from the site of the split (from within the wound) to the future event where wholeness will be restored in the embodiment of the ancestral multiple-Self evoked in the Coatlicue cluster. The path that she is taking in the writing of this story of inherited magic and trauma moves through chapters and sections that simultaneously narrate, critique, and reconfigure the grammar of Chicana/o becoming. This is Gloria’s process of becoming—of coming home to her self.

To move through a series of stages in this way, including where she reinstates teleological historicity and dualistic structural axes, on the one hand is the expression of a very personal experience of the residues of conquest, colonization, and perhaps most saliently US imperialism and on the other hand is an invocation of nostalgia for a lost, hidden, repressed *past* discursively and materially covered over by that colonial-imperial History. The painful dualism is expressed in terms of its production of estrangement, of the distance erected between ancestor and descendant, of the gulf between the past and the future, such that the aim becomes to invert the object positioned at both ends of this story—to reformulate the origins in order to rewrite the ending. That is, Anzaldúa proposes that the Coatlicue state substantiates the future vanquishing of the rational (paternal, European) way of seeing by the magical (maternal, Indigenous) way of seeing. The multiplicity produced by the necessary (re)fusion of opposites, that likewise produces the impulse to move through the fractured locus on the pathway to restoring wholeness, is then modified into a heterogeneous wholeness attempting to retain all of these contradictory parts. Again, this formulation retains the linear shape by which the rational eye organizes bodies and lands according to the same logic dividing the rational (or scientific) from the magical (or superstitious). The split between the two cannot be bridged, we are told here; the two opposites can be fused, momentarily it seems, contingently, in the Coatlicue state. Yet even in this state the split (*la rajadura*) obtains within the inherently ruptured Self to the extent that the telos of wholeness is also an idea of transformation ((r)evolution) in which the split can never actually be

bridged—one side will *always* be required to vanquish the other in order to actualize that change, in this formulation. I will add that the Coatlicue state functions as a guiding figure or principle in the text, but rarely does Anzaldúa seem to allow the shamanic writing practice associated with it to govern the narration—preferring the explicative mode of the manifesto and writing the autobiographical Self along this linear axis of development, conversion, and (teleological) actualization.

The question here is about how Anzaldúa theorizes the ancestor-descendant relation (which likewise bespeaks theories of the processes of life and death), which I read as the expression of processes of becoming that position the ancestor as immaterial (symbolic) source of collective (neonational) identity and at once as material (consanguine) source of essential qualities. In my reading, these processes are all organized in linear sequence and along a line drawn as originating in purity, then passing through rupture, proceeding in a universalized notion of constant conflict (oppositional stances) where one side has to win out over the other, which will then (in this teleology) end in the conversion of conflict into restored wholeness by means of that rejection or vanquishing of one side by the other. In this linear shape of (kinship) relations, the Self can only ever actualize as such through a process of rupture and restoration—thus indexing a perceived (and felt) reality of an irreconcilability of the dualisms of Self/Other, past/future, masculine/feminine, body/soul. Anzaldúa’s perspective of pain is relevant to the extent that she is narrating the inherited trauma of *la rajadura* (the Border cutting the body and the land); this is salient and noteworthy and is a common narration of varying experiences of social violence, natal alienation, and corporeal trauma produced by settler colonial pedagogies and colonial-modern epistemologies of separation. And yet, Anzaldúa’s narration classifies human experience according to the same linear temporal narrative of development, of becoming-human, and ontologizes the Self-ancestor relation in the language of neonational myth. The ancestor as father is the near relation of constrictive (masculinist) tradition, the ancestor as mother is the distant object of ritualized (feminist) myth—and both remain unambiguous categories arranged in dualistic opposition and in linear evolutionary time.

## **New Mestiza**

The pathway to the new mestiza consciousness that Anzaldúa narrates bears the mark of a split—*la rajadura*, at once painful and liberatory. Etymologically, the term “mestizo/a” ascribes a

notion of mixed species—borrowed from the Portuguese *mestiço* and first used to label those Iberian Spanish whose genealogies included North African blood.<sup>37</sup> While based in a eugenicist proto-anthropological theory of breeding that proposed different “races” (likewise from the Latinate, and naming “roots”) as different *species* of humans, the etymology of “mestizo/a” likewise enables the term to carry the full weight of a principle of two *kinds* brought together to form a new, essentially split or hybrid *kind*—narrowing *kin* to blood and (biological) race. This is to say that, in Anzaldúa’s narration of the pathway of the new mestiza, an underlying incommensurability seems to haunt her pursuit of new mestiza futurity where the vision of that future Self seems only realizable through rejection of one or the other *half* of that dualistic new *kind* of (raced) human. In this section, I think through the ways that Mexican nationalist philosophy and revolutionary spirit shape this principle of mixedness in Anzaldúa’s text in the spirit of José Vasconcelos’s utopic vision of a superior future race—a greater *mestizaje*. My understanding of Anzaldúa’s philosophical and theoretical debts is informed in large part by Rubén Medina’s careful analysis of the relationship between Anzaldúa’s project and Vasconcelos’s problematic legacy, which I nuance through Guidotti-Hernández and Contreras. In “El mestizaje a través de la frontera: Vasconcelos y Anzaldúa” (2009), Medina reads Vasconcelos’s 1925 *La Raza cósmica* and identifies a theory of *mestizaje* that positions racial mixture (hybrid humans, as it were) as the evolutionary telos for all humankind, where Vasconcelos claimed that “la finalidad de la historia [...] es la mezcla de todas las culturas y poblaciones” (the telos of history [...] is the mixture of all cultures and populations) (cited in Medina, 107).<sup>38</sup> The cosmic race moves from separate races-as-species to one big mixture as the final state of human kind(s). Medina’s work brings into relief the ways that, rather than ritualizing the fusion of opposites in the mestizo/a Self, the Vasconcelian vision authorizes a political and social theory “de favorecer ensamblajes monolíticos y minimizar aquellas áreas intermedias que revelan contaminación, influencias y préstamos culturales” (of favoring monolithic assemblages and minimizing those in-between areas that reveal contamination, controls, and cultural borrowings) (Medina 105). A very different sounding project than Anzaldúa’s, as far as her emphasis on such intermediary spaces and practices. And yet, Medina finds that the teleological shape of both Vasconcelos’s utopian vision and Anzaldúa’s adoption of it (albeit with the inverted telos aiming at dark, feminine, magico-religious thinking, not white, masculine, rational thinking) re-inscribe “una jerarquía racial y una visión lineal de la

historia” (a racial hierarchy and a linear vision of history) (Medina 110). Framed in teleological terms of becoming-human and becoming-historical subjects, mestizaje retains a distinctly problematic linear social evolutionary theory of human development. Now, to be clear, Medina places equal emphasis on the possibility of redirecting mestizaje in critical ways—a critical feature of Anzaldúa’s text to consider within its mestiza dualisms.

In this section, I begin by taking up the ways that Anzaldúa’s project explicitly allies itself with Vasconcelos’s intellectual (and eugenicist) political project, before shifting into a discussion of the ways that the text selectively elides those features of Vasconcelian mestizaje in order to redirect the concept toward new and heterogeneous critical terrain. Anzaldúa tells her reader that Vasconcelos envisioned “a cosmic race, *la raza cósmica*, a fifth race embracing the four major races of the world” (99). And this, she says, is positioned in Mexican philosophy at that time as “opposite to the theory of the pure Aryan” and declares that this was a theory of “inclusivity” (99). So, this is the idea of a monolithic yet heterogeneous single race of humans. Beyond the strange denotation of “four major races of the world” from which a new hybrid mestizo race is created, as a form of inclusivity, Anzaldúa envisions mestizaje as a biological (genetic) and selective process where, at the “confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly ‘crossing over,’ this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool” (99). The new mestiza-Chicana is the direct descendant of this more advanced mestizo-Mexican “species,” the text asserts. Now, I want to take care here to state that my work is not adjudicating the richness of any gene pool nor making claims about genetic qualities or capacities. My reading of kinship makes no claims toward qualities or kinds of bodies. Moreover, *La raza* as a noble category of mestizo/a Latinidad importantly advances a discourse of belonging, excellence, and cultural heritage. The intervention here is instead in the way that Anzaldúa’s text takes shape within a political tradition envisioning the whitening of the Mexican population through such racial mixing, articulating a progressivist multiculturalism that flattens out difference (in favor of a monolithic assemblage) and reinscribes racial hierarchy coordinated along a linear axis of (social evolutionary) development. I am invested in reading the ways that Anzaldúa’s text at times takes up this question of blood-borne essential qualities distributed unevenly across what she understands to be differently speciated races of people. My reading contends with how her adoption of Vasconcelian mestizaje informs the story of a linear shape of

kinship to the effect of sequencing and categorially demarcating races-as-species according to what she reads as inherent qualities in the blood but which I argue are misplaced theories of linear social evolutionary development. I find that Anzaldúa's uncritical adoption of Vasconcelian *mestizaje* produces both an anthropocentric sense of ethno-national place, generally, and a sense of territorial (demarcated) *mestiza/Chicana place* in the strict terms of individual and nation-state sovereignties assured through blood quantum—while yet opening up critical terrain in the idea of *mestizaje* as heterogeneous (or poly-lithic) assemblage.

In her chapter titled “Tlilli, Tlapalli: The Path of the Red and Black Ink,” Anzaldúa explicitly borrows from Mesoamerican literacies and frames her writing practice in terms of the inheritance of an Aztec shamanic or “*musa bruja*” (witch-muse) writing method. “Tlilli” and “Tlapalli” are Nahuatl words that literally translate into black and red colors, black soot and red blood to be precise, but which are also symbolic elements indexing Aztec pictographic traditions borne by designated scribes and interpreters of pre-Columbian knowledge systems.<sup>39</sup> The path of the red ink is also, it feels, the path of the blood—the blood *line*. But, as a way of working toward a nuanced analysis of senses of place in the text, here I want to make note of how the Aztec literary tradition resembles the cultural borrowing that Medina critiques. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, through Contreras, Anzaldúa's project is informed by social scientific literatures published in the 1960s and 1970s and not so much by continuous literary or oral traditions maintained in her mestizo/Chicano community. This is clearly a factor of that fractured locus in the sense that the languages and stories of the people have been erased, hidden, covered over, destroyed, refused. Anzaldúa writes her testimony by reclaiming histories and memories “in the absence of hard copy” (to reiterate Lionnet)—by reappropriating the past to transform her understanding of her self. This is decolonial and feminist method. Anzaldúa says:

In the ethno-poetics and performance of the shaman, my people, the Indians, did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life. The religious, social and aesthetic purposes of art were all intertwined. [...] The ability of the story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else is shamanistic. The writer, as shape-changer, is a *nahual*, a shaman. (88)

This is art as heterogeneous mixture of all critical and aesthetic terrains. And it has the power to transform. Echoing some of the discussion in the previous section, here is a significant declaration of a practice of accessing unconscious or embodied knowledge, made possible explicitly by a blood-borne capacity for a “magico-religious” way of seeing but through a

decolonial and feminist method of reappropriating of Aztec myth, symbolism, and literary practice. Noteworthy in this passage, as well, is the way that Anzaldúa writes the writer as a shaman, as a shape-changer, and rewrites the framework of her project as one through which the process itself of writing (of storytelling) is the transformational act. She will transform herself and her listener through this story of the pathway to the new mestiza consciousness. And this pathway is written in the black soot and red blood of her progenitors. In the same breath, so to speak, Anzaldúa configures the mestiza pathway as moving toward a teleological future point where the (unambiguous categories of) dark, feminine, Indigenous, and “magico-religious” will come to represent the advancement or improvement of the four major races now fused into one greater mestizaje. This is to say that revolutionary spirit here narratively (re)marks “the Indian woman” as the material and symbolic source for a future becoming made possible by this reappropriation of Aztec myth, symbols, and literacies, and sited in the idea of Aztec land (Aztlán). I find as well that Anzaldúa’s claim here, once again, consolidates hemispheric indigeneities into a singular and totemic “the Indians” demarcated by and as those mixed-race mestizas/os who can or do claim Aztec blood. Not only does Anzaldúa invoke a selective trait of that ancestry, choosing to identify with the maternal Indigenous half rather than the paternal Spanish half yet where the hybrid product (progeny) will be an inherently improved “species,” but the text then stages that inheritance of essential qualities as the path of the blood that entitles the Chicano/a claim to rightful inheritance of Aztec patrimony, including Aztec land (Aztlán). Echoing the first section of her manifesto, this passage temporalizes heterogeneous indigeneities into a monolith and sequences an “ancient” history of her people, “the Indians,” narrated wholly in the past (they “were,” they “did”), in linear temporal relation with the present tense of her mestiza writing practice (the mestiza writer “is”). Through the principle of mestizaje drawn from Vasconcelos, Anzaldúa’s method controverts its own framework where Indigenous epistemologies do not separate the threads of knowledge; yet the framework of the text persistently separates humankind into races-as-species (juxtaposing past purity with future mixedness) and separates past, present, and future into a linear temporal sequence by which the text stages an inherent incommensurability of indigeneity and presence (or futurity). In other words, the performance of this ethno-poetics entangled with Vasconcelian mestizaje separates monolithic racial categories into a linear evolutionary temporality rather than taking the histories as also such a heterogeneous (poly-lithic) assemblage. Not only does the text fail to interrogate

the formation of such social categories of race—taking race instead as an inherent quality of the blood—but it simultaneously proposes that Indigenous people are already vanished, succeeded by the mestiza/o who now inherits the cultural and genetic patrimonies of the Indigenous Americas.

What I find especially striking about the linear temporal juxtaposition of races-as-species is the way that it instantiates a sense of mestiza/o right to place—the homeland of Aztlán—located in the discursive impossibility of “pure-blooded” Indigenous presence or inheritance of what is now neatly demarcated as mestiza/o-Mexican territory. On this last point, I recall what Trujillo had said about how “the hemispheric articulation of nation-state sovereignties in North America and Latin America rely on a mode of translation that decimates the incommensurable temporal and spatial heterogeneity of Indigenous life under the tyranny of a singular horizon of space and time” (66). The reappropriation of myth and symbolism suggests, as I read it, that Anzaldúa and Vasconcelian mestizaje both (pro)claim a homeland—a *place* of origin—more importantly than a temporal historical origin, but do so through the unidirectional temporality and surficial spatiality that Trujillo’s critique describes. This is to say that teleological historicity makes such narrative or myth of origins possible in the first, an epistemological and discursive point from which to then assert the historical primacy of a people in a *place* rendered as such by a sense of it as a surface site of becoming and belonging. In tandem with a legal discourse of blood quantum authorized land grants, Anzaldúa’s text (and, by explicit affiliation, Vasconcelos’s vision) instantiates an ethno-nationalism in this staging of lineal, cultural, and territorial place-nation. Guidotti-Hernández similarly critiques the erasure of Indigenous presence in this kind of project, saying that “[w]hen racial mixture is evoked as the future, as the harmonizing of disparate identities, it ignores ‘the more pernicious and hierarchical impulses behind mestizaje in the Americas’ and does not complicate the legacy of colonial violence or implicate Chicana/os in the production of racism” (17, citing Pérez-Torres). In other words, *this* kind of mestizaje, obsessed with origins, ends, and blood-based linear kinship, is a theory and practice of un-critical mestizaje by which racism and colonial violence are perpetuated in the assumption of social evolutionary ideas of (territorial) becoming and belonging.

Anzaldúa positions the new mestiza consciousness as the natural evolution of past indigeneity into future mixedness, at once as a promise of the ascendancy of such Aztec (“the Indians”) practices and as a matter of (inadvertently or not) de-indigenizing the envisioned

homeland (place) of Aztlán. On this last point, Guidotti-Hernández's analysis once again informs my reading: "the politics that center around celebrating or reclaiming mestizaje are highly problematic because of what they elide from the colonial past and nationalist present, especially when Anzaldúa's strategic invocation of the mestiza is unequivocally read as Indian only" (19). Anzaldúa's strategic invocation of mestizaje asserts the blood inheritance of Indigenous practices and Indigenous lands at the expense of eliding altogether the violent history of such racial politics and colonial-imperial organizations of land and bodies in the borderlands, as well as seeming to affirm the vanishing of "pure-blooded" Indigenous progenitors. Medina similarly finds the racist undertones of such celebration of (race-blind) mixedness, citing Juan Carlos Grijalva, arguing that "El mestizaje americano es [ . . . ] una vía de glorificar el 'linaje' de cierta raza, a la vez que de evitar que se propague la 'fealdad' de otras. El discurso utópico del mestizaje de Vasconcelos es una manera de borrar y desindianizar, de incorporación forzada de los sectores étnicos, antiestéticos, a la hegemonía de la cultura nacional emergente" (mestizaje in the Americas is [...] a way of glorifying the "lineage" of certain races, at the same time that it is a way of deflecting how it propagates "fealty" to other lineages. The utopian discourse of Vasconcelian mestizaje is a mode of removing and de-Indianizing, of the forced incorporation of undesirable ethnic sectors into the hegemony of the emerging national culture) (Medina 110). The politics of this kind of mestizaje, emphasizing inherent qualities in the blood that when mixed produce a greater *race* of human, "de-Indianizes" contemporary mestizo-Mexican cultural becoming and belonging. Moreover, by affixing essential qualities in an anterior stage of human development, this kind of mestizaje concomitantly lays claim to Indigenous lands by forcibly removing and incorporating (that is, assimilating) an "ancient" indigeneity into the (colonial-modern) neonational mestiza/o-Chicana/o culture.

While I find that the political, ideological, and philosophical debts of Anzaldúa's project bend toward reifying the "hierarchical impulses" behind mestizaje, the project activates a (critical) mestizaje distinct from that Vasconcelian model obsessed with blood and with origins and ends. The path of the red and black ink is not solely a matter of lineage. Anzaldúa describes storytelling in terms of its power to shift the shape of the speaker and the listener, the storyteller being the creator of worlds, in a sense, and stories having the power to shape materiality. This, to me, is where the text actualizes a sort of embodied knowledge that more fully unsettles colonial-modern categorial thinking. This is to say that Anzaldúa tells us, in her messy manifesto form of



a text (testimony), that storytelling and poetry-prose are conduits for ways of seeing *and* that the body of the storyteller is intertwined with the material world to the extent that she can shape the ways that the body understands or interacts with her surroundings. Stories and storytelling transform the speaker (writer) and the listener—transform perception and relation of and with the (human and more-than-human) world. At the same time, in the confluence of heterogeneous generic tendencies and colonial-modern calque, the text sustains a contradictory separation of the sacred from the secular, the rational from the magical, maintains the dualisms as incommensurable, and organizes the dichotomous categories according to a linear social evolutionary development (or hierarchy). This is to say that the writing practice that she hails as an ethno-poetics is authorized in an ontological language of the social sciences discourse that organizes embodied knowledge into pre-modern “magico-religious” thinking.

Anzaldúa consciously and selectively reappropriates what she sees as ancient, mythical, magical, primal, pre-modern, and Indigenous and deploys its rewriting toward the consolidation of Chicana feminist literary praxis as future-work. In the above passage, the Indigenous storyteller who iconizes her method is a shaman—a shape shifter named as such in the Nahuatl language. However, the word she uses, *nahual-*, is a root verb form, not a noun as she uses it here.<sup>40</sup> *Nahual-* alone does not name a shape-changed being nor a being with shape-changing power: with a conjugating suffix (in Nahuatl, these are gender-neutral pronominal forms), *nahual-* describes the *action* of transforming, the process or movement or relation even, and emphasizes the trans- over the -formation. It is not naming an object or form as such; and (importantly) it takes a *relational* suffix to form the nominal expression of shapeshifter, such as *nahualli* (as the embodiment of the action, as sorcerer, witch, or spirit-animal), or *nahualti* (as the ever-present yet not always sensible animal alter-egos, or the already shape-changed form of such). Whether intended or not, the construction reads as the identification of “the Indian woman” progenitor of the mestiza body as an already shape-changed form, a “nahual”—the mestiza body rendered already always a shaman, determined by the essential qualities of the blood passed down from that mythical mother. On the one hand, this reads as the idea that the mixed-race body, the mestiza, is naturally and essentially shamanic—a point outside the framework of my inquiry. I make no measure of such capacities. On the other hand, the passage organizes transformation simultaneously as the power of the storyteller-shaman and as a fixed state of being, an essential quality in the blood.

The underlying logic of nominalizing what otherwise would (with the presence of a *relational* form) express an action or a process, as I read it, maintains a separation between the human as a singular (and wholly conscious) agent of change and the material world within which that storyteller moves. The shaman-writer here is already always inhabiting a state of transformed-ness absent of the lively activeness of a processual trans-formativity. Here, the human agent stands apart from the network of processes of the more-than-human world and selectively (consciously) transforms its materiality. This is to say that the underlying logic substantiates the (advanced) human as moving in *active time* and on the backdrop of *inactive space*—a wholly colonial-modern narrative of being, becoming, and of place. The discursive separation of human and world not only contradicts what Anzaldúa claims about the Indigenous artistic practices activating her shamanic method, but it materializes an anthropocentric theory of place that separates the body from the land. Instead of the mestiza/o place as a heterogeneous assemblage, the text catalogues the other-than-human (including the “ancient” Indigenous) world as pure and natural (and stuck in the past) and credits the *modern* human as the force of change *in time*. On the one hand, this is a powerful vision of the work of storytelling—one which does indeed shape new forms in the sense that the place is recreated as mestiza/o territory, as the third space of Chicana/o belonging insurgent between US and Mexican nation states. On the other hand, this story says that a people are not intersubjectively and transcreatively interacting with *place*—with the world—but that, by sheer force of will, shape it into the vision of their future becoming (as individual and nation-state sovereignty) made possible by mestizaje as linear social evolution.

I want to emphasize as well that Anzaldúa’s text and method slip into and out of such contradictions. While much of my reading of her invocation of Aztec heritage is critical of the underlying logic of the text’s teleological historicity, there are numerous threads of the text that open pathways for alternate interpretations. At this juncture, it may be helpful to rethink what I have noted briefly here and there about the genre—the manifesto. Anzaldúa acknowledges the worlding of poetics (and prose), yet asserts the story of an inherent Self, of the mestiza pathway, through a genre that exacts a kind of specificity and tangibility otherwise forsaken in something like poetry. In many ways, of course, this book is not simply a manifesto—Anzaldúa regularly interrupts the neatness of genre with bits of other forms and with instances of shamanic embodied knowledge-practice. Reading the text with this kind of heterogeneous genre in mind,

then, I am compelled to consider simultaneously (as convoluted as it may become in my composition here) the woven intricacies and the sweeping totalizations. Both, and everything in-between, form the body of the text—together, these features form the bridging and breaking of hierarchical dichotomies while yet reenacting the same (problematic) dualisms, linear evolutionary temporality, and racial politics. My reading attempts to at once historicize *mestizaje* in relation to Mexican national philosophy and politics and to suss out reificatory modes that perpetuate racial and social (and ecological) hierarchies of becoming and belonging. I do this weaving here as a way of working through the implications of demarcating a third space (material place) of Chicana/o belonging—or thinking through how the text demarcates a sense of *mestiza* feminist *place*.

In this same section of her manifesto that invokes the inheritance of Nahuatl pictographers, Anzaldúa expresses a shamanistic, embodied knowledge while yet (again) insisting on an underlying structure of order and neatness (rationality). Of her text, she says:

I see a hybridization of metaphor, different species of ideas popping up here, popping up there, full of variations and seeming contradictions, though I believe in an ordered, structured universe where all phenomena are interrelated and imbued with spirit. This almost finished product seems an assemblage, a montage, a beaded work with several leitmotifs and with a central core, now appearing, now disappearing in a crazy dance. The whole thing has had a mind of its own, escaping me and insisting on putting together the pieces of its own puzzle with minimal direction from my will. (Anzaldúa 88)

The previous passage had described shape-change as a product of storytelling, as a production of a state of transformed-ness configured as the capacity to willfully effect change on the world yet also expressed as shamanistic practice understood in relation to that access through the obsidian mirror to the unconscious. Yet, here, Anzaldúa associates her “will” with the writing—the text has a mind of its own, she says, *in spite of* her individual will or intention to direct it toward a sort of cohesion or ordering. Indeed, she says she believes in an “ordered, structured universe.” In the way that the text has broadly been claiming that such access to unconscious states and such shape shifting power by storytelling are qualities imbued in that Aztec blood, this feels like an extraordinary claim. By this I mean that Anzaldúa explicitly tells her reader that the Aztec blood (the Indigenous mother with which she identifies) directs the text—that the text’s hybridity is the product of unconscious processes in the hybrid body. Nested in this explicit claim is the implicit dimension where Anzaldúa draws extensively from Vasconcelos’s theory and vision of *mestizaje*—a form of willful direction of transformational processes (selective hybridity, even).

In the context of what she calls a hybridization of metaphor, an assemblage, a montage, and a text containing different “species” of ideas, this reads as the idea that the hybridity comes through her method of unconscious shamanic practice. Yet the choice to identify with and reappropriate Aztec practices has been made wholly conscious throughout the manifesto and explicitly on the point of choosing to identify with the Indigenous maternal *half*. There is no way to delineate what is conscious, what is unconscious—and, in this confluence of features, the text simultaneously performs heterogeneous genres that defy categorial thinking *and* substantiates a problematic conceptualization of essential qualities of the blood. That is, Anzaldúa implies that her Indigenous blood *naturally* accords this capacity for shamanic writing. I do not dispute or challenge her method. Neither do I level critique on her embodied practice as such. Rather, what I find concerning is the insistence that these modes of knowing and being are encoded in genetics—that it is an essential quality of mestiza/o race-as-species. With a similarly nuanced (or dual) interpretation, Contreras finds that Anzaldúa’s text has generated and informed numerous scholarly inquiries in terms of hybridity and critical mestizaje, gender and sexual fluidity, and postcolonial ontologies. At the same time, Contreras maintains as well that, in *Borderlands*:

Aztec mythology provides a specifically ethnographic basis for asserting the indigenous side of mestiza consciousness, which is depicted as the site of cultural contact and confrontation. Consequentially, indigeneity exists most forcefully in Anzaldúa’s text as myth and signifies the denied or unconscious side of mestiza consciousness. And although Anzaldúa strives to give expression to the indigenous elements of Chicana identity in the present, her persistent appeal to an Aztec pantheon represented by Coatlicue/Serpent Skirt, Tlazolteotl, the snake, and smoking mirror effectively dehistoricizes the relations between Chicanas/os and Natives. (116-17)

Contreras identifies the figures that populate Anzaldúa’s text, and which I discussed in the previous section, in relation to the ways that Anzaldúa’s appeals to that “Aztec pantheon” dehistoricize contemporary transnational Indigenous relations. This is to say that the sense of place coordinated in the text by that appeal to myth performs an ideological operation whereby the place of Aztlán becomes identifiable as Chicana/o place through the emphasis on Aztlán as a place of *origin* written and claimed as such by the disappearance of pure-blooded “Indians” and their replacement by descendant mestizos/as. Contreras’s findings enable me to think through the use of myth as history in relation to the insistence that Vasconcelian mestizaje—organized as linear evolutionary development—affirms her method. Vasconcelian mestizaje thus becomes the evidence or reason that she gives for laying claim to inherited practices by staging them as

inherent in Indigenous blood. Anzaldúa writes her shamanic practice as inherited essential qualities in direct correlation with this imperative to “create a narrative of belonging” sited in Aztlán (Contreras 6). Of further concern in this coordination of Aztec blood and Aztec place—beyond the underlying assessment that “most Chicanas/os [...] can assert no ancestral link to the Indigenous peoples of the Valley of Mexico” (Contreras 5)—Contreras identifies another willfully directed component of the project that contradicts the assertion of shamanic method. Contreras finds that Anzaldúa borrows heavily from a 1975 ethnographic history of that Aztec pantheon, C.A. Burland and Werner Forman’s *Feathered Serpent and Smoking Mirror: The Gods and Cultures of Ancient Mexico*—a borrowing that remains uncredited in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Contreras identifies a nearly word-for-word passage about the obsidian mirror, about the Shadow-Beast as the unconscious side of the self, and that Anzaldúa incorporates without quotation marks. I mention this here not in an effort to discredit the text nor to dissuade readers from appreciating and learning from Anzaldúa’s text—on the contrary, I contend that acknowledging the genealogy of Anzaldúa’s intellectual project promotes the shamanic dimensions of the text even further by conceptually mapping those areas of her project that *unconsciously* participate in a problematic politics. But I mention this borrowing to also contend with the ways that Anzaldúa’s text speaks through multiple voices, some of which themselves shape her tendency toward linear social evolutionary thinking and whose presence in her text risks discrediting the supposed authenticity of her unconscious, embodied shamanic method. Contreras suggests, as well, that “[r]ecognizing Anzaldúa’s dependence on Burland and Forman in this instance does not detract necessarily from the original work of *Borderlands*. It does, however, alert us to the fact that there are sources for Anzaldúa’s indigenous imagery outside of a Chicana/o archive of personal experience and textual expression [and] provides additional evidence for situating Anzaldúa within a discursive history of primitivism and its reliance on the excavations of archaeology” (127-128). This is all to say that Anzaldúa’s vision of Indigenous ways of knowing—locked in essential qualities in the blood and accessed by the dual displacement of Aztec myth to Chicana/o history and Aztec blood to a Chicana/o place of belonging—map to a genealogy of social scientist discourse and colonial-modern ways of knowing more than to persistent and adaptive Indigenous epistemologies. At the same time, Contreras clarifies, Anzaldúa’s project remains one in which “[w]hatever its unstated, unrecognized, and, indeed, even unconscious ideological and discursive debts, *Borderlands/La*

*Frontera: The New Mestiza* presented its audiences with unfamiliar generic forms as it transgressed, merged, and shifted the borders of academic and popular speech, scholarly and creative production, the conventions of masculinity, femininity, and erotic or sexual orientation” (114). By means of Anzaldúa’s messy mixture of shamanic and social scientific sources and methods, the text endures as a heterogeneous assemblage of parts whose whole remains fragmented but to the effect of advancing such brokenness as itself a site of transcreative energy.

The writing of this new mestiza pathway is the process by which Anzaldúa has come to the awareness of the shamanistic power of storytelling—it is a pathway that she has been describing as she walks it herself. It is a pathway that I attempt to walk (in my non-mestiza position, that is) as a way of intimately engaging her project, without extracting the text or the mestiza writer from that site of becoming and belonging, and while thinking through the implications of the project in relation to the ways that senses of self, and ancestor, and place are shaped by ways of seeing kinship relations. Believing in an ordered structure of the cosmos in the same breath as noting variations and contradictions serves the project well by enacting the contradiction that unsettle the very order she is avowing. But the declaration then also organizes order as the rational, the symmetrical, the consciously or willfully construed, and the bordered, in opposition to the irrational messiness of her borderlands-thinking assemblage. Another way to think through (or perhaps beyond) Anzaldúa’s contradictions is the idea that order *as* messy mosaic assemblage instead allows multiple horizons of possibility. Indeed, it need not be qualified through discourses of history and anthropology—to attempt to do so reifies teleological historicity. While the consciously laid out belief system seeks to order the parts of the text into a coherence through the language of “hybridization” and “species”—seeks to ontologize the parts of the text in the same way that the mestiza body is first seen as a hybridization of two otherwise pure blood lines—here too the genre of the text is encountered as a hybrid, as a messy mixture of incommensurable parts. The mestiza text—the mestiza body/place—embodies, performs, and speaks into being a territorial space within which heterogeneous assemblage belongs.

To linger on this idea of messiness or contradiction as part of the pattern might help clarify my reading of kinship throughout and in particular in the context of my analysis of senses of place. Anzaldúa interprets the ordering of the universe in part as the interrelation and spirit of the substrate of earthly life, despite opposing this ordering to her messy assemblage. But in this kind of spirited, interrelated, assembled ordering, internal contradictions (dissensions,

palimpsests, exchanges) are neither foreclosed nor centralized; rather, they are substantiated in terms of multiple, unfixed patterns that shift and change persistently. This interpretation allows the thought that the embodied self, the ancestor, and senses of place need not be delimited in terms of linear historicity, nor organized (and mapped) into identifiable categories of static beingness. Instead, this text (per)forms a mode of inquiry that opens the possibility of bodies, relations, and places as open patterns constituting and constituted by their interactions. In other words, the messiness and contradictions of the text become a modality that conditions readers to apprehend the self, the ancestor, and the place as messy formations full of contradictions, uncredited borrowings, conscious and unconscious processes as well as *calque*, residue, and ideology that interfere with the exercise of that embodied knowledge. This is the shape shifting of the storyteller-shaman that Anzaldúa describes. And, in this sense as well, Anzaldúa's text amplifies a kind of scholarly practice that in many ways opens up renewed definitions of literacy that circumvent the precedent of measuring literariness in terms of linear writing and coherent internal logic or structures. In the way that the project remains messy, contradictory, and hybrid, Anzaldúa manages to convey a kind of ordering that is already always chaotic, unrefined, assembled bits, and radical in its substantiation of a neonational place of belonging characterized by such a sense of open-ended patterning and heterogeneous relations. Contradictorily, Anzaldúa decries how "Western art" "attempts to manage its own internal system such as conflicts, harmonies, resolutions and balances" (89). Anzaldúa tells her reader that she is not making this attempt—that the text escapes her willful direction. But to ontologize the two *sides* of the mestiza Self (through Vasconcelian *mestizaje* and social evolutionary thinking), and in the interest of staking claims to Aztlán, likewise attempts to manage the internal system and to balance out the opposition by means of a monolinear logic of time.

This distinction is significant. This explicit declaration contradicts the structure of the text and convolutes her conceptualization of the body, of ancestry, and of her sense of place (the US-Mexico Borderlands). Anzaldúa says that "Western art is always whole and always 'in power.' It is individual (not communal). It is 'psychological' in that it spins its energies between itself and its witness" (Anzaldúa 90, citing Robert Plant Armstrong on *The Powers of Presence*). Somehow, this passage sounds like a description of what I have already been discussing of how Anzaldúa conceives of processes of becoming or of self-actualization. To be clear, much of the text explicitly selects the maternal Indigenous *half* while implicitly enacting the paternal

colonial-modern *half*—a future wholeness to be recuperated by this selective adoption and rejection of supposedly essential qualities in the blood. The emphasis on wholeness, on the individual, and on the psychological center of Western art tend to reflect the way that Anzaldúa narrates the obsidian mirror as a site for crossing into a more “true,” pure, uncorrupted, and unconscious sense of Self. Explicitly, the call is to cross over into a coherent space of unconscious thought and imagining. Implicitly, the text calls for incoherence *as* the intellectual project of moving beyond such a framework of coherence and unity. The incoherence is the unity, here—a sentiment that Lugones describes in terms of the “fractured locus,” a body and a place made un-whole by colonial-modern rupture (*la rajadura*), but which is also the site of generative resistance to and transcreation of the absolutist hegemony of colonial-modern epistemologies and systems of governance. The above declaration also arrives in the text after Anzaldúa has told us that the tribal order was helpful for Indigenous people *in the past* but that the individual self must release the constraints of kinship in order to freely exercise agency in the world. This turns out to be a very psychological center of Anzaldúa’s text—in its insistence on individualism, on a true (coherent, inherent) Self—and one that adheres to the very principle of Western art that she decries here. But, again, while the contradiction in terms equates wholeness with coherence and, by association, equates dualism with incoherence, the text belies a structure and (il)logic by which the mestiza/o is put on a pathway toward the actualization of an (albeit artifactual) Indigenous way of knowing and through which anti-imperial sovereignty achieves free exercise, in the body and in the place of mestiza/o belonging. Despite the explicit suggestion that coherence is not the aim, there remains a continuity of terms on this pathway that reproduce the notion of a true Self, a true homeland, drawn in a line from Aztec blood (and land) to Chicana/o blood (and land)—the insistence on an internal truth, however *incoherent* here, drawing a coherent throughline from unconscious primitivist production to the new mestiza consciousness activated in the Coatlicue state of unconscious or un-directed writing.

But I want to refocus here on the text’s sense of place. I make this move by way of the preceding discussion of textuality in part for the ways that a critical mestizaje moves beyond the limits of human social relations (toward more-than-human relations, as well), whereas Vasconcelian (and to a point Anzaldúan) mestizaje maintains the human as the singular agent of the (pro)creation of place. Anzaldúa frames senses of place in relation to epistemologies that have already been asserted to be conducted by blood and genetics, while at once calling out:



Let's all stop importing Greek myths and the Western Cartesian split point of view and root ourselves in the mythological soil and soul of this continent. White America has only attended to the body of the earth in order to exploit it, never to succor it or to be nurtured in it. (90)

The long tradition of colonial-modern exploitation of the land is indisputable. Anzaldúa recognizes the role of myths and dualistic ontologies that position the body of the earth as matter to be put to use rather than as a nurturing matter (mother). On the surface, the call is for abandonment of a split point of view—contradictory, while also cohering with prior intimations of the split Self seeking resolution in wholeness when one side will win out over the other. With the “Let’s,” Anzaldúa imbricates the reader in the call—the imperative hails the English-speaking audience, and we are asked to “root ourselves” in the “mythological soil and soul of this continent.” Recall that the mythological roots of this genealogy of the soul are sited in the merging of two “bloodlines,” drawn in linear temporal relation to an “ancient” Aztec ancestry. So this is a call to English-speaking mestizas/os to abandon the rationality and dualisms of “the Western Cartesian split point of view,” to unlearn what the (white) education system has inculcated (the shame, the self-denigration), and to rise up through the performance of this ancestral heritage based on blood rights. A compelling argument. An empowering call. The first time I read this line, as an undergraduate, I felt a surge of that empowerment to abandon a Manichean worldview. This call amplifies the project. There is also, at once, in the same breath, a way in which this call undermines the explicit and noble aims of the project. Anzaldúa’s refrain is one of abandoning the split, binary, Western, rational way of seeing. That view—seeing through eagle eyes—must be vanquished. That *half* of the mestiza/o must be rejected—that blood renounced. The text calls for the marginalized, “magico-religious,” Indigenous way of seeing—to root in the “soil and soul” of Indigenous land. These are in opposition: the magical versus the rational, the Western versus the Indigenous. These concepts are all split, dualistic, divided in precisely the way that Anzaldúa is calling for “us” to abandon. Ultimately, this sounds like a call to Chicana/mestiza (national) identity to identify with ancestry in Aztec (Indigenous) lineage rather than Western lineage—for this side to win out over that side. To reject the father—the colonizer, the imperialist, the oppressor—and claim identification with the Indigenous mother (land and body). The “soil and soul” of this continent is now written as the material (maternal) fund that enriches the present project of neonational Chicana/o Aztlán—a new territory demarcated by its features *as* wholly, coherently “Indian.” Moreover, the juxtaposition

of a (maternal) Indigenous earth and (paternal) Western culture narratively (re)marks and (re)makes space as feminine and time as masculine—let us succor ourselves in the body of the earth, the text says, while yet framing the land as a (feminized) *place* of the mythological and as the *natural resource* that funds the linear temporal pathway to the new mestiza consciousness. Explicitly, the call voices a decolonial and feminist turning toward place-based practices; implicitly, the text organizes essentialized oppositions that retain the monolinear logic of Cartesian (colonial-modern) dualisms.

A simple inversion of a dualism (of a hierarchical dichotomy) fails to transform the structure—the threads of the textile maintain the same relations, we are just seeing a different side on top, a different image illustrated by that pattern. But in the way that Anzaldúa speaks through Aztec myth, the idea of inversion also extends a Nahuatl language concept of translation and thus aligns with the kind of inheritance that Anzaldúa reclaims throughout. While inverting a dualistic structure may not transform the system of power that sustains it as a hierarchy, the political philosophy of such an endeavor bespeaks the cultural practices within which Anzaldúa finds a sense of belonging. The Nahuatl word for translation is “tlacuepa,” which typically is expressed in English as a “twisting” or an “inversion.”<sup>41</sup> As the idea of re-writing the story, then, of mestiza futurity in the Americas, Anzaldúa manifests an inversion of the patriarchal nationalist paradigm to transform it into a matriarchal neonationalist paradigm. Twisted. Inverted. This is important: qualities or performances marked dark, feminine, queer, and magical continue to draw the ire of white supremacy and the violence of homophobia and femicide. Inverting the poles of power in the hierarchical dichotomy, in this sense, feels like the necessary step. Choosing the maternal, Indigenous, dark, succoring relation is, for many reasons, the more reasonable and logical choice in this context. However, I prefer to spin a different thread, in relation to ways of seeing. That is, my focus moves past discussion of the politics on the ground, so to speak, and orients toward consideration of how a decolonial political theory that seeks to invert the binary hierarchy conditions relations with *place* through ideas of territorial sovereignty—of the land belonging to the people rather than the people belonging to the land.

Whatever the material outcome, an inversion of opposites proposes to resolve the tension or struggle through this inversion (as translation or transformation). The gesture seeks resolution as a telos, as a future-point at which the balance will have been restored through the repositioning of top and bottom as it were. The gesture is fundamentally invested in managing

the internal coherence of the project (be it the text, the Self, the nation, revolution). In this way, I find that the explicit call to abandon a split point of view avoids acknowledgement of the implicit structure of the text shaped through the same kind of linearity of vision and bloodlines that shape Vasconcelian mestizaje, or by proposing to resolve the experience of seeing through split vision—which is at once a painful state *and* a potential site of recuperation (seeing through serpent and eagle eyes at the same time). A choice must be made, we (her readers) are told:

And once again I recognize that the internal tension of oppositions can propel (if it doesn't tear apart) the mestiza writer out of the *metate* where she is being ground with the corn and water, eject her out as *nahual*, an agent of transformation, able to modify and shape primordial energy and therefore able to change herself and others into turkey, coyote, tree, or human. (Anzaldúa 96-97)

The opposites are internal, a twoness contained within her that, if it does not destroy her through rupture can “propel” and “eject” her out as an agent (a shaman, a sorcerer) of selective transformation. I have already addressed the nominalization here of the otherwise lively *nahual*. Nevertheless, in context and experience, this process of transformation through opposition, struggle, and ejection or propulsion figures the story of mestiza becoming as a matter of a coming-together in the *metate* (like a mortar and pestle). The tension of opposites, the crossing of genetic streams. Two life-bloods converge in the place of the grinding to form a new, third kind of body—but only if she can resist being pulled apart by the tension of those dueling (dualling) life bloods. The agent of transformation is named in Nahuatl and the artifacts of that heritage are here marked in italics, emphasizing not simply their difference from the English text but also their position in relation to the “primal” and “magico-religious” “Indian.” The new mestiza is transformed by and transforms the primitivism of mythological Aztec soil and soul into the modernism of historical mestiza/o becoming and belonging. Suddenly the process is very much directed by the will to balance and order the text into a coherent whole—to rid the split self of one of her blood lines.

At the same time, following the enunciation of the Coatlicue state as a method of accessing the internal, blood-borne, embodied knowledge of her ancestors, Anzaldúa formulates the fusion of what she understands as opposing forces such as pleasure and pain. This is to say that the contradiction once again points to an organic and undirected messiness of the text where it is not covered over by didactic explication aiming at manifesting Chicana/mestiza nationalism. Anzaldúa's project aims for resolution of the split by bridging the divide, fusing the opposites,

into a new (whole) *space* (as body-place) of mestiza/o belonging. The emphasis is on blood and body and land. In the context of the mestiza writer's shamanic agency, this is the offering:

And for images, words, stories to have this transformative power, they must arise from the human body—flesh and bone—and from the Earth's body—stone, sky, liquid, soil. This work, these images, piercing tongue or ear lobes with cactus needle, are my offerings, my Aztec blood sacrifice. (Anzaldúa 97)

In order to be ejected out as *nahual*—as an agent of transformation—the mestiza writer must write from a space of embodied knowledge, from the intelligence held in the cells, the nerves, the bones of the body, or else from the embodied knowledge held in the land, in the stone and the sky and the soil. Anzaldúa tells us that this is a necessity—the stories *must* arise from the human body and the earthly body. This makes sense as a declaration of the transformative power of storytelling understood as literacies and literariness alternative to social evolutionary notions of knowledge production—or like the more-than-human world as teacher, the land as literature. In a way, this passage promotes such alternative literacies and literariness. Yet in that enunciation, the text signifies the Indigenous body and Indigenous land as a material sacrifice in the pursuit of this future telos of transformed-ness into such a mestiza body-place. While stories and images are indeed sites of contestation of the epistemologies that subtend colonial-modern power, this passage posits that such stories and resistance must necessarily arise out of the sacrifice of the flesh of the “Aztec blood” and of feminized land (the mythological, magico-religious, Indigenous mother, soil and soul of the continent). The stories *must*, Anzaldúa insists, come through the blood line—the red blood ink, spilled and sacrificed for the transcreation of the place into a mestiza body-place of becoming (shaman and “Indian”) and belonging (Aztlán). And to direct the text with this willfulness toward a particular end, to explicate the offering through a linear historical and blood-determined means to that end, yet further situates the project at a remove from the professed enactment of embodied knowledge, shamanic writing, and Indigenous ways of seeing. By this I mean that Anzaldúa insists on the stories coming from the blood sacrifice of the mestiza writer, framing literacies in the land as dependent on extraction—the stories have to be *taken out* of the land or the body. The mestiza writer must be ejected out of the metate to become this shamanic agent who will then be capable of transforming the conditions of the fractured locus into whatever thing she wants it to be. This passage elaborates the shamanic practice of the mestiza writer as one of a coming-to-consciousness despite the explicit distinctions of embodied knowledge and intelligence as crossing into access of the

unconscious. And to come into this consciousness, by the logic of the text, means first for the Indigenous side to win the internal struggle (“to eject her out as *nahual*”) and second for the Indigenous blood to be sacrificed (even if metaphorically) for the story to come from the body and transform the storyteller. In the way that Anzaldúa claims this inheritance as identification with a maternal, Indigenous bloodline, situates this expression of sacrifice—of the human (female) body and the (feminized) body of the earth—in a framework in which the female body-land axis ultimately iconizes the figure of “the Indian woman” as raw (primitive, messy, irrational, incoherent) source material for the continuation of a bloodline (of a “*nueva raza, el mestizo, el Mexicano*”). The mestiza pathway to a “something else” implicitly actualizes through the blood, body, and sacrifice of the Indigenous female body and land.

As personal experience, the expression describes Anzaldúa’s coming to consciousness of the power of such embodied knowledge and storytelling; as a notion of literacy or of mixedness, of *mestizaje*, the expression theorizes transformation (of the body or of the place) in terms of ejection, extraction, blood-sacrifice, and the convergence (the tension) of opposites. Here again I find a (potentially productive) contradiction. Anzaldúa tells her reader that, like the sensuous-anxious act of writing, “it is this learning to live with *la Coatlicue* that transforms living in the Borderlands from a nightmare into a numinous experience. It is always a path/state to something else” (95). Anzaldúa once again figures storytelling in terms of transforming or translating (twisting, inverting)—of reappropriating the past toward revised futures. The story of the fusion of sensuous-anxious energies in the act of (shamanic) writing transforms the storyteller (and her listener) into “something else.” Embracing the dualism, then, in contradiction to suggesting that the tension of opposites must be resolved into a unity by ejection (or extraction into stories that then transform), the *fusion* of opposite energies in Coatlicue produces the story of “a path/state to something else.” I find it striking that “path” and “state” are conjoined by a slash here, suggesting that neither word suffices alone to convey the effect of transformation as process and being *at the same time*. This is to say that Anzaldúa emphasizes the mixed-race body and the split consciousness as a site of power, pleasure, sensuousness, and (embodied) intelligence. It is a state of (nightmare) being and at the same time it is a temporary stage in the path toward a (numinous) “something else.” This is the noble aim of the project. In the state of convergence, in the site of the bleeding, the “nightmare” of life in the Borderlands is potentially transformed into the “numinous” by means of this *temporary* state of mixedness. Anzaldúa is not positioning

mixedness as the telos after all, not in the same way that Vasconcelos proposed the cosmic race as the telos of human kind(s). The Coatlicue state that the mestiza writer inhabits is a state of betweenness—better might be even to call it the Coatlicue *path* or Coatlicue *bridge*. The deep structure of this configuration belies a concept of transformation as a form between forms, a form that changes the other two—but that also changes the prior form into the latter form. This configuration thus likewise instantiates transformation as a third space, or as the site of difference. The two (pure, static) forms in opposition can only, it seems, be changed by their confluence in a third. This third space is then the site of a cross-bred hybridity that reconfigures the other two forms or spaces. On the one hand this makes good sense given the history of scholarship on notions of cultural change.<sup>42</sup> However, I find this framework deeply troubling in its insistence on a deictic notion of transformation marshalled by teleological historicity—that any body, land, or state is fixed *until* changed by an energy conceived as already always different than and external to that body, land, or state. To figure the body, the nation, the culture, the earth, as whole and constant *until* ruptured by some external force simply naturalizes the dominant, social evolutionary interpretation of change by which “magico-religious” practices are reconvened as “primitive” and uncorrupted until that time when change is imposed by an external (human) agent of history. The deep structure of Anzaldúa’s claims here imply that transformation occurs when two fixed states (or two essential qualities) converge, violently, and one wins out over the other to produce—to eject out—that new “something else” at which to arrive next (in sequence). This reads as well as though this *state* of transformation (this fixed third space of difference) exists solely (if usefully) to bring about another state: an endpoint at which the transformed-ness will become the new normative state of being. This is transformation as a means to an end and this ultimately negates or at least vacates attendant claims of shape-shifting and liveliness in storytelling if it is simply a matter of the storyteller exacting transformation through will and direction—the human agent of one’s own (individual) destiny. But—and this is so important—this third space also makes possible the transformation of Gloria’s intimate Borderlands experience from nightmare to numinosity, a most necessary transformation for Anzaldúa to rewrite. The fusion of opposites in this third space is the bridge, the embodied experience of the fractured locus (the split consciousness) transforming the internal tension of opposites into a means of suturing the rupture, escaping the tension, and forming a new, harmonized, and reconciled body and land. On the one hand, this bridging of oppositions

promises to transform the painful experience of a split Self into the numinous experience of seeing through the serpent and the eagle at once (as she has said); on the other hand, this bridging of opposites staged as a temporary, fixed state between a past state and a future state retains a linear, teleological, social evolutionary shape of change—enacted through self-sacrificial blood-letting and on the backdrop of a place located as a fixed state (a territory) to be transformed by the writer as willful human agent.

I want to add that there comes a moment where Anzaldúa releases some of the calque of colonial-modern ontologies, in particular in places where she uses Spanish instead of English. By way of concluding this section and moving into a more holistic discussion of the stakes of the dualistic structure of the text, I turn to a passage written entirely in Spanish. The following passage juxtaposes the body and the place in a way that I find numinous. Despite the unfortunate demarcation of its otherness by italics, Anzaldúa's shamanistic writing becomes a sensuous (and radical) act speaking back to US imperialism, lingering inside the tense state of oppositions and embracing (momentarily) the simultaneity of the body and its relations with the world:

*Tallo mi cuerpo como si estuviera lavando un trapo. Toco las saltadas venas de mis manos, mis chichis adormecidas como pájaras al anochecer. Estoy encorvada sobre la cama. Las imágenes aletean alrededor de mi cama como murciélagos, la sabana como que tuviese alas. El ruido de los trenes subterráneos en mi sentido como conchas. Parece que las paredes del cuarto se me arriman cada vez más cerquita.* (Anzaldúa 93, orig. ital.)

[I rub my body as though I were trying to wash a rag. I touch the bulging veins of my hands, my sleepy boobs like hens at dusk. I am slouched on the bed. Images flutter around the bed like bats, the sheet like it were winged. The noise of subterranean trains inside me sounds like holding my ear to a conch shell. It feels like the walls of the room are closing in on me tighter and tighter.]

Anzaldúa tells us a story of the body, here narrated from the sensation rather than from the cognition. *This* moment of sensuality speaks volumes of embodied knowledge in the ways that she touches herself by rubbing her body—the verb *tallar* at once describing rubbing, measuring, and sculpting. The images that she senses flutter like bats, she says. She is slouched on the bed touching the bulging veins of her hands and the “sleepy” breasts that hang like hens at dusk, she tells us. This mode of her writing is a sensuous (if at once anxious) act. But there is more to it than sensuality as physical stimulation. The sensuousness of the writing act is here augmented by its relation to her many invocations of Aztec blood. The subterranean trains that sound like

seashells or conches parallel the bulging veins that she touches—this is then also the sound of the Aztec blood flowing in her veins, the blood of the continent (its soil and soul) like subterranean trains inside her body, like what one hears when putting an ear to a conch shell. It sounds like the sea but is really the sound of one’s blood amplified by the spiraling shape of the interior of the shell. This construction thus imagines the relation between the body and the world as one not only shaped by language but also where the materiality of the body is contiguous with the earth and in kinship relation. The seashells, the trains, the blood: all are indexed in the act of self-exploration—all are located in the materiality of the body. The Spanish here signals a use of metaphor and symbol that, in its performance of Aztec (“the Indians”) indigeneity, weaves the body into a scale of time akin with the ocean and a scale of space akin with the transit of empire (the trains crossing expanses of land, but under that ground). At the same time, in its actualization, the metaphor and symbol eventually revert (turn back to) an act that divides the figurative from the material and articulates an epistemology retaining that same sense of hierarchical difference between the rational and the magical. This interpretation emerges in relation to the two textiles in this passage: one a figurative rag—as she rubs her body *as though she were* washing a rag; the other a material sheet, figured *as if it were* taking flight or sprouting wings. I tend to think that, on a conscious level of writing, these two textiles bring together a sense of her body interwoven with the room and her surroundings. But where she draws a distinction with the conditional simile, in imperfect subjunctive form (in the Spanish), the verb construction organizes immaterial figure and material form as unambiguous categories. The sheet is animated but only figuratively (a material object made useful, whose animacy is immaterial). And that the sheet can only have wings by figurative linguistic relation, and not by virtue of its materiality in relation with the air in the room (the air that in this sense animates the sheet to that flying motion), likewise dampens the sensuousness of the passage by revealing an anxiety or an impulse to ontologize the living and the non-living, to discursively separate out the flesh and the fabric. The rag, meanwhile, figures her corporeal animation—the rag is not a present materiality in the room with the writer. Where she begins to rub (or sculpt or measure) her body, *as though* washing a cloth rag, I imagine a rubbing motion, like rubbing two sides of wet cloth together to get a stain out. The sensuality sounds painful all of a sudden. The body is apprehended through a metaphor likening the act of self-knowledge with an act of cleansing an unwanted feature from that material form of the body. The space and materiality of the room



likewise remain confined to use-relation, to a metaphorical relation between body and place. What begins as a sensuous act now comes to resemble a painful one, a split or grating where the material and the figurative are incommensurate and their division governs the narration of the coming to sensation of her own form and flesh. Yet this pain is part of the story—part of the sensuousness. This is Anzaldúa’s story of writing as a sensuous-anxious act and I am not here to dispute or decry her narration of experience. However, in this construction where the figurative and the material exist as dualistic opposites, the body will remain the site of the pain (*la rajadura*) and the pleasure or sensuousness will remain the product of figurative, metaphorical relations. The material body is the site of pain and bleeding, the figurative soul is the site of hope and futurity. At least, that is the story that I read it here in the dualistic mixture of pain and pleasure in the place of the mestiza body-land axis.

The above passage likewise becomes a sort of odd universalizing of the creative process, especially following prior declarations that Indigenous art is communal and not simply individual. The artist-writer here is an individual who feels (psychological) pain and pleasure, whose body is enclosed within the walls of the room—demarcated. Here, art seems to figure as a very personal, individual endeavor—the artist must create out of necessity, to transform the pain of living in the psychic unrest of the Borderlands into a pleasure of and in the *fractured locus*. This forms a very psychological center to Anzaldúa’s text. Anzaldúa’s conceptualization of art presupposes its production as personal and individual, and the mestiza writer or artist as enclosed in the walls of her body (and the place). The place—the land, the body—of the new mestiza is an enclosure, a territory, in which the form is felt as a painful rubbing, grating, bleeding, where two opposites converge in the individual body and individuated place but where living in the split compels the desire to be ejected out of that internal tension of opposites.

It may be that the language of the text—English—is in part to blame, so to speak, for this kind of slippage between the surface and the structure of Anzaldúa’s declarations. The term “hybridity,” for example, has become a common figure in scholarship, in particular in interventions in Border theory.<sup>43</sup> My intervention here has less to do with the kind of scholarship that addresses cross-cultural or biracial lived experience than it does with considerations of the epistemological charges of Anzaldúa uses of various terms for mixedness. Mestiza/o comes through the colonial genealogy of discourses used to organize bodies within the system of legal enslavement—those marked *mestizo* were understood to have a degree of European blood that

supposedly made them more fit for certain kinds of labor compared to pure-blooded “Indian” or (“African”) savages.<sup>44</sup> The etymology of the word “hybrid” similarly shows it emerging from the Latin *hybrida* around the sixteenth century and likewise in the context of the burgeoning natural sciences in Europe—in the discursive ontologizing of planetary life under the rubric of European rationalism, Cartesian binary, and proto-anthropology. The Latin root specifically demarcates the “offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar, or of a freeman and a slave” (*Oxford online dictionary*). “Hybrid” was then adopted into the lexicons of European societies with the purpose of delineating the cross breeding of two different species of plants or animals, just like the word *mestizo* in the Hispanophone world (and *métis* in the Francophone). At that time, and still, its use largely indexes the crossing of genetic *lineages*—although, its use in any discussion of human bodies problematically denies and deflects that *all humans are the same species regardless of categories of race*. To call any human body “hybrid” is to uncritically accept a biological definition of race, rather than to consider race as at once a categorial social construct and a material experience of inhabiting a body narratively marked into a social category (and concomitantly posited to possess essential internal qualities corresponding to those narrative markers of external phenotype and presentation). The term *mestiza/o* is not much better, in that it equally derives from Eurocentric natural sciences and continues to index notions of race that insist on the demarcation of blood-borne differences. The alternative *criollo* (or *creole*) offers a slightly different etymology and force, indexing anyone born in the Americas and outside of distinctions of blood, although this term has similarly shifted into a definition of mixedness as well in various sites and usages across the hemisphere.<sup>45</sup> These three terms for mixedness, then, all refer back to a colonial history of managing and racializing bodies for the purpose of organizing (enslaved) labor and for expropriating Indigenous lands. In their definitions, histories, etymologies, contexts, valences, regenerations, and limits, *mestiza/o* and hybrid in particular adhere to their paternal European lineage in the ways that they insist on the notion of an original purity *in the blood* only differentiated by a (violent) encounter with an Other blood and only in a linear shape of evolutionary time.<sup>46</sup>

Echoing the notion of transformation as one of crossing from one state to another via a third space of difference or rupture, Anzaldúa’s use of Vasconcelian *mestizaje* as a genealogy through which her project voices its aims for a *mestiza/o* futurity tends to reify the linear social evolutionary biopolitics of colonial-modern institutions and epistemologies. To position the

mestiza writer as the bridge, the third space, between two opposites—as the fusion of those opposites—and then to rewrite that fusion as one needing to reject one side (the paternal) and to claim the other side (the maternal), reads as a crossing-over from one side to the other that ultimately reinstates the border between the two states *and* that arranges the sides in a hierarchy of exclusive difference foreclosing the actual coexistence of the two in the one (of the mixedness). In many ways, this story redraws a border. This story tells of dualisms by which the mestiza writer actualizes her transformative agency at the same time that she can never remain in the twoness—can never remain on (as) that bridge—since that state of struggle either tears her apart or else propels her into that agent of change by (r)ecting one or the other *side* of the mixed Self. Even if considering the state of transformation as one in which the two sides are brought together to form a “something else” or a new “hybrid progeny,” the language and structure of the text implies that the mestiza writer will arrive at a future state of transformation by passing through that state of mixedness. The mestiza dualisms in this context articulate a temporary (temporal) state of a heterogeneous (poly-lithic) *place* between two otherwise homogenous (monolithic) places of belonging and becoming.

## **Dualisms (Time > Space)**

In this section, I reengage the dualistic structure of Anzaldúa’s manifesto as a way of approaching a more refined synthesis of my reading of the linear shape of kinship. I have already said that the chapters adhere to dualisms in terms of the figures and forms that Anzaldúa employs and in sensing their oppositionality throughout. Here, I arrange the dualisms in the text in relation to abstract notions of time and space and in order to think through what a linear shape of kinship means as far as the stakes of my reading. I have been conceiving of the shape of kinship as an episteme through which understandings of the self, ancestry, and place take form in both meaning and experience. This is to say that how a person understands the relations that form the matter and story of a life, I argue, is shaped by how matter and lives are understood as such and that this comes through shapes of kinship (embedded in language and epistemology). Anzaldúa seems to understand her Self in linear sequential relation to both an experience of Chicano traditionality and a mythic Aztec ancestry, by which she substantiates a sense of her (mestiza) body and her (Borderlands) place as continuous and as a territory demarcated by blood (lines).

The stakes of this reading then arise, for me, in questions of how a linear pathway marshals ways of seeing and enacting forms of political, national, and corporeal becoming that are activated by an epistemological dualism implicitly privileging the temporal over the spatial—by linear temporal history suppressing spatial difference and multiplicities. Trujillo addresses this phenomenon, which I have already been describing, in terms of the “tyranny of a singular horizon of space and time” that denies and oppresses the heterogeneous temporalities of Indigenous life in the Americas (66). Indigenous scholar Mishuana Goeman similarly addresses spatial epistemologies in the context of contemporary Indigenities and linear temporalized history in *Mark My Words: Indigenous Women Mapping Our Nations* (2013). Goeman draws from feminist geographer Doreen Massey’s work on the gendered dimensions of space in the context of colonial-modern and global economics and the management of bodies and lands.<sup>47</sup> Through Massey’s language, Goeman describes place not as territory or as landscape but, importantly, as a “simultaneity of stories-so-far” (Goeman 6, citing Massey). Goeman’s work questions the “acceptance of colonial spatialities” and how they “look at distance and closeness in terms of dichotomous difference” (7). In this way, Goeman’s argument is largely about “the move toward geographies that do not limit, contain, or fix the various scales of space from the body to the nation in ways that limit definitions of self and community staked out as property” (11). In other words, epistemologies of time and space inform delimitations (or else flexibilities) of relations between the body, the ancestor, and the place where all are mapped in the imagination in various scales of space—on the one hand limited, contained, and fixed (in the colonial-modern) and on the other hand unlimited, uncontained, and unfixed (in Indigenous and decolonial feminist praxes). I find Goeman’s work vital for sorting through Anzaldúa’s beautifully messy project in relation to how the text takes up time-space epistemologies through a colonial-modern framework while also reappropriating Aztec myth toward renewed Indigenous practices. Novoa for her part reads this tendency in Anzaldúa in relation to how the “historical narrative of space and time that characterized Spanish American thinkers was influential in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa through her interest in the writings of Mexican intellectuals” (103). Novoa argues that colonial-modern epistemologies (established in part through Cartesian dualism and Newtonian universal linear time) propose “ideas of universal history and synthesis” to the extent that these epistemologies effectively “replace[] the supremacy of physical place by a new notion of space/time” (103, 102). A theory of universal history and synthesis makes the

claim that space (as *nature*) is unchanging except or until encounter with the willful human agent who enacts conscious transformations of the space and along a linear and unidirectional axis of historical time—the material space is but a plasticity made open and available as a resource for the becoming-human. This theory of space-time makes possible the legal doctrine of discovery by which Indigenous lands were (and continue to be) claimed by the authoritative gesture of putting them to proper *use*—a utilitarianism at odds with Indigenous ways of seeing and knowing the world as a living and breathing kin relative. Novoa argues that “Anzaldúa followed this pattern, but at the same time, completely transformed the possibilities of spatialized history that led to a more inclusive idea of the nation” and, Novoa finds, redirected the idea of universal time and synthesis toward a “narrative of heterogeneity, multiplicity, and inclusion” (103). While I agree that the explicit aim (*telos*) of the project is indeed toward this kind of heterogeneity and inclusion, I find that the linear shape of time, history, and kinship *reconvene spatial difference as temporal sequence*, to paraphrase Doreen Massey.<sup>48</sup> All this is to say that the linear kinship (as blood lines and as teleological historicity) in *Borderlands/La Frontera* functionally asserts the historical primacy of Chicanas/os in the Borderlands (in Aztlán) as a means to an end but a means that simultaneously replaces the heterogeneous (poly-lithic) assemblage of the mestiza body-place with a monolithic and monolinear temporal and spatial homogeneity.

In an important way, Anzaldúa is telling a new history of mestiza/o becoming through the enactment of the Coatlicue state (through inhabiting *la rajadura*). To revisit her chapter on “La Herencia de Coatlicue,” Anzaldúa had said there that:

An addiction (a repetitious act) is a ritual to help one through a trying time; its repetition safeguards the passage, it becomes one’s talisman, one’s touchstone. If it sticks around after having outlived its usefulness, we become ‘stuck’ in it and it takes possession of us. But we need to be arrested. Some past experience or condition has created this need. This stopping is a survival mechanism, but one which must vanish when it’s no longer needed if growth is to occur. (68)

For Anzaldúa, the mestiza writer, the Coatlicue state (or pathway as I have also called it) is just such a ritual, such repetition, and the “internal struggle of opposites” cited in the previous section is the past experience or condition that has created this need, as she puts it. This is odd; now it sounds as though the mestiza Self is a stage in a linear progression from broken to fixed. Anzaldúa recognizes that it is possible to get “stuck” in a repetitive motion while yet emphasizing the curative properties of this kind of ritual repetition. Indeed, in her interpretation

and experience, it is not possible to *move forward* until this *past* experience has been resolved. It is a linear model. Growth can only happen, she says, if the ritual arrestation is temporary. The movement of the Self *in time* follows a universal, linear flow of progress, growth, and development—positioning the repetitious act as both risking permanent arrestation (a stasis with no growth) and the condition of possibility for growth but provided it is only a *temporary state*. In this way, the repetition as ritual forms an outline of the bridge metaphorizing the mestiza body/writer where it figures as the temporalized state of transformation *in between* a former and a latter state of being—the third space of difference, but where, in the structure of the text, it is affixed in a temporal dimension bridging a past event *in time* and a future curative *in time* and where that bridge must necessarily vanish once its service has been completed. In this linear shape of becoming, the progression or growth of the Self is a smooth and uniform flow *until a time when* that progress is stopped first by the rupturing condition or experience (the event that makes the repetitious act necessary) and second by the curative repetition of an act (the future event when the rupture will be healed). This arrestation and ritual repetition, in a linear universal historical temporality, is a “talisman” to guide the embodied self toward a transformed state out of the experience of that rupture—to transform the nightmare into the numinous. The implication remains of utmost importance in the lived experience of the mestiza writer as Anzaldúa tells it. The splitting of the border/body, *la rajadura*, is the condition that created the need for the ritual repetition of the Coatlicue state in which the opposites are fused, the internal struggle resolved, in order for “growth” and “progress” to occur.

But there is another angle to consider here: the transformation occurs in the arrested state between a “past experience” and a future “growth” or later form. Implicit in the structure of this path, change (transformation) occurs as an event on a linear *timeline*—as I have been arguing, space (or place) provides the surficial backdrop for human activity (becoming). Space, or place, here, is not so much heterogeneous as it is an open vessel into which human historical agents can place the objects through which their agency and identity actualize (in linear social evolutionary time). The ritual repetition is a talisman to guide the conscious agent through the passage of time, from wounded to healed. While I contend that this is not an explicit or conscious claim that Anzaldúa makes in her manifesto, the structure of the pathway that she lays out tends to follow a linear (temporalized) logic by which process is transcribed in terms of product: the ritual repetition is a “touchstone,” and suddenly not a *path*; the ritual repetition is an object, an “it” that

“sticks around” if one allows (it is a choice, it seems); the ritual repetition is nominalized, no longer described by verb forms denoting repetition as process but rather repetition is an icon existing across a dichotomous arrangement of “distance and closeness” (to reiterate Goeman). In this sense, the Coatlicue state as a ritual repetition resembles a mode of iconizing a past image as a touchstone or talisman (a use-object) to guide the mestiza/o Self (nation) toward a future-telos of a transformed state in which the resolution of the struggle (as growth out of or away from it) will have produced a new singular corporeality. It concerns an individual body (a singular soul, a singular consciousness) and an individual nation (a singular soil, a singular national consciousness). Both the body and the place are written as territories to be discovered *in time*. This kind of story about the body and land (as nation) tells that both are pure and whole unless or *until a time when* ruptured or split by an external force of time. A dualism that momentarily bridges the hierarchical dichotomy but, once crossed, does not break it. The split remains in the monolinear and monolithic temporal and spatial imagining.

The implicit dualism of time and space in the text offers yet other angles of consideration. According to Anzaldúa, “[t]hose activities or *Coatlicue* states which disrupt the smooth flow (complacency) of life are exactly what propel the soul to do its work: make soul, increase consciousness of itself” (68). So here the “smooth flow” is explicitly a “complacency” that, in a way, arrests growth similarly to how a ritual repetition can become an addiction if it sticks around past the point of the necessity of its arresting force. The Coatlicue state interrupts this complacency and “propel[s] the soul” and grows the soul’s “consciousness of itself.” The Coatlicue state is homologous to the “internal tension of opposites” that either tears apart the mestiza writer or “propels” her, “ejects her out as *nahual*, agent of transformation.” The Coatlicue state is *la rajadura*—but it is meant to be used only temporarily. Read together, these passages at once narrate an experience and manifest an ideology. In the event (moment) of resolution of the internal struggle, when the Coatlicue state will have propelled the mestiza writer out as an agent of transformation, her soul’s consciousness of itself *will be* the product. What then, I wonder? Will the Coatlicue state no longer be necessary once the new mestiza will have arrived at a state of higher consciousness of her inherent Self? Will Coatlicue no longer be the talisman? If she is no longer needed then, because the rupture will have been healed, will she stick around like an addiction? I don’t mean that these are my questions, but these questions arise out of a consideration for the power-geometry implicit in the dualisms of time and space that

structure Anzaldúa's narration of this temporary arrestation in in-betweenness. These questions challenge the explicit claims of the text. At the same time that Anzaldúa has cautioned that balance and harmony are the effects of willful direction, and not of unconscious shamanic writing, the text is implicitly balanced or harmonized in its temporal-spatial dimensions of universal history: the Coatlicue state is, by conscious (reasoned) contrast, an interruption of the smooth flow of Anglo imperialism. Despite being voiced as the workings of the unconscious hybridity of this autonomic manifesto, contradiction is a conscious part of the project. Moreover, in the above passage, the Coatlicue state figures "activities" that promote the kind of (mestiza) consciousness in which the tension of opposites—the conflict—is resolved at the same time that it is, here, announced as that very force which interrupts the "smooth flow" of life. The Coatlicue state is the conscious force that asserts the logic of its contradictory character; the Coatlicue state is, contradictorily, the unconscious force that produces a return to (or recreation of) a smooth flow of life. It bridges, it breaks; it heals rupture, it is rupture. It is an *it*, imbued with force and spirit—yet it is also objectified (nominalized) *and* it is bestowed with subjectivity, a capacity for acting, for activity, for sticking around even after it is no longer needed. These activities as a state or event or linear temporal moment then also cease to encompass the notion of process and again implicitly refer back to a product even while retaining enormous transformative (storytelling) power.

Some of the contradictions that I am reading here are salutary, others problematic. In gross, the contradictions confirm the messiness of in-betweenness and flux and as salutary epistemologies that open new horizons of possibility. However, in precise points I find balances that discreetly instantiate Anzaldúa's ritual repetition as one that also repeats colonial-modern epistemologies—hierarchical dichotomies, categorial logic, and universal linear historical time. The Coatlicue state enacts rupture (interruption) that cures past rupture; Anzaldúa likewise voices this as a call to "let the wound caused by the serpent be cured by the serpent" (68). Coatlicue, in whose image Anzaldúa as well clusters Cihuacoatl and Tlazolteotl, forms the emblem (the multi-headed serpent in the obsidian mirror) of both the past condition or experience of rupture that creates the need for arrestation *and* the space of future becoming-singular (wishing the others were not there in the mirror, as the text stressed before). But this is odd: was the wound caused by the serpent mother who repetitiously enacts the mourning rites of resistance inherent in "the Indian woman"? In the narrow sense, the mestiza writer's reenactment



of this ritual repetition is an act of resistance to that prior rupture. This is possible, Anzaldúa argues, by virtue of the blood inheritance of Aztec mourning rites, Aztec symbology, Aztec literary traditions, and Aztec land. This is the story. This is: “*Coatlicue* depicts the contradictory. In her figure, all the symbols important to the religion and philosophy of the Aztecs are integrated” (Anzaldúa 69). This reads once again like the willful direction of the text by Anzaldúa’s desire for this future resolution of the split—a conscious ordering of *Coatlicue* into a balanced form as talisman and as ancestor. A noble aim, in terms of transforming nightmare into numinosity; yet one figured nonetheless through an epistemology that affixes indigeneity in a perpetual primitivity of historical time, framing all the symbols of the Aztec (“the Indians”) in terms of their availability *as* talismanic icons to be put to use in the development of a new corporeal and national identity named linear historical inheritor of those symbols. In this framework, *Coatlicue* is unchanging. She is already always “stuck” in that past state of repetitive mourning rites—she is addicted to the ritual of mourning, to read her through Anzaldúa’s logic. *Coatlicue* depicts the contradictory but only ever in the way that she reflects a static past in dualistic contrast with what Anzaldúa frames as a static future built from both her blood sacrifice and that of the mestiza writer repeating those inherited activities. The contradiction is stated as a fusion of opposites, yet the site of this fusion is a female body abstracted (extracted) from the place-time of her living and iconized as an object (“touchstone”) guiding an individual soul to its manifest destination. The contradictions seem to dissipate and her image forms into a balanced harmony vis-à-vis her objective use function. In this way, the opposites are maintained synthetically as opposites—to affix *Coatlicue* in the past, as an unchanging symbol or icon of mestiza origination, situates the (female) serpent figure as the artifactual source material for (re)production of national belonging. And this national belonging is demarcated by blood—by a *bloodline* made pure again in the rejection of the paternal and the re-enactment of the maternal.

This is explicit in the text. Returning now to the ultimate chapter of the manifesto, on “*La conciencia de la mestiza*,” Anzaldúa asks: “in a state of perpetual transition, the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed: which collectivity does the daughter of a dark-skinned mother listen to?” (100). Beyond the characterization of the *mestiza* as a “mixed breed”—siting race as speciated distinction—an individual choice implicates the process of coming to new *mestiza* consciousness in terms of deciding which *blood line* with which to identify. And she *must* choose one side or the other—the imperative marshalling the call as ideological. The “perpetual state of

transition” is not itself curative; heterogeneities of self, ancestry, and place are not written as salutary—they are temporary stages toward something else, something more advanced, something more resolved (or *evolved*). Mestizaje is not itself the curative, it seems. But choosing to be ejected out on one side of that split *is* curative. Here, the emphasis seems to rest on the “dark-skinned mother”—the Indigenous “half” that promises to show the new mestiza the way to consciousness if she chooses that pathway. The fusion of opposites in the Coatlicue state fails to promote the embodied knowledge accessible in and by a split consciousness where the state of mixedness perpetually (repetitiously) demands adherence to one side or the other—*este lado, otro lado*. The opposition maintains a sense of irreconcilable dualism—a rupture that cannot be healed. I say this in part because of Anzaldúa’s simultaneous insistence on the biological futurism of mixedness and expounding on the necessity of restoring wholeness by choosing the maternal Indigenous blood *line*. Implicitly, the reader has been told that the mestiza writer must follow the talisman of maternal indigeneity in order to heal and resolve the rupture of that original merging (that convergence of the life blood (lines) of two opposing worlds). Explicitly, on the other hand, the reader is told:

But it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed [...]. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes. (Anzaldúa 100-101)

Explicitly, it is not enough for one side to win out over the other—rather, the healing must make possible the capacity to stand on both shores *at once*, in a simultaneity of stories-so-far, in a heterogeneous assemblage (a poly-lithic body-place). The opposites must be fused, bridged, and held together to the extent that they fail to read as opposites anymore. The ambiguity of that polyolith must be inhabited—embodied. In this passage, I find no impulse to be ejected out of the site of the tension of opposites. Rather, here, at the end of the pathway to new mestiza consciousness, the tension of opposites conceives of the mestiza body (and land) as a coexistence of masculine and the feminine—the serpent and the eagle, *at once*. Explicitly, this is Anzaldúa’s call. For the serpent to heal rupture with rupture means for her to embrace the eagle—to embrace the paternal. But, again, this contradicts what she has told her reader throughout, as I have been describing, where she insists that dualisms have no bearing in Aztec (Indigenous) epistemology

as well as where she insists that the dualisms (the ambiguity) must be resolved and one side must win out over the other. Moreover, to fuse the two “shores” removes the space of (for) the bridge—removes the third space of mixedness and maintains the opposites, the dualism, by excising the site of fusion or by means of suggesting that one must “leave the opposite bank” in order to pass over (arrive at) a new state of fusion of opposites. Again, the bridge—the Coatlicue state—is written as a *temporary and temporal state* (stage) within which the transformation of substance occurs *in time*.

Anzaldúa tells us that a counter stance (an opposition) merely locks both combatants in perpetual conflict—not unlike the internal tension of opposites she has been expressing. This is good. On the surface, consciously, the aim is not to simply have one side win out over the other. On the surface, consciously, it is not a matter of the maternal, dark, feminine, serpent order defeating the paternal, white, masculine, eagle order in combat. On the surface, consciously, it is a matter of arriving at a (future) state in which the twoness is fused into a oneness—an at-onceness—the masculine and the feminine in the same body, the Indigenous and the European blood rooted in the soil and soul of the same Borderlands, the time and space of the body-place as a simultaneity of eagle and serpent. Under the surface, unconsciously (as it were), this also means that the future state of mixedness at which this project aims is one where the fundamental dualism will be “somehow healed”—that is, the rupture will be sutured. The mestiza consciousness will cross over that bridge, turn away from the “opposite bank,” cross over to *one side* on which the eagle and the serpent are one. This is synthesis. This means that the future of the mestiza body/Borderlands is one when (temporally) the two sides will be fused together—a synthetic product in which the eagle and the serpent will at once be fused together (and undifferentiated) *and* be the possibility of seeing incommensurable heterogeneities.

This reads as a contradiction between the explicit and implicit levels of the text. To will the text into harmony would, of course, countervail Anzaldúa’s aims here. To maintain the contradiction is part of the project, at the same time that the contradiction generates an incommensurability between the stated goals and purpose of the new mestiza consciousness and the unstated assumptions that subtend the monolinear (temporal) logic and monolithic spatial logic of Anzaldúa’s project. Anzaldúa proposes that the “junction where the *mestiza* stands” is the site (the third space) of crossing or transformation—the new mestiza is the bridge. The mestiza body is a place. The mestiza body is standing on both shores at once. The new mestiza:

is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness—a *mestiza* consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. (Anzaldúa 101-102)

This passage is crucial to an understanding of Anzaldúa's explicit project. Here, the fusion of opposites is not a synthesis—explicitly, the *mestiza* body-place “is not” one of synthesizing separated or severed pieces. She tells the reader that healing the rupture with rupture is not about simply bringing the two (separated) shores or oppositions together. It is not, after all, about bridging the opposite shores, it seems. The *mestiza* body unites all that is separate, but not, we are told, by an act of balancing “opposing powers”; rather, the *mestiza* body (consciousness) is a third space whose wholeness is “greater than the sum of its severed parts.” While this sounds a lot like it *is* a site of severed pieces coming together, the explicit call is that the *mestiza* is a sum, an equation of parts otherwise seen or heard as divided units. In this precise expression, Anzaldúa reinvokes the eugenics of Vasconcelian *mestizaje* by describing the new *mestiza* as “greater than the sum of its severed parts,” which ultimately implies the historical separation of categories (as species) of different races only now, in this historical moment, brought together into a new race but which, in this paradigm, presents as a curative to that *past* racial purity. Without abandoning the poles of purity and mixedness, or past and future, the implicit structure of the text slips into a determinant of space-time dualism by which both indigeneity and whiteness are parts (categories) reconciled into a new idea of wholeness (“a third element”) in the *mestiza* body-place as a temporary moment in linear historical time. Explicitly it is not synthesis; implicitly, it is synthesis.

In a way, this suggests that the prior separation of races was a discursive move that Anzaldúa's project aims to correct. More importantly for my reading, this third space is not so much a space, after all, as it is a temporality—a future *telos* when the union of severed elements will have been restored (their rupture healed with rupture) as the product of temporarily bridging the false divide. Here it also becomes unclear whether the aforementioned “intense pain” is the product of the event of mixing—the birth of *la nueva raza* in 1521—or the event of the border cutting the land and body of the Chicana/*mestiza*. In the various passages that I have been weaving together, there grows a confusion in the implicit structure. In this passage here, the

intense pain of the mestiza is linked to her situatedness in the Borderlands—linked to the historical severance of the whole of Chicana/o peoples in the region. Yet in numerous earlier passages, the implication was that the mestiza/o body (originating with that original event of its “birth” in 1521, she had said) is the site of an “internal tension of opposites” that exists out of necessity (for growth) and that seeks resolution for the mixed “breed” (as she calls it) person. Both expressions site the source of the pain in a temporal event of mixing—in the grating and bleeding of the life bloods of two worlds in contact, in 1521 in Aztec-Spanish convergence and again in 1848 with the drawing of the US-Mexico border. The way that the text convolutes the source of the pain both as a trauma inherited intergenerationally in the blood and as the rupture of community and culture produced by the imposition of the border may not be necessary or meaningful to untangle.<sup>49</sup> But the convolution does indicate a contradiction in the text that shifts the role and significance of the new mestiza consciousness (or mestiza writer) from a praxis of multiplicity (ritual repetition, flexibility) to a theory of linear temporal becoming—which, as I read it, disavows multiplicity by insisting on a future in which wholeness will be restored even if that wholeness is intended as the synthesis of all races of humans into a new unity (in the mestiza body-place). In this way, wholeness—as a totality—is the desired form or outcome. Wholeness, unity, and a notion of collectivity in which only one of the bloodlines can be claimed as inheritance: these are the implicit calls of the text. Although including the idea that it is through “continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm” that the new mestiza does this work, the dualisms in the text insist that mixedness and fragmentation are pain and create a temporary need for ritual repetition to restore wholeness.

Again, my reading is invested in addressing the temporal and spatial dimensions of this framework where Anzaldúa’s textuality insists on biological and linear historical pathways of growth (or development). I hear Anzaldúa’s explicit calls—I hear her say that “[a] massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war.” And I agree. Dualistic, Cartesian thinking that organizes biologically determined qualities into hierarchical dichotomies along a linear axis of temporalized history is the root of much oppression and violence in the colonial-modern world.<sup>50</sup> Just before the previous passage’s declaration, I also hear Anzaldúa say that:

The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. (102)

The new *mestiza* consciousness shows in her flesh and her art (the images) how to transcend the subject-object duality that is the originary split—the past condition or experience of rupture. The Border and the mixed-“breed” self are products of that condition of possibility whereby the land and the body are cut in two—separated from each other and divided into dual parts across a false divide. Anzaldúa’s position and claims become focused here, at the end of the process of writing the sequential stages on the pathway written as manifesto, where she arrives at a conscious transcendence of the contradictions between the explicit and implicit modes of her narration: *it is the epistemological structure that cuts*. It is the way of seeing the world as already always divided in twos: *that* is the source of the pain. It is not, in fact, the moment of mixing—not the conquest of Indigenous lands and bodies, not the “cross-pollinization” of two kinds of human, but the imposition of a split in ways of seeing, the persistence of the dualistic opposition that grates and wounds and splits. *Me raja, me raja*, she says. The work of the new *mestiza* consciousness then—as a *consciousness* of the source of the split—is to persistently and transcreatively challenge the empiricism (the Empire) of that duality governing ways of seeing. While I maintain that inverting the dualism is not the same as resolving or dismantling its dominance, the political aesthetic activism that Anzaldúa hails here is vital to Borderlands life. In essence, the call to “break down the subject-object duality” declares that the body-place—the “flesh,” the “images”—is the site of the “continual creative motion” by which such paradigmatic oppositions are broken down and dismantled when animated to (un)conscious and continual (constant) creative motion. The *mestiza* body-place is the site for such making, unmaking, and remaking precisely because she embodies the interwovenness of otherwise divided and hierarchized and oppositional dualisms.

In this textual moment/location, Anzaldúa has now walked her reader down a messy path of dualisms, contradictions, balances, and deviancies. The deep structure of the text, shaped in dualisms, here arrives at a clarity of consciousness that demonstrates and enacts a process of transforming the nightmare into numinous experience by transforming the perception of duality into a perception of (woven) wholeness. The implicit, teleological pathway narrated through

linear ancestry and dualistic thinking arrives at a transformed state of mestiza consciousness here in the (future) event of Anzaldúa's own arrival at a place (a sensation) of healing—the rupture healed with rupture. The project of sensing the contours, relations, and conditions of possibility of her own body-place is laid out as the site/instance of unmaking and remaking the mestiza in the image of Coatlicue: the fusion of opposites by which the opposites can no longer differentiate. It is a future point when wholeness is restored—made manifest by the merging of the explicit and implicit, fused into a linearized progression through the story of becoming her shamanic, transcreating, shape-changer, mestiza writer self. Favoring the narrative of linear temporal development, yes, and in this I find a repetition of a colonial-modern logic of becoming and belonging (of body and place, marshalled by the ancestor); at once, the vitality of this project of healing rupture with rupture endures in relation to lived experiences of the Borderlands.

That Anzaldúa positions her own body as the site of the work is a radical scholarship. The method authorizes female, queer, colored experiences of the world in literary and cultural criticism and brings a sense of the awareness of the positionality of the speaker. I have attempted to not hide or deflect the traces of myself in this composition as one way of honoring and amplifying that important work. Anzaldúa heralds “*Nuestra alma el trabajo*, the opus, the great alchemical work; spiritual *mestizaje*, a ‘morphogenesis,’ an inevitable unfolding” (103).<sup>51</sup> Anzaldúa's soul is the work of (in) this text, her sense of mestiza self is the site of the scholarship. Here, *mestizaje* is more than a simple mixing of races or bloods, as it has largely been theorized thus far in the text. This is a *mestizaje* that exceeds blood lines. This is a *mestizaje* as a way of seeing multiply. Here, *mestizaje* is spiritual, as a philosophy or principle of transformation, “morphogenesis,” as an “inevitable unfolding” into the capacity to see through a split consciousness (through serpent and eagle eyes at the same time). And it no longer appears to be limited to (or by) blood lineage. At once, again, the reader is confronted with an explicit call drawn out in an implicit structure by which the pathway to this kind of new consciousness remains embedded in the very logic it explicitly claims to dismantle.

But, oddly, the expression of an “inevitable unfolding” positions *mestizaje* as a kind of futurity already written in the linear trajectory of human progress—more akin to Vasconcelos's *raza cósmica* (as the biopolitical effort to *desindianizar* the Mexican people) than to self-discovery advancing the intelligence and contributions of bodies marked female, queer, and of color. The mixedness—spiritual or biological—is “inevitable”: it is a pathway that cannot be

avoided, it is now the designated pathway and no longer the deviant pathway. Mestizaje ceases to figure as a consciousness of multiplicity in wholeness and resembles, instead, the expectation of a totalized future form. That is, the “morphogenesis” ideated alongside the humility of the spiritual becoming, through work on the self, explicates mestizaje as a more advanced, more evolved, more progressive, developed, liberal, and inclusive future *state* of human kind(s)—at once political and corporeal. It is an internal tension. It is an inevitable unfolding made possible by the linear transmission of essential qualities carried in the blood *and* it is the learned capacity to see multiply. In this claim, Anzaldúa implicitly guides her reader to an understanding of time and human history that accepts a linear (social) evolutionary narrative of change while yet proposing the openness of this critical terrain. Here at the end of the pathway to the new mestiza consciousness, Anzaldúa arrives at the conclusion that the mestiza body-place is naturally (by social evolutionary time) a transformation of a past indigeneity—the dark-skinned mother and her inherent rebelliousness—into a *morphogenetic* future form of higher consciousness that challenges and disrupts the status quo.

Initially, I thought that I was reading too much into this formulation by reading it in this way. Initially, this feels like an overly heavy-handed assessment. However, Anzaldúa then says: “The *mestizo* and the queer exist at this time and point on the evolutionary continuum for a purpose. We are a blending that proves that all blood is intricately woven together, and that we are spawned out of similar souls” (103). That all human blood is related is a salient issue to raise in the time of her writing, and still. I have been reiterating this point in my analyses where I find the text to reify biological essentialism and to operate through a language of colonial-modern social scientist ontologies of race (and sex). I have been saying that a mixed-race body is not the same as a hybrid species, as a critique of the way that Anzaldúa tends to reify that (colonial-modern) concept. But this claim explicitly stages “the *mestizo* and the queer” as biological essentialisms in (as products of) a linear axis of social evolutionary development. These are essential qualities formed by necessity, she says, within that history of colonization and imperialism. This is confounding. These are forms, she says, that exist at this “point on the evolutionary continuum” as a temporary bridge to another point on the “evolutionary continuum.” Anzaldúa’s claim here seems to suggest that queer and mestiza/o have not existed prior to this (linear historical) moment—and that they exist only now as a matter of necessity, or use, their presence thus produced by a past event or condition that generated their being-ness



through rupture and at once as ritual or curative yet *temporary* presence. This frame feels estranging. Not only does it fully naturalize heterosexuality as the originary state of human behavior, and queer gender and sexuality as divergent states branching from that traditional and pure past, but it likewise proposes that the power to invert hierarchical dichotomies of male/female, European/Indigenous, light/dark is generated through the naturalized ordering of human *kinds* (as categories) on a linear axis of social evolution inevitably unfolding toward a telos of advancement or improvement. Even if proposing a valuable or improved state of being, the teleology of an “evolutionary continuum” by which the “*mestizo* and the queer” are marked as temporary (and temporally staged) deviations from some universal ostensibly straight and pure normative state of being naturalizes a colonial-modern biological determinism and closely resembles the aforementioned “more pernicious and hierarchical impulses behind *mestizaje* in the Americas” (to reiterate Guidotti-Hernández’s citation of Pérez-Torres). Anzaldúa’s temporalization of queer and *mestiza* existence feeds into racist and xenophobic tendencies by framing the evolutionary development of queerness and mixedness as modern transformations of ancient heterosexuality and racial purity. And this, I argue, gestures recursively to a politicized ideology by which colonial-modern social sciences ontologized and hierarchized different “races of man” into different “stages” on a linear axis of development or progress.<sup>52</sup>

The queer and the *mestiza* exist at this point “for a purpose,” Anzaldúa says—for a *use* it seems, as images or icons of a state of mixedness that will guide the people to the next, more improved, stage (state) of being. The queer and the *mestiza* are now talismans, touchstones, ritualized objects. These figures as such foreclose the flexibility and (inter)wovenness of embodied beings. The queer and the *mestiza* are arranged here as fixed states produced of necessity at a precise temporal moment in linear evolutionary time and history. As figures locked in time, like Guadalupe, they no longer hold the possibility of continual creative motion. To be clear, a more holistic accounting of past and present Indigenous epistemologies of gender, sexuality, and notions of race or kinship enable a keener view on this question in terms of the ways that alternative temporalities and literacies (in the Americas) record and narrate these concepts outside of the teleological colonial-modern framework that Anzaldúa naturalizes in her manifesto toward *mestiza* futurity.<sup>53</sup> Anzaldúa implicitly proposes change as temporary social and corporeal *states* in linear sequential order moving progressively toward a singular event of arrival at an improved or restored future state. From this angle, this is not a philosophy or praxis

of multiplicity, of diversity, or of anti-racism; this is an assertion that social modernity (as social evolutionary development) is inherently (naturally, by blood) an improvement on the past inevitably unfolding in unidirectional time. But: contradiction is part of the project.

## **Dualisms (Time = Space)**

One of the ways that I read the conundrum of the dualisms in Anzaldúa's manifesto ties even more deeply into the time-space hierarchical dichotomy. In the previous section, I looked at the stakes of a linear, teleological framework privileging the temporal—privileging the notion of temporal progress toward an inherently advanced state. In this section, I will briefly discuss ways in which the text activates a spatial orientation in counter-valence with the teleological structure and toward a renewed possibility of *continual creative motion*. Although beginning in a politics of neonationalism and Vasconcelian mestizaje, Anzaldúa's text formulates a challenge to patriarchal and racist paradigms. In consideration of the structure of the entire text—as a wholeness comprised of messy, hybrid, heterogeneous, contradictory parts—I render a spatial (and more durable) relation to the explicit aims of the project. Anzaldúa maintains that “[i]ndividually, but also as a racial entity, we need to voice our needs. We need to say to white society: We need you to accept the fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us” (107). While contradicting what she had said previously—that it is not enough to simply stand on the other shore and shout challenges across to the other side—here she seems to advocate for exactly that. Here, the text positions the Chicana/o on the opposite shore from whiteness—in full rejection of the white blood *line*. To shout out demands to be seen appeals to the worldview of the dominant social category in part by acknowledging it as dominant and, perhaps more importantly, by adopting the categorial logic and language by which that power is conferred and as a means of staging that appeal in legible terms. This gesture matters. In this sense, to amplify difference even in that categorial language builds an argument based in an alternative (poly-lithic) logic that attempts to reconcile parts into a whole not by assimilating difference into the normative but by addressing difference. This alternative mode can be called a relational logic (which Trujillo suggests) or a coalitional logic (which Lugones offers). The language for these shapes or ways of thinking come through contemporary conversations on and in decolonial feminist theories—where, for example, Lugones offers the expression “logic of coalition,” and Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill argue that Native feminist theories

imagine a relational logic that likewise addresses difference as a mode of coalition-building that does not demand assimilation or flat multiculturalism in their collectively authored “Decolonizing Feminism.” In a similar tone, Novoa argues that “[Anzaldúa] is not interested in providing only a place of origin that follows the linear determinations of genealogy, but also the creation of a space that would help us think differently about our location and origins. The beginning is not found in time, but in place” (113). The text’s appeals to recognition locate the Chicana/o-mestiza/o in a *place* (third space). And that place coexists in heterogeneous assemblage with other Indigenous places and in a way that reveals “the incommensurable temporal and spatial heterogeneity of Indigenous life,” attempting to shift that life (as a multiplicity) out from under “the tyranny of a singular horizon of space and time,” to repeat what I have already cited from Trujillo (66). This is to say that, despite the teleological substructure, the new mestiza pathway arrives at (in Novoa’s words) a “spatialized history” within which *this* kind of neonationalism proposes a space of heterogeneous simultaneity of assembled (assembling) bodies-places.

In the ultimate chapter of the manifesto, Anzaldúa aligns her project in full with appeals for recognition of that difference, which is made explicit in the set of subsections that comprise it. Chapter seven, “*La Conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness*” is comprised, as it were, of the following subsections as declarations to white society: *Somos una gente*, we are a people—the Chicana/o or mestiza-Mexicana are a nation of blood kin, a pueblo, a people to be recognized as a political body and as individual (racialized) identities; *By Your True Faces We Will Know You*, the true faces existing underneath a mask, it seems; *El Día de la Chicana*, the day of the Chicana, or the day when she will achieve visibility and be celebrated for her worth; and *El retorno*, the return, or that turning (back) toward an Indigenous maternal *line* (the blood and the place, the mestiza body and Borderlands) held up as icon and talisman of the new mestiza. Anzaldúa decries the “mask of contempt” that so many mestizas/os wear; she draws on the concept of doubling or mimicry advanced in Black studies in the Americas, asking that whiteness and the US “admit that Mexico is your double, that she exists in the shadow of this country, that we are irrevocably tied to her. Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your psyche”; she also tells us: “Where there is persecution of minorities, there is shadow projection. Where there is violence and war, there is repression of shadow” (Anzaldúa 108). The formulation of advanced mestiza beingness, as the evolution of humanity *as a whole*, as she imagines it, issues

from the spatialization of self/other figured in the articulation of shadowing, doubling, masking, and a politics of seeing. In these arrangements, rather than privileging the temporal in a social evolutionary story of mestiza becoming, here Anzaldúa privileges the spatial in a transnational story of simultaneous spaces of difference within a larger domain of universal humanity. On the one hand, these appeals for recognition, along with the narration of true identities hidden behind masks, quite strongly echoes Frantz Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952) although without any citation to that effect. A primary similarity between Anzaldúa's and Fanon's projects, as I read it, comes through the language of psychoanalysis in both. I have already argued the very psychological center of Anzaldúa's project in her concern for the "true" inner Self and for the individual expression of identity in opposition to the external forces of culture. Anzaldúa's analyses, especially in this final chapter of her manifesto, deploy a common method of announcing the universal humanism of, here, the (new) mestiza where Fanon's analysis addresses the condition of Antillean Creole men of color by also appealing to a notion of universal humanity. Both projects slip into figuring universal humanity within an implicit structure of teleological historicity and (masculinist) linear time. In both Anzaldúa and Fanon, the authors voice a somewhat reactive response to that history of persecution and denigration of the identity of the Other to the dominant whiteness and, in so doing, theorize the universal human subjectivity of the persecuted minority. Yet the appeal to a politics of recognition frames their respective projects in terms of a spatial relocation within existing social categories moving along that linear evolutionary continuum (as Anzaldúa had called it).<sup>54</sup> This is to say that relocating the talismanic image of the subjugated side of the hierarchical dichotomy to the dominant side of that spatial arrangement proposes the resolution of the conflict by which the two were put in opposition in the first place—proposes to resolve the subject-object split by inverting the binary. And yet, again, this proposal is voiced through the same language of subject-object relations: of the doubling, mimicry, and uncanniness of the self/other bifurcation. But the shadow remains—universalizing one or the other side of the hierarchical dichotomy maintains the spatial relation of difference simultaneously yet in perpetual struggle. The self rejects the other as a means of identifying the Self, yet beckons recognition from the other in order to achieve a consciousness of Self. In this way, in the psychological center of Anzaldúa's project, the ultimate chapter coordinates the conditions of possibility of overcoming the struggle

in an implicitly spatial arrangement of processes of intersubjective becoming-in-relation—or, a relational logic of coalition.

There is more to this spatial arrangement. I want to take my reader right up to the end point of arrival at the new mestiza consciousness presently. But Anzaldúa urges a slowing here, deictically:

Before the Chicano and the undocumented worker and the Mexican from the other side can come together, before the Chicano can have unity with Native Americans and other groups, we need to know the history of their struggle and they need to know ours. Our mothers, our sisters and brothers, the guys who hang out on street corners, the children in the playgrounds, each of us must know our Indian lineage, our afro-*mestizaje*, our history of resistance. (108)

Anzaldúa slows herself down, acknowledges that there may be some sort of “before” work to be done—there are more steps on the pathway to a new mestiza consciousness. Anzaldúa says it as a “need”—a necessary arrestation—this need “to know the history of their struggle and they need to know ours.” So, while she retains the us-them shape of Chicana-mestiza and Indigenous Other, she likewise appeals to a sense of transnational indigeneity that embraces the spatialization of difference and simultaneity and narrates the relation as one of shared Indigenous histories—or a sense of place as “‘the simultaneity of stories-so-far’,” to repeat Goeman’s citation of Massey. The “we” demarcates the differences here between what sounds like a sort of pure or unmixed “Native Americans” in contrast, it seems, to the mixed lineage of “Mexicans,” although the aim here is to demarcate all of these kinds (*kin*) within a new, heterogeneous, Indigenous nationalism. It aims at an inclusive notion of a heterogeneous nation. In saying it this way, Anzaldúa arrives at yet another us-them spatialization where *mestizaje* and indigeneity are bordered together but in opposition with whiteness. The Indigenous and the mestiza stand on one side of the shore and shout their needs to dominant white society—rejecting the paternal, light, European side of this new consciousness. In a sense, Anzaldúa re-spatializes the power geometries by which racialized minorities are marginalized and whiteness centralized. At the same time, her emphasis on knowing the histories of not simply struggle but, more importantly, histories of *resistance* can guide the people to the awareness that rematriating Indigenous land means first remembering (retelling) Indigenous histories—means knowing and sharing the stories held in the bodies and lands of the (maternal) Indigenous *line* to which all of these peoples maintain very real material affiliation. The necessary and vital work of the mestiza

writer is to transform the space of difference—her embodied self—into a space of difference that shifts the shape of her people out of that space of difference that constrains, limits, and indexes the Indigenous body in a state of primitivity (without history) and into a space of difference activated by a logic of coalition and continual creative motion *in a shared space*.

Here, at the end of the ultimate chapter, at the culmination point of the new mestiza pathway made manifest by Anzaldúa's inner struggle externalized in the messy narration of this process, *here* the spatial relation amplifies a decolonial feminist spatialized history and simultaneously (as the meeting up of stories-so-far) reasserts a colonial-modern linear shape of kinship that then repositions the land as a resource for the (pro)creation of a new mestiza nationalism bound and bordered by blood (kin). I hear the at-once explicit call and implicit structure of the text—as an at-once of possibility and limitation of Anzaldúa's mestiza dualisms. The final passage of the text tells the reader:

Yes, the Chicano and Chicana have always taken care of growing things and the land. [...] We water [the tiny green shoots of watermelon plants] and hoe them. We harvest them. The vines dry, rot, are plowed under. Growth, death, decay, birth. The soil prepared again and again, impregnated, worked on. A constant changing of forms, *renacimientos de la tierra madre*. (Anzaldúa 113)

While I do not dispute the cultural heritage of which she speaks, Anzaldúa's narrative describes the land in terms of a practice of care defined narrowly through plow agriculture. Growth is defined here in language that explains it in linear temporal terms—growth is naturalized as a stage of development in a sequence including death, decay, and rebirth. On the one hand, this makes sense where it describes a cycle of transformations of materialities. On the other hand, this passage likewise equates that possibility of growth, death, decay, and rebirth with the agency of the human hand that penetrates the soil with the plow, that “impregnates” that feminized soil (and soul) of the continent, and that proposes to exist actively in opposition to the conversely passive ecology of the land. At least, that is my reading of the relational logic in this culminating passage. The relation is one of human will directing the unfolding of the earth into useful matter for human consumption. Care of the earth here is a matter of plowing, hoeing, and extraction. Moreover, the “*renacimientos de la tierra madre*” (rebirth of the mother earth) that finishes the passage equates care of the body of the land with that impregnation—the feminized body arranged as a passive space upon which the human agent enacts Self-actualization. Guidotti-Hernández locates this in relation to a tendency in Latin American politics and philosophy where

a “coming to revolutionary consciousness” colludes with the neoliberal globalist imaginary positing social ascendancy through strategies of development and linear social evolutionary notions of progress. Specifically, this is collusion in the way that, within “narratives of progress, the subject is rendered masculine, mobile, ethical, and an agent of his own transformation, regardless of his or her gender” (Guidotti-Hernández 15). The hand that *cares* for the soil in the above passage does so by *impregnation*—“again and again.” The impregnation of a passive landscape by human hand suddenly renders that continual creative motion of the new mestiza writer powerful by problematic recourse to a mobile, masculine “agent” of transformative penetration. Not only does this kind of plow agriculture emerge in *El Valle* through US imperial expansionism promoting monoculture and industrialization in the nineteenth century, forgetting the aquaculture (or milpas) that Anzaldúa’s Nahua-Mexica ancestors innovated, but the passage firmly positions the universal human in a use-relation with the earth—which, as I read it in terms of kinship, removes the human from a kinship relation with the land. This is decidedly at odds with Indigenous ways of seeing the liveliness of more-than-human beings in terms of relations that mutually sustain—the mother/matter here is penetrated and impregnated again and again. The mother/matter here exists for human (re)production. Regardless the poles here, Anzaldúa concludes the writing-as-ritual process of becoming, or of entering the new mestiza consciousness, by means of recourse to the body through a strange displacement. The continual creative motion now figures less as the shamanic force of storytelling to transform the outer world and more the principle of a subject-centered notion of agency deriving from subject-object dualism. “A constant changing of forms” effected by the human hand preparing and impregnating the soil tells the story of an external force of change acting by subjective will and agency on a passive recipient of implantation in the creation of life. In this arrangement, the spatial can only ever be as a second order to the temporal in the sense that the temporal is the force of change—the land waits passively for the evolved human hand to turn it from unused space into meaningful place and as backdrop for human activity. The liveliness of the land is refused here—the maternal (feminine) body similarly vacated of creative energy except by virtue of the hand that acts upon her. I realize that Anzaldúa is not making these claims—this is nowhere explicit in her text, nor is it her intention to subjugate the female body, even discursively. However, I find that mapping senses of Self in the mestiza dualisms of the text leads the reader down the pathway toward a new kind consciousness (or consciousness of kind)

via a complex, messy, contradictory series of oppositional arrangements that imagine the possibility of heterogeneous neonationalism within a rubric that simultaneously undermines the aim to abandon Western-Cartesian epistemologies by sustaining such hierarchical dualisms of time/space, man/woman, and human/nonhuman. To “root ourselves in the mythological soil and soul of the continent” in relation to the culminating claims of the text imagines that act of rooting as one of a use-relation with the earth—as well as with the signs, symbols, and histories of Indigenous presence in the hemisphere.

Anzaldúa’s explicit call is vital and worthy of reverence. In my reverence for her project, I am likewise compelled to critique the deep structure of the text—the one over which she said she wielded no control or will. In the deep structure, the time-space dualisms, in particular, tell a story of the way that Anzaldúa activates her call to abandon dualistic thinking through a recursive logic of dualistic thinking. This is not her failure—indeed, I don’t read it as entirely accidental either in the sense that the contradiction and messiness, the incongruencies between the explicit and the implicit terms of her project, enhance the necessity for continual creative motions to dismantle the spatial-temporal power geometries of the colonial-modern. I add to the call by arguing that the capacity for continual creative motion is not adjudicated in the blood—the power to transform through storytelling or to care for the earth is not encoded in genetics (a point that Goeman likewise makes); rather, it is marshaled in the literary and cultural practices that condition *ways of seeing and knowing and being*. A linear shape of kinship in stories of the self, the ancestor, and place reduces the possibility of seeing- and knowing- and being-in-relation with human and more-than-human kin. But to heal the rupture of the originary subject-object dualism that Anzaldúa senses in her own body-place means, to her, to first bridge the two sides of the dualism in order to then break the structure altogether—the bridge heralding the death and the new mestiza consciousness enacting (after Anzaldúa) the decay of the heteropatriarchal order in order for it to be reborn, transformed. To this I add that even if Anzaldúa had not fully arrived at this event of the death of the old order, and despite her naturalizing a linear shape of kinship, the work itself takes shape as process—as a messy, always in-process, simultaneity of stories-so-far whose coexistences exceed and defy categorial logic and linear temporal history, and as the continual creative motion of flexing and shifting spatialized histories amongst human and more-than-human kin relations.



## *Yo soy un puente tendido...*

I said at the outset that I was telling the story of kinship in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*. But I have actually been telling two stories—telling my reading of two sides of the same textile. My dual analyses form contiguously with the contradictory (il)logic of Anzaldúa's text. In this way, I hope to have maintained a method of *discriminating on the terrain of the original* (to borrow a phrasing from Gayatri Spivak). In the context of "The Politics of Translation," Spivak asserts that the work of the (decolonial) feminist translator is to proceed with an "ethic of love" and to work from the position of the text rather than to impose a reader's vision onto that text and domesticate it into the reader's worldview (320). I have been working from this position within, while yet maintaining my differently differentiated positionality, and looking for the "trace of the other in the self" as a process of reverent critique from within Anzaldúa's complex and enduring Chicana feminism and in full acknowledgement of my position as outsider to that experience (312). Here, as my way of concluding this chapter, I reiterate through Anzaldúa's own words the pathway that I have been drawing here. The closing of the text asks: "Just what did [*la mestiza*] inherit from her ancestors? This weight on her back—which is the baggage from the Indian mother, which the baggage from the Spanish father, which the baggage from the Anglo?" (104). The rumination originates in this dual body-place of mestiza becoming. Inhabiting the split, Anzaldúa's words index a feminized Indigenous blood line and a masculinized European blood line. How can she, the mestiza writer, possibly arrive at a neat spatial ordering of which "baggage" comes from which blood line, she asks. The place of origination that Anzaldúa is herself attempting to map out is also the place of the originary split of subject/object dualism, of a masculine/feminine binary, of a problematic racial politics. The question thus questions the biopolitics by which such genetic (and generic) lineages (and borders) take shape in and act on lived experience. And then she concedes that "*Pero es difícil* differentiating between *lo heredado, lo adquirido, lo impuesto*. She puts history through a sieve, winnows out the lies, looks at the forces that we as a race, as women, have been part of" (Anzaldúa 104). It is difficult to differentiate between inherited, acquired, and imposed traits. Indeed, in assigning traits as essential qualities of a body-place, the gesture already always affixes behavior as substance—delimits otherwise contingent formations as timeless forms. By putting history through a sieve to *winnow out the lies*, Anzaldúa's process, the messy, dualistic, freighted, *mestiza* way, proposes to reassign these traits as temporary behaviors and not, after all,

blood-borne essential qualities. Anzaldúa wants to tell a different story, despite the ways that the text slips into telling that new story through the same (linear) structure of universal time and through the same dualistic structure of synthesis—both principles of the colonial-modern epistemologies her work explicitly challenges. In this way, Anzaldúa’s project tells this story two ways at once—as and in dualism. And she writes her mestiza self/Self as the corporeal and textual bridge (*un puente*) to (re)fuse the epistemological dualisms that originate the rupture.

On the one side of the textile of new mestiza coming to (revolutionary) consciousness, Anzaldúa gives her reader the story of a consanguine progenitor “Indian woman,” as a talisman carried in the blood and locked in an ancient past, existing now as source material for the new mestiza—the mythological soil and soul of the continent existing as a fund to enrich the mestiza/o present in the Borderlands. On the other side of the textile, that same story weaves an inverse image in which the dualistic and linear social evolutionary terms that authorize and effect the erasure of that history are the same terms that authorize the ascendancy of a neonational mestiza/o body-place of becoming and belonging. The dual stories of a linear shape of kinship in Anzaldúa’s project materialize in the structural axis constituting and constituted by the new mestiza sense of Self. Anzaldúa is but a bridge—this mestiza writer offering her flesh and her land as the site of unmaking and (re)making *la rajadura*—transforming nightmare into numinosity. In her body and in her place, the Aztec ancestor is on the one side an icon of a history of Indigenous women’s resistance and on the other side an embodied practice of writing the Self into the world in order to challenge the world’s refusal to see and honor that self. The pathway is messy. The pathway is covered with the residues of colonial-modern ways of seeing. The pathway is also a process of transforming nightmare into numinosity by enacting the process herself and walking that path and contending with the difficulty of differentiating *lo heredado, lo adquirido, lo impuesto*. I, for one, have made no attempt to distinguish what Gloria inherited, acquired, or had imposed on her in her becoming-Gloria. Instead, my reading of a linear shape of kinship in Anzaldúa’s text tells the story that (r)evolution (as transformation) is not a temporal point of change in a universal flow of time but rather a set of possibilities of convergence, divergence, resurgence, insurgence, and inversion.

Anzaldúa’s text-body as bridge—*un puente tendido del mundo gabacho al del mojado* (25)—ruptures the complacency of that universal flow of time by the sheer presence of a sense of mestiza Self that is uncontainable to unambiguous categories of race, sex, gender, and national

belonging. As a literary project, moreover, Anzaldúa's body as bridge fulfills the epistemological necessity of authorizing heterogeneous expressions within and across heterogeneous spatial arrangements of bodies, ancestries, and places. Maintaining a position of critical reverence for the project, I map the new mestiza pathway without disembodiment of its internal tensions with a colonial-modern inheritance of the subject/object dualism. Instead, I find the bridge stretched between worlds in different ways and different places in the text and locate its urgency in relation to a temporary necessity to interrupt the complacency of the linear historicity by which Anzaldúa's cited ancestry was distorted and absented in the first. While the text maintains a certain fidelity to that linear temporal history and attendant social evolutionary time, Anzaldúa sacrifices her flesh (her "Aztec blood") in the process of building a bridge across which her people can transform the nightmare of colonial-modern violence on Indigenous bodies and lands into a numinous space of multiplicity and heterogeneous belonging.

Thank you, Gloria, for building the bridge.

## CHAPTER 2

### In the Garden/Memory:

#### Tracing Relations in Pineau's Rhizomatic (Re)Weavings

*... the stretch and recomposition of kin are allowed by the fact that all earthlings are kin in the deepest sense, and it is past time to practice better care of kinds-as-assemblages (not species one at a time). Kin is an assembling sort of word. All critters share a common "flesh," laterally, semiotically, and genealogically. Ancestors turn out to be very interesting strangers...*

— Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene"

*Here is the story.*

A girl lives in a black and white world. She has been taught that her family tree is rooted in a White line and a Black line brought together by an unspeakable violence of slavery and colonization. She has been taught that the Black line defines her place in this black and white world, that her blackness defines her. In school, the only black skinned girl in a class of towheads, she is forced to sit under her teacher's desk as punishment for writing with her left hand—the hand of the devil, they say. And she knows that her teacher is also punishing her for her blackness. But these lessons are not the only possible education for her, certainly not the enduring formation: her black and white world is becoming unsettled by the presence of an ancestor whose teachings are opening up a kaleidoscopic array of colors, instructing her in the sensations (the sensibilities) of multiplicity. This ancestor's teachings—day after day, in little ways, quotidian matters woven into lessons that transcend the limits of a classroom, a desk, a primer, *l'ardoise*—are telling her the stories of her ancestry as a present entanglement not merely a past issuance of paternity. And these stories re-root her sense of herself within a network of kinship that exceeds both the Manichean black and white world and the singularity of a genetic taproot; these stories weave a pathway to a sense of being that takes the family tree not as figure but as material relation.

The story that I am telling here is my reading of the shape of kinship in Gisèle Pineau's 1996 memorial novel *L'Exil selon Julia* in which the author narrates a recuperation of those Creole roots—stretching across the Atlantic from France to the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. Pineau tells her grandmother's story of exile while living in France for a time with the young author and her immediate, nuclear family. The narration begins in a section titled "Noir et Blanc" ("Black and White") and concludes in a section titled "Couleurs" ("Colors"). The section between narrates "Les Cinq ministères de Man Ya" ("Man Ya's Five Ministries"), an explicit declaration of the work (the teachings) of that ancestor—the grandmother, Julia, or Man Ya. The work is a spiritual matter of the grandmother navigating life in urban Paris, uprooted from her beloved home and *jardin créole*—her creole garden—in the former French colony (and now overseas department) of Guadeloupe, and, at once, the work is a matter of Pineau reprising in her writing the lessons rooted in her Man Ya's Creole storytelling. Ultimately, Pineau's memorial novel tells a story of kinship through the presence of her ancestor but not in the conventional sense of narrating lineage or inheritance. Rather, it is a story that sites kinship in a network of relations between bodies and places. The epigraph offered at the beginning of this chapter, from Donna Haraway, signals as much: *kin is an assembling sort of word*. This is to say that the kind of story of kinship that I am telling—that I am reading in Pineau—shifts the terms of belonging toward assembling kin in a body-land locus and away from the kind of (patri)lineal filiations that tend to dominate canonized (post)colonial stories of family, nation, and the global. Haraway's estranging take on kinship allows for an interpretation of rootedness in a flexible network of discursive-material affiliations—or a rhizomatic shape of kinship.

I make this connection on the grounds that Pineau's memorial novel itself implicitly critiques the kind of patrilinear affiliations and gendered formulations of the big names in Creole and Caribbean scholarship. In *Éloge de la Créolité* (In Praise of Creoleness) (1989), the three authors, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, first dedicate their text to Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, and Frankétyèn, who they describe as the forebears of Créolité. The authors stake out a transnational Creole form of belonging issuing from in-between European and African and Asian—a space of mixedness, métissage, creolization—and generated by the multiplicities of Creoleness yet in lineage with the fathers of Négritude and Antillaneté, Césaire and Glissant. This patrilineality is central to their stated sense of a Creole self, as well as to a sense of the space (the place) they exalt. For them, the body-land axis represents a terrain on

and through which that patrilineage discerns patrimony—their right to call the land home, to call the land theirs. Moreover, these authors of Créolité call for the creation of a body of Antillean Creole literature while declaring that “l’oralité est notre intelligence” (Bernabé et al 33) (“orality is our intelligence” [95]). The Creolists cite intelligence in orality and aim their political project toward the realm of aesthetics—literature. And yet, the linear shape of relation and development out of that paternal source reads the self, the ancestor, and senses of place as a linear evolutionary progressive story of becoming (material and literary) that I find distinctly at odds with the multiplicities that they praise and at odds with the kind of relational epistemology that Glissant articulates in his *Poétique de la relation* (1990), where the figure of the *rhizome* is erected against the figure of the *racine* (or taproot). In his chapter on “L’Errance, l’exil,” Glissant draws from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on assemblage theory. Glissant says: “La pensée du rhizome serait au principe de ce que j’appelle une poétique de la Relation, selon laquelle toute identité s’étend dans un rapport à l’Autre” (Rhizomatic thinking would be in principle what I call a poetics of Relation, according to which all identity stretches itself in relation to the Other) (my translation) (23). The rhizome is a way of thinking—an epistemology. The rhizome is a way of thinking the self and other in assemblage, in an inter-subjective formation that stretches the identity in a relation to the other and that likewise transcreeates the dialectic of nomadism and sedentarism that drives Glissant’s critique. The rhizome is multiple, mobile, assembling, yet invested with a capacity to move in what Glissant calls concentric circles, or “nomadisme circulaire” (circular nomadism) in contrast to “nomadisme en flèche” (nomadism of the arrow) (30). This is to say that Glissant reads the root (*la racine*) as the emblem of linear filiation, which certifies, he asserts, a direct link to Creation in the Western (European) epistemology and through which colonial patrimony (space/place as private property) is adjudicated. The rhizome, by contrast, represents a sort of synthesis of circularities that remain errant, exilic, not fully rooted in one place.

The primary consideration here, in relation to my reading of Pineau, takes place in Glissant’s juxtaposition of *la racine* and *la rhizome* with the figures he offers of the circle and the arrow. Glissant asserts: “La racine est monolingue” (the [tap]root is monolingual) (27). The rhizome is multilingual but *la racine*—the (tap)root—can speak with only one tongue, as it were, it is anxious in its limitations, seeks rootedness, is obsessed with origins and ends, and enacts this *nomadisme en flèche*: like an arrow of time, the taproot is a projection. It projects itself—throws

itself forward—across the globe, conquering and claiming paternity (patrimony, ownership) over spaces (places). The rhizome, we are to understand, articulates itself multiply, with many tongues, and enacts a flexible and mobile *nomadisme circulaire* rooted everywhere and nowhere. In both, movement—mobility—is a central figuration of the human, the man. The human moves across the landscape, in linear projections or in circular repetitions. In this, Glissant frames his reading of errancy and exile thusly: “l’exil se révéler profitable, quand ils sont vécus non pas comme une expansion de territoire (un nomadisme en flèche) mais comme une recherche de l’Autre (par nomadisme circulaire)” (exile reveals itself to be enjoyable, when [errancies] are lived not as an expansion of territory (nomadism of the arrow) but as the seeking out of the Other (by a circular nomadism)) (30). Exile and errancy, as the search for the Other, diverges from the project of territorial expansion by a kind of de-territorialized re-connection. The (mobile) human being seeks other human beings, in time and outside of place. While rhizomatic thinking is said to dispel this kind of dialectic, this kind of dichotomous arrangement, here Glissant seems certain of the way that exile can be revealed to be enjoyable when enacted through this movement that seeks articulation with the Other by reason of its opposition to the other. The Antillean Self actualizes in exile, by embracing movement, mobility, errancy, he says. Okay, good; but: in Glissant’s juxtaposition of the circle and the arrow in this way, the spatial arrangement begins to resemble not only a dialectic but a distinctly gendered dichotomy, where Glissant appeals to a logic that reads the arrow and the circle, the human and the place, in relations of opposition that delimit each as distinct from the other by reason of their opposition. The other is formed as an Other in this relation, which I read as stuck in what Anibal Quijano calls *the coloniality of power*, and from which María Lugones stages a compelling analysis of the “coloniality of gender” in her turning “Toward a Decolonial Feminism” (2010). Lugones challenges the “hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and non-human” imposed in colonial-modern structures of thought and her work critiques the ways that this ontology of bodies then serves the reification of the power and perspectival privilege of what she calls “Western man” (743). While Glissant proposes his poetics of relation in the shape of the circle (*nomadisme circulaire*), the way that the Self is conceived by opposition reifies that same kind of hierarchical, dichotomous distinction that then reaches for an Other across a perceived space between already always formed subjectivities. The coloniality of gender is not merely a feminist critique on the grounds of gender as case study, however; Lugones’s critique is staged through

gender as a tool for analysis and on the grounds that colonial-modern ways of seeing reduce yet *other* ways of seeing, knowing, and being to “premodern” values. The coloniality of gender follows the same linear, “categorical logic” of the coloniality of power, itself an ongoing structure of knowledge (of ways of knowing and being) in which *other* bodies and lands can be classified in a hierarchy that authorizes their exploitation by that subjective, projective force of the (hu)man. Now, Glissant’s aims are not to perpetuate this structure—clearly, he speaks against this kind of colonial thought. Yet Glissant’s rhizomatic relation to the Other is, from this position, legible as a reification of that categorial logic, through which Glissant—and the Creolists—sustain not only fidelity to patrilineality but also a deep anxiety over their own becoming *man*. Embedded in their calls for an Antillean literature and for rhizomatic thinking lies the search for a direct link to (Western, European) Creation, effectively positioning their critical theories alongside and within the coloniality of power. But this, I find, is part of the problem faced in postcolonial theory generally: if the power to speak, act, and write is authorized or claimed in the same (colonial-modern) hierarchical dichotomy that ontologizes gendered and racialized bodies, reduces them to human and non-human (modern and *premodern*, linearly), and organizes their labors into global economism, then that speech, action, and literature affirms the coloniality of power—that speech then claims patrilineal right to exercise the same power of conquest that projects itself toward a future telos of becoming whole, of coming to full ownership of the universal humanist Self. And, specifically, does so against the discursive and material *backdrop* of feminized space and feminized bodies.

Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley addresses this contradiction directly in her critique of postcolonial theory, situated in an eco-erotic re-reading of Antillean and Creolist literary theories, in *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism Between Women in Caribbean Literature* (2010). Tinsley argues: “the most renowned theorists of inclusive Creoleness often do not recognize how their very neocolonial rootedness in binary gender and sexual identities undercuts the complexity that they express as fundamental to their project” (25). This is to say that the Creolists and Glissant, both, fail to address the (colonial) gendering of landscape in their respective projects *and* fail to interrogate the colonial-modern formulation of the (masculine) human by opposition to a (feminine) wild landscape of the Americas—a wildness that necessitated a language for authorizing its domestication under the conquering force of the (colonial-modern) human. That gendering and dehumanization of landscape is precisely the source of colonial power, in the



context of Lugones's analysis, as well. The postcolonial, in this way, is indebted to that patrilineality to the extent that it fails to escape or subvert either its discursive power (in the linear, categorial logic) or its material power (in the continuity of gendered violence and ecological destruction, in the Caribbean and elsewhere). Tinsley goes on to admonish Glissant's gender blind *Poétique* in part on the grounds of a diatribe against feminism—a diatribe that Glissant buries in a footnote, no less, his narrative structure essentially gesturing the *woman* as something to be added in in special cases (Tinsley 24). To Glissant, the story of Antillean becoming is the story of (Antillean) man, and woman is somehow just a footnote—not in rhizomatic relation to the man, not as a critical tool of analysis through which to stage a more thorough and complex critique of colonialism, but as an Other to the mobile Antillean Self. Glissant's footnote, understood through Tinsley's critique, imagines decolonization as the ascension of Antillean man to the position of power but a position underwritten by the same categorial logic that sustains the colonial difference that disarticulates the human from the more-than-human and hierarchizes gendered and racialized bodies to the extent of their discursive dehumanization and material fungibility. Likewise, Tinsley argues that the Creolists present gender blindness in their implicit feminization of the “sticky” and “moist” mangrove swamp, its multiplicity suggesting to them the site of generative (masculine) Creole self-actualization. In this way, Tinsley tells us, the coloniality of power is reaffirmed through “sexualization and heterosexualization as the male poets lean into this *elle* [of the grammatically feminine Créolité]” (24). Place is a feminized space, a passive backdrop (or sexualized Other) against or on top of which an Antillean Creole (nationalist) imaginary exercises sovereignty in the form of *use*. As at once a metaphor and a materiality, this feminized sense of place is put to use to legitimize a patrilineal self-ancestor relation in a way that authorizes a heteropatriarchal ownership over that place. But, in this poetic, the rhizome becomes not a material relationality assembling self-other (kin) laterally and semiotically but rather a figurative (discursive) relation that naturalizes the same colonial-modern epistemologies through which patrilineal ownership over lands and bodies is asserted. Tinsley's incisive critique thus allows a reconsideration of Caribbean literatures that shifts epistemological privilege to ways of seeing and knowing that operate outside of the gendered coloniality of power, outside of the linear colonial-modern story of progressive becoming, including a re-visioning of the rhizome.

Tinsley's eco-erotic Caribbean orientation opens up Pineau's memorial novel to decolonial readings staged in part through feminist materialisms. In particular, reading Pineau's narration of her grandmother's exile and relations with her *jardin créole* through Tinsley's critique and Lugones's framework reproduces a sense of the self as woven with place—a material rhizomatic relation. This dislocation from the dialectic of nomad/sedentary (tap)rootedness and from the coloniality of power (gender) is undertaken by means of feminist material “trans-corporeality.” This expression comes from Stacy Alaimo's *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010) and is offered as a theoretical site for engaging in “rich, complex modes of analysis that travel through the entangled territories of material and discursive, natural and cultural, biological and textual” (3). I also think of this expression as naming a praxical site in which modes and patterns of storytelling that precede and circumvent colonial occupation in the Americas already address Alaimo's call for “more robust and complex conceptions of the materiality of human bodies and the more-than-human world” (2). Transcorporeality, briefly, offers a grammar for thinking through a sense of place cognizant of the liveliness of a place-as-assemblage and of the constitution of the human in assemblage with the more-than-human. My reading of rhizomatic kinship in Pineau's memorial novel thus tells the story of a resilient kinship relationality held in transcorporeality, nonlinear temporality, memory work, and in a self-ancestor relation no longer freighted with patrilineal anxieties over universal humanist self-actualization. The rhizome as kin-rootedness, in this version, relates that stretch and recomposition, understood through the material relationality of the body-place nexus, in a way that speaks, acts, and writes from the perspective of a relational logic (not a categorial logic). The oral intelligence held in the ancestor's storytelling practices, in her memory work, and in her relations with her garden collectively enact a rhizomatic shape of kinship that imagines the self, the ancestor, and the place in assemblage.

Pineau's narrative of her grandmother's exile is a memorial novel because it fabulates upon the biographical, let's say, and because it is a story generated by rewriting memories in relation with the present moment of writing. It is not quite an autobiography, and yet neither can it be called a novel in a purely fictional sense. Pineau produces a text of heterogeneous genre that shuttles between what the author herself describes in the novel's epigraph as an indiscernible blend (weaving) of real events and faults of memory, between witness testimony and imagination, “Tout est vrai et faux” she says (Pineau *epigraph*) (“Everything is true and false”

[*epigraph*]).<sup>55</sup> But this too warrants explanation. Philippe Lejeune formalized the delimitations of the genre with *Le Pacte autobiographique* (1975), which takes a linear evolutionary framework from Rousseau to the twentieth century and discerns the faithfulness to that autobiographical pact in terms of a realism adjudicated by the naturalization of a linear trajectory of becoming—of an arrow (of time) projecting itself across space. Numerous scholars have, since that time, revised the generic delimitations in terms of multiplicity, nonlinearity, and heterogeneity.<sup>56</sup> Yet the objective realism connoted in the narrative of linear time predominates where these revised generic delimitations simply mark other categories as special cases—women’s stories as Other, as footnote to the story of the universal human (man). Where the genre of autobiography delineates the narration of a life according to the naturalized ontology of clocked, colonial-modern temporality, it likewise narratively marks the genre according to the same hierarchical dichotomy of the colonial-modern, of the coloniality of power—of the black and white world. Memorial (or life-) writing is then posited as the gendered female literary space wherein sentimentality and multiplicity are generically credible, yet only as hierarchically dichotomous to the rational, linear, and universally (masculine) human of autobiography. In this configuration, the gendered delimitations of autobiography and memoir codify the legibility of gendered colonial-modern life—on the one hand, as a linear and rational process of becoming (the arrow) and, on the other hand, a nonlinear and irrational (circular) process. To accept this hierarchical dichotomy is to accept the coloniality of power in the realm of literary analysis as well as in the lived experiences of (material) bodies gendered and racialized by that power geometry.

That Pineau narrates her childhood and her grandmother’s exile in part through a structural shift from the black and white world to the world of colors then speaks, acts, and writes the self, the ancestor, and senses of place from a position where oral, memorial, and flexible relations (rhizomatic kinship) circumvent and disrupt the colonial-modern categorial logic governing both genre (gender) and literariness (literature). My reading here alludes to Françoise Lionnet’s “Politics and Aesthetics of Métissage,” which anticipated what I identify in Pineau, on the critical position of “métissage as praxis” (9). Preceding more recent theories of critical mestizaje, and drawing from Glissant’s “pratique de métissage,” Lionnet argues that postcolonial women’s autobiographies instantiate this kind of practice, akin to weaving, saying that their aesthetic (self-storytelling) practices “subvert all binary modes of thought by privileging (more or less explicitly) the intermediary spaces where boundaries become effaced

and Manichean categories collapse into each other” (18). Like Lionnet, I find that the conventional hierarchy between oral and written literatures tends to subsume such subversive modes into genre-specific, gender-specific, special cases. Lionnet argues for weaving as aesthetic literary practice because “to establish nonhierarchical connections is to encourage lateral relations: instead of living within the bounds created by a linear view of history and society, we become free to interact on an equal footing with all the traditions that determine our present predicament” (7). Read in this way, Pineau’s memorial novel embraces its own illegibility within the parameters of (auto)biographical literature defined through temporalized history and, at the same time, refuses that categorial logic altogether by retelling a conjugated story of the grandmother’s exile and the writer’s process of becoming through the material space of that ancestor’s *jardin créole*—through a kind of nonlinear (re)weaving.

Another consideration for reading rhizomatic kinship in this way in Pineau’s memorial novel comes through Toni Morrison’s essays on autobiography and on ancestors, *What Moves at the Margin: Selected Nonfiction* (2008). In an essay titled “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation,” Morrison describes elements central to Black artistic culture in North America, one of which she calls “the presence of an ancestor.” While Morrison is not reading Afro-Caribbean literature for her analysis, I find an important connection to Pineau’s work where Morrison says that “it seems interesting to me to evaluate Black literature on what the writer does with the presence of an ancestor” (61). Like Morrison, I am not looking to denominate the objects in relation, so much as to read the relations—to consider what the presence of the ancestor *does* in the story, how her presence tells the story of exile differently. What the Creolists and Glissant *do* with the presence of their named ancestors is, largely, to ritualize the father and render invisible (to footnote) the mother; and even to write of Antillean Créolité on gendered terms already bespeaks a particular kind of *use* of the ancestor as an *other* against which the subjective agency of Antillean man actualizes. Morrison’s helpful consideration allows that to read rhizomatic kinship in Pineau necessitates not simply reading who she calls ancestor but rather reading what she does with the ancestral relation—reading *how* that ancestor is erected, whether as a use for something else, as a part of her own sense of self, or as an articulation of processes of becoming that are otherwise illegible to (in) the colonial-modern categorial logic of patrilinear inheritance. Morrison argues that a multiplicity of character or of narrator, a “we” in narration, is disorienting to White readers. I would add that the Creolists’ use of “we” as marking their three voices and

Glissant's poetics of self-other relation are not quite the same discursive move as what Morrison describes here, considering their emphasis on subjective agency and their reliance on gendered dichotomies. But what Morrison's perspective makes clear is the importance of thinking through the sense of a collective "we" made material by the presence of the ancestor and how that presence may be treated differently in Black art, where she says the absence of ancestor is crisis, trauma, threatening or frightening (62). Pineau's storytelling is animated by both Black and Creole concerns in the way that she moves from the Manichean black and white world to the colorful Creole world—a move made possible by her grandmother's Creole ministrations.

To narrate a sense of the Self tethered in rhizomatic shape to ancestors is to narrate identity rooted (routed) in ways of seeing and knowing the world as fundamentally relational. The Creolists' notion of Créolité as a "totalité kaléidoscopique" ("kaleidoscopic totality" [89]) expresses this well, despite their unconscious reaffirmation of the kind of linear ancestry so clearly wedded to colonial-modern power over lands and bodies (Bernabé et al 27). The world is conceived as an assemblage, like diffracted light, that tells a collective story collectively and with difference in each turning of the kaleidoscope, to extend the metaphor. The "we" of a kaleidoscopic totality, then, is not a synthesis of individuals—not a Self reaching across to an Other—but a notion of an embodied self made (and re-made) as such by relations. Morrison's assertions on the presence of the ancestor in Black literature thus stretch my reading into a kind of hemispheric literary world, as well, where it allows a rhizomatic shape of kinship to exercise epistemological breadth across the African diaspora in the Americas. In other words, this reading is decidedly *not* a claim to a particularized, exogenous alterity specific to Afro-Caribbean Creole women's life-writing. Indeed, to say so would be to again affirm a categorial (colonial) logic that "reconvenes spatial differences as linear sequence," to borrow from Doreen Massey. In her 1999 lecture, "Imagining Globalisation: Power-Geometries of Time-space," Massey argues that the dominant narrative of global modernity temporalizes local difference and subjects othered places and peoples to a logic by which their ways are made pre-modern, undeveloped, primitive, and (of course) in need of being thrown into the singular stream of universal linear (colonial-modern) time. At least, that is the story that global economism tells of the world—and that global economism, Massey reminds, is inheritor of colonial-modern structures of power enacted through exploitation, extraction, deterritorialization, and authoritative violence. My reading of kinship in Pineau's memorial novel takes the position of the margins, the position of the self-

ancestor “we,” and posits the coexistence of multiple temporalities, multiple processes of becoming, multiple modes of relating that at once precede and circumvent the colonial-modern logic through which bodies, networks, and places are discursively and materially separated out along a linear axis of (social evolutionary) development. These othered modes persist (despite the pressures of the colonial-modern) in the production of forms of knowledge, place-making, and literariness generated by nonlinear, relational, and multiple epistemologies—by what Lugones describes as cosmological, ecological, and spiritual knowledges, relations, and values that resist and exist in tension with that linear, categorial logic (743).

Where a linear temporal narrative of the global proposes history as sequence, the ancestor is always already an icon of a past state, a past issuance of inheritable identity—affixed in time, narratively marked as a before (where modernity is a strangely dislocated eternal-now). Both Lugones and Massey, in their very different contexts and disciplines, offer spatial readings of the coloniality of power and provide a framework for reading Pineau’s narration of rhizomatic kinship as at once the narration of senses of self, ancestor, and place in open, flexing, assemblage, and with the epistemological resiliency to persistently, little by little, unsettle and disrupt the coloniality of power. This is to say that the dichotomous arrangement of a feminized space and a masculinized temporality together assure the authority of the linear narrative of global becoming in the ways that they seem to index a naturalized dimorphism: the passive material body is the vessel for the reproduction of active History. And in this linear shape of time, History becomes the authoritative archive of the collective memory of all of mankind—at least, that is the story it tells of itself. Stories that take other shapes, stories that resist legibility, and senses of the self that fail to adhere to the singular horizon of colonial-modern (humanist) time and space are, in that system, special cases marked in linear temporal relation to the figure of colonial-modern man.

But in a nonlinear shape of time the past is never really *passed*—memories coexist with presence and re-membering thus enacts a theory of knowledge in which the ancestor and the self are woven together, conjugated, co-constituting, a co-presence. Morrison describes this kind of re-membering in terms of materiality. In her essay “The Site of Memory: Writers and Writing,” fiction is not a question of invention, it is a question of imagination—and imagination is bound up with/in memory (76-77). *Tout est vrai et faux*. Morrison’s “nonfiction” essays are no more or less objectively real than her novels—writing the self, writing the ancestor, writing a place: all

are acts of re-membering as imagining (or imagining as re-membering), and how these relations (or objects) are imagined affects the shape that they take in the body's perception of the world. Moreover, in a relational (rather than categorial) logic, memory and imagination are not exclusive to the mind (as though separate from the body); rather, memory is in the body, in the land, in *material relationality*. Morrison reminds: "You know, they straightened out the Mississippi river in places, to make room for houses and livable acreage. Occasionally the river floods these places. 'Floods' is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering" (77). The way that the river swells and relents with the seasons is a form of remembering, it tells a story of locations and durations where (when) the river and the shore meet, assemble, and shape one another. The land (body) has memory.<sup>57</sup> And re-membering those flexing, shoaling relations at once shifts the terms of belonging away from patrilineal, subjective agency and linear History and toward a (re)weaving of the self with the ancestor and with place. Re-membering in this way historicizes on the grounds of the duration-locations in which memory and sensation come together, informing a perception of open-ended, rhizomatic kinship relations activated in nonlinear (rhizomatic) memorial-ecological networks.

My reading of a rhizomatic shape of kinship in Pineau contributes to emerging bodies of scholarship that bring together postcolonial theories and ecocriticism, while yet intervening on the framework of the postcolonial and tending toward a decolonial (feminist) framework. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley's edited volume of *Postcolonial Ecologies* (2011) advocates for this kind of ecocritical turning, in particular in terms of methods that focalize literature (and aesthetics) as the site of recuperation, persistence, and giving voice to the land in a way that, I argue, likewise engenders sustainable, resilient, and joyful relations in human and more-than-human assemblages. In their introduction to the volume, DeLoughrey and Handley assert the recuperative role of place, read in this way, and as well locate the "impossibility of fully translating place because of the historical violence that produces 'tongueless whispering'" (5, citing Wilson Harris). The editors argue that this incommensurability takes history and nature "without reducing either to the other" and as a generative decolonial practice in literary studies (4). I find that their call resonates with Massey's advocacy for the coexistence of multiple narratives of time-space and globalization in the sense that both seem to indicate "the role of literature in mediating environmental knowledge and in articulating a poetics of place in the alienating wake of globalization" (DeLoughrey and Handley 9). Shedding ties to the global

economism issuing from colonial-modern patrilineage means not only reconsidering what counts as literature, as the literary, but also reconceiving how ideas of literariness (re)produce narratives of knowledge, being, and becoming, and mediate modes of relating between humans and between human and more-than-human. It is not about telling a different story, it seems, but rather about telling stories differently.

What I prefer to call decolonial ecologies, then, engaged through a relational logic that defies the categorial logic and hierarchical dichotomies of the colonial-modern and its post-progeny, effectively re-weave the body and the land without, I propose, reproducing a feminized, Edenic landscape “outside of human time” (DeLoughrey and Handley 12). Another way of naming this phenomenon, beyond the *post-* in DeLoughrey and Handley’s collection, comes from Simón Ventura Trujillo and his work on *fugitive translation*—that is, Trujillo interrogates the epistemological effects or patterns of Indigenous life “under the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space” (66).<sup>58</sup> While largely addressing translation, Trujillo effectively draws attention to the ways that the coloniality of power shapes ways of seeing to the extent that literary genres read through that linear, categorial logic mis-translate local expressions of a self, a life, a story, and render its shape according to the tyranny of that logic. The *post-* in postcolonial nationalisms retains patrilineal relation to the colonial, marks itself as a new sovereign and individual state issuing from that (patrilineally) prior state or form. There is only one possible ending in that linear story of History and time, and it always, Trujillo warns, ends with Indigenous, Black, and Latinx fungibility in the Americas. Trujillo proposes re-reading autobiography of borderlands life in terms of the ways that these lives escape translation—their multiplicity and nonlinearity escape recognition by a world literature issuing from the colonial-modern linear narrative of History. In this way, Trujillo locates a *generic fugitivity* in his reading of the literary aesthetics of heterogeneity, or of stories that defy the categorial logic—that escape genre (gender). This way of seeing the self and the world through multiplicity—heterogeneity—contrasts with a way of seeing the Self and the world through that singular (enclosed) perspective under that tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space. Trujillo cautions that an enclosed perspective reproduces coloniality, reproduces hierarchically dichotomous power-geometries, in part through nationalist forms of remembering—which, in turn, shape modes of affiliation (political, personal, global) and tell the story as though there is only one ending (and one beginning), which I take to mean the Word, that faithfulness to a patrilineal link to Creation,



even if enacted as a secular pursuit of universal humanist Self-actualization. The nonlinear, open perspective that Trujillo theorizes thus emphasizes the connection between ways of seeing and modes of affiliation and the contrasting forms of tyrannical violence (the coloniality of power) and fugitive enlightenment (decolonial, joyful futures) that materialize through aesthetic and literary practices.

Here again, I draw together Black and Indigenous feminist theories to tell the story differently than that enclosed way of seeing. Tiffany Lethabo King has already written part of the story that I want to tell, albeit with non-identical sites of intervention. King's *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (2019) gathers together Black and Indigenous feminist theories with feminist materialisms and toward a reading of relational Afro-Indigenous coalition. King's work intervenes on how (whitestream) settler colonial studies tend to reproduce a form of speech that refuses to name the ways in which racialized and gendered bodies are made fungible in that settler colonial structure; and, at once, King advances a nonlinear figure of what her work offers to a new literary studies in the form of a challenge to the disciplines: "shoaling." That is, the persistent, gradual, flexible, and adaptive positioning of Black and Indigenous feminist theories in the site where water and land assemble and shape one another. Specifically, King articulates expressions (narratives) of desire—of reading for desire, and of desire as futurity generated in and by memory-work. The stakes of these re-readings—of these retellings of the story of the Americas—are in the possibility of open modes of coalition and relationality, ones that neither ignore incommensurability nor require identity and that move toward open horizons, toward decolonial futures. As such, reading Pineau through eco-erotics and feminist materialisms re-orient engagement with Afro-Caribbean literariness toward decolonial (women of color) feminist theories, toward open-ended Creole futurities generated in and as narratives of desire. It is not enough to tell the story of colonization through re-imagining the gendered and racialized violence it produces; it is time to tell the story differently through the expressions of joy, resilience, and kinship that epistemologies of multiplicity sustain, toward hemispheric readings of women of color literatures that take gender as a tool of critical analysis and that take the coexistence of multiple temporalities as open horizons of becoming that produce (bit by bit, day by day) joyful Creole futures.

The passage of narrative time through the middle section of Pineau's memorial novel—in between the black and white world and the world of colors—is marked by the before Man Ya

(the black and white world) and the after Man Ya (the kaleidoscope of colors). And yet, Pineau assesses the “après et avant Man Ya” (“before and after Man Ya” [102]) in a transversal mode (elided in the English translation) where the aftermath seems to precede the precedent (137). Or, at least, where the passage of time is complicated by this arrangement such that absence and presence likewise are reconfigured, hinting at the ways that Pineau’s life now—in the time of her writing—seems gathered together by the re-membered presence of her Man Ya. Where Pineau’s parents taught the young author that slavery was something to forget, a story to be kept silent, Pineau tells us that “seule Man Ya ose nous instruire” (111) (“Man Ya alone dares to tell us about it” [81]). Man Ya’s storytelling—in Creole—gives Pineau herself the model of memory work as reprisal through storytelling and expressly as a mode of speaking joyful Creole futures into being in the present. Where a French education taught that the written word was the portal to knowledge and becoming—within a paradigm that also put Pineau under her teacher’s desk for her blackness<sup>59</sup>—Man Ya dares to teach an otherwise kind of knowing and being asserted through the multiplicity, flexibility, and wovenness of her Creole language. Moreover, through the assertion of the grandmother’s oral intelligence, Pineau structures the sections of the novel toward the ways that Man Ya’s supposedly illiterate ways of knowing and being open up those horizons (plural) of possibility, open up that world of colors. Man Ya’s orality narratively marks multiple horizons of possibility and re-members cosmological, spiritual, and ecological modes that escape that tyranny of the linear time of colonial-modernity that only offers one possible future for bodies like hers. In the nonlinear temporality of Man Ya’s memory work, her storytelling, I locate Man Ya’s sense of relations with her *jardin créole*—and the consequential sensation of exile in France—in a mode of being and knowing that embraces multispecies kinship relations, epistemes of multiplicity, and joyful decolonial futures. An otherwise future is generated in and by memory, by the act of re-membering the place and multispecies kin with whom Man Ya feels (rhizomatically) rooted.

In this chapter, I ask: in what ways does the re-membering (the memorial novel itself) enact experiences of time that confound the linear logic of what I am calling the black and white world? How does this enactment give multiplicity of scale and meaning to the ways that Man Ya (and by extension Pineau) engage Creoleness and Creole language? And, through this sense of multiplicity, how does the narration hold space for more capacious epistemologies of self, ancestor, and senses of place? In the sections that follow, I gather together passages in which the

ancestor—Man Ya—generatively orients attention toward memory as future-work. Woven together, these passages form an accumulative silhouette of a theory and practice of kinship relationality rooted (rhizomatically) in a durational-locational love with Man Ya’s garden.

## **In the Garden/Memory**

Man Ya’s memory work obtains most saliently in Pineau’s narrations of the *jardin créole*, which the grandchildren hear described through Man Ya’s oral Creole storytelling. Pineau tells the story of Man Ya telling the stories of her garden’s multiplicities, marvelousness, and richness to her grandchildren, framing the novel with lush descriptions of the garden—first, retold in the black and white world, and then later seen and felt in the world of colors. In between, the memory of and desire to return to the garden hang over Man Ya’s temporary “exile” in France. In the first description, through Man Ya’s storytelling in a cold, drab apartment in the Parisian banlieues, Pineau narrates:

Plus que sa case de Routhiers, son jardin lui manque infiniment. Elle le dresse pour nous comme un lieu merveilleux où toutes espèces d’arbres, plantes et fleurs se multiplient dans une verdure accablante, quasi miraculeuse, argentée ça et là d’une lumière qui ne diffuse qu’au seul cœur de Routhiers. [...] Elle nous rapporte chaque parole des oiseaux, nommant après eux les feuillages et les fruits. Et puis elle nous hisse dans les branches de ses arbres, juste pour mieux nous montrer l’horizon tout bosselé par les petites îles qui ploient sous le poids de leurs volcans ventripotents, fumant, crachant. Nous voyons tout par ses yeux et la croyons comme on croit au Paradis, balançant sans cesse entre la suspicion et l’intime conviction. (17-18)

[Even more than her house in Routhiers, she misses her garden. She pictures it for us, a wonderful place where all kinds of trees, plants, and flowers grow in abundance in an overwhelming green, an almost miraculous verdure, dappled here and there with a silver light that shines nowhere else but in the heart of Routhiers. [...] She sings us the song of every bird; afterward she names the foliage and the fruits. Then she hoists us into the branches of her trees, just so we can see the horizon better, the horizon with its little bumps of islands bending under the weight of their smoking, spitting, pot-bellied volcanoes. We see it all through her eyes and believe her as one believes in Heaven, wavering endlessly between suspicion and deep conviction. [8]]

Along with the present tense verbs, which locate Man Ya in a presence (rather than a past tense) of the storytelling, Pineau’s style does not conform to standards of French prose—missing conjunctions, fragmented clauses, beginning a sentence with “Et” (“And”). Man Ya’s garden is heard in loose oral narration. And it is a marvelous place where all kinds of plants, trees, and flowers multiply in an unbelievable verdancy. It is “quasi miraculeuse.” It is said to resemble

something *out* of this world—Paradise (Heaven)—something impossible *in* this black and white world. Real enough to figure as a location yet unreal enough to be chalked up to fabulation—storytelling, legends, fantasy. Moreover, Pineau narrates Man Ya’s insistence that the light that dapples the plants and trees is silvery, silvered, and only, *only* shines just so in the heart of Man Ya’s village home, in the heart of Routhiers, in the grandmother’s *jardin créole*. It is a quasi miraculousness sited in a precise place, and the place is redressed in a storytelling mode weaving Man Ya’s orality into Pineau’s writing—in the present of Pineau’s retelling. To the young Pineau and her siblings, the multiplicity of the garden is positively unbelievable—it cannot be real. At least, to the young Pineau in the black and white world, the garden’s miraculous qualities are legible only as analogue to faith-based or utopic *other*-worlds—and her grandmother’s Creole orality is associated with tales and legends, not material facts, not science, not literacy. However, Pineau tells her reader that Man Ya’s storytelling also includes all the Creole names for the plants, trees, and fruits, and relates each call of the birds in her garden. Man Ya’s oral storytelling coordinates a network of named relations in the garden with the positioning of her grandchildren in the branches of her tree, to better see the Antillean horizon. There is something about the interruption of a neat line of the horizon by those little bumps of smoking, pot-bellied volcanoes—an implication of more than what the figure of a horizon conveys in its metaphor for the future. Here, in this Creole orality, presentness (in the branches of the tree, in the garden, in Pineau writing these stories) and futurity (the horizon, the volcanoes, the Antilles) assemble and obtain from within Man Ya’s stories, in relation to her language (only indirectly spoken in the narration). Literarily, if not also materially, the conjugated scales represented here in Man Ya’s retelling of her *jardin créole* open up critical modes (plural) of seeing, sensing, and being with the world. As well, more than her home in Routhiers on the island of Guadeloupe, Man Ya misses her garden. Or, in the French, “son jardin lui manque”: her garden is the subject of the action, and she is the indirect object pronoun (“lui”) missing; she is missed, she is lacking from that place. In one sense, the grammatical construction of the phrase in translation (in English) *misses* the part about who is doing the missing and who is missing of or from someone or somewhere. The difference produced in the between space of that translation asks for a re-translation of the ways that Man Ya exercises her sense of self. This is to say that where Man Ya re-members the material relations of her more-than-human kin for her grandchildren, her stories situate memory in the garden—in the active materiality of that space that misses her, in the

garden that remembers Man Ya. Uprooted from her garden, the garden feels the absence of Man Ya at the same time that Man Ya sustains a present presence of her garden in the ways that her storytelling hoists her grandchildren into the branches of that tree to better see the open and shoaling horizon(s) of Creole futurity.

As the children are transported to this other-world by the vibrancy of Man Ya's storytelling, they are likewise transported into the branches of the trees that Man Ya names in her garden. Beyond the surficial metaphor of family as branches of a tree, what Man Ya shows the children here bespeaks a relationality with the Antilles as a whole, a shape of relations that is described in the arrangement of "petites îles" weighed down, bent, bowed by their smoking, spitting, potbellied volcanoes. The figure of the volcano bears unpacking for its allusions to the Creolists' *Éloge*, to the eruptive force of a volcano; the volcanoes are noteworthy as well for how they index both deep time (the age of the mountains) and the flexibility and persistence of the islands, shoaling and shifting with time yet always materially related, entangled, rhizomatic in the ways that they network, break apart, spit new land into the sea, the ways that the wind and the water shift their sands around.<sup>60</sup> But the volcanoes are not the focus of my reading of kinship here. Rather, it is in the trees. That Pineau expresses how "elle nous hisse dans les branches de ses arbres juste pour mieux voir l'horizon" calls attention to an experience of the place that is intimately immersive (in the branches of the trees, of the trees as kin) yet at once capacious in its vision (seeing all the way to the horizon where ocean meets sky). To hold both scales in view at once, and everything in between, literarily and materially, bespeaks a "totalité kaléidoscopique." The capacity for this kind of sensorial multiplicity—to hold at once the micro- and the macro- in view—as I read it, is also a form of knowledge production and practice rooted in epistemologies of multiplicity, in relationalities that enable a critical mode of seeing, sensing, and being with a world resplendent with assembling human and more-than-human kin. Pineau must hear the (woven Creole) language, must enter into the tree, must enter into the branches—the arms—of her kin, to see the stories, to sense the multiplicity of Créolité, and to re-member that rhizomatic shape of relations.

Implicit in this then, as well, is how Pineau's education in such relationality is produced as much in the present tense of her literary retelling as in the moment of Man Ya's stories in that cold apartment in Paris. Man Ya's Creole storytelling begins to open a space, cultivates a possibility for a very different kind of education and one in which presentness (the tree, the

branches) and futurity (the horizon, the volcanoes) assemble and obtain from within the enfolding embrace of kin relations, the embrace of a shape of relations that holds in view at once the precise time and place of Man Ya's garden and the whole history of the Antilles and the world. Moreover, reading this kind of openness of horizons from the perspective of decolonial feminist theories re-members the ways that Man Ya's modes of being and knowing escape the legibility of generic translations of her life under the tyranny of a singular horizon of space and time. Here, the conjugated temporality of Pineau re-membering Man Ya's storytelling, itself a re-membering of that place (time) of her garden, takes shape as concentric circles of self and ancestor conjoined by memory work—assembled in a simultaneity of relation with the ancestor, rather than in a linear sequence with her, and thus formulating open horizons of possibility that escape the tyranny of a singular horizon of space and time.

With the opening up of this sense of multiplicity, Pineau's narration shifts from the rigid formations of the black and white world toward relational epistemologies expressed in the familial liveliness of her grandmother's *jardin créole* and in its re-membering in her writing. The garden, in all its overwhelming greenery, hangs over the sections of the novel that follow like a welcome haunting—a reminder as presence of the relations that Man Ya senses as kin. Pineau will return to the garden in the final three pages of the novel, which I will discuss in the sections that follow here—although, I argue that it is not a re-turn in the conventional sense of there and back again. Pineau's (re)turning to the *jardin créole* will be as a reprisal of memory in this way that activates a decolonial feminist kind of memory work and kind of nonlinear, conjugated temporality (which I will explain in the next section) and rewrites the terms of self and ancestor. Here, in the cold apartment in Paris, the reader is left with the impression that this “verdure accablante” is like any other legend from the Antilles: superstition. At the same time, with the opening up of this multiplicity of senses and scales, Pineau's' narration opens up a multiplicity of kinship with the place, with the beings in it, equally located in the familial relations of the activity and liveliness of the *jardin créole* and in its representation (re-membering, rewriting) in the novel.

## **Tracing Relations**

That first, long, description of the garden is given in the narration in the context of Man Ya hardly ever smiling in France. Pineau juxtaposes how Man Ya seemed either to not know or to

have forgotten how to smile. And this reads as irrational, initially. Pineau's family, it is said, saved her from the years of abuse she had suffered by her husband, Asdrubal, himself suffering from acute post-traumatic stress following his conscripted years in the trenches of World War I, fighting for France. Asdrubal is named in the text as "Le Bourreau" (the Executioner) for unexplained reasons, but his time in the trenches in 1916 is made clear as is his capacity for projecting his traumata onto Man Ya's body (Pineau 16). Asdrubal's blows have become a ritual for fighting off the demons that chase him in his sleep, and Man Ya bears them because of this, tolerates his abuses because she senses his pain. The implication here is that, to the young Pineau and her immediate family, there is no reasonable reason why anyone would prefer the hardship, the abuse, the demons, the rustic and archaic setting, and the dearth of modern conveniences that (in their view) make and mark her home in Routhiers as a backwards and undesirable place. Indeed, it is worth noting that Pineau names her grandmother by that kinship metaphor, Man Ya, while naming Asdrubal by the (proper) noun *Le Bourreau* as well as naming her own parents by the (proper) nouns *Daisy* and *Le Maréchal* (the Marshal). They are not figured as *maman* or *papa* through their relation to her, they are figured through their relation to the language of their existence in France, enclosed it seems by the black and white worldview. Daisy (along with other Antillean women in France) is said to dream of a better, more European, future issuing from the forgetting of the Antillean (and African) past: "Elles s'étaient vues devenant des grandes femmes libres Là-Bas en France, sauvées du joug paternel, dégagées du sacerdoce d'ainesses, épargnés du destin des vieilles filles qui ne trouvent plus d'ivresse qu'en Dieu" (Pineau 14) ("They pictured themselves turning into important and free women Over There in France, rescued from the paternal yoke, unconstrained by the vocation tied to their birthright, spared the destiny of the old girls who no longer find euphoria except in God" [6]). These women are said to imagine themselves ascending to the hierarchical position of modern-human by severing ties with their birthright—a legitimate and understandable effort considering the ways that the narrative of modernity positions women of color as fungible, sacrificial bodies. They seek recognition as human, through appeals to universal (liberal) humanism. But this, for the reason that their "birthright" limits them to the singular outcome of living under the "joug paternel"—they sense the limitations of living under the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space while yet being unable to see the relation between that tyranny and the narrative of modernity to which they ascribe. Daisy says that "le passé est mort et enterré" (Pineau 115) ("the

past is dead and buried” [84]). Forgetting is the means to that futurity, in this story of becoming—in this narrative of modern linear progressive movement toward more free and just futures—and the past is weighted with stories of enslavement and struggle. To break the chains seems to require moving *forward* and forgetting that past, abandoning *that* birthright. In this black and white world, they are convinced of the benefits of modernization, consumer goods and fashions, mechanized households, and secular realism promised to them by the tenets of liberalism: liberty, equality, and fraternity—the empty promise that if one learns to walk, talk, and think like a European then one will get to live the comfortable and free life of a (White) European. Yet Pineau keenly assesses how “Hélas, les soupirs qu’elles poussent à présent dénoncent tous leurs rêves. Et les Si j’avais su..., évocateurs des lits sans soleil où s’écoule leur existence, témoignent les démâtages qu’elles ont déjà subi” (15) (“Alas, their sighing now betrays those dreams. And the If I’d known’s..., indicators of the sunless cots where their lives waste away, testify to the wreckages they have already endured” [6]). The romantic, fashionable, and free vision of French futurity continues to elude these women. Here, the familial relations in Pineau’s storytelling begin to evoke, on the one hand, the limitations of the black and white world explicitly tied to Daisy and le Maréchal’s imperative forgetting, and, on the other hand, the open horizons of possibility of the world of colors to which Man Ya is initiating her grandchildren explicitly through her Creole storytelling as memory work. To trace the relations in the memorial novel, then, calls me to think through what it means to remember and to forget—not simply to account for the lost objects, but rather to analyze the relations between linear temporality (the past as dead and buried) and nonlinear temporality (or memory work as radical, decolonial future-haunting).

Daisy and Le Maréchal do not anticipate, nor can they fathom, Man Ya’s feelings of exile in France—they cannot fathom why Man Ya would not want the same things, the same comforts and eases, why she would want to go back to that former life so proximate it seems to them to the days of enslavement. Only later in the narration does it begin to become apparent, at least to the Pineau narrating at the time of the writing, that the cold, grey, dull, deanimated, urban world of Paris is precisely that which produces sensations of un-rootedness:

Alors, je comprends mieux la mélancolie de Man Ya, sa peur de mourir ici là, sur une terre muette où les arbres n’ont pas d’oreilles, le ciel et les nuages barrent le souffle des anges, où le temps marche en conquérant, sans jamais regarder derrière lui, piétinant toutes choses. (Pineau 117-18)



[Then I understand Man Ya's melancholy better, her fear of dying here, in a silent land where the trees don't have ears, where the sky and the clouds block the breath of the angels, where time marches on, a conqueror, without ever looking behind him, trampling on all things. [86]]

Again, narrating in the present tense, Pineau tells her reader: *now* I understand. Now it makes sense why Man Ya felt exiled in this way, at that time, why she couldn't smile in France: the land is mute, silenced by the march of progress. The silenced landscape of Paris is precisely that which produces sensations of exile because the trees are deanimated—mere backdrop for the human activity of modern life. In the black and white world, wealth and freedom are said to follow this same linear shape of time that marches forward “sans jamais regarder derrière lui,” and this should be seen as a good thing according to that story of becoming. One must march *forward* to escape the *past*. The same logic that teaches that the past is dead and buried teaches that sensing animacy in an other-than-human world is primitive—superstition. Trees having ears cannot be intelligence, in that linear story, and Man Ya's ways of being—her Creole speech, her relations with her garden, her desire to return to her island—read as primitive, unfulfilling, decidedly *unmodern*: in need of *civilizing*. Why would she *want* to return to that backwoods place, is the question posed by this linear logic. The future lies “ahead”—an arrow of time, marching forward without ever looking backward. Yet it is in direct correlation with the management of raw materials and labor that trees, land, and gendered and racialized bodies are incorporated into that linear temporalized history, which in turn temporalizes the kind of orally transmitted (Creole) knowledge that reads trees (and plants and animals and waters) as sentient familial beings and imposes hierarchical dichotomies of nature and culture, time and space, man and woman. In that story, the dehumanization of the more-than-human world seems to align with *progress*—and this sign of progress then naturalizes the forgetting of such vital materialities. Man Ya's feelings of exile emerge in relation to the ways that the trees, the sky, the land under the streets, is understood (and ignored) as mere landscape, as a backdrop for the activity of people caught up in the accelerations of modern life.

Pineau makes the explicit relation one of temporality, as well, importantly implicating the forward march of (modern, progressive) time in this logic where human and more-than-human networks are sensed and narrated as separate, material relations discursively severed into inanimate, passive bodies-as-use-objects waiting to be exploited.<sup>61</sup> But this black and white

world of modern, mid-century France names itself the face of progress, performs the privileges of modern life as the telos of all human societies, sees itself the savior of poor, rustic places such as Guadeloupe and poor, rustic *vieilles campagnardes* (old country bumpkins) such as Man Ya. And in this linear notion of progress lies a logic that positions Man Ya's sense of kinship and place as undesirable, as primitive, as decidedly *unmodern*, as in need of being thrown into the current of modernity, in need of civilizing. To count the trees as kin is superstition where kinship is defined by bloodlines, by a tree as a metaphor for relations but not the tree *as* relations. And yet, in juxtaposition with the wreckages of Daisy's dreams of wealth and status, and in the context of Man Ya's feelings of exile, the implication here is that the conquering march of linear (colonial-modern) time is that which (re)produces the hierarchy by which blackness can never escape its "birthright" (its fungibility) in global economic systems. And, to be clear, this imaginary of a richer, easier, more comfortable modern future is imagined (in black and white) as though it is the singularly desirable future for all of humankind despite that it is the same narrative through which that birthright of fungibility takes shape.<sup>62</sup> In the black and white world, time marches forward "sans jamais regarder derrière lui" ("never looking backwards"), and this should be heard as a *good* thing (to Daisy and Le Maréchal). One must march *forward* to escape the *past*, in this configuration, is how the story goes. *Spatial differences are reconvened as temporal sequence* in this story that says that the future is marked by ways of being that adhere to the narrative markers of liberal (White) humanism.<sup>63</sup>

But to Man Ya, this forward march of time—the linear epistemology of the black and white world—"barre le souffle des anges" ("shuts up the murmur of angels"), which in her view indicates the silencing of other kin, the severing of more-than-human relations, the discursive and material erasure of ancestors and their stories. The time of France marches forward, nonetheless, trampling everything in its path and never looking backward. This is significant. The land is denied voice, denied rights, *muted* by such a notion of progress, as are those who see more-than-human beings as living relations; and time is an arrow ever progressing toward a more modern, more built, more *used* (exploited) future. Concomitant with the assertion that the trees in France have no ears is the implicit reminder that to believe in such superstitious marvelousness as trees having ears is also to be rooted, or stuck, in an undesirable past. And Man Ya herself, as a symbol or vestige of the old, the "anachronique" (anachronistic), the primitive and outmoded, is ignored and chided in France for her inability or unwillingness to assimilate to this linear

shape of time, to this deanimated mode of being with the world, to this black and white logic that not only conceives of her sense of kin relations as primitive superstition but that also distinguishes her love for these kin as a sign of her being a figure out of place (time) in the modern world (Pineau 84). To sense the more-than-human world as living and breathing and capable of speech and hearing means, in that linear story, to accept as “birthright” those so-called primitive modes of being that then ostensibly legitimize the dehumanizing terms translating that life as backwards, uncivilized. This story then can say that uncivilized (read: non-modern) cosmologies, ecologies, and spirituality suggest the legitimacy of their dehumanization since these abstract concepts cannot map onto the linear march of progressive time moving toward liberal humanist relations epistemologically structured in the categorial logic by which human and other-than-human are severed and the human is positioned as that active force (that arrow) moving across a passive backdrop of material resources for use. The trees there are not treated as relatives; the land is not sensed as living and breathing alongside and entangled with human life. To account for the deanimation of the more-than-human in France as the cause of Man Ya’s feelings of exile, as Pineau begins to sense, also then begins to narrate an acknowledgment of familial relations that surpass the human, that exceed bloodlines, that eclipse the nuclear family unit.

The grammatical tense of this narrative moment is worth lingering on further. Pineau, in the time of the writing, in the moment of re-membering, understands *now* why her Man Ya felt exiled in France *then*. In its latency, the arrival of this understanding intones that nonlinear shape of time that re-members in the body—that relates the presence of the ancestor to a simultaneity of self-becoming. Here the text shuttles between past and future in a way that assembles (or conjugates) these times in the present of Pineau’s writing. That is, Pineau marks the extra-diegetic time of writing within the memorial novel, incorporating her presence into the diegetic body of her grandmother’s coming to awareness of the epistemological silencing of the land by that conquering march of time. In this sense, the now of the writing is also part of the diegesis, is also part of that past event, just as the diegesis leaks out into the world in the time of the writing through Pineau’s practice—this revelation is part of the material world of her adult life in France in the 1990s while yet recording this *now* in colocation with the narrative time of Man Ya *then* not wanting to die in the muted, deanimated, black and white world of 1960s France. Represented as primitive and anachronistic, Man Ya and her Creole orality are seen as out of

place (out of *time*) in France, as though she is incapable of assimilating to that same story of modernization that names her ways of being as superstition. But this is a matter of Man Ya's desire—not an inability. Man Ya doesn't *want* to assimilate to that march of time, Pineau tells her reader. This is especially salient where Pineau adds that the trees in her garden are “de sa chair et de son sang” (“her flesh and blood” [102]) and she is a “manman-arbre” (“tree-mother” [102]) (Pineau 137). The logic behind her experience of exile and her desire to return to her garden family are now legible *as a logic* structured in and by a nonlinear episteme of multiplicity and relationality. Man Ya asserts her desire for that place of multiplicity, and the familial beings in (with) it, and asserts this through the ways that she conceives of relations with more-than-human kin.

Despite how everyone else seems to think they are saving her from that primitive life back home, Man Ya *wants* to return—she doesn't *want* to assimilate to the conquering time of France. Here I retrace critical analyses from Tiffany Lethabo King as a way of orienting the relations in Pineau's text in terms of nonlinearity and desire as future-haunting. One of the interesting features of King's book is the way that she articulates the spatial formations of both critical methodologies and sociopolitical relations within modernity, understood as the epistemological offspring of Enlightenment and liberal humanism, which she argues (and I reiterate) legitimize the genocide and enslavement of dehumanized and “fungible” bodies. King argues that “conquistador humanism and its view of the Native and Black Other—as a space of death—produced and sustained a genocidal violence and brutal system of enslavement” (16). Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill likewise makes this same claim, but in a present-tense instantiation of settler colonial structures as ongoing (not simply as past event) in the context of “Decolonizing Feminism” (2013). This is such an important critique. The literate, rational, self-sovereign humanist subject relies on the construction of an Other marked as one not yet arrived at such individual ownership. Marxism and whitestream feminism function as similar forms of humanism, King maintains, and privilege the same hierarchical dichotomy of human and less-than-human bodies (or fully non-human bodies), in particular in relation to labor and social evolutionary definitions of the human. King finds these to be insufficient or unstable critiques in terms of addressing Indigenous genocide and Black enslavement and the dehumanization of both because, she argues, those critiques reify the individual laboring body and thus also reify the humanist hierarchy promoting rational, liberal Man (in opposition to the Other) (17). King's

critique beautifully closes with an epilogue about land and water, linking desire and erotics to the project of decolonization and Black and Native futurities. In this ending-as-opening, King describes how “our *yet-to-come* notions of connectedness and relationality are capacious enough to yield something more than coalition in the end. A new relationality can imagine new kinds of Black and Native futures” (209, my emphasis). Echoing Eve Tuck’s “Suspending Damage” here, calling for amplification of narratives of desire that reproduce resiliency and futurity despite ongoing settler colonial occupation, King points to renewed understandings of desire and unsettled temporalities as a pathway toward enacting such relationality and coalition. Pleasure, storytelling, and nonlinear temporality, in this way, embody and inform King’s metaphor of the shoals—of shifting land-water formations that interrupt and slow settler colonial discourses and doctrines of discovery through epistemologies of multiplicity and through the enunciative position of cosmologies, ecologies, and spiritualities that defy and resist the linear logic of liberal humanist narratives of the human. In the ways that Pineau narrates the simultaneity of Man Ya’s desire for her garden with the author’s present-tense coming to awareness of the liveliness of Man Ya’s sense of relations, it may be said that Man Ya insurrects the future that she wants for herself implicitly through her capacity to hold onto that relationality with the more-than-human. Man Ya’s desire to return to that place from which she is missing is not the desire to return to some nostalgic past state; rather, it is a desire informed by the welcome haunting of that remembered place, a haunting that asserts the ongoing presence of that place in the body, in the liveliness that sustains the body-place relations. To hold the sentience of the trees in view in this way indicates open horizons—open futurities—that circumvent and defy the linear, progressive time “qui marche en conquérant” and that so eagerly seeks to delimit Man Ya’s ways of being as outmoded. *Now* Pineau understands that unrooted and uprooted from her family of plants and trees and rocks and waters, the relationality with her garden severed, Man Ya’s inability to smile in France is at once an assertion of her capacity for a nonlinear kind of memory that roots her sense of futurity in an active desiring for a yet-to-come coalition and transcorporeality sited in the overwhelming greenery of her *jardin créole*.

Pineau tells her reader that Man Ya narrated her *jardin créole* as if it was a marvelous place; but recall that this is the young Pineau’s interpretation of Man Ya’s stories, in the black and white world, in the muted landscape. The children were suspicious, then, in the past tense, but now—in the present of her writing—Pineau understands why Man Ya felt exiled *and* why

she wanted to return. Recalling the structure of the novel, this then also tells me that her initial disbelief was an effect of the black and white world, which instructed her in the divisions between people and the natural world, divisions between places and times, between fact and imagination, which instructed her in the linear temporalization of history and a patrilineal shape of kinship. Believing Man Ya's stories of her garden was like believing in superstition, the logic of the black and white world overriding the actuality of the colors of Man Ya's world in that moment. Multiplicity and thriving diversity seemed unreal, fantastical, the stuff of myths and legends. And this made sense—in a black and white world, where the logic of modern, linear, humanist time structures perceptions of what is real and good. But here, now, Pineau is telling her reader that Man Ya's exile makes sense for the ways that the conquering time of France enacts a kind of violence on the liveliness of the world—human and more-than-human—to the extent that relationality is rendered impossible, improbable, or simply illegible. In defiance of that logic, Pineau's narration conjugates the time of her writing into the time of Man Ya's exile, forming a simultaneity of becoming-ancestor and becoming-grandchild. And, importantly, this simultaneity sustains the relations not only as a co-presence of bodies in kinship but also as the co-constitution of past and future such that the tyranny of linear time fails to incorporate and suppress the spatial arrangement of that simultaneity nor to coopt it into the narrative of progress by which Man Ya's ways of being are discursively devalued and materially displaced.

## **Rhizomatic(s)**

Holding in view the claim that the place of the garden is family, is kin, and that a sense of conjugated time pervades the narrative, the shape of kinship in Pineau's memorial novel is also then a matter of the movements of bodies in time but in relation to place. While the fabulation follows Man Ya going to France and then returning to her island some years later, Pineau's narration takes her readers on a route that is no simple *aller et venir* (coming and going). But this shape is not readily dissimulated from the narration itself, which broadly appears to reflect a linear passage of time conducting Man Ya's exile and return; rather the movements are (in my reading) evidenced in the most minute, even quotidian, linguistic expressions which, in Pineau's voice, enunciate a kind of spectral, haunting difference that ultimately signifies their illegibility to enclosed (colonial-modern) ways of seeing. It is in an intimate reading of the text that such minor slippages take shape as a rhizomatic, conjugated time-space whose form is made real and

possible by a sort of palimpsestic textual accumulation—a shoaling. There are two such expressions that I wish to trace here: *l’aller et le virer*, and *au mitan de*. The first transcreates a common French expression of coming-and-going into a Creolized movement of going-and-turning-about, at once of bodies in space (time) and of the idea of places-as-assemblage; the second expression is a preposition whose etymology itself is rhizomatic and shuttling and which articulates an otherwise sense of conjugated time-space than the linear coming-and-going idea of a return. Together, these figures condensate (nonlinear) shapes of relations that haunt colonial-modern epistemologies of disjunction, determinism, and teleology; and, perhaps more importantly, these palimpsestic shapes of relations facilitate the persistence of oral intelligence, diasporic communities, and epistemologies of multiplicity that defy the categorial logic of colonial-modernity. Moreover, these expressions of multiplicity then function and persist peripheral to (inside, outside, beyond, in excess of) the secular humanist subjectivity that dominates colonial-modern delimitations of at once kinship, sovereignty, and physical sciences.

I anchor this section in a consideration of the rhizome—of rhizomatics, really—with the help of Elizabeth Grosz’s reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s formulation in her “A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics” (1993). In the way that Tinsley’s work challenges the implicit gendering in Glissant’s and the Creolists’ works, Grosz offers a comparable framework of rhizomatics as a feminist reading practice which further allows the decentering of residual humanist subjectivity in Glissant’s take on the rhizome. Grosz’s framework helps clarify the interventions and contributions of my reading of senses of place in Pineau’s text, senses activated by movement that is not in dichotomous arrangement with stasis. Grosz interprets Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome against both the figure of the tree and the figure of the root—the first metaphor, she says, is “an emblem of linear, progressive ordered systems” and the second metaphor “also presumes a unity, but like the root itself, this unity is hidden or latent [...] a kind of nostalgia for a lost past or an anticipated future” (173). Here is a clear alignment with the ways that Glissant formulates his poetics of relation through the figure of the rhizome, as a form defined against (in opposition to) both the (colonial) tree and the root (*la racine*). But where Glissant insists that a poetics of relation as rhizomatic thinking is where “toute identité s’étend dans un rapport à l’Autre,” his rhizome retains a sense of forms and subjectivities linked synthetically across spaces between already formed subjects. Each identity is stretched in a relation to the Other, he says. Grosz’s feminist framework of rhizomatic thinking suggests, by

contrast, that to conceive of identity in this way is already to naturalize (neutralize) the rhizome as figure rather than to engage it as a matter of processes of becoming—as transcorporeal. Glissant seems attached to a subject-centered vocabulary of becoming as *identity*, the body as cohesive (coherent) unit in relation to another such unit to the extent that such relation with the other across space retains the logic of both the tree and the root. Grosz argues for feminist theories working to reconceive the body “as a discontinuous, non-totalized series of processes, organs, lows, energies, corporeal substances and incorporeal events, intensities, durations” (170). This is to say that feminist rhizomatic thinking provides a framework akin to feminist materialisms conceiving of a “non-teleological notion of direction, movement, and process” in material relations of becoming (170). The body does not precede its relations to an other—indeed, the body *is* by relations, as networks of processes in which the body takes shapes that are “diversified, non-aligned or aligned only in provisional or temporary networks, in non-hierarchical, rhizomatic connections” (Grosz 170). Not only does this speak to readings of the body, but this equally speaks to readings of political bodies, social bodies, and (I argue) senses of place as such provisionally affiliated formations. Grosz’s feminist rhizomatic connections offer that political struggles benefit from such a reconceptualization of the body, in a way that allows that Pineau’s text forms a decolonial feminist critique of postcolonial nationalisms. Grosz argues that “multiplicity is not a pluralized notion of identity [...] but is rather an ever-changing, non-totalizable collectivity, an assemblage defined, not by its abiding identity or principle of sameness over time, but through its capacity to undergo permutations and transformations, that is, its dimensionality” (170). Multiplicity is not, here, a collection of things—nor a sequence of reproduced sameness. Multiplicity, here, is a way of seeing the nonlinear movements that form bodies as such in time (space). And rhizomatics is a name for “a method and an objective,” then, by which forms of speech, thought, and action can take shape durationally and in relation to the precise locality of assembling (assembled) bodies already as multiplicities (174). The political body is then likewise (re)drawn as a locational and durational assemblage, a multiplicity that defies the idea of coalition as solidarity, as shared national identity, or as identity politics. This kind of political body escapes inscription where historiography depends on the temporalized lineation and affixation of bodies, generally.

I will add that I diverge from Grosz’s framework in the idea of rhizomatics as an objective—which reifies teleology—and in her reading of the spatial dimensions of the rhizome.



Grosz concludes that the rhizome is “based on cartography, not a reproduction or tracing [...] but map-making or experimentation” (174). On the one hand, I agree that this map-making as experimentation makes good sense as a pragmatics; on the other hand, I contend that the insistence on mapping as oppositional or superior to “tracing” fails to challenge the ways that the emblems of the tree and the root already always naturalize relations *as mappable*. Let me say this otherwise: in my reading, the idea of tracing relations in Pineau’s rhizomatic (re)weavings allows that I am moving along circuits and routes of the text where narrations of self, ancestry, and senses of place constellate diversified, non-hierarchical, and contingent movements—or a directionality that is neither teleological nor continuous, neither the arrow nor the circle. I am not naming the places as such, nor mapping the objects in their places—that pragmatics of mapping, I find, upholds (patrilineal) ownership over bodies and lands in the way that cartography draws two-dimensional charts of otherwise durational (contingent, flowing) formations of space (materiality) and reconvenes those spaces as objects affixed in time (place) thus reifying temporal sequence. Tracing allows that these shapes (bodies, places) can and will change with each new pass that the reader makes over their forms—tracing relations in Pineau allows the co-presence of palimpsests, disarticulations, frayages, and opacities. I do not seek to affix the forms that I read into a chart of their relations. In the same way that Tinsley sites eco-erotics and King orients toward shoaling, I trace the movements that shape the bodies, memories, and spaces (places) in Pineau’s text and read for how they are activated and (re)produced in Man Ya’s desire to return to her beloved *jardin créole*. Grosz adds that, in rhizomatic relations (contrasted with hierarchical, binarily structured relations), “desire is what produces, what makes things, forges connections, creates relations” (171). Desire (re)weaves. Desire is nonlinear, stretching and recomposing forms (bodies, places) in ways that defy linear temporality and that reconvene the spatial as a network of (multispecies) material assemblage. Desire speaks rhizomatically, from a (feminist materialism) sense of place. This sense of place, then, is (re)forged in eco-erotic love—in excess of heterosexual (heteropatriarchal) notions of love (which I will explain further in the next section) and activated by a kind of desire that finds roots and routes of extension and incorporation that shuttle, crisscross, and move dimensionally without endings (without telos). While I read the language in Pineau’s text through this rhizomatic orientation, I want to take care that I am not retelling it as a discourse said to define the lived material experience of the Antillean grandmother—this is not a story of her exogenous alterity or of her Creole woman’s

worldview as special case. Rather, I stage my reading through Grosz's rhizomatics, Tinsley's eco-erotics, and King's shoaling as a way of beginning to re-orient Pineau's work in terms of feminist materialisms. As such, reading the repetitions and multiplicities of the minute expressions that I trace here is my way of signaling the persistent middle-space of the rhizome as material relations without beginning or end, without origin or telos. I retell the story of Man Ya's desire to return to that *jardin créole* through the nonlinear, multiple sense-abilities of a rhizomatic rootedness in a place sensed not as space (as surface) for human becoming but sensed as relation, and her return to that place thus sensible (reasonable as well as able to be sensed) as a *yet-to-come* forged at once in the relations between self and ancestor and in the dimensional movements of the language of the text.

Constrained by the linear writing of this kind of scholarship, I must take these expressions one at a time despite my desire to present them in a simultaneity of apprehension (the way they assemble in thought). First, the expression *l'aller et le virer* transcreates the conventional back-and-forth or linear *coming and going* (*l'aller et le venir*) into a *going and turning about*, the verb *virer* denoting the nautical movement of tacking or turning through water where straight lines of travel are unreasonable when moved by (moving with) the wind and the waves. The movement is thus more like a shuttling, persistent (re)turning than a linear there and back again. Pineau tells us that "Pour [Man Ya], le temps de France se déploie sur une musique trop savant qu'elle ne veut pas garder dans son esprit" and instead "elle préfère rester dans son temps de Guadeloupe, qui balance entre pluie et soleil, entre l'aller et le virer" (Pineau 100, 101) ("For Man Ya, the time of France is marshalled by an overly serious music that she doesn't want to live by," "she prefers to inhabit the time of Guadeloupe, which oscillates between rain and sun, between going and [turning about]"[73]).<sup>64</sup> Man Ya doesn't *want* to assimilate to the shape and pressures of the progressive time of France, she prefers to remain within (during) this shuttling and multiple time of Country (le Pays, Guadeloupe)—a going and turning about, a turning toward Creole horizons where past and future are related spatially. The time of France is that linear, conquering march forward whereas the time of Guadeloupe as a going and turning about—incanting the shape of a spiral such that the yet-to-come re-turning is related spatially, is conjugated with all times rather than sequenced as spatial points on a linear *timeline*. In this way, Pineau's use of *l'aller et le virer* invokes (nonlinear) futurity in its expression of a movement that includes sensitivity to the place within (during) which beings articulate and disjoin and

rejoin. It is in the expectation of a linear, rational, sequenced experience of time that Man Ya's feeling of exile takes hold; and it is in the repetition of *l'aller et le virer* that Man Ya's desire for other futurities is legible as a flexible yet reliably durable mode of speaking better tomorrows into being, in the present. In the reprisal of this nonlinear temporality, Pineau's repetitions of *l'aller et le virer* orient the text toward a Creole futurity otherwise than that written by the marching time of France. In the enunciation of *desire*, where Man Ya is heard as not *wanting* to accept its governance over the seasons and expectations of her life, the narrative positions her speech—her oral intelligence—as a pathway for a Creole futurity enacted (materially) through nonlinear and multiple relations and movements. And, as well, this enunciation asserts an alternative reading of time (place) that registers experiences of other climates than the global north and experiences of other ways of relating with the world than the colonial-modern notion of progress and lineal kinship. A sense of nonlinear futurity emerges in the actualization of temporal experience as simultaneous (rather than sequence), desire then figuring futurity as a *yet-to-come* formation cumulatively forged and reforged in a presentness of speaking (storytelling).<sup>65</sup>

With even greater epistemological charge, in my reading, Pineau drops the idiosyncratic French expression *au mitan de* all throughout her narration—spiraling and accumulating through figures such as the garden, the trees, Man Ya's body, and through an at once of time and space.<sup>66</sup> The genealogy of the word *mitan* is significant, as well—indeed, the proliferation of the expression in Pineau's narration is at once subtle and jarring in part due to the term's etymological movements (its shuttling roots and routes). Dating from the twelfth century, the word *mitan* is oddly attributed to both vernacular Occitan and to Latin, defined simply as a spatial middle or “milieu” yet in the context of either a prepositional *temporal location* (as in “à mi-chemin,” or “midway,” “mid-path”) or a *temporal duration* (as in “pendant ce temps-là,” “during this time”).<sup>67</sup> However, in *2000 Néologismes créoles*, a glossary developed by Raphaël Confiant, one of the Creolist authors of the *Éloge de la Créolité*, the word “mitann” is asserted as a Creole neologism and defined as “un intermède” (an “interlude”), privileging a durational, temporal middle.<sup>68</sup> In relation with the past participle “mitanné” (translated into the French verb expression “arbitrer,” to arbitrate), the glossary thus suggests an intermediary force of intervention or a durational *arbitrating* in this prepositional *au mitan*. In this sense, the expression is not simply marking a fixed middle point, nor a neutral middle ground (as passive space), nor a *meanwhile* kind of temporal duration marking a (Newtonian) universal flow of

time. The expression denotes an active in-between-ness marshaling the shape of time-space through this sense of intervention, mediation, and arbitration. The Creole *mitanné* actively verbalizes and conjugates *mitan* and arbitrates this middling time-space prepositionally as at once *location* and *duration*. The expression fails to translate into English where such lexical compounding seems inescapable. For this reason, I will refer to a not-fully-satisfying *within-during* and *time-space* as markers of a sort of conjugated, nonlinear epistemology whereby it is possible to conceive of time-space, location-duration, and body-place as always already interwoven, yet kaleidoscopically diffracted, and where it is also possible to sense the material-discursive as a relational network. And this, I find, bespeaks a decolonial feminist sense-ability in its evocation of an always already woven body-place. In my reading of the shape of kinship in Pineau's storytelling, this sense of relationality is interwoven with a palimpsestic or accumulative emphasis on Man Ya's Creole language and stories that open up the colorful world of multiplicity and Creole futurities.

In the Creolists' use of *mitan*, Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant indicate a space cleared for Créolité within existing national delimitations. The Creolists open their praise of Créolité by naming it as an attitude, or “une sorte d'enveloppe mentale au mitan de laquelle se bâtitra notre monde” (a kind of mental envelope within-during which we will build our world) (my translation) (Bernabé et al 13). It is an *irruption*, an externalization of internality, a vigilance articulated and enacted from *within* the patrilineality of the postcolonial. But Créolité is, in this formulation, filled with an exclusively human sense-ability, which is simply to say (once again) that to conceive of the human in this way—developing an internal subjectivity, an identity, against the gendered landscape of a place-as-nation—reinstates the coloniality of power in postcolonial Antillean thought.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, describing this intermediary *mitan* in terms of a mental envelope—as attitude, vigilance—asserts a subject-centered form of agency and thus discursively un-weaves the relationality of processes of becoming otherwise so saliently registered in Glissant's figure of the rhizome. The Creolists use of *au mitan de* fails to capture the multiplicities of rhizomatic relations and seems to settle for human subjects moving along a universal flow of time, across passive (feminized) space, toward the telos of their self-actualization as a coherent body driven by conscious thought. By contrast, my reading of Pineau's use of *au mitan de* traces a shape of time and a relation of space, or a conjugated time-space, wherein the human assembles with the more-than-human kin and their bodies are co-

constituted *by* this provisional relation in time (place). This is to say that Pineau's text narrates the body-place locus as a location-duration of activity—not a force or attitude controlled (consciously) by bodies synthetically related across an empty between, but a force of arbitration (re)forged in that relation in time-space.

Pineau's use of *au mitan de* narrates Man Ya's relations with place—specifically, with her *jardin créole*—in terms of a rhizomatic shape of kinship relations that (re)produce resiliency and radical joy outside of the (linear) march of the time of France and in excess of the residual coloniality of gender in the Creolists' formulations. Pineau characterizes Man Ya's joy through how “l'arbre de vie qui croît *au mitan de* son estomac pour retenir son cœur, comme un nid dans ses branches, sourit et fait des fleurs” (Pineau 66, my emphasis) (“The tree of life growing [within-during] her stomach to hold her heart like a nest in its branches smiles and puts out flowers” [46]).<sup>70</sup> The tree of life is rooted *within-during* the relation that (re)forges Man Ya's body-place. For Man Ya, joy is not generated by *things*; joy is generated in *relations*. This is the location (duration) where she knows how to smile: in her garden—in her relations with trees, plants, animals, the sky, the sun, water. Pineau locates Man Ya's joy in a present-tense duration of the tree smiling and flowering. And this tree holds her heart like a nest in its branches. Interestingly, Pineau circumvents figurative language here, excepting that the heart is linked to a nest by simile; the tree of life is declaratively growing, pushing, smiling, as a material factness of her being. And, recalling the ways that she hoists her grandchildren into the branches (relatives) of her tree in storytelling, to better view the horizon, this moment becomes one not of a fantastical vision of a tree inside the body but rather one of a material relation, of a felt reality that eludes translation (extraction, abstraction) *out of* Creole for the reason that the tree of life is *au mitan de son estomac*: just as her body is *within-during* the tree of (planetary) life, so the tree of life is *within-during* her body.<sup>71</sup> All branches and roots intersect and trace relations across, among, and between, with no definitive divisions, no finite beginnings and endings, no erasure of more-than-human (other-than-blood) relations. The tree is kin, likewise called “les ancêtres,” and the grandmother is “le manman-arbre” (Pineau 136, 137) (“the ancestors,” “the mama-tree” [102])—rhizomatically related in provisionally forged assemblages, in location-duration within-during time-space, in an active middling arbitration of body-place relations.

Of the many uses throughout the text, most noteworthy are such expressions relating Man Ya to her garden and trees. Juxtaposing movements through a sort of conjugated time-space

within-during which Man Ya goes and turns about, while in exile, Pineau assures us that “Elle peut marcher dans les allées de sa jeunesse le matin et s’asseoir *au mitan de* son jardin le midi” (Pineau 84) (“She can walk in the paths of her youth in the morning and sit *in the middle* of her garden at noon” [59]). Pineau further narrates this old tree as “le vieil arbre, enraciné *au mitan de* son estomac, sur lequel ses bronches frissonnent comme les oiseaux d’après-cyclone” (Pineau 129, my emphasis) (“the old tree, rooted *in the middle* of her stomach, on which her bronchioles shiver like birds after a hurricane” [95]). The lungs (*bronches*) of this old tree tremble, shiver figuratively *like* birds after a hurricane, deep in a felt reality of exile yet where the tree here affirms Man Ya’s material (rhizomatic) rootedness in this body-place relation. The organs for breathing—respiring, shuttling, forging, weaving materiality in and out of the body—are held up, supported, by this tree of life, this tree-kin. The wind and waves of the storm (exile) make the lungs quake, but this old tree is rooted in Man Ya just as she is rooted in it. Ultimately, then, Pineau’s uses of the expression *au mitan de* arbitrate a nonlinear, shuttling, and conjugated time-space of the *manman-arbre* and substantiate her storytelling as declarative of material-energetic relations that forge and reforge the body-place. Regenerated in and by both the Creole storytelling in the narration and its narrative movements in Pineau’s text, the expression orients the narrative in terms that escape legibility to an enclosed worldview *and* that exceed the patrilineal tendencies of postcolonial Créolité. I read the expression in Pineau’s text through at once a critique and an embrace of the Creolists’ formulation, to be clear. I read the embrace of the intermediary vigilance and force of Créolité while yet situating its force in a (feminist) rhizomatics of kinship relations materialized in a conjugated time-space body-place to the extent that translations into the expression fail where such grammatical synthesis (compounding) is inescapable. To weave the expression *au mitan de* in the ways and frequency present in the text, Pineau narrates an unfixed (open-ended) sense of place and does so in such a way as to materialize a sense of conjugated time-space in which Man Ya’s relations with her tree-kin posit an intellectual paradigm *within-during* which the human (the individual body) is no longer abstracted or excised by a mechanics of language but rather maintains relations in and with more-than-human as well as past and future ancestors through the shuttling, rhizomatic wovenness of Man Ya’s Creole language and storytelling.

Pineau’s framing of the narrative with descriptions of the *jardin créole* becomes sensible in excess of its initial charge as spectral *irreality*, in relation to this rhizomatic shape of kinship.

The rhizomatic shape comes into view through tracing (again and again, yet never twice the same) the diffractions and accumulations of Creole expressions and storytelling that collectively weave Man Ya and her garden rooted not in linear ordering but rather in the shuttling movements of nonlinear within-during relations. It is a logic of multiplicity, a relational logic; it is materially real in this perspective and experience of language and ecology; it is multispecies, rhizomatic kinship and conjugated time-space, inflected by Créolité yet without the patrilineal baggage of the Creolists' formulations and figures; it is a (decolonial feminist) story of a kaleidoscopic totality of (multispecies) being rooted rhizomatically in Man Ya's *jardin créole*.

### **(Re)Weaving, in the Garden (Memory)**

The concluding section of Pineau's memorial novel, "Couleurs," begins with a return—a section repeating the title "Délivrance" first used for the section narrating Man Ya's arrival in France (in exile). Here, Man Ya returns to Guadeloupe—returns, as in a *turning about*, to be sure. Pineau tells her reader that three years then pass, one of the rare denotations of clocked time in the novel. In Man Ya's absence, the young Pineau begins to think, dream, and write about the marvelousness of that *place* and the many beings inhabiting Man Ya's garden. But it is not until the closing of the novel, the final three pages, that Pineau narrates her own (re)turning to that place. After a lengthy route across the Atlantic, Pineau (and her immediate family) arrives at a "Retour au pays pas natal" (return to the non-native land) and spends an indeterminate period of time in Martinique.<sup>72</sup> This sub-section title recreates the title of Aimé Césaire's 1939 *Cahier du retour au pays natal* (notebook of a return to the native land) with a difference: Pineau acknowledges that her own return to the Antilles is not to the land of her birth—it is not, in fact, a re-turn at all (I maintain it is a *turning*). Finally arriving in "Guadeloupe," the ultimate sub-section of this memorial novel, Pineau stages the ending as an opening—a going and turning about (*l'aller et le virer*), a turning to a home *place* that I read against the Césaire allusion as dissimilar from a birth *land*. The idea of a home *place* in my reading describes a place made home by (familial) relations within-during the transcorporeal body-place. It is unfixed, open, and assembling. In contrast, a birth *land* narratively marks the place as space as the (feminized, material) coherent body from which an individual subject emerges and against which he acts in (progressive) time and toward a telos of self-actualization. Through Pineau's narrative turning toward matricultural networks of processes rooted rhizomatically in a relational logic, she tells a

common story of exile, but with a decolonial feminist difference implicitly marking the uncanny, gendered logic of a (linearized) return to a (feminized) birth *land*. The movement in Pineau's text is, as I have been arguing, a dynamic and shuttling turning rooted in a home-place—the *jardin créole*—rather than routed in the (patri)linearity of the postcolonial turn to nationalist notions of becoming. And it is in the multispecies kinship of the grandmother's garden that Pineau forges (weaves) her turning to that body-place familiarity.

Pineau narrates reconvening with her beloved Man Ya—in the beloved *jardin créole*. Upon seeing one another again, “Julia se mit à danser, chanter et crier” and “ses larmes disaient la joie et ses yeux brillaient différemment dans cette eau-là” (Pineau 214) (“Julia started to dance, sing, and shout” and “her tears expressed her joy, and her eyes shone differently in that eye water” [162]). The *passé simple* and *imparfait* verb tenses in the French speak volumes on the re-narration of this moment. Pineau asserts Man Ya's capacity for laughter and rejoicing within a formal literary lexicon, where the *passé simple* verb here, “se mit,” codifies the action (“started to”) in a tense reserved for written French. It is the exclusive domain of the literary—it delimits literariness. It is formal, never spoken—not oral. Where she had been unable to smile in France, registered in loose oral narration, here her joy is emphasized grammatically as a literal (biographical) fact. Moreover, the *imparfait* is the past tense commonly used (in both speech and writing) to narrate past conditions, repetitions, or habits and here describes Man Ya's tears speaking and her eyes shining. That her tears *were speaking* and her eyes *were shining* is thus written in the *imparfait* as durational—not a single event of speaking, but a condition or capacity for speech. So, her capacity for tears that speak and eyes that shine is documented in a conventionally literary lexicon and registers not simply an emotional state but an authoritative situatedness in Man Ya's capacities. Then and there, in this durational moment (place), Pineau turns to the garden: “Man Ya nous montrait tous ses bois, les alentours, la cour, l'amour de son jardin” (Pineau 216) (“Man Ya showed us all her woods, the surroundings, the yard, the love of her garden” [164]). Again in the *imparfait*, and not fully registered in the English translation, Man Ya *would show* us the love of her garden, Pineau says. There is a durational component to the narration—a location-duration of showing the love—rendering it effectively as an accumulation or repetition of her grandmother showing this love, this garden, this familial home-place. It is not, to be certain, a single moment in the past where Man Ya *nous a montré* the love of her garden (the *passé composé* verb form in this case asserting by contrast an event as a single



temporal point, now passed). It is an all-moments; it persists; it is not simply a *past* (passed) moment. Pineau narrates a durational quality of this love, a kind of love generated in and by the relations that Man Ya maintains with her garden and its multiplicity. In this eco-delic love, the text stages both a kind of multispecies kinship relation between Man Ya and the more-than-human beings in her garden and a form of memory work—re-membering—unindebted to the linear temporality by which colonial-modern epistemologies otherwise organize (and manage) bodies and lands. This is especially significant when read in relation to how Pineau opens her story with an epilogue insisting on the irreducibility of Man Ya’s story to distinctions between “Hasards de la mémoire” and “inventions” (Pineau, *epigraph*). Remembering is not, as it were, a matter of revisiting past moments in a conscious mind severed from the materiality of the body; remembering conjugates time-space, where the location-duration of the re-membering is in simultaneous relation with the memorialized moment as an articulation of presentness and as a desire for yet-to-come futurity made materially possible in the transcorporeal sensations of body-place relations. This is to say that the diegesis of the present shuttles within-during its relations with the diegesis of a (re)traced past (so to speak) and as the lively and active process of becoming where (when) the so-called future is continually being (re)forged. Pineau imbricates the moment of her writing the story in this past moment of reunion with Man Ya in the garden, and as a locational-durational sensation of the persistent love of ancestors—of (strange) kin remembered in the body-place location-duration (the way a river remembers the stretch and recomposition of its floods).

The enduring descriptions of the young author’s initial encounter with Man Ya’s *jardin créole* begin from this signaling of love and kinship. In the earlier retelling of her garden, the young Pineau and her siblings had remained suspicious of the marvelousness of the garden, of the tales and legends of the Antilles revived in Man Ya’s storytelling. Now, here, in Guadeloupe (in the kaleidoscopic Creole world of “Couleurs”), Pineau gathers—weaves, assembles—these before- and after-Man Ya descriptions of the garden, affirming Man Ya’s stories as something so much more than fable:

Soudain, elle enlaça un tronc d’arbre, et disparut dans ses branches. [...] En France, elle nous avait dit et redit qu’elle entraît dans les arbres ; ces paroles n’avaient pas crû en nous. A présent, elle était là-haut dans la lumière et nous en bas dessous l’ombrage, bien incapables de la rejoindre. Et l’insolence de sa vieillesse, sa science nature et la richesse de son jardin nous obligeaient à l’humilité. (Pineau 217)

[Suddenly she clasped the trunk of a tree and disappeared into its branches. [...] In France she had told us over and over that she climbed trees; those words had not taken root in us. And now, she was up there, in the light, and we were down here in the shadow, quite incapable of following her. And the insolence of her old age, her plain knowledge, and the richness of her garden obliged us to humility. [164]<sup>73</sup>]

In France, the children are—present tense—transported into the branches of the tree (to better view the horizon) through Man Ya’s storytelling. But believing the story, then, was superstition. In France, the legitimacy of her (Creole) stories had not (yet) taken root in the children. Now, as Pineau narrates, *now* Man Ya was (in the durational *imparfait*) up there in the light and her grandchildren below in the shadows, incapable of joining her. Man Ya is the one enlightened, radically; and the children, with all their formal French education, are the ones stuck in the shadows cast by Man Ya’s tree-kin. Not only is this a refutation of the kind of pedagogy that first put this little Black girl under the teacher’s desk as punishment for her physiognomy, but this is also the substantiation of the material and biographical real-ness of Man Ya’s ecological literacy. The black and white world instructs children that the (feminized) landscape is mute, de-animated, a material resource for man’s use (self-actualization); Man Ya’s language and stories instruct a multispecies kinship ontology by which the trees and every-being in the garden are sensed relationally and with multiple scales of time-space in view simultaneously. In the accumulation of these narrative location-durations in the garden, Man Ya’s intelligence suddenly takes shape for Pineau as materially real. This humility likewise bespeaks the ways that memory and bodily sensation co-constitute perception, in the sense that the memory of Man Ya’s earlier storytelling (the quasi-miraculousness of the garden) and the memory of the reunion with Man Ya in her garden are both reprised in the present-tense of Pineau writing. Now, Pineau says, *now* she can see these relations as materially real—and as indexical of Man Ya’s extensive science and literacy, albeit in modes that escape the legibility of linear (evolutionary) notions both of becoming-human and of literacy and intelligence. Man Ya’s oral intelligence—her storytelling—keeps these relations alive, lively, and Pineau re-members this liveliness through the colocation-duration of their reprisal in her writing. Pineau (re)forges Creole futurity in a conjugated relation of all times, rooted in her grandmother’s durable loving relations with her garden. In France, Man Ya’s intelligence was illegible as intelligence from the perspective and conditioning within that black and white worldview in which linear writing, nuclear families, and modern creature comforts represent the superior or most civilized forms of intelligence, kinship, and wealth.

Here, laughing in the light and in the embrace of the tree-kin, the audacity of her age, her natural sciences, and the richness of her garden oblige the children to humility. The durational love of Man Ya's garden is now legible as wealth and the multispecies kinship relations with her garden are legible as a science.

There are (at least) three different modes through which to consider this (eco-delic) love of the garden as wealth. First, the expression and practice of the *jardin créole* originates with small plots of land cultivated by enslaved and *marrons* Africans throughout the French colonies in the Americas. These informal, multispecies, chaotic (yet highly productive) gardens enabled degrees of freedom and supplemented the meager rations doled out by colonists.<sup>74</sup> The figure is characterized by its wild chaos and entangled multispecies diversity. Indeed, its biodiversity is precisely that which assures the richness—the resiliency—of the *jardin créole*. And this, I argue, is a form of ecological literacy held in Man Ya's woven Creole language and epistemology. The *jardin créole* defies the logic and escapes the legibility of the neatly demarcated, heavily pruned, segregated, and mono-cropped practices so familiar in the colonial-modern definition of agriculture, but it is also known for its representative multiplicity.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, to see the place as rich, alive, and resilient requires at once a durational-locational memory of those communities' stories and a way of reading memory work activated by that *yet-to-come desire*—a practice of literacy rooted (rhizomatically) in conjugated temporality, in body-place relations, in place as kin. Recall that Man Ya tells of this place, this place that misses her, where “toutes espèces d'arbres, plantes et fleurs se multiplient dans une verdure accablante, quasi miraculeuse, argentée ça et là d'une lumière qui ne diffuse qu'au seul cœur de Routhiers.”<sup>76</sup> It is rich *because* it is multiple. And it is a science (intelligence) because it reads the resiliency of multispecies diversity, persistent (flexible) kinship networks, and durable (durational) rhizomatic relations.

The second mode for thinking through the (eco-delic) love of the garden as wealth is that Man Ya felt precarious in France when (where) she was displaced from the foods and plant medicines that comprise a wealth of (orally transmitted) healthcare knowledge. Recall that she names all the plants and animals, calls them out to her grandchildren even in storytelling—she knows them familiarly, invokes them in the same way that a grandmother might show her grandchildren photos of ancestors and relatives. In this way, a multispecies kinship ontology rooted in an ethic of love teaches the material relations between beings—holds this relationality in view, in a simultaneity of time-space location-duration, and orients modes of reading toward

re-membling that this kind of kinship is wealth (wellbeing). In exchange for the corporeal energies of Man Ya's cultivation and the climatic inputs of the island, such as rain and nutritive decomposition, the beings in the garden (re)turn those energies to Man Ya as nourishment, medicine, and companionship (embrace, love). Man Ya nurtures these relations *as living relations*. This, I insist, is wealth—a wellness relative to the capacity to *read* the relations that co-constitute time-space, body-place, or even nature-culture entanglements.

Thirdly, despite comprising only three pages at the (open) ending of the novel, this memory of Man Ya in her tree stands out, Pineau tells her reader, in part because of the nonlinearity of the there-then location-duration. While describing Man Ya up in her tree, the grandchildren below in its shade, Pineau tells us:

Aucun de [mes] souvenirs ne se superposait avec cette de Man Ya qui riait tout là-haut, dans les branches de son arbre. D'un coup, comme toujours dans les moments de confusion, les temps se mirent à rebondir, grandes roues d'une cariole en caracoles et cabrioles sur une route de roches. (217)

[None of [my] memories could be superimposed on this Man Ya who was laughing, way up there, in the branches of her tree. All at once, as always in these moments of confusion, time began to bounce along, like great wheels of a cart that bumps and bounces on a rocky road. [164]]

Time has a way of bounding, bouncing back, or (radically) persisting—bounding into the past and stretching into the future *all at once*. This moment in Pineau's memory persists as a duration. It bounds into view again and again—or perhaps never really leaves her view. The memory of Man Ya laughing up in her tree, embraced by the branches of her kin and *argentée* by the quasi-miraculous light that diffuses there (and only there): like the turning of a spoked wheel, cavorting and bouncing over a rocky route, time is a *turning*. An open-ended movement of *going and turning about*. It is marked as a moment of confusion (or “embarrassment,” in the French—elided in the English translation); but the embarrassment locates Pineau's *humility*, humbled by Man Ya's teachings and her (fugitive) enlightenment.<sup>77</sup> And what makes this relationality sensible now to Pineau is the continual renewing and re-membling of the garden's love—of her grandmother showing the love of the garden, already rendered in nonlinear durational terms. Man Ya's Creole literacies clear a pathway for turning to multispecies kinship, a (re)turning within-during which all futures are possible including (most importantly) decolonial futures made materially real through the capacity to read the roots (routes) of multispecies kinship, a

(re)turning to modes of relationality that teach the *kaleidoscopic totality* (the wovenness) of the world. And in this narration of multispecies kinship, a deep and sustaining love is held in view—an enduring, familial love that likewise articulates a sustainable mode of being in and with the world precisely through those nourishing, loving, kinship relations.

### **(Re)Weaving, in the Memory (Garden)**

It is with this memory held in view that the *kaleidoscopic totality*—the world of colors—comes to inform my reading of a rhizomatic shape of kinship in Pineau’s text. Not only does the narration conjure a multiplicity of time-space and scales of perception (in the tree, horizon), but a multiplicity of genre emerges as part of the critical project as well. In this sense, the novel’s multiplicities exceed the novelistic, unsettle the self in the autobiographical, and assert decolonial feminist literary praxes through heterogeneous genre. Where linear writing instructs teleology, narratively marking narrativity through an obsession with origins and ends, so too oral storytelling instructs the rhizomatic tracing (and retracing and retracing, with differences in each retelling) that I have been attempting. Where a linear narrative of becoming likewise marks life according to this same anxiety over beginnings and endings (“under the tyranny of singular horizon of time and space”), rhizomatic kinship instructs through “de patiences, d’accumulations, de répétitions, de piétinements, d’obstinations, où se mobiliseraient tous les genres littéraires (séparément ou dans la négation de leurs frontières)” (Bernabé et al 22) (“patiences, accumulations, repetitions, stagnations, obstinacies, where all literary genres [come together] (separately or in the negation of their limits)”[84]). That is, through the persistent, repetitive, accumulative work of re-membering (re-forging) the future. This kind of persistence, I argue, defies the categorial logic that seeks the figurative assignment of kinds—the arrow or the circle—and does so through the impossibility of the production of sameness. This is to say that oral intelligence—oral storytelling—materializes the kind of conjugated time-space by which Creole speech and action find authority in radical forms of joy and wealth.<sup>78</sup>

The narration of Man Ya’s exile in France has now moved through moments (durations) of loose orality, interwoven or shifting voices, conjugated temporalities, and implicit critique of the linearity that names Man Ya’s ways anachronistic, outmoded, primitive, backwards. Then, in the closing three pages of the novel—following Pineau’s reunion with Man Ya and her canny

entrance into the trees—Pineau inscribes these otherwise epistemes of Creole wealth and intelligence in an at-once declaration of the wealth of Man Ya’s orality:

Alors, nous comprîmes réellement ce que Man Ya nous avait apporté... Sentes défrichées de son parler créole. Sentiments marcottés en nous autres, jeunes bois étiolés. Senteurs révélées. Elle nous avait donné : mots, visions, rais de soleil et patience dans l’existence. Nous avons désigné les trois sentinelles, passé, présent, futur, qui tiennent les fils du temps, les avait mêlés pour tisser, jour après jour, un pont de corde solide entre Là-Bas et le Pays. (217-218)

[Then we really understood what Man Ya had done for us... Cleared the paths of her Creole language. Layered feelings in the rest of us, pale, drooping young forests. Revealed perfumes. She had given us: words, visions, rays of sunlight, and patience in life. She had pointed out to us the three sentinels, past, present, future, that hold the threads of time, had twisted them together to weave for us, day after, day, a solid rope bridge between Over There and Back Home. [165]]

Once again, Pineau authorizes Man Ya’s ways of knowing and being through the *passé simple* verb tenses reserved for the literary. This is not the ventriloquizing of a Creole grandmother’s rudimentary orality—in this very formal literary tense, Pineau’s narration shifts the discernment of oral intelligence away from a mere reenactment or transcription of Man Ya’s speech and storytelling. In this literary tense, Pineau asserts Man Ya’s story into a literary world, into a world literature, but through a means that refuses to exoticize or affix what is an otherwise flexible and rhizomatic mode of speech and action. Pineau is here saying that “we understood” (“nous comprîmes,” in the *passé simple*) formally, materially, factually, what Man Ya had brought her grandchildren, drawing the narration of Man Ya’s oral intelligence into a literary legibility as the passage of knowledge, memory, and kinship specifically in and through her Créole speech (“son parler créole”). Man Ya’s speech is the explicit conduit (route, root) for the (re)forging of a kind of futurity in which multiplicity, memory work, and rhizomatic (multispecies) kinship materialize joy and wealth (wellness). And this, importantly, by repetition—by the minute, quotidian, repetition, “jour après jour,” of her speech and actions. The way that Pineau narrates this speech and action as a practice of weaving further affirms the episteme of multiplicity shaping Man Ya’s worldview—her readings of rhizomatic kinship, conjugated time-space, and body-place relations. The marvelously solid rope-bridge twists together the threads of time toward open-ended (decolonial) futures of assembled spaces, France and Guadeloupe now collocating (durationally) in a way that resists the cooption of the island to the marching time of conquering France. These plural pathways, moreover, opened through

(woven) speech and action, effectively defy linear directionality in such a way as to open multiple horizons of Creole joy and wealth—these plural pathways dismantle the “tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space” (to repeat Trujillo’s line) otherwise adjudicating the relations between France and its overseas (post)colonies. The *passé simple* in this passage thus mediates the generic multiplicities of Pineau’s memorial novel—her narration shuttling between the formal mode asserting literary authority in the domain of francophone (world) literature and the informal (so to speak) orality that unsettles both the linearity and the possibility of generic unicity in the text.

Pineau’s narration of her grandmother’s exile destabilizes delimitations of genre at once as a matter of relearning (or unlearning) the boundaries drawn by the black and white world and as a question of what it means to write (that is, to translate) a life. Pineau writes life as the persistent weaving (and re-weaving) of heterogeneous genres, shuttling between what the author describes in the novel’s epigraph as the coexistence—or co-constitution, even—of lives: “Ici, l’essential voisine les souvenirs adventices. / Il n’y a ni héros ni figurants. / Ni bons ni méchants. / Seulement l’espérance en de meilleurs demains” (“Here, the essential is side by side with casual reminiscences. / There are neither heroes nor minor players. / Neither good nor evil men. Only a hope for better tomorrows”). In other words, the act of reprising her grandmother’s story becomes a site of authority on experiences of the world narrated through a relational logic that refuses to categorize and linearize the complex locational-durational assemblages of a life. Pineau’s epigraph makes clear that there is no aim or goal, no underlying moralization on how one thing may have led to another and now lessons have been learned, no coherent categories. The ways in which Pineau describes weaving a marvelously solid rope-bridge out of the threads of time, and authorizing that conjugated temporality in literary language, substantiates the narrative of that ancestor’s life as co-constituting with the author’s own. There is no endpoint of self-actualization envisaged here on some distant (singular) horizon; there is only a hope for better tomorrows. A desire. The memorial components of the text are reconvened through autobiographical language, and the autobiographical likewise reconvened through oral or spoken French and Creole, which together mediate these swellings and shifts in the text and orient it toward a kind of generic heterogeneity that collapses the binary of memoir-autobiography genre (gender) and that likewise refuses to shape that life through the narrative markers of normative linear directionality. It is not a line (not a lineage) that connects Pineau to her beloved Man Ya: it

is repetitions, *des piétinements*, accumulations of locations-durations whose features are formed in the perception, itself formed where memory and sensation meet. Man Ya's life, memorialized and narrated through Pineau's authorship (authority), seems to acknowledge through this generic heterogeneity that something is left out, something is left opaque in the translation of her life into linear writing or into the logic of the black and white world. In a non-identical context, Trujillo says as much in relation to retranslating-as-re-reading life-writing through nonlinear temporalities. This move, in Trujillo's work, enables the reader to abandon (or unlearn) the notion of a singular source of authority or authorship. Indeed, to conceive of any life as having singular authorship is to affirm the categorial logic of linear temporal History and to accept the *tyranny of life under a singular horizon of time and space*. Pineau authorizes opacity in Man Ya's story, her worldview, yet does so through a narrative (generic) heterogeneity that (gloriously) fails to reproduce that singular horizon by refusing to write that life into a particular genre, into a particular delimited category of being. That Man Ya's story takes shape in this way in relation to her *jardin créole* further articulates both the opening up of a world of colors—of a kaleidoscopic totality, a multiple quasi-miraculous verdancy—and the collective authorship of lives (bodies, places).

Pineau's narration encourages a kind of engagement with Man Ya's knowledge as a science, an intellect, despite its generic (gendered, racialized) illegibility within the parameters of a world literature defined through temporalized history. Indeed, Pineau takes care to notify her readers that in that space cleared by Man Ya's Creole speech is also the recognition that intellectual authority is vested in part by the power accorded to literacy—as linear writing. But Man Ya's knowledge operates outside of the frame of reference (outside the scope of legibility) of the colonial-modern—and not so as an archaism or ignorance—as an opacity, an illegibility, an alternative form of literacy that, in its material facticity, exceeds the limits of a colonial-modern intellect stuck in a monolingual, monolinear view of the world as a series of events (History, taking place against a backdrop of nature). Man Ya's story tells of a way of seeing (and being and knowing) the world as a network (a rhizome) of relations:

A l'époque, bien sûr, ce qu'elle nous offrait semblait inintéressant : pièces inutiles dans une trop grande maison, fades marinades d'un passé dépassé, manies de vieille femme, paroles créoles de négresse campagnarde, lubies et dérades, sentines de siècles d'esclavage. Savants, nous voulions à toute force, lui apprendre à lire et à écrire, pour la tirer des ténèbres où nous la sentions embâclée. Selon nous, poser les dires sur du papier, tracer des lettres à l'encre définissait la connaissance dans son entier, marquait



l'évolution. Et là, quelques années plus tard, au bas de cet arbre, nos certitudes périlclitaient. Tout notre beau savoir déboulait derrière les prunes que Man Ya voltigeait. Et soudain, nous étions parés à tout entendre, à écouter et empiler pour l'avenir. (Pineau 218)

[At the time, of course, what she was offering us seemed uninteresting: useless rooms in a house that was too big, tasteless marinades of an outmoded past, an old woman's funny ways, a black country woman's Creole sayings, whims and wanderings, bilge from centuries of slavery. Educated, we wanted, at all costs, to teach her to read and write, to take her out of the darkness where we felt she was stuck. To our mind, to be able to put down statements on paper, to trace letters in ink, was the entire definition of knowledge, and a sign of progress. And here, several years later, at the foot of this tree, our certitude was in jeopardy. All our fine learning was rolling away behind the apples that Man Ya tossed down. And suddenly we were prepared to hear everything, to listen and to stack up for the future. [165]<sup>79</sup>]

At the time, when she was young, Pineau advises that, *bien sûr* (of course), they sensed Man Ya's modes of being and knowing and doing as the "fades marinades d'un passé dépassé"—dull dressings of an outmoded past. In contrast to the material comforts of the black and white world, Man Ya's Créolité indexed a mode of being that the children understood as affixed in the past, as obsolete, undesirable, or even unenjoyable; as *passed*; as an impediment to their futures. This is what they were taught in the black and white world. Perhaps most impactfully, that education also taught that modernization is the singular (linear) pathway toward a more evolved and intelligent—and wealthy—future. And yet, that same modernity of the black and white world is built on wealth generated by the labors of enslaved Africans and on lands stolen from displaced (and murdered) Indigenous peoples.<sup>80</sup> That same modernity designs the pedagogical practices that standardize student outputs and that put the young Pineau under her teacher's desk for reasons of her supposedly transgressive physiognomy. That same modernity excludes Man Ya's present-tense mode of being and categorizes it as pre-modern—representing her ways as out of place(time) in the modern world. That same modernity enforces the silencing and exploitation, in the interest of economic growth, of those more-than-human relations that Man Ya senses as kin. The teachings of the black and white world determine that Man Ya is locked in a darkness and that alphabetization will bring her into the light—*Enlighten* her, instruct her in the rational (liberal humanist) worldview. And, Pineau tells us, the grandchildren initially wanted nothing more than to teach Man Ya to read and write (in standard French), to free her from that dark place, to draw her out of the shadows where they thought she was stuck ("embâclée").<sup>81</sup> But

now, in the enduring (persistent) memory of standing at the base of the tree in which Man Ya moves with ease and laughs, the certainties of that black and white worldview crumble, collapse.<sup>82</sup>

What is further striking here is that Pineau is emphasizing how the grandchildren were as yet unable to account for the notion that better tomorrows are opened up for them, the inheritors of the history of slavery who are also the future ancestors of Créolité, precisely in (during) that supposedly outmoded mode of being—that it is by the *piétinements, jour après jour*, of Creole language and storytelling, in the weaving of the threads of time to bridge geographic space, in multispecies kinship, in conjugated time-space, that such “meilleurs demains” are (trans)created.<sup>83</sup> Because it is here, in this passage, in this moment of humility standing below Man Ya up in the branches of her tree-kin, that Pineau avers that all the perceived certainties of that black and white world collapsed. Moreover, it is precisely in the space of in-betweenness, *au mitan de* Man Ya’s garden—Man Ya up in her tree-kin—that this transformation takes place. It is in the sensation—the sensational realism, the felt reality—of Man Ya’s capacious knowledge and worldview that conjugated relations of time-space, self-other, flesh-wood, come to be sensed instead as materially real. In contrast to the literacy strictly apprehended as linear writing, and codified via a logic that relates rather than separates time-space and matter-discourse, Pineau sees here now that Man Ya’s intelligence is yet more capacious, more dynamic, more flexible, more persistent, and finally more full with the possibilities of Black joy and wealth than the limiting, categorial, always-already divided up shape of time, space, self, other, body, place. And this, for the reason that Man Ya’s Creole—her oral intelligence—facilitates multiple ways of seeing and being with the world. In this persistent and flexible relational logic, the world is a multiplicity, a rhizome with no beginning or end, open horizons. It is in the re-remembering of this memory, as well, that Pineau articulates this sense of literacies not based on linear writing (alphabets) through which nonlinear shapes of time-space, self-other, and body-place—clumsily compounded in English—name the relations (rather than naming objects) and make sensible that shuttling and flexing network of entanglement of all life so vibrantly expressed in the spectral multiplicities of the *jardin créole*.

Reading this passage here, with the image of Man Ya’s *jardin créole* from the first passage that I cited hanging spectrally over it, as promised, necessitates (I argue) a weaving/reading interpretative practice. In other words, the final three pages of the novel take

shape through their conjugated, durational-locational relation to those memories of Man Ya's storytelling narrated in the opening section of the novel. The quasi miraculousness of the garden and the tree-kin, the rope bridge woven with the threads of time, the pathway cleared through Creole language and orality: all come into focus as a kind of eco-feminist practice. And, in a rhizomatic kinship relation, (re)weaving this mode of re-membering the love of the garden in her narration asserts Man Ya's ways of knowing and being as a (flexible, shoaling) rubric for the (re)forging of decolonial futures. Through Pineau's literary (re)weaving, the spectral world of multiplicity and multispecies kinship is sensible as materially real in excess of the globally legible modern worldview imbricated in the systems that delimit Man Ya's Creole speech and *inalphabétisation* as markers of ignorance, as "fleeting and unmoored" ("lubies et dérades"). Perhaps it makes sense, in the anxious patrilineal logic of colonial-modern power geometries, to discursively allocate Man Ya's intelligence to a pre-modern evolutionary mode of legend and superstition because, as this reading finds, that rhizomatic kinship reproduces extensive networks of material and discursive resiliency, persistence, and wellness that escape the tyranny of the colonial-modern system that seeks the subjection of (seeks to "throw under") all bodies and lands. Man Ya's worldview, as narrated, conceives of and describes the world as an open set of relations, as an open multiplicity, such that to sense the self as a familial relation of the trees already denotes something more than a simple use relation: it is a love.<sup>84</sup> It is a kinship. A kinship whose shape is not traceable as a *bloodline* but rather whose shape is traceable as this sort of rhizomatic assembling of materialities that stretch and recompose together, marvelously, within-during space-time (conjugated time). The rhizomatic shape of kinship expressed through Pineau—through Man Ya woven with Pineau—persists through its diffuse and branching networks, through persistently forging and reforging (re-weaving) relations activated by multiplicity. It is a network connected by shuttling and diasporic roots (routes) that hold memory in the (rhizomatic) body and that materialize enduring (if yet-to-come) Creole joy and wealth.

### ***Son jardin est plein de sa présence...***

Pineau is preparing her reader for the future more than telling her about the past. In the final three pages of the novel, Pineau has told her reader about the collapse of the binary structure of thought and perception conditioned through the black and white world; Man Ya's Créole orality has incontrovertibly opened up a world of kaleidoscopic multiplicities and colors and alternative

literacies; and the young Pineau has now arrived in Guadeloupe, has now been shown *l'amour de son jardin*. Because it is here, in the passage narrating her sense of humility and readiness, standing below Man Ya up in the branches of her tree-kin, that Pineau avers that all the perceived certainties of that black and white world collapse. It is precisely in the duration-location of Man Ya's *jardin créole* that this transformation takes shape. It is in the sensation—the felt reality—of Man Ya's capacious knowledge and worldview that her oral intelligence, multispecies kinship relations, and memory work become legible as (alternative) literacies of self, ancestor, and place. In contrast to linear writing, linear historicity, and linear social evolution, Pineau sees here, now (in conjunction with there, then), that Man Ya's intelligence is yet more capacious, more dynamic, more flexible, more persistent, and finally more full with the possibilities of joy, wealth, and futurity than the colonial-modern, Manichean, always-already divided up objects of time, space, body, place, culture, nature. Because of the ways that Pineau articulates her grandmother's Creole oral intelligence, multispecies kinship relations, and memory work toward insurrecting better (decolonizing) tomorrows by speaking and teaching them into being *today*, Pineau's French-language memorial novel offers a foundation for a decolonizing language and literature studies generated in a multilingual and hemispheric American literary world. To carry Man Ya's teachings into English literature studies means to (belatedly) apprehend a story of the Americas yet more attuned to the multitude of languages, places, and ways of being that produce the hemisphere as such. Moreover, this kind of multilingual, hemispheric, American studies dislocates the production of the idea of Americanness from the purely (and a-historically homogenous) Anglophone genealogy and re-spatializes the story of the Americas in coordination with the many routes (and roots) of the hemisphere's making. Indeed, a multilingual, transnational, hemispheric perspective opens up alternative readings of global-local dialectics and manifests decolonial pedagogies in the turning to the local body-place entanglement as a re-membering of sustainable and ethical modes of relating globally to other people and the planet. To read the (non)ending of Pineau's text as a finality would be to read through the rules of the black and white world in the sense that to read death as the end of the line is to accept the same logic that conflates linear writing with evolution. Allow me to say this otherwise: within a worldview that senses kinship across species and that expresses time-space as conjugated, death is not an ending—merely a transformation. The body, related spatially, does not end so much as transform its substance into and among

those other bodies with which it shares a kinship, an ecology. Moreover, to conceive of conjugated time-space makes possible the sensation (perception) of multiple scales at once, such that there are no beginnings or endings, only an open set of transformations across all-times and all-places.

It is in the re-remembering of her grandmother's literacies that Pineau articulates a sense of kinship relations not based on (patri)lineality and that make sensible the rhizomatic, shuttling, and flexing network of *all life* so vibrantly expressed in the spectral multiplicities of Man Ya's *jardin créole*. Then, finally, yet with a forceful resistance to finality, Pineau concludes (with openness):

Je n'ai jamais pleuré la morte de Man Ya. Elle n'est jamais partie, jamais sortie de mon cœur. Elle peut aller et virer à n'importe quel moment dans mon esprit. Sauter d'une branche. Monter les et caetera de marches du Sacré-Cœur. Son jardin de Routhiers est plein de sa présence. Et les jours à haler jusqu'au soir sont moins lourds à ses bords. Elle est là, dans le temps d'aujourd'hui, vivante. [...] Elle est assise sur un nuage. Elle rit et mange des mangos roses. (219)

[I have never mourned Man Ya's death. She has never gone away, never left my heart. She can come and go at any moment in my spirit. Jump from a branch. Climb the endless steps of the Sacré-Coeur. Her garden in Routhiers is filled with her presence. And the days to be hauled along until evening are not as heavy at her side. She is there, right now, today, living. [...] She is sitting on a cloud. She is laughing and eating rose mangoes. [166]]

This final passage can read along the *lines* of a figurative expression of Man Ya living after death by living in the heart and memories of loved ones. It could simply be read as elegy. But in the context of thinking through a rhizomatic, woven shape of kinship and conjugated time-space expressed in the language of the novel, it is so much more. Within epistemologies that sense kinship across species and that express time-space as conjugated, death is not an ending—merely a transformation.<sup>85</sup> The body does not end so much as transform its substance into and among those other bodies with which it shares an ecology. Where time-space is understood as simultaneous, conjugated, and multiple, then birth and death and living are all already always bounding and stretching in all locations-durations at once. There is no grief, no loss, Pineau asserts here; she has never cried over Man Ya's death because she now re-members this rhizomatic shape of kinship, she now reads the relations that nourish and sustain. Man Ya's garden is full with her present tense presence. Man Ya persists. The presence of the grandmother in her garden, in a locational-durational persistence of presence in spectral material relation with

her garden, substantiates a rhizomatic shape of kinship, unrooted in its crossings yet routed in a multiplicity of time-space, that allows that this is not a simple elegy: Man Ya still lives because the past is not really *passed*; Man Ya persists because Pineau writes the stories of Man Ya into the realm of (auto)biographical literature while yet unsettling that literary schema; Man Ya lives because conjugated time-space is the world as woven, because her Creole orality weaves the world into being as a multiplicity—as a *totalité kaléidoscopique*—by which Man Ya’s (and Pineau’s) black-skinned body, her Creole orality, her wild chaotic garden, and her non-modern modes of being are sensed and narrated as futurity, not archaism, her ways of knowing and being read as durable modes that forge and sustain better tomorrows. Creole indeed superposes Pineau’s formal French, here in the (non)ending where Man Ya is alive in the time of today, living, and eating “mangos roses,” the use of “mangos” superposing the standard French *mangues*. A minor slippage, it may seem, but one with weight and duration in its insistence that Man Ya eats Creole fruit—not French fruit. Her Creole oral intelligence persists, nourishes. There is no grief for Man Ya, no loss: all of Man Ya is retained in the loving relations with her *jardin créole*, in the durable and persistent rhizomatic shape of (multispecies) kinship, and in the joyful Creole futurity enacted in decolonial desire.

## CHAPTER 3

### In the Web/Space:

# Sensing the Story of Silko's "Spiraling" Science of Kinship and Creation

*Pueblo expression resembles something like a spider's web with many little threads radiating from the center, crisscrossing one another. As with the web, the structure emerges as it is made, and you must simply listen and trust, as the Pueblo people do, that meaning will be made.*

— Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*

*In Lakota astronomy, the stars are the breath of the Great Spirit. It is as if the old Lakota foresaw physics and modern astronomy, the sciences that now tell us we are the transformed matter of stars, that the human body is a kind of cosmology.*

— Linda Hogan, *The Radiant Lives of Animals*

*Here is the story.*

A man lives in a palimpsestic world. The people, their histories, and their places have been renamed, remapped, covered up by settler colonial erasure and occupation. He has been taught that his family tree is named as such in the new words, that he is the product of two *lines*. He has been taught that his mother's people are stuck in the past, that the stories of their people are all superstition and nothing more. In school, his white instructors berate him for these superstitions, convince him that the past lies *behind* and the future lies *ahead*. He has been taught that he must get out, move away, leave his people *behind* in order to make it in this world. So he joins the army. Generational trauma compounds with combat trauma. And he forgets the stories from before, he forgets the histories of the people—those stories covered up by settler colonial words (world), those stories erased and written over by a new History of a New World. In this man's trauma, he prefers forgetting. He drinks to forget. He drinks to numb his body and quiet his mind. But it is not enough—the trauma pulls at his mind and wracks his body. Even in the eyes

of his immediate family, he's acting crazy, they say. But it's not the alcohol and the war that made him crazy, he thinks; it's been going on a long time—longer than the war, longer than the bad dreams and the drinking. His stomach twists and turns with the feeling that something is lost, twists with the drinking and the dreams; and he has no other egress from the pain but death, he thinks. But then, on old Grandma's encouragement, he agrees to try a ceremony. With the help of a map—a design, a pattern—given by an old medicine man, he begins to sense the traces of the old stories underneath the new words (world), he begins to remember things, to remember how the stories all fit together. The man remembers that his ceremony is part of something greater than the individual self, that his body is part of something greater than the individual self. *This* story, now remembered, (re)orients the man with(in) a loving web that spins (spans) together all the stories (all places), the old and the new. *This* story is still being told. And *this* story locates the people in a spiraling shape of kinship that substantiates a woven world of human and more-than-human relationality.

The story that I am telling here is my reading of the shape of kinship in Leslie Marmon Silko's 1977 novel *Ceremony*. Silko's narrator voice tells a story of how Tayo, resident of the Laguna Pueblo reservation and a recent veteran of the Pacific theater of World War II, is in need of a good ceremony. The narration takes Tayo and the reader in a "spiraling" motion through locations arranged in nonlinear temporal relation and as the ceremony that is the good cure for his present post-trauma. The reader spirals with Tayo through personal and topographical memories (stories) held in the place—both in his Laguna body and in Laguna lands—as Silko gathers and assembles the parts of the ceremony into a bundle that simultaneously forms extra-diegetic (decolonial) ceremony. I draw from the work of Indigenous philosopher and climate justice scholar Kyle Powys Whyte with this expression of "spiraling" kinship. Whyte theorizes "spiraling time" in his essay on "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene" (2018) in which, in part, he "develops an account of Indigenous narrative-making using a conception of spiraling time that can be seen as living science fiction, and [that] helps to explain certain aspects of Indigenous artistic production and Indigenous environmental conservation and environmental justice work" (225). Within the framework of spiraling time, Whyte focalizes expressions of kinship that defy the linear logic of colonial-modern time.<sup>86</sup> Whyte's argument is grounded in how the Anishinaabemowin expression for ancestor and descendant are the same word (228)—there is no possible way to separate these two figures out into linear sequence. Whyte's



“spiraling time” thus identifies intergenerational dialogue that enfolds relations in the present between those otherwise linearly disarticulated *past* and *future*, the narration of which materializes a kind of temporality counter valent to the linear time of colonial-modernity. I begin from Whyte’s formulation of “spiraling time” to situate my reading of the spiraling structure of the narrative, of Tayo’s movements through the ceremony, and of the shape of kinship articulated in what I identify as a multiscale scope of the novel. Where Silko’s story of Tayo’s ceremony exceeds the bindings of the book itself is in this relation to nonlinear temporality, the narration forming an aesthetic and at once scientific rendering of the physics and metaphysics of the body, the ancestor, and the place in coordination with “the motion of the stars across the sky” (Silko *Ceremony* 95). The epigraph from Chickasaw scholar and writer Linda Hogan, offered above, similarly instantiates the sciences in Lakota orature in which the body is already always understood in relation to the stars—to stardust—a physics woven with the philosophy, practice, aesthetics, spirituality, and ecological literacies of the “old Lakota,” of the old stories.<sup>87</sup> And as the epigraph above from Silko’s essay collection likewise finds, Pueblo expression resembles a spider’s web that, like the motion of the stars, spins (spans) in a constant spiraling motion and in which the word (world) is made and remade multidirectionally.<sup>88</sup> In Pueblo expression, she says, meaning is not made by the (linear) sequence of words (or time), but rather made in a nonlinear crisscrossing of “threads.” It is in this sense of a spiraling motion where intersecting threads of the web form intergenerational, multidirectional dialogue and where *place* then denotes a spiraling movement *in a place*. Expressed in this way through the spider’s web structure of language, the body, the ancestor, and (a) place thus are understood to form, reform, and transform in the spiraling temporality that Whyte likewise describes in terms of “constant migration and motion occurring at different scales” (228). I will confer this phrasing on elements of my reading of Silko’s text on the grounds that the kind of spiraling ceremony and narrative structure of the novel bespeak a particular story—or shape—of kinship. The spiraling relation between self and ancestor theorizes multidirectional temporality and articulates a sense of place through an Indigenous science, embedded in language and correlative epistemology, articulating the world in constant motion on multiple scales. Like Pueblo expression resembling a spider’s web, this story of the spiraling shape (science) of kinship in *Ceremony* asks that you simply listen and trust that meaning will be made. But it will require patience.

But, you may be asking, how does a mere metaphor of a spider's web make claims to planetary and (astro)physical sciences? Or, how is it that such language bears any effect on the actual, material relations between bodies? In the ways that language shapes perception, this says that words tell different stories of *mattering*—of becoming, of relating, of being—and in *this* story, aesthetics are inseparable from science, the self is inseparable from the ancestor and the place, and all are sensible (reasoned as well as able to be sensed) in constant relative motion, spiraling in a web/space of material (stardust) assemblage. I will leave traces of Karen Barad's new materialist work throughout this chapter, beginning with this expression of worlding as "mattering" from *Meeting the Universe Halfway: The Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007). I take up Barad's work for the ways that it bears a common understanding of the "entanglement of matter and meaning" as Silko's spiraling science of kinship and creation, but I include it more so in terms of the vocabulary it offers than as a mode of confirming Silko's science. This is to say that Barad's work elaborates concepts and theories coeval with Indigenous sciences, but Indigenous knowledge of this entanglement of matter and meaning precedes and circumvents its capture in the modern sciences (and their instruments) within which Barad stages her study. Barad's primary engagement centers around the finding that "[m]atter is agentive, not a fixed essence or property of things. Mattering is differentiating, and which differences come to matter, matter in the iterative production of different differences" (137). The intergenerational dialogue captured in Whyte's formulation confirms this finding where the present is the location (the time-place) in which past and future take shape as such, which Barad expresses similarly in terms of how "difference patterns do not merely change in time and space; spacetime is an enactment of differentness, a way of making/marking here and now" (137). Silko's novel (re)creates this sense of the making/marking a here and now of Laguna place, yet in an intergenerational dialogue of multidirectional temporality that expresses an enduring science of planetary kinship and creation: a spiraling spacetime enacting difference patterns relationally (like threads crisscrossing, like the motion of the stars across the sky). These are ways of kinship. These are ways of sensing multiscalar wovenness—sensing "constant migration and motion occurring on different scales."

As a mode of storytelling, then, the spider's web-weaving (spinning, spiraling) situates literariness (or knowledge-production) in multidirectional relation with place-making. The (re)making of place then performs a theory-in-practice of (pro)creation that at once posits the

entanglement of “discursive practices and material phenomena” and forms a persistent strategy of unsettling the colonial-modern organization of kinship as lineage (as linear temporality) and place as territory (Barad 34). On this last point, I gather together scholar of gender and Indigeneity Mark Rifkin’s *Beyond Settler Time* (2017) with American literature scholar Susan L. Dunston’s “Physics and Metaphysics: Lessons from Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*” (2010) and Latinx and Indigenous scholar Simón Ventura Trujillo’s “‘So that the Thieves Will Not Inherit the Earth’: Writing and the Fugitive Translation of Indigenous Land Reclamation” (2017). My reading is likewise activated by the work of gender and Indigenous studies scholar Mishuana Goeman’s *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (2013). Along with Whyte, this constellation of scholarship forms the groundworks of this chapter. Goeman’s argument is largely about “the move toward geographies that do not limit, contain, or fix the various scales of space from the body to the nation in ways that limit definitions of self and community staked out as property” (11). Or, moving toward possible alternative Indigenous futures that instantiate unfixed, nonbinary, decolonial epistemological frameworks that precede and circumvent or counteract policies of Indigenous removal, assimilation, and genocide. Goeman’s assertion compellingly articulates critical relations between land and bodies, not as neatly delineated corporeal entities but rather as unlimiting, uncontained, unfixed patterns—or mattering. In resonance with Goeman, Rifkin reads Silko’s later novel, *Gardens in the Dunes* (2000), and locates the “everyday tendency toward connection, recontextualization, and creation that gains orientation not through reference to lineal familial inheritance but through an enduring, capacious connection to and (re)creation of place” (Rifkin *Beyond* 168). I find this same ethos in *Ceremony* where Silko’s spiraling science of kinship and creation expresses a theory-in-practice of mattering (worlding) that sustains relations of care (an ethic of love) between human and more-than-human *in place*. In this way, too, place is conceived as a formation in constant relative motion and not as a fixed territory to be defended, as much as this is also a vital issue for tribal nations and in the context of decolonization. This is to say that perpetuating definitions of kinship based on blood lineage—and attendant theories of blood quantum—reiterates the terms of colonial-modern temporality and in the service of policies such as allotment (which Rifkin analyzes), displacement (as Goeman addresses), and genocide (which Whyte confronts). Directly drawing together the physics in Silko’s novel and the physics that Barad engages, Susan Dunston argues that “Silko employs an account of the physical world that is remarkably similar to

theories proposed by contemporary physicists” (135). Comparing *Ceremony* with twentieth-century breakthroughs in physics, Dunston finds distinct similarities: “Quantum theory conceives the world as dynamic relationships or configurations that enable and demonstrate continuity, contiguity, and mutually creative effects” (138). This is to say that Laguna elders’ language and knowledge systems already theorize-in-practice what post-Einsteinian sciences have just now been figuring out about relationality and entanglement. Dunston goes on to say that “[w]hen Silko, as do many other Native Americans, refers to the earth as our mother, she is not making sentimental metaphor but describing a physical relationship” (140). This claim is particularly relevant to my reading of kinship in the novel. Here again, it is not mere metaphor—the spider’s web of spiraling temporality and constant motion occurring on different scales are already theoretical-practical engagements with the patterning of discursive and material entanglements—with mattering. Perhaps most importantly, Dunston lays bare how “time is separable from space only intellectually, not actually. We move across and through time’s topography via experiences, observations, dreams, and memories” (137). The spiraling motion of Silko’s narrative thus resembles not only the spider’s web of Pueblo storytelling, but likewise substantiates storytelling as a legitimate scientific mode of knowledge-production and transmission in the way that the web-like spiraling enacts the physics (and metaphysics) of the material-energetic relations entangling all beings and the earth. It is a science of kinship and creation. In this way, too, kinship with the more-than-human world is not a proximity to nature maintained in particular ethno-biologies, nor is it simply the superstitions of so-called primitive cultures. Spiraling kinship is a resilient, sustainable, and loving way of seeing and being in and with the world.

The stakes of this epistemological distinction become salient and material in the ways that Indigenous bodies and lands have historically and continue to be discursively and materially organized by what Rifkin describes in terms of the politics of linear temporality. Rifkin argues that the “chronobiopolitics of heteroreproductive lineage (and the generational transmission of racial Indianness) abet and are animated by the chronogeopolitics of assertions of US sovereignty” (*Beyond* 163). In other words, the narrative of linear time, linear heredity, and deanimated topographical space is the same story that narrates Indigenous lifeways as artifacts of a *past* people—lifeways thence destined to vanish and be replaced by settler colonial lifeways. Pueblo-Sioux scholar and author Paula Gunn Allen confirms the stakes here as wholly material in saying that “loss of memory is the root of all oppression”<sup>89</sup>—loss of memory of the old stories,

of the spider's web-story of the world. The story is not simply a story—the story re-members the relations that matter (that iterate different differences) and that materialize Indigenous sovereignty. Trujillo similarly reiterates the (decolonial) enactment of aesthetics, narrative, and storytelling in his work on insurgent Indigenous land reclamation. Trujillo (re)reads Reies López Tijerina's Chicano memoir, *Mi Lucha por la Tierra*, through and against Silko's epic 1991 novel *Almanac of the Dead* toward a theory of "fugitive translation" where the texts escape the generic confines of the linear temporality of nation-state sovereignties in the Americas. Trujillo's argument largely addresses the ways that such linear temporality—embedded in the limiting, containing, and affixing discourse of individual and nation-state sovereignty—relies on a mode of "translation that decimates the incommensurable temporal and spatial heterogeneity of Indigenous life under the tyranny of a singular horizon of space and time" (66). I will reiterate this expression throughout this chapter in relation to the ways that Silko's spiraling science of kinship and creation defies—escapes—that tyranny, as well as how the physics of intra-activity and constant motion in (a) place configure the self, the ancestor, and senses of place in a relational web-story of mutual becoming. The gathering of these scholars' works offers that my reading of kinship in Silko's *Ceremony* is also a practice of collective authorship in the sense that their stories form the stories that must be told in order to explain with care and patience the meaning behind the words in my own story and through which I slowly assemble and weave my sensing of Silko's spiraling science. The spiraling shape of kinship in the novel voices Tayo's ceremony as a ceremony for every being and the earth. The spiraling shape of kinship remembers the multidirectional relations by which the constant motions of the cosmos gather material-energetic locations in the web/space, making and remaking *place* as a making and remaking of the earth—of kin.

The stakes cannot be emphasized enough here. I am making an argument about a novel—about an oft-called "return narrative" of an Indigenous man returning to the reservation and returning to the stories and lands of his people in a way narrated as salutary. Native American studies scholar Shari Huhndorf reads *Ceremony* in this explicit context, locating it in relation to the Native Renaissance of the 1970s concomitant with policies of federal recognition in her *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture* (2009). While largely contributing an argument for transnational American and Indigenous studies, Huhndorf looks at *Ceremony* for how "such returns [to community] provide a necessary defense

against ongoing colonization, and the novel's emphasis on storytelling (both traditional stories and their revision as the novel itself) underscores the importance of culture in these endeavors" (9). In this way, the idea of a return narrative ought to be encountered not simply as a return to traditions affixed in time (and place)—recalling Goeman's work, the location of return is not staked out as property. The location of return is written in terms of returning to remembering the world as kin and keeping alive stories that create and transcreate the here and now (the stories that *matter* Indigenous life beyond the limiting and affixing discourse of self and place as property). Trujillo's work makes sense of these stakes, as well, in the articulation of "Indigenous life under the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space." What this "tyranny" describes, as I understand it, is the idea that there is only one possible ending for Indigenous life in the Americas—at least, only one ending in the story written by and for that linear temporality of colonial-modernity. Huhndorf's finding that Silko's novel emphasizes storytelling positions the literary (aesthetic, narrative, oral, visual) as a rich and vital site for engaging defenses against that tyranny. Gathered together, these scholars' works make and remake what counts as the literary and specifically in the ways that their findings reconceptualize the human in entangled relation with the more-than-human—and this in such a way as to at once reconceptualize literacy in terms of ways of reading the stories (the mattering) of flesh-earth bodies. Or, to say it differently, the way that I gather these works together with my own thinking on the spiraling shape of kinship in Silko's novel recreates the literary as such a *place* of multidirectional temporality, intergenerational dialogue, and constant motion occurring on different scales. The literary, in the context of Silko, cannot ever be confined to the written word; the literary is the world. Huhndorf, for one, approaches this in her work on transnational Indigenous literary studies, turning from the narration of nation-state sovereignties in the return narratives of *Ceremony* and its contemporaries yet devising the literary world as materially entangled with Indigenous life in the Americas to the extent that the transnational becomes one kind of engagement with constant motion on different scales and against the tyranny of the singular horizon of time and space that forecloses Indigenous futurity in real material ways. And Trujillo confirms that it is material when he describes the tyranny of a singular horizon—a singular story, ending with Indigenous genocide (by assimilation or annihilation, both).

In this sense, I cannot take up this project as though the literary (and my scholarship) exist outside of the relations that constitute the *place* of the literary in the colonial-modern world

of linear time and its settler colonial erasures of not only Indigenous life but also, correspondingly, of the life of the planet. Because it is precisely through a linear narrative of time, of the division of disciplines and genres, and of the territorial nation-place that the chronobio- and chronogeopolitics of colonial-modern systems exact a perverse violence against lands and bodies—against that which is conceived as outside of the self/nation, yet which is, as quantum physics now agrees, actually materially with(in) the web/space of all life and the earth. The literary here turns from re-presenting the man—Tayo—as an already always Human subject moving across an inert material world that forms the backdrop of his becoming-human. The human becomes human—the place becomes place—through relations, through constant motion occurring on different scales; whether the human senses these relations depends on the modes of storytelling—modes of translation—by which the human and the world come to be known as such. Storytelling is not a matter of recording the past or simply speculating on the future: the stories *matter*. And the stories—the old stories, Silko’s story—materialize a defense against Indigenous illness and death. Drawing in part from Barad’s new materialism, Stacy Alaimo considers such material-discursive relationality in *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010). Alaimo reminds readers that “things” as such do not precede their relations (their intra-activity) (21). Alaimo proposes the expression of “trans-corporeality” through reading material memoirs and to show “how profoundly the sense of selfhood is transformed by the recognition that the very substance of the self is interconnected with vast biological, economic, and industrial systems that can never be entirely mapped or understood” (23). This is an understanding of self that comes through a recognition engendered in and by the stories that re-member the self in connection with those other systems—and not as a synthesis of self and other but rather as the recognition that the self and the other are already always in process of, as Barad asserts, the “iterative production of different differences.” Moreover, Alaimo offers that, “as a theoretical site, [trans-corporeality] is where corporeal theories, environmental theories, and science studies meet and mingle in productive ways” (3). I take up Alaimo’s transcorporeality throughout this chapter in relation to the ways that Silko narrates Tayo’s ceremony as one of returning to this recognition of multiscale entanglement and as a way of naming the theoretical site of Silko’s science of kinship and creation. While Silko’s novel is not a memoir in any proper or conventional generic sense, both its narrative strategies and its physics of relationality animate a kindred theoretical site for the consideration of where the body, the

ancestor, and the place “meet and mingle in productive ways.” The body is in spiraling, transcorporeal relation with the ancestor and with the place—and all are making and remaking the story. In this way, as well, Silko’s novel is not a novel except by relation to a notion of (world) literature that delimits the object as such by reason of its fictionality. Yet Whyte’s formulation makes clear that the denotation of fictionality is a matter of the same linear temporality that separates ancestor and descendant—that denotation comes through the story that literature and literacy are the sequential products of a prior (primitivized) practice of orature out of which a society evolves to linear writing. Whyte describes Indigenous literature in terms of its science, bracketing the word fiction in his title. Together with transcorporeality, Whyte’s formulation thus spells out literary aesthetic practices meeting and mingling with science, the body, and environment (or place) and *mattering* the iterative productions of different differences. Reading relations with Pueblo expression, Lakota astronomy, Indigenous land reclamation, transcorporeality, and the politics of corporeal and territorial sovereignty then locates Silko’s novel in a kinetic literariness and by which a spiraling shape of kinship translates relations with the self, the ancestor, and a place into a story inseparable from the lived experience, embodied knowledge, and matter-energy movements of all peoples and the earth. At the same time that this is very much Silko’s story, a Laguna story, the notion of the literary that I am describing cannot be ontologized in terms of period, area, or national literature—cannot be affixed to a particular people in a particular time and place—because it locates modes of reading and writing in body-land histories and matterings and thus encourages a practice of reading/weaving land as literature to the extent that it reconceives of literariness outside of the linear social evolutionary narrative of a world literature that categorizes orature as pre-modern, animism as superstition, and metaphor as non-material. The physics and metaphysics of Silko’s story are not superstition. The web-space is not a metaphor. And the animacy of the more-than-human world is part of the story of becoming human—of becoming *the story that is still being told*.

Now I turn to the novel itself as a way of placing in dialogic relation the scholarship that I have gathered here with Silko’s novel and before entering into the differentiating (inter)sections of this chapter. I ask for your patience.

The novel opens with a lyric form incantating a story of creation. This story of creation is not, to be clear, a record of a past or originary event of becoming human or becoming Pueblo. I



argue that this story is a persistent yet adaptive science. Silko's voice comes through this opening verse:

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman / is sitting in her room / and whatever she thinks about / appears. // She thought of her sisters, / Nau'ts'ity'I and I'tets'ity'I, / and together they created the Universe / this world / and the four worlds below. // Thought-Woman, the spider, / named things and / as she named them / they appeared. // She is sitting in her room / thinking of a story now. // I'm telling you the story / she is thinking. (Silko 1)<sup>90</sup>

The spider weaves a web—a story, the world—and, as she weaves, the story is being told, the world is being bodied. Importantly, the story is continual—it is not a story of the past (of something that has *passed*). It is still happening. And Silko implicates her novel, her storytelling, in this gathering of threads, as well—in this *worlding*. Silko is telling Tayo's story and is telling this story, too, this story that Thought-Woman the spider is still telling, this story of the creation of worlds—the collective creation of worlds, to be clear, by three sisters.<sup>91</sup> The world is continually in process of creation through the collective work of sister-kin and storytelling. This offering of verse announces transcreativity and transformation through the grandmother, Old Spider Woman, whose work of spinning (spanning), gathering threads, and assembling locations articulates persistent motion and change within a pattern of co-relations.

The following page of the novel bears another poetic form, which initiates the ceremony—Silko's ceremony. The verse begins with the word “Ceremony” and tells of how stories are not entertainment, they are “all we have to fight off / illness and death” (Silko 2). The voice in this verse locates stories in the belly, adding that “[t]here is life here / for the people. // And in the belly of this story / the rituals and the ceremony / are still growing” (Silko 2). The story is in the belly; the story at once *has* a belly (a body). The body-story is spinning into being, still and always. With this intonation of the story as defense against illness and death, the ceremony spans the conventional diegetic boundaries of the novel form—it is the story that is still being told, Silko insists. Now, here, in the belly of *this* story, the ceremony is still growing. Thought-Woman's story—Silko's story—is transcreating the pattern of the web, meaning as well that there is no one single ending to this story (no tyranny of one single horizon of time and space). This leads to a small piece of text at the very bottom of the third page, under the negative space of an otherwise blank page: “*What she said*: // The only cure / I know / is a good ceremony, / that's what she said” (Silko 3, orig. emph.). What are we to make of this? Who is this ceremony for? Which “she” is this? And is this a ceremony for the characters who populate

the novel, or is it rather for us, the reader? I say it is both, and: the text translates the world into the spider's practice of weaving, gathering, and assembling, and unsettles the delimitations of genre and linear temporality by invoking the novel itself as ceremony that is still and always in process of (still *matter*ing). Silko's prose follows the opening verses but not until the fifth page (in the fifth world) and only after the word "Sunrise" alone on the fourth—in the fourth world where the people emerged, it is said. The sunrise gathers all things, Silko will tell her reader. The ceremony that will take place through the novel begins with the beginning of Pueblo cosmology and language. Begins with the transitional position of the "sunrise." As I read it, we are to understand with this that the story Silko is weaving—that Thought-Woman the spider is thinking—is still being told both internal and external to the diegesis. This story is not entertainment. This story is speaking (weaving) into being a defense against Indigenous illness and death—against illness and death of the whole web-story. And the story will still be in the time of the telling when Tayo completes his ceremony in the final pages of the novel. Yet, as Silko substantiates and my reading attempts to expand, there are no endings (only transitions). Silko's ceremony has no ending, it is not an event, not a climax, not a moment of resolution; it is an ongoing process of telling and retelling the story that re-members kinship relations capacious of all human and more-than-human; it is weaving (spinning, gathering threads together); and it opens multiple horizons of time and space for Indigenous life in the Americas through Tayo remembering the old stories of his people and how they orient with the world through this love for kin. All are in the web. And the web is always spinning (spanning) all of creation with(in) the present moment of the retelling. I feel I must clarify my use of the word *creation* here. I use it because Silko uses it, but I use it with sensitivity to its implicit denotation of creation as though issuing from the cognitive intention of a singular source. In contrast, spiraling kinship, as I have already said, denotes the collective authorship of worlds. I maintain my use of *creation* in coordination with the kind of collective creation that Silko narrates in the opening verses of her novel. Creation in this sense, by sister-kin, by Thought-Woman the spider and her two sisters, is after all a theory of collective genesis. In this intonation of storytelling, ceremony, and epistemologies of wovenness, Silko narrates material-discursive entanglements that exceed legibility in settler colonial discourses of time, space, matter, bodies, places, and kinship relations. Beyond yet at once inclusive of the idea of blood *lines*, a spiraling shape of kinship correlates this collective creation of worlds with the embodied experience of intergenerational

trauma, Indigenous persistence, and land-based literacies and articulates creation as a spatialized and multidirectional web-story of assembled (and assembling) forces.

In this chapter, I ask: in what ways does the story of the cosmos as a spider's web of relations bespeak a particular shape of kinship? How does the shape of kinship then also speak to senses of temporality and to what discursive and material effects? And what does this say about the ways that language shapes perception, in terms of how such expressions of kinship naturalize various ways of being in and with the world? In the (inter)sections that follow, I sense the story of a spiraling shape of kinship and creation in *Ceremony* through moving my reading (and my reader) through the novel's spiraling multidirectional route, focalizing passages in which Silko's storytelling orients Tayo (and her reader) toward a relational cosmology that narrates Tayo's process of healing while simultaneously enacting extra-diegetic ceremony to defend against Indigenous illness and death. Silko's narration is not a relic or artifact of her Pueblo culture, nor is it fabulation in the limiting sense of historical imaginaries. My reading proposes that the spiraling structure of the narrative, expressed as a spider's web of the story of the cosmos, defines kinship relations *spatially* (rather than in temporal *sequence*) and that in this same expression Silko locates a persistent Indigenous science of relationality. I suppose I ought to clarify my use of the word *science*, as well, before continuing with my story. I use *science* loosely to mark discourses of how the world works, so to speak. While modern sciences propose to explain the ways that the world works through methods of hypothesizing, testing, and evaluating, in large part through instrumentation, the science that I am describing in relation to Silko's storytelling marks a discourse of how the world works that is also a narration of the way the world works and that is generated in orature, practice, and land-based literacies. This is distinct, in a way, from Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) insofar as I am addressing the epistemological shapes and languages of describing these workings (worldings) rather than articulating the specific body of knowledge that comprises millennia of TEK equally woven into these old stories and languages. The point is not to catalog Indigenous science. Rather, I am proposing that Silko's story is an expression of a physical and metaphysical science of kinship and creation and doing so through emphasis on the ways that the narrative orients nonlinear temporalities, quantum entanglements, and spiraling movements in a place (and that make and remake the place as such). Silko's narrative gathers together these kinds of productive and moving locations in Tayo's life—the weaving of which tells his particular story in nonlinear

assemblage with *the story that is still being told*. It is precisely in this moment, in this life, and yet it gathers with all locations-durations in a story of the entire cosmos. In this way, the novel narrates sets of relations shaped as radiantly interwoven concentric circles of kinship—or as “spiraling” kinship. Kin (kind) are thus able to be sensed (measured) as relatives through a common relation to planetary matter—to an earth mother (matter) but through the mutual (re)production of both and not as a (linear) issuing of one from the other. The (inter)sections that follow will explain this meaning as I slowly move through this web/space to sense the story of Silko’s spiraling science of kinship and creation that locates the self-ancestor in a present presence of intra-active relations in and with place.

## **In the Web/Space**

Silko’s prose opens without indication of time or place. The narrator voice simply tells us that Tayo didn’t sleep well that night (Silko 5). Which night, we do not know, who Tayo is likewise remains imprecise. What is clear is that he is haunted. His dreams, his memories, haunt him. Silko describes Tayo’s struggles in terms of entanglement. Here, in this moment of restless sleep, “[h]e could feel it inside his skull—the tension of little threads being pulled and how it was with tangled things, things tied together, and as he tried to pull them apart and rewind them into their places, they snagged and tangled even more.” The tangling is compared to his grandma’s colored sewing threads and how, when he was a child, he had spilled them in the summer weeds and they had rolled away in all directions (Silko 7). The tangle is multidirectional yet here this feels like an unwelcome diffusion, like he must sort and untangle the threads. While the orientation of the time and place of the narrative is as yet undefined, what is apparent is that grandma’s sewing threads go in all directions and in many colors. Silko tells her reader that this memory coexists with the present of Tayo’s sensation of a tangle of threads pulling in his skull and, this, following the opening verses of Thought-Woman, the spider, spinning the world into being, spinning *this story*. In a way anticipating the ceremonial convergences of colors and cardinal directions that will mark important places in this story, Silko begins to tell Tayo’s story in this way through the collocation of grandmas and the tangled weavings of their multidirectional threads. I will discuss these convergences as a feature of the novel in further detail in the section “Science of Kinship (Creation).” For now, I want to just say that the relation between old grandma and her sewing threads is not negligible—indeed, it forms a kind of central *pattern* in Silko’s novel, one worth

attending to with care. But to Tayo, this memory coexisting with the present of lying in bed struggling against the tangle presents as painful, as pressure, as that against which he must resist. Tayo thinks that to escape the pain he must untangle the threads, untangle the past from the present. He tries, but “he had to sweat to think of something that wasn’t unraveled or tied in knots to the past—something that existed by itself, standing alone like a deer” (Silko 7). To be in the tangle, to remember, hurts. To him, it would be less painful to be untangled—to stand alone, the threads all laid out straight, singular, individualized. To remember is to feel entangled with a painful past. Tayo resists the entanglement because it reminds him of an absence, it reminds him of something lost. In this same narrative moment, Silko tells us briefly about Rocky, Tayo’s blood cousin (who he calls brother), hinting at their time together in the war and recalling fragments of combat in the present tense of the narration of Tayo lying in bed. We, the reader, are caught up in a narrative temporality that does not attempt to untangle the past and the present, despite suggesting that Tayo is trying to do just that. We are in the web. We are in the moment of his restless sleep and in the moment where he is with Rocky, in a Philippine jungle, seeing their uncle Josiah’s face in the faces of the Japanese soldiers the two were enlisted to kill in the name of the USA. These two relatives, cousin-brother and uncle, are invoked alongside a curious juxtaposition: on the one hand, in the memory of wartime, Rocky had been explaining to Tayo that “the facts made what he had seen an impossibility” (Silko 8). Uncle Josiah was not physically in the jungle with them—Tayo had hallucinated it. Rocky is certain of this. On the other hand, these “facts” and this “impossibility” are arranged on the page as the source of Tayo’s distress rather than the hallucination itself:

[Tayo] felt the shivering then; [...]. He shivered because all the facts, all the reasons made no difference any more; he could hear Rocky’s words, and he could follow the logic of what Rocky said, but he could not feel anything except a swelling in his belly, a great swollen grief. (Silko 8-9)

Which moment are we in? Was this distress and shivering felt in the jungle with Rocky? Or is the shivering in the moment of recalling that memory? Or is it both, at once? Recalling that the belly is where the stories are located, this localized swelling and grief in juxtaposition with the facts and logic that incites the shivering potentially across temporal moments together implicate a particular kind of storytelling and a particular notion of time in the physical manifestations of Tayo’s trauma. The “swollen grief” is in his belly, yet this swelling materializes in relation to the meaninglessness of those facts and logic in relation to his corporeal sensations. It is not simply

that he saw combat; it is not simply that he has lost these two relatives to death, which Silko will confirm shortly. The swelling in his belly—where the stories are located—is a sensation (a sense ability?) that orients the reader to Silko’s storytelling by way of at once the grandmas’ multidirectional threads and this sense that a logic of linear temporality and objective (material) reality delimit Tayo’s grief in terms of the “impossibility” of maintaining relations with those “lost” loved ones. The logic and facts that Rocky recited, that say that Josiah was not really, materially, in the jungle with them, discursively posit time as linear sequence and death as annihilation—the past is passed, the dead are dead. These are, in a secular scientific intellectual paradigm, the facts of life—a universal flow of time affirmed in Newtonian physics. These facts tell a story of an individuated self who moves with that (linear) flow of time and likewise orient the human as a willful subject moving across passive material space. But these facts and logic produce the shivering; the assertion that matter is fixed in these forms induces the swelling grief in Tayo’s belly (where the stories are kept). These facts and logic make Uncle Josiah’s presence in the jungle impossible and tell Tayo’s story through a governing logic that narrates the web-world as unreal, as immaterial, as hallucination. These facts explain the presence of Uncle Josiah in the jungle as a dysfunction in Tayo’s brain; these facts tell the story that Tayo must strive to untangle, unwind, and separate the threads of the tangle; these facts and logic tell the story that the web/space of the story that is still being told is fiction, not science. On the other hand, Silko is telling the story that these facts and logic suppress the stories held in the belly of the people—the stories that are their defense against illness and death. The tyranny of a linear temporal logic induces the illness. Tayo’s story is intimately his, yet it is also *the story that is still being told*. As Tayo struggles to sort out the threads entangling his memories and his present (presence), Silko maps time spatially in a web/space of woven past-present-future and beckons her reader to orient to Tayo’s corporeality through the spiraling multidirectional temporality of the spider’s web and grandma’s sewing threads.

This first section of the novel moves fluidly without temporally marking or dividing these moments in Tayo’s life. The narration assembles this night of restless sleep with memories of childhood, remarks on the drought years preceding his enlistment, on the years he was in the war, and on the jungle rain while overseas. Drawing together local, present drought, with remembered rains then leads to Tayo telling a story in verse to pray “against the rain” and to give them strength as he and his corporal carry a make-shift stretcher with Rocky’s expiring body on

it (Silko 12). Which moment (place) are we in? The first page breaks of the novel frame his incantation with negative space on the page, after which the narration continues only not in the same moment of telling—now Tayo is surveying the drought of Laguna lands immediately following his return from the war and interpreting it as the result of praying against the rain in the jungle. Here, now, in yet another colocation of memories, “he cried for all of them, and for what he had done” (Silko 14). We seem to be spiraling. The narration is winding through these parts of Tayo’s story, drifting along with the threads pulled by any given word or sentiment registered in the telling—words which then require explanation, that necessitate the telling of yet other stories to make their use and meaning clear.<sup>92</sup> All of these moments in Tayo’s story are assembled as a simultaneity, the only breaks in the text framing his prayer for the jungle rains to end, then. The reader is called to reckon these moments as co-constituting.

After a second, smaller, line break, Tayo is described as himself broken, lost—diffuse and scattered like white smoke, drained of memory by “their medicine,” by the treatment from white doctors in the army hospital after returning from combat (Silko 14-15). Now we are in the hospital with him. Tayo’s body undergoes heaves, spasms, vomiting, crying; he is a shell. We are given another short line break, the next section beginning again in the whitewashed room of that hospital yet quickly drifting into the sleepless nights and days of ongoing drought on the reservation, after his return from the war and where (when) he is lying in bed struggling against the tangle—I will call this the *narrative present* as a weak placeholder for the parts of the novel that directly narrate Tayo’s passage through the parts of the ceremony. Yet I must stress that the idea of a narrative present itself implicitly indexes linear temporality, which the novel as a whole eschews (skews). But in the sense that Tayo’s movements through the parts of the ceremony include multidirectional temporalities, I rely on this placeholder to convey that the narration insists on an ongoing present (presence) in which past and future co-articulate and all times are materially entangled in a nonlinear web/space. Tayo once again surveys the drought, as we spiral or shuttle within the tangle of memory and presence. He takes in the reds of the sand and clay flats of the terrain in colocation with a hazy blue sky. This is one of the locations, understood as multidirectional temporality, where (when) Silko gives her reader an assemblage of colors and directions that orient attention to a transition, that orient attention to the important place in the story (in the ceremony) at which we find Tayo (and reader). The colors of the sky and earth,

gathered together, conjure another memory. Tayo is now (at once) a child climbing Bone Mesa with Rocky and feeling close enough to touch the sky:

Distances and days existed in themselves then; they all had a story. They were not barriers. If a person wanted to get to the moon, there was a way; it all depended on whether you knew the directions—exactly which way to go and what to do to get there; it depended on whether you knew the story of how others before had gone. [Tayo] had believed in the stories for a long time, until the teachers at Indian school taught him not to believe in that kind of “nonsense.” (Silko 19)<sup>93</sup>

He had remembered, until he was taught to forget—taught not to believe in the knowledge held in his people’s stories. When Tayo was younger, he “believed” (which I read as remembering) that distances and days all had stories—and that these stories opened up the entire cosmos to him as a spatial relation of time such that he felt himself with the sky and conceived of himself in proximate relation to the moon. Moreover, this is announced in the context of how he had believed in the old stories until being taught not to believe in such *superstition*. Remember, facts and logic explain away such “nonsense,” as Rocky had come to believe as well by the time that they had found themselves in that faraway jungle. Here in this *narrative present* Tayo is being asked to untangle and unwind the past from the present—to unwind the tangle, to forget the story that distances are surmountable if you know the stories, if you know the directions. The specific emphasis on spatiality here through “distances” and “directions” draws together Tayo’s experiences of forgetting the stories with forgetting the multidirectionality of the web/space. These are spatial concerns, intellectual maneuvers for organizing cosmological *facts*—only, narrated quite otherwise through the idea that the tangle is a material durability. It is only in the forgetting of the multidirectional web/space that the belly swells with grief—the defenses against illness and death are forgotten with the forgetting of the stories. But forgetting here is likened to the placement (affixation) of the past as materially passed with the certainty of the linear logic of Newtonian physics. In Silko’s telling, I sense a distinct emphasis on the colocation of these memories with his present illnesses—not in the linear *chrono*-logical sense of the memories of past (*passed*) trauma causing sickness and grief; rather, Silko narrates the ways that (white) kind of education erases and replaces the old stories with the facts and logic of a linear temporality (a linear temporal History) in which Indigenous stories are only ever artifactual, affixed in the past—passed, obsolete, superstitions. And yet, the structure of how Silko tells the story is a spatial marshalling of time in which storytelling is nothing less than a defense against Indigenous



illness and death. Indeed, the spatialized time in the novel orients Tayo (and Silko's reader) toward an assembling spider's-web/space of *the story that is still being told*. These are intersections of *passed and presence*, so to speak, and together they orient the spiraling movements of Tayo's ceremony toward its co-constitution with the novel itself, as itself a ceremony (story) to defend against Indigenous illness and death.<sup>94</sup> The story is a living being—and knowing the stories is knowing the directions for how to surmount distances and days (themselves living beings with stories).

The web/space that I am sensing in Silko's novel presents through the structure of the storytelling as much as through the story it tells. Thus far, I have been expressing it in terms of the structuring figure of the spider's web, the grandma's multidirectional (and multi-colored) threads. And maybe this is an important part of Silko's story to tell before entering more directly into the shape of kinship. Or maybe I am already telling the story of the shape of kinship, but in a nonlinear way. But I want to be clear that my reading is not of an experimental narrative temporality. Silko's storytelling names Thought-Woman, the spider, as storyteller and her web as a spatial organization of time. The line breaks noted in the preceding paragraphs and that delimit sections and subsections throughout the novel mark no consistent pace or rhythm of the narration. They do not help the reader predict different *points* in time—rather, the movements within the sections oscillate within the tangle of multidirectional time(space). In some locations, they form an elliptical collapsing of temporal sequence where following sections then return to the same location. In other locations, the line breaks relent the narrative present, open up a moment (place) to verses of old stories, or new stories, only to remain in the present (presence) on the other side of the verse. At other locations still, the sections of the novel drift and spiral—I will return to this structure at the end of this section. But here, for now, I am describing the way that Silko's narrative structure initially feels disorienting, illogical, even unsettling, but that this is part of remembering the story of how to surmount those distances and days—*this* unsettling orientation re-members the directions. And, importantly, this drifting and spiraling movement orients to a place—to a multidirectional web/space. Yet, if we are holding in view the Pueblo theory of language noted in the epigraph to this chapter, the structure of the novel feels less disorienting and more *orienting*—orienting attention to the stories as a mode of remembering how to attend to the transitions, how to speak into being the necessary defenses against illness and death. There is no one single narrative thread to follow, no one single *storyline*, no linear

chronology or trajectory of Tayo's self-actualization or conversion—the ceremony is not an event to resolve (and thereby “end”) his trauma. There are no easy answers or directly consequential conclusions. In a nonlinear episteme of multidirectional time-space, there is momentum, constant motion, accelerations, arrestations, but no ending. Weaving a web, or spinning a web of words (worlds), exceeds a logic of linear sequencing—meaning is relational, not consequential. Time is likewise set in spatial relation, not temporal sequence, as a narrative representation of its multidirectional physics. The present is not the direct effect of a past (passed) cause, the past (passed) is articulated in relation to the present (to presence). And remembering *this* story is critical to defending against Indigenous illness and death.

Tayo's movements through the web/space thus far have told of his impulse to resist the tangle, to attempt to unwind the threads, yet this has all been narrated through the collocation of grandma's sewing threads and the spider's web-spinning *the story that is still being told*. The ceremony that will be his good cure cannot, then, be an event that causes an effect (a cure). The ceremony, like the Pueblo theory of language and like Thought-Woman's storytelling (worlding), distinguishes the cure as a matter commanding patience—the story will wind its way, multidirectionally, toward making meaning. I find that this distinction begins to become visible (sensible) to Tayo when he agrees to be seen by Ku'oosh, a medicine man who speaks in “the old dialect.” Silko's narrator voice remarks how his speech is “full of sentences that were involuted with explanations of their own origins, as if nothing the old man said were his own but all had been said before and he was only there to repeat it” (34). Even the words have stories—like distances and days, the words are living beings. The involutions in the old dialect form webs that intersect and weave and spiral the words into a whole with (multidirectional) meaning. But you can't get to the meaning by tracing a straight line through a sentence—indeed, the meaning is not a place of arrival, but rather the meaning is a movement in a place. The old dialect doesn't make a point: the old dialect weaves a pattern whose image becomes sensible with patience and love. Tayo is not yet patient; he struggles to follow the language, described as “dense with place names” (Silko 36). But he does recognize Ku'oosh's telling of a lava cave, which Tayo recalls from wandering with Rocky. Ku'oosh says that maybe there are things Tayo doesn't know because Josiah hadn't told him before he left for the war—but he needs to know these things, Ku'oosh insists. Silko's narration moves between direct and indirect discourse, as Ku'oosh speaks and then his speech is elaborated for the reader:

“You know, grandson, this world is fragile.” The word he chose to express “fragile” was filled with the intricacies of a continuing process, and with a strength inherent in spider webs woven across paths through sand hills where early in the morning the sun becomes entangled in each filament of web. 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; and this demanded great patience and love. (Silko 35-36)<sup>95</sup>

The narrative has made clear that Ku’oosh is not a blood relative; however, in hailing Tayo as “grandson,” Ku’oosh reveals the kinship metaphor *not* as one that nominalizes Tayo as that linear descendant but rather one that identifies the (transcorporeal) relation between these two men as one of co-constitution. The relation constitutes them both as such through this interaction, through a present collocation made possible by the multidirectional web/space. Yet, the emphasis in this passage describing Ku’oosh’s speech is on how the world is fragile and intricate yet durable with the inherent strength of spider web filament—a filament with which the morning sun becomes entangled, describing the materiality of sunlight in physical relation to the web. This is not metaphor. This is material entanglement. The strength of these stories—of these threads—is inherent, material, and embedded in old Laguna dialect dense with old place names. The strength of the world (the web/space) comes through its wovenness—the stories of each word (or each body, or each place) then understood as woven with language, woven with place, woven with responsibility. Yet this strength is also part of the story of the word “fragile.” And, importantly, Ku’oosh’s words are “filled with the intricacies of a continuing process.” The old dialect assembles all these place names, weaves meaning through fragile and intricate yet durable and strong webs or relations which in turn tell the stories of how to surmount distances and days—it is story as process (not product). It is also web/space (world) as process, not product. And the body is likewise neither a product of speech nor an artifact of a (Newtonian) universal flow of time. Is there a direct point to Ku’oosh’s (or Silko’s) story? Perhaps not. But this is not an *illogic* of the old dialect—this is a *multidirectional logic*. And it is a relational logic. No word exists alone, Silko tells us, to explain this sense of fragility. No body exists alone, either, in this relational episteme. The body—the word and the materiality—record presence in the assembling (weaving) of patterns that transcreate at once past and future within a present (location) in the web/space. In this way, in the web/space, the story of Tayo’s physical illness spans (spins)

something great and inclusive of the self and the outside—something that weaves the self into the world and the world into the self. And this, Ku’oosh explains with the word “fragile,” is the responsibility that goes with being human. Responsibility to the weaving, to the intricate wovenness of the web. Here with Ku’oosh, the old dialect evokes something in Tayo—something deeply entangled with the density of old place names in his speech and deeply evocative of the multidirectional logic of *the story that is still being told*.

Silko’s storytelling commands patience and love—the web/space calls for attention to the transitions, to the fragility of the intersecting filaments. Despite the pressure the tangle puts on his skull, Tayo is beginning to see that the cure is not in the forgetting, not in disentangling or unweaving himself from the world—quite the contrary, he begins to see. After Ku’oosh leaves, leaving him with a bundle of blue cornmeal for eating and for ceremony, Tayo finds no relief in crying anymore. Ku’oosh’s words have transformed something—something as yet imperceptible. But “[t]he old man only made him certain of something he had feared all along, something in the old stories. It only took one person to tear away all the delicate strands of the web, spilling the rays of sun into the sand, and the fragile world would be injured” (Silko 38). At first, it seems that Ku’oosh has done the tearing away, considering the collocation of these sentences. And yet, “something in the old stories” came through Ku’oosh’s old dialect, the meanings of whose words are made relationally—like a spider’s web assembling intricate and fragile yet durable patterns of threads. Ku’oosh is not doing the tearing away of the delicate strands, he is rearticulating the threads for Tayo. He is pointing to the lessons in the old stories and the old language, to the memory of entanglement. The “fragile” world (web/space) is injured by the severing of filamentary relations, injured by the logic and facts that organize the world instead in linear sequence and that attempt to unwind and separate out the threads of that tangle. With a logic of the world as a fragile spider’s web, there comes a sense of responsibility to the weaving: to attending to the wovenness, taking care with the intersections that form the stories that assemble and gather into *the story that is still being told*—the cosmic story of this planet and all its matter/inhabitants. Ku’oosh is telling Tayo—with great patience and love—how easily the intricate fragility of the web can be upset by forgetting the stories, how easily the web/space can be destroyed as much by epistemological as material separations, divisions, and ruptures between kin, between times, between bodies.

The narrative structure and focalized spatial relations in Silko's prose incant a kind of gathering or assembling work that isn't trying to untangle the relations to make more or better sense of objects; rather, this web-work of storytelling, which I am also calling a spiraling, expresses a multidirectional physics of time(space) relations. The logic is not in a line, not following a single thread and unwinding it to its end point; the logic is a wovenness, a weaving, a network of processes. This is the story of the web/space of all human and more-than-human kin, entangled in the material web of life on earth—beginning, as it were, in the place where Old Spider Woman (and her sisters) weaves the world into being. It is Silko's story, and Tayo's story, and it is *the story that is still being told* that likewise gives directions for how to surmount the distances and days—how to defend against Indigenous illness and death. In the way that Silko opens the novel with the grandmas, moving with Tayo's presence and memories and assembling his uncle Josiah and cousin-brother Rocky in a present presence, the narration of these ancestors orients Tayo's illness and potential cure, both, through the juxtaposition of linear and nonlinear logics of time-space. In this way, too, the novel situates kinship within an epistemology of wovenness, multi-directionality, and spatialized time—the body is not the product of a linear temporal sequence of birth and death, the body is in co-constitutional process (or multidirectional location) with(in) the web/space.

## **Sensing the Story**

In his last summer before enlisting with Rocky and going off to war, Tayo tries out a prayer to bring an end to the drought that he sees taking a toll on his uncle Josiah—who has gone out on a limb in buying some Mexican cattle that he hopes will survive despite the drought. Tayo is not quite sure of the right motions to go through for this prayer, nor is he sure of what they will produce, yet he goes through these motions with sincere intention to bring about a transition—rain. Perhaps if he remembers the story—if he remembers the directions—distances can be surmounted. Tayo gathers yellow flowers and shakes their yellow pollen onto the water that is trickling from a crack in the ancient orange sandstone rocks shaped and smoothed by water, wind, and sand. Tayo lays the yellow flowers beside the small pool of water “and waited.” Silko assembles yellows, marking an important place in the story. Tayo is at an important place in the story. The narration feels like the narrative present, but it is clear that this prayer was spoken before Tayo had gone off to war; this memory is a present part of Tayo's story, of the story that

is still being told. Tayo is in this moment, in the canyon, and so are we (the reader), and he is striving to remember the stories. He waits. Then:

The spider came out first. She drank from the edge of the pool, careful to keep the delicate egg sacs on her abdomen out of the water. She retraced her path, leaving faint crisscrossing patterns in the fine yellow sand. [Tayo] remembered stories about her. She waited in certain locations for people to come to her for help. She alone had known how to outsmart the malicious mountain Ka't'sina who imprisoned the rain clouds in the northwest room of his magical house. Spider Woman had told Sun Man how to win the storm clouds back from the Gambler so they would be free again to bring rain and snow to the people. He knew what white people thought about the 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. (Silko 94)

Tayo is at once in the canyon, sprinkling pollen and seeing the spider, and in the classroom where his teacher upheld settler colonial memory as History. And, at the same time, he is in the *narrative present* remembering waiting in the canyon and thinking of the old stories of Spider Woman and how she knew the story for how to bring the rain clouds back from where they were held captive on the mountain. Distances (as time) are surmountable if you know the story, if you know the directions for how to get there. Spider Woman, the grandmother, knows the story of how to outsmart the drought—here figured through the Gambler. Tayo remembers that there is a story, one which tells of relations between not only the sun, the clouds, and the mountains but also between those forces and human activity. While Silko has yet to share the story with her reader, Tayo remembering Spider Woman's storytelling directs Tayo's story toward remembering the knowledge-power of his ancestors. But the nonlinear, spatial temporality of the cosmological web/space disallows the ancestors as mere linear predecessors. Here, grandmother spider leaves "faint crisscrossing patterns in the fine yellow sand" as she retraces her path. Spider Woman gives directions to the Gambler, while the spider in the canyon traces a path and drinks from the pool of water where Tayo offers yellow pollen and yellow blossoms. The direction that Tayo needs to know to surmount this distance—this drought—is embedded in this movement *in a place*, marked by yellows. Silko assembles yellows, pointing Tayo (and her reader) north. And, at the same time, in this story Silko traces a pattern for how to engage with an ecosystem in ways that enrich and nourish it—in ways that care for the intricate and fragile web. The teacher at the Indian school had called these stories superstition. Indeed, Tayo seems to hesitate under the weight of that memory of the teacher denigrating his people's stories. Those stories are superstition, the teacher asserted, and the collectively generated knowledge-power of Pueblo

stories thus affixed to a primitive stage of linear social evolutionary development in linear temporal relation to the “true source of explanations” held in modern English-language textbooks. On the one hand, it would be worth noting how this kind of education has been weaponized against Indigenous Americans as a means of assimilating and removing the people from the land—opening it up for *use*.<sup>96</sup> But on the question of how shapes of kinship direct relations with the world, Silko’s story (Tayo’s story—*the story that is still being told*) orients ancestor-descendant relations spatially (with(in) the web/space) *and* assembles colors and directions in precise coordinates of Tayo’s (and the novel’s) ceremony as other kinds of knowledge and knowing. These coordinates are locations (understood as durational, not static geography). These coordinates concomitantly extend beyond the frame of the novel where they remember the stories of the people—where they remember the story (science) that gives directions for how to surmount the distances and days, for how to defend against the Indigenous illness and death deployed through discursive (pedagogical) and material (extractive) means. In the locations where (when) Silko assembles either multiple figures of the same color or a precise set of colors in coordination, the novel materializes a practice of place-making that narrates the world as knowable *otherwise*—the world as (living) story. And in this discursive-material gathering, the story acts as counterspell, in a way, to the settler colonial story of “Indigenous life under the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space” (to again reiterate Trujillo’s words). This story tells of multidirectional histories, of multidirectional ancestry, and of multidirectional locations within which constant movement persistently makes and remakes place as a living being assembling with human and more-than-human relations.

Here, in this narrative moment of memories nested in one another like concentric circles, Tayo has his doubts. He remembers waiting for the spider, watching her drink from the pool; he remembers remembering the story of the Gambler. But something still lies just out of view—as yet imperceptible. The *narrative present* of the novel is following Tayo after the war, as he struggles with the feelings of loss—the grief that swells in his belly. So, this is a story of loss: loss of his ancestors, his relatives. But it is also a story of the loss of the stories, the loss of intergenerational memory, and the loss of how the stories all fit together into a woven pattern that is still being made and remade. And yet, Silko insists that this loss, for Tayo, is not complete—that one fragile thread of memory, of Spider Woman, remains. In the location (duration) of the schoolteacher admonishing him for his culture and stories, itself a memory

nested in the memory of praying for rain, Tayo again remembers a memory of how he read those textbooks but didn't believe the stories at the time. Those science books explained "the causes and effects." Those textbooks explained the world according to a linear logic—linear sequence. But his old grandma had told him other stories, stories with persistent power despite the schoolteacher's efforts at erasure. The old stories explain the world *otherwise*:

Old Grandma always used to say, "Back in time immemorial, things were different, the animals could talk to human beings and many magical things still happened." He never lost the feeling he had in his chest when she spoke those words, as she did each time she told them stories. (Silko 94-95)

He never lost the *feeling*. The memory is a sensation—the body remembers. A thread remains, a fragile filament. The old stories conjure a feeling, and this feeling is persistent and durable (yet fragile or not always perceptible). Old Grandma spoke those words each time she told stories, telling the words and their stories. Remembering the stories likewise recalls (reconjures) feelings in his chest. Again, registering the material effect of discourse in his body, the ancestor is here not simply the keeper of stories: her stories keep Tayo in the sensation, in a feeling in his chest remarkably different from the swollen grief in his belly. And, remembering this memory of old Grandma and her stories, while in the canyon praying for rain, Tayo sees how:

Everywhere he looked, he saw a world made of stories, the long ago, time immemorial stories, as old Grandma called them. It was a world alive, always changing and moving; and if you knew where to look, you could see it, sometimes almost imperceptible, like the motion of stars across the sky. (Silko 95)

To read old Grandma here simply as the keeper of these stories—not unlike old Thought-Woman, the spider—would settle for kinship as a metaphor, would take the grandmother as archive of the past. That reading, I find, stops short of reading the stories behind the words, or how these stories narrate the world otherwise than those white teachers' textbooks (otherwise than kinship as blood lines). Why are old Grandma's stories so enduring, so corporeally sensed in his chest yet simultaneously so fragile as to be lost and forgotten under his trauma? Grandma's stories—the old stories—narrate a world always in transition. But that transition is "almost imperceptible, like the motion of stars across the sky." To be able to take in the "constant migration and motion on multiple scales" (in Whyte's words) requires at once corporeal memory as sensation and, it seems, the capacity to sense or see the patterns in the stories that tell of that constant motion. The stories hold that view of transition in a presence (present), the stories tell of



where (or how) to look for that almost-imperceptible motion. The old stories remember how to sense the story that is still being told *as* persistent motion. Constant motion, patterns, always changing and moving, like the stars across the sky. The movement, the liveliness of the world, is almost-imperceptible. Almost imperceptible, like the motion of the stars across the sky. Almost imperceptible, like “faint crisscrossing patterns in the fine yellow sand.” The motion of the stars across the sky is affiliated with the spider’s movements, and both narrate the movement of the world spatially, as a spiraling. This is the story, and it is still being told—it is alive.

Now Tayo remembers where to look, or at least he is beginning to remember. After his prayer for rain, in the canyon, Tayo rides off on his horse into a grove of dry (yellow) sunflower stalks. There he sees a bright green hummingbird flying higher and higher into the sky until he loses sight of it. Silko gathers colors; an important transition is about to take place. Tayo feels how seeing this hummingbird is (was) also an important part of the story, for “it left something with him; as long as the hummingbird had not abandoned the land, somewhere there were still flowers, and they could all go on” (Silko 95-6). The semi-colon here coordinates these two clauses relationally in such a way that the hummingbird is now the storyteller, the ancestor, the kin relation whose movements in a place now remind (that is, teach) Tayo of that constant motion. The hummingbird teaches him that his survival is related to the survival of the land, of the liveliness, of the web/space. Remembering old Grandma’s stories and the feeling that they conjure at once conjures the knowledge (the memory) that hummingbird is a pollinator whose work assures the continuation of worlds.<sup>97</sup> In this place, coordinated with his prayer for rain, hummingbird confirms that Tayo’s act of sprinkling pollen and waiting for the spider are part of the “always changing” motion that (trans)creates a place (the relations of everybeing gathered in a presence in that place). And it feels right, good. The next day, “the wind came up from the west, smelling cool like wet clay. Then he could see the rain. It was spinning out of the thunderclouds like gray spider webs and tangling against foothills of the mountain” (Silko 96). He followed hummingbird’s model, in a way, as pollinator, shaking yellow pollen onto the water to call up the rains; and the rains came, rain specifically described as spinning—spiraling, telling a story, weaving the world into being—out of thunderclouds like spider webs. Linked by simile, here the web is a figure that discursively relates material processes, yes; however, in the juxtaposition with old Grandma’s stories (and the feeling in his chest), the workings of the weather substantiate the web/space in terms of the material assembling of forces whose relations

spiral and weave and tangle in a place (movement). The spider in the canyon, the hummingbird, the rain, the thunderclouds: all (trans)create the place as such. When (where) gathered together in this way, they make and remake the life of the mesas and canyons, their movements Tayo then repeats to bring about or attend to a transition.

But the prayer and ensuing thunderclouds are all occurring before Tayo goes to war while yet being narrated from an orientation toward Tayo in the *narrative present* of post-war illness and seeking ceremony to heal. I must take care here to explain that this sense of narrative temporality does not reflect a singular character's interior life or internal line of thinking. These nested memories are not narrated as acts of Tayo remembering these past (passed) moments—they are for us, the reader. They explain the meaning behind the words that Silko uses—the meaning behind the movements of Tayo's ceremony. To sense the meaning of Tayo's present illness and grief and loss, Silko must tell the stories behind the locations that gather together in Tayo's ceremony, in this story. She must explain the web of relations, the way all the stories fit together. Because the meaning is made relationally. No single word alone can explain it. In this sense, as well, the loss that forms a central crux of Tayo's story is the loss of memory through which the state exacts Indigenous oppression and dispossession. The same institutional instruction that upheld the facts and logic of a textbook taught Tayo to distrust the old stories—to disregard the story of the liveliness of the world. It is an education that not only takes the stories away from the people, that insists on forgetting, but that also ontologizes the world as a sequence of inert matter made useful by the active force of human agency, of human time moving across that passive material space. This is a very different narration of the world than that lively, constant motion in a place expressed in Pueblo cosmology and language. This kind of education, this kind of History written in linear social evolutionary terms, narrates Indigenous life as a broken and irretrievable relic of an outmoded and *past* way of being in and with the world. Indigeneity, in this narrative, is always a thing of the past.<sup>98</sup> And yet, Silko is telling her reader that in forgetting the stories—the story that is still being told—English-language facts and logic simply assume superposition over Indigenous knowledge systems, arranging the world according to the new words yet where the structure of the old stories remains palimpsestically (like a ghost) underneath.<sup>99</sup> The web/space continues to spin, beyond colonial-modern perceptibility; and, where the people remember traces of the story of constant motion on multiple scales, the people likewise remember the story of how to surmount the “tyranny” of that singular horizon written in

settler colonial policies and modern sciences and which attempts to organize Indigenous death by means of affixing materiality as inert matter under a linear flow of time.

At this juncture I revisit what Silko told her reader at the outset: that the people's stories are not entertainment. Silko addressed her reader: "they are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness and death." In verse form, Silko insisted that the old stories are the target of settler colonial destruction: "Their evil is mighty / but it can't stand up to our stories. / So they try to destroy the stories / let the stories be confused or forgotten. / They would like that / They would be happy / Because we would be defenseless then" (2). The stories are not mere discourse. Indeed, the very cosmology that narrates the constant motion of a place (world) iterates discursive-material assemblages in the ongoing weaving of this story that is still being told. Forgetting the old stories is not simply *not remembering*. The loss of this kind of memory is oppression.<sup>100</sup> Losing the old stories is forgetting the persistent motion of the web/space of the cosmos which is also forgetting the defense against Indigenous illness and death because to remember the liveliness of the world is to remember human relations *with* the materiality of the world—with all of the matter-beings that inhabit this shared ecosystem.<sup>101</sup> And this story of the world's liveliness and of the people's source of resiliency is a direct threat to the structures of settler colonization and extractivism. The colocations and assemblages of colors and directions, and the spiraling structure of Silko's storytelling (which I discuss further in the next section), are not entertainment: they are a defense, a counterspell. And Tayo spiraling through the places of Pueblo stories toward a ceremonial transition contextualized through the motion of the stars spiraling across the sky teaches the world as living being—as kin.

This is Tayo's story, it is Silko's story, and it is a story of the cosmos. This story gathers locations—assembles colors and directions as coordinates on the map of Tayo's ceremony (of Silko's ceremony). He is need of a good ceremony. Turning now back to the so-called narrative present, Auntie's husband Robert brings Tayo to old Betonie's place outside and overlooking the town of Gallup. Auntie herself (a good Christian woman, we are told) is inclined to distrust anyone who lives in such a place, but old Grandma says Ku'oosh recommended Betonie and that he thinks he can help Tayo.<sup>102</sup> The old medicine man immediately explains the story behind the place, behind the placement of his hogan:

"They keep us on the north side of the railroad tracks, next to the river and their dump. Where none of them want to live." He laughed. "They don't understand. We know these hills, and we are comfortable here." There was something about the way the old man had

said the word “comfortable.” It had a different meaning—not the comfort of big houses or rich food or even clean streets, but the comfort of belonging with the land, and the peace of being with these hills. But the special meaning the old man had given to the English word was burned away by the glare of the sun on tin cans and broken glass, blinding reflections off the mirrors and chrome of the wrecked cars in the dump below. Tayo felt the old nausea rising up in his stomach, along with a vague feeling that he knew something which he could not remember. (Silko 117)

To Betonie, comfort comes through a kinetic and relational sense of place, a sense of familiarity “with these hills.” Betonie laughs at what the whites misunderstand, describing “comfort” that could also be called familiarity, as in family, as in kinship *with* these hills. What whites don’t understand, he is saying, is the relationship with the land, with place, with the beings assembling with(in) it; “they” only see resources or the potential unfolding of matter, developing it outward into things for use (consumption) such as those cans and cars now piling up at the dump below. In contrast with seeing materiality as resource, Betonie sees ancestors (kin) in the hills. Belonging with the land. I want to take care here to explain that Silko’s narration is not suggesting that Indigenous people are by blood and birth right inherently *closer to nature*—that is a settler colonial reading of Indigenous epistemologies (and as racial biologies). Indeed, to read this kind of multispecies kinship relationality as a science requires seeing (sensing) the story not as artifact of an ethnocultural group but rather as an enduring, collectively generated epistemology of multiplicity that ontologizes the world as a spider’s web/space assemblage of constantly moving matter-energy. This is a perceptibility of the world’s liveliness that is, in a way, possible for any human to see but which requires a certain kind of learning and remembering—that commands a kind of kincentric sense-ability made possible by and through the kinds of storytelling practices that animate Silko’s novel. Tayo, too, in this place with Betonie, cannot quite remember how to see it—that feeling rises up in his belly (where the stories are kept) but he cannot quite remember something he knows because he is blinded by the reflection of the dump. It is as though his senses are hindered, his ability to see the liveliness of the world still covered over by that superposition of his white instructor’s denigration of the old stories. This is where his belly swells again with nausea and pain—Tayo’s symptoms activated by what is un-remembered, activated by an absence felt as a presence. He senses something just out of reach, as yet imperceptible. But in his inability to fully perceive it, he feels grief and loss precisely in the place where the stories are kept (in the belly). While as yet imperceptible, it is becoming more palpable that the loss and grief are engendered by the loss of the stories that

remind Tayo how to see and be with(in) the constant motion of the world—of the place, of his life. Being in the place but where the place is mere backdrop or exists as resource supply produces these sensations of grief. Being at peace with the hills, as Betonie describes, means being *in* that feeling of (lively) kinship familiarity with the place-as-living-being. And Silko's story gathers and bundles the movements that reinforce this kind of remembering, that remember *this story* and as a defense against Indigenous illness and death.

It may be necessary to remain in old Betonie's hogan for a bit. The space is characterized as having a circular room on the west side, built into the side of a hill, with a "sky hole" in the middle. Tayo is not yet sure what this ceremony will bring, he just knows that he cannot go on in pain and nausea and sleepless nights. Betonie has him sit on brown goatskin on the floor under the sky hole; he is looking around the room, which is stacked with bundles of newspapers, shopping bags, mountain sage, herbs, and more. Then:

He could see bundles of newspapers, their edges curled stiff and brown, [...] and he began to feel another dimension to the old man's room. His heart beat faster, and he felt the blood draining from his legs. He knew the answer before he could shape the question. [...] He wanted to dismiss all of it as an old man's rubbish, debris that had fallen out of the years, but the boxes and trunks, the bundles and stacks were plainly part of the pattern: they followed the concentric shadows of the room. The old man smiled. [...] "Take it easy," he said, "don't try to see everything all at once." He laughed. "We've been gathering these things for a long time—hundreds of years." (Silko 120)

The brown goatskin is gathered with the browning edges of the papers and things stacked and bundled throughout this circular room. Tayo is at an important part of the story. A transition is about to take place. The stacks follow the concentric shadows in the room, such that the old man's gathered bundles are arranged in a pattern that matches these concentric shapes in this circular room relative to the position of the sunlight coming through the sky hole. And it is a pattern that he has been designing, intergenerationally, for hundreds of years, he says. It is a collectively authored design, and it incorporates Tayo and his need of a good ceremony. In the narration, this moment of realization takes place at what seems to be the start of the ceremony—yet, it has been going on for a long time, we have been told, and I find that this patterning in Betonie's hogan implicates the design (the pattern) of the ceremony in terms of its liveliness, its constant motion, and its collective authorship. In this way, then, Silko's narration of this moment of Tayo on the brown goatskin reeling from taking it in all at once initiates his role in the story as a coming-to-awareness of his role in the ceremony. Or, in other words, Tayo recognizing the

map—the pattern—marks his participation in the ceremony that will be his good cure (and that I have been describing as Silko’s ceremony of defense against Indigenous illness and death). And yet, the constant motion and liveliness of the pattern, sweeping across the sky like the motion of the stars, reminds—and makes certain in this narrative moment—that ceremony is process, ceremony is attending to transitions within that constant motion. Ceremony is not, in fact, a resolution—certainly not in the context of ongoing settler colonial occupation in the hemisphere.<sup>103</sup> Betonie and his predecessors had been gathering these bundles and stacks for hundreds of years and arranging them in concentric circles that follow the shadows of the round room. Silko, too, gathers and bundles; Silko, too, patterns and arranges these bundles throughout her text, forming what I discuss in terms of a “spiraling” movement in the next section and which for now, importantly, remarks the entanglement of the storyteller in the story, so to speak. Or, where Silko arranges the browns and the west wall of the circular hogan, Tayo and the reader are called to attend to this important transition (this part of the ceremony). Tayo cannot dismiss the bundles as detritus, certainly not in the same way as the cans and cars in the dump below. And what is disorienting to try to take in all at once is the immensity of the pattern, the way everything fits together into a pattern—it takes time, and patience, to sense it. And it has never been easy, Betonie tells Tayo, because “it” has been going on for a long time. With this “it,” Betonie implicates what he calls the “witchery ranging as wide as this world” (Silko 124). Throughout the novel, this witchery is a force conjured by powerful storytellers who speak into being the kinds of destruction introduced to the Americas with European colonization and continuing with ongoing settler colonial occupation. But all people, including the white Europeans responsible for this destruction, are affected by the witchery’s appetite—it is not that European peoples are inherently or singularly evil, this tells us; it is that the white settler colonial forms of storytelling and education narrate the world through ontologies of separation and condition that struggle against that which is outside the individual self, defined in part through *bloodlines*. That story of the world calls it a backdrop for the passage of (patri)lineal time, naming History as such through the same metaphor of linear sequence. It is ancestry *to* and *from* an individuated point on a *timeline* of the self (the body). By contrast, the nonlinear web/space story of the world coordinates ancestry spatially, as a *with(in)*. In this way, too, the body is not individuated—not extracted from the place with(in) which the self is made and remade, in constant motion at multiple scales. And the ceremony cannot therefore be for an individual, not

for the salvation of a singular soul, but for something greater and inclusive of the self. It is extradiegetic ceremony. It is ceremony for all of creation. Tayo's illness materializes the work of the witchery that comes through the words of that white teacher's version of his story (of the story), calling his ability to see the vast web/space of an entangled matter-energy physics "superstition," the illness (of the witchery) thus infecting his body as well as the body of the earth and every being who sees and relates with the world in this way—and it is an illness against which the old stories defend because the old stories remember how to see and sense that kinship between human and more-than-human. Betonie tells Tayo: "You are at an important place in the story" (Silko 124). Tayo hears this, but:

Tayo's stomach clenched around the words like knives stuck into his guts. There was something large and terrifying in the old man's words. He wanted to yell at the medicine man, to yell the things the white doctors had yelled at him—that he had to think only of himself, and not about the others, that he would never get well as long as he used words like "we" and "us." But he had known the answer all along [...]: medicine didn't work that way. His sickness was only part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything. (Silko 125)

Tayo feels it in the place where the stories are kept, in his stomach, and he resists at first Betonie's encouragement of the collective curative. The doctors who treated him after the war drilled it into his head, into his memory (his body), the story of the individual human: the story that tells that he would never be healed as long as he expressed identity collectively—"we" and "us" are symptoms of Indigenous superstition, in their story (as absolutist "science") and what is real is the beginning and the end of the individual Self. At least, that was the white doctors' story. Where the old dialect and the old stories express gathering and assembling and spiraling motions of space-time, English-language facts and logic and medicine separate, individualize, try to unwind and untangle to a telos—aim for a salvation that is, really, an ending. Assimilation or annihilation: both are endings.<sup>104</sup> Both endings propose the complete erasure of Indigeneity—that is, the erasure of Indigenous ways of seeing and of real living Indigenous folx. Both endings permit the open extraction of Indigenous lands as *resources* through destruction of the defenses against Indigenous illness and death—through destruction of the stories that articulate kinship relationality with a lively more-than-human world. But that is part of the violence, it seems, part of the "witchery" that appetizes destruction.<sup>105</sup> Here, in Betonie's hogan, the transition to which Tayo must attend is in a (re)gathering of "we" and "us," in assembling the patterns and sensing the story. Even if it is too overwhelming to see the pattern all at once, forgetting the story and

trying to unwind the tangle are the estranging violence that attempts to extract Tayo (painfully) from the story—that attempts to assimilate him out of the place-making practices that create and transcreate and recreate *the story that is still being told* (“great and inclusive of everything”).

Ceremony is transcreation. This is important. Silko is telling her reader that it is about attending to transitions, not restoring to an undamaged state; it embraces the world as alive and always changing and works to shape those changes by attending to the processes, to the relations. Kinship then, as well—ancestry—is a matter of transitions, patterns, sweeping motions of constellations, and not a matter of a linear sequencing of heredity. Betonie voices this distinction directly to Tayo and the reader, pointing to how people in the community “these days” think that ceremony means performing rites exactly how they have always been done. But Betonie insists that how they have always been done has always been exact only to the presence of the location (duration) of their incantation: ceremony re-members the persistence of change by persistently changing. Ceremonies are meant to be different each time because each ceremony marks a new transition within the lively constant motion of the world (place). Betonie tells us that “only this growth keeps the ceremonies strong” and “things which don’t shift and grow are dead things” (Silko 126). Death is not an ending except where it forecloses change, motion, transcreation. The old stories, and ceremony that attends to transitions, describe dead things as those in fixed states because this fixity enables and perpetuates the power of the “witchery.” This sense of fixity is also an obsession with ends. A teleology. A linear shape of time. A linear ontology organizing the matter-energy of the earth into inert and non-human (or less-than-human) resources for *use*. Betonie suggests that clinging to an affixed form of the old ceremonies enables the witchery: “then their power will triumph, and the people will be no more” (Silko 126). To cling to an idea of an authentic past reiterates the terms of the same linear logic that proposes only one possible ending for Indigeneity. In the obsession with fixity, or in the ability to see only the distance between bodies, ancestors, and places, the world becomes sensible only as that backdrop to the actualization of an individuated human actor. Resistance to change forms in that conjunction of the need for fixed, decipherable states of objectively configured others, forming as well the inability to sense (remember) the ways that matter is relational and persistently intra-acting and transcreating.<sup>106</sup> As I make clear in the introduction to this chapter, quantum physics now reiterates the kind of entangled materiality that the elders’ language and stories in Silko’s novel succinctly narrate external to and proleptically of that modern science genealogy. So this idea of



the intra-activity of the body-place axis is not only *not* superstition; it announces a persistent Indigenous science of kinship and creation in Pueblo language and cosmology. Silko narrates: “‘Look,’ Betonie said, pointing east to Mount Taylor towering dark blue with the last twilight. ‘They only fool themselves when they think it is theirs. The deeds and papers don’t mean anything. It is the people who belong to the mountain’” (128). The mountain does not belong to the people, the people belong to the mountain because, in the multiscalar web of intra-activity in which human and mountain bodies form and reform, to perceive the mountain as property or to claim the body as individuated is simply to believe the story that the human stands apart from the lively world. To relinquish the sense of ownership—and the attendant sense of autonomy or sovereignty that comes with it—feels dangerous, maybe even reckless for me to state here. It feels like an invitation to further degradations of Indigenous lands and women’s bodily autonomy, in the time and place of this writing. But the story that I am telling you that Silko tells is also a story about responsibility with that collective entanglement. In this sense, rather than functioning as license for rampant use of differentiated bodies and lands, to argue the entanglement of all bodies with the earth is to argue that any violation of bodies, lands, or waters is never a violation of an *other*—it is always already a violation of self. The destructive power of the witchery that Betonie describes is the power of its story to tear the intricate patterns of filament of the web/space. To conceive of collective entanglement is risky in the face of that destructive appetite; but to do so, to tell *this story*, fundamentally orients toward remembering the directions (the story) for how to see the patterns, how to attend to the transitions, and how to move with(in) the web/space with attention to the ways that every minute action or force is in relation to all other forces—that sustainable and resilient notions of self-interest include a capacious notion of the self in kinship relation with(in) the world. Silko’s story is one of deep and enduring comfort (pleasure, joy) in this sense of relations—this shape of kinship. Indeed, it is a story of how forgetting these relations, forgetting how kinship exceeds bloodlines, is also forgetting human imbrication with the more-than-human and this forgetting is felt in the body as a trauma—as a trauma that haunts the body’s senses.

To tell a story about recovering a sense of kinship and responsibility with planetary life is starting to sound like a project with an ending, aiming for a telos—a shape completely at odds with the shape of kinship and narrative form that I have been describing. It also sounds a lot like a story calling for a return to something older, something *passed*—like restoring a *past* state. I

must take great care to explain that Silko's novel orients us toward a theory of temporality in which the *passed* is continually shaping and shaped by *presence* in a place (a location/duration). In the same way, the novel orients us toward a theory of ancestry that situates the self in spiraling spatial relation (not linear sequence) with ancestor and descendant. I recall here how Whyte tells his readers that the Anishinaabemowin terms for "ancestor" and "descendant" are the same word (228). There is no linear temporal distinction made, linguistically or materially, between generations. The generations are in intra-active relations of constant motion on multiple scales. Old Betonie insists on this as well. Change is a persistent happening, not an event with a discrete beginning and ending. The changing, the becoming, is always already occurring. In this story, transformation is more stable and sustainable than fixity, more durable than stasis. There is likewise an ethos of care in this story: of caring for the changes, appreciating the transformations, attending to the transitions, not fearing them, for fear of change is fear of the world is fear of the self. Which is part of Tayo's illness, it seems. Fear. Fear of endings, of loss. Betonie (and a young helper) guides Tayo during this initial part of the ceremony, in the circular hogan—but maybe it started with Ku'oosh. Or maybe it started with Tayo in the canyon, before the war. Or with Thought-Woman, the spider? It has been going on a long time. And this is the story that is still being told. Silko takes her reader from that reckoning with the depth and scope of the pattern, the design of the shadows and bundles in concentric circles, and then to a verse form on the page telling the story of Coyote and a man who needed a good cure (ceremony), the same cure as for Tayo. But it will be different, not an exact repetition, we know now. Betonie paints the mountains on the floor, with white corn and black sand, and Tayo sits in the middle of the floor painting. They move Tayo through hoops arranged by the bundles and stacks of gathered things, moving him through the concentric circles of the design, the motion and change itself a ritual in a way. Then Tayo is moved outside the hogan where he falls asleep under the stars, dreaming about the speckled Mexican cattle that Uncle Josiah had bought before the war but which had gone missing. When Tayo wakes up:

He stood at the edge of the rimrock and looked down below: the canyons and valleys were thick powdery black; their variations of height and depth were marked by a thinner black color. He remembered the black of the sand paintings on the floor of the hogan; the hills and mountains were the mountains and hills they had painted in sand. He took a deep breath of cold mountain air: there were no boundaries; the world below and the sand paintings inside became the same that night. The mountains from all the directions had been gathered there that night. (Silko 145)

The design of this ceremony is a gathering: it assembles the white corn and the thick powdery black sand, it assembles Tayo with the mountains—he is in the design. There are no boundaries, he breathes in and with the land. The cosmos is inside him and he is inside the cosmos. That night, he could feel the gathering of all directions. Sensing the pattern beyond the visual representation of landscape, Tayo now sees how the ceremony is about remembering a sense of belonging with the land, a sense of comfort with the land, a sense of kinship with the land—and this through storytelling, through re-membering the constant motion of persistent change. Like Betonie’s old Navajo father had seen, we are then told in a story to explain the meaning of the words in this part of the text, Tayo sees “the planets and constellations wheeling and shifting the patterns of the old stories. He saw the transition, and he was ready” (Silko 150). The pain of the tangle begins to recede, along with the fear of the change. He sees the transition taking place, and he is ready. From the ways that his grandma’s stories evoked that feeling in his chest, to the ways that old Betonie’s designs for his ceremony guide him toward staying in the feeling of constant motion and change, the ancestor is formed with(in) the self and the self with(in) the ancestor and both are formed as such through relations that exceed bloodlines and linear temporal historicity. Tayo’s sense of his ancestors and his self begins to resemble the concentric circles of the pattern in the hogan, albeit with the distinction that these circles are part of a story that is itself intra-active and in constant motion—spiraling.

## “Spiraling”

In the *narrative present*, following his visit to old Betonie, Tayo feels like he is waiting for something more to happen. He is staying at a family ranch in the mountains, by himself. His friend Harley, another veteran of the war and frequent drinking buddy, comes to visit but can’t seem to sit still. So he convinces Tayo to go with him to buy beer, Harley travelling by burro and Tayo by old gray mule. I have already been describing the spiraling shape of Silko’s narrative form as well as a spiraling shape of temporality. Here, I would like to elaborate this shape and more carefully articulate its relation to my reading of kinship in the novel. Silko tells us that Tayo and Harley:

traveled in wide arcs, moving gradually to the north. Tayo thought about animals then, horses and mules, and the way they drifted with the wind. Josiah said that only humans

had to endure anything, because only humans resisted what they saw outside themselves. Animals did not resist. But they persisted, because they became part of the wind. (27).

I take up this notion of persisting “with the wind” and traveling in wide arcs and consider it a distinction drawn between resistance and persistence—a distinction that then allows me to elaborate “spiraling” kinship in part through the way that these two characters “gradually” arc north. In this passage, to resist the wind is to resist what is seen as outside of the self. Resistance to the force of the wind is both distressing and a bit absurd—resistance thus forming a sort of ineffective effort at forward motion (or future work) where it suggests that one must press directly against those forces felt outside the self, that one must insist on taking a straight line of forward motion-as progress. But here, Josiah has told Tayo that animals persist because they become “part of the wind” rather than attempting to maintain momentum by pressing against it. There is an important lesson for decolonial action in this distinction between resistance and persistence. The gray mule’s momentum is persistent, if indirect. Persistence is a wide arc rather than a straight line; persistence embraces the forces outside of the self, moves with those forces. Persistence is radical, it refuses to quit. Resistance is not figured as the revolutionary act here—it is figured as a condition that sets people in a relation of fear and anxiety against the world, resistance to and fear of that which is seen as outside of the self. But to conceive of the self as *with* the world—as part of the wind—is a mode of persistent (and revolutionary) motion: spiraling. The thought here reiterates what I have begun to formulate in previous sections in relation to Whyte’s insistence on “constant migration and motion occurring at different scales” (228). Silko tells her reader this story, as a way of explaining the meaning behind another part of Tayo’s story, with Rocky just prior to deployment. All the stories fit together. To feel the loss of his cousin-brother, Rocky, comes through that resistance to what is seen as outside of the self. This is to say that in the old stories, such as those told by Uncle Josiah and old Grandma—stories that must be understood as living, changing—a sense of the world inside the self and the self inside the world comes through the relations between the features of the story, and not in the representation or symbolism of the features. It is not what the old gray mule symbolizes, it is the pattern formed by the collocation of the old gray mule and moving in wide arcs with the wind. And this, we are told, is akin to old Grandma: “They were the same—the mule and old Grandma, [...] she was as blind as the gray mule and just as persistent” (Silko 27). So perhaps there is more to this distinction. The simile here links Grandma and the old gray mule—one as figure for

understanding the movements of the other. In the insistence on their similarity, this passage does yet more by announcing the similarity in part through Josiah's storytelling. Tayo sees, in this present with Harley riding to the beer store, how Josiah had told him something about the animals that now makes something about Grandma clear and in a way that exceeds the simile. It is not that Grandma is *like* an animal. It is that her persistence is likened to the old gray mule, who we now know moves in wide arcs with the wind. Grandma persists, with the wind. Some people resist the entanglement, resist the wind, resist the spiral and try to untangle the web, try to reinforce the *line*. But Grandma doesn't resist the wind, Tayo can now see. The shape of Silko's storytelling gathers these things together, bundles them in the text, for Tayo and for the reader. We encounter the mule and the Grandma together and understand her persistence as a matter of moving with the wind. Spiraling. Like Silko's narrative. The story (that is still being told) moves in wide arcs, gradually moving north. The story persists. The story persists in its ceremony, in its attention to the transition—to *constant motion occurring on different scales*.

This spiraling movement of the animals compels further contemplation in Tayo. But the answers do not lie with his friend Harley, nor at the bottom of a beer bottle—although, he tries for a moment, once again, to see how it feels to forget. This time, it feels different. Something has transformed in him since that other night when he found himself *in* the design of Betonie's ceremonial bundling and sand drawing. The novel moves gradually through yet another bundling of scenes: Tayo drinking with his friends at the bar, listening to their war stories; Tayo enlisting for the war with Rocky; Tayo in the army hospital after combat; and all interwoven with Laguna stories in verse. The narrative only takes up the *narrative present* of Tayo and his drinking buddies again much deeper into the novel's pages, when, after his body rejects the drinking, he leaves his friends and sets out on foot, walking back to the ranch around dawn, by memory. Tayo belatedly allows his senses to open up to the possibility of finding the other elements of Betonie's ceremony that are needed for its completion: "there were the cattle to find, and the stars, the mountain, and the woman" (Silko 167). Tayo must gather these things, it seems. But he is not sure how—he does not yet remember the story for how to surmount the distances and days. But he is gradually remembering how to move with the wind, how to not resist that which seems outside of himself.

Now Tayo walks the land at night because he is sensing the story, he is sensing the pattern of the ceremony, and he is moving with the wide arc of the wind. Silko tells another story

in verse. Her reader must simply trust that meaning will be made as she moves in wide arcs through this story. This verse is part of ensuring the meaning of the story that is still being told. This one is longer than the other verses, as well, and intricate in its narration of how the mountain Ka't'sina, Kaup'a'ta "the Gambler," captured and locked up the rain clouds and for three years "the land was drying up / the people and animals were starving" (Silko 172). We have heard part of this story already, and we have been told that knowing the stories is knowing the directions for surmounting distances and days. This story tells of how the Sun, father of the storm clouds, took offerings of blue pollen and yellow pollen, tobacco and coral, and walked to where "Spiderwoman was waiting for him" (Silko 173). Recall that Thought-Woman the old spider "waited in certain locations for people to come to her for help." She gives the Sun directions (the story!) for how to surmount the magic of the Gambler and free the clouds—to bring rains to end drought. Sun frees the storm clouds from where they were locked up in four rooms—in the four cardinal directions—and the verse concludes with Sun calling out "Come home again. / Your mother, the earth is crying for you. / Come home, children, come home" (Silko 176). This, I find, is the story—the directions for surmounting the distances and days. It is in remembering this story of the Sun calling the people home to the earth that Tayo attends to the transition about to take place. I will add that to conceive of the shape of kinship in Silko's novel as a spiral—as interwoven concentric circles—to me argues as well that reading this verse through the Pueblo theory of language as woven, spiraling, and like a spider's web situates the meaning of this incantation in terms of the relations that shape the forms. The verse is not anthropomorphizing the sun and the earth; rather, this kind of kinship metaphor, as I have said before, is in Silko's novel the narration of material (physical and metaphysical) relations—bodies in kinetic spatial relation with the earth (the mother, the matter).<sup>107</sup> In the spiraling pattern of the web, these figures of mother, father, and children are formed in their gathering, their assembling *as* relations—their (trans)formations are made and remade as such in the *constant motion* of their relations. And animals and people and mountains likewise take shape in these same gatherings of materiality even as the pattern of gatherings shifts and spirals in wide arcs with the constellations in the sky. Tayo is beginning to remember *this story*, now.

At present, directly following Silko's lyrical narration of Sun calling his children home, Tayo is startled by the voice of a woman standing under an apricot tree in a small yard near an arroyo. He tells her he is looking for his uncle's speckled cattle—he is looking for the parts of

the ceremony. She invites him inside her cabin, hugging her blanket around herself in the frigid Fall air. The sky on the horizon is bright red. The patterns on her blanket stand out to Tayo, “designs woven across the blanket in four colors: patterns of storm clouds in white and gray; black lightning scattered through brown wind” (Silko 177). Silko gathers colors. A transition is about to take place. Silko’s narrative spiraling is forming a pattern; Tayo is looking for a pattern—as the reader is likewise called to sense Silko’s patterning. Here, with the woman, Silko tells us that Tayo has been watching the night sky all through the month of September, looking for Betonie’s stars—the constellations in the ceremony. Like a map, these constellations are to mark the parts of his ceremony (to mark and make his story). But looking for the constellations is not simply a matter of the right time, more precisely it is a matter of the right *place-time*. The spiraling sweep of the stars across the sky is continual, yet never an exact repetition—it is a pattern, always in transition, a spiraling motion. And here, with this woman in the patterned blanket, Tayo looks to the sky and sees: “Old Betonie’s stars were there” (Silko 178). Suddenly, enigmatically, Silko presents her reader with a darkened page marked with white specks and swoops (Silko 179). The page tells this part of the story visually, a loose spiraling of stars in a dark sky. This is the location of a part of the ceremony, mapped in the precise geospatial positioning of the stars and assembled with Tayo and the woman in this precise place-time. The scenes that follow this starry visual express a depth of joy, remembering, love, and caring through the ways that this as yet unnamed woman embraces Tayo. Enabling him to “let the motion carry him,” they make love and “he could feel the momentum within, at first almost imperceptible, gathering in his belly” (Silko 181). A gathering is taking place, in the place where the stories are kept. The motion, the momentum, is “almost imperceptible,” like the motion of the stars across the sky. Tayo is moving in wide arcs, and it feels good. It feels like coming home. The woman was waiting for him to arrive, it seems—waiting for him to come to her for help, calling him home to the earth.

Tayo is beginning to remember the stories, a remembering located in his belly (in the belly of *this story*). In the morning, the woman rises before the sun and Tayo follows, breathing in the “sounds gathering with the dawn. [...] the sounds gathered intensity from the swelling colors of dawn” (Silko 182). Silko gathers colors with momentum in her story. Tayo has found the woman. But there is more to be done for his ceremony—for this *Ceremony*. As the sun rises, Tayo voices a song:

He repeated the words as he remembered them, not sure if they were the right ones, but feeling they were right, feeling the instant of the dawn was an event which in a single moment gathered all things together—the last stars, the mountaintops, the clouds, and the winds—celebrating this coming. The power of each day spilled over the hills in great silence. Sunrise. He ended the prayer with “sunrise” because he knew the Dawn people began and ended all their words with “sunrise.” (Silko 182).

Like the novel, Tayo’s song begins and ends with the word “sunrise.” The sunrise is the ultimate emblem of transition. The sunrise gathers the stars, the mountains, the clouds, the winds; sunrise assembles, attends to the transitions and, in the way that Silko intones it, this gathering of all things is “celebrating this coming” or be-coming. And this, in a word—in the way that the Dawn people “began and ended all their words with ‘sunrise.’” The song for sunrise is a single word, yet the single word is also a gathering together of words (Tayo’s song) that take up this precise meaning in this precise location of the sunrise and of the novel. Allow me to interject, as well, that the sun rising is a phenomenon of spiraling: the earth spins, the sun appears to rise into the sky. To call it sunrise risks naming it as an event; but to remember the spinning, the web-story, remembers that sunrise names a relation. Sunrise is movement in a place—motion that is also the relation through which moving bodies take shape as such. Tayo’s movements through the parts of the ceremony orient the narration in this spiraling movement through at once the structure of the novel, the story it tells, and the ways that Silko articulates the ceremony as being called back home—called back to the earth, to the mother and her love—through a spiraling movement with the wind, in celebration of the gathering of all things with the sunrise.

Tayo is beginning to see it—beginning to trust that the meaning of Betonie’s design will be made. Tayo thinks: “until the previous night, old Betonie’s vision of stars, cattle, a woman, and a mountain seemed remote; [...] but suddenly Betonie’s vision was a story he could feel happening—from the stars and the woman, the mountain and the cattle would come” (Silko 186). The ceremony is a story (the story is a ceremony). He can feel it happening. The story is a sensation. The story is still being told and he is in it—in the web, the fragile yet durable filaments of which are almost-imperceptible. He anticipates the transition, now—he is ready. (Who is this ceremony for again?) But there is more to be done. Tayo is still looking for Uncle Josiah’s cattle. So he and the woman part ways, sweetly, and he rides his horse further into the mountains toward an area of land that abuts the reservation and where he expects to find the cattle. The land is owned by a white rancher and is surrounded by a steel fence, purportedly to



keep predators from eating the rancher's livestock. But "the people knew what the fence was for: a thousand dollars a mile to keep Indians and Mexicans out; a thousand dollars a mile to lock the mountain in steel wire, to make the land his" (Silko 188). The rancher's ownership of the land is the source of his power—but it is also the source of anxiety, such that he feels the need to erect a fence to protect his power. A fenced place is a territory, a defensible space whose body belongs to the rancher to do with as he pleases. And the thought of someone else *doing something* with the land (or even doing nothing with the land) constitutes an abuse of his property; to put the land to *use*, to generate monetary wealth through that body, well now *that* constitutes legitimate use it seems. The fence demarcates that body (land) as "his." Tayo suspects that Uncle Josiah's cattle are on the other side of that fence, taken by the rancher (constituting proper *use* of cattle, as property). But it is Tayo who would be in the wrong were he to trespass on that now-private property, if he were to cross that fence line. Tayo now sees through the erasure of the old stories, sees the fence for what it signals. Focused on the transition, Tayo thinks:

The spotted cattle wouldn't be lost any more, scattered through his dreams, driven by his hesitation to admit they had been stolen, that the land—all of it—had been stolen from them. The anticipation of what he might find was strung tight in his belly; [...] there was no longer any hurry. The ride into the mountain had branched into all directions of time. He knew then why the oldtimers could only speak of yesterday and tomorrow in terms of the present moment: the only certainty; and this present sense of being was qualified with bare hints of yesterday or tomorrow, by saying, "I go up to the mountain yesterday or I go up to the mountain tomorrow." The ck'o'yo Kaup'a'ta somewhere is stacking his gambling sticks and waiting for a visitor; Rocky and I are walking across the ridge in the moonlight; Josiah and Robert are waiting for us. This is a single night; and there has never been any other. (Silko 192)

The stories all fit together. The presentness of the oldtimers' language; the stolen land and cattle; the tightness strung in his belly, in the tangle, where the stories are kept. These are all directions, and all directions branch in a present presence of *constant motion on different scales*. Spiraling. Tayo knows now, senses the story of spiraling temporality and multispecies kinship in this simultaneity of all time in this single night. The old story of Kaup'a'ta the Gambler is in the new story of Tayo searching for Josiah's cattle; and, in the way that Silko tells it as a presence, Tayo searching for Josiah's cattle is also part of the old story of the Gambler and his gambling sticks. The simultaneity of moments is recorded in the text through the relational work of the semi-colon, arranging the Gambler, Rocky and Tayo in the moonlight, and Josiah and Robert "waiting" for them in a pattern generated by the ways that "yesterday" and "tomorrow" only ever

register the present moment and do so relationally. In this way, too, the fence signals not simply the demarcation and defense of private property but the demarcation of linear temporal sequence. The fence signals a resistance to that which is perceived as outside of the self—a resistance to the wind, to change. Tayo sees now that the rancher fences his property to “keep Indians and Mexicans out” because they represent that outside-ness and because their ongoing presence on the land haunts the rancher’s ownership of that land. The cattle—and, relationally, Rocky, and Josiah, and the land—wouldn’t be lost anymore because Tayo is ready to see the pattern of the stories, including the story of the theft of Indigenous lands not simply by steel fences but by what the fences signal in terms of the imposition of a kind of temporality that renders Indigenous futurity impossible—a kind of temporality that renders *place* a matter of territory, of demarcation and defense. But Tayo is now seeing (sensing, feeling) that *place* is a meeting up of histories, a coexistence of presents (presences), a multidirectional branching, a living being. Perhaps it is the effect of being out in the mountains, on his horse, but Tayo feels a sense of ease that has eluded him—recall that his illness has been going on for a long time now. Or perhaps it is the ceremony doing its work. There is no longer any hurry (yet momentum is building, in his belly). There is no clear cause for this effect; rather, there is a growing sense that the spiraling temporality of the oldtimers’ language enfolds all locations, gathering in the present, into a presence that is also an intergenerational dialogue through which Rocky and Josiah and the Gambler coexist multidirectionally. And the anticipation of what he might find coexists with a patience that holds Tayo in the present night. He is not untangled; he is at ease in the tangle. The present night is the only certainty yet the past and the future are only conceivable in a simultaneity of expression in the present, assured through Tayo remembering the ways that the oldtimers, who speak in the old dialect (full of involutions, as Ku’oosh’s speech made real), conceive of time as multidirectional. The *passed* and the *yet-to-come* are *presence*. And the story is still being told. There is no rush—patience (and love) is at-once with anticipation and all are felt in the place where the stories are kept, in the belly. This is part of the ceremony, sensing this presence and spiraling in wide arcs with the wind is at once the spiraling time and the intergenerational dialogue theorized in Whyte’s Indigenous science, a gathering made possible in material intra-activity yet rendered sensible (able to be sensed) through *the story that is still being told* that is the defense against Indigenous illness and death—which is also the defense against the erasure and renaming of settler colonial land theft. The white rancher’s fence is part of the story, as well, part of the

ceremony of Tayo remembering the stories that reorient him not simply *on* the land but with the place-making of the place—with the memory (stories) in the land—and with the place as kin.

At the same time (or, place), Tayo is doubting the ceremony, wanting to give up tracking the cows and to turn back. The language of the text—that is, the story behind the words and feelings within the story—must yet move gradually in wide arcs through stories of Tayo’s life to make sense of the present, to situate riding in the mountains looking for the cattle within a greater pattern. I want to work through this part of the novel with patience and care—this will take time. Were I to hurry up the process of sensing this spiraling movement in wide arcs by selecting only the snippets that directly implicate kinship, my reading would reduce the story to a (linear logic) sequence of causes and effects. To be certain, the parts of the ceremony are not the cause for an effect of a cure. Tayo’s cure is coming through the ceremony as the ceremony rearranges his experience of time as an experience of place—living, flexing, assembling, kincentric *place*. And this process includes the hesitations that (in a linear, teleological cosmology) could be seen as a force that throws Tayo off-track, slows or stalls his progress, or prevents his arrival at that cure. But Tayo is moving in wide arcs with the wind—his progress is already a matter of process, not arrival, not telos. Here, on the mountain with his horse, looking for the cattle, Tayo hesitates:

Old Betonie and his stargazing, the woman in her storm-pattern blanket—all that was crazy, the kind of old-time superstition the teachers at Indian school used to warn him and Rocky about. [...] As the Army doctors had told him: it was all superstition, seeing Josiah when they shot those goddamn Japs; it was all superstition, believing that the rain had stopped coming because he had cursed it. A strange paralysis accompanied his thoughts [...]. (Silko 194-95)

He had begun to sense the pattern, now here he slips back into a kind of doubt that is really more like a willful forgetting. Tayo’s ability to stay in the feeling of the old stories is impeded by the feeling of paralysis that overcomes him—a feeling tangled up with the “teachings” of the Indian school. And he feels this corporeally, this thought of at once the teacher’s and the doctors’ expertise decrying his people’s stories as superstitious, as crazy, as artifactual of an Indigeneity stuck in the *past*. Suddenly he is brought back into that pain, that straining against the tangle. Tayo’s hesitation on this night, just as Orion slips below the southern horizon, must be explained through the story of the science teacher denigrating Indigenous stories. Silko is telling us that the meaning of this presence, this precise location on the mountain on this night, is produced in its

assembled relations with that education—as a simultaneity, not as linear consequence. Tayo’s sense of paralysis—of loss, pain, trauma—overtakes his body in relation to the insistence that “it was all superstition.” Silko repeats the declaration on both sides of a semi-colon, following a colon that signifies the ways that these two clauses asserting superstition relate to one another in the speech of those Army doctors. To those doctors, seeing Josiah in the jungle and praying against the rain are the effect of his people’s stories, these hallucinations as they say are caused by listening to and believing the old stories. These are facts and logic, to them. It is inconceivable, to these medical experts, that old stories could contain anything other than faith-based superstitions. This, to the doctors, is the plain fact of the old stories being old—being from the *passed*. In their view, the present is in linear (social) evolutionary relation to a bygone past. Stories that tell of the relationality of all things and the earth are the product of old superstitions, according to the doctors’ science. In the same way that the Indian school teacher had upheld the science textbook as the “true” source of facts and logic, the doctors demean Tayo into thinking that his illness is the result (the effect) of believing those old stories, of believing in relationality, of believing that past and future are simultaneous and always already articulated in a present sense of being. The assertion of the facts and logic of an epistemology of individuated bodies, ancestors, and places overwhelms the logic of relationality held in the old stories and, in the simultaneity of Tayo’s presence on the mountain, the past and the future fuse into a linear sequence (the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space) in which being affixed to that *passed* Indigeneity tells the story of loss of the past and promise of the future. *That* story tells Tayo that his cure lies in moving forward *out of* that past state and toward a future point at which he will arrive at a state of cured-ness. The grammar of that logic bears unpacking: a past tense adjective will name that new state—Tayo will have been cured, will be in a (future-tense) state of cured-ness—but only once he arrives at that future point, articulating temporality as linear and consequential. A strange paralysis, a corporeal sensation, overtakes the sense of ease that he had been beginning to feel just a few short passages prior. The movement toward a cure is not only *not* linear but a linear arrangement of temporal sequence forecloses Tayo’s ever arriving at a cure because its logic cannot conceive of transformation except by a notion of future arrival at an already always static place of transformed-ness. The (temporal) states are bordered, demarcated—enclosed and affixed in time as a logic of *place* that proposes its sameness until that time when it will (future-tense) be changed (past-tense). There is no present (presence) in

this linear sequence, only the constant haunting of a lost past and the illusive promise of a new and improved future. Tayo's body registers and records the estranging (dys)logic of this linearity in the locations (time-places) where he attempts to untangle and unwind the web-story (the old story) into that singular narrative (horizon) of time and space.

The contrast between linear and relational logics becomes all the more salient in the following sections, which detail his relations with the still-unnamed woman he had met in the mountains. First, this "strange paralysis" causes Tayo to pass out and fall from his horse. It is dark when he awakens, his face in a pile of pine needles. Suddenly he sees a mountain lion enter the clearing where he lies, its yellow form "moving into the wind." Silko narrates through this figure: "The eyes caught twin reflections of the moon; the glittering yellow light penetrated [Tayo's] chest and he inhaled suddenly. Relentless motion was the lion's greatest beauty, moving like mountain clouds with the wind, changing substance and color in rhythm with the contours of the mountain peaks" (Silko 195-6). The animal persists, moves with the wind—spiraling, in *relentless motion*. Moving in the moonlight, as well, the animal changes substance and color in rhythm with the shapes of the mountain (with(in) the design). This easily falls into the realm of being read as superstition—great cats don't *really* change substance, right? That's crazy. Yet there is something about this idea of "relentless motion" that bespeaks the movements of material relations on multiple scales—this "relentless motion" is not unlike Whyte's "constant migration and motion." Moreover, that Tayo inhales suddenly upon his chest being "penetrated" by the yellow light of the great cats' eyes reflecting moonlight both references Grandma's stories (that liveliness of place that he feels in his chest) *and* arranges these many materials into a process of breathing—a kinetic process of becoming-cat by way of relations with the materiality of the moonlight, with Tayo's perception, and with the rhythms of the shapes of the mountains. The animal is great cat, and moonlight, and shadow, and mountain, and brother-cousin to Tayo, whose perception of the animal is narrated through its movement with the wind. The mountain lion teaches Tayo that transformation takes place, constantly, in the relentless motion of the wind and the changing substance and color of the mountain—in rhythm with the mountain, in rhythm with the constant motion and migration of the *place*. Tayo marks their shared encounter with ceremonial yellow pollen, sprinkling it into the paw prints left by the animal. Tayo is attending to the transition. Then "he rode the mare west again, in the direction the mountain lion had come from. [...] Gathering the spotted cattle was only one color of sand falling from the fingertips; the

design was still growing, but already long ago it had encircled him” (Silko 196). Moving west again, moving in wide arcs, Tayo rearticulates this practice learned from his Uncle Josiah with his movements through the parts of the ceremony. Without his hesitation, without passing out from that strange paralysis, Tayo would not have encountered this yellow-eyed animal, would not have sprinkled yellow pollen in the paw prints, would not have been reminded of the light, shadows, and rhythms of place (of the mountain). Moreover, Tayo now sees that gathering his uncle’s cattle is only one color of the design of the ceremony drawn for him by Old Betonie — yellow is only one color of the pattern. Silko’s ceremony (at once diegetic and extra-diegetic) is also a design. But the design is not mappable as a linear narrative, nor is the process of healing effectual through an act of untangling the threads to their source and laying them out in a neat line. The novel, and the ceremony, organizes the pattern as a matter of sensing (remembering) the relentless motion of and in a place (of and in a body). And, we are told, the design had encircled Tayo long ago yet is also the story that Silko is telling us which is also Thought-Woman the spider’s *story that is still being told*. The design is relentlessly in motion, spiraling in wide arcs, shifting like the constellations, almost imperceptible yet, with attention to the transitions, the pattern begins to take shape as the spiraling web-story of all life and the earth—the spiraling web-story of the constant motion of the cosmos.

When Tayo soon succeeds in locating the cattle, urging them toward an opening he has now cut in the white rancher’s boundary fence, he feels good. But not because his sense of entanglement has lessened. Indeed, it seems that he feels ever more entangled with the place, with the wind and mountains and animals of the place. At the very start of Silko’s prose, Tayo was described as caught up in the tangle in his skull, he was ill and in pain. But here, that pressure of the tangle is lifting (Silko 198). Gathering the cattle is but one color of sand in the design—there are more colors to be gathered, there are more directions (of time) to be gathered in this place. Lying in a thicket on the mountain to rest as the cattle slowly wind their way down, Tayo feels a sense of relief now in regard to this idea of entanglement:

The magnetism of the center spread over him smoothly like rainwater down his neck and shoulders; the vacant cool sensation glided over the pain like feather-down wings. It was pulling him back, close to the earth, where the core was cool and silent as mountain stone, and even with the noise and pain in his head he knew how it would be: a returning rather than a separation. He was relieved because he feared leaving people he loved. But lying above the center that pulled him down closer felt more familiar to him than any embrace he could remember; and he was sinking into the elemental arms of mountain

silence. Only his skull resisted; and the resistance increased the pain to a shrill whine. (Silko 201)

The magnetism of the mountain—of the place—“spreads” and “glides” similar to rainwater and to feather-down wings. The magnetism of the place washes away the pain like rainwater; or, ensconces it in soft feathers. The pain recedes with the sensation of being pulled back into the earth—of being pulled by that tangle of materiality. Yet this is salutary. This feels like an embrace—and he anticipates the transition of death as a returning to that elemental embrace rather than as a loss of love with people. His fear of loss transforms into anticipation at-once with patience—the fear of a future that exists outside of the self transforms into the remembering of the self in constant migration and motion on different scales in familial (kinship) relation with the earth. The love that he can now feel in this embrace, in the “elemental arms of mountain silence,” is indeed *more* familiar than any embrace he could remember—a deeper kinship than blood relations animates this elemental embrace. Far from a matter of unwinding that tangle, that pain, Tayo senses that death is not a matter of leaving people he loved—it is not something outside of the self to be feared or resisted. The mountain’s cool embrace relieves that fear, transforms it into the remembering of a kind of belonging, of a familiar or familial—kinship—relation with the land, with the earth, with (a) place as a living being in kinship relation with the human body. Moreover, he senses this familiarity in relation to the certainty that death is a return to this warm embrace—physical death is not loss, not annihilation; it is a transformation, whereas to articulate the self within that linear (dys)logic of the Indian school teachers and Army doctors amounts to the annihilation of bodies through their affixation *in time*—in the resistance to their material entanglement. Tayo is sinking into the mountain’s embrace, and it feels good. It feels like a hug, like love. Only his skull resists the tangle, Silko tells her reader. Yellow is still only one color of sand in the design, which is still growing (the story is still being told). Tayo senses that:

if he left his skull unguarded, if he let himself sleep, it would happen: the resistance would leak out and take with it all barriers, all boundaries; he would seep into the earth and rest with the center, where the voice of the silence was familiar and the density of the dark earth loved him. He could secure the thresholds with molten pain and remain; or he could let go and flow back. It was up to him. (Silko 202)

If he holds up the barriers erected in and by the logic of the Indian school teacher and the Army doctors, he affixes himself in the pain of the tangle by trying to unwind it to its source. By

contrast, if he leaves his skull unguarded (unfenced, undefended), the resistance will “leak out” and the barriers will dissolve. If he could “let go and flow back” into that relieving embrace of the dense dark earth that loves him, he would seep into the rhythms of the mountain—he would seep into a deep and spiraling temporality in which he can sense his body in relation with the tangle of all matter-energy of the cosmos.<sup>108</sup> Here again resistance is figured as resistance to the wind, resistance to the web and to the entanglement; resistance is erecting barriers, closing off the self to the constant migration and motion of all matter-energy. To resist the familiar embrace of the earth—this love from and with the earth—conjures pain, paralysis. Letting go, or not trying to secure barriers and thresholds between the body and the earth (between self and other, between human and more-than-human), is persistence. Beyond the idea of the persistence of a corporeal body, this describes an enduring strategy of persistence of a people through the (old) stories and language that narrate the self in kinship relation with the place—in constant motion with(in) relations with the place. Moving in wide arcs with the wind describes persisting in and with this world in a way that circumvents the kinds of territorialization, ownership, and defensible places demarcated by fences and in fear of a loss of that territory (body or place). Spiraling in wide arcs with the wind, as persistent place-making, likewise articulates the dissolution of perceived boundaries: it is the remembering of the liveliness of place, of the teachings of the more-than-human—and it feels good, healing.

Here on the mountain, in the cold Fall air, Tayo is letting go—letting himself move in wide arcs with the wind. The cattle won’t be told what to do or where to go, gathering them won’t be easy, but Tayo knows that they will come down the ravine to look for water eventually. So he rides back to the ranch with the intent to return to collect them once they come down of their own volition. He then returns with Robert (Auntie’s husband) and a cattle trailer, arriving first at the cabin where he was with the woman and near where the cattle have now kettled themselves at the base of the ravine. It seems that someone—the woman—has made sure that the cattle are secured, watered, and fed in the meantime (Silko 214). But Tayo and Robert find the cabin empty. The colors and patterns and smells lingering in Tayo’s memory are no longer present in the space. However, there is a palpable sense of the growing momentum of his relentless motion through these parts of the ceremony—that with the woman he had greeted the sunrise and that through that encounter he had gone into the mountains and sprinkled yellow pollen in the mountain lion’s pawprints before riding west and finding the cattle. Silko assembles



colors and directions, the colors of the design falling like sand from the fingertips (slowly, with patience and anticipation). Recall that Tayo is following a map of sorts, a design, a pattern, of the constellations whose positioning shifts continuously in a broad spiraling motion across the sky. He is ready for the transition. He is attuned to the assembling of colors and directions in relation to that map—he is attending to the transitions. Now, here in her emptied cabin, Tayo sees it:

On the north wall of the room there was an old war shield hanging from a wooden peg set into the white clay wall. He did not remember seeing it before. It was made from a hide, elk or maybe buffalo, heavy and stiff and split at the edges, and it had lost the round shape. At first he thought the hide had turned black. There were small white spots of paint all over the shield. He stepped back: it was a star map of the overhead sky in late September. It was the Big Star constellation old Betonie had drawn in the sand. (Silko 214)

A shield—a defense against illness and death. Tayo must step back to see the pattern at once, his position and perspective rendering the spots on the shield legible as a star map of the overhead sky in late September. The location is precise. Yet the stars are constantly shifting and spiraling—the position is transitional. It is not a location affixed on a timeless map of geographical space, it is a location (trans)formed in the lively intra-activity of stars, planets, human, and more-than-human bodies. It is place made as such by the relations of forces—forces against which resistance forms when those forces are conceived as outside the self. Here, Tayo sees that the forces are within his self—his body—as much as his body is within those forces. Resisting that which is perceived as outside the self locates the world as the Other against which a human becomes-Self (in that (dys)logic of place). The relational logic of place described in the ways that the novel and the character are moving in wide arcs with the wind locates the human *in* the more-than-human and describes the wellness of both in relation to the nonexistence of material-energetic boundaries. And this relational logic is embedded in the language and stories of the oldtimers—embedded in Old Betonie’s design. It is not simply the paint on the heavy and stiff animal hide that forms a shield—and certainly not a simple metaphorical defense; it is the story in which the shield participates that forms the defense, through a practice of (pro)creating *place* as a matter of persistently (pro)creating a people.<sup>109</sup> Remembering *this* story is future-work. It is in remembering the story (that is still being told) of human and more-than-human kinship—of the relentless motion of material-energetic entanglement—that Tayo can sense his position (his self) as transitional. And it feels good. The stars painted on the dried hide correspond with Betonie’s design, painted in yellow and white and black sands on the cliffside

by his hogan. Tayo is in the design; he is a part of the story. Yet this is but one color of sand in the design. He had ridden west, now the star map is on the north wall of the cabin; now, too, the map gathers the color black with the overhead positioning of the Big Star constellation in the late September night sky—a non-negligible insistency on the time-space coordinates of this part of the ceremony. Silko assembles colors and directions. Tayo (and the reader) is spiraling.

## **Science of Kinship (Creation)**

In the Spring, following by only a few pages his autumn encounter with the woman on the mountain, seeing the mountain lion, and gathering his uncle's cattle, Tayo goes back to the family ranch where he had been that September (which is also where he had first stayed after coming home from the army hospital before that). We know that something in him is transformed, since last autumn, but what are we to make of the leap of months in so few pages of the narrative? Winter was but an elliptical arrangement of short sections marshalled by large page breaks—like the momentum building, at first almost imperceptible, gathering in his belly. And now it is Spring. A transition is taking place. He is still ready, still persisting in wide arcs with the wind and with the rhythms of the mountain. In the silence of the ranch, Silko tells her reader about how the yellow striped cat hunts grasshoppers, a black goat eats tumbleweeds, and the land is green—not green like the jungle, Tayo thinks, but green compared to the dusty red winds “spinning” across the flats in the dry years prior (Silko 218-19). Silko assembles colors. The transition must be attended to. Yellow, black, green, red: these all correspond in Pueblo epistemology with directions and, in the story that is still being told, mark locations (time-places, positions) of transition. Silko describes puddles of red muddy water, the green valley, spreading from “the yellow sandstone mesas in the northwest to the black lava hills to the south” (219). The way that Silko gathers these colors in the narrative is not a simple material description of the landscape: it is ceremony. Silko gathers elements into the pattern, the design, the story that defends against Indigenous illness and death. And in the ways that *this story* (re)articulates multiscalar relationality in the intra-actions of human and more-than-human, this gathering of colors likewise narrates a science of kinship (creation) that describes the material-energetic *web* in terms of the kinship of all life, the earth, and the cosmos—a web the wellness of whose fragile and intricate filaments (filiations) is sustained in shared transitional locations (places) through reciprocal expressions of (material-energetic) love.

In the previous section, I described Tayo and the narrative moving in wide arcs (with the wind), spiraling through arrangements of yellows, blacks, and blue-greens, and encountering the black shield with white spots mapping constellations. The assemblings of colors are as much for the reader as for Tayo. In *this* story, the colors are directions—instructions for how to surmount the distances and days. Tayo is taking in the assemblage of yellow, black, and green noted above, and at once seeing the dusty red winds of the drought years spinning in the same location. The colors spin and spread. As though explaining the stories behind the words here, Silko then tells her reader about the old gray mule, once compared to Old Grandma, and who had persistently moved in wide arcs with the wind:

The gray mule was gone, his bones unfolding somewhere on the red dirt, bleaching white and thin in the sun. The changes pulled against themselves inside him; the mule had been blind and old. But his room was the same, the creaking bedsprings and frame pushed into the southeast corner below the small window. The terror of the dreaming he had done on this bed was gone, uprooted from his belly; and the woman had filled the hollow spaces with new dreams. (219)

Gray, red, and white: the mule, the dirt, the bones. The sunlight enhances the white color of the bones as they unfold back into the red dirt, sinking back into the center and into the warm familial embrace of the land the way Tayo imagined himself seeping into that magnetic center. The changes are pulling against themselves inside him—inside Tayo, the tangle of threads pulling at his skull—registering a sense of loss of even an old and blind mule. And at the same time, the text focalizes how the terror has been “uprooted from his belly.” The bed under the southeast window, on which he had writhed in pain and nightmares for so long, where he had longed for the relief of the tangle to be unwound to the source, is still in the same location in the southeast corner of the room. But the terror of dreaming is gone—like the mule, “unfolding somewhere” in an assemblage of red and white. The terror has been uprooted by the love shown and shared in his encounter with the unnamed woman on the mountain. In his belly (where the stories are kept), the uprooting left hollow places filled by the woman—filled by “new dreams.” This story that is still being told is changing. Tayo is not returning to an old dream, an old story; the location is at once the same and changed. The story is at once the same and changed—living, folding and unfolding. The love shared with the woman uproots the terror and gives directions (the story) for how to *surmount the distances and days*, how to tell a new story of Indigenous futurity by remembering the old story (still being told).

A critical transition takes place on this same page immediately following this gathering of colors, directions, and the new dreams. Tayo lies back on his old mattress, under the small window in the southeast corner of the room and thinks (Silko narrates):

The dreams had been terror at loss, at something lost forever; but nothing was lost; all was retained between the sky and the earth, and within himself. He had lost nothing. The snow-covered mountain remained, without regard to titles of ownership or the white ranchers who thought they possessed it. They logged the trees, they killed the deer, bear, and mountain lions, they built their fences high; but the mountain outdistanced their destruction, just as love had outdistanced death. The mountain was far greater than any or all of these things. The mountain could not be lost to them, because it was in their bones; Josiah and Rocky were not far away. They were close; they had always been close. And he loved them then as he had always loved them, the feeling pulsing over him as strong as it had ever been. They loved him that way; he could still feel the love they had for him. The damage that had been done had never reached this feeling. This feeling was their life, vitality locked deep in blood memory, and the people were strong, and the fifth world endured, and nothing was ever lost as long as the love remained. (219-220)

It is worthwhile to linger with this passage. It commands patience. In this location, the gathering of red and white and southeast—of colors, directions, and new dreams—enables Tayo to sense the pattern. There are three elements of the pattern to take up here: one, that the mountain is in their bones, which echoes the preceding passage where the mule's bones unfold back into the dust, into the mountain; two, the proliferation of semi-colons, doing relational work in and with the language of the passage; and three, the love outdistanced death in the same way that the mountain outdistanced the destruction of fences and land *use*. The language, then—the words, the stories—gives instructions for how to surmount the destruction of the planet by seeing the pattern of multiscale kinship relations, marked most prominently in this passage by the collocation of the mountain in their bones and the love (the life) locked deep in blood memory. This is to say that the vitality in the blood is a shared vitality—a liveliness that migrates and moves on different scales, folding and enfolding bodies in a relational pattern of relentless motion. The mountain is part of the pattern—not mere backdrop. The body of the mountain forms and transforms in its relations with the people, yet within a scale of time that registers at once the “trans-corporeality” of material entanglement and the persistent spiraling motion of the stars across the sky.<sup>110</sup> The multiscale sensibility of this passage finds that the rancher's destructive practices cannot surmount that distance (that spanning, spinning of time-space)—they don't know how, they don't know the story. But the body remembers, it seems—the vitality locked in blood memory is the love that outdistances death and the mountain that outdistances

destruction. While this risks reading the blood as a sign of a kind of memory made possible by heredity, I must take care to note that that reading fails where blood is constituted here as part of a vitality relating all human and more-than-human kin—this is not blood lineage, nor inherent Indigenous qualities: this is spiraling multispecies kinship. Silko’s text is not asserting that Indigenous people have a blood-borne proximity to the natural world. Silko’s text is reminding her reader that the oldtimers’ language and stories describe the human and more-than-human as materially entangled to the extent that those stories give instructions for how to outdistance the destruction unleashed in what is often called the fifth world—the old story (the fourth world) transformed in and by settler colonization and US imperialism. While this is indeed a shared Indigenous experience in the Americas—and the Indigenous body (the blood) remembers when this fifth world broke open<sup>11</sup>—the relations are materially real for all human and more-than-human bodies (as kin). However, the ability to sense (remember) those relations comes through knowing (remembering) the stories that give the instructions for how to sense those relations, for how to surmount the distances and days that in the other story (under that tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space) posit the human as a solitary actor on a backdrop of inert matter. By contrast, *this story* (that is still being told) reminds the people who remember it how to persist despite the destruction, despite that other story that narrates Indigenous knowledge as superstition. The love that Silko intones is no simple special feeling—it is the material-energetic relation through which bodies fold and unfold in *constant migration and motion on different scales*. It is a science that describes how the world worlds—and remembering this love, this kinship relationality, is also the story of how to persist in and with this world.

In the novel as a whole, and here in this passage, Silko embraces the semicolon, which, as I read it, marshals the intimacy of relations between clauses, an intimate relation that would otherwise be broken by a period or reduced to sequence by a comma or conjoined as a supplementarity by a conjunction. The semicolon holds together spatially the claim that “they were close” with “they had always been close”—these sensations of proximity with Uncle and Cousin-Brother are not organized in linear temporal sequence, they intersect. The past tense and the past perfect tense arrange the temporality of Josiah and Rocky’s relations with Tayo in terms of an intimacy that surmounts the distance grammatically insinuated between the “were” and “had always been.” And it is an enduring intimacy, a love that outdistances death not by progressing across space with a linear flow of time—this view in fact creates a greater sense of

distance between the days, between kin, between bodies, a greater sense of loss. Rather, it is a love that outdistances death by remembering the spiraling shape of kinship that arranges temporality as a simultaneity of deep and quantum time-space. In the time of the mountain, their bones are already always dust; yet that dust is always already a vital materiality—a liveliness—forming and transforming bodies through material-energetic relations (love!) that co-constitute them as such. Tayo lies in bed and remembers the love in his body—in his blood, in his bones—and it is a love that, discursively, retains and relates the “always” of past and future in a present presence. Tayo remembers the love in his body not as a fact of revisiting a memory of the *passed* but as a fact of remembering that in the time of the mountain (in the embrace of the earth) their bodies are “always” close.<sup>112</sup> And, materially, yet through that story, the earth and everybeing is felt and understood to be related, relative, familiar, kin.

Tayo’s sense of the loss of loved ones recedes with his remembering this sense (knowledge) of retention and relation. Tayo now sees how nothing is lost, all is retained—the vitality locked in blood memory is always retained between the sky and the earth and within himself. The love outdistances. As Silko narrates, the mountain has no regard for titles or ownership. The white ranchers’ fences mean nothing in the scale of the time of the mountain, that is. The temporality of the mountain is rendered spatially in Silko’s language but not as an *outlasting* or *outliving*; it is an *outdistancing*. Temporality is a location—or: temporality is relentless motion in (a) place. In the same way that Ku’oosh had taken great care to explain his use of the word fragile, here Silko tells the story behind “love,” the story behind “memory,” and the story behind mountains in their bones, and all these in terms of the ways that she says love outdistanced death. The spatial rendering of temporality in this way is remarkable not as a metaphoric—this is not a timelessness of love that exists in the mind of the beholder (the lover). Indeed, in Silko’s narration, movements and temporality are a matter of the spatial relationality between and within the sky and the earth and the body. Death is not an ending, because the matter of the body is part of the mountain just as the matter of the mountain is part of the body—it’s in the bones—and because, in spatial terms, death is a material relocation (white bones unfolding into the red dust). Love outdistances in the sense that the relations in vital materiality render temporality as locations. In the place where the stories are kept, where Tayo’s new dreams transform the old terror through the love shared with the woman on the mountain, the feelings of loss and damage are surmounted—outdistanced—by the (transcorporeal) *love* that

retains kinship relations as such, that retains *all* between earth and sky and the self. The damage—the Indian school teachers, the Army doctors, the terror of the dreaming, the fences and extractions—had not reached that love. Moreover, in the way that Silko concludes this passage, that the love outdistances settler colonial damage functionally compounds a mode of persistence (rather than simple resistance) as a decolonial theory-in-practice engaged through keeping the old stories alive: “This feeling was their life, vitality locked deep in blood memory, and the people were strong, and the fifth world endured, and nothing was ever lost as long as the love remained.” To remember the love is to persist (in wide arcs with the wind) and this persistence is radical in terms of the temporality of settler colonization. To stay in the feeling of love that outdistances death means to outdistance the damage. Tayo’s terror of loss was induced by the facts and logic that narrate Indigenous life—and the way the world worlds—“under the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space.” That story produces deep feelings of alienation and anxiety; that story makes intergenerational dialogue seem impossible, superstitious; that story makes the people see the world (and themselves) as subject to a passage of time that can only ever reproduce the terms of becoming as a matter of the linear sequence of heredity, ownership, and progress understood as the *use* of the planet as resources for the procreation of a (perennially unreachable) future. In that story, the distance between the past and the future can never be surmounted where linear temporality refuses their collocation in a present presence. That story can only ever tell people of their loss, at once the loss of what has been but can never be again (because it is passed) and the loss of what will be but which will never arrive (because it can never exist in the present). Silko tells *the story that is still being told* and as a ceremony to defend against the very illness and death that that other story tells through its linear appointment of Indigenous knowledge and lifeways as eternally affixed in the past. In Silko’s story (Thought-Woman the spider’s story), the love outdistancing death is not a philosophy that locates remembering in the mind, nor that inscribes stories as mere records of past (passed) lives or events. *This story* locates memory in the body—in the vital materiality, the blood memory—and which is also memory located in the body of the earth (in the shared bones and dust). This is the story that tells of the spiraling motions of material forms in open-ended, spatial relations and transformations inclusive of all planetary locations. Here, then, is a science of kinship (creation, really) located in *this story* (which is not entertainment) that tells the people how to stay in the feeling of love with more-than-human kin and through which it is possible to decolonize—to

outdistance the destruction of settler colonization—by outdistancing the death (as annihilation) that is the affixation of Indigeneity in a discursively distanced past. To remember the love—in the body, in the land—is to remember that the damage has never reached that vital material kinship with the planet (not fully). And to remember *this story* of how to surmount that distance constitutes a radical decolonial praxis of persisting (in wide arcs) in the (pro)creation of the vital materiality of (a) place—of the land, the body, the people. The story is one of joy, pleasure, and desire for love and care-based presents (in spiraling temporality).

One of the ways that Silko has been telling this story is through the idea of the earth as the mother of all—a Mother Earth expression not uncommon in Indigenous and environmental literatures.<sup>113</sup> In the previous section, I described how Tayo felt himself seeping into the cool embrace of the earth as he lay on the mountain. On the one hand, this could be understood in the gendered terms of maternal love—the Mother as a figure of enduring love and comfort. While this reading is also true in the way that it describes certain energies associated with the labor and care of maternity—of bringing new life into the world, so to speak—when reading kinship as a science of transcorporeality and kincentric ecologies the idea of the earth as mother instead posits the material relation through which bodies are formed and not a simple metaphor (figure) of a sexed and gendered body. I make this claim on the grounds that the structure of the story and of Silko’s language describes bodies and places as unfixed in their forms and continuously, persistently, in transition, persistently in the time of the telling (of this story, of Thought-Woman the Spider’s story-web). The earth as mother in this sense, then, names the relation—not the object, not the discursively othered body. This distinction is important. Reading “mother earth” as a gendered kinship metaphor names the body as an object through that figuration and, as such, aligns with reading the female body as a figure (a device) through which the humanist human is (pro)created. Indeed, the Latinate roots of the word already denote the synonymy assigned to “mother” and “matter” (*mater*). In the nominalizing reading, as metaphor, mother/matter is a source material. In the relational reading, as transcorporeal and kincentric, mother/matter is the relation that all bodies share with the earth as a web (assemblage) of matter-energies *in constant motion on different scales* (to again reiterate Whyte’s formulation). I find that Silko’s text articulates the material (maternal) relations between human and more-than-human bodies as all parts of the same matter (mother), transitioning and shifting constantly in and among and between bodies—forming bodies as such by their relations. Embrace is cited as the embrace with



the mother (matter) of all, embrace with the earth, but I conceive of this kinship expression as naming the relation that simultaneously forms the earth-as-mother and the human-as-body. The earth becomes mother/matter in relation to the human and more-than-human becoming kin. Tayo's sensation of seeping into the embrace of the love felt with the earth, with the location of his body in relation to that matter, can thus be organized into not simply a feeling but an experience of the material web of all life—an experience made real and possible by the millennia of stories persisting in telling and retelling the people (and telling anew) about how the world worlds through *constant migration and motion on different scales*. To resist that seeping, to resist or forget that feeling, to ignore or erase the traces of the transitions, to attempt to untangle or unwind the threads of the web: all these practices train the body to sense itself apart from the world. All these incite the pain, anxiety, and fear of that which is perceived as outside of the self—fear of the earth, fear of the Other, *terror at a loss*. But remembering the (trans)corporeal feeling incited by *the story that is still being told* means re-remembering the story of human and more-than-human kinship with the earth and re-members how to stay in the feeling of that cool embrace—to stay in the love.

Tayo is now beginning to remember how to stay in the feeling of love with his kin—his blood kin as well as all matter of the earth kin. He gets up from where he has been lying on the old mattress in the southeast corner of the room—where he felt the love of Josiah and Rocky pulsing over him—and he goes outside, greeted by blue clouds and the gray slate and yellow sandstone of the mountains, who, he finds, have no relation to months and years. The mountains have no relation to linear time—they are formed, they have form, in relation to a much deeper and slower spiraling motion of time. They outdistance. And, suddenly in the narration, it is now summertime at present and Tayo sees flowers of all colors of yellow. Silko gathers colors, attending to a transition. Tayo gathers yellow pollen from the flowers gently, with a blue feather, and mimics (learns from) the gentleness of the bees dusting yet other flowers with the pollen. Now Tayo is attending to a transition. As far as Tayo can see, across the red clay flats, the yellows and orange of the sandstone, the gray hills where the mesa ends, the yellow spotted snake whose traces in the sand he fills with the yellow pollen, “in all directions, the world was alive” (Silko 221). The world's liveliness is multidirectional. The proliferation of colors attunes Tayo (and the reader) to the transition about to take place. And then, after a short page break, he sees her again—the woman from the mountain. He is ready. Now Tayo (and the reader) come to

hear her name—her short name, anyway: Ts’eh. While Silko avoids making the connection explicit, it is now becoming apparent that Ts’eh is Ts’its’tsi’nako—Thought Woman, the old spider, who is also one of the creators (with her sisters) of this world (and the four worlds below), and she is still telling *this story*.<sup>114</sup> She waits in certain places for people to come to her for help, like Tayo, to come to her for the story of how to surmount the distances and days. Ts’eh tells Tayo to remember the stories so that he can stay in this feeling of love and kinship. She wears a blue shawl and a red calico skirt. Ts’eh says that she is camping up by the spring, in the canyon, and invites Tayo to come. She shows Tayo which flowers to gather for ceremonies and when and from where and what their colors signify.<sup>115</sup> She gathers the flowers, leaves, and roots in her blue shawl. Alongside the proliferation of yellows, reds, and blues in the text during these pages of gathering, there is a sense that Silko is gathering what she needs for her ceremony, as well. A transition is taking place and she is taking great patience and care to attend to it. Ts’eh then says that there is just one plant that she needs and can Tayo gather it for her in case she has to leave before it’s ready. This startles him, and for a moment he fears a loss. But Silko’s narration directs us instead to the plant itself, rather than to Tayo’s feelings here. Indeed, the anticipation of loss recedes quickly with the sense that “all is retained.” But Ts’eh tells him that it is not ready—that, if he were to gather this last plant too early, “its wet flowing vitality would be lost in a single breath” (Silko 227). The plant, too, bears a “flowing vitality” in its viscosity—in its blood memory—a vitality that risks being lost if its location (time-place) is not precise (if its transition is not attended with care). Tayo replies: “I’ll remember it. [...] I’ll gather it for you if you’re not here” (226-227). Tayo must remember this story of the plant’s vitality; and, in remembering this story through corporeal practice of gathering precise colors in precise locations (time-place), he will remember how to attend to the transitions. But this plant isn’t for color after all, like the others, Ts’eh says: “It’s for light. The light of the stars, and the moon penetrating the night” (227). She is giving him the story of how to surmount the distances and days. He must remember this story, this relation; must take care and love to gather this relation at just the right location and remember that it is for the light of the stars. For the constellations spiraling in constant (almost imperceptible) motion across the sky. Ts’eh, the woman in Betonie’s design, is part of Tayo’s ceremony—part of Silko’s ceremony. If Tayo can stay in this feeling of love that comes through Ts’eh (Thought-Woman, creation), if he can remember the story of this kinship

relation of love and care with the place and everybeing in it, then he will be ready to complete the ceremony (that is great and inclusive of more than himself).

But the right location has not yet come around for Tayo. There is more to the story that he must know. Tayo and Ts'eh are in the arroyo talking. Ts'eh is bundling willow twigs with cotton string—gathering, again, telling *this story*. She cautions him: “The destroyers: they work to see how much can be lost, how much can be forgotten. They destroy the feeling that people have for each other” (Silko 229). Echoing what Betonie had told Tayo about the work of the “witchery,” Ts'eh is telling Tayo that the feeling destroyed by *that* story is the feeling that people have *for each other*—it is the reciprocation of love that is lost, it is the memory of kinship relation that is lost, yet this is the same enduring love that Tayo realized had never actually been lost (the destruction had not reached that deep). The relations persist, but whether the stories of how the world worlds remember that relationality decides the shape that the world takes in the perception of its features and workings. Ts'eh is saying that the story that keeps people in the feeling of love can be lost, it can be destroyed by *forgetting*—can be destroyed by *that* story that affixes *this story* (Thought-Woman's story) in the past and names it as an object of *passed* superstition hereby to be forgotten and replaced (covered up) with the linear narrative of becoming human.<sup>116</sup> Tayo is beginning to recognize (remember) how he too had been erased and covered up by the “facts and logic” that called his people's stories superstition and that so powerfully incited those episodes of illness that I described in the opening section of this chapter. Ts'eh is showing him the durability of that love, showing Tayo how to stay in the feeling of care and reciprocity—the story of which is also the people's defense against the illness and death wrought by the “witchery.” Tayo is sensing a pattern great and more inclusive than himself and in which his body is always already held in loving embrace (kinship relation) with the earth (the place). Here in this precise location woven between Ts'eh, the sky and earth, and himself, Tayo breathes in this feeling of transcorporeal relation and kinship:

The position of the sun in the sky was delicate, transitional; and the season was unmistakable. The sky was the early morning color of autumn: Jemez turquoise, edged with thin quartz clouds. He breathed deeply, trying to inhale the immensity of it, trying to take it all inside himself, the way the arroyo sand swallowed time. (Silko 230)

The position was transitional. The body, in a location (time-place), is transitional. This is an important place(time) in the story. That the sky and clouds are described through stones is remarkable, as well, for it elides taking these as simile. The clouds are declaratively quartz. But

stones are fixed, are they not? Stones don't change and flow and shift like clouds, right? That's craziness. Superstition. Must be metaphor. But is it simply figurative? I find the materiality of the quartz-clouds compelling where the text coordinates the shifting motion of water vapor with the perceived fixity of stones whose formations occur in time (in place). Both are conceived as in constant motion, on different scales. Tayo's body is likewise constellated with the mineral-firmament, with the earth-as-mother, trying to inhale the immensity of these different scales, trying to take it "inside himself"—flesh and mineral equally subject to unfolding in the dust and seeping into the cool embrace of the earth. To read this as more than figurative acknowledges the relentless motion of transcorporeal intra-activities—a constant motion that exceeds full perception and that assembles materialities through relations of simultaneity and co-constitution, and decisively *not* along linear (temporal) bloodlines. Moreover, in the way that the position of the sun was "transitional," the text describes a location made precise by the co-constitution of time and space (not as separate forces but as co-constituting directionalities). A location (time-place) is thus acknowledged (made known, knowable) in terms of a simultaneity of scales of motion—this notion of place being unmappable except through the living stories that hold the people in a relation of liveliness and kinship with the place. The language in this passage positions the stones, the earth, the body, in terms of transition—retained together in an open-ended set of transformations that materialize relationally and that write the story of time as an at once of a magnitude great and inclusive of more than the self.<sup>117</sup>

There is yet more to express of this narrative location between Tayo and Ts'eh. When they had first reunited, near her camp by the spring, in Spring, Tayo had fallen asleep by the water and reawakened alone. At first, he was convinced that he must have dreamed her. He shakily wondered whether there were any traces of her that proved the material realness of her presence. He had looked for traces in the sand and found them, imprints that he then traces with his fingers (Silko 222). Ts'eh is equally real as the spider who visited him at the spring in the canyon all those years ago, before the war, when he had prayed for rain. She leaves faint traces in the yellow sand, like the spider. And, like the spider then, Tayo was then relieved to find that Ts'eh was nearby, on the east side of the canyon near the spring, sitting by a moonflower plant with her blue shawl spread out in front of her covered with roots and plants for ceremony. And then here, in the arroyo whose sands swallow time the way that Tayo's body breathes in the immensity of it all, Tayo "could feel where she had come from, and he understood where she

would always be” (230). In this transitional position (location) in the story, Tayo reckons Ts’eh is spider—Ts’eh is Ts’its’tsi’nako. She is at once present, with him in her form, yet also always already in her room telling *this story that is still being told*. In this way, too, her presence is not limited to the proximity of her fleshly body to his. Old Spider Woman’s presence is constant, in motion, in the web/space yet always waiting in that certain place for people to come to her for help (Silko 94). At once, this dispels the terror of loss where (when) Tayo remembers that it is simply a matter of (re)location, that all is retained; and this describes Ts’eh as inhabiting a certain location, an unfixed place. Now, Tayo finds, “when he cried now, it was because she loved him so much” (227). Ts’eh gives Tayo the story for surmounting the distances and days, for remembering the directions, for staying in the feeling of love with the earth-as-mother. All is retained between the earth and the sky and himself.

Ts’eh is likewise concerned about “destroyers,” about the story told by the “witchery,” for which Tayo’s ceremony is also designed, since his cure requires something great and inclusive of more than himself. She is helping him remember the stories and teaching him to gather, gathering plants in her blue shawl, and Ts’eh cautions Tayo: “The end of the story. They want to change it. They want it to end here, the way all their stories end, encircling slowly to choke the life away. [...] Because this is the only ending they understand” (Silko 231-32). “They” are the destroyers, they are those people who are taught and believe the story told by the witchery and who enact its destruction in and with their relations with the earth and each other.<sup>118</sup> Ts’eh tells Tayo that the witchery wants an ending which is also the end of life. Simple death? No. In this spiraling epistemology, death is not the same as annihilation—which is what the witchery spells out—death is relocation, as Silko has told us. But death-as-annihilation is what Betonie had told Tayo about the witchery’s appetites, and that annihilation of life (of vitality, liveliness) is what the witchery pursues. The witchery wants to destroy the fragile and intricate filaments of the web—the means of this destruction lies in the way the story is told, the way that *that* story tells people that they are separate from Nature, the way that *that* story tells the story of becoming-human as a matter of becoming educated in “facts and logic”—becoming civilized. The witchery achieves destruction through the people—and the people do this work when (where) the witchery succeeds at tearing the fragile filaments, destroying the stories that remind the people how to stay in that feeling of kinship love with the earth-as-mother. *This* annihilation of stories is the annihilation of worlds where (when) people act upon the world as

though it exists outside of themselves. Beyond discourse, the idea here is that the way the stories are told (not the stories themselves) teaches how to relate in and with human and more-than-human. Where the self is defined as separate, fences are erected—the outside is feared, the Other exists in relation of opposition, competition, and conflict, and self-interest necessarily excludes the Other; the inside is thus made private and proprietary, defensible by means of keeping out all that which is perceived as outside of the self. *That* story of kinship defines the inside by blood relation, by lines of transmission that affix each generation in linear temporal historical sequence and in terms of stories (bodies, places) that are unchanging, fenced, enclosed. In Silko's words, the ending aimed for by witchery is a telos. It is an ending that forecloses transition, that prevents relocation. It is a linearity that attempts to untangle and unwind the cosmos and separate out all the threads in straight lines. It is the closing off of thresholds, it is barriers to breathing—it proposes the end of the constant, relentless motion that can also be described as the liveliness of matter and as the energetic (loving) reciprocal relations between human and more-than-human. But what Ts'eh is saying to Tayo here is that the witchery's idea of an ending, of tearing at the fragile filaments of the web, is ultimately the destruction of all life on earth—of the life of the earth. And yet, Tayo has already realized—and the reader now knows, too—that the destruction has not reached that deep, the destroyers have not been able to fully rend the web, the witchery has not fully erased the feeling of love that pulses so strong inside Tayo when (where) he remembers (lying in his old bed under the southeast window) that the “love had outdistanced death”—indeed, Tayo (and the reader) are ready to attend to the transition because now we remember the story that “the people were strong, and the fifth world endured, and nothing was ever lost as long as the love remained” (Silko 219-220).

But Ts'eh has said she might be leaving soon. Tayo is at an important place in the story—in the ceremony. So are we. Tayo wakes for sunrise, “the transition from night already started” (Silko 236). Here again, Silko assembles a proliferation of yellows on the page, along with hues of blue, at this precise location (position, time-place) of transition. The place is rich with memories, but by which Tayo no longer feels haunted; rather, Tayo now looks around and sees the proximity, kinship, and relation of love with the place revitalized (brought back into a sensation of its vitality) by the new dreams, by remembering the stories and the love that Ts'eh shared. Josiah, the cattle, the old gray mule, ancestral Pueblo markings on the cliffs, how the Spaniards had followed the caves along the valley when they attacked: all these are written in the

land, stories told in its topography, and Tayo breathes in the immensity of all of the stories as a new story (new dream) of the transcorporeal durability of a people. He is not dissolute, he is not estranged from the place, from himself, from the story. He is gathered with the place, with himself, with the story: “at that moment in the sunrise, it was all so beautiful, everything, from all directions, evenly, perfectly, balancing day with night, summer months with winter. The valley was enclosing this totality, like the mind holding all thoughts together in a single moment” (237). The sunrise gathers night and day. The light is material, remembered in the vitality of the plant Tayo promised to gather for Ts’eh. The sunrise is a multidirectional location; it is also a transitional position. Sunrise is also the first (and last) word of Silko’s novel, intoning the ceremony. This is so much more than Tayo. It is great and inclusive of his diegetic world and of the world outside the novel, as Silko assembles and gathers and bundles and speaks this story (ceremony) as a defense against Indigenous illness and death. Tayo breathes in the immensity of the totality of *the story that is still being told*, inhales it all at once and he remembers: “The strength came from here, from this feeling. It had always been there. He stood there, with the sun on his face, and he thought maybe he might make it after all” (237). This feeling of love with the earth (kin)—this feeling of relationality, of being-with more-than-human minerals and vitalities—is strength, is a cure for his illness. And in remembering, in holding the stories together in this way, Silko is telling her reader that to take in the immensity of relentless motion (on multiple scales) is not a superstition, it is a science that describes the way that the world worlds in terms of all creation as kin and all kin in constant motion of collective creation.

## **Science of Creation (Kinship)**

But it has never been easy.

Immediately following Tayo’s newly located sense of strength, he is challenged to hold the stories in view, to remember the stories, to stay in the feeling. His friends—the other vets who, like him, preferred the art of forgetfulness through alcohol—pass him as he is walking on the road and pressure him into riding and drinking with them. He consents. He needs to rest for a while, he thinks, “and not think about the story or the ceremony. Otherwise, it would make him crazy and even suspicious of his friends; and without friends he didn’t have a chance of completing the ceremony” (Silko 241). The challenge, too, is part of the design of the ceremony. The cure will not be found in further separating the self from that which is perceived as outside.

Of course, drinking to excess again results in Tayo passing out and waking up, sweating, in his friends' empty truck parked in the sun at the foot of a rocky hill. He vomits. He is stiff. His body forgets the strength of the feeling. But then he looks south, in the distance, and sees a bright green cottonwood tree on the edge of the arroyo, "its web of roots exposed, held upright only by a single connecting root" (242). Silko assembles colors, giving directions. A transition is about to take place. Noteworthy, as well, is the single connecting root that holds up the entire web of this tree—not incidentally a cottonwood tree, sacred in Pueblo symbology. How easy it would be to tear the fragile filament of the web, it seems. A gust of wind could even do it, Silko adds. Like this sacred green cottonwood tree to the south, Tayo is held in the web by but a single filament it seems. His position is tenuous, yet transitional—the roots (filaments) appearing fragile. Yet, the gust of wind that arrives in the next paragraph is noted not as a tearing force but for its sound "like a hawk sweeping close to the ground, whirring wings of wind that called back years long past and the people lost in them, all returning briefly in a gust of wind" (242). The wind is not an adversary, not a force outside of the self and which to fear. The wind promises relentless motion, where one moves in wide arcs with it. This cottonwood tree hanging by a thread reminds Tayo. The lively wind reminds him. He remembers how to move in wide arcs with the wind, not to resist its force. He remembers that the filaments of the web can be torn easily, despite their durability, and that the love with the earth-as-mother can be forgotten easily despite its durability, because the witchery is spread wide—the story of the individual self against the world is a powerful narrative of becoming-human. The wind here sweeps like a hawk, the sound of which calls back the people lost in the years—the people forgotten, stuck in the past by that story told by witchery. But "the feeling lasted only as long as the sound" (Silko 242). The sound calls the people back, but the sound is as fleeting as the gust of wind and the feeling comes through the sound—without the sound, the feeling is gone. How can Tayo stay in the feeling? How can he stay in the space of that strength? How can he remember the story? The wind-as-hawk's-wings tells the story, but the story must be persistently told (must stay in the telling) for the feeling to remain—to sense the love retaining. And drinking again, doubting the ceremony, unable to stay in the feeling, Tayo thinks: "It was difficult then to call up the feeling the stories had, the feeling of Ts'eh and old Betonie. It was easier to feel and to believe the rumors. Crazy. Crazy Indian. Seeing things. Imagining things" (242). It was easier to forget the feeling of the love than to remember. It is a matter of ease, yet the work that is the harder to maintain is also



the work more critical to continue—to ward off illness and death. The numb of the alcohol makes taking the easy path more tolerable, in the body. But this pain, this tangle of pressure, has been going on a long time, longer than the war and the alcohol and the dreams. To try to unwind the tangle simply adds pressure, in Tayo’s skull (as Silko told her reader at the opening of the novel). Tayo reverts here to that impulse to separate out the threads, to separate out the time as events of past (passed) and present and as a means of leaving that past *behind*. That story of linear time, the same story upheld in the “facts and logic” of the Indian school teacher’s textbook, decides that the individual human stands apart from the world. That to see the world as lively, relational, and familial is superstition. That to feel the love of the earth is superstition. The story of the individual posits the singular authorship of a life—whether by Christian God or by the will and cognition of the secular human. To reiterate a point made previously, drawing together the “fugitive translation” of Trujillo and “kincentric ecologies” of Enrique Salmón, the story of the individual convenes life “under the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space” (Trujillo 66). There is only one possible ending to that story. Trujillo emphasizes the “temporal and spatial heterogeneity” erased by teleological time, and in particular relation to Indigenous life in the Americas. Likewise, Salmón describes how “[t]o indigenous people, history does not remain in a linear past. History is continuous and, more importantly, contextual” (1331). These two theories relationally form an analysis of Silko’s science of creation (kinship) in the ways that, taken together, they tell the story of open horizons (plural) of Indigenous futurity where indigeneity cannot be confined to the linear narrative that discursively positions Indigenous lifeways (and lives) as *passed*. It is that same affixation to a period in the past that in turn disfigures heterogeneity into a singular horizon of illness and death—exacted through the forgetting. The contextuality of Indigenous histories that Salmón describes posits a nonlinear continuity of collectively authored histories (lives). It is a relational logic that then inscribes the story of creation as the story of the ongoing collective creation of worlds—creation, to be clear is not an event that occurred in the past and of which the present is an issuance (an offspring, progeny) produced in linear succession from that originary point. Rather, the past and the future are co-constituting in their relations with the present and this through the many and myriad impulses, affiliations, dissensions, palimpsests, and networks in a continually folding and unfolding present. This is to say that the science of creation (kinship) in Silko’s novel writes the

way that the world worlds in terms of the relentless motions of forces (on multiple scales) creating and transcreating worlds (and lives) collectively.

But let us recall that Tayo is at a very important place in the story—in the ceremony—and so is Silko. Tayo struggles against remembering the feeling, remembering the story—but this is also part of the story, part of the ceremony. And it won't be easy; it has never been easy, old Betonie had said. Tayo leaves the scene of the sweltering parked truck and proceeds on foot up the small hill. In the place where the stories are kept, in his belly, he is suddenly hit with the feeling that his friends, the other drunken vets, are not really his friends—perhaps not so much through betrayal but, rather, he is realizing that they are lost. Annihilated. Affixed in their forms. They have succumbed to the witchery. Something about this hill where his friends have parked the truck makes him feel vulnerable and sick. *This* is why he doubted the ceremony, he thinks; *this* is why he had lost the feeling that Ts'eh had gathered in him. Now Silko gives us a large page break, the next section locating the story in at once-ness of the same place but another time: the reader remains on the hill where Tayo feels this sickness but now the text narrates the development of the old uranium mine, becoming a site of US military exploitation and extraction between wars only to be abandoned as soon as it had been ransacked for all its uranium deposits. Silko describes a square mile of previously rich grazing lands, wrapped in barbed wire and now a gaping, abandoned, “hole in the earth” (Silko 244). The hill has been destroyed—the mineral vitality, the matter-energy, extracted and exported and fashioned into nuclear weapons to wreak destruction far and wide in the world. This place has been devoured by the witchery's appetite. But perhaps a single connecting root still holds the story together—perhaps Tayo can retain that connection by remembering the story, by moving with the wind that sweeps like a hawk low to the ground and whose sound keeps the feeling alive. Tayo drags himself across the dry arroyos toward to the old mine, crawling under the old barbed-wire fence at twilight (a transitional position). He recalls how old Grandma had told him stories of this place, during the time of his deepest illness after the war, and of how “they” had tested the “biggest explosion that had ever happened” on this earth. Grandma remembered. She didn't know why, but she remembered. Now Tayo knows why. Now Silko tells her reader:

[Tayo] had been so close to it, caught up in it for so long that its simplicity struck him deep inside his chest: Trinity Site, where they exploded the first atomic bomb, was only three hundred miles to the southeast, at Whitesands. And the top-secret laboratories where the bomb had been created were deep in the Jemez mountains, on land the

Government took from Cochiti Pueblo: Los Alamos, only a hundred miles northeast of him now, still surrounded by high electric fences and the ponderosa pine and tawny sandrock of the Jemez mountain canyon where the shrine of the twin mountain lions had always been. There was no end to it; it knew no boundaries; and he had arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid. (245- 246)

Tayo is at a very important place (time) in the story—a present that collapses past and future into the (re)making of this place. So close. So familiar. And now he can sense his proximity in the story. Now he sees how the US government renamed and mapped this land as property and, at once, tore at the fragile (yet durable) filaments of the web (of the story that is still being told). Where the shrine of the twin mountain lions had always been, naming a relation with the more-than-human, the uranium mine now lies like a gaping wound. Now Tayo remembers too that the vitality extracted from the place was then transformed (by people working for the witchery) into the bomb used to “end” the war (to annihilate life). This is why he feels sick, why he struggles against remembering the feeling that Ts’eh had gathered in him. The violence of extraction coupled with the violence of weaponizing the vitality of the planet is a violence done at once to the world and the self—Tayo feels it in his body, in his bones, because the mountains are in his bones (as his bones are in the mountain). Tayo feels the destruction in his body. Now Tayo understands why “Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices” in the jungles where he saw his uncle’s face in the faces of the soldiers he was enlisted to kill and in spite of the “facts and logic” meant to reassure him that it was hallucination (246). This is a violence done not only to the cities and peoples that the US bombed, but a violence done to Laguna lands and bodies; this is a violence done to the entire web of earthly matter-energy relations; and this is a violence done to the heterogeneous histories of Indigenous life, where renaming and remapping the land under the rubric of national time and territory remove the people discursively and materially from the (kin relations with) land. There is no end to the destruction because the destruction is done at once to the land, to the body, and to the web-story that gathers the cosmos in every location. Now, here, Tayo is crawling through the barbed wire and remembering the stories told in this site—remembering both the story of the witchery’s design for destruction and the story for the people’s design for persistence (and beginning to realize how the stories fit together). The shrine to the twin mountain lions had always been in the canyon, here. It is not lost, even if it is covered up by the new map (the new names). Tayo remembers the story, he remembers the name, and

Silko asserts its persistence here in spite of the government's fences and mining. Laid out here, patterned in this precise collocation of stories, the fate of all living things including the earth is being written (and rewritten). And there are other endings possible, other endings besides the tyranny of the singular horizon that spells annihilation; other endings are possible if Tayo can remember the stories that Ts'eh gave him (if he can remember the directions).

Tayo must remember—must keep all the parts of the ceremony in view at once despite how painful this tangle feels inside his skull. Tayo must remember the story as directions for how to surmount the distances and days to defend against Indigenous illness and death. This is ceremony for something greater and more inclusive than an individual self, yet the design of the ceremony positions Tayo intimately within the creation of the design. He is neither the sole author of his own life nor a helpless subject to the will of a sole deistic authority. He must remember *this story* of collective continuous creation. Now Tayo is inside the fenced-off former mine site:

He walked to the mine shaft slowly, and the feeling became overwhelming: the pattern of the ceremony was completed there. He knelt and found an ore rock. The gray stone was streaked with powdery yellow uranium, bright and alive as pollen; veins of sooty black formed lines with the yellow, making mountain ranges and rivers across the stone. But they had taken these beautiful rocks from deep within the earth and they had laid them in the monstrous design, realizing destruction on a scale only *they* could have dreamed. (Silko 246)

That feeling that had struck him in his chest in the previous cited passage—struck him for its simplicity—now becomes overwhelming. The feeling of the pattern overwhelms him. The feeling that arises in his relation with the pattern overwhelms (surmounts)—it is great and inclusive of more than the self. The pattern of the ceremony was completed there, past tense; but he thinks this before any specific arrival has manifest on the page. Indeed, it is slowly becoming clear to Tayo and to the reader that the witchery is also a pattern—the witchery is also a collectively authored worlding of worlds. The pattern laid out by the witchery is a design made material through people extracting the “beautiful rocks from deep within the earth.” But Tayo sees how the stones are streaked with black and yellow, as though painted, and in the way the stones are arranged now, in the present, that likewise designs a pattern not dissimilar from Betonie's design drawn in colored corn and sand. The yellow of the uranium is “bright and alive as pollen” and the “sooty black” forms a pattern with the yellow—their collocation drawing the image of mountain ranges and rivers across the stone. The mineral vitality of the earth is not

annihilated—it is still alive. And Tayo sees the simultaneity of the patterns formed here in this location as the design of the witchery and the design of the ceremony to defend against illness and death. These histories coexist, these histories meet up in this location, these histories are contextual and *not* affixed in the past. The design—the pattern, the story—is still being told, created and transcreated. The text gathers colors—yellow, black, gray—a transition is about to take place. Or, at least, the gathering of colors creates the transition by transcreating the design of the witchery that was put in motion long ago (it has been going on a long time). “Their” collective design for destruction is about to converge with the design for Tayo’s ceremony—for Silko’s ceremony. The terror of loss is part of the design of the witchery, the incitement of a fear of that which is perceived as outside of the self and which is only made possible by a teleological story of creation obsessed with origins and ends (the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space). And this design was patterned long ago. But it is not the only pattern—it is not the only story. There is also the design drawn out by old Betonie, which has also been collectively authored over multiple (dialogic) generations. *This story* is the design that has guided Tayo, with patience and love, persisting in wide arcs, spiraling, to this precise location (time-place) of transition by which the ceremony will keep Tayo in the feeling of kincentric love with the earth. Remembering the overwhelming feeling of intimacy with the place and its converging histories, now:

[Tayo] 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.* (Silko 246, my emphasis)

In this precise location, as a simultaneity of (hi)stories, Tayo remembers how the stories all fit together to collectively, continuously, transcreatively become the *story that is still being told*. The pattern mapped in the constellations, slowly spiraling across the sky, almost imperceptible, is Ts’its’tsi’nako’s story. Thought-Woman the Old Spider weaves the story (the world) into being with her sisters but that is not as an origin from which Tayo’s present issues—the weaving/worlding includes Tayo and his ceremony. *This story* does not separate the creation of the world from the world—does not separate out the threads of the collective creation of the world as a (transcorporeal) location of converging stories. It is the story that Ts’eh has taught him to remember. It is also *his* story. It is also Silko’s story. It is also the reader’s story. And

Tayo now remembers—in his body—that seeing this pattern of how the stories all fit together is only craziness and superstition when sensed through the story of the facts and logic and linearity—through the teleological story of the individual. Tayo sees now how sensing the pattern of *constant motion on different scales* is a sense ability, not a dis-ability, not craziness. The singular horizon of time and space is also the linear narrative of history that affixes such sense ability in a discursively passed past—affixes such sense ability as out of place (time) in the modern world. *That* story assures the annihilation of Indigenous life through this deadening of the vitality of place and of the multidirectionality of time and achieves this destruction through the same collective orchestration of activities that the story denies. Moreover, in the science of creation that Silko’s novel posits, that collective authorship becomes sensible (reasonable, reasoned, as well as able-to-be-sensed) not only as a matter of record but as a matter of continuously (trans)creating the present in terms of multiple horizons of time and space and thus multiple horizons of possibility for Indigenous futurity. The future is not a singular point that lies *ahead*—not a telos. The ceremony too, then, is not a design that positions a future point of arrival at a state of curedness—the temporality of this premise already flawed in its proposal of a future past-tense state of affixed beingness. Tayo now remembers the story of collective authorship (creation) of worlds as the convergence of stories whose assembled pattern re-members “the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions across all distances and time.” There are no endings, only transformations—as long as the story is kept alive, that is. On the one hand, that there are no boundaries means the destruction (the witchery) knows no bounds, manifests only one possible ending (annihilation of liveliness, foreclosure of change); on the other hand, that there are no boundaries also means that the pattern is not fixed, that that ending aimed for by the “witchery” is *not* in fact predetermined because the story is still being told and because there are no (material-energetic) boundaries, only transitions. The story is continuously flexing and breathing, kincentrically and collectively. The pattern is still being designed, woven, spoken into being through the “constant migration and motion on different scales” and through the “interconnectedness of all life and the earth” (to repeat, again, Whyte and Salmón). *This* story’s ending is not an ending at all—if the ceremony works, that is. Unlike the Indian school teachers, the Army doctors, Auntie, and even Rocky, who all repeated the line that facts and logic displace the superstition of the old stories, *this story* makes Indigenous futurity possible through a science of creation (kinship) that generates and regenerates the world as a present presence authored

collectively through continuous *transitions*. Tayo can now see that the story of annihilation written for him in and by linear (settler colonial) epistemologies of time, space, history, and kinship is not the only story, not the only design. There are a multitude of stories that all fit together in a pattern—and the stories that make this pattern sensible are the people’s, Tayo’s, Silko’s, and the reader’s defense against the illness and death of the vitality of the world (of the web/space).

The design of the ceremony has guided Tayo in wide arcs to this location. Where the text has gathered colors and directions, Silko has been teaching her reader to attend to the *transitions across all distances and time*. Tayo is alone in the fenced-off mine—alone in this location of relief at sensing the pattern. Alone, but not lonely under the vast night sky. Tayo looks up:

He saw the constellation in the north sky, and the fourth star was directly above him; the pattern of the ceremony was in the stars, and the constellation formed a map of the mountains in the directions he had gone for the ceremony. For each star, there was a night and a place; this was the last night and the last place, when the darkness of night and the light of day were balanced. His protection was there in the sky, in the position of the sun, in the pattern of the stars. He had only to complete this night, to keep the story out of the reach of the destroyers for a few more hours, and their witchery would turn, upon itself, upon them. (Silko 247)

Silko has said before that there was only this single night and no other, that all times were gathered into this one night. Here again, the text realizes (a) place as the convergence of histories—or, the location sites time and place as co-constituting—by insisting that this was “the last night and the last place.” This location is a transitional position. And Tayo feels this because the constellation forms a map of the mountains in the directions he has moved for the ceremony—Betonie’s design is in the stars, spiraling (almost imperceptibly) across the night sky. But the pattern is unfixed, and the stars themselves are not fixed points of light in relation to which one orients oneself while moving across a landscape; rather, in *this story*, the stars are a gathering or assemblage of materialities that form a pattern with(in) relation to this precise location (night and place). The pattern is co-constituting with Tayo in this location—the materiality of the stars and of Tayo’s body converging to create a present presence of the pattern as a matter of transitions across all distances and time. Tayo’s cure—his protection, his defense—materializes with the materialization of this pattern of the stars *with* Tayo. Tayo (and Silko, and the reader) is a co-creator of *this story*. Now he has only to complete this night in

order to complete the transition—to keep the witchery from deciding how this story ends (in annihilation). Silko (and I) must keep the story alive.

Silko too must complete this transition for her ceremony to work. But suddenly Tayo is not alone in the mine anymore. His tears of relief give way to hearing his drunken friends come bouncing over the road in their truck. While Tayo hides behind a boulder, his friends (who are not really his friends, as he has found, they are lost to the witchery) beat up his other friend Harley for having left Tayo in the truck that same morning. Harley was supposed to bring Tayo back, to return him to the hospital and the Army doctors whose science of facts and logic—of individuality and linear temporality—has already decided that he is damaged beyond repair as an effect, apparently, of his culture’s superstitions and inability to adapt to the logic of individuality and linear temporality. The Army doctors, and Tayo’s “lost” friends, are doing the work of the witchery—they are part of the collective authorship of the witchery’s design for the destruction of the world. Tayo does not intervene to help his “lost” friend. He must keep the story alive for this last night, must complete the ceremony-as-transition. But it will not be easy:

[T]he witchery would work so that the people would be fooled into blaming the whites and not the witchery. It would work to make the people forget the stories of the creation and continuation of the five worlds; the old priests would be afraid too, and cling to ritual without making new ceremonies as they always had before, the way they still made new Buffalo Dance songs each year. (Silko 249)

This is interesting. Once again embracing the relational work of the semicolon, Silko intersects the fear of loss with the story of loss, the one designed by the other. The witchery—the appetite for destruction—works to make people forget the stories and, specifically, “to forget the stories of the creation and continuation of the five worlds.” This is important. The destruction is wrought through forgetting *this story that is still being told* and which tells of the continuous, collective creation of worlds. And, as well, the witchery wreaks destruction by stoking divisions between peoples and between human and more-than-human kin. These divisions—the separating out of the threads, the unwinding of the tangle—render possible the tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space; these divisions make the linear narrative of history feel real; these divisions make it easier for people to forget the story of the collective creation and continuation—the persistence!—of the five worlds. Here, Silko insists that white people are neither the target of the cure nor the source of the illness. To blame “the whites” is to believe that the witchery is a matter of *bloodline*, which is precisely the work of the witchery, Silko asserts. The story of linear time



designs the erasure and covering up of kincentric ecologies and of multiple horizons of time and space—*that* story of creation teaches that kinship is defined by blood, and that the individuation of peoples is as enduring as the individuation of bodies in linear historical time. *That* story of creation (kinship) destroys the story that is still being told and that is the people's only defenses against (Indigenous) illness and death. The work of the witchery is to make people forget how to sense the story of the spiraling science of kinship and creation; to make people forget how to stay in the sensation of love with the earth; to make people forget that the world is continuously and collectively created (and transcreated); to make people forget the relations that imbricate human, more-than-human, mineral, and mountain in a web/space of kinship. As Paula Gunn Allen reminds, "loss of memory is the root of all oppression." Remembering the story that is still being told is a continuous (re)enactment of re-membering (keeping alive) the continuous and collective creation of the present to the extent that people remember that there are multiple horizons of time and space, multiple directions of time, multiple scales of constant motion, and that the future of destruction aimed for in that other story is not the only possible ending. Remembering *this story* keeps the people in the feeling of love that is also their defense against illness and death. The witchery makes the people forget that there are no boundaries, only transitions, which makes the people anticipate the ending as annihilation and which makes the people feel fear. Then the people cling to those things affixed in the past that they then see as tradition and do so out of fear of loss of a past now figured as outside of the self (as separate from the present). Then the people themselves try to affix tradition in a place (in a time) conceived as separate from all others and they try to conserve it; but this just feeds the witchery, Silko says, because affixing things in time (place) *is* annihilation. Now it becomes sensible as well that the defense against annihilation lies in the how of the story—lies in the mode of storytelling that, in its fragile yet durable filaments of Thought-Woman's weaving, narrates the worlding of worlds in terms of wovenness. Thought-Woman the spider's story, Tayo's story, Silko's story, the web-story: all narrate entanglement, relationality, and a loving embrace with the web/space of an entangled human and more-than-human world. Importantly, Silko tells her reader that the ceremonies must be renewed; that it is not about repeating exactly the same gesture and sound each time; and that the way that people tell stories does the work of designing the patterns through which the world makes sense as such. Storytelling is not simply entertainment; stories shape relations with the world, into patterns of destruction and annihilation as much as into patterns of healing and caring. And, importantly,

these patterns are continually shifting and spiraling, like the relentless motion of stars. Creation is not a *passed* event, it is a collectively authored story that is constantly, almost imperceptibly, still ever in the time of the telling. The pattern (science) of creation in *this story*, here, relates human and more-than-human in a spiraling shape of kinship. There are no boundaries, only transitions.

Tayo had never been crazy. Tayo can see now that the old stories are not superstition, they see the world the way it has always been: in *constant migration and motion on different scales*. Spiraling. In collective creation. A transition is taking place in the convergence of patterns. Tayo can now see that all is retained between the sky and the earth and himself. It is a shared story. The patterns gather here, in this location. And this location is gathered as such in and by the story that remembers the relationality of the world (of worlding). There is something great and inclusive here beyond a story about Tayo or a story about Indigenous life in the Americas. Yet I do not find this to be a story proposing to represent itself as paradigmatic of Pueblo culture or Indigenous intellectual practice generally. I want to take care here to explain that this story is very intimately Laguna. It is Silko's story, it is Tayo's story. And, at the same time, it is a story that shapes a science of kinship and creation that I find remarkably resemblant of the theories of quantum physics that now refute the Newtonian mechanics by which time and space have been discursively separated out into a line and a circle—time as an arrow flowing continuously across an empty, flat geographic space that forms the backdrop of (or the device for) human activity and agency. In this sense, my reading of a science of creation (kinship) in Silko's novel conceives of something far greater and more inclusive than a historical accounting of a discursively individuated people. It is their story, and it is also the story that is still being told of the entire cosmos. *This story* bespeaks the creation and transcreation of a science that, in its emphasis on a spiraling web of collective creation, retains the feeling of love between all peoples, all beings, all matter of the earth, in terms of multidirectional kinship relations sensible as such through the shape of the story. It is a science that retains relations—that cannot separate out the threads of what is really and materially a web/space of material-energetic relationality. Silko speaks to something greater and more inclusive than the individual (Laguna) self and does so through the intimate, local, and personal story of Tayo's ceremony but also as an extra-diegetic ceremony for the defense against the illness and death of the entire web/space. It is the story of the cosmos—of a multidirectional gathering of threads constantly moving in an almost

imperceptible spiraling pattern. The pattern was put into motion a long time ago—a pattern mapped in stars on an old shield hanging in an empty cabin, a pattern formed in the concentric circles and shadows of gathered things bundled together, a convergence of patterns collectively weaving *the story that is still being told*.

### ***There are no boundaries, only transitions***

I have been telling a story of a spiraling shape of kinship, which I also retell in terms of a science of kinship and creation. Silko's *Ceremony* narrates relatedness beyond bloodlines, conceiving kinship in the spiraling shape of a spider's web—a web entangling all life and the earth and through which *all is retained* in constant, spiraling motion on different (differentiating) scales. To read the novel in this way, I have offered that senses of self and community are oriented and constructed through the shape of temporality—through a linear narrative of nation-state and individual sovereignty, in the colonial-modern story, and through a nonlinear narrative of collocational becoming in and with the web/space in Silko's Laguna story. Silko organizes the time spatially—narrating multiple horizons of time and space, or multiple scales of kinship arranged across multiple directions of time. To sense the story as such, I also offer that it is still being told. Silko's storytelling practice resembles the spider's web—Thought-Woman, the grandma spider's storytelling is weaving—and in a way that imbricates the novel in an extradiegetic ceremony of Silko's making and which works toward defending against Indigenous illness and death. To read *this story* means to sense that liveliness in the land and words, and to remember that ceremony, in this spiraling science, is not the same as resolution: ceremony is process; ceremony is constantly attending to the transitions, because “there are no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time.” The ancestor is thus always already conceived in multidirectional relation with the self where the kinship metaphor names the *relation* in which ancestor and descendant mutually differentiate as such. Indeed, the spiraling shape of the story, and of temporality, co-locates kinship in an at-once of ancestor and descendant that makes intergenerational persistence possible and that arranges the notion of *place* in terms of relentless motion in (a) place. In the enunciation of place as creation and trans- or even pro-creation of place, I locate a science of kinship mutually informing a theory of collective, collocational creation. Silko emphasizes kinship in relation to the earth-as-mother, as another index of multiplicity of self-ancestor-place, and where remembering this relation means remembering the

love—love for and with the kinship relations of all human and more-than-human kin. Moreover, this story narrates (spiraling) kinship in such a way that the science of creation comes to be recognizable as a matter of the collective authorship of patterns of intra-action, exchange, and directionality that, gathered together, form (and transform) *this story that is still being told*.

I thus make my attempt at keeping this story alive by telling the story of a spiraling shape of kinship in terms of a science of kinship and creation and in a way that imagines this story as also part of *this story* and as also collectively authored through the gathering of multiple directions of scholarship. As a reader of Silko, I feel myself called to encounter the story from a multiple “I” position where constant migration and motion on different scales includes the ongoing movements between body and book. The story is kept alive by that reader who suspends the perceived boundaries between science and aesthetics and engages with an ethic of love that then extends the ceremony into the extra-diegetic world where real, actual, and material defenses are still needed against the ongoing erasure of Indigenous presence—which, to be clear, persists despite 500 years of attempted genocide and does so in large part through persistent strategies for keeping alive the stories and languages that remind the people of the power in such spiraling kinship and time. The story is still being told—there are no boundaries, only transitions.

I now conclude this chapter inconclusively. Or, to keep this story alive, I gather Silko’s closing of *Ceremony* with some of the multiple directions (crisscrossing threads) with which the extra-diegetic ceremony of the novel continues to create (and procreate) meaning in the world and persists in its attention to (decolonizing) transitions. Tayo has successfully kept the story alive for that last night of his ceremony—he kept it out of reach of the destroyers, working through his (lost) friends. Silko tells her reader:

The transition was completed. In the west and in the south too, the clouds with round heavy bellies had gathered for the dawn. It was not necessary, but it was right, and even if the sky had been cloudless the end was the same. The ear for the story and the eye for the pattern were theirs; the feeling was theirs: we came out of this land and we are hers. (255)

The feeling was theirs—the feeling of love for and with the earth-as-mother is kept alive as a material memory sited in at once the body and the place. It is a corporeal feeling that retains the vitality of mineral and flesh, here indicated by the way the colon between them reveals that this “feeling” contains the minerality of the land, the emergence from the land is held in the body. And the body remembers. The body remembers by remembering the ear for story and eye for pattern—or, sensing the spiraling pattern of the story’s structure is also the work of the body

knowing how to sense the pattern of all creation shaped in the web/space of transcorporeal entanglement and collective authorship of worlds. Note, as well, that the transition is complete—not the ceremony. Silko bundles directions—west and south—with clouds that have now “gathered for the dawn.” The clouds—previously identified through their own mineral corporealities as quartz and turquoise—have gathered here, in this precise location that is also the transitional position of the sunrise. Recall that the dawn people always begin and end their words with “sunrise,” Tayo has remembered. The completion of the transition thus does not propose that a ceremony has an ending. Rather, the sunrise in this location of completion gathers directions by which the position of completion is also one of attending to transitions. Attending to the transitions likewise means re-membling the body’s capacity to sense the story that all is retained between sky and earth and the self: nothing is lost, there is no grief, as long as the love is felt and kept alive. As long as the story is kept alive (out of the hands of the destroyers who seek to deaden it, to affix it). And Tayo remembers, now, that the people “had always been loved. He thought of her then; she had always loved him, she had never left him; she had always been there. He crossed the river at sunrise” (Silko 255). Tayo thinks of Ts’eh, of her love, and remembers that she had never left—that she had always loved the people. She persists. She waits in certain locations for people to come to her for the story, for the directions for how to surmount the distances and days, and she is in that location still. In that co-location of the web/space. Tayo then crosses the river at sunrise—attending to the transition, still, by transitioning through the river within the transitional position of the sunrise (across all distances and time). And the love outdistances the destruction.

In one sense, the spiraling shape of kinship—and of temporality—iterates Silko’s ceremony as a theory of revolution. Silko’s story takes seriously the idea that attending to transitions written collectively is an enactment of persistent movements of change and transcreation, rather than theorizing a figure of changed-ness in the telos of revolutions enacted in the linear temporality of individual and nation-state sovereignty. Change conceived as a future event of arrival into what will then be an already always past tense modified state of alteration is a theory of revolution that portends the deadening and affixation of that future state in its conception as the limited and contained property of a Revolution that names the object and not the relation of change. Change conceived as the turning and returning of a spiraling shape of multidirectional kinship and time is a theory of revolution that materializes change in the slow

but steady processes of attending to the transitions of *constant migration and movement on different scales*. It is transformation that takes place in transcorporeal assemblages of political and ecological bodies, through accumulations and relentless motion that is multidirectional and collectively enacted. The change is thus shaped by the accumulative and multiply directional forces acting in the service of stories that either attune or numb the senses to that entanglement of matter-energy in assemblage. A theory of change taking shape over time, little by little, likewise resembles the work of Hummingbird: in Haida author and animator Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas's retelling of a hemispheric Indigenous story, *Little Hummingbird* (2010) persists in fighting a forest fire by dropping water from her tiny beak.<sup>119</sup> It is a slow, accretive effort. In Silko's *Ceremony*, hummingbird of course appears when (where) Tayo encounters green hummingbird after voicing his prayer for rain in the canyon spring, where spider came out to drink and remind him of the (old) stories (I described this scene in detail in the section "Sensing the Story"). To Tayo, green hummingbird confirms that he is moving in the right direction and that his prayer for rain is a good one—the rain then spinning in like spider webs across gray hills. But hummingbird also appears in fragments of verse dropped bit by bit throughout the narration, retelling how Hummingbird and Fly went to their mother to ask for "food and stormclouds" for the people (Silko 105)—to ask for a story, that is, directions for how to surmount the distances and days, the drought and famine. They give her blue pollen and yellow pollen; she gives them the directions to ask "old buzzard" to "purify the town" (106). Buzzard asks them to gather tobacco, so they must return again to their mother, who tells them to go ask caterpillar (152). It cannot be done alone. So Fly and Hummingbird go to caterpillar, who gives them tobacco to give to old buzzard. Buzzard then purifies the town in the four directions: east, south, west, north (as their mother had directed) (256). Hummingbird and Fly gather colors (blue and yellow pollen) and work with buzzard and caterpillar to "fix up things again" but it was not easy, will never be easy, and necessitates the slow accretion of collective effort (256). In many ways, too, this principle of aggregated activities effecting accreted change marks and makes transformation through forces that move (in wide arcs) with the wind, not against it. Ultimately then, yet resistant to the idea of conclusion or an ending, Silko's *Ceremony* as ceremony (as defense) imagines and enacts a slow, accreting, assembling, multidirectional force of change (revolution).

*Ceremony* bespeaks even greater visions of Indigenous revolution when considered relationally with Silko's later *Almanac of the Dead* (1991). The spiraling structure of *Ceremony*

is marked by page and line breaks as the narration moves with Tayo through a series of ceremonial locations that spiral and spin toward what Silko calls transition (not resolution, not ending, but transition). The ceremony is not an ending, not a telos. And, if we are to consider it part of the story that is still being told, we can anticipate that the novel does not end on its final pages. Silko continues to tell the story in her next novel through a transnational, hemispheric web/space likewise mapped as a spatial temporality with converging patterns, collaborations, dissensions, and palimpsests. *Almanac* opens with what Silko names the 500-year map, illustrating Tucson, Arizona in the center of a spider's web of directions (and transitional locations) that gather, assemble, and bundle the multitude of characters who populate the various threads and intersections of her epic novel. I include this to signal the extension of the extra-diegetic work of *Ceremony* as ceremony—as a story for the defense against Indigenous illness and death. The revolution at the heart of *Almanac* is collectively generated, although not necessarily unified by an agreement on the means of resisting or persisting. Yet the characters—those working for the “witchery” as well as those working for the story of earth-as-mother—put in their drop of water, so to speak. Those working for the story of the earth-as-mother attend to the transition prophesied in multiple Indigenous cosmologies: the disappearance of all things European in the Americas. Silko is clear in her terms that the novel is not calling for the destruction of all European peoples and things—this is not revolution that divides, certainly not along *bloodlines*. It is revolution centered on land—a coalition open to all who love and care for (with) our mother. In relation to *Ceremony*, Silko's narrative strategies take shape as a theory and practice of revolution informed in and by stories that remember the sense-ability to attend to the transitions, to persist in wide arcs with the wind, and to gather forces from all directions. Silko gathers and bundles colors and directions throughout *Ceremony* to signal the locations (time-places) of the transitions that bend and shape the change—not as a shaping to one's will, to be clear, but a shaping *with* in relation to that constant multiscalar motion (of the stars across the sky). The change is hemispheric. Indeed, Silko's *Almanac* lists numerous rebellions and uprisings throughout the history of Americas under European colonization and US imperialism, rebellions and uprisings that are thus arranged as part of the design of this spiraling, persistent revolution. The “generic fugitivity” (to reiterate Trujillo's phrasing) of Silko's novel escapes the tyranny of the singular horizon of time and space *and* speaks (thinks, weaves, writes, forges) Indigenous futurity into being. The story for this change (this ceremony, this transition) was put

in motion long ago yet it is still in the time of the telling. Together with *Ceremony*, the story that is still being told concomitantly tells the story of the disappearance of all “things” European—the disappearance of all the stories that thing-ify the world, that organize it under the tyranny of the witchery. It is prophesied, but *this story*—in *Almanac*, an ancient almanac that travels and transforms with certain characters—must still be kept out of reach of the destroyers. The story of a spiraling science of kinship and creation must be kept out of reach of the destruction—must be kept alive.

I cannot retell this story with an end in mind, I cannot deaden this story. I must maintain an ear for the story and an eye for the pattern and maintain these as feelings—as sense-abilities that remember the physics and metaphysics of a world alive with stories, colors, directions, because I am also part of *this story*. Silko is attending to a transition outside of the novel. It is a decolonizing practice that gathers and bundles forces from all directions, that gathers and bundles colors. And through this practice of gathering as designing the ceremony with/in the web/space, Silko tells a hemispheric story of Indigenous life in the Americas that proposes Indigenous futurities through the durable (yet fragile) structure of the spider’s spiraling web-work. The fragility of the filaments must be attended to, the stories behind the words must be explained with care and patience so as not to tear that web of relations apart.

The structure of the story *matters*. The care and love shared and shown in relations on multiple scales *matters*. These are *matterings* that differentiate different differences (as Barad’s language allows me to say). Silko’s novel recognizes the *mattering* of stories. In the end-as-transition of *Ceremony*, Tayo returns to Ku’oosh to tell him about the ceremony. It is told as a story of his ceremony (within the story of *Ceremony* as ceremony):

It took a long time to tell [Ku’oosh and his helper] the story; they stopped him frequently with questions about the location and the time of day; they asked about the direction she had come from and the color of her eyes. It was while he was sitting there, facing southeast, that he noticed how the four windows along the south wall of the kiva had a particular relationship to this late autumn position of the sun. (Silko 257)

The most important features of the story, to Ku’oosh and his helper, are the colors and the directions—the locations (time-places). And then again, here, Tayo is facing southeast and recognizes that the four windows of the kiva attend to (have a relationship with) the late autumn position of the sun—a transitional position, as I read it. The old stories, the old dialect (full of involutions), the locations of the stars in the sky, their relation to the places (parts) of the



ceremony: all are a spiraling. The story is still in the present of its telling. And the ceremony is working. Silko intones how the witchery has turned upon itself, how Tayo keeping the story out of reach of the destroyers on that last night shaped the transition. And: “It is dead for now. / It is dead for now. / It is dead for now. / It is dead for now” (261). The repetition in verse writes this in prayer against the witchery yet where the witchery destroys *itself* by deadening and affixing itself, it is “stiffened with the effects of its own witchery” (261). Finally, although without aiming for an ending, Silko finishes her prayer the way that the Dawn people finish all their words: “Sunrise, / accept this offering. / Sunrise” (262). Silko attends to the transition. Silko substantiates the novel as itself a ceremony, as counterspell to the witchery spread far in the world—as a story to surmount the distances and days of ongoing settler colonial occupation in the Americas. Silko’s extra-diegetic ceremony remembers the directions for how to keep the story alive, to keep it in the time of the telling. There are no boundaries (to this book), only transitions through all distances and time. I am telling you the story that she is telling.

*Sunrise.*

## Conclusion

### *Decolonization is not a metaphor...*

*Many of our [Native] stories of the sky are similar to stories of the land. It is part of how we remember the ecosystems where we live as well as the cosmos beyond us, but few people consider, or even remember, the knowledge of stories that existed before the European entrada. Learning these is a part of the re-minding that helps us envision our world in ways that offer a chance of survival.*

— Linda Hogan, *The Radiant Lives of Animals*

Linda Hogan's prose opened this project. I now return to her voice to offer something of a conclusion. Hogan's collection of essays speaks toward learning from the *radiant lives* of animal-kin. Here, once again, Hogan points to Indigenous storytelling practices that sustain memory of both the intimate scales of local *ecosystems* and the expansive scales of the *cosmos* beyond. Hogan's work emphasizes the vital necessity of remembering such stories and storytelling practices—remembering the stories is a matter of survival. And survival is a matter of keeping the stories *alive*. I read this in relation to the shared terms that Trujillo accentuates in his call for modes of translation (or translation-as-reading) from within “the sensation of relinquishing the sovereignty of private property and individual authorship to the life of the land and words” (“So that the Thieves” 67). The life—the liveliness—of the land and words. The stories that Hogan references are *living* beings. So how am I to write a conclusion here when the story is still being told? I want to imagine this project as itself a living text. If the story that I am telling is a story activated by the residual memory of a deep and enduring sense of kinship relation with the more-than-human in a persistently changing world, and if Indigenous poetry, music, and art continually generate and regenerate this story (and science) of multispecies kinship, can we thus think about scholarship as being untrustworthy where it attempts to affix its findings as an empirical assessment of what is more accurately one reading out of many possible readings of a web-textile of material-discursive *matterings*? It feels like a defeat to insist on pursuing a linear logic that ends in the final Word, here. How about, instead, I write this conclusion as a (re)opening: what does weaving/reading kinship in hemispheric American literatures offer not only to a discourse of comparison but also to living Indigenous peoples and lands? What am *I* doing with the body, the ancestor, and senses of place? Reading for patterns,

for crossings within-during rather than simply a-cross perceived disjunctions, I have been weaving/reading shapes of kinship through and as alternative epistemologies, or through and as ways of seeing and knowing that remember the liveliness and heterogeneity of the land and words. Weaving/reading from within an intimate connection with ecosystems and an expansive connection with the cosmos means to situate my scholarly practice within a responsibility to the narrative creation of worlds—because, I find, weaving/reading hemispheric American land and literature sustains the ability to respond to the pressures and pleasures of relationality, across all distances and time. This is to say that hemispheric weaving/reading orients translation-as-reading toward a broader understanding of comparatism that situates critique from the intimacy of within-during the wovenness and with responsibility to the collective weaving. And this, I maintain, attempts to retell a story that re-members the knowledge of stories that Hogan vocalizes: *Learning these stories is a part of the re-minding that helps us envision our world in ways that offer a chance of survival.*

But, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang assert that “Decolonization is not a Metaphor”—it is about LAND. Survival, then, is a matter of reading, seeing, writing, and knowing beyond the figurative. Or, better: it is a matter of reading the land as the *mother* of all human and more-than-human beings and not as a mere metaphor of kinship. The relation is material. And sustaining responsibility to the collective weaving likewise sustains relations of love and care toward and between all human and more-than-human beings. Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill open critical terrain for me to make such claims here. In their collectively authored “Decolonizing Feminism,” these three writers argue that:

recognizing the persistence of Indigenous concepts and epistemologies does not mean blindly copying or performing them oneself, nor does such recognition require excavating “authentic” Indigenous traditions out of a distant past; instead, feminists must recognize Indigenous peoples as the authors of important theories about the world we all live in. Native feminist theories make claims not to an authentic past outside of settler colonialism, but to an ongoing project of resistance that continues to contest patriarchy and its power relationships. (21)

I recognize Indigenous storytellers as the authors of important theories about the world we all live in—including but not limited to those authors whose work I have been reading, citing, and analyzing throughout the chapters of this project. This is to say that weaving/reading shapes of kinship in hemispheric American literatures is a matter of orienting toward such theories as at once an intervention in discourses of comparison and as a contribution to that matter of

Indigenous survival—of survival of the planet. Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill insist that they “do not view Native feminist theories as limited to the participation of those who are Indigenous, feminist, and/or woman identified” (11). Decolonizing work is done collectively, and, as they argue, through forms of alliance and coalition that address difference—this is not an argument for inclusion, this is the argument that “respecting the environment is not encoded in the DNA” (as Mishuana Goeman phrases the same call) (Goeman 28). Decolonization thus means remembering and enacting ways of knowing and being that recognize Indigenous stories as theories about the world—about the land, the water, the sky, about intimate ecosystems and about the cosmos beyond. And this, these scholars agree, begins with remembering that “land is knowing and knowledge,” voiced as at once land and ocean and in refusal of separating and abstracting the earth’s features (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 21).

With critical commonalities, Reid Gómez relates Silko’s notion of “the land as the keeper of stories” (“Storyteller’s Escape” 158). Land is the keeper of the stories that offer a chance for planetary survival. Reading Silko’s second novel, *Almanac of the Dead*, Gómez considers the ways that settler colonial discourses of law, history, and anthropology strive to control the narrative of history—to force the forgetting of those ways of knowing and being that persistently challenge the absolutism and teleology of settler colonial (and colonial-modern) authority. To remember the stories that tell and retell (adaptively, creatively) of such ways of knowing and being means to inhabit a *resistant self in relation* (to relate María Lugones’s language) and to inhabit a resistant relational world that are both fugitive to, that escape, that are uncontainable to the controlling historical narrative of and for that “tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space” that Trujillo identifies (66). In other words, relations of love and care for and with the (material mother) earth are sustained through remembering the land as the keeper of stories—through weaving/reading land *as* literature. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson likewise cites “Land as Pedagogy” in *As We Have Always Done*. Simpson retells a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg story (and epistemology) of learning from the land:

The land, Aki, is both context and process. The process of coming to know is learner led and profoundly spiritual in nature. Coming to know is the pursuit of whole-body intelligence practiced in the context of freedom, and when realized collectively, it generates generations of loving, creative, innovative, self-determining, interdependent, and self-regulating community-minded individuals. (151)

Remembering the stories that remember the land as kin relation and as teacher “creates”—makes material—loving, creative, sovereign, wise, funny, vulnerable, and “community-minded” people. Simpson describes how the land teaches (by being) both “context and process.” Land is relational; land is in constant motion. Both Gómez and Kyle Powys Whyte amplify “motion”—Gómez in the context of Indigenous sovereignty “as motion” and Whyte on the point of “constant migration and motion on different scales” in his formulation of “spiraling” temporality and kinship relations (Gómez, “Storyteller’s Escape” 147; Whyte, “Indigenous Science” 228). Gómez adds that “[u]nderstanding sovereignty as motion allows for important process-oriented theorizing, calling forward the need to experience language and land instead of ‘understanding’ them” (152). That is, the capacity to see, sense, and come to know sovereignty, not as a fixed state of independent liberty (which is a form of freedom where the abstracted individual merely has nothing left to lose), but as a *constant motion of and in sovereignty* sensed as such through the experience of motion (liveliness) in language and in the land. The commonalities—the shared-ness—of these terms collectively author (and authorize) multidirectional routes of land as pedagogy, as teacher, as keeper of stories. Land teaches the constant motion of the liveliness of the land and of words; land teaches the multiple scales of material relationality; land teaches freedom and sovereignty in a moving (motile) collectivity (not an abstracted, fixed individualism); land teaches modes of alliance and coalition that, likewise, are constantly and contextually in motion; land teaches love. Indigenous stories and storytelling practices, then, sustain the liveliness of the land and of words which in turn sustains loving kinship relations between human and more-than-human.

This is not metaphor. This is material. I have been contending that weaving/reading land and/as literature in these sites of differing shapes of kinship tells a story of heterogeneous modes of relating with the self, the ancestor, and the place. In their distinct yet related ways, the three chapters of this project take up differently differentiating (Indigenous) storytelling as epistemologies of (re)weaving—thinking through the web-weaving of Old Spider Woman of Laguna Pueblo creation stories (which I locate as science). The connection to emphasize here, by way of open-ended conclusion, is between land and weaving and literacy. This is to say (and I am not the first to say) that this kind of weaving is a transcreative process at once contextual, multidirectional, and enunciative. In the afterword to the co-edited collection *Writing Without Words*, Walter D. Mignolo describes “weaving, agriculture, and writing... as alternative literacies”

(297). Here I think of agriculture not at all in terms of the plow or of monocrop farming but in terms of multispecies and permacultural practices of cultivating the liveliness of the earth (and of words), the idea being that weaving, agriculture, and writing are all forms of at once “coming to know” and sustaining the liveliness of the land and of words. These are forms of literacy—of reading and writing through and in *constant migration and motion on different scales*, a motion likewise enacting sovereignty and freedom in and through and for collective relations of love and in persistent resistance (though not rigidity) to the *tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space* of colonial-modernity that (really, materially) attempts to organize and maintain control over bodies and lands. Mignolo finds that “writing in colonial and postcolonial situations requires, more than a grammatology, theories of the materiality of reading and writing cultures and their relevance to understanding colonial expansions and ideologies of domination” (309). Inhabiting the *resistant self in relation* requires literacies and epistemologies alternative to those discourses of law, history, and anthropology that work to expand coloniality and to naturalize ideologies of domination—and requires remembering the process of coming to know *as* process and as contextual and as a matter of learning from the land as teacher, from the land as keeper of (these) stories.

Paula Gunn Allen, for one, emphasizes remembering as decolonial action. I have said this before and will say it again, through Allen’s voice: “loss of memory is the root of all oppression” (cited in Federici 81). I cite Gunn Allen through Silvia Federici’s *Re-Enchanting the World* not to give credit elsewhere but to trace the shared terminology and collective authorship (authorization) of storytelling practices and epistemologies that re-member the (multi)directions for *surmounting the distances and the days* (to echo Silko’s language from *Ceremony*). Moreover, Federici’s land- and place-based feminist project speaks as well through Mexican theorist and activist Mina Navarro about women defenders of the land who call themselves “*tejedoras de memoria*” (weavers of memory) (139). Weaving here is both material, in the ways that these weavers of memory steward the land as a kincentric ecology, and metaphorical, in the ways that weaving memory figures “an important instrument of resistance, because the knowledge they sustain and share produces a stronger collective identity and cohesion in the face of dispossession” (Federici 139). The *tejedoras* weave (and reweave) the knowledge of a woven kincentric world in and as a decolonial act of memory (of re-remembering the collective relationality). This is a collective story of decolonization, one that is necessarily generated in and

by generations of community-minded people who tell and retell the stories that sustain the liveliness of the land and of words because it is this act of remembering such liveliness that sustains the lives of all living beings and the earth—all human and more-than-human kin. So decolonization, then, is not only *not* a metaphor, it is also *not* a theory about the world limited to coalitional participation by Indigenous- (or feminist-) identifying people. Moreover, decolonization speaks to the survival of the planet. Indeed, Silko’s storytelling practices generate (and are generated by) the sensation of, as the coming-to-know, multispecies kinship and multiscalar relationality in the context of “justice for the earth and her children” (*Yellow Woman* 151). I reiterate: this is not about excavating some “authentic” Indigenous practice or preserved story; this is about the sensation of the liveliness of land (and words). This is about remembering that Indigenous stories are *living* archives of millennia of land-based practices and literacies—constantly and relentlessly made and remade between and across generations. Silko’s later novel *Almanac of the Dead* takes up this point even more directly than *Ceremony* in its heterogeneous, epic narration of transnational Indigenous revolution centered on land. *Almanac*’s narration suggests throughout the novel that the loose, incohesive, and largely diffuse coalition staging this Indigenous revolution centered on land is a hemispheric alliance welcome to all who see and relate to the earth as (material) mother. In this spirit, remembering the stories (remembering the land as keeper of stories), in correlation with the moving processes of weaving, agriculture, and writing, substantiates Indigenous storytelling not only as a matter of remembering a story of the past (as the *passed*) but also (in this “spiraling” epistemology) as a coming to experientially know, weave, and cultivate possible futures. Gómez maintains that “[a]n orienting toward process as a way of life informs how we approach the changing world. It does not try to stop it from changing” (155). Change is constant; change is also collective. By participating in the everydayness of sustaining relations of care with human and more-than-human kin, caring and loving and collectively free futures are cultivated and made material. It is a matter of memory (a memory of *matter*ing).

Where Gómez emphasizes storytelling as a mode of escape from the narrative and political limitations of settler colonial (and colonial-modern) discourses of law, history, and anthropology, Trujillo identifies comparable modes of (fugitive) translation to counter those discourses of absolute, empirical, and scientifically proven shapes of time and space. This suggests that the work is in part about refusing or defying the categorial logic that separates time

from space and that ontologizes the real in relation to colonial teleology and the unreal in relation to nonlinear epistemologies. Mishuana Goeman likewise asserts that literatures “provide imaginative modes to unsettle settler space” (2). Stories, translation, literature: these are sites within which (and in the relations between which) creative, scholarly, and performative literary (and cultural) practices dismantle the authority of those discourses and reconfigure their teleology into decolonial (and feminist) futures. Goeman argues that “the literary [...] tenders an avenue for the ‘imaginative’ creation of new possibilities, which must happen through imaginative modes precisely because the ‘real’ of settler colonial society is built on the violent erasures of alternative modes of mapping and geographic understandings” (2). In Goeman’s spatial study, visual practices generate the deepest and most enduring transformations on ways of seeing—here organized generally within literature and the literary. That is, Goeman finds that that “mode of translation that decimates the incommensurable temporal and spatial heterogeneity of Indigenous life in the Americas” (as Trujillo voiced it) likewise translates space (or place) into private property. Writing through Doreen Massey, Goeman argues for “the move toward geographies that do not limit, contain, or fix the various scales of space from the body to the nation in ways that limit definitions of self and community staked out as property” (11). So the idea of nationalism is likewise restructured here, akin to the call from Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill for restructuring alliances. Spatial restructuring—in alternative spatialities—opens up multiple horizons of relations, dissensions, palimpsests, and pathways (or futures). Here again the emphasis is placed on modes of coming to know the self, the ancestor, and the place through epistemologies that sustain nonlinear relations across and between various scales—in constant migration and motion—such that the abstractions, divisions, and teleology of those other discourses serving individualist and individual nation-state sovereignties turn the destruction back on themselves. In other words, literatures and literacies of the land teach relations with self, ancestor, and place that at once “unsettle settler space” and escape the ending (in annihilation) written by and for settler colonial (colonial-modern) control over Indigenous lands. Goeman’s work echoes Gunn Allen, who writes that “land is not really a place, separate from ourselves, where we act out the drama of our isolate destinies; the witchery makes us believe that false idea” (*Sacred Hoop* 119). The “witchery” of the “real” of settler society (*built on violent erasures*) tells the story that Indigenous stories (epistemologies) are always already a relic of a pre-modern, primitive way of knowing—a singular, totalized, uncultivated indigeneity affixed in



a past time and thus destined to vanish within the supposedly universal linear flow of colonial-modern time. I speak through Trujillo again when I say that:

the possibility of Indigenous land reclamation resides not in the power of recognizing shared or discrete tribal and mestiza/o identifications but rather in [...] the power to inhabit the estranged recognition of language escaping and building worlds beyond the capture of Eurocentric epistemologies and cultural forms—a power to make private property and settler sovereignty indefensible. (83)

The storytelling modes that Trujillo, Gómez, Goeman, Mignolo, and Gunn Allen articulate commonly (communally) gather together weaving and reading as a multidirectional, heterogeneous, and lively site of decolonization. These ways of seeing land in and as community *relinquish sovereignty to the life of the land and words*—and this, they collectively argue, is a decolonial act of *sensing* the self, the ancestor, and the place as kin relations in processes and contexts of constant motion and amongst whom we learn how to inhabit relations of love and care with each other and the earth. Decolonization is not a matter of taking back control over territories, despite how that has become necessary for the survival of so many Indigenous communities under threat and actuality of removal, genocide, and assimilation. Decolonization, in these scholars' (creative adaptive) frameworks moves through the relinquishing of individual sovereignty and the (re)turning to sovereignty as motion where the site of contestation of the violent “real” of settler society is in literature and storytelling practices that *escape* the tyranny of that singular, despot “real.” But the *resistant self in relation* does not enact land reclamation through recourse to private property or individual sovereignty. Rather, the storyteller enacts that fugitive *escape* by defying and refusing categorial and abstractive modes of knowing and being. Gómez offers the avowal that: “Boundaries of reality, authenticity, accuracy, and validity are regulated in ideas of genre, as products are categorized into areas that inform and in many cases determine analysis. There is no space or opportunity here for vision [...]. Instead, scholars carefully write for an audience that passively reads and at times consumes information for later reiteration and recitation” (151). That is, ideas of genre regulate the boundaries of the “real” of settler society such that discrete communities form through seeing shared markers of genre as though they are the similarities that define coalition and alliance. This is a point made forcefully by Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill as well. Trujillo's argument (which he makes in part through citing this same text from Gómez) articulates the possibility of Indigenous land reclamation in relation to modes of knowing (of translation-as-reading) that sustain heterogeneities *fugitive* to the

categorial capture of *generic* markers of similarity and difference. In other words, retrenching generic similarities as the pathway to belonging or survival merely retrenches the separations and abstractions and colonial translations that foreclose the liveliness of the land and words (of the world). Remember: *the storyteller's escape* (or creative adaptive resistance in language and literacies) is a decolonial act by necessity generated in collective, if diffuse, *coalitions that address difference without attempting to categorize or eliminate it* (this is one of the primary challenges that Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill pose to settler colonialism and feminist studies). In other words, decolonization necessarily draws power from all directions; and heterogeneous coalitions refuse the categorial, hierarchical, or even celebratory multicultural of the colonial-modern narrative of becoming-human (or of coming-to-know the human) because *that* mode of coming-to-know the self, the ancestor, and the place abstracts each from the other and naturalizes the mode of translation already identified as at work in service of colonial-modern (and settler colonial) social, political, and ecological violence (and control). Decolonization is about the land—and in this sense, then, decolonization is also about the people returning to ways of seeing, sensing, and coming to know *in love* the liveliness of the land (and words).

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Here is my offering (opening): In 2010, Haida author and animator Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas published a graphic tale and short animated film retelling an Indigenous story of *The Little Hummingbird*. The story focuses on Hummingbird, or dukdukdiyahm in Haida on account of the sound of the bird's song and beating wings, who "does what she can" to put out a forest fire, dropping water from her beak one drop at a time onto the blaze. In Yahgulanaas's retelling, the other forest animals look on paralyzed with fear while Little Hummingbird persists in her endeavor. Despite the massive scale of the blaze, she persistently moves between the water source and the flames and persistently deposits little drops of water on the fire. Yahgulanaas's retelling leaves the ending undefined—the reader (or viewer of the short film) will not know whether the fire will be successfully extinguished. As I read it, that is not the point. A conclusive ending would simply solidify her strivings into a legible moral outcome. Instead, the open ending allows the story to retell a way of learning from Little Hummingbird—our animal kin-teacher. That is, the story orients the reader to a kind of (decolonial) work that persistently enacts a *process* of everyday resistance to the sweeping destruction of the fire. Hummingbird does what

she can despite the appearance of her insufficient means to extinguish the blaze. She refuses to quit. Moreover, the fire will eventually run out of forest fuel and will in essence destroy itself in time—Hummingbird simply strives against the fire rather than doing nothing yet knowing that the fire will eventually destroy itself in that way. But it is the process that matters.

Yahgulanaas's graphic tale is but one retelling of a story told and retold (orally) not just in Haida community but also by the Quechua of Ecuador and Peru and by Indigenous and Afro-descended peoples throughout the Americas. Hummingbirds are exclusive to the Americas and frequently populate the poetry, stories, and sign-systems of numerous literatures from Haida Gwaii, the French Antilles, the Andes, and Amazonia. Hummingbirds color the Caribbean poetry of Aimé Césaire and Paul Laraque, for example, and Silko narrates Hummingbird in *Ceremony* as a brother, as kin, and as a collaborative agent of sustaining Pueblo life. In other ways, Little Hummingbird remains a powerful symbol for strength, hope, movement, and change where, for example, the Spanish language name for little hummingbird, colibrí, has been taken up as the name of various organizations supporting Central American migrants, Latin American forest defenders, and Indigenous land rights movements.<sup>120</sup> The distinct yet related iterations of Hummingbird's story map entangled histories of peoples and places, as well as a capacious sense of kinship relations among species sharing ecologies in the hemisphere. Hummingbird is relative, friend, transformer—a small but powerful force for sustaining the liveliness of the world in the same drop-by-drop fashion as Yahgulanaas describes.<sup>121</sup> The hummingbird is but one index of a kind of hemispheric web, the threads of which transit linguistic, national, and cultural delimitations and narrate multidirectional relations between human and more-than-human worlds of matter and meaning.

Hummingbird likewise sustains communalities across the three chapters of this project. I say “communalities” rather than “similarities” for a reason: this is not a kinship of *sameness*, this is a kinship of *sharedness*. Hummingbird *makes and marks the here and now of differently differentiating differences* (to speak through Karen Barad's voice) in the three shapes of (woven) kinship that I have been articulating. These are shapes that share in kinds of decolonizing praxes—whether making and marking a here and now in the reappropriation of lost histories toward liberatory futures, or in the conjugated space-time of rememorative ecological literacies and love, or in the ceremonial spiraling that (re)turns to collective sovereignty as motion. These are shapes that share in kinds of wovenness—whether that of the two-sided textile, or the

network of un-rooting and re-rooting of the rhizome, or the spiraling spider's web-weaving of the story that is still being told. In Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* Hummingbird is Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec god of war and conflict but who leads the people to what will become the center of Aztec empire, Tenochtitlán, where the serpent writhes in the eagle's beak. This Hummingbird is a figure (a metaphor) of what it means to be a warrior and at once a name for (material) forces of change that impel movement, that enable movement, and that protect the people's movements.<sup>122</sup> In Gisèle Pineau's *L'Exil selon Julia* Hummingbird is not explicitly named but her image allusively emerges in the relations between the narration of Pineau's grandmother's love in and with her garden and the postcolonial Caribbean literary praxes on which the narration draws. This Hummingbird is opaque, untranslated, yet centrally if spectrally present in the ways that the grandmother moves through the space intra-actively and in how she enters into the tree-kin (*les ancêtres*) while the tree likewise grows inside her and holds her heart *like a nest in its branches*.<sup>123</sup> In Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* Hummingbird is a character invested with speech and who works closely with his brother Fly to facilitate the return of the rains to the drought-stricken land. This hummingbird teaches the people how to interact (or intra-act) with the place in loving and mutually nourishing ways, green hummingbird then showing Tayo that his prayer for rain is a good ceremony.<sup>124</sup>

In the multilingual *Borderlands*, the hummingbird is at times called colibrí and at times called picaflor, chuparrosa, or chupamirto. Interestingly, the term colibrí comes through the Carib people who first encountered the Spanish and Portuguese that landed in the islands. The name of this little bird was recorded as such in travel logs and maintained as the official Spanish-language nomenclature for the entire array of hummingbird varieties in the Americas—those little *humming* birds so alien to European eyes. Picaflor, chuparrosa, and chupamirto meanwhile index Spanish translations of local Indigenous expressions throughout Mesoamerica that name variations of the birds for their shared activities of biting or sucking at different flowers—naming, as it were, the relation between the bird and the flowers and thus sustaining a sense of the intra-active relations that shape the bird-beings as such. I imagine that there are countless other names for these little bird-kin and which I am not concerned with itemizing, quantifying, or attempting to catalogue. But, here at the open-ended conclusion of this project, I am interested in considering the ways that Hummingbird remains a central feature of hemispheric American languages and literacies and in particular in the ways that this little kin relates the persistence of

Indigenous modes of knowing and being such that Hummingbird's presence substantiates my attempt to situate the Americas as Indigenous production outside of, beyond, and even nested deep within ongoing settler colonial occupation and colonial-modern translations. In Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Hummingbird appears as Huitzilopochtli, the son of the goddess Coatlicue. This god of war's name specifies that he is Hummingbird on the Left and, in Aztec myth, he is said to have replaced the Nahua god of the sun, Nanahuatzin, in the period when the Mexica ascended to power in the region following their arrival at (and creation of) Tenochtitlán. This is to say that Huitzilopochtli *marks and makes the here and now* of Aztec empire as such in terms of the transformation of matriarchal social relations (those that Anzaldúa vaunts in her Aztec genealogy and Coatlicue state) into centralized patriarchal power, a transformation effected in part through the translation of the hummingbird into a mythical figure who then authorizes the origins of a totalized Aztec people in the originary site of Aztlán. Anzaldúa's text takes up an already-translated Huitzilopochtli, held at a remove from the hummingbird as animal kin, or from the local picaflor as teacher. Here, Hummingbird is mediated by myth in a way that situates the figure as symbol of the rise of patriarchalism and that at once retains the figure as cultural heritage even in the textual manifestation of a new mestiza feminism. Huitzilopochtli thus teaches a mode of knowledge and knowing that moves through struggle (as the god of war) as the necessary (it seems) pathway toward transformation—a transformation enacted as the replacement of one totemic figure by another. I see this mode of knowledge and knowing at work in *Borderlands/La Frontera* in the ways that the text proposes the telos of (social evolutionary) becoming—and becoming-liberated—now oriented to a revised totemic figure of “the feminine” but where she (the figure) can only ever exist as such in mythical relation to the living Indigenous-mestiza who invokes her as distant (and thus absent) ancestor. *Borderlands/La Frontera* writes from the site of the *fractured locus* and asserts embodied knowledge practice while yet constrained to move through conflict toward resolution that inverts the dualism but retains the dualistic structure. While I find Anzaldúa's text itself to be quite lively and flexible and heterogeneous, its primary mode of coming to knowledge and knowing maintains the stories of indigenous resistance as figures fixed in time and ritualized across a perceived distance made material by the colonial-modern discourse of linear temporal history.

The official French name colibri likewise follows the same etymology from Carib informants to European taxonomies with no change and toward a totalized understanding of the

diverse array of *humming* birds in the hemisphere. However, locally, in the Francophone Caribbean, the hummingbird is at times called oiseau-mouche—a compound noun enjoining the word for bird (oiseau) and fly (mouche, as the insect, a house fly). In Aimé Césaire’s collection of poems, *Soleil Cou Coupé*, for example, in a poem titled “Fils de la Foudre” (which I read as “Ribbons of Lightning”), the poet-politician coordinates the figure of a seductive woman with the unspoken image of a flower in the way that she seems to attract oiseau-mouches and men alike, who are drawn in by the sweet nectar of her speech (her words). As I experience Césaire’s language, the space between colibri and oiseau-mouche makes and marks the difference between on the one hand a continental thinking that translates and totalizes all of the Americas’ *humming* birds as a one and the same colibri, and on the other hand a place-based thinking that retains a sense of (in this instance) local Antillean Creole specificity. In other words, oiseau-mouche figures Antillanité in its American space—that is, oiseau-mouche restructures the space between Indigenous (African and American) knowledge and knowing and European continental knowledge and knowing, rather than accepting subordinate spatial relation to the French colonial translation into a singular category of colibri. *This* humming bird is Creole. While Pineau does not name oiseau-mouche (nor colibri) in her narration, I locate an allusive presence. Pineau names a chapter of her novel by a rewriting of a Césaire book title—his 1939 *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Notebook of a Return to the Native Land) restructured as “Cinq plaies du retour au pays pas natal” (or “The Five Plagues of the Return to the Non-Native Land,” as I read it).<sup>125</sup> The “five plagues” that Pineau recounts are different kinds of insects, animals, and climatic forces that mark her initial experience of the Antilles (having grown up in the banlieues of Paris) as one of being terrorized in a way by unfamiliar beings such as “ravets” (cockroaches), “mabouyas” (skinks, a kind of Antillean amphibian), or “maringouins” (mosquitoes) (Pineau 193). These Pineau all names as specifically Antillean beings—defying the French taxonomies that name (and totalize) them as cafards, grenouilles, and moustiques despite their local distinctions. This is all to say that not only does Pineau write through Césaire’s poetic-political legacy—in particular his Calibanization of language, so to speak—but she also writes her experience of the liveliness of (Antillean Creole) land and words. The idea of Césaire’s “Calibanization of speech” comes from Caribbeanist Yarimar Bonilla’s *Non-Sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment* (51). Bonilla argues that, “rather than adopting the clarity of form and content that the French Left demanded, Césaire purposefully

deploys a baroque, impenetrable style, which he links directly to maroon strategies of resistance and subterfuge” (51). Bonilla orients this resistant experience of language toward a reading of contemporary political-aesthetic movements that shift away from postcolonial nationalist aims and toward what she calls “non-sovereign futures” as a marker of restructured alliances (and not as a failure of liberatory projects). I find an allusive and non-identical strategy of poetic-political marronnage in Pineau’s rewriting of Césaire’s title—that is, Pineau’s text performs a kind of fugitive enlightenment, it escapes both the hegemony of the colonial language and the misogyny calcified in Césaire (and the Creolists’) postcolonial and neonational projects (which I discuss at length in Chapter 2). But where is the little oiseau-mouche in Pineau? As I see it, these “five plagues” are those features of the island environment that initially make and mark the young Pineau’s here and now (then) as a matter of alienation while yet acknowledging the specificity of the Antillean Creole place in its American space (as distinct from the French space of her upbringing). By contrast, the idea of the oiseau-mouche as I have been suggesting is one of kindness, of kin-relation, of shared ecologies. In this way, Pineau’s beloved grandmother, Man Ya, implicitly resembles a little oiseau-mouche kin in the ways that she moves and interacts with her marvelously tangled *jardin créole* (Creole garden). Here, Man Ya as oiseau-mouche more closely resembles the everyday activities of Little Hummingbird from Yahgulanaas’s retelling than she does the lustful oiseau-mouche of Césaire’s poem—she attends to the plants that populate her garden-family, and her Creole speech and storytelling facilitates the persistence (*jour après jour*) of her alternative ecological literacies, her oral intelligence, and her (what I call) decolonial pedagogies. She is a powerful force that sustains life and that shapes material transformations in the lives of her ancestors and descendants (her tree-kin and her grandchildren)—her Creole speech leads them to water, in a way, by opening up new pathways to joyous futures.

Silko’s English-language text remarks no such etymology, but *Ceremony* as a whole presents Hummingbird in large part through Laguna Pueblo stories that persistently (re)make and (re)mark the here and now of Tayo’s ceremonial return to local knowledge and knowing. Hummingbird appears primarily in verse, a continuous story retold through sections of the verse scattered throughout the narration and in places that coordinate with different parts of the ceremony. First, Hummingbird appears as “fat and shiny” while the people starve during drought, but he eagerly tells the people where to find plentiful flowers and plants (54). The verse

continues as if unbroken by the space of the pages in between, where Hummingbird then tells the people that they are in need of a messenger. So he gives specific directions to the people and if the people follow his directions, he says, “After four days / you will be alive” (repeated four times in a row in the verse) (71). After four days, Green Fly joins Hummingbird and they offer to fly down to the “Fourth world below this one” and ask “our mother” for the way (the story) for how to surmount the drought and starvation (82). It is in the space between this fragment and the next that Tayo sees a little green hummingbird fly out of the canyon where he was praying for rain, signaling that his prayer was a good one. Hummingbird and Fly then find “our mother” and give her gifts of yellow and blue corn, turquoise beads, and prayer sticks. She tells them that they must find Buzzard and ask him to purify the town (105). These are the directions—the story, that is also a spatial coordination of multidirectional and collective forces. Hummingbird and Fly take the same gifts to Buzzard, at his place “in the east,” who tells them that they are missing the gift of tobacco—“(You see, it wasn’t easy)” the verse contends (113). Hummingbird and Fly return to the people’s town but find no tobacco, so they return to the fourth world where “our mother” tells them to go ask Caterpillar (151). At his place in the west, Caterpillar conjures tobacco and gives it to them rolled up in dried corn husks (180). Hummingbird and Fly thank caterpillar and take the tobacco to Buzzard, who then purifies the town as promised—purifies the town in all four directions, east, south, west, and then north (255). Here, immediately preceding the culmination of this story in verse that has transited the whole of the novel, and following the completion of Tayo’s ceremony, Silko tells her reader why this all matters (how it is a *matter*): “The ear for the story and the eye for the pattern were theirs; the feeling was theirs: we came out of this land and we are hers” (255). Hummingbird and his brother Fly have worked diligently to open a pathway along which the story comes to the people. That is, they are messengers that translate (so to speak) *our mother’s* directions for surmounting drought and famine. Hummingbird and Fly are more-than-human teachers who remind the people of the material (not metaphorical) kinship relation between human and more-than-human worlds. In this way, as well, the possibility of restorative transformation (of drought turning to rains) comes through the collective, multidirectional, quotidian, and *relentless motion* of attending to the transition by enacting reciprocal relations with “our mother” (the material mother of all life: the earth), by nourishing that relation, by giving gifts, and by each *doing what we can* to stave off



the sweeping fire of the settler colonial destruction of lives, lifeways, and the liveliness of the land and of words.

I write this offering (opening) toward a decolonial feminist ethics of love. By orienting this offering through Little Hummingbird, I coordinate the land as the keeper of stories and our more-than-human kin as teachers. But, as Silko's prose suggests, the capacity to learn from and through these relations necessitates an "ear for the story" and an "eye for the pattern." Pedagogies that serve a politics that separates and abstracts, that severs the relationality of worlds, that deadens and dehumanizes our more-than-human kin: these are the work of the "witchery" that fools people into thinking that they are individuals acting out of free will on the backdrop of the world as a collection of material things. Decolonial feminist theories—and decolonial pedagogies—(re)make and (re)mark a here and now that remembers the story (the multi-directions) that *the land has memory*. The land is the *keeper of stories*. And in the idea of weaving as literacy, the story that gives directions for surmounting the distances and days of colonization—the story that tells the people ways to decolonize—is a story that ultimately comes from the land, from "our mother," from the relentless weaving of the spider's web of kinship and creation. In relation to the aforementioned *tejedoras de memoria* (weavers of memory), Silvia Federici remarks the land-body nexus in terms of "both possessing a historical memory and both equally implicated in processes of liberation" (140). That is, weaving the memory of how to surmount the violence of colonization, the ongoing structure of settler colonialism in the Americas, and the destruction of ecosystems of knowledge and environment necessitates at once (re)weaving kinship between human bodies and more-than-human lands. The sites of weaving/reading that I have been retelling here as a story of shapes of kinship with distinct yet related decolonial force are sites in which (in non-identical ways) the kinship relation between body and land is re-membered as an already always woven relation. And, through this remembered relation, these authors' works give testimony to and through modes of knowledge and knowing that shape the conditions of possibility of their respective efforts to surmount the material-discursive effects of that colonial-modern (and settler colonial) teleology—that colonial translation that renders the liveliness of the land and of words as inert materialities and that then authorizes the destruction of bodies and lands. But the memory of the stories that give the directions for how to surmount that destruction are re-membered in the material and metaphorical act of weaving—weaving as reading, weaving as literacy, weaving as a continual

*process* or as a *constant migration and motion on different scales*. Weaving/reading shapes of kinship in hemispheric American literatures attunes ears and eyes to the stories and patterns of being and becoming that at once trans-create colonial Histories, re-member hemispheric American (alternative) literacies, and substantiate alternative material-discursive readings of bodies, relations, and places.

Like Little Hummingbird, who fights the forest fire one drop at a time (who does what she can, in little quotidian ways), I make this offering as my effort to *do what I can* (even if it is by only one tiny drop of scholarly water at a time). This is an opening toward everyday acts of decolonial persistence-as-resistance—learning from Little Hummingbird. I offer this opening as well toward re-readings (as re-translations) of literatures in relation to decolonial feminist theories and decolonial translation. In Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, the Laguna Pueblo character Sterling returns to the reservation at the very end of the epic (and violent) story of Indigenous revolution centered on land. However, to be clear, the revolution is not an event that takes place in the novel—the novel writes the pathway-as-process of such revolution and which is really just getting started (yet was set in motion long ago) at the novel's closing. Sterling had been living in Tucson and working for Zeta, a Yaqui Mexican woman whose business trafficked goods across the *illegal* US-Mexico border (naming the settler colonial states, and not her enterprise, as the transgressors!). Upon returning to the reservation, Sterling is initially struck by the absence of his Aunties who have now walked on. Despite the pain of that loss, Sterling's experiences with Zeta have opened him up to a renewed way of interacting with the place—a mode of knowing that had previously been conditioned out of him by the residential school in which he was compelled to abandon his people's language, practices, and sense of collective (kinship) relationality. Where before he had been obsessed with dime-store novels and their dramatizations of aggrandized Wild West figures such as John Dillinger and (a fictional version of) the Apache warrior Geronimo, now Sterling hears and sees those stories as representative fictions of righteous "Americanness" and reductive "Indianness." He no longer has interest in *those* stories. Sterling sits "below the red sandstone cliffs," sitting alone with the land at first to simply avoid the emptiness of his Aunt Marie's house. Sterling looks down and sees tiny black ants busily at work. Watching them work, he then remembers that Aunt Marie (and the Laguna elders) "had believed that ants were messengers to the spirits" (757). Like Hummingbird, the ants are teachers who relate a kinship connection between human and more-than-human worlds. Sterling recalls

that the elders used to give gifts of food and beads to the ants, “that way the ants carried human prayers directly underground” (757). So Sterling shares his cooked beans with them, despite his concern for how difficult it would be for them to even receive—but the ants “worked steadily, and by sundown they had taken all the beans underground” (757). While he admits that he wishes he had listened more or better to Aunt Marie’s stories, here Sterling learns from the ants—he learns that by each ant diligently *doing what one can* to move those beans underground, the seemingly insurmountable work becomes possible. The work is collective, and the work is completed by each ant putting in its bean—or, in the Quiche story, by each ant putting in *su granito de arena* (one’s grain of sand).<sup>126</sup> Learning from Little Hummingbird, and from the tiny black ants, decolonization draws forces from all directions. With an ear for the story and an eye for the pattern, the message from these tiny messengers is one of collective, quotidian, relentless processes of decolonial restructuring.

This is my offering.

# Notes

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## Notes to Introduction

1. See, for example, the recent work by physicist Carlo Rovelli in which he questions the lack of popular awareness or understanding of quantum theories, suggesting as well that “Reality is not a collection of things but a network of processes” (“The Big Idea” np).

2. I draw from geographer Doreen Massey here. Massey interrogates the naturalization of the discourse of (economic) globalization and the way that it proposes a singular narrative of the modern world as a progressively improving project emanating from Western Europe (see Massey’s “Imagining Globalisation”).

3. This claim addresses a point made strongly at the 2022 annual conference of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), where a decolonial turning was the focal point. In her presidential address, Shu-mei Shih spoke to the ways that cultural and area studies—and by extension, comparative literature—have thus far largely failed to interrogate the social evolutionary conflation of linear writing and literariness. The task of the comparatist today, Shih argues, is to address racism and racialization within the context of imperialism and toward a decolonizing practice of comparatism. Shih calls for alternative, revised, or revived notions of literariness that shift the field from its own linearized historicity and toward a comparative framework generated in and by decolonial methods, movements, and pedagogies that center Indigenous ways of knowing.

4. See Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Glen Coulthard’s collectively authored “Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity” for more on this concept of alternative political alliances and formations grounded in relations with land. I will address the concept further in the concluding section of my project.

5. For more on the decolonial turning in eco-criticism, see Escobar’s *Territories of Difference*; Kyle Powys Whyte’s “Indigenous Science (Fiction)”; Sarah Wald et al on *Latinx Environmentalisms*; Jorge Marcone’s “The Stone Guests”; Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble*; and Alaimo. Toward a more distinct postcolonial eco-criticism, see Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley’s edited volume *Postcolonial Ecologies*; and Monique Allawaert’s *Ariel’s Ecology*. For more on the decolonial turning in translation studies, see Gayatri Spivak’s “Politics of Translation”; Maria Tymoczko’s *Enlarging Translation*; Talal Asad’s “Concept of Cultural Translation”; Cheyfitz’s *Poetics of Imperialism*; Lowe’s *Intimacy of Four Continents*; Trujillo’s “So that the Thieves”; and Reid Gómez’s “Storyteller’s Escape.” This is of course only a partial list.

6. For more on Caribbean feminisms, see Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley’s *Thieving Sugar*; Océane Jasor’s “Lessons from Protests and Pedagogy”; and Patricia Mohamed’s “Future of Feminism in the Caribbean.” For more on Indigenous decolonial (feminist) practices, see Melissa K. Nelson’s “Getting Dirty” in Joanne Barker’s *Critically Sovereign*; Michelle Raheja’s “Visual Sovereignty”; Mishuana Goeman’s *Mark My Words*; and Tiffany Lethabo King’s *The Black Shoals*, which brings together Black and Indigenous feminisms within an eco-critical rubric. See also Wald et al; Escobar; Marcone; and DeLoughrey and Handley. I will take up elements of these scholars’ works throughout the chapters that follow.

7. I will return to this idea in the concluding section of this project. My position is informed by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, who declare that decolonization is not a metaphor: it is about the land (see their collectively authored “Decolonization is not a Metaphor”).

8. One of the ways that I approach this body-place nexus through what I am calling shapes of kinship comes from the work of cognitive linguist Lera Boroditsky. Studying the ways that different languages narrate time-space, Boroditsky’s comparative framework marks distinct relations between how space is narrated in language and corresponding representations of time, kinship relations, morality, emotion, and even musical pitch (see Boroditsky’s “How Does Language Shape the Way We Think?”). While in a sense tangential to my project, Boroditsky’s work suggests that how space is lexically conceived informs the narrative shape of kinship and time—which, I contend, translates the material experience of kinship and time into sets of spatial and social relations that may or may not retain memory of the material-energetic intra-activity generating time and space as such.

9. On the one hand, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, among others, translated Nahua pictographs into Spanish text hence rendered legible to Spanish empire and toward official efforts to subjugate the peoples of Mesoamerica (see *Florentine Codex*). The preface, introduction, and translators’ notes to Sahagún’s *Florentine Codex* from Miguel Leon-Portillo, Arthur J.O. Anderson, and Charles E. Dibble challenge contemporary translators and scholars

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to interrogate the relationship between Spanish missionary and Indigenous Nahua scribe (interpreter) of the codex, suggesting that the creation of the records was—on both sides, so to speak—undertaken with motives that likely mis-shape some of the stories: the Nahua sought to preserve Aztec language, customs, and symbols in ways potentially elided in the Spanish translations, whereas the Spanish sought to narrate Aztec history as an artifact of a pre-modern society already in decline (due in no small part to Spanish interest in claiming Aztec lands, no doubt). On the other hand, extending critique of the ways that Ancient Mexico has been organized into anthropology and political thought, María Josefina Saldaña-Portilla addresses the tendency in the Mexican revolutionary imagination to appropriate select icons, symbols, and stories of an ancient (Mexican) indigeneity and to deploy these same toward a new (at that time) modern nationalism that claimed lineal right to the land and culture of Mexico (*Revolutionary Imagination*). Part of the critique comes through the ways that this new nationalism excludes yet other cultures and histories of peoples whose lands and lives are caught up in Mexican (and US) political geographies but whose local variations fracture the unified vision of a nationalist imaginary and that the revolutionary project did so by erasing these cultures and languages from the very definition of Mexican as hybrid Aztec and Spanish.

10. Bernabé et al assert the need and desire “to turn away from the fetishist claim of a universality ruled by Western values in order to begin the minute exploration of ourselves, made of patiences, accumulations, repetitions, stagnations, obstinacies, where all literary genres (separately or in the negation of their limits) as well as the transversal (and not just pedantic) use of all human sciences would take their share” (84).

11. “Here, the essential is side by side with casual reminiscences. / There are neither heroes nor minor players. / Neither good nor evil men. / Only a hope in better tomorrows” (Pineau np).

12. Central to the concept of turning toward desire as a decolonial device, Eve Tuck appeals to scholars to eschew narratives of damage because of the ways that such narratives reproduce (settler colonial) conditions of Indigenous erasure in her article for “Suspending Damage.” Tuck urges scholarship to read for narratives of desire—desire for such yet-to-come decolonial futures made possible in part by rejecting the singular narrative of universal linear time.

13. Glissant’s *Poétique de la relation* proposes: “La pensée du rhizome serait au principe de ce que j’appelle une poétique de la Relation, selon laquelle toute identité s’étend dans un rapport à l’Autre” (Rhizomatic thinking would be in principle what I call a poetics of Relation, according to which all identity stretches itself in relation to the Other) (my translation) (23). In this sense, the shape of the rhizome is one of extension and colocation where the self is constituted within and during relation with the other and thus kinship, as well, is constituted within and during spatialized relations (in contrast to the conventional temporal mapping of linear ancestry).

14. This phrasing is Massey’s (“Imagining Globalisation” 13).

15. The so-called father of modern anthropology, Lewis Henry Morgan, made this claim in his 1877 *Lines of Civilization*, which took Native Americans as objects of study and organized difference according to a linear social evolutionary idea of social development. Specifically, Morgan claimed that the absence of linear writing and the persistence of heterogeneous genders, non-monogamy, and family networks enlarged beyond the nuclear family—marked as “savagery” and “barbarism”—are primitive forms of social organization; that the linear development of all societies follows the same path from these other(ed) tribal forms to the teleologically oriented apex of monogamy (and monotheism); and that the nuclear family and heteropatriarchal normativity are the telos of evolutionary intelligence and civilized morality. See Shari Huhndorf’s *Mapping the Americas* for extensive, scathing, and astutely evidenced critique of Morgan’s mistranslations and categorial linearization of indigenous life in North America.

16. Spivak argues for an intimate translational reading practice that resists extracting a text (a body, a life) from its particular site and instead “discriminates on the terrain of the original” in such a way as “to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay” (“The Politics of Translation” 320, 313).

## Notes to Chapter 1

17. All citations from Anzaldúa are from *Borderlands/La Frontera* and will henceforth be noted simply by page number in-text.

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18. See Bost's "Messy Archives and Materials That Matter: Making Knowledge with the Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers"; Ortega's "Speaking in Resistant Tongues: Latina Feminism, Embodied Knowledge, and Transformation"; Saldívar-Hull's *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature*; and Keating and Gloria González-López's edited collection on *Bridging: How Gloria Anzaldúa's Life and Work Transformed Our Own*. Anzaldúa's legacy remains strong, and her work and life have been and continue to be transformative for many, myself included.

19. See Saldaña-Portillo's *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*.

20. Simón Ventura Trujillo maps this reading of Anzaldúa's challenge, citing scholars such as Rudy V. Busto and Teresa Delgado who frame her project as at once an "outsider" text in Chicano literature and as a challenge to "exclusionary paradigms" voiced in the same terms "that appear to authorize" those paradigms (cited in Trujillo 64-5).

21. The word "Aztlán" translates to land of the Aztecs. I use the term "mythicized" not to undermine or doubt Mesoamerican histories recounting the waves of southward migrations of Otomí and Nahuatl speaking groups from this place, which was only later named Aztlán as itself a story of the common origins of those groups once they were consolidated by the Mexica into Aztec empire. Rather, in using the name Aztlán as referent, I maintain caution in assigning geographical exactitude to it as a location. The idea of Aztlán is what will be important to my analyses; the geographic location, on the other hand, remains a matter of Aztec (Nahuatl-speaking) myth-making in the unifying narratives of pre-Hispanic empire. Contreras makes this referent possible as such in the context of my analysis, which will be elaborated in the sections that follow.

22. It should be understood that Mesoamerica has always been (and continues to be) a multilingual region made up of diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnic relations, not all of which map onto a Nahua/Mexica genealogy. But I will be using the term *Aztec* or *Nahua* in relation to the totalized Mesoamerican indigeneity that Anzaldúa invokes, which is deployed specific to Nahuatl-speaking groups whose language and worldviews were interpreted and translated into the codices available to the archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians who Anzaldúa occasionally cites and from whom her work extensively borrows. The name *Aztec* indexes the groups amassed under the rubric of empire, and only then in the centuries immediately preceding Spanish colonization, and is not in itself a singular ethnic group so much as a mythicized unity of Mesoamerican indigeneities.

23. I will sort through this question of translation, and of the legacy and scholarship of Mesoamerican codices, in further detail in the sections that follow. In short, the codices that Anzaldúa cites in her text are themselves texts that were recorded by Spanish missionaries and based on codices inscribed by the Nahua-speaking Aztec officials after they had already destroyed the libraries of predecessor societies such as the Toltecs in the Tula region. Furthermore, the scholarship on these codices on which Anzaldúa relies is primarily comprised of English-speaking interpretations of Spanish translations of these texts, and has since the time of Anzaldúa's writing been shown to largely overlook questions of (mis)translation, intentional or otherwise, exacted by either sixteenth-century Spanish missionaries or by mid-twentieth century scholars, both with imperatives toward classifying indigeneity as a thing of the past in the interest of expropriating Indigenous lands.

24. In the epigraph, Anzaldúa cites Los Tigres del Norte, a Chicano norteño music group, and anthropologist and historian Jack D. Forbes's 1959 *Aztecas del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlán*. While Aztlán remains ambiguously defined, geographically, throughout Anzaldúa's text, here it is loosely demarcated as the US Southwest comprising land stolen from the Republic of Mexico by the US with the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. The implication here is that it is Mexican territory rightfully occupied by Mexicans (on both sides of the border) and illegally occupied by Anglo Americans. Forbes's work is considered foundational in the development of Native American and Indigenous studies programs in US institutions and gives Anzaldúa a basis for mapping the origins of the Chicana/mestiza. Meanwhile, omitted from consideration here is the status of the land rights of the Tohono O'odham, the Kumeyaay, further west, or the more than sixty groups retrospectively classified as a homogenous Coahuiltecan society but whose diverse customs and isolate languages reflect their 11,000 years of uninterrupted occupation of the region preceding the Spanish and mestizo/Mexican settlement that began in the sixteenth century (see John P. Schmal, "The Indigenous Groups of the Lower Rio Grande," for more on the diverse Indigenous groups of lower Texas and Northeast Mexico and whose historical primacy is elided in the myth of Aztlán). While I do not interrogate Anzaldúa's sources directly here, I contend that Anzaldúa is invoking Aztlán, through their authority, as a symbol and in terms of a myth of origins, to place Chicanas/os in a position of historical primacy in US lands. For a deeper consideration of the intellectual work of Forbes's corpus, see Simón Ventura

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Trujillo's detailed mapping in "The Indigenous Materialism of Jack D. Forbes: Notes Toward a Speculative Historiography for a Future without Europe."

25. Anzaldúa will tell us that, while teaching in an English department, she was told that she could not teach Chicano literature. This manifesto, then, is also one of and for language justice, clearing a space in English departments for the study of Chicano literatures and culture yet obligated, it seems, to demarcate the Spanish words in the English-language text—to demarcate the difference.

26. This and all subsequent translations of *Borderlands/La Frontera* are my own. I ask preemptive grace for any errors or infidelities.

27. This is not even to mention the multitude of Indigenous nations in the Americas whose histories and ancestries cannot be mapped to Uto-Aztecan origins except by means of a discursively totalized biological linear sequence—a concept of ancestry rooted in colonial-modern ideologies of paternity, inheritance, biological race, and the primitive inferiority of Indigenous bloodlines.

28. See Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo's edited collection *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes*. See also Edgar García's *Signs of the Americas: A poetics of Pictography, Hieroglyphics, and Khipu* as well as Leslie Marmon Silko's essay collection *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* for more in-depth descriptions of the destruction of pre-Columbian literacies, literatures, and literary practices, as well as for more on ongoing modes of resistance, persistence, and refusal of colonial-modern ways of knowing.

29. See Miguel Leon-Portillo's preface to *Florentine Codex*, along with the introductions and translator's notes from Dibble and Anderson, for more on the ideological aims of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's translations of Nahuatl language and epistemology and for how the Aztec had already retold the stories in ways amenable to their imperial aims. I draw from these sources not as authorities on Mesoamerican language and literacies but as scholars of the recorded texts circulated by Spanish language missionaries. I read these scholars' work with a critical eye for what their assessments also elide in the area of (mis)translated worldview, but their assessments of the missionaries' goals and imperatives remain useful for my purposes.

30. The name Huitzilopochtli refers to a figure described in translation as "Hummingbird on the Left" (see the Nahuatl dictionary at [nahuatl.uoregon.edu](http://nahuatl.uoregon.edu)). This Hummingbird is a godlike figure representing war and conflict and thus seems to correspond to the eagle way of seeing, so to speak, and not as it were to the serpent way of seeing nor to a mode of seeing through both. Huitzilopochtli is the icon for winning the seat of Mexica power.

31. As one notable example, Ethan Madarieta reads Mapuche language and epistemologies surround the body-land nexus in his forthcoming "The Body Is (Not) the Land: Mapuche Hunger Strikes and the Territorial Aporia" (in press), in ways that render important critical distinctions relative to Anzaldúa's totalizing indigeneity under the rubric of Mestizo-Mexicanness.

32. As a sidenote, Anzaldúa seems to equate the temporality of Aztec empire with the linear timeline of ancient Greece—using "ancient" to modify both Aztec and Greek cultural, political, and social organization. However, early in her manifesto, Anzaldúa historicized the Aztec empire in the wake of southward migration from the desert southwest to the central valley of Mexico in 1168. How this equates with the linear temporal age of "ancient" Greece is by sheer social evolutionary logic describing ancient as a primitive state preceding each culture's entrance into the linear flow of liberal modernity. At least, that is the impression her equation leaves.

33. See Marubbio's *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* and Barker's edited collection *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*.

34. Juliana Barr confirms the history of this mistranslation in a broader examination of the history of contact between tribes of the Rio Grande valley and the Spanish missionaries migrating northward with their Nahuatl speaking (mestizo) guides and interpreters. Barr finds that the iconography of feminine saints and most prominently of Guadalupe resulted in misunderstandings that, initially, gave Spanish missionaries a certain advantage over Anglo settlers in their ability to integrate into those societies. At the same time, Barr says, the mistranslations of these icons across languages and cultures produced the very means of religious conversion, persecution of "aberrant" sexualities, and the imposition of Catholic morality in particular in the areas of marriage, sex, and the political disenfranchisement of Indigenous women. This is all simply to say that while Anzaldúa heralds the mistranslation of Coatloapeuh into Guadalupe as a matter of salutary fusion—of the figure as icon of duality—the fusion itself is also historically one of the mechanisms by which the presence of those Indigenous groups (not

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Aztec, not Nahuatl) has been denied, erased, and covered over with Aztec-Spanish fusions of symbols, customs, and ways of knowing in that region. See Barr's *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands*. Ramón A. Gutiérrez extends a similar discussion on the transformations to Indigenous cultural practices and ways of knowing in *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*. Anzaldúa writes with these erasures in mind—toward reclaiming that history in the absence of record—yet repeats the erasures of Caddo, Apache, Tejas, Hasinai, and other groups in the region by taking on Mexican revolutionary political imaginaries and the predominant Spanish translations of Indigenous sexuality and ways of knowing.

35. This is from footnote 19 on page 53, the text of which is on page 116 in *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

36. These are the names of Aztec goddesses whose roles and characteristics are recorded in the codices. *Cihuacoatl* is known as *snake woman* or *female serpent*; *Tlazolteotl* is known as the goddess of vice, lust, and debauchery, according to the same codices, although she is also said to have cleansed and removed corruption (see *Florentine Codex*; and Nahuatl dictionary). Anzaldúa invokes these figures as contradictory and constituent parts of a whole *new mestiza consciousness*.

37. I describe this etymology in greater detail in the introduction to this project. My source for the etymology of the term is the French language resource website *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Littéraires* (CNRTL).

38. This and all subsequent translations of Medina's essay are my own—any fault or infidelity in the translation is thus also my own and for which I ask preemptive grace.

39. See Boone and Mignolo's *Writing Without Words* as well as Martha Cutter's *Lost and Found in translation: Contemporary Ethnic American Writing and the Politics of Language Diversity*, among others. The definitions of these terms are given from the Nahuatl online dictionary at the University of Oregon ([nahuatl.uoregon.edu](http://nahuatl.uoregon.edu)).

40. See the online Nahuatl dictionary ([nahuatl.uoregon.edu](http://nahuatl.uoregon.edu)).

41. My understanding of the term “tlacuepa” comes through Bridget Christina Arce, associate professor of modern languages (University of Miami), who chaired a session on “Multilingualism in the Americas” in which I participated at the Modern Language Association annual conference in January 2021. In our discussion, Dr. Arce offered “tlacuepa” as a metaphoric for exploring how, as a theory of translation, the expression likewise forms an episteme of transformation understood as the effect of a twisting or an inversion—which I read as well as the idea of two sides of the same textile. The definition of the term is also confirmed in the University of Oregon online Nahuatl dictionary (see [nahuatl.uoregon.edu](http://nahuatl.uoregon.edu)).

42. See for example Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* or Joshua Lund's aforementioned *Impure Imagination*.

43. See for example Lund, Bhabha, et alia.

44. See *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Littéraires* (CNRTL) for the complete etymology of the term *mestizo*. See also discussions of *mestizaje/métissage* in the collection of essays on *Hemispheric American Studies* edited by Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine, and *Comparative Indigeneities of the Americas: Toward a Hemispheric Approach* edited by M. Bianet Castellanos, Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera, and Arturo J. Aldama.

45. See Levander and Levine for further discussion of historical, contextual, and postcolonial differences between *hybrid*, *mestizo*, and *criollo*.

46. Noteworthy in this as well, Anzaldúa describes the Border as the cutting, the split, *la rajadura*, yet throughout the text insists on the dualisms produced in the event of the life bloods of two worlds merging to form a third new race, the *mestizo/a-Mexican*. The explicit critique is aimed at US imperialism, yet in her use of the term “*mestiza*” and her appeals to Vasconcelian *mestizaje*, Anzaldúa repeatedly orients her analysis toward the question of mixing blood, of fusing opposites, and of Aztec-Spanish *hybridity*. Adriana Novoa reads this in terms of how the text largely addresses the Border as an encounter of imperial-national relations and considers that the focus of the project, rather than the question of historical *mestizaje*. By contrast, I find that the text definitively operates through both an anti-US-imperialism and an anxious-sensuous experience of *la rajadura* or split consciousness.

47. See Massey's *Space, Place, and Gender*.



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48. This citation comes from Massey's address to the discipline of geography in "Imagining Globalisation: Power-Geometries of Time-Space" in which she carefully articulates a monolinear logic and narrative of progress emanating from Europe and mapped onto the narrative of modernity as the ultimate state of advanced (and "civilized") human societies (13). Massey's address largely intervenes on this singular narrative by encouraging the multiplicity and simultaneity of temporal and spatial heterogeneities (equally controverting the narrative of unidirectional linear temporal history).

49. Novoa understands the text as more invested in voicing a challenge to US imperialism than to Spanish colonization, to be clear.

50. See Lugones; Trujillo; Goeman; Guidotti-Hernández; Massey; as well as Anibal Quijano's "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality"; and Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill's "Decolonizing Feminism." The consensus is that colonial-modern dualistic ways of seeing, knowing, and being serve to authorize the dehumanization of and extractivist violence against, in particular, bodies sexed female, bodies of color, and Indigenous lands.

51. Anzaldúa cites Harold Gilliam on "morphogenesis" in the context of the theory/principle in chemistry.

52. Here I am reiterating the principles of modern anthropology developed by Lewis Henry Morgan in his *Lines of Civilization* (1877). Morgan is considered one of the forefathers of the field, and was taken up extensively by Karl Marx as informing the basis of understanding of (linear) human history and social progress. In short, Morgan argued that Indigenous Americans were stuck in an anterior stage of development compared to European "mankind"—they were, he asserted, less evolved where evolution is understood as linear progressive change toward an ever always superior state of being. That is, of course, a *social* evolutionary theory that maintains no bearing in processes of social and physiological change. Needless to say, Morgan identified the telos of human becoming along the very same axis as the colonial-modern gender system challenged by María Lugones's work—the ultimate form of the human adhering to ideologies of heteropatriarchal monogamy, individual self-interest, and exploitation of natural resources (or proper use of the environment, as he saw it). Many of Anzaldúa's credited and uncredited sources participate in the same politics of social evolutionary thinking coordinated in large part by the Newtonian theory of universal, unidirectional, teleological time.

53. See, for example, Barker; Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill; Lugones; and Huhndorf's *Mapping the Americas*.

54. See Glenn Sean Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks* for more on the politics of recognition in the context of Indigenous ways of knowing contrasted with postcolonial modes of political poetic activism such as Fanon's (and, by extension, elements of Anzaldúa's).

## Notes to Chapter 2

55. This and all subsequent citations attributed to Pineau reference *L'Exil selon Julia* and its English translation by Betty Wilson.

56. See for example Barbara Havercroft's "L'Autobiographie"; Françoise Lionnet's "Politics and Aesthetics of Métissage"; Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith's "De/colonizing"; Susan Stanford Friedman's "Women's Autobiographical Selves"; Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother*; Toni Morrison's "Rootedness" and "The Site of Memory"; and Nancy K. Miller's "Entangled Selves." See also Lisa Lowe's *Intimacy of Four Continents* for further critique of the political charge of autobiographical teleology.

57. Both Billy-Ray Belcourt and Cherríe Moraga use this expression, in nonidentical ways, in their respective sites of critique and intervention, in Belcourt's "The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open" and in an interview Moraga gave with Priscilla Ybarra, "The Body Knows and the Land has Memory" (in Wald et al *Latinx Environmentalisms*). That the body and land remember is not an uncommon theme in decolonial literatures.

58. I cite from Trujillo's article "'So that the Thieves Won't Inherit the Earth.'" Trujillo's larger project *Land Uprising: Native Story Power and the Insurgent Horizons of Latinx Indigeneity* extends many of the same critiques of settler colonial occupation, insurgent literary practices, and the politics of translation.

59. In the chapter "Lettres d'en France" ("Letters from France"), where a young Pineau writes letters to Man Ya following her return to Guadeloupe, one such letter describes this form of punishment: purportedly because "je souriais ironiquement" ("I was smiling ironically"). But Pineau understands, as a child, that it is essentially

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because “elle n’aime pas voir ma figure de négresse, ma peau noire” (152) (“she doesn’t like looking at my black woman’s face, my black skin” [113]).

60. The three Antillean authors of the *Éloge* describe Créolité in part through the metaphor of an *irruption*—drawing on Glissant—or like the externalization of an interiority, like a volcano (Bernabé et al 42). In a different paper it would also be worth considering in greater depth the ways that the ocean is elided as the site of spitting and fuming but how that act of externalizing the interiority of the planet is precisely the transcreative geological mode through which new lands are formed. So, in a way, this constatation is not indexing a damage caused by that irruptive force (nor of allusive Créolité) but rather should be understood as an expression of creativity. Additionally, in this creativity, the shapes of the islands come to be known as flexible, or shoaling, much in the same ways that Black and Native feminisms shift and adapt to the projections of settler colonial narratives of bodies and time (see King’s *The Black Shoals*). Pineau later describes the Antilles as “frères et sœurs” in a way that likewise calls forth these forms as relations (46) (“brothers and sisters” [30]).

61. Here, I am using “exploit” in the literal meaning of *use*, from the French verb *exploiter* (“to use”) whose roots are from the Latin *explicare* or “unfold.” As such, it is meant as an indicator of the ideological production in language of an expectation that “other-than-human” “nature” is comprised of *resources* waiting for a human hand to *unfold* them—for a subject-centered notion of human agency to carve the statue from the (unused/useless) raw stone (to allude to Heidegger).

62. King and Mark Rifkin both take up this question of the *making fungible* of Black bodies in settler colonial discourses of conquest and land rights, as well as in relation to the dehumanization of in particular queer and female-sexed bodies of color as part of the becoming-human of humanist and colonial-modern discourse. See King’s *The Black Shoals* and Rifkin’s *Fictions of Land and Flesh*.

63. This reiterates Massey’s distinction on the narrative of globalization, which I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. In a similar vein, cognitive linguist Lera Boroditsky researches and theorizes the ways that various languages conceive of spatiality and how this then inflects other abstract concepts: “Representations of such things as time, number, musical pitch, kinship relations, morality, and emotions have been shown to depend on how we think about space” (“How Does Language” 138). The ways that space is discursively organized in language, her findings argue, marshal the ways that speakers of those languages then come to understand abstract concepts such as time and kinship. In this way, to suppress the spatial under the tyranny of a singular (linear) temporality suggests the suppression of ways of seeing and relating to space that otherwise complicate, challenge, or unsettle the authority of linear temporality and, by consequence, destabilize the global economic project of colonial-modernity itself so dependent on this linear narrative of time and of becoming civilized or becoming human.

64. I have modified the English translation here to reflect the idiosyncrasy of Pineau’s choice of term, where the translation otherwise domesticates Pineau’s *l’aller et le virer* into the conventional (linear) *l’aller et le venir*.

65. The expression of a “yet-to-come” desire is from King’s *Black Shoals*, cited in the introduction to this chapter. In a resonant expression, Pineau describes “le désir de Guadeloupe” as such a notion of connectedness that (re)produces new kinds of (Black) futures for Man Ya (Pineau 209). In “A Glossary of Haunting,” Eve Tuck and C. Ree offer a comparable frame of desire as a sort of future-haunting, or how “Desire makes itself its own ghost, creates itself from its own remnants. Desire, in its making and remaking, bounds into the past as it stretches into the future. It is productive, it makes itself, and in making itself, it makes reality” (648). And, in a separate piece, Tuck further elaborates this “ghostly quality of desire” as a productive, decolonial mode (“Suspending Damage” 417).

66. Pineau weaves the word “mitan” all throughout her text, each appearance fragmenting and solidifying its meanings, marking at once location and duration. Interestingly, the only chapter from which the word is absent, “Lettres d’en France,” is written in epistolary form, which formally denotes linearity and which Pineau narrates through her younger self’s voice from within the black and white world. In contrast, the other chapters of the novel, narrated in Pineau’s voice at the time of writing as well as through the perspective of her grandmother, openly unsettle and blur both the borders of genre and the commonly held notion of linear temporality. “Mitan” appears on pages 17, 31, 42, 45, 49, 50, 61, 66, 68, 72, 84, 90, 95, 114, 129, 136, 137, (the word does not appear in “Lettres d’en France,” pages 145 to 166), as well as on pages 168, 170, 172, 182, 184 (2), 187, 195, 199, 204, 205, 206, 212, 213, 215—a highly unorthodox rate of use of this word for a French text!

67. See *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Littéraires (CNRTL)*.

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68. This is from Confiant's dictionary *2000 Néologismes Kréyol* (see *Potomitan*). French language dictionary entries note the expression "mitan" as *vieilli* (as an archaism). The word "milieu" (literal translation: mid-place) is the *modern* French term for "middle."

69. Tinsley stages a more comprehensive critique of this pattern in postcolonial Caribbean theory, in part through critique of how the Creolists and Glissant both use the feminized space of the mangrove swamp as a figure (or foil) for Creole man's self-actualization (*Thieving Sugar*). It might be worth including here that Confiant's dictionary of Creole expressions is reposted on a website called *Potomitan*, devoted to archiving all things Antilles. The word *potomitan* is a Creole expression that compounds *poteau* ("pole" or "post") and *mitan* (that sticky middling "intermède") to name the central pillar or post of a *case* (a small shack commonly associated with Afro-Caribbean communities living and working on plantations). *Potomitan* has been taken up as a slang term that figuratively describes the gendered role of the mother or grandmother to hold up the entire family in a similar way as that center pole, which Maryse Condé focalizes in her 2006 memorial novel of her Antillean grandmother, *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots*.... I find more than just a bit of irony in using this expression as the name of the website, which seems to unquestioningly take a feminized figure as the centrifugal point through which their project of archival memory rests. Poetic on the one hand, in its praise of that woman's work, yet deeply misogynistic in its masking of the gendered discourse of their Créolité and of the ways that they put feminized bodies (and lands) *to use* in their pursuit of delimiting Creole identity.

70. Once again, I have modified the English translation here, where it once again domesticates the text in translating the idiosyncratic *au mitan de* simply as "in the middle of" which is, formally, in French, "au milieu de." The elisions present a kind of Creole-blindness that I find at odds with the kaleidoscopic brilliance of Pineau's text..

71. The idea of the body and the tree woven into the same textile-web of material relations speaks through Alaimo's "trans-corporeality," as well as through the new materialist work of Karen Barad (*Meeting the Universe Halfway*). Put simply, Alaimo says that "'things' as such do not precede their intra-actions" (*Bodily Natures* 21). The emphasis lies in reading the relations that co-constitute bodies of all kinds.

72. This is my translation of part of the sub-section title, the full title noting it as "Les Cinq plaies du Retour au pays pas natal" which I have abbreviated simply to focus on the nonequivalent allusion to Césaire. In any case, the published English translation renders the sub-section title in full homage to Césaire, omitting entirely the "pas" ("not") of Pineau's text and naming it as "The Five Plagues of the Return to the Native Land" (146). A most confounding choice.

73. The English translation of Pineau's novel uses "plain knowledge" (for the French "science nature"), which I understand to mean that it is common or ingrained in Man Ya. However, I also find that the word "plain" reduces Man Ya's knowledge to a kind of rudimentary or primitive status that, in my reading of Pineau, is inconsistent with the vibrancy of her ecological literacies, the stated value of her teachings, and the allusions in her text to the oral intelligence expressed in the Creolists' *Éloge*.

74. For more extensive study of *jardins créoles* in Afro-Caribbean communities of enslaved and *marrons*, see Gabriel Debien's "La Nourriture des esclaves."

75. The Creolists make this apparent, as well, in their embrace of multiplicity: "Du fait de sa mosaïque constitutive, la Créolité est une spécificité ouverte. [...] L'exprimer, c'est exprimer une totalité kaléidoscopique, c'est-à-dire la conscience non totalitaire d'une diversité préservée. Nous avons décidé de ne pas résister à ses multiplicités pas plus que ne résiste le jardin créole aux formes des ignames qui l'habitent" (Bernabé et al 27-8, original italics) ("Because of its constituent mosaic, Creoleness is an open specificity. It escapes, therefore, perceptions which are not themselves open. Expressing it is not expressing a synthesis, not just expressing a crossing or any other unicity. It is expressing a kaleidoscopic totality, that is to say: a nontotalitarian consciousness of a preserved diversity. We decided not to resist its multiplicity just as the Creole garden does not resist the different forms of yam which inhabit it" [89, original italics]). Not only is the garden expressed as the subject of the action verb (resisting), expressed as having the agency, it is likewise related as not resisting the multiplicity of kinds of yams ("ignames") that inhabit it. The multiplicity is what makes the *jardin créole* rich, alive, and resilient.

76. I am simply reiterating the earlier description of the garden here (Pineau 17) ("where all kinds of trees, plants, and flowers grow in abundance in an overwhelming green, an almost miraculous verdure, dappled here and there with a silver light that shines nowhere else but in the heart of Routhiers" [8]).

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77. This expression of “fugitive enlightenment” reiterates points of analysis from Trujillo, cited in the introduction to this chapter (himself citing Moten and Harney) where the heterogeneity of the narration of a life escapes generic legibility—it is a fugitive form of enlightenment that functions outside of that “tyranny of a singular horizon of time and space” that Trujillo identifies (“So That The Thieves...”).

78. The kind of persistent, repetitive, accumulative work that the Creolists advocate and that Pineau likewise weaves into her text reminds me of the work of *Little Hummingbird* (see Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas). In the ways that the ancestor, Man Ya, embodies this kind of obstinate and radically persistent mode to me suggests that a way of figuring her work might be through this image of little hummingbird carrying water with its beak to put out a forest fire, drop by drop. While Pineau does not identify her grandmother as such, the Creole term for hummingbird—*oiseau-mouche*, a prominent figure in the poetry of Aimé Césaire—comes to mind in relation to Man Ya’s modes of being and doing, in the repetitions of her Creole speech as a persistent mode of future-work.

79. The English translation oddly domesticates Pineau’s “prunes” into simply “apples.” The “prunes” reiterates the “prunes-Cythère” noted in the preceding paragraph, which is a kind of tropical drupe common in the Caribbean. The difference in that domestication dislocates the fruit from the Antilles and from Creole language in a way that subordinates Man Ya’s local ecological knowledge to a globalist (North) economism. This slippage confirms Trujillo’s take on “fugitive translation,” where Pineau’s narration is translated into the linear vocabulary of that singular horizon of time and space—progressively moving toward colonial-modern development by first dislocating the local, the Caribbean fruit then delimited by categories written in the narrative of globalization.

80. For colonial pedagogies, strategies of erasure (forgetting) and coerced education, and their connections to the management of lands and labors, see Brenda J. Child and Brian Klopotek’s “Comparing Histories”; Frantz Fanon’s *Peau noire, masques blancs*; and Yarimar Bonilla’s *Non-Sovereign Futures*; as well as Gómez and Trujillo. See also Silvia Federici, whose work cites Indigenous scholar Paula Gunn Allen: “loss of memory is the root of all oppression” (*Re-Enchanting the World* 81). Memory work is decolonial work.

81. This adjective seems to be neologized from the noun for an ice dam or blockage formed by ice (“bouchon de glace”), where “embâcle” must first become the verb “embâcler” in order to reach the past participle adjective of “embâclée.” I trace activity—a forceful resistance—in the movements of this transcreated modifier.

82. Here I am simply reiterating Lionnet’s articulation of *métissage as literary praxis*, as this sort of mediational work in the in-between spaces, or an attention to in-betweenness, within-during which Manichean categories collapse into one another (“The Politics and Aesthetics of Métissage”).

83. I repeat: here is the story of “l’espérance en de meilleurs demains” (Pineau, epi.) (“hope for better tomorrows”).

84. An ethic of love permeates decolonial feminisms: see Spivak; Tuck; Lugones; and King, to begin with.

85. Here I am reiterating materialist feminisms theorizing intra-active *transcorporeality* and that propose a fundamental relational entanglement of material-discursive forms (or bodies). See Alaimo and Barad.

### Notes to Chapter 3

86. Much has already been said about the construction of linear temporality, and specifically in the context of the colonial-modern. While I refer throughout this chapter to this formation, I orient my focus in the decolonial “spiraling” temporality and for the most part leave explanations and analyses of the linear logic of colonial-modernity to those scholars who have addressed it thoroughly elsewhere and from whom I extend my analysis into nonlinear temporality in the context of shapes of kinship. See for example Anibal Quijano’s *Coloniality of Power* and “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality”; Lugones’s “Heterosexualism and the Colonial-Modern Gender System” and “Toward a Decolonial Feminism”; see also Gómez; Massey; Boone and Mignolo; and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s *As We Have Always Done*, among others.

87. The epigraph is from Hogan’s *Radiant Lives of Animals* (xii). Carl Sagan of course made this finding famous when he said something to the same effect in the context of mid-twentieth century astrophysics. Needless to say that the Lakota stories predate Sagan’s.

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88. The epigraph is from Silko's collection of essays, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, in which she articulates "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Perspective" and expresses how that the structure of a language informs cultural understandings of connectivity (or division) (48-9).

89. Allen wrote this in "Who is Your Mother? Red Roots of White Feminism" (in *The Sacred Hoop*). However, I read this expression and quote it from Silvia Federici's *Re-Enchanting the World* (81). Federici raises the point in a context comparable to my reading of kinship where her argument articulates this loss of memory as also always a silencing of the land—a silencing of the histories inscribed in the land and through which Indigenous life in the Americas is discursively erased through the silencing of such multidirectional (and land-based) historicity.

90. This and all subsequent in-text citations attributed to Silko index *Ceremony*, unless otherwise indicated, and will be simply noted by page number.

91. The expression of *three sisters* is commonly associated with the trinity of sacred and staple foods of the Americas: corn, beans, and squash. Their symbolism and significance reflect at once a means of survival and a kind of ecological knowledge. Importantly, the kinship metaphor of sisterhood invokes a practice of gathering these three plants (foods) into a bundle. But there's more to it than metaphor: when interplanted, these three species of plants maintain relations of mutual beneficence, balancing the soil's richness with their own nutritional needs and mutually supporting one another's structures. The three sisters are in material kinship relation. The moniker of *sister* should thus be understood as not really figurative, after all, if what it describes is a material kinship bond of mutual responsibility, in a particular shared place.

92. This is in reference to the epigraph at the opening of this chapter, citing the way Silko has described the Pueblo theory of language in the shape of a spider's web—each word is intricately woven with other words, and each has a story (woven with all the other stories).

93. It may be necessary to explain that "Indian school" designates the residential school system designed to convert and assimilate Indigenous children into white society (into the formal economy anyway). The policies behind these programs, and the devastating outcomes, are discussed at length in *Indian Subjects* edited by Brenda J. Child and Brian Klopotek. Erasing Indigenous life through erasing Indigenous languages and cultural practices was an intentional and legally authorized practice throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the US and Canada. Such policies made displacement easier by severing people's connections to family and to the land and therefore, also, to the (relational) self.

94. The shape that I am describing here calls back to the dialogue between the works of Goeman and Trujillo, which I laid out in the introduction to this chapter. Where Goeman describes the (re)mapping of geographies that do not limit definitions of self and community within a nationalist framework and as "property," Trujillo likewise identifies the discourse of individual and nation-state sovereignty through which Indigenous modes of knowing and being are (mis)translated and delimited under the "tyranny" of a singular, teleological narrative of self and community. In short, Goeman and Trujillo both offer that the defense against Indigenous illness and death is practices that retain nonlinear (or spatialized) senses of time and articulations of self and community as spatially collocating (rather than in linear sequence).

95. As Silko has told her reader, Pueblo expression is like a dense and intricate spider's web of words and stories: it requires great patience and love to sense the meaning, which is made in the structure of the telling (slowly but surely).

96. Child and Klopotek unpack *Indian Subjects* in their edited collection of essays addressing the history of education for Indigenous children throughout the Americas, stating in their introduction that "Many [Indigenous] knowledge systems have been destroyed or significantly interrupted through colonial education institutions designed specifically to interrupt the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. A near consensus developed among Anglo-American policy makers in the late nineteenth century United States that Native children must be removed from their communities entirely in order to effectively strip them of the ways of thinking of their parents and their communities" (Child and Klopotek 3-4). Huhndorf also discusses the official US policy governing the establishment of an education system for Indigenous children beginning in 1879 with the Carlisle school in Pennsylvania, whose motto (written by its founder, general Richard Henry Pratt) was "Kill the Indian and save the man" (Huhndorf 58-59). Huhndorf further emphasizes how the policy enforcing Indigenous children's attendance at such schools coincides with another US policy that provided for the "conversion of collectively occupied reservation land into private property" (Huhndorf, *footnote* page 58). The Indian school system, in the US, Canada, and Latin America, was the primary mechanism for disabling collective organizing and resistance to colonization and for assimilating

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Indigenous children out of their intergenerational knowledge and customs, and these policies were engaged with the express aim of expropriating Indigenous lands in order to put them to *use* for mining and extraction, for industrial agriculture, for the accumulation of private capital.

97. I will discuss the work of the little hummingbird in greater detail in the concluding section of this chapter. For now, it is noteworthy for the ecological literacy its work teaches and for its green color gathered in the text with yellow and turning toward a proliferation of blues. After seeing the green hummingbird (and before the next leap return to *narrative present*), Tayo goes to a small town, Cubero, to deliver a message from Josiah to his lover, a woman that the people call the Night Swan (Silko 98-100). Paula Gunn Allen reads Tayo's encounter with the Night Swan for the ways that the proliferation of blues in the scene signal feminine energies, in her chapter "The Feminine Landscape of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*" (see *The Sacred Hoop*). Tayo's Night Swan visit occurs before he enlists and goes to war and, upon parting ways, she tells him to "remember this day because you will recognize it later," it will make sense (meaning) in time, in relation to the design of Betonie's ceremony for him (Silko 100). I do not directly analyze the passages here, but I consider the proliferation of blues part of Silko's way of drawing attention to and attending to the parts of the ceremony. It is part of the ceremony.

98. Huhndorf, as well as Mark Rifkin, Trujillo, Goeman, Barker, and more, confirm that the discursive affixation of indigeneity in the past (as passed) is part of the project of taking Indigenous lands.

99. Eve Tuck and C. Ree describe this as a (de)colonial haunting: "Erasure and defacement concoct ghosts; I don't want to haunt you, but I will" (643). While imagined as also productive, Tuck and Ree emphasize the lasting quality of haunting as a form of revenge and ceremony without end. The haunting is part of the ongoing ceremony for reparations for Indigenous illness and death.

100. Paula Gunn Allen says that "loss of memory is the root of oppression" (cited in Federici 81). Sylvia Federici reiterates Allen's claim in the context of nineteenth-century anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan's efforts to minimize, temporalize, and (discursively) bestialize matrifocal and gynocratic Indigenous societies. The erasure of Indigenous lifeways—of Indigenous languages and stories—is also the destruction of the memory (the weavers of memory, as Federici notes) of the people.

101. This story likewise reiterates the kind of kincentric ecology that Enrique Salmón describes of his people, as well, which I discuss in the introduction to this project. Salmón describes how the language of the Rarámuri translates multispecies kinship in terms of "a whole morphophysiological process of change, death, birth, and rebirth associated with the concept *iwi'*" (1328). Salmón indicates that the expression of *iwígara* reminds the people of this "continuous interconnected cycle of breath and life" (1329). Keeping the language alive keeps the people in the feeling of the story that remembers the relations that sustain that interconnected life: "With the awareness that one's breath is shared by all surrounding life, that one's emergence into this world was possibly caused by some of the life-forms around one's environment, and that one is responsible for its mutual survival, it becomes apparent that it is related to you, that it shares a kinship with you and with all humans" (1331-32).

102. Without wishing to wander too far, I must make note that the word "betony" is also the common name for a couple of varieties of mint family plants. The scarlet betony grows in parts of the US southwest, including New Mexico and Texas, as well as further east, and is remarkable for its red flowers which attract hummingbirds. The significance of old Betonie's name in the novel is perhaps coincidental. But the way that Tayo has already considered the work of the green hummingbird, it might be reasonable to propose that Betonie is one such (red) flower attracting Tayo-as-hummingbird who is striving to emulate hummingbird's work to bring back the rains, to assure the continuation of this world.

103. Tuck and Ree invoke Silko's words on ceremony: "[Maxine Hong] Kingston said that Silko taught her that ceremony is the only resolution" (652). And ceremony is process; is ongoing; and is attending to the transitions.

104. This claim calls back to Trujillo's work on the ways that Silko's later novel, *Almanac of the Dead*, performs a "generic fugitivity" that escapes the "tyranny" of the teleological shape of individual and nation-state discourses and imaginings of sovereignty. In that story, there is only one possible ending for Indigenous life in the Americas.

105. Silko locates the "witchery" in terms of a story of destruction conjured by Indigenous magic and that implicates the arrival of European peoples (and their stories that affix and deaden the world). Silko tells it in verse: "Then they grow away from the earth / then they grow away from the sun / then they grow away from the plants and animals. / They see no life / When they look / they see only objects. / The world is a dead thing for them / the trees

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*and rivers are not alive / the mountains and stones are not alive. / The deer and the bear are objects / They see no life. / They fear / They fear the world. / They destroy what they fear / They fear themselves*" (Silko 135, orig. emph.). The "witchery" is a story that separates, that shapes people's perception so that the world appears dead, plants and animals and stones appear lifeless, without breath. The story of the witchery forecloses the sense-ability for the interconnectedness of all life and the earth. This sense of separation then also inspires fear—fear of that which is perceived as outside of the self. They destroy what they fear, including themselves, though, because the world is not actually outside of the self.

106. This claim calls back to the work of Barad and Alaimo that I discussed in the introduction to this chapter.

107. I use the term mother earth in relation to Indigenous epistemologies. While striving to reconfigure the association in terms of thinking outside of the coloniality of gender (articulated by María Lugones in "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"), I am aided once again by Alaimo, who argues that emphasis on female vulnerability can be detrimental at the same time that "even as ubiquitous Western association between 'woman' and 'nature' has been for the most part quite detrimental to women, feminists who would also be environmentalists need to forge modes of agency that are not predicated on transcending 'nature'" (105). In the thought that things as such do not precede their intra-activity, the body and the land co-constitute in such a way as to also index the transcorporeal body in relation with transcorporeal land. The kinship metaphor of "mother" is in this sense a matter of *mattering*. I am proposing that kinship metaphors, in Indigenous epistemologies, name the relation through which "ancestor" and "descendant" are co-constituting forms (in the same word) and thus the earth and the body are also in nonlinear kinship relation by which the earth co-constitutes as mother (matter) in that process of *mattering*.

108. As Linda Hogan artfully reminds: the human body is the "transformed matter of stars" (cited in the epigraph to this chapter).

109. This claim calls back to the work of Mark Rifkin on the pro/re-creation of place, described in the introduction to this chapter.

110. Here I am reiterating the "trans-corporeality" described in the introduction to this chapter and drawn from Alaimo. The central idea is that, "By emphasizing the movement across bodies, trans-corporeality reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures" (*Bodily Natures* 2). Alaimo reads what she terms the "material memoir," in the works of the likes of Audre Lorde, theorizing "how profoundly the sense of selfhood is transformed by the recognition that the very substance of the self is interconnected with vast biological, economic, and industrial systems that can never be entirely mapped or understood" (*Bodily Natures* 23). Silko's novel likewise substantiates this recognition that the substance of the self is woven with at once vast and intimate systems.

111. This claim echoes the title of an essay by Billy Ray Belcourt, "The Body remembers When the World Broke Open," and which addresses the haunting trauma of not only settler colonial violence on Indigenous lives and lifeways but also the haunting trauma of the discursive separation of the human from the more-than-human.

112. In the same essay collection cited in the epigraph to this chapter, Silko describes how "death is relocation, not annihilation" (*Yellow Woman* 137). Silko likewise articulates it in terms of how "the past and future are the same because they exist only in the present of our imaginations. We can think and speak only in the present, but as we do it is becoming the past, which is always present and which always contains the future encoded in it" (137). This idea is echoed earlier in the novel as well when (where) Betonie says that "things which don't shift and grow are dead things. They are things the witchery wants. Witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth. But it has always been necessary, and more than ever now, it is" (*Ceremony* 126). Past, present, and future locked in static linear alignment deadens each to the kind of present-tense transcreations of each in the imagination (perception, feeling, intellect, experience).

113. Paula Gunn Allen reads "The Feminine Landscape of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*" as one such example (*Sacred Hoop*). Goeman similarly takes up Indigenous conceptualizations of land and body through gender as a tool of analysis (*Mark My Words*). Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill similarly take up the different iterations of the body-land axis between Indigenous and heteropatriarchal epistemologies and practices ("Decolonizing Feminism").

114. Paula Gunn Allen confirms this reading of Ts'eh in *The Sacred Hoop* where she says: "There is not a symbol in the tale that is not in some way connected with womanness, that does not in some way relate back to Ts'eh and through her to the universal feminine principle of creation: Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought Woman, Grandmother Spider, Old Spider Woman. All tales are born of the mind of Spider Woman, and all creation exists as

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a result of her naming” (119). While I agree with this reading, I diverge from the emphasis on “womanness” in the ways that Gunn Allen conceives of womanness as synonymous with a “universal feminine principle of creation,” in the sense that the gendered metaphors of “womanness” divert that energy of creation into an energy of procreation ascribed to female-sexed bodies as vessels or devices for the reproduction of the coloniality of power (see Lugones’s “Toward a Decolonial Feminism”). My reading takes the universal feminine principle of creation as, actually, materially, multi-versal—the *feminine* in this reading indexing multidirectionality and what Karen Barad calls writing theory from the position of a “multiple ‘I’” (*Meeting the Universe Halfway ix*). The multiple “I” convenes the (*feminine*) principle of creation as collective and transcorporeal because: “To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating” (*ix*).

115. Here is an important distinction: on the one hand, Silko’s novel articulates what I am calling a science of kinship (creation). On the other hand, in this particular moment, Silko is more directly pointing to Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), a system of interacting with plant and environmental technologies that extends to stewardship and cultivation of biospheric life in multitude forms and based on millennia of shared, adaptive, and persistent oral and pictographic transmissions of knowledge. My focus on a science of kinship (creation) is inclusive of TEK but my argument is not really invested in mapping or cataloging that knowledge so much as invested in articulating the modes of knowing and being that intersect with TEK in the (trans)creation of stories that of how the world worlds.

116. Elsewhere in *Ceremony* Silko says, in relation to Tayo’s Christian Auntie, that: “Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the Mother who loved and cared for them as her children, as her family” (68). *That* story tells of the Father as the singular creator, and the mother as mere vessel for the procreation (figuration) of His flesh and blood. *That* story tells of the feminized matter/mother as a device (or simply backdrop) for the actualization of the individual soul of the Father’s Son. *That* story resists the embrace of the earth-as-mother of all and enforces the separation of the body from the mother (earth) as the very means of the soul’s arrival at the telos of actualization (salvation). In a similar vein, the humanist story of becoming-human figures the Human in hierarchical dichotomous opposition to Nature—as existing in (linear temporal historical) time and acting through individual will and cognition upon the backdrop of passive material space. This is the story reinforced by Newtonian mechanics as well as by secular, national time by means of the discourse of history that demarcates something like the idea of a mother earth as pre-modern superstition, as the personification via gendered metaphors, or as sheer ignorance of physics. And yet, the kind of science that Silko’s text posits on the way that the world worlds through relationality and entanglement more keenly describes the kinds of quantum mechanics and material intra-activity that now refute Newtonian mechanics (see again Dunston’s “Physics and Metaphysics”).

117. Tayo breathes in the immensity, materializing the interconnected breath connoted in Salmón’s *iwigara*. Breathing is also a gathering, and this (Salmón argues and I agree) is a science—a traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) as well as a way of describing how the world worlds transcorporeally.

118. As a point of clarification, while the text at times names these “destroyers” as white Europeans, past and present, Silko is careful to tell her reader (through the voice of Old Betonie) that white people themselves are not the witchery (*Ceremony* 132)—it is not a blood-borne inclination to destroy, it is a matter of the stories (the teachings). The witchery (the story) potentially puts all colors of people to work toward the destruction for which their appetites know no bounds. Betonie says that the witchery ranges far and wide across the world—not unlike colonial-modernity and its teleological story of becoming-human, which is also the story of a singular horizon of time and space that enacts a tyranny over Indigenous life in the Americas (as Trujillo argues).

119. Yahgulanaas and Wangari Maathai emphasize various stories about little hummingbird from across the Indigenous Americas and indigenous Africa (*Afterword*, np). The stories share the feature of the hummingbird’s work as a little-by-little process of effecting change. An important lesson taught from this little kin.

120. Yahgulanaas and Maathai note numerous iterations of their story of Little hummingbird fighting the fire one drop at a time in their *Afterword* to the graphic tale.

121. Yahgulanaas and Maathai (*Afterword*, np).



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122. I discuss Huitzilopochtli in relation to Anzaldúa's linear shape of kinship in Chapter 1 *On the Borderlands/Body*.

123. I gesture toward the almost-imperceptible presence of Hummingbird in relation to Pineau's rhizomatic shape of kinship in Chapter 2 *In the Garden/Memory*.

124. I read Hummingbird in relation to Silko's spiraling shape of kinship in Chapter 3 *In the Web/Space*.

125. See end note number 72 for my explanation of the translation of this chapter title between Pineau's French novel and its English language publication.

126. *Su granito de arena* is a political philosophy that I draw from Quiche Guatemalan activists, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, who appeared in the 1982 documentary film *When the Mountains Tremble* and its follow-up documentary of the making of that earlier documentary, *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* (2011). While these are English-language films produced by American filmmaker Pamela Yates, the Quiche activists and their understandings of Indigenous revolution centered on land form the lively heart of both films and inform the liveliness of this political philosophy as one of everyday activities of relentless decolonial restructuring.

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