University of New Mexico
UNM Digital Repository

American Studies ETDs | Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Spring 5-15-2019

(Re)Insurgent Ecologies: Dwelling Together Between Queasy Worlds

Kirsten E. Mundt
University of New Mexico - Main Campus

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/amst_etds

Part of the American Studies Commons, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons, and the Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Mundt, Kirsten E.. "(Re)Insurgent Ecologies: Dwelling Together Between Queasy Worlds." (2019). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/amst_etds/82

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Studies ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Kirsten Elizabeth Mundt
Candidate

American Studies
Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Dr. David Correia, Chairperson

Dr. Kathleen Stewart

Dr. Michael Trujillo

Dr. Irene Vasquez

(RE)INSURGENT ECOLOGIES:

DWELLING TOGETHER BETWEEN QUEASY WORLDS

By

Kirsten Elizabeth Mundt

B.A., Anthropology, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA, 1993
M.A., Eastern Classics, St. John's College, Santa Fe, NM, 2004

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
American Studies

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2019

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is dedicated to Lila, who—from the age of six—patiently wondered aloud when I would be done, and at 12—was the first to cheer for me when I said, "I think I'm done!" Thank you for your patience, and I'll be there for you when it's your turn. Thank you, Mom, for being there when it was my turn. For my father and brother, for supporting me even when my choices seemed inexplicable. Thank you Sylvia Ledesma and the healers of the Kalpulli Izkalli, for always making sure I knew where my heart was in relationship to my words and worlds. Thank you to my people for cheering me on… you know who you are.

Thank you David Correia, committee chair and source of tough love. Thank you for believing in my project more than my doubts. Thank you Michael Trujillo, for asking hard questions and trusting that I could handle the grilling. Thank you Kathleen Stewart, for your invaluable guidance and for inspiring me with your work. And thank you Irene Vasquez, for sitting on my committee at the last minute without hesitation.

(RE)INSURGENT ECOLOGIES:

DWELLING TOGETHER BETWEEN QUEASY WORLDS

By

KIRSTEN ELIZABETH MUNDT

B.A., Anthropology, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA, 1993
M.A., Eastern Classics, St. John's College, Santa Fe, NM, 2004
Ph.D., American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2019

ABSTRACT

Discourses that construct the "self" as something to be fixed, or made whole, chart a retreat from relational ecosystems back to the individual, reinforcing colonial politics rooted in bounded individualism. This project animates an ontological, relational framework that, in detaching from liberal humanist discourses of healing and "self," makes affective links from autopoietic frameworks for healing and survival to de-colonial, sympoieitic concerns for expanded kinship. New meanings and attachments are forged within queasy border zones of incommensurability, toggling between the particular and the universal, between desires for solidarity and recognition that colonial violences continue to be unequally distributed and borne. Inhabiting these spaces as a scholar, not disentangling from the thickness of grief, means deploying methods and methodologies that can accommodate ontological disturbance and refusal as they grate against colonial logic. By recording pressure points of friction as they emerge in ordinary life, narratives, terms, and practices emerge to illuminate what it might mean to liberate "healing" from the terms of neoliberal, settler citizenship. The goal is not to resolve paradox, but to confront it by writing within and between the limits of

scholarship and conventions that assume bounded self-hood. Aspiring beyond social solutions based in liberal humanist frameworks means subverting all forms of scholarly practices and categories based in Western hegemonies and hierarchies of being. What could a future look like in which co-poietic, sympoietic terms prevail; where the terms of speaking, writing, being, touching, and imagining do not hold allegiance to liberal humanist lineages of colonial selfhood?

Keywords: decoloniality, ecologies, sympoiesis, affect, hapticality, resurgent knowledges

Table of Contents

Foreword: (Re)conjugating Reality, Decoloniality as Praxis ix

Introduction 4

Methods Between Queasy Worlds 15

Embodying Non-Analogous Frameworks 27

Chapters 41

Chapter One— Belonging and Healing: Refusing Colonial Capture 50

Healing and Resistance in Northern New Mexico 54

Thinking ***With*** 62

Historicizing and Exceeding Narratively Condemned Status 81

Chapter Two— Speaking / Telling Stories: Kaleidescopic Methodologies 95

Senseur Ethnography and Kaleidescopic Consciousness 112

Chapter Three— Reading: Redemption/Truth Telling as Colonial Strategy 129

Woman Who Watches Over the World 141

Chapter Four— Feeling Vulnerable: Resilience, Recognition, and Warrior Consciousness 158

Precarity and Vulnerability 166

Liberal Vulnerability and Decolonial Resurgence: Brené Brown and Leanne Simpson 170

Resilience, Resurgence, and Warrior Consciousness 176

Warrior Consciousness 182

Chapter Five— Haptics / Hapticality: Touch and Vital Agency 190

Phenomenology, Mindfulness, and the Neoliberal Self 199

Hapticality, or Love 203

The Ancestral Speculative and Speaking for the Dead.. 211

Conclusion— Aspiration: The Haptical Imaginary and the Ancestral Speculative..... 219

Speculative Strategies 223

Coda 227

Bibliography 228

re·sur·gent
rəˈsərjənt/
adjective

1. increasing or reviving after a period of little activity, popularity, or occurrence.[1]

in·sur·gent
inˈsərj(ə)nt/
noun

1. revolutionary[2]

ecologies
e·col·o·gies
noun. pl.

1. the totality or pattern of relations between organisms and their environment[3]

---

[1] dictionary.com
[2] dictionary.com
[3] The Free Dictionary by Farlex.

Foreword:

(Re)conjugating Reality, Decoloniality as Praxis

"Like all offspring of colonizing and imperial histories, I-we-have to relearn how to conjugate worlds and partial connections and not universals and particulars"[4]

Bounded individualism couched within liberal humanist hegemonies is a free radical, a cancer cell, destroying our collective bodies and shared ecosystems. This project toggles between human desires to heal and connect, and to name painful, particular ways that colonial oppression imprints upon bodies and lived histories. How can there be collectivity and solidarity when violence is ongoing and relentless, when displacement, global warming, and voracious and unequal economic growth, are intensifying precarity for most? Within this question, there is a both an animation of the particular and the universal: the desire to love and belong, to go on living and fighting for each other, despite colonial conditions that relentlessly consume and exploit.

Within this question lies a productive tension around what it means to be a "self." What does it mean to be fully embodied within one's particular, racialized, gendered, and biopoliticized location, critically naming structures of injustice perpetuating violence, while understanding that we occupy permeable, dynamic worlds that can never be fully known, or fixed in place? Identity becomes fluid, always contextual, always in relation. A self that looks out and sees, having a singular experience, is not separate from the dynamic eco-system in which it is embedded. Liberal capitalism relies upon individuation, individual rights, economic growth and security, conditioned by desires animated by collective agreements around liberal humanist constructions of "self," or what it means to be singular

[4] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

within larger, shared, and dynamic eco-systems. Logic of "self" perpetuates what Aníbel Quijano would call coloniality, or the underlying logic binding together liberal humanist ways of thinking, being, and knowing. Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh build upon Quijano's work to theorize decoloniality-as-praxis, or praxis that animates ways that coloniality imprints upon our bodies, social systems, institutions, and scholarly practices, as well as bringing forward its emergent opposite. Decoloniality becomes not about political independence as nation-states (reflecting original goals of decolonization), nor simply how the West colludes with capitalism, but how "modernity/coloniality implants in all of us, as worked and continues to work to negate, disavow, distort and deny knowledges, subjectivities, world senses, and life visions."[5]

My task here is to confront coloniality that makes collectivity impossible, without reproducing the same logic. The extent to which there is a distinction between individual suffering and social suffering has much to do with how definitions of self are deployed and managed, advocating either for the rights of the individual, or acknowledging kinship far outside the boundaries of one's own skin. There's a reason why liberal humanist logic appeals to the individual, but we can't pretend that the individual doesn't matter. The topic of "healing," then, is an interesting place to explore because it is a problem of the self that toggles between the personal and the political. It is mired within a minefield of conditions and discourses meant to manage what that means and how it is done. How do individuals and communities conceptualize the notion and practice of healing, and what does it mean when

[5] Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

healing does not mean restoring ones-self to norms of neoliberal citizenship?[6] At the same time, the pendulum has swung quite far from liberal multicultural politics of inclusion, and I'm not interested in swinging it back. Similar to Anna Tsing's argument in *Mushroom at the End of the World,* I don't believe in smooth flows of agreement. Every living organism has its own history of violence and dynamic position within their own fight to maintain life, so from what vantage point can there be a collective representation against power?[7]

Instead, dynamic relational spaces are the subject of this dissertation. In the lived space of the "in between," there is no solid ground. In the ethnographic tradition of Joao Biehl, Kathleen Stewart, Paul Stoller, and Michael Taussig, I am interested in building upon a form of scholarship that "identifies crossroads and opens up possibilities"[8] for what might emerge out of fraught and dynamic spaces. This is a shift away from deconstructive scholarship concerned with historic-socio-economic analyses of colonization[9]. Instead, lived experiences and conversations emerge to illustrate painful tensions and realities at the heart of our colonial nightmare.

Specifically, my research explores healing discourses as they circulate through literature, visual culture, and lived experience. For example, Didier Fassin argues that the floating signifier of "trauma" pervades western therapeutic practices, allowing liberal humanist constructions of "self" to circulate around the globe. While his goal is not to negate the healing work of humanitarian service providers, he argues that psychological language

[6] What I mean by neoliberal citizenship will be more fully fleshed out in the Introduction, considering ways that "neoliberal" exists as a set of conditions and discourses setting the terms for belonging, or citizenship.

[7] Anna Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

[8] Biehl, Joao, and Locke, Peter. *Unfinished: The Anthropology of Becoming*. Durham: Duke, 2017, xii.

[9] Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh (2019) distinguish between scholarship concerned with decoloniality and decolonization in *Decoloniality as Praxis*, 2019.

that disembodies affect can neutralize collective mourning and political action.[10] Similarly, words such as "vulnerability," "resilience," "redemption," and "mindfulness" circulate within environments related to healing, and are not neutral or innocent. These discourses often reinforce what Lauren Berlant calls the "cruel optimism" of neoliberal selfhood that seeks fulfillment in prosperity, ownership, and optimal functioning of self. Good citizenship means taking on responsibility for one's self in order to not burden others: depression, anxiety, illness, motherhood, and old age are one's personal responsibility. This cultural obsession with self responsibility charts a retreat from collective caregiving to the individual, and circulate within discourses, affects, and terms that carry loaded and multiple meanings.

At the same time, the meaning of these terms, as well as what it means to "heal" are far from fixed. The ways these terms are re-conjugated often exceed the ways they are deployed by neoliberal discourses. I didn't know what I was looking for when I began my research, other than a queasy affect that was animated by crossing between multiple and conflicting worlds on a daily basis. On any given day, I cross between roles as a somatic massage therapist, mother, American Studies Scholar, instructor at a tribal college, meditation instructor, writing teacher, student of traditional women's medicine. The terms of "self" vary widely within these locations, and who I "am" within these locations—fluctuate based on the terms of various discourses. Inviting lived affects and bodies into the conversation—from shifting and multiple locations—means inviting grief, confusion, brokenness and liminality, that does not stop at "self," because the terms of bounded selfhood no longer make sense.

---

[10] Didier Fassin. *Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

The ontological argument I'm building draws upon Donna Haraway's notion of *sympoiesis*, performative actions of tentacular multiplicity, feeling their way against regulatory norms of being and recognition inherent to neoliberal citizenship. Sympoieis is related to Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's notion of *hapticality*, in which the pleasures of feeling with and for trump settler belonging. It has the possibility of speaking against liberal logic and multicultural self-reflexivity, when the individual self is displaced in favor of alterity. It is a process that acknowledges grief and dispossession as a process that writes against all subject formations. The goal is not to prove which subjects are the most injured, but rather to move and speak against conditions that render lives unlivable. Developing a generative, ethical framework for acting and "being" beside ourselves—means inhabiting both ontological disturbance and felt possibilities for acting in solidarity. What is that common commitment, if not based in race, class, ethnic, gender, or species identity? Thinking, writing, reading, and touching sympoietically, instead of auto-poietically, provide movement toward thick co-presence that challenges neoliberal, settler citizenship.

There are dangers here. Scholars in Critical Indigenous Studies argue that there is no room in de-colonial scholarship for reinforcing settler logics. Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd argues that any impulse to "world" is always the work of the colonizer, even if that work is to make the world a kinder, gentler place.[11] Similarly, Philip Deloria argues that forces of creation and destruction always exist in tension between Natives and settlers. To be American is to always be unfinished, to have the freedom to become "new," to transform;

[11] Byrd, Jodi. *The Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2011, 38.

and “although that state is powerful and creative, it carries with it nightmares all its own.”[12] Given that there is always the danger of perpetuating settler logic, what does it mean to squarely face subjectivities related to settler belonging and the role of this subjectivity in perpetuating colonial violence? My goal is to get underneath settler subjectivity, not only to name structures of oppression, but to imagine possibilities for how bodies might mobilize situated difference in pursuit of equal justice. Candace Fujikane might call this “settler ally-ship,” or settler subjectivity that exists beside itself, not divorced from the grief of ongoing colonial violence.[13] By inhabiting incommensurable tensions around narratives, images, and practices that circulate around what it might mean to “heal” and to de-colonize, possibilities emerge for confronting hierarchies of being conditioned by the colonial wound. While my dissertation is not about race or identity, it must necessarily dance with these issues within a post-multiculturalist moment in America. Lived embodiments are never neutral.

Theoretical and incommensurable impasses related to de-colonization provide friction from which to uncover, inhabit, and explore the colonial wound which continues to wound. At the center of this hurt are frameworks and vocabularies that center the bounded individual, reinforcing existing power structures bound within colonial capitalism. Policy, scholarship, and healing practices concerned with protecting ownership, borders, and autopoietic[14] selves are not equipped for contesting what Isabelle Stengers calls “barbarism,” or rapacious exploitation of land and bodies. By engaging Critical Indigenous, Chicana, and feminist

---

[12] Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University, 1998.

[13] Candace Fujikane, *Settler Allies in Indigenous Economies of Abundance: Critical Settler Cartography as Relational, Embodied Practice.* From a paper presented at 2018 AAAS Conference.

[14] Beth Dempster, *Sympoietic and Autopoietic Systems: A New Distinction for Self Organizing Systems*, 1995. Unpublished thesis.

science/capitalocene feminisms in an epistemic gathering,[15] my intention is to animate a framework that, in detaching from the cruel optimism of self, makes space for border ecologies of overlapping relationalities and concerns. Critical Indigenous theory grates against affect and Chicana studies, critical race scholars rub up against anthropocene and object oriented ontologists, but there is something alive in the grating. Lauren Berlant might call this "lateral politics," or the "embodied process of making solidarity through commitment to the senses."[16]

What's at stake are embodiments and solidarities that have creative political force and power for confronting empire and its endless hunger for accumulating power and resources (both human and non-human). What else can we not only imagine besides binary projects of construction and deconstruction, self and other? What kinds of projects can emerge out of this break for the offspring of colonial, imperial histories? I'm just alerting you in advance that I am not trying to trick you, but am writing my way through a framework that neither tears down Jenga towers nor builds with the same worn out blocks. Instead, my intention is to animate life prior to and within, in a move to displace bounded individualism and collective agreements around what it means to "heal:" to exist, belong, touch, and create. At stake here are possibilities for power and solidarity that reach beyond individual desires for possession, territory, safety, and rights.

In 1994, I had a graduate fellowship in cultural anthropology at the University of Zimbabwe. The only woman in a program dominated by Shona and Ndebele men, they nicknamed me "Mary Wollstonecraft." As I grew more and more uncomfortable with my gender, colonial position and white skin privilege, I didn't understand what ethnography was supposed to DO, even though I was getting paid to do it. I watched how the World Bank,

---

[15] Gaile Pohlhaus's essay, *Knowing Without Borders and the Work of Epistemic Gathering*, recognizes that all positions, all identities, can only provide partial knowledge.

[16] Lauren Berlant. *Cruel Optimism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, pg. 260.

USAID, and a whole network of international NGO's served white expatriates, gobbled up land, and exploited local labor. I couldn't reconcile the fact that my $20,000. stipend was a hundred times more than most people I passed on the street made in a year. The irreconcilability of my White, western presence in the city of Harare made everything hurt.

One Saturday, I visited the market at Chitungwiza, a crowded, high-density settlement outside of Harare. I had my bones read by an n'anga, a Shona traditional healer. He said, "You are an orphan."

I argued with him. I said, "No, I'm not an orphan. I have parents."

He said many other things, but the thing I most remember is looking me in the eye and saying, "No. You are an orphan. You don't have parents."

I DO, literally, have parents. But I knew he wasn't talking about that. Instead, he meant that I was a cultural, spiritual orphan, fragmented and disconnected from multiple levels of place and ancestry. Instead, my identity had latched on to cosmopolitanism, roaming as a "citizen of the world" as a form of trans-cultural identity. I know now that the experience of being orphaned, or disconnected from place, cultural norms, and ancestral lineages, makes "home" either elusive or impossible. It's a disorganized attachment that can't land, can't attach, can't root. This kind of dispossessed embodiment can be confused, fragmented, and multiple. It is an orphaned structure of feeling that lives in my DNA, that was passed to me through histories constructed through slavery, colonialism, and immigration. This confused attachment around belonging is endemic to settler subjectivities, but also bodies dismembered and disturbed in infinite other ways.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that the colonizer/colonized binary does not make sense when theorized at the level of the individual; many of us are constructed through complex histories of layering which occurred between and across groups. We constitute and are constituted by each other. Slavery, or the history of being removed from place and family, commodified and shipped, is a shared history between Black and Indigenous people. Rape, and consensual and non-consensual sexual relationships between colonizer and colonized, stigmatized many mixed race children from belonging to any group or place. Hybrid identities were regulated through colonial legislation, such as blood quantum policies and the Naturalization Act of 1906, determining what sorts of relationships people could have with each other. Identities were classified and ranked by race, determining eligibility for citizenship (both for tribal membership and for American Citizenship), determining who was human and who was "property," laying the foundation for Manifest Destiny, slavery, segregation, and post-World War II practices of redlining, allowing for massive accumulation of wealth for White men and their families.

It goes without saying that legacies of colonialism and White privilege persist. White identities and whiteness are not the same thing, however. While "White" is not an ethnic category that resonates with me, I benefit mightily from White privilege. While I have light skin, my great great grandmother Classina Gerdeman was a slave in Suriname who gave birth to twelve children through a Dutch land owner. While my half-black great

grandmother, Marie Cornelia Henrietta, immigrated to New York and passed as White, most stayed in Suriname, and died in Paramibo. Many, many of them died as children. I recognize that the choice my ancestors made—to disavow Black ancestry—has afforded me racial and social privileges that "passing" provided. I will not dispute that, nor claim otherwise. At the same time, colluding with racist colonial policies, identities, and strategies bound within White privilege, comes at a great cost. When"White" identity means blank, invisible, neutral, and temporally bound within the same structures of "self" that define and create it, claiming it as an identity means colluding with a matrix of consciousness that severs me from embodied knowledges that live in my bones. While living with light skin is not the same thing as whiteness as structure of oppression, it is an inevitable facet of this historical moment in which we are forced to reckon with complicity with settler colonialism.

Throughout this dissertation, I track orphaned structures of feelings within complex, relational ecosystems. My history and identity are not the subjects of my dissertation. Nor are the people who appear within these pages. Instead, I am interested in poking and lingering within confused, sticky affects and longings that grate against colonial legacies of whiteness that persist in our settler colonial reality. Sometimes these affects are shared, sometimes not, but they muck about in the world with various levels of awareness, scratching at socially agreed upon realities and discourses. Often they show up as discomfort in the body, in lived spaces of paradox that emerge when we can no longer agree with the terms of neoliberal citizenship or identities projected upon us. In this lived space of the "in between," there is no solid ground. Instead, lived experiences and conversations emerge to illustrate painful tensions and realities for what it means to muck together through the ruins of our colonial histories.

Far from a problem to be fixed, or a subjectivity to be "healed," orphaned structures of feeling pose a problem for subjectivities that depend upon discourses of wholeness holding together liberal humanist laws, discourses, and institutions. The point is that embodying cracks and fissures challenge colonial constructs of "self" on many levels, including liberal multicultural discourses that present American history and whiteness as synonymous: neutral, innocent, and racially unbiased.

Is it possible that fragmented, orphaned structures of feelings can widen cracks in what Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh call "Western ontological totalitarianism?"[17]

Can we aspire to imagine new social formations, whatever bones we have inherited?

Or, as Leanne Simpson muses, "What if no-one colluded with colonialism?"

[17] Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

A·mer·i·can dream
əˈmerəkən drēm/
noun

1. the ideal that every US citizen should have an equal opportunity to achieve success and prosperity through hard work, determination, and initiative.

ne·o·lib·er·al
ˌnēōˈlibərəl/
adjective

1. relating to a modified form of liberalism tending to favor free-market capitalism.

She arrives at a "Radicalizing Contemplative Practice" conference in Northern California on a fellowship. The conference is being held at a new retreat center in the Redwood Forest.

From Santa Cruz, she takes the 32A as close as she can, then sits at the bus stop, wondering how to get the rest of the way. She calls to see if transport is available. The kind woman on the other end advises her to Uber a ride. She looks at her old phone, unable to download apps because she had accidentally deleted the app to download apps. She says nothing. She pulls her carry on suitcase the remaining tree-less miles uphill along the side of the road.

She arrives sweaty and sunburned, greeted by meticulously dressed and groomed staff who offer her mint infused water next to the espresso bar. In the gift shop, journals, candles, wool shawls, jewelry, hair clips and clothing are sold as "supports for spiritual practice." She feels shabby in her sweat stained thrift store clothes and greying hair. She fingers a $22. plastic hair clip, but does not buy it.

The three story building where the fellows are housed is down a shady path past the spa and infinity pool, past an enormous conference center in process of being built. The building has clean lines, built with sustainable materials, but feels monochromatic, modern, hotel-like. There is no art, and the color palate ranges from heather grey to army green. There is no trace of human hands, and the building is so airtight and energy efficient that ants, spiders, sun, wind, and rain, can't get in. It is a meticulous white space, clearly meant to be blank slate for healing and renewal—scrubbed clean of any specific cultural references so everyone can feel at home, or not at home, or whatever you need it to be.

She chooses the bed with the only window, offering a glimpse of the redwoods if she is lying down, looking up.

Internet password: "connect2self."

At dinner, she speaks with a woman who wants to know how she was bridging bodywork with American Studies and social justice movements. She says that we are all stewing in these cultural violences and because we don't know how to name them, we participate. Even when we do name them, we are still complicit, affected, traumatized. She looks down at her tray full of tiny plates of gourmet vegetarian food, at the antelope chandeliers, the fireplace in the middle of the massive dining room. Her breath is shallow, uncertain.

She makes a note to self: this place is the physical manifestation of how healing culture perpetuates the healing industrial complex, the spiritual marketplace, hiding in the guise of self care and healing. You deserve it. We deserve it. Self righteousness helps her breath deepen. How can this be radical in any way?

When she says this out loud her dinner mate says, "White people get to do this all the time. I want to do it, too. "

During a keynote session, a conference organizer reminds us that we are guests here. We are here to talk with each other and rest. As guests, do we have the right to criticize our hosts?

Past dark, she receives an email from her partner: Last night, when I said that you were being a graduate student, it's just that you seem to believe that concepts such as patriarchy and capitalism are resolved. A good intellectual is always problematizing these concepts. They are not complete and final. There is always something chaotic and open to further inquiry and investigation.

The redwoods are giants, and she glimpses them out of the too-high tiny window that doesn't open. She can see a sliver of moon poking through the branches.

Her room-mate says, "The trees are distressed. Something has happened here." She agrees; something is unsettled. She feels the tension in her body.

The next day, a professor of critical theory says "feeling" is important and necessary for working through white supremacy culture. What are the rules around white feelings? She argues that deconstructive critique, meant to peer beyond and through feeling, is where whiteness and imperialism are intertwined and perpetuated. Deconstructive critique is complicit. Historicizing is not the only task.

A young white man clearing the tables calls her "sir." She doesn't correct him because he is young, and she has already lost her only son. She says, "He's young and doesn't know that black women have never been considered women."

Her pain clears the lunch chatter and we sit with her in the broken silence.

Claudia Rankine wrote an essay in The New York Times Magazine after the church massacre in Charleston, North Carolina. She writes, "I asked another friend what it's like being the mother of a black son. 'The condition of black life is mourning,' she said bluntly — " mourning, M-O-U-R-N-I-N-G —"

Introduction

"If we do not seek to fix what has been broken, then what?"[18]

Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* examines toxic narratives of neoliberal self-hood perpetuating the "good life," or the American Dream based in prosperity and wholeness that promise happiness. This cultural obsession with ending personal suffering through attachments to cultural narratives that promise personal well-being but undermine collectivity. Narratives that define the self as something to be fixed, or made whole, in order to heal, chart a retreat from society to the individual self. These de-politicized definitions of self often serve to reinforce neoliberal constructions of self in which politics are based on the individual, not the collective. The logic of neoliberalism dictates that we must be responsible for our own individual well-being. It is the individual as citizen who must bear the burden of stress associated with economic insecurity and social precarity and who alone is responsible for the self care needed to survive this state of affairs. Without a critical framework for helping us understand how these narratives of the self de-politicize and dis-empower communities, we are left with a politic of self responsibility, reinforcing exploitive, capitalist frameworks. Neoliberal selfhood, then, is not just a set of economic practices, but an imaginary that governs language, laws, and the movements of our bodies.

William E. Connolly argues that neoliberalism thrives in a climate of self-responsibility, while simultaneously diminishing conditions for its flourishing. He writes, "neoliberal ideology inflates the self organizing power of markets by implicitly deflating the

[18] Stefano Harney and Fred Moten. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions, 2013.

self-organizing powers and creative capacity of all other systems."[19] In other words, through marrying the free market with the state and attendant discourses, power can be consolidated in the hands of the few while the majority focuses on self care, self management, and shoring one's own body against increasingly precarious circumstances. These policies and violences are not just affecting life for humans, but entire eco-systems and the planet as a whole. As life becomes more precarious, more fragile and tenuous, tensions emerge. Connolly lists hundreds of ways the lived condition of fragility grate against neoliberal discourses and vice versa: growing precarity and economic inequality, pollution of water by the fracking and oil industries, destruction of natural habitat, increasing drought, earthquakes, and tsunamis, and interrupted loops between bees, viruses, and pesticides.[20] For Connelly, the point is not to separate the universal condition of vulnerability from neoliberal conditions that produce and support surplus vulnerability. Instead, muddling through this "living paradox" is necessary for creating conditions for emergent forms of social life and citizenship[21].

Analytical frameworks and vocabularies that center the bounded individual self at the center of both scholarship and health care policy, inevitably reinforce existing power structures and are inadequate tools for dismantling the foundations of neoliberal citizenship. Policy, scholarship, and healing practices concerned with protecting autopoietic selves are not equipped for contesting what Isabelle Stengers calls "barbarism," or rapacious exploitation of land and bodies in the name of economic growth. Autopoiesis draws upon the Greek word "to make," in which "a person brings into being that which did not exist

---

[19] William Connolly, *The Fragility of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. pg. 31.
[20] Ibid, pg. 33.
[21] Ibid, pg. 37.

before.[22] Through observing that natural systems do not maintain strict boundaries between self and other, living and not-living, Beth Dempster builds upon Maturana and Varela's earlier theory of autopoiesis[23], that all organisms self-produce, maintain self-imposed boundaries, and are organizationally closed.[24] Instead, Dempster theorized sympoiesis in her 1995 thesis[25], combining sym- for *collective*, and poiesis, for *making.* Sympoieis refers to complex, self-organized, collectively produced, boundary-less systems, while auto-poietic systems are geared toward maintenance, survival, and homeostasis. For example, trees, individual humans, caterpillars, mammals, etc. could be considered auto-poietic, in that we are controlled by negative feedback; our survival depends on maintaining particular conditions for life. For humans and other species, this often means fighting for power, survival, and resources in order to maintain status quo. Sympoietic systems, on the other hand, are concerned with evolution based in feedback loops that are not closed. The survival of one organism depends upon the survival of the others in which it is intertwined.

For example, Anna Tsing's *Mushroom at the End of the World* theorizes mushrooms and humans as embedded and endangered within the same rapacious capitalist eco-system that is destroying life on this planet. Instead of thinking of ourselves as autonomous, auto-poieitic organisms, she points to shared precarity as the key to collectivity and systematicity.[26] She argues that matsuki mushrooms provide an example of world-making

---

[22] Wikipedia.

[23] Maturana and Varela, Autopoiesis and Cognition: *The Realization of the Living.* Amsterdam, Holland: Reidel Publishing, 1980.

[24] Beth Dempster, *Sympoietic and Autopoietic Systems: A New Distinction for Self Organizing Systems.* Unpublished thesis.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Anna L. Tsing, The Mushroom at the End of the World. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. pg. 20.

that is open-ended and full of possibilities for re-thinking power, progress narratives, and collective survival. Instead of fighting for power over, fungal systems provide an example of a multi-species feminist ethic in which the health of a singular organism is bound within an entire eco-system. Similarly, Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* argues that scholarly disciplines such as biology, cultural studies, philosophy and history can no longer place human individuals at the center of knowledge. Our center of knowledge is becoming rapidly displaced as we face rising temperatures, acidic oceans, and disappearing species. Haraway argues that in order to shift course, we need "tentacular," complex, and non-binary ways of staying with the trouble long enough to re-think what it means to be fully human. She argues that, "staying with the trouble requires learning to be fully present… as mortal critters entwined in myriad configurations of places, times matters, meanings."[27]

In other words, living into new social formations with enough power to confront the violences of this historical moment may require new ways of writing, thinking, and practicing scholarship that lie outside of theorizing universals and particulars. For example, the term "neoliberal citizenship" is so fraught and scholarly that is practically meaningless. Elizabeth Povinelli's *Geontologies* argues that capitalist forms of violence can really only be tracked through specific ways that power is encountered and resisted in daily life. In other words, language that reifies totalizing discourses of power are not specific enough for ways that life is lived in the singular. In other words, theories that universalize a greater social good necessarily imagine that good from the particular lens of the theorizer. Povinelli references Tsing's *Mushroom at the End of the World* in order to point out that while Tsing

[27] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press, pg. 1.

uses the sympoieitic eco-system of the matsutake to imagine a non-hierarchical, inclusive ecological imaginary in which humans and non-humans thrive, this ecological order is still human-centric. In other words, certain species cannot have a vote within the terms set by any totalizing system. In other words, the will to survive, the desire to live, is often violent in its will to resist normativities and systemic capture. For example, she argues that fungal parasites such as *P. noxious,* a toxic byproduct of agricapitalism, is a formidable class warrior, in that it "eats up the conditions of its being and it destroys what capital provides as the condition of of its normative extension,"[28] while also gobbling up that which lives around it. In other words, who decides, and on what terms, which species should be destroyed to make room for others?

Utopian, universalizing theories may no longer be useful for helping us imagine a more ecologically just world since change, violence, and death are always central to the struggle for life. Our "selves" are necessarily a small part of this dynamic eco-system. A turn toward the ecological, relational and the "planetary,"[29] including decoloniality, post-humanism, non-humanism, new materialism, affect theories, and object oriented ontologies have emerged as part of this shift of consciousness. Feminist science study scholars such as Stengers, Tsing, and Donna Haraway argue that toxic narratives of self, or languages that govern who we are in relationship to the living world, must be examined if we are to re-story a world in which we might survive and thrive as a species. This argument is not new or unique. Chicana, Indigenous, Black, and other women of color scholars, activists, and healers, have long operated from and argued for ecological, embodied frameworks that

[28] Elizabeth Povinelli. *Geontologies.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016 pg. 12.

[29] The term "planetary" is attributed to Christian Moraru's *Reading for the Planet*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

expand beyond the bounded human self. These histories and legacies of scholarship cannot be collapsed, however. They occupy radically different embodiments and histories as a result of colonization; similar to Tsing's fungal eco-systems, difference necessarily means conflicting positions and political agendas in the name of survival.

At the same time, there are concerns that are shared, that can be placed in conversation to yoke potential solidarities. By bringing together Indigenous, Chicana, and feminist science studies frameworks to converse on "self" and healing, my goal is to articulate and *animate* a feminist multi-species paradigm for what it means to heal and act in solidarity with the decolonial *for,*[30] or relational solidarities against that which dehumanizes, exploits, kills, and extracts. Mextiza, Indigenous, and multi-species feminist paradigms (inhabited often by White scholars) often exist separately from each other and engender distrust arising from legacies of liberal multiculturalism.[31] I am interested in how these spaces interact and inform multi-racial and multi-species relationships in New Mexico, especially from the perspective of resurgent relationalities. What is the real target, if not each other? This conversation can best be described as "queasy." I am interested in centering polyvocal relationality, or theoretical frames that emerge from cross-positional collaborations. The potential story is about ally-ship, and how shared trauma, grief, and desire for healing forge feminist, collaborative relationships that take aim at the appropriate target: racialized, neoliberal citizenship and discourses that perpetuate it. Through what framework might we begin to conceive moments of shock, trauma, or "falling apart" as

[30] Walter Mignolo, *On Decoloniality.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

[31] Frameworks that seek to celebrate diversity within a multicultural framework can be a form of ethnographic entrapment (Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 2013), perpetuating institutional practices that seek to incorporate difference instead of challenging capitalist power structures that rely upon racialized hierarchies (Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 2011).

opportunities for expanding multi-species collectivity, re-defining mental health and what it means to heal? Especially in the face of a politic that has us turning to self responsibility and rising nationalism in the face of unprecedented resource/income inequality and environmental precarity.

My dissertation will embody the auto-theoretical act of writing through tensions grating at the border between healing and unfinished struggles for racial and social justice. At the heart of this inquiry are how definitions of "self" and "healing" either reify or contest human exceptionalism and individualism bound within racialized capitalism. What would it mean to give up anthropocentric privilege when class, racial, and gender privileges are unfinished, when human suffering is so unequal and so great? By fully embodying cracks within border zones of thinking/being, self/other, and multiple social locations between worlds, this feminist framework allows for emergent, co-poeitic ways of theorizing how relational spaces are forged and created when the suffering of others is met as one's own, especially within precarious and unequal social conditions. How definitions of self and other are deployed through healing practices is important for considering ethics of a feminist multi-species praxis. What could it look like to simultaneously heal a self and to re-frame that self as part of an existing matrix of precarious and violent social relationships? By rejecting neoliberal terms of "self," I hope to activate a trans-subjective relational framework that displaces bounded, cohesive human selves at the center of our ecosystem. At the heart of this inquiry are how definitions and representations of self and healing either reify or contest human exceptionalism and individualism bound within racialized capitalism.

Building upon a polyvocal feminist research justice model, an emergent ecological model thinks with multiple voices, traditions, and frameworks to expand conversations about

what it means to de-colonize neoliberal citizenship, or agreements resulting from racialized histories, systems, and relationships. At the same time, there are incommensurable tensions that exists here; Eve Tuck and Steve Wang argue that if de-colonization needs to be more than a metaphor, the word de-colonial should be only used for scholarship that is concerned with repatriation of Native lands and spaces. Period. Using the word de-colonial for projects that are concerned with other oppressions, such as racism, sexism, capitalism, etc, should use the word "anti-colonial."[32]

While I wholeheartedly support Native sovereignty in all its forms (especially as it relates to land), this argument leaves little room for thinking with, for operating in shared solidarity with de-colonizing space and shared existence. It is incommensurable because we're talking about land; I am a settler and I exist on land. This is a deep friction that I don't want to discount or gloss over. I am interested in inhabiting that incommensurability everywhere I can in this dissertation. However, my gaze always lies on a larger, shared enemy: barbarism as it travels through bodies colluding with the terms of colonialism. The framework I am aspiring toward is meant to undo the foundational terms of colonial selfhood. The word "anti" is static; it assumes a binary in which identity exists either as colonizer, or colonized. There is a cohesive self, a bounded body that acts in resistance. Instead, the variation of the word "de-colonial" I am preferring to use is *decoloniality*, a term theorized by Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, who build upon Aníbel Quijano's work on coloniality. Instead of referring to a specific end or goal, especially one that lands with alternative forms of state-hood, decoloniality is "not a static condition, an individual

---

[32] Tuck, Eve, and Yang, Wayne. *Decolonization is not a Metaphor.* Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society. Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-40.

attribute, or a lineal point of arrival or enlightenment. Instead, decoloniality seeks to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought."[33] In other words, decoloniality is a relational praxis that thinks with and for both refusal against colonial structures of power, and creative responses that imagine otherwise. According to Mignolo, decoloniality does not signify the absence of colonialism (which may never disappear), but multiplicity of ways of thinking, being, knowing, and sensing that are plural, multiple, and tentacular.

As an act of decoloniality-as-praxis, this project explores how healing practices, literature, art, and scholarship contribute to radically occurant paradigms of self, embodiment and being as an act of feeling and thinking *with* multiplicity and paradox, imagining ethical frameworks that recognize mutual fragility and interdependence as key to survival. How can we reimagine ethical frameworks and cultural representations that recognize, instead of collude, with that which is killing us? As human descendants and inheritors of a colonial legacy that is unequally distributed and borne, we need new vocabularies for embodying and articulating what it means to exist, speak, think, and touch within increasingly violent and precarious social conditions. What kinds of frameworks can best sever from individual safety and well-being, and how might we conceive moments of shock, or "falling apart" as opportunities for multi-species collectivity, re-defining mental health and what it could mean to "heal?" By inquiring into how lineages of writers, healers, and artists define, embrace and resist narratives of trauma and self, I am interested in possibilities for vitalizing ways of

[33] Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

being and healing as a messy form of collective resistance against neoliberal and racialized capitalism. In other words, what could it mean to survive and thrive when colonial traumas and violences are ongoing and unfinished, when the paradoxical practice of "healing a self" may be what Lauren Berlant calls a cruel optimism?

While Berlant's constructivist analysis of cruel optimism is useful, I am especially interested in her conclusion in which she proposes "lateral politics," or a politic of "feeling with." What happens when we stay with, feel with, muddle within, our cruel attachment to bounded individualism long enough that it becomes intolerable? Berlant is interested in the moments of fracturing from this condition of cruel optimism, through Deleuze's concept of *perturbation*, in which disturbances can only be navigated through "continuous reaction and transversal movement."[34] In other words, she suggests imagining a politic (and poetic) of lived, ordinary experience, in which "trauma" is navigated through the sensorial fabric of the living moment. Within the fertile place of embodied refusal, she argues that new, more authentic and emergent desires are possible, since those experiences have been ruptured from the affectual noise that surrounds conventional notions of patriotism, politics, security, and belonging.

The affective, co-poietic possibilities Berlant raises in *Cruel Optimism* is where this project begins. Instead of modeling Berlant's constructivist framework, however, I will explore affective frameworks and methodologies capable of transforming and transmuting the terms of liberal monohumanism[35], or the bounded, individual self. Instead of simply critiquing liberal humanist terms and frameworks, my project imagines a framework for

[34] Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2011. pg. 6.

[35] Liberal mono-humanism is a term attributed to Sylvia Wynter, referring to frameworks that occlude the non-human from liberal humanist discourses. I will flesh out this theory in Chapter One.

displacing the self-knowing, bounded self from the center of our cultural, linguistic, and environmental eco-system. What could a lateral politic of de-centered humanity look, feel and sound like? What could this mean for how we think about health, caregiving, and justice? In order to fully inhabit and write from queasy spaces between worlds, I will employ methods and methodologies that can accommodate the friction of cacophonous conversations and the inevitable ontological disturbance that results from the collision of critical race/Indigenous theories and the lived experience of neoliberal, settler citizenship. The goal is not to resolve tension and paradox, but to confront it; not just theoretically, but through my own living, breathing body. Obstacles become portals to be lived, not problems to be resolved. Through inhabiting the paradox of radically situated awareness—that is simultaneously bio-politically constructed and sovereign—new solidarities and commitments may reveal themselves.

If healing the individual self is a cruel optimism that feeds exploitive capitalism and the roots of colonial capitalism, what could it also look like to love and discern, to be permeable (vulnerable) and to resist toxic cultural narratives that reproduce precarity and violence? In other words, what kind of scholarship can pierce binaries that separate "serious" critique from relational and spiritual practices? As Laura Perez writes, "neoliberal capitalism benefits crucially from our exile from spiritual discourse."[36] Challenging epistemological binaries at the heart of neoliberal academic and health care practices means directly engaging feelings of grief, despair, and urgency over our fragmented, frayed lived ecologies. By lived ecologies, I am referred to social/environmental relationships in which we are all intimately

[36] Perez, Laura. *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spritual and Aesthetic Alarities.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

embedded. What kind of embodied healing consciousness of "being" is capable of confronting and loosening colonial power structures? It is my intention here not only to respond to unjust material conditions and practices, but also to write an alternative narrative outside of colonial knowledge production and representation bound within a "self" wrestling with dialectical materialism. If materialism is a culturally produced idea that relies on "nature" as a construct, this narrative must embody and write through ways of knowing and being that lie outside of hegemonic discourses of what it means to be a rational, cohesive human. This means that my methodology can't repeat the violences of a dialectical narrator endemic to liberal humanist critique; I must also write through multiple ontological positions that animate what it means to be a being whose embodiment defies western measures of value and logic.

Methods Between Queasy Worlds

The subject of my research, neoliberal citizenship as it is travels through discourses of "healing," has emerged out of a set of interlocking and conflicting personal and professional life experiences. In 1991, a semester abroad in India led me to Buddhist meditation practice, transforming my consciousness in a way that led me to drop out of a graduate program in Anthropology to become a licensed massage therapist. Since 1996, I have been a massage therapist trained in somatic mind/body therapies, and eventually traditional women's healing practices in the form of Aztec *curanderismo*. Since 2003, I have been a bodyworker and mindfulness instructor at a residential treatment center for trauma and addiction in Santa Fe, New Mexico. While this center once primarily served affluent white clients who didn't need health insurance to cover "alternative" treatments such as mindfulness, massage, and acupuncture, these services have become increasingly mainstreamed and medicalized. The

center is now run by a large health care corporation based in Texas, takes health insurance, and the population—both staff and clients—is ethnically, racially, and economically diverse. At the same time, it runs according to the principles of the free market, where popular discourses related to "trauma" and "healing" drive supply and demand. Simultaneously, from 2009 to 2017, I taught English, Summer Bridge, and First Year Seminar to Native students at the Institute of American Indian Arts. Here, I became painfully aware of my status as a settler, complicit with whiteness and colonial capitalism. Ultimately, friction between these deeply conflicting set of circumstances led to a set of questions that led me to enroll in a PhD program in American Studies. The most pressing questions that emerged were, what does it mean to heal, to exist and belong, when the violences of settler colonial capitalism are so unfinished, so alive and violent not only for certain groups of humans but for the entire living world? And more importantly, how am I complicit, and what is mine to do? What is my responsibility, not just as an "ally," but as a full participant in the de-colonial project? These are not easy questions, and in my search for answers, I found more tensions and questions than answers.

A year into my PhD coursework, I sought help from Sylvia Ledesma, a traditional *promatora traditional*[37] in Albuquerque's South Valley, because I found myself split apart by untenable conflicts. The organization she co-founded, *Kalpulli Izkalli*, roughly translates from Nahatl as "House of Light," provides "medicine for the people, by the people." Sylvia offers traditional healing services by donation, as well as workshops on plant medicine and

[37] While this healing practice is sometimes called *curanderismo*, Sylvia does not call herself a *curandera*. Healers in the Mezo-American Aztec tradition do not call themselves *curanderas*. Members of the community decide who is a *curandera* and refer to practitioners as such, but *promatoras* do not typically use this word as a self descriptor.

Aztec philosophy. Sylvia is a well-known *curandera*, but also a dedicated advocate for environmental, social, and gender justice. Her healing work is also critical; she clearly names structures of oppression working on bodies and communities, and is active in environmental and racial justice work. For Sylvia, there is no separation between poverty, racism, patriarchy, environmental toxicity, and emotional/physical illness.

Meeting with Sylvia once every few weeks provided a space in which to bridge between two vastly different professions; bodyworker and American Studies scholar. While I didn't disagree with what I was reading, much of the critical language *felt* at odds with what I knew in my body as a relational being. If a primary goal of massage is attunement between self and other (I *feel* you, I can *love* you, no matter what your politics), this universalism grates against critical race, feminist, and Marxist frameworks that aim to revitalize difference. Massage, community art projects, and other healing practices can certainly be dismissed by critical scholars as new age and liberal; *feeling with* others may do very little to change structures of oppression. For example, Slajov Zizek argues that we must be wary of "relational aesthetics" and "interpassive" subjectivities that celebrate community but don't directly critique underlying social and economic power structures.[38] Liberal, new age healing traditions are problematic because of their complicity with neoliberal and colonial technologies. In my job as a mindfulness instructor and bodyworker for an integral treatment center, I am well aware that my social position as a White woman, teaching citizens how to suffer less, makes earning a living possible in integral healthcare. And what about learning traditional women's medicine*?* Am I not "playing Indian?" This is both a fact and a

[38] Bavo. "Neo-Liberalism with Dutch Characteristics: The Big Fix-Up of the Netherlands and the Practice of Embedded Cultural Activism." In *Culture and Contestation in the New Century*, edited by Marc James Leger. Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2011.

caricature I have had to confront over the years; not from the people who invite me to learn from them, but from scholarly lineages that are rightfully critical of cultural appropriation and new age spirituality. Critiques of cultural and spiritual appropriation in the marketplace are not new, but we might need new ways of thinking about how we relate to each other's cultural and spiritual knowledges as we strengthen shared political commitments.

In many ways, conversations with Sylvia only widened the gaps between these conflicts. While I first went to Sylvia for personal healing, I eventually asked her to mentor me. I won't call myself a full apprentice within this tradition, because it felt slightly askance to my particular location as a migrant White woman with ancestral roots spread over several continents. While what I mean by this will be more fully fleshed out in Chapter Two, my ancestral roots are not in Mexico. Many of the practices related to Aztec *curanderismo* are related to claiming Mexican-Indigenous roots and ancestry through dance, prayer, and ceremony. This is sometimes problematic when Sylvia publicly speaks on "de-colonial healing;" Pueblo people indigenous to New Mexico will ask how these healing practices can be de-colonial when they see these practices as essentially Mexican, reinforcing what they see as Chicanx settler colonialism. I don't think these conflicts are something to be smoothed over, forgotten, or taken lightly.

At the same time, over and over, Sylvia kept saying, "We don't care what your skin color is or where you're from. It matters that you show up." Here, Sylvia is acknowledging how identities are both constant (what we represent; the social positions we inevitably occupy) and generative; identities and actions are *also* fluid, performative, and complex. Within this statement, there is an urgency that exceeds critique, forms of emergent affect, which require embodied thinking beyond critiques of cultural appropriation or ways that

Philip Deloria calls “playing Indian.” The difference I hope to flesh out, here, is centered around individualism, individual power, healing, and appropriation. If “playing Indian” is, according to Deloria, a form of post-modern play that is simultaneously frivolous and a form of identity-making, leading actors into “contradiction and irony,” play can make dissonances seem more harmonious.[39] Playing Indian as form of creative identity making holds the danger of prying apart questions of inequality, failing to critique power structures of whiteness and settler colonialism. The danger, here, is two-fold: either remaining unaware of power structures at play, or to entrenching oneself within rigid critiques of liberal multiculturalism that make border crossing—in service of aspiring beyond neoliberal selfhood—impossible.

There are so many paradoxes at play, here. I am grateful that Sylvia and many other teachers in my life generously share their knowledge with me. Operating from a place of solidarity and mutual respect for these teachings and ongoing relationships is my first priority. I use the present tense here because what is most important to recognize here is that this relationship is ongoing and evolving. I’m not “dropping in” to study Sylvia and the Kalpulli Izkalli. Scholarship is colonial when relationships and concerns are not mutual and shared. When I take knowledge for profit and gain, it is colonial. A woman I met at a conference said that local people in Papau New Guineau call ethnographic researchers “seagulls;” they swoop in and take. When researchers aren’t responsible to community relationships and shared, entangled eco-systems of violences in ongoing ways, we are

[39] Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, pg. 184.

complicity with colonial technologies. Knowledge is taken, largely for the benefit of the researcher.

As I sought to theorize border crossings and felt interactions with more-than-human worlds (ancestors, planets, plants, etc.), the issue became confronting limitations of scholarly writing and research based in liberal humanist frameworks. I felt trapped within institutionalized boxes of agreement that limited ontological possibilities for what was actually happening, or what could be possible. The frameworks didn't have enough force, enough life, enough relational possibility. I spoke with Sylvia often about the problems of writing a dissertation in which I felt bound by legibility within my field. When my writing was explaining, writing *about*, it became increasingly theoretical, losing its affective center. I couldn't find a voice that could express the complexity of writing as a located, but dislocated self.[40] Over and over, Sylvia told me that I couldn't write a de-colonial dissertation from a colonized mind, and would have to find a way to speak in service of life, instead of standing outside of it. She said to me:

> *So how is this [dissertation] going to serve you and humanity, the human race? Because you are a part of this, not separate. How is it going to serve the earth, preserve the water, the fire, the wind, those elements that we are made of that are also right here, part of this universe, so how's it going to serve that?*

My method, then, necessarily became the act of recording paradoxes of healing and de-colonial justice as they revealed themselves. Writing became a necessary immersion into lived tensions that occurred during ordinary moments between people inhabiting queasy, unsettled worlds. You might call this ethnography. While I initially interviewed healers and

---

[40] By this, I mean the lived experience of muddling between multiple and conflicting worlds; between being a bodyworker who feels with embodied experience that make "no sense," and an academic trained for clarity and critique.

directors from Kalpulli Izkalli, Solace Crisis Treatment Center, and the New Mexico Women's Foundation to determine a direction, I began to record lived experiences as a massage therapist and teacher of various subjects and practices in very complicated, fraught circumstances. Field work became a lived experiment in what it means to navigate and inhabit queasy spaces together when we re-locate ourselves together *within* the colonial wound. Instead of thinking about these individuals and organizations as my "subjects," I am interested in overlapping concerns, conflicting terms, and emergent frameworks that emerge during my regular working day. Using my bodywork clients, students at IAIA, and the healers of the Kalupulli Izkalli as the subjects of my dissertation would repeat the violences of colonial ethnography. The alternative, applying a post-structural lens back on settler-colonial new-age practices, felt equally guilty of maintaining colonial power relations. Instead, my own body emerges at a point of contact between multiple and conflicting worlds, resisting speaking from a position that seeks to justify or make traditional women's healing practices more legible to dominant power structures.

As I sifted through critical race, Marxist, affect, Chicana, and Indigenous feminist texts, I was inspired by the work of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Laura Perez, Gloria Anzaldúa, Leanne Simpson, Judith Butler, Kathleen Stewart, and many others whose words demonstrate that sensate awareness, affect, and relational intimacy provide a necessary corrective to binaries perpetuated by Western critique. My focus shifted from binary swings of right and wrong, to Donna Haraway's question, *who is available to think with*?[41] Instead of *my* body, or the cultural practices of Chicana and Indigenous women, the object of

[41] Donna Haraway, Staying With the Trouble. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

analysis that emerges are shared relational spaces in which bodies push and grate against neoliberal frameworks that manage what it means to "heal a self," existing within constantly shifting eco-systems of power and dominance. Within this particular dissertation, the collaborators include Chicana, women of color, and Indigenous feminists, affect, science study and de-colonial scholars, artists, writers, and healers. These actors don't come together naturally or easily. Since these philosophies spring from endless social positions based upon race, gender, and colonial positions, they don't share the same ontological and political commitments. My goal is not speak for any group, but to animate a conversation from my own lived location, my own here-ish, in its many forms. Emerging social justice paradigms, such Adrienne Maree Brown's *Emergent Strategy* imagines how crossing borders and boundaries, in pursuit of equal justice, can contribute to the richness and complexity of diversity of social justice movements. For Brown, relationships are everything, and contribute to new ways that we might imagine building sacred solidarities in pursuit of collective liberation.

Among the communities and individuals I engage with in my research, conflicting meanings around words such as "healing," "vulnerability" and "resilience" emerged to provide clues for what it might mean to *feel one's way* as an embodied act of co-emergent strategy that resists colonial, neoliberal citizenship. If one of the foundational wounds of colonization is the imposition of bounded individualism, de-colonial healing practices are incompatible within liberal humanist frameworks. The very notion of a "self" is part of the wound itself, arising from a long history of defining who is considered to be a "person" worthy of rights. While neoliberal and liberal humanist narratives would have us believe that we are solely responsible for our personal suffering and wellbeing, I am more interested in

writing through tensions at the border between thinking and embodied acts of caring, healing, creating, and acting in service of "others," both human and non human. What happens when individuals and communities push back against the colonial foundations of thought which reproduce social precarity and violence, while simultaneously attending to the wounding inflicted upon individual bodies?

You realize on the first day of class that because of your course title, Bruja Feminism, that everyone thinks you will be a badass woman of color. Instead they find you, a skinny middle aged White woman from Santa Fe with brown hair and thrift store clothing. You see yourself through their eyes: another White hippie professor teaching de-colonial theory. You feel the skepticism, but they greet you warmly anyhow.

A student tells her that her neighbor spits on her door every time she passes her apartment.

I know because I asked her, she said. She calls me a bruja.

Weeks later, when you know this student better, you share your insecurities out loud because a friend—a race activist—told you that's it's probably not your place to teach this class because you're White and it's not your job. The woman throws back her head, laughs, and says she thought the same thing. But they talk theory, share books, and the conversation turns to the frame of wounding, the ways they could possibly wound each other, and the anger they feel when someone tells them they can't or they shouldn't because of who someone else thinks that they are. They talk about the source of that wounding, the common enemy they both call neoliberal citizenship. They talk about the difficulties of learning how to share space together when those spaces have been so fraught with violence, so dominated by hierarchies of colonialism and whiteness.

Susto, she says, we are all swimming in a culture of shock.

Fraught moments like these take the form of short, *senseur* vignettes that frame more theoretical chapters. There are moments that can be felt and ethnographically recorded. It is *susto*, the shock and violence of existing within cultural limits and terms so violent and alienating that we have few other options than to *feel* our way through what we can't name. How is one to think, speak, and create, when goals for wholeness and healing collude with consumer capitalism, bounded individualism, and personal entitlement attached to the

American Dream? I am interested in (dis)embodied border spaces inhabited when one detaches, either by choice or force, from illusions of wholeness, progress, and the American Dream. What possibilities exist in-between self/not-self, embodiment/disembodiment, language and being? What new attachments, stories, and commitments emerge out of queasy, fragmented spaces? Without conceptual frameworks for imagining these experiences as potential moments for expanding kinship with life, we return again and again to the cruel optimisms of the individual self, bound inexorably to capitalist exploitation.

Necessarily, the *senseur* writing voice moves between first, second, and third person voices, disorienting the location of both the writing self and the reader. Identities and selves blur. In other words, my position as an ethnographer is determined by my own position from which I look out, my own vulnerability as a specific, living organism. At the same time, the urgency of our planetary condition requires that I look out at social violences in order to track them. Povinelli calls this position "hereish," in which the radically local is a site through which we neither scale up to totalizing discourses of the "planetary" or the "human," but adjust the lens toward "quasi-events," or condensed, affective spaces in which liberal violence is felt, endured, and sometimes transfigured.[42] Understanding is always partial, never total. By recording pressure points of friction that emerge around me as part of my ordinary life, my goal is to magnify "pressure points" around narratives, images, and practices that circulate around what it means both to heal within, and to resist, the cruel terms of neoliberal citizenship embedded within various configurations of capitalism such as late liberalism and settler colonialism. More pointedly, my goal is to illuminate how bodies

[42] Povinelli, Elizabeth. *Geontologies.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016 pg. 21.

manage and redefine the terms of social violence, subverting and transforming what it means to exist as a human being. I'm not interested in proving who is on the right side of a socially constructed binary, but to expand possibilities for cross-disciplinary alliances that include sensory forms of kinship as key to contesting the barbarism of ongoing exploitation of bodies and land.

In Gaile Pohlhaus's essay, *Knowing Without Borders and the Work of Epistemic Gathering*, recognizes that all positions, all identities, can only provide partial knowledge. Interoceptive knowledge gathered and presented as a *senseur*, then, is not meant to argue for a universal way of knowing and healing, but to contribute to a more vibrant conversation about what it could mean to be both singularly embodied and allied with resistance against violent and exploitative social conditions. There is a conflict here; while embodied, felt experience is typically sidelined as "irrational" or primitive within liberal humanist frameworks, sensory experience is not necessarily a de-colonial corrective. It can simply be sensation, the felt sense of the body, that can be reflexive and colonial within consciousness that continues to believe that it is bounded by "self" and the confines of one's skin. It can be another tool of "self" interested in a fuller experience of neoliberal self-hood, expanding one's personal agency. I am not nearly the first to write about this; Women of color, Chicana, and Indigenous writers have always been at work in this arena. Contemporary work in feminist science studies also provides connective tissue between multiple worlds, for thinking with the shared, embodied wounds of liberal humanism and colonization. While the work of Anna Tsing, Donna Haraway, Judith Butler, and Karen Barad provide connective threads throughout my writing, they are not meant to provide a foundational theoretical framework from which to "include" the voices of Chicana and Indigenous women. Instead,

this project imagines a framework and vocabulary that both theorizes and models tensions between auto-poietic (self) and sympoietic (collective) consciousness concerned with decolonizing what it means to heal. Instead of taking a static position from which to argue a point, this project crosses boundaries between individual bodies, scholarly disciplines, theories, and ethnicities, while respecting the vitality of singularities and differences.

M. Jacqui Alexander might call this process a move from neoliberal citizenship to "sacred citizenship,"[43] in which solidarities and understandings are forged across differences in order to forge a "metaphysics of interdependence."[44] She argues that forging solidarity across differences does not mean giving up identities and oppositional politics; rather, building solidarity means shifting away finality of difference that is one-sidedly oppositional, that require us to "genuflect at the alter of alterity and separation."[45] In other words, plotting an imaginary that can imagine radical singularity, difference, and solidarity means forging critical frameworks that can accommodate bodies, solidarities, and commitments that grate against each other's differences. This is far from a smooth process, but a necessary one if we are to imagine shifting affective states of alterity and alienation to belonging to each other. While the notion of the "sacred" has been much maligned in secular feminist lineages, my goal is to make the dissertation process itself a process of giving birth to something alive and sovereign unto itself. In other words, arguing that the word "sacred" has a place in feminist scholarship is not the point at all, and reinforces binaries of thought that legitimate a hierarchical ranking system of binaries and values. My intention is to write *through* this trap.

[43] M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
[44] ibid, pg. 6.
[45] ibid, pg. 5

Embodying Non-Analogous Frameworks

> "The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the dedicated Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e. the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e. the standards of thought) no longer exist" [46]

One of the primary tool of totalitarianism is building mass support for a central narrative of what's wrong and how to fix it. Dissenters are silenced through master narratives. Truth is a trick. Academia is complicit; we present our own counter narratives and ideologies, using language that only *we* can understand. The same poststructural arguments meant to undo neoliberal narratives are appropriated by the totalitarian project; journalistic narratives become "fake news," grounds for rejecting climate change science and race critique. Opposing narratives can be dismissed as ideological and biased. Language can't reveal any final truth, only used to endless manipulate constructions of reality. Critical race theories have been used on the left to point out structural violences, and also used by the right to point to how academia has alienated itself from the concerns of the white, rural folk who voted for Trump. Given these conditions, I wonder how to speak in a way that is critical, but feels, acts, moves, and writes *with* a collectively rising, throaty howl. How do we inhabit this strange world in which the solid ground of rational truth is crumbling before our eyes, even as we witness increasing global warming, violence, and extraction? While the impulse to survive and save might be to frantically do more, of what use is this if it reinforces the same traps of thinking and being? What possibilities exist for inhabiting paradoxes of

[46] Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism.* New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1948.

individual and collective healing if we are not trying to *fix* something, or frantically save our broken democracy?

In order to theorize how human subjects are moved to ethical action, Hannah Arendt outlined distinctions between thinking and acting. She considered thinking a primarily private, subjective act because it happens in isolation of one's own mind. While thinking belongs to the ethical sphere because it produces judgement (which can then produce action), she argued that action belongs to the collective, political realm. For Arendt, both thought and action are impotent unless they become generalizable and collective. In other words, thoughts and actions that are largely personal and private matter less than collective, political, moral action. For example, she argues that Thoreau's act of civil disobedience in the form of moving into a cabin and not paying taxes are largely private political actions that have no social force. Arendt's perspective is important to consider because she recognized that thought, as a private and personal activity, is only as useful, or ethical, as the collective action that it produces.

Arendt's theory of thinking/acting, however, is of limited use in expanding beyond binaries of being based in liberal humanist frameworks of rights and recognition. Elana Loizidu's *Dreams and the Political Subject* critiques Arendt, arguing that personal affects and dreams matter when considering when and how to act, and uses Rosa Parks as an example. Park's indignation, or whatever personal affects arose for her in that moment, prompted her to remain in her seat, despite her activist training. She wasn't *just* a tool of resistance. In her reading of Arendt in *Parting Ways*, Judith Butler argues that Arendt didn't fully maintain these distinctions, but failed to fully account for the fact that "sociality

precedes and enables what is called thinking."[47] In other words, Rosa Parks not only kept her seat not only because her body had been "stewing" in the social (which was pressing toward civil rights), but because she was not acting alone. There were many other Black individuals at that time who were also holding their seats, but were less sympathetic as a face of a movement. Park's affects and actions were not just the result of a lone individual, but inexorably bound within both an inner plurality of "selves" as well as networks of others supporting her actions. Butler argues that parsing thinking and action from each other maintains a body/mind distinction which reproduces hegemonic power and language structures. Within Arendt's framework, ethics remain self-exalting, self-righteous, self-knowing. Ethics remain trapped within analogous frameworks that limit possibilities for relationality and new forms of social life to emerge. If that, then this.

Instead, Butler considers the affective, embodied *force* behind resistance and disobedience a space for considering how struggles for dignity can reveal affective spaces that exceed recognition. If recognition is the process by which self and other are defined and separated by norms and identity categories that produce "you's" and "we's," then scholars must beware of these colonial, dialectical traps of thinking. Instead, how might we think about what Butler calls "poiesis," or embodied self-making, as an act that exceeds liberal forms of reason and recognition? In other words, moments in which the "self" must find agency when it has been misrecognized, made "other," and abject, are ripe spaces of potential for imagining new ways of being and belonging. Instead of thinking about poiesis as another form of narcissism, Butler sees this act as grating against all normative categories for being

[47] Alena Loizidou in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, pg. 130.

human. In other words, moments in which we are unintelligible, do not belong, and are dispossessed of our humanity, are moments in which we re-make our lives in creative relationship with others. We create new forms of being and belonging that challenge what it means to be "rational," to be "ethical," to be trapped by our histories and imposed identities.

In this way, poiesis is not an act of "self," of autopoiesis, but an act that is always in relationship with social worlds that act upon it, that move along and with other selves. Less calculated than relational, sensory acts move toward something unknown, rather than personal peace or transcendence. Butler argues that transcendence of "self" is neither desirable nor possible, though co-poietic moments of singular force give rise to renewed possibilities for agency and collectivity that are embodied and alive, eluding recognition and definitions. I am using the word co-poiesis, or sympoiesis, in the way that Donna Haraway[48], and Bracha Ettinger use it; as fertile moments of being and becoming that cross boundaries of rigid identities, roles, and borders. Meeting suffering becomes a motivating force for ending it, or finding collective ways to touch and inhabit that which is shared. In these moments of feeling and being *with*, actions and movements become motivated by *something* that eludes capture. Here, I am interested in an ethic that can only be glimpsed in fragments; in fleshy in-between gasps and movements.

In many ways, healing practices can support Hannah Arendt's distinction between the private and the political. If healing a self, especially for profit, is focused on subjective well-being, it's likely that this activity is not political or supporting collective justice. Without question, healing practices, literature, and visual culture can be complicit with settler

---

[48] Donna Haraway theorizes sympoiesis in *Staying with the Trouble*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

colonial, multiculturalist and neoliberal power structures. Chapter One, *Contextualizing the Self who Heals*, magnifies tensions around healing practices and colonial frameworks that drive the healing industrial complex. While it would be appropriate to apply a constructivist, Marxist analysis to the self-help and healing culture of Northern New Mexico, this analogous framework isn't complete. Frameworks that center a knowing, historicizing self, cannot capture the complexity of what's actually happening in felt, embodied, constructed and hybridized bodies.

Within certain critical and binary frameworks, there is no ethical place for me to stand, or to "world" as a settler. My racial/ethnic/settler position makes me an invasive species wherever I go. Genetically, I have no ancestral bloodline that allows me to return anywhere. I am as Surinamese as European, both slave and Dutch land owner. I am as much working class poor as intellectual class, as much queer as heterosexual. The only place of real belonging for me is "in-between," or what Elizabeth Povinelli refers to as an "alternative spiritual public"[49] based in a common commitment to care, or to tend. What is that common commitment, if not based in racial, class, ethnic, or gender identities? What does it mean to "show up" for ourselves and each other when every identity, every position, has been bio-politicized and constructed on colonial terms? Identity politics based in self-reflexivity, in either confessing one's crimes of identity and privilege *or* oppressive wounding often reproduce the same colonial logic from which they spring. Andrea Smith argues that this practice springs from colonial violences of recognition and ethnographic entrapment based in liberal humanist scholarship. The practice of identifying ones-self within a hierarchy of

---

[49] Povinelli, Elizabeth. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

privilege based in race, class, and gender rests in an epistemological foundation of "self" that is ultimately a trap. If who we are in any given moment shifts given the context, there is no sharp divide between oppressed and oppressor. The practice reproduces dynamics of oppression; the self reflexive subject measures and judges those seeking to become self reflexive, "woke" citizens. While the self reflexive subject remains "indeterminate and hence self-determining,"[50] they are reproducing the foundation of white supremacy which is to continue to produce knowable, racialized subjects. If the goal is not to make ourselves more knowable and legible to a system of measurement that bestows or denies our humanity, what alternatives do we have for imagining a world we might want to inhabit?

While Andrea Smith argues that self-reflective activism is crucial for historicizing and undermining white supremacy and settler colonialism, it is incomplete. It is lacking imagination of the *possible*. If liberation and justice is what we seek, then we need to begin to imagine ourselves not as self-determining, self-reflexive subjects, but as selves in radical relationship with all beings and things. The "self" becomes dislocated and unintelligible in processes of radical relationality. What is "bad," seen in black and white, meant to be resisted, can be engaged in new ways. My goal is not to prove who is on the right side of an imaginary binary, but to expand creative projects and cross-disciplinary alliances that are sensate, animated, and differentiated. What possibilities can we imagine and create? In other words, what affects are we stewing in right now that might provide force to create new, alive, and more just social realities?

[50] Audra Simpson, Andrea Smith, editors. *Theorizing Native Studies*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. pg. 221.

Collective agreements around self, time, and space, continue to be bound within historical erasures, denial, and optimisms bound within liberal humanist laws, philosophies, and current forms of racialized capitalism. Hierarchies of what it means to be fully human are coded within these institutions and narratives, defining who has a right to be protected and who does not. As American Studies scholars, we are trained to historicize violence, to trace these histories and name how history marks the present. At the same time, deconstructive critique based in this logic can only be partial. The past continues in the present, marking our bodies and our actions, and is in constant process of construction and deconstruction. While we are all marked by histories of gender, race, and class, there is also something alive, charged and present within cracks, spaces, and fissures. We are both bio-politicized and much more than we can imagine. Scholarship that does not wrestle within this paradox—the uneasy toggling between the particular and the universal—inevitably reinforce status quo on multiple levels. Eve Sedwick warns against the dangers of a "hermeneutics of suspicion,"[51] or Jameson's dictate to "always historicize."[52] Christina Sharpe warns against the dangers of theoretical models that re-inscribe what Sylvia Wynter calls, "narratively condemned status,"[53] or scholarly work that primarily deconstructs legacies of violence within legible frames of consciousness that reproduce limited terms of knowledge and understanding. Within these narrow, categorical terms—blind to how knowledge itself has been colonized and constructed—scholarship becomes static, unavailable to the needs of the poor and the

[51] Paul Ricoeur quoted in Eve Sedwick's *Touching Feeling*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, pg. 124.

[52] Fredric Jameson quoted in Eve Sedwick's *Touching Feeling*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, pg. 125.

[53] From "An Open Letter to my Colleagues" after the LA race riots of 1992.

environment. In other words, the Jenga game of pulling away opponent's pieces can leave everyone with nothing, or at least an unsatisfying emptiness that the game has been decided.

What kinds of methodologies might imagine otherwise, speak otherwise, might yoke the imagination outside of linear temporality and individualism to imagine new forms of collectivity and identities? This dissertation is an auto-theoretical experiment in writing meant to both destabilize racialized power structures while animating possibilities for dwelling together between *always* unsettled worlds. It's an experiment with traditional academic methodologies—tracing long lineages of scholars wrestling with these questions—and creative praxis meant to animate something *else*. My writing toggles between theory and sensory worlds not as a means to final truth, but as an experiment in tracing partial connections and conversations. It is animated by affects and borders, poking at collective agreements and discourses around what it might mean to "heal." It is an experiment in crossing borders of every kind in order to meet each other and imagine otherwise, without the comfort of truth, other than the fact that worlds and bodies are always dynamic and changing. In other words, this project aims to break collective agreements of reality in order confront paradoxical and painful dilemmas about what it means to exist together within complicated and tenuous eco-systems.

Similarly, Bruno Latour's essay, *Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?* argues that critical scholarship has been losing its political and social relevance by failing to provide constructive alternatives to problems of liberal humanism and representation. Instead of engaging divergent perspectives for generating vibrant conversation, the role of deconstructive and analogous critique is to *de-bunk,* reinforcing binary positions and oppositions. While deconstructive scholarship remains critically relevant by unveiling power

relations, binary critical practice narrows the field of conversation because those who do not agree with the critic are philosophically wrong and not worthy of inclusion. Instead, feminist science scholars Donna Haraway and Anna Lopenhauer-Tsing join Latour in arguing for critical practice that "nurtures and protects matters of concern."[54] Instead of taking up the position of the knowing critic, what happens when multiple perspectives speak and inform each other?

In *This Bridge We Call Home*, Gloria Anzaldúa and Ana Louise Keating call for a trans -dialogical reading practice, which puts polyvocal dialogue and vulnerability at the heart of scholarly practice.[55] Anzalúda and Keating expand the concept of *nepantla* beyond Chicana and women of color feminism, in order to open space beyond concrete notions of "self" and identity. A foundational premise of *nepantla* is that there can be no such thing as "home," or truly safe and secure embodiments, because those embodiments lack movement and life. Instead, the fragile act of risking oneself through vulnerability and spiritual openness is to reach out to "others" within shared, and necessarily unstable and precarious systems. Instead of fighting for more material security and recognition, there is a stated concern for embodying another kind of *conocimineto* that can express the fire of anger, fear and grief in the face of instabilities created by neoliberal power structures: poverty, global warming, and war. This argument points toward an ethics of relationality not based in oppositionality, but as a complex set of conflicting negotiations not limited or bound by notions of a cohesive self, or knowable reality.

---

[54] Bruno Latour. "Why Has Critique Lost Its Steam?" *Critical Inquiry 30,* Winter, 2004.

[55] Ana Louise Keating. *Transformation Now: Toward a Post-Oppositional Identity Politics.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), pg. 65.

While I draw upon the word *nepantla*, I am interested in developing the metaphor of a kaleidoscope as way to experiment with ethnography, literary, visual, and spatial analyses around activities in which something resembling a "self" emerges: a thinking, writing, speaking, creative, sensory self. People doing *something* within a social life that appears chaotic, unfixed, and in constant motion. The metaphor of the kaleidoscope comes from Sylvia Ledesma, in an interview:

> And all those people in the world that some say are bad and evil and ugly but they're just energies, and they're trying to find a balance. We just don't know…So if you can imagine, or compare it to a kaleidoscope… you turn it and see all these colors and they're going all over the place, and moving and all over, then, slowly… it takes shape and it forms a beautiful design.[56]

What I'm interested in constructing here is an invitation to the reader to feel and imagine how embodied presence and history are constantly co-creating each other in a dance that is not predictable or knowable. Through co-eventing reality, especially under pressure, a future is inevitably being constructed, but can never be finished. While a kaleidoscope may present particular moments of beauty and stillness, it will inevitably give way to movement and chaos again. The chaos, or trauma, we first encounter in becoming disoriented from our usual perspective is not necessarily something we want to see or feel. All of the pieces are in play while the kaleidoscope is turning, but it takes some willingness and imagination to wait for a new pattern to emerge. It's uncomfortable to think *with* multiplicity and dissonance long enough for some kind of agency to arise within the unknown. As academics and

[56] Sylvia Ledesma, interviewed by Kirsten Mundt, Albuquerque, New Mexico, September 2017.

thinking, conscious humans, we are destined to run into our own resistance, as I certainly have in this process. My hope is that the constant movement of ideas will help re-define and reshape what connection, solidarity, and resistance could look like in its most alive and co-poietic moments.

The metaphor of a kaleidoscope is useful for imagining how unlikely disciplines and thinkers come together to forge something new from the chaotic and unknown. Contrary to both liberal multiculturalist and separatist identity politics, the idea is not to prove which position is right, but to see what each piece has to offer an emergent design. The goal is not "truth," but an animated paradigm meant to fall away to chaos, movement, and agency. By inhabiting unresolvable paradoxes and tensions, the intention is to confront these spaces, not to resolve them. There is no center, except for the resurgent force of something that lives between the cracks of reality. There is no certainty here, but there are breathing bodies—mine and yours (the reader) feeling our way through colonial tangles of thinking.

The metaphor of the kaleidoscope creates a possibility for recording emergent patterns within a contained space for the purposes of this dissertation. Contrary to Deleuze's rhizome, there are no lines of flight. In turning the sphere, each colorful piece of the kaleidoscope jumbles and scrambles with other pieces to create new patterns. There is no resolution, no resting place, no final image, no transcendence. The kaleidoscope presents shards of reality, chaos in transit, of patterns and moments of beauty that change and pass. By investigating how meanings and attachments are forged within tense, queasy border zones between self and other, power and vulnerability, embodiment and language, worlding and unworlding, this framework is meant to contest well-meaning health, economic and environmental frameworks that perpetuate social solutions based in liberal humanist ethics.

On some level, kaleidoscopic consciousness shares some parallels with what Donna Haraway and Karen Barad call diffractive praxis; a scholarly move away liberal humanist traps of reflexivity and objective critique. Instead of placing myself at the center of knowing, I locate myself as a full, sensory participant within a dissonant multitude of voices sharing similar concerns. This perspective, based in quantum physics and theorized in Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway*[57], considers how entanglements of difference create textures, affects, and complex relationships in which the writer is also embedded. Phenomenon and perspectives can be observed, but any kind of representation that is analogical, that presents cause and effect, will produce a knower and a "known." These analogous methodologies[58] reflect the mirror back on the writer/scholar attempting to have enough distance to get a real handle on what's "real." Donna Haraway considers diffractive methodology a starting point for conceptualizing feminist scholarship as a specific form of world-making in which objectivity is not produced from subject/object distance, but from responsive consideration of physical and cultural phenomena.

Diffraction (sympoiesis) and refraction (kaleidescope) are fundamentally different, however, and produce a necessary tension for my project. If we place a "knower" as the central viewer turning the kaleidescope, the kaleidescopic merely refracts lights off of objects deemed real and solid. By turning the kaleidescope, reality can be seen from different perspectives, but interaction with new truths does not fundamentally alter the viewer. Things look different, but the viewer is untouched and untransformed. This kind of knowledge

[57] "Diffractive praxis" was first conceptualized by Donna Haraway in her 1992 essay, *The Promises of Monsters*. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), Karen Barad acknowledges Haraway's contribution, and applies this perspective through the lens of quantum physics.

[58] Here, Haraway and Barad present their work in contrast to Fredric Jameson's call for analogous cultural theory in *The Political Unconscious.*

squares nicely with Newtonian physics and a mechanistic view of the world, which also translates well to liberal multiculturalist practices. With refraction, the viewer changes the reality of that which is being viewed, which poses a fundamental problem for representation of "Others," or realities represented by the kaleidescope. The "self" seeing, turning, and interacting with the world as the viewer fundamentally leaves power untouched. In other words, within this paradigm of seeing, there is still a universalist, hegemonic seer.

From the point of view of diffractive praxis, the viewer and that which is viewed are completely linked. Contrary to refraction, which presumes a viewer, diffraction is only evident on quantum levels. There's no metaphor for understanding, since the act of looking and interacting with the world on a quantum scale dislocates the viewer. Since we can only see one dimension of reality, our reference conditions what we can see. Only by shifting one's point of reference, by moving from macro scale to quantum scale, is real transformation of "self" possible. With diffraction, the very nature of the act of looking changes things. Diffraction is a direct manifestation of the uncertainty principle. There is no single point, but many points. The light waves goes through many points, determined by specific location. What happens here is that light going through point A is interfering with point D. What's coming through is changed by the interaction with other points. Diffraction alters light, but refraction doesn't.

For example, Mark Rifkin's *Beyond Settler Time* draws upon Einstein's theory of General Relativity in order to challenge commonsense notions that time is universal and shared. He argues that Indigenous people inhabit a double bind in which they are either relegated to the past, or to a present which is incongruent and violent to native versions of reality. Settler concepts of shared time and space define limits of what it means to share

space, clearing the way for smooth flows of capital and "progress." According to Rifkin, there can be no shared, mutual "now" since we all inhabit singular perceptions and locations. Instead of a continuous unfolding of time, temporal formations have their own rhythms—"patterns of consistency and transformation emerge immanently out of the multifaceted and shifting relationships that constitute those formations and out of interactions among those formations."[59] In other words, the General Theory of Relativity makes universalist perspectives impossible. No reality can be completely shared or agreed upon. This tension reflects a larger tension in physics between Einstein's General Theory of Relativity and Quantum Mechanics.

My problem is not one of needing to side with either argument, but with how scholarship produces either static knowledge or de-materialized abstractions. What has been confounding to me is that the laws of quantum physics alone may fail to provide traction for confronting racialized power structures and paradigms, and how they continue to cause wounding. There is a body—a conditioned body that is both socially determined *and* charged with possibility. What possibilities exist for the "self" within the truth of chaos and constant change? Vulnerability may be our fundamental human condition, but we must also confront how surplus vulnerability is assigned to certain groups of people, affecting *singular* beings. The problem for me with diffractive praxis on its own is that it can be accused of colluding with White feminism, spiritual transcendence, and an inability to address Indigenous and women of color concerns. It can be accused of moving too far into universalized concepts that don't provide enough friction for justice.

[59] Mark Rifkin. *Beyond Settler Time*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. pg. 2.

As scholars, we are constantly moving between the universal and the particular, and neither binary is particularly productive for nurturing new configurations of solidarity. By putting incommensurable ideas together in conversation, I am interested in illuminating a moment in which materialist concerns for justice can interact with relational, spiritual, and more-than human desires for intimacy, connection, and belonging. My goal is not to prove who is on the right side of an imaginary binary, but to expand possibilities for cross-disciplinary alliances that include sensory and spiritual forms of kinship as key to contesting the barbarism of ongoing exploitation of bodies and land.

Chapters

Grounding this abstract inquiry are how definitions of "self" circulate within terms such as "resilience," "vulnerability," and "redemption." How do these terms operate, and do they reify or contest human exceptionalism and individualism bound within colonial capitalism? At the same time, what new possibilities are created in spaces that resist neoliberal notions of healing and selfhood? Anna Tsing hints at methodological possibilities for healing in her Reprise of *In the Real of the Diamond Queen.* Here, she considers how narratives of personal spirituality and mysticism were appropriated by Indonesia's New Order to promote tourism through spirituality. In tourist literature, newspapers, and official discourses, the authenticity of "timeless spirituality," promoted individual responsibility, supporting the violent political project of the Sakarno era. Tsing argues, however, that spiritual forms of expression such as hands on healing and poetry, reveal *not* timeless spirituality, but sites of resistance, refusal, and criticism. Similarly, Elizabeth Povinelli

argues that caring practices are subversive, active in creating “alternative spiritual publics.”[60] How is this so?

Each chapter wrestles with a static floating signifier (what a self “is”), and possibilities for what a self “does” outside of liberally constructed versions of itself. If constructing a self depends upon agreements of language related to what it means to *be* and to *act*, each chapter will place words, discourses, texts and thinkers in relationship to each other around concepts that are far from fixed. While each chapter engages and wrestles with traditional theoretical paradigms and structures, no resolution is possible within the dialogue itself. Instead of arriving at a satisfying conclusion or linear argument, chapters demonstrate the limits of the traditional scholarly form, or western knowledge production. By using verbs as grounding words that reflect what a self *does,* instead of *is,* I am inviting the reader into an experience of aisthesis, emergence, movement, and possibility within philosophical impasses. Instead of describing self and other, verbs provide a space in which something called a “self” emerges, engaging with activities that may or may not be “de-colonial,” according to various frameworks. The goal of my research is to highlight and magnify tensions that often fly under the radar when talking about “healing.” The field of behavioral health and wellness is full of people doing the work of serving others, but is not the same work as Indigenous/Chicana healing practices contesting Western hegemonies of thought and being. These paradigms point toward different possibilities for “self.”

Instead of taking the position of a knowing narrator, my goal is to embody and enflesh these emerging tensions and paradoxes in order to provide friction and traction for

---

[60] Elizabeth Povinelli. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

something new to emerge. Chapters are interspersed with *senseur* vignettes, meant to illuminate embodied, affective tensions that dialogue with theory, art, literature. In a way, the task is to meant to function as a non-hierarchical creative experimentation that does not reinforce hierarchical binaries: theory over poetry, rational over the felt/lived, allopathic medicine over *curanderismo*, or science over the felt sense. Nor do I aim to flip these binaries. Instead, I'm interested in confronting them by mucking about between worlds that are asking to be in dialogue with each other in order to move the reader out of linguistic/theoretical stasis and into movement.

Chapter One, *The Healing "Self" and the Healing Industrial Complex: Refusing Neoliberal Capture*, considers the word healing in relationship to colonial legacies of land theft and genocide. I will provide a foundation for thinking about and contextualizing healing practices that are non-analogous, non-binary, and embodied. Who is available to think with, when considering possibilities for ways of thinking and being that do not perpetuate the nature/culture divide and human exceptionalism coded both within colonialism and healing industrial complex? At the same time, what legacies of thought also allow for thought that does not flatten colonial, racialized differences that are the result of hierarchies of being? This chapter considers Sylvia Wynter's *de-colonial sciencia* as an ethical foundation for a collaborative multi-species feminist conversation that does not fall into traps of liberal multiculturalism or invisible White feminism.

Chapter Two, *Speaking/Telling Stories: Kaleidescopic Methodologies,* explores problems of speech, or writing, when trying to displace a cohesive, whole narrator that speaks either for self or other. Necessarily, this means theorizing literary and experimental uses of language that illuminate life lived between the political and the singular. When

Benjamin wrote the *Arcades Project*, his recordings of fragmented scenes and ordinary moments never became a finished project. If he had intended to string together these notes into a cohesive narrative, we'll never know. But his legacy gave rise to ficto-critical ethnographic methods of Michael Taussig, Kathleen Stewart, and Stephen Muecke, scholars who avoid *naming* things in favor of animated, lived affects. Writing becomes a living, creative act of animating the ordinary; what is lived and felt. Mixed genre auto-theories such as Norma Cantu's *Canicula*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*, Maggie Nelson's T*he Argonauts*, Linda Hogan's *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, and Gloria Anzaldúa's *La Frontera* provide examples of how literature performs the function of theory, making affective links between gendered and racialized colonialism, neoliberal capitalism, and human suffering. Since liberal humanism depends upon coherent narratives that define who and what can be considered rational and human, theorists in these traditions move readers beyond one's static capacity to "know," in order to illuminate aisthetic forms of grief, connection and kinship.

Chapter Three, *Reading: Redemption and Transformation as a Colonial Strategy*, explores the floating signifiers of "redemption" and "wholeness" and their complicity with neoliberal selfhood. There is a reciprocity between the one who speaks and the one who hears. When listening to stories of pain and violence, which stories are heard and recognized as "truthful," or transformative? How we to avoid colonial traps of recognition when hearing, or listening to, colonial, racist, violence with which we may be complicit? The memoir work of Linda Hogan crosses between theory/literature, self/not-self, in order to enflesh ghosts of "historical trauma." The goal is not healing as inclusion or transformation, but the embodiment of pain; the body continually torn apart by racism and colonialism.

While Hogan explores the pain of embodiment, the gaze and voice turns continually back upon oppressive violences. There is no final "healing" here, other than the act of speaking, of continuing to grieve and cry out against that which continues to wound. Drawing upon Hogan and other writers, what political possibilities exist for turning language of the body, as an interoceptive capacity of the individual, into collective possibilities?

Chapter Four, *Feeling Vulnerable: Resilience, Recognition, and Warrior Consciousness* considers various ways that floating signifiers such as vulnerability and resilience are deployed. If "vulnerability" is a paternalistic, colonial word typically applied to whole populations considered to be "at risk," how do we think about this word in relationship to how these conditions are produced and reproduced through power relationships? Especially when emotional vulnerability and permeability is considered to be a feminist virtue for building relationships and resilience. If "resilience" is associated with survival, or the capacity to absorb the shocks of life, how do we differentiate resilience from resistance, or recognizing ways that survival is hindered by unequal and racialized conditions? At the same time, what examples do we already have of cultural production and practices that live radically outside of colonial imaginaries for a "self" capable of absorbing and tolerating its violences?

Chapter Five, *Haptics/ Hapticality: Touch and Vital Agency* considers the act of touch as an inter-species relational possibility outside of settler constructs of self, time, and space. If touch can be both a violation of "self," as well as a site in which the self exists beside itself, it must be theorized outside of frameworks bound by Western sensory categories. This chapter considers how western neuroscience—through the study of *haptics*—colludes with neoliberal citizenship, and contrasts this with Fred Moten and Stefano

Harney's notion of *hapticality*. My presentation will consider trans-personal, embodied expressions of *hapticality*, contrasting this with "recognition" granted by setter states. If neoliberal policy is concerned with "fixing" in order to make whole, this chapter concerns itself with moments of sensory tenderness with pain, or what cannot be fixed.

The Conclusion, *Aspiration: The Haptical Imaginary and the Ancestral Speculative*, turns toward aspirational possibilities for critical theory and speculative writing as they continue to challenge boundaries of western scholarship, conceptions of self, and interspecies/generational collaboration. In what ways can scholarly writing think outside both the realm of what is considered "real," and disciplinary silos that typically separate disciplines from each other?

belonging
bəˈlôNG/
verb

1. to be the property of.
2. close or intimate relationship; a sense of *belonging*

worlding
ˈwəːldɪŋ/
verb

1.Being and Becoming[61]

2. a way of approaching wholes, systems, networks or culture in ways that account for emergence, the assemblage of disparate entities, and the experience or situation of being “in” something.[62]

[61] Martin Heidegger, *Being in Time*.
[62] Kathleen Stewart, 2014 class syllabus. https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/files/m6GpmqeUrg

On Tuesday, May 15th, the promatores traditional (healers, curanderas)[63] *of Kalpulli Izkalli, parishioners of the Holy Family Church Grotto, and the South Valley community of the Atrisco neighborhood gathered for the celebration of San Isidro and Santa Maria de la Cabeza for the blessing of the waters.*

Dressed in white, I drive from Santa Fe to participate in blessing the first day of planting, honoring the snaking acequias that flow through Albuquerque's South Valley. Historically, this community does not plant until after May 15th, after the blessing, after the water and the earth have been celebrated and honored.

The ceremony is presided over by an Anglo Catholic priest, a Mestiza elder, and long-time residents of the South Valley. After community elders say prayers for rain, for la vida, water as lifeblood of this community and for ancestral continuity. Community members, flower petals, and garden tools are blessed by the promatoras, with drums, copal smoke, and the honoring of the four directions.

On our walk, Sylvia says, "I have been doing this ceremony since the 1980's, when it was just me, when I would drive up from down south. We used to be considered witches, brujas by the church and the community. We have come a long way. The ceremony used to only honor San Isidro. But this ritual is the external express of the internal, the way we are connected to the earth and each other. It's important, even if there are contradictions. The earth, the water, connects us despite our differences. It's what ties us together."

This spring has been the driest in recorded history in New Mexico. Less drought than an ongoing shift of climate, the land is aridify-ing.

Hundreds of people: children, the elderly, parents, people on crutches and in wheelchairs, Indigenous dancers and drummers, process and sing behind banners of San Isidro and Santa Maria de la Cabeza, arriving at the mouth of the community acequia, where families with water rights take turns drawing from the flowing ditch to irrigate their fields.

I walk around with a basket of flower petals. People take small handfuls, and offer them to the water. The water carries thousands of flower petals downstream past giant cottonwoods and family fields.

East of the acequia, fields are being transformed into large, two story homes on one acre plots. The South Valley is rapidly gentrifying. On our way back to Central Avenue, we catch a glimpse of the shiny and controversial rapid bus system—the ART—meant to attract and retain creative, urban professionals.

A man close by tells me that his family has been here since the mid 1800's, and even before that, but they had settled on a land grant. Slowly, his family has been selling off their

[63] Sylvia Ledesma told me that one should never call themselves a curandera; that is a name bestowed by members of a community. Instead, promatora is the preferred term.

land. He says that even though this has been so, the community has still managed to keep out Walmart and Flying J's.

After the ceremony, as we arrive back at the church, I tell Sylvia how grateful I am to have been invited, to be part of such a beautiful ceremony. I say, "I had a moment of belonging here, of feeling a part of this community."

She says, "There is a lot of colonization in that statement. Think about that…"

***

"Some of my ancestors were given free land, Native people's land for free, and we were given access to credit. We were able to accrue wealth, whereas people of color were not."[64]

[64] Quote from Albuquerque participant in *The Heart of Gender Justice*, New Mexico Women's Foundation.

Chapter One—

Belonging and Healing: Refusing Colonial Capture

> "*This place that you're standing on, my ancestors shed blood here…. for you to enjoy the beautiful romanticized tourism hotspot…. beautiful Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is what it is because of the people who gave blood on this land. We cannot deny that, right?*
>
> *…That's why I'm up here today. I'm here on behalf of Tewa Women United and the Tewa people. I wanted to let you know that I'm here not to speak of politics of laws or rules but to talk to you about your hearts and the unconditional love that it's going to take to make change. For all of us, each and every one of us. Not only that, but you have to understand with unconditional love comes boundaries and expectations, so we don't feel resentments, so we don't hate, so we don't get jealous, so we don't step on each other's backs to get ahead of another.*
>
> *We don't do it from an 'I' perspective, we do it from a WE. That's who we are as women….*"[65]

In her speech given at the Santa Fe for the Women's March in January 2018, Beverly Billie links place making and settler colonialism, and how that legacy affects current relationships between Native communities and settlers in regard to political activism, or "making change." In tourist literature, art and literature, Northern New Mexico is billed as a tri-cultural destination that promises purity and healing of body and spirit through connecting with wild, unspoiled desert landscapes and people. Santa Fe in particular has profited from what I call the "healing industrial complex" built on romanticized narratives of history, nature, and Indigenous spiritualities that link place and body. From billboards on I-25 between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, to art and tourist magazines, images of women draped in turquoise, pueblo architecture, spa waters, and historic photos of the 1920's link

---

[65] Speech given by Beverly Billie on January, at the Women's March in Santa Fe. While the march organizers had invited representatives from Tewa Women United to speak at the event, the invited women were not able to attend. Tensions rose among the many Indigenous women in the crowd, and Beverly Billie gave a spontaneous speech. For more of the speech, see http://tewawomenunited.org/tewa-women-united-at-2018-santa-fe-womens-march/

romanticized images of "authentic" Indigenous people, architecture, and the pioneer spirit to Santa Fe. The Santa Fe imaginary is an artfully constructed simulation of place[66] that has turned much of Santa Fe into a romanticized simulacrum that is fantasy, or "Fanta Se." We can visit the plaza—the site of Billie's speech—for a dose of how "otherness" creates the fulcrum for whiteness and an anesthetized version of how Natives, Hispanics, and Anglos peacefully co-exist in spiritual harmony. This is the Santa Fe that, according to Fredric Jameson, is "forcibly yoked together and fused by the power of aesthetic ideology into what looks like an organic whole."[67] Neoliberal ideologies, hidden within liberal multiculturalism narratives related to "healing," profit from romanticized notions of place that depend upon obscuring histories of violence. Histories of bloodshed, gentrification, and land loss are not included in tourist literature and celebrated histories of tri-cultural harmony.

Links between romanticized notions of place, healing, and free market capitalism do not need to be pointed out to Mestiza and Indigenous communities in New Mexico. In 2016, the New Mexico Women's Foundation led a series of community focus groups around New Mexico. Fifty women from 42 women's organizations in Espanola, Albuquerque, Las Crucas, Silver City, Gallup, and Santa Fe were asked the following questions: Do larger issues such as patriarchy, racism, and historical trauma, etc. affect you and your community's daily health and economic situation? In what ways? While the foundation had previously focused on funding programs concentrated on economic justice, they learned that communities had their own frameworks for justice that were critical of philanthropic practices based in capitalism and western healthcare. For example, communities argued that

[66] See Chris Wilson's *The Myth of Santa Fe.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.
[67] Jameson, Fredric. *The Seeds of Time.* Irvine: The University of California Press, 1994, 168.

participating in an economic system that encourages massive wealth accumulation and token redistribution through philanthropy was no way to address inequality in New Mexico. They told researchers that social determinants impacting women's health such as environmental contamination, historical trauma, immigration status, and racial equity, were factors not only preventing communities from achieving wellbeing, but that focusing on health and economic security within current frameworks only perpetuates a capitalist system that actively reproduces social oppression.[68]

The communities interviewed by the New Mexico Women's Foundation team clearly named this dynamic, linking historical trauma to racialized, colonial capitalism. They called out the work of foundations, arguing that philanthropic money had been made through primitive accumulation, racism, and liberal labor and environmental laws. One participant observed:

> It forces you to think where the monies for philanthropic work like this come from. Capitalism, right? That's always part of the animal chasing its own tail. All we're really doing is putting band-aids that keep the system going."[69]

Instead of seeing colonial solutions for colonial problems, communities in New Mexico argued that they themselves held solutions for restorative health and justice, specifically through practicing culturally and community rooted healing practices. I point out the fact that many communities in New Mexico are already aware of this dynamic because I am not interested in pointing out what is obvious over the course of the dissertation. The intersectional analysis employed by the New Mexico Women's Foundation

[68] The Heart of Gender Justice, Executive Summary.

[69] pg. 44, The Heart of Gender Justice: Intersectionality, Economic Security, and Health Equity.

reflects what we generally know; health and wellbeing directly reflect structural violences related to access to economic opportunity, childcare, healthcare, etc. and which are unequally distributed across gender, "race," geographical, and class lines. We also know that these economic "opportunities" and institutionalized practices, in their complicity with environmental and human extraction and destruction, are unacceptable terms of neoliberal citizenship for many communities. Mirroring Billie's speech, the communities interviewed by the New Mexico Women's Foundation articulated a vision for healing that necessarily operates outside of colonial frameworks. Part of that vision means articulating ways of being that refuse deficit models based in neoliberal measurements of health and well-being. A participant from Gallup stated:

> *There is a tremendous amount of wealth and richness because of the cultural back ground and histories that live here. How do we start to shift the narrative, primarily at a systematic level, from the deficits to the wealth of the communities that we live in? I think that language, to me, has such a powerful impact.*[70]

In other words, communities in New Mexico do not need Marxist or de-colonial scholars to understand the violences in which they are steeped, or to reclaim their own solutions. Instead, Billie's speech speaks to the necessity of shifting colonial consciousness toward new ways of understanding the *unconditional love that it's going to take to make change*. This means not only naming settler colonial and neoliberal violences, but imagining new ways of being together that include the capacity for both *unconditional love and boundaries*. She names a problem for the largely settler audience, that their presence on New Mexico soil was due to the blood and sacrifice of her ancestors. She articulated that wasn't interested in lecturing to the crowd about *politics of laws or rules*, or ways that laws and rules are steeped in settler

[70] https://newmexicowomen.org/the-heart-of-gender-justice-in-new-mexico/

colonial power structures. Instead, she articulated a clear desire to appeal to "hearts" and a capacity for a deeper unconditional love that does not seek power over, but power *with.* What could this mean, if we're not talking about either liberal multiculturalism or separatist nationalism?

When I asked the New Mexico Women's Foundation and members of the Kalpulli Izkalli how my research could be of most service, the unanimous response was that my research could point out ways that settler colonialism and whiteness, traveling through discourses of "healing" could be made more visible. The individuals and communities that appear in this research don't need the help or support of my research. Instead, the clear target is colonial knowledge production as it circulates through therapeutic and scholarly communities which reproduce colonial conditions and policies. The goal is not necessarily to improve services for these communities, but to undermine the foundations of neoliberal citizenship which reproduce policies and services that undermine the role of traditional healing in strengthening self-determining communities and just eco-systems.

Healing and Resistance in Northern New Mexico

While New Mexico has a long history of alternative health and healing practices that operate outside of institutionally recognized settings, the profitability of alternative practices has prompted a flurry of economic activity and legislative oversight. De-contextualized and secularized healing practices have continued to be appropriated for every corner of the therapeutic marketplace. Within every corner of the market—from spas, hospitals, universities, treatment centers for addiction, Indigenous and Eastern healing practices have been rapidly making their way into mainstream institutions. For example, UNM offers a cross-disciplinary courses in *curanderismo*, UNM hospital offers massage therapy and

acupuncture, and the UNM medical school is a national leader in training medical doctors in integral health systems. Similarly, secular mindfulness practices have proliferated as "miracle" cures for the suffering western mind. The Life Healing Center (where I work) has wholeheartedly embraced the practice of mindfulness, linking neuroscience, therapeutic discourses, and corporate healthcare. As these practices proliferate and become mainstream, legislative oversight increases.

For example, in 2009, a group of alternative health care practitioners in New Mexico helped pass the Unlicensed Practitioner's Act, a law allegedly designed to protect both client and practitioner. One of the conditions of "protection" is that *curanderas* and other non-licensable healers put up signs that pronounce that they are unlicensed medical professionals. The signs must provide a contact number for clients to call if they are unsatisfied with the unlicensed service. In other words, the rights of the consumer are protected. For the healers of the Kalpulli Izkalli, this "protection" is part of a colonial, patriarchal model that mis-recognizes the training they have undergone and the service they provide. For Sylvia, one should never call herself a "curandera," but is named by the community in which they are an integral part. Becoming a *curandera* cannot be bought with a university degree, but earned through a long apprenticeship with a *maestra(o)* and a commitment to a circle of other practitioners. It is a not a training that allows one to buy and sell healing services as an individual practitioner, nor to market oneself as a healer. Healing services are offered by donation, and practitioners must not charge the people, only institutions.[71] While women's

[71] After my first session with Sylvia, I asked how much she charged. She said it was up to me, since healing has no price. How can you put a price on something that does not belong to her, or to anyone else? It's like air or water, and flows freely. She said I could make a donation to the Kalpulli, but her teacher had taught her to never charge the people, only institutions.

healing practices have always functioned outside of institutionalized, capitalist structures, this is in danger of changing or becoming regulated by licensing boards. Kalpulli healers are well aware of this movement toward appropriation, and refuse institutionalization. While the Kalpulli was an initial participant in the UNM course on *curanderismo* through the Anthropology department, they currently reject participating with the program nor any other institution that mis-recognizes the nature of their work. In other words, they are consciously rejecting the economic and social benefits of "recognition," or inclusion, seeing it as a deadly form of colonization. When these knowledges are "included" or incorporated within Western therapeutic discourses, policies, and practices, what is necessarily incommensurable is occluded. It can't breathe.

For example, western psychological discourses can be particularly disordering for Indigenous communities. Dian Million's *Therapeutic Nations* argues that deploying the term "trauma" in Indigenous communities locates Native people within a historical narrative which assumes traumatic violence lies in the past, as something to be healed and forgiven. Through this narrative and attendant psychological treatments, the state assumes a benevolent role, treating traumatic injury with discourses and tools which exonerate conditions reproducing the trauma.[72] Million quotes Joseph P. Gone's argument, "it may be that the missionary, military, and anthropology vanguard of the historic White-Indian encounter has been displaced of late by the professional psychotherapists or credentialed counselors of the "behavioral health clinics who, armed with their therapeutic discourse and their professional legitimacy, are using a shrewder way that the old style of bullets to resolve the age-old

[72] Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2013, 156.

"Indian problem."[73] Million draws upon Patricia Richards to argue that the function of neoliberal multiculturalism in Canada is not to challenge racial hierarchies, but to produce self-governing subjects that do not challenge economic and political goals of the state.[74] If the political economic goals of neoliberalism are to maintain control of land and resources for exploitation, growth and gain, self governing subjects are also consumer subjects who must believe in neoliberal citizenship and attendant "benefits" such as private property ownership and self determination. Million argues that therapeutic and humanitarian discourses serve the purpose of offering self determination to prior subjects of colonization.[75] In other words, self-determination, empowerment, and "healing" become linked to a form of neoliberal selfhood that necessarily depends upon forgetting the violences of history, in order to occupy an a-historical, multi-cultural present.

Ned Blackhawk and Jodi Byrd argue that Indigeneity is the foundational "otherness" upon which settler subjectivities are built. Native Americans as a group pose a special problem for multicultural America since Native presence provides an inherent threat to the state's right to the land upon which its empire is built. A solution to this problem has been to construct colonial narratives that elide histories of racist Indian policies, genocide, and land theft through historical writings, literature, scholarship, and cultural norms that assume post-coloniality as a general condition of the American cultural experience. This process has left Native people in an essentially ungrievable space, in which their existence "nowhere and everywhere" provides the foundational condition for colonial assimilation. If "Indianness"

---

[73] Ibid, 157.

[74] Patricia Richards, "Of Indians and Terrorists: How the State and Local Elites Construct the Mapuche in Neoliberal Multicultural Chile," Journal of Latin American Studies 42, no 1 (2010):90.

[75] Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 7.

exists as a regrettable casualty of manifest destiny, it obscures contemporary, present-time, lived effects of colonialism that Native people confront on a daily basis.[76] The fulcrum of "Indianness," then, becomes both the original reason for exclusion/extermination, and a site through which liberal multiculturalism celebrates American exceptionalism through romanticized and abstracted (disembodied) forms of native recognition. In this way, Byrd argues that "Indianness" presents a double bind of identity, in which actual histories and lived conditions of colonialism are elided within larger multicultural histories and narratives that promote national amnesia and deceit. The primary deceit is the belief that America is a post-racist, post-colonial society, once in which everyone--regardless of race, class, and gender--enjoys equal opportunity.

Ned Blackhawk argues that this American fiction has been forged within racial constructions and identities, and uses historical revisionism to expose how violence was used to construct normative citizenship and belonging. He argues that certain Native groups, such as the Paiute, Ute, and Shoshone, have been written out of histories of the Southwest due to settler-colonial normative values that defined them as "primitive and without history".[77] Blackhawk argues that the colonial need to forget, to define itself as peaceful and benevolent, as *anti*-colonial, and fundamentally democratic, has determined how history has been written and recorded, obscuring the violent nature of US colonization. Through graphic rendering of events, Blackhawk exposes how violence was used as a forceful tool of colonization and oppression against Native bodies, specifically female and child Native bodies. The goal, argues Blackhawk, was to both assimilate and destroy Native populations who stood in the

[76] Jodi Byrd. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, xxiv.
[77] Ned Blackhawk *Violence Over the Land*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, 6.

way of manifest destiny, or the Christian God-given right to claim and inhabit *terra nullis*, virgin land destined for European ownership. According to the logics of manifest destiny and liberal humanism, the “primitivity” of indigeneity provided a stark contrast to western civilization, and provided the reason and necessity for using violence against Native people. In turn, native tribes ascribed the same violent logic toward other tribes and their colonizers, demonstrating that the process of assimilation has been anything but peaceful and benevolent. Blackhawk shows that Native populations did not-and could not-willingly assimilate, but fought violently for a cultural and bodily integrity that refused to be colonized. Blackhawk argues that scholars of history must acknowledge and correct how their discipline contributes to racialized citizenship through the omission of histories of violence.

Blackhawk’s goal is to restore a sense of cultural integrity and pride within a historical past which has been largely erased and elided within assimilationist rhetoric and histories. More specifically, Blackhawk intends to create a space from which to grieve and to acknowledge the violences of the past through speaking the unspeakable. The body in pain has largely been treated as an internal, subjective space which can easily be objectified and managed within colonial treatment models. What then, does it mean to use language in a way that creates embodied density outside of neoliberal agreements of “self?” Blackhawk cites the overwhelming need for scholarship to create a space from which Native people can speak historical trauma outside of multicultural celebratory narratives of post-colonial America.[78] For Blackhawk, violence becomes both the subject and the method of his intervention by

[78] Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, 287.

opening up a juncture between what has been told (represented), and the actual lived experiences of native bodies, graphically and violently told.

Similarly, Jodi Byrd, drawing upon LeAnne Howe's Chictaw word, *haksuba*, sees the collision between western binaries as a simultaneously creative and destructive force.[79] Rather than trying to order the chaos created by colonialism, *haksuba* records "inter-contexual relations between histories and lived experiences."[80] *Haksuba* as method creates a juncture between representations of "Indianness" and actual embodied experiences, creating a headache for settler-colonial frameworks that seek to order the universe. Through defying multicultural notions of "Indian-ness" that have left Indians in a liminal state of transit and ungreivability,[81] Byrd interrogates and disrupts ways that scholars are complicit in settler colonialism through abstracting Indigenous histories and bodies. Byrd points us to Wilson Harris's *Jonestown* as an example of a text that uses the language of cacauphony to disrupt settler-colonial logic. Byrd argues that *Jonestown* presents us with characters struggling with intuitive and imagistic worlds, existing in the "experiential motion of among and between."[82] Instead of trying to fit exclusions into an inclusionary world, Harris creates a relational dialectic in which an abyss of understanding creates a philosophical gap that can't be subsumed by rational discourses and representations.

Hegemonic agreements of time, space, and "self" lie at the heart of Western liberal humanist scholarship. Liberal humanist constructions of bounded selfhood, in its multiple and often hidden forms, presents a real problem for building de-colonial alliances. In other

[79] Byrd, Jodi. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, xxvii.
[80] Ibid, xxviii.
[81] Byrd, Jodi. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. xv.
[82] Byrd, Jodi. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 83.

words, scholarship that obscures lived, interlocking realities of neoliberalism and settler colonialism, is complicit with colonial logic. Similarly, relational spaces and institutions that promote "diversity," but fail to attend to incommensurability at the root of settler colonialism are equally complicit. These are not new critiques. What I am interested in here, however, are how frameworks that fail to attend to emergent potential, to *possibilities of heart* that Billie mentions, are equally colonial. In order to imagine emergent possibilities outside of both liberal multiculturalism and separatist nationalisms, there is a necessary abyss, a place of incommensurability in which individuals and cultures exist not as whole and complete, but inevitably in motion and in relationship to histories, economies, and non-human worlds. In other words, alterity—appearing in the form of indigenous, queer, female, trans-gendered, or aging bodies, continues to vex Western multicultural and neoliberal technologies that seek "healed," whole citizens. When healing means not restoration of the individual, but restoration of mutual respect and relationships between individuals, communities, and land, colonial thought ceases to make sense.

Byrd argues that the responsibility for decolonization rests upon all of us, especially scholars, and that by placing lived experiences of colonialism at the center of discourse, we may actually begin to have conversations about building de-colonial political alliances. By centering grief for what is lived and felt, theoretical frames emerge from cross-positional collaborations. If my interest here is expanded kinship and yoking knowledges for justice, is it possible to imagine that sharing grief and a common desire to dismantle the roots of settler citizenship, can forge emergent and collaborative relationships? The goal of the remaining chapter is to trace a lineage of thinkers capable of thinking with these questions. The foundational argument in this dissertation is that healing practices and discourses are a site in

which "selves" are simultaneously constructed and biopoliticized as bounded individuals *and* simultaneously sovereign as multiple, subaltern, within always emergent eco-systems. What these thinkers have in common commitment is a shared desire to imagine dense, embodied social lives outside traps of neoliberal selfhood and racialized capitalism. What is *not* shared are lived realities and positions that benefit unequally from settler colonial and racialized hierarchies. In other words, while a common desire for love and justice might be shared, our positions, attachments, and commitments are not the same. In other words, overlapping concerns rub against lived difference.

The danger, of course, would be to propose a solution that makes incommensurability more legible to settler common sense. Instead, feeling and thinking our way through the murk of the unknown requires co-poietic methods and methodologies that necessarily undermine colonial logic. Since we can't see or know the world we are trying to create, a common vision isn't possible. At the same time, without yoking imagination to what *may* be emergent and possible, both for human and non-human worlds, scholars stay trapped within the same prison-house of liberal humanist consciousness. How do we embody and co-create our way into realities not conditioned by domination?

Thinking ***With***

> "What happens when human exceptionalism and bounded individualism, those old saws of Western philosophy and political economics, become unthinkable in the best sciences, whether natural or social? Seriously unthinkable: not available to think with."—Donna Haraway[83]

[83] Haraway, Donna. *Staying With the Trouble.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Laying a theoretical foundation, or lineage of thinkers capable of muddling within incommensurability is my intention, here. Problems of language and "self" lie at the heart of this inquiry. What relationship can we cultivate with language and being that allow for vital acts of solidarity that can both expand ontological limits imposed by Western liberal humanism *and* respect difference? I am not the first to wrestle through problems of self. Problems of self and subjectivity have preoccupied Western scholars since Socrates and Enlightenment thinkers like Decartes, while de-colonial scholars have actively sought to undo Western European hegemonies of thought. Many scholars I draw upon in this dissertation are considered "Western:" Walter Benjamin, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Bracha Ettinger, Kathleen Stewart, Eve Sedwick, and Erin Manning all engage language and experience phenomenologically, and are often categorized as affect theorists. Their work often directs language and thought toward embodiment and intersubjectivity. While these theorists muddle between sensation and language in order to access shared experiences of suffering and the ordinary, they are often accused by critical race scholars of failing to recognize structural injustices that act on non-white bodies. While affect scholars often draw upon European scholars to poke holes in western liberal humanism, there is a tension here between affect/phenomenological methods and critical race theory. What does affect theory *do*, besides make more room for peaceful, colonial worlding and being? Does this form of scholarship provide traction for critical social change, or is it complicit with colonial technologies? For example, Chad Kautzer argues along with Nelson Maldonado-Torres that phenomenology on its own, as a method focused on sensation and "being", can be complicit

in leaving oppressive and inhuman power structures intact.[84] Simply being human is precarious—we are all vulnerable to injury and death, but we don't suffer equally. Franz Fanon argues that "the black man suffers in his body quite differently from the white man."[85]

In a way, these tensions coalesce around the meme "all lives matter." From critical race, Marxist, and Indigenous perspectives, this multicultural sound bite obscures continued structural violences of racialized capitalism, meant to conceal ongoing exploitation and colonization of bodies. Through rhetorically collapsing differences, liberal multiculturalism perpetuates hierarchies coded within humanist laws, philosophies, and sciences, obscuring *which* specific lives actually matter. A great deal of critical work in American Studies has been dedicated to deconstructing and historicizing how the state has granted recognition to certain groups of humans over others. We can see the fruits of this work in activist movements such as Black Lives Matter, and protests against police violence. On the other hand, some affect theorists, queer, women of color, new materialist and feminist science scholars start from the position that "all life is matter," applying methods and methodologies meant to restore vibrant agency to language and bodies (human and non-human). Instead of applying self-reflexivity and objective distance involved in Western cultural critique, these scholars apply methods and methodologies that do something *other* than reinforce dualities of language/being, self/other, and human/non-human. These methods often cross between literary and philosophical practices, and are sometimes accused of being a-political. Insisting that "all life is matter" can be as flattening as "all lives matter."

---

[84] Insurgent Subjects, Chad Kautzer. Final proof of unpublished book: https://www.academia.edu/28723026/Chad_Kautzer_Insurgent_Subjects_Hegel_Césaire_and_the_Origins_of_Decolonial_Phenomenology_corrected_proofs_.pdf

[85] Franz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, New York: Grove Press, 1952, 117.

This section aims to both intensify binaries and to imagine social life inside of and perhaps beyond them. I'm interested in how scholarly positionalities and interests converge and diverge, creating intractable conflicts in which "selves" are both singular and beside themselves, exceeding Sylvia Wynter's narratively condemned status. In other words, working within boundaries of legibility within liberal humanist scholarship often means reproducing the same conditions that perpetuate violence and double consciousness. We remain foreign to ourselves, reproducing the same logic that "reinscribes annhilation."[86] Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake*, argues that abjection that is immanent, that is *here*, resulting from legacies of slavery and colonialism, continue to inform the present moment. This subjectivity is not an aberration, or evidence of failure to assimilate to a post-racial present, but a necessary condition from which to challenge neoliberal violence. Doing so requires scholars to become undisciplined in order to "blacken" knowledge through unscientific methods that can value "sitting in," "being with," "gathering," and "tracking phenomena"[87] as foundational for full-body methods of writing. Here, the goal is not simply to resolve, explain, or historicize, but to aesthetically depict and enflesh paradox and grief in the wake of the denial of Black humanity.

Enfleshing paradox *outside* the terms of liberal humanist, analogous scholarship, becomes the task. In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson argues that dialectical methods face an inevitable duality: they can trace either historical origins of an object (de-fetishizing them), or deconstruct subjectivity (how we come to know objects and texts). Instead, Jameson argues that Marxist critical theory must develop an analogous cultural

[86] Christina Sharpe, On Blackness and Being, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, pg. 13.
[87] Ibid, pg. 13.

studies that is simultaneously critical and affective. This struggle is often reflected in the structure of scholarly texts. The Introduction will outline the primary argument, methods, and methodologies, then chapters provide examples for the argument. Ironically, the last few sentences or the afterward provides the real juice by raising the question the author *really* wanted to ask. For example, Vinay Gidwani's *Capital, Interrupted*, performs a largely historical, Marxist analysis of labor in a small village in India. In the afterward, he acknowledges an aporia; Western ("Northern") research demands reproducing disciplinary, formalized knowledge systems that can be "judged academically worthy,"[88] while reality cannot be represented by logical, deductive models. The aporia here is that Gidwani produced a commodity, a book that simultaneously critiques capitalist systems while working within its framework. Throughout the text, Gidwani hints at where he really wanted to go, but couldn't within the constraints of his "non-dialectical dialectic."[89] Instead, the last sentence of his book tells us his real intention; to theorize a politic of love.

Similarly, Ruth Gilmore's *Golden Gulag* employs a Marxist historical, political, and economic analysis to provide insight and language for activists working to change the racist criminal justice system. While her intervention is primarily to deconstruct how the prison system is organized around racialized capitalism, her last chapter points to the practice of "social mothering," or organizing around the fact that every incarcerated person is a woman's child. Gilmore argues the love of mothers provides an example of how abandoning divisions

[88] Vinay Gidwani. *Capital, Interrupted: Agrarian Development and the Politics of Work in India.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 245.

[89] Gidwani uses the term "non-dialectical dialectic" to refer to Marxist inquiry that attempts to expand beyond the dialectic, in order to include affects that aren't intelligible to market capitalism. While I appreciate the attempt, I don't apply Gidwani's "non-dialectical dialectic" because it doesn't fully succeed in theorizing a politic of love.

of action and analysis can help “consciencize” the American prison system.[90] Similarly, Jodi Byrd’s *Transit of Empire* performs a Critical Indigenous critique of post-colonial scholarship (especially affect theories) to ultimately argue in favor of “grieving together the violences of US empire.”[91]

These scholars point toward scholarship that is driven simultaneously by structural, materialist, human concerns, while reaching toward affective states that defy colonial constructions of selves. Within methodological constraints that place an expert author at the center of a clear and rational argument, the author’s afterward may be the only way to provide aisthetic[92] movement of thought. My problem, then, is not with Marxist methodologies or with Afterwards, but with methods that produce either static knowledge or de-materialized abstractions. While Jameson and Gidwani highlight problems of dialectical understanding, they cannot resolve it from within the logic of analogous critique. De-colonial scholar Walter Mignolo echoes this problem of disciplinary understanding when “understanding” is used more as an adjective rather than a gerund. He argues that scholars bound by western discourses are required to produce knowledge *about* people, objects, literature, etc., in order to produce serious theoretical knowledge.[93] Similarly, Eduoard Glissant challenges critical practices based in western epistemologies which fail to see the

---

[90] Ruth Gilmore. *Golden Gulag*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 241.

[91] Jodi Byrd. *Transit of Empire. (*Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 229.

[92] The word “aistheic” is pulled from Jan Jadronski’s *Arts Based Research: A Critique and A Proposal* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2013), as well as Walter Mignolo’s concept of aiSthesis. These authors distinguish the word “aisthetic” from “aesthetic,” through displacing perception of a central knower. Texts such as literature and art are approached as sensory and affective “events,” instead of things that can be known. These authors distinguish themselves from post-structural methods by insisting that sensory perception provides access to the ontological “real,” away from stasis that results from releasing objects into the realm of the symbolic/imaginary.

[93] Walter Mignolo. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 76.

colonial practice of a “knowing subject describing and explaining a knowable object,”[94] effectively marginalizing diverse ontological and spiritual realities that, while different, are potential allies and collaborators.

Taken together, the concerns of Sharpe, Gidwani, Gilmore, Byrd, provide an affective and ethical force for this chapter. What kind of thinking can theorize a politic of love, that seeks to consciencize and grieve the violences of neoliberal capitalism, while densifying the wellbeing and fate of others as inseparable from one’s own? What kind of scholarship is possible when both the material (the embodied and enfleshed), and the “new” material (the more than human, the ancestral, the transcendent) rub up against each other to resist colonial, capitalist practices? What kinds of political struggles, solidarities, and stories are produced within the aporia of critical race critique and theories of the non-human, within the borderland between language and being? Ultimately, I am interested in how affective tensions are *magnified* by hybrid forms and theories, encouraging us to linger in impasses between knower and knowing. If the central problem of liberal humanism is the cohesive, rational self, work that confronts binary positions of language/sensory ontologies, literature/scholarship, and material/transcendent is important to consider. In other words, Jameson’s call to “always historicize” presents an impossible limitation for illuminating the complexities and tangles of lived affects and relationships.

For example, Eve Sedwick’s essay, *Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You’re so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You*, questions what knowledge actually *does*, instead of *is*. She argues that the call to “always historicize” is based in a

---

[94] Edouard Glissant. *The Poetics of Relation.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

1980's era hermeneutics of suspicion, or paranoia, from which to set up straw dogs such as "the state," or "neoliberalism." She argues that this position, endemic in academia and psychoanalytic theory, if left undiagnosed, "grows like a crystal in a hyper saturated solution, blotting out any sense of the possibility of alternative ways of understanding or things to understand."[95] She draws upon the work of Sylvan Tompkins to argue that theory based in paranoia, a negative affect, can be classified as a "strong theory," or a monopolizing view on reality that anticipates negative results. This has the unintended—and often unexamined—result of blocking positive affect and possibility. She draws upon Melanie Klein and Foucault to examine how this position often inaugurates a move toward what Foucault calls "care of the self," from within a guilt-ridden, fragile environment that is ultimately non-nourishing and punishing.

Within this dry, ascetic space of critique and defense of "self," there is little room for pleasures that arise from a sense of self that is multiple and sympoietic, that moves with the rhythms of a constantly emerging world. Instead, knowledge aims to *expose*—through omniscient narrative form—the truth. For me personally, this is the essence of a colonized mind from which I am wrestling my way out of. Tracing divergent lineages of scholars may help wrestle our way out of traps associated with assuming cohesive positionality endemic to Western scholarship. Sylvia Wynter's notion of *decolonial sciencia* and Katherine McKittreck's resistance to "narratively condemned status" is helpful, here. At the same time, placing the legacy of Deleuze and Guattari in conversation with de-colonial scholars such as Jody Byrd, Walter Mignolo, Franz Fanon, and Claudia Rankine, is also productive for

[95] Eve Sedwick. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003,131.

imagining how we might avoid traps of thought that reinforce whiteness and settler logic. In these works, there is both refusal of colonial logic as well as an affirmation of something *else;* something resurgent, embodied, affirmative, and alive. Since the violence of colonial capitalism is circulated through universal reason and logic, de-colonial healing must necessarily be operating outside of this logic. And then, to write about what this means, necessitates methods and methodologies that also fall outside of the logic of liberal monohumanism.

Sylvia Wynter adds "mono" to "liberal humanism" to indicate how ongoing colonization constructs global, hegemonic definitions of what a human being fundamentally *is*. This knowledge, based in western enlightenment sciences, presumes that bio-centric notions of reality pre-exist all other models of human religions and cultures, providing justification for the territorialization of land and bodies. Enlightenment philosophies and western definitions of who is a "person" and therefore deserving of life, have left a deep colonial imprint upon the activity of thinking. This chapter will think with various lineages of scholars committed to overturning the terms of liberal monohumanism, reaching across disciplinary lines and boundaries. In order to do this without flattening differences, I draw upon Wynter's concept of *de-colonial sciencia* to provide an ethical foundation for this kaleidoscopic conversation. Wynter builds upon Franz Fanon's statement that "besides phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny" in order to develop her concept of sociogeny, or *decolonial sciencia,* that places the lived experience of coloniality at the center of de-colonial thinking. [96] Instead of thinking of humans as nouns, Wynter argues that scholarship must re-

---

[96] Kathryn McKittrick. *Sylvia Winter: On Being Human as Praxis.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 116.

think humans as verbs, restoring present life to bodies trapped by partial stories and static categories. Instead of submitting either to the Western canon or remaining outsiders, the thinkers I engage employ colonial language to overturn dominant world views hidden within colonial language systems, whatever their social position. Wynter's theory fleshes out Fanon and DuBois's notion of "double consciousness" in order to de-link one's phenomenological experience of the world from how one is perceived by others. Fanon and Wynter are emphatic that sociogeny is not an *object* of study, but a way of wrestling new concepts of space, time, and subjectivity into being. Wynter's argument that the creative and intellectual project of de-colonization is not a linear, teleological project of movement toward emancipation (another static category), allows me to consider overlapping concerns between "all life is matter" and "certain lives don't matter" scholars. In thinking through the ethics of restoring embodied agency into present time, *decolonial sciencia* provides a more specific de-colonial framework that diffractive praxis can't provide on its own.

According to Wynter, the tasks of *decolonial sciencia* are to a) name links between geo-history and knowledge, b) name consequences of Western expansion and imperialism, and c) generate knowledge capable of putting the needs of humans (and life itself), over the demands of growth and capitalism. Wynter's *decolonial sciencia* a useful frame for evaluating the ethics of using a diffractive/kaleidescopic praxis to engage multiple positions. The first part of this chapter will consider tensions between critical race, Indigenous, Marxist, feminist and affect theorists when faced with Wynter's first task of *decolonial sciencia*, to historicize and name geo-histories of knowledge and lived effects of colonization. For example, affect theories based in Deleuze and Guattari are accurately accused of colluding with liberalism when concepts such as *nomadism* and *lines of flights* fail to confront links

between geo-history and knowledge. At the same time, affect theories perform a much-needed corrective to dialectical materialism and the linguistic turn in the humanities, which make the generation of life-sustaining knowledges (Wynter's third requirement for *decolonial sciencia*) more difficult. In other words, deconstructing how subjectivity is produced and positioned through language, culture, and literature is only part of the de-colonial project.

Historicizing effects of geo-history and knowledge upon bodies is central to the current American Studies project, but is only the first task of Wynter's *decolonial sciencia*. While perspectives differ according to race and positionality, thinkers based in historical Marxism, critical indigenous feminisms, Black, Chicana and feminist Science Studies, as well as new materialist/affect theories critique foundations of liberal humanism embedded within language and bodies. While perspectives, methods and methodologies differ, these frameworks provide traction for deconstructing economic, racial, and ontological knowledge systems that exploit life. Many of these scholars put race and gender hierarchies at the center of liberal humanist violences, while others draw upon Deleuze and Guattari to exceed methodological limits based in representation and human subject positions.

While problematic for many critical race scholars, the legacy of Deleuze and Guattari often provides a foundation for cultural studies scholars seeking alternatives to structural and constructivist critiques that fail to language vital, lived experiences. In *Rhizomes*, The Introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari state that their project is to undermine binary, representational thinking, or "State Thought," bound in reason, law, and hierarchical (arboreal, or "tree-like") thinking. By providing radical opposition within the opposition, by refusing the very terms on which power and subjectivity spring, the practice of

philosophy transforms into an erotic, joyful process of play. By insisting that philosophy cannot produce ultimate truth, ideas can be used like crowbars in the hands of the curious and willing. Instead of using thought to produce new truths or to reify old ideologies, the real question becomes, "What new thoughts are possible to think? What new emotions are possible to feel?"[97] Instead of reproducing more representations of the world, rhizomatic knowledge punctures divisions between fields of reality (one's subject), fields of representation (one's method, or what is produced, such as a book), and fields of subjectivity (the author, one's methodology).

Deleuze and Guattari start with the premise that "each of us is many," and their collaboration is meant to create a multidimensional experiment instead of a univocal argument. Through complete rejection of the liberal humanist of a coherent, knowable, internal "I," rhizomatic scholarship reflects polyvocal, plenar assemblages of many. Human subjectivity and language become a-centered, providing possibilities for de-territorialization and lines of flight driven by tendrils of desire. While Deleuze and Guattari argue along with Foucault that our subjectivities are already determined, they take Foucault further, imagining what kinds of generative possibilities can exist for all of us existing within rhizomatic capitalist nets. Deleuze's influence can be seen in anthropologists as diverse as Michael Taussig, Anna Tsing, Kathleen Stewart, Elizabeth Povinelli, and Eduardo Kohn, new material feminists Elizabeth Grosz, Jane Bennett, Christine Chen, non-humanists such as Richard Grusin, Brian Massumi, Erin Manning, and Steven Shaviro, and in the cultural criticism of Lauren Berlant, Fred Moten, and Stefano Harney. Following his translation of

---

[97] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri. *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1987.

Deleuze's *A Thousand Plateaus* in 1999, Brian Massumi's foundational text of affect theory *Parables for the Virtual*, theorizes the body as always in transition, both abstract and real. His project called for languaging lived experiences that fall neither into subjectivist, phenomenological perspectives, nor structural models based on Saussure and Lacan. Critiquing deconstructionist scholarship, Massumi argues that when we divide and measure space, we "stop the world in its thought."[98] He argues against piling concepts upon concepts to produce more concepts, but advocates instead for piling details upon details in order to produce affective states of digression and deviation. Instead of producing closed arguments that pin thoughts down, Massumi argues that methodologies based in Deleuze's rhizome can generate "new systems and buds; new openings and possibilities." [99]

For scholarship in the tradition of Deleuze and Guattari, affect is an energetic force, a vital point of emergence where the actual meets potential. From this perspective, culture is not a set of unified structures, but intensities, assemblages, articulation, potentialities, and lines of flight. Binaries such as inside/outside, male/female, body/mind, quiet/arousal, become spaces of of potential movement and force. This legacy of immanent (or plenar) critique shifts the focus away from language and representation toward moments of resonance, movement, and "feeling" in order to consider capacities for human and non-human agency. These scholars track visceral, pre-personal, and often unconscious, forces that propel *both* conditioned actions (requiring resistance) and creative possibilities for sovereignty. While the legacy of Freud turns us toward our individual selves and the use of therapy, Delueze and Guattari write directly against Freud, theorizing "lines of flight" as

---

[98]Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).
[99] Ibid. pg. 17.

moments of pure creativity that break away from bio-politicized embodiments into larger rhizomatic possibilites. Many scholars who draw upon Deleuze and Guattari, such as Kathleen Stewart, Michael Taussig, Lauren Berlant, Maggie Nelson, and Patricia Clough, practice double-strand scholarship, blurring boundaries between creative/scholarly practices. Other scholars, such as Brian Massumi, Erin Manning and Steven Shaviro, draw upon affect to theorize open-ended explorations of collaboration, connection, and expanded kinship with life-forms beyond the category of "human." Still others, such as Elizabeth Povinelli, Eve Kosofksky Setwick, Fred Moten, and Stefano Harney, draw upon both queer/critical race theory *and* Deleuze to consider affective forms of solidarity against racialized neoliberal violences. The common thread linking these scholars is a desire to avoid stasis, or static categories of meaning, analysis and subjectivity, in favor of ontological movement and possibility.

While one might loosely place this work generally in the field of "affect theory," the frame "affect" is slippery, and has no real meaning outside of specific ways it is employed methodologically. For example, affect theory in the Marxist tradition of Fredric Jameson, Raymond Williams, and Lauren Berlant, seeks to deconstruct "structures of feeling" that shape larger cultural norms and practices.[100] Another term associated with affect is the word "poeisis," or the condition of plenar emergence and immanent interaction with everyday life. Kathleen Stewart defines "[Worlding] as a way of approaching wholes, systems, networks or culture in ways that account for emergence, the assemblage of disparate entities, and the

[100] The term "structures of feeling" is properly theorized in Raymond William's *Marxism and Nature*.

experience or situation of being "in" something."[101] Eve Sedwick draws upon Deleuze to spatialize poiesis as existing *beside*, instead of beneath or beyond,[102] and Massumi and Manning draw upon Deleuze to theorize poeisis as ontological creative excess, or that which cannot be read as a "text."

While the concept of poiesis, a word which shares the same root as *poetry*, has been deeply influential for theorists wrestling thought away from Western binarism, Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd's critique of post-colonial affect theories in *Transit of Empire,* together with Patrick Wolfe's collection of essays, *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies*, deeply problematize non-binary thought. Byrd argues that any discussion of spatial justice must include engaging with *ongoing* violences against native bodies and land. Jodi Byrd is critical of Deleuze and Guattari, accusing them of "flattening space" through assuming the anteriority of Indianness, or notion of "Indians without ancestry."[103] While Deleuze and Guattari name Indigeneity as a positive disruption of linear Western thought, similar to how schizophrenia is a disruption of normative mental health, this move is not dissimilar to the process of colonization in which space is smoothed out for settler creativity. Through using Indigeneity as sign, the current lived, material conditions of Native people are erased and glossed over. Similarly, de-colonial scholars such as Franz Fanon, Eduard Glissant and Sylvia Wynter, seek to displace racialized hierarchies and subaltern subjectivities with vibrant, sovereign ontologies and voices. Post-structural queer theory and feminist science studies share a commitment to liberating ontologies bound by language and

[101] Class syllabus: https://www.utexas.edu/cola/files/4041355

[102] Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity. (*Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 8.

[103] Byrd, Jodi. *The Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2011.

representation rooted in Enlightenment definitions of the “rational” and the “real.” While sharing concerns associated with power, embodiment and affect, many of these scholars are critical of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of nomadism, or “smooth spaces of thought”[104] that move freely, resisting linear analogies and concepts. Indeed, many theories based in Deleuze seek to *open* aesthetic/aisthetic methodologies beyond human-centric representations of language and being, to restore creative agency and movement outside of “state thought.”

Here lies a primary tension for critical race, queer, and Indigenous theories working against scholarly practices that flatten race, gender, and histories of removal. By “putting a pig in the tracks,”[105] scholars who critique Deleuze and Guattari *resist* and *refuse* all that renders life unlivable for certain groups of people. For example, critical Indigenous scholars often confront post-colonial scholarship which calls for trans-racial solidarity through displacing hegemonic norms and structures. For example, Jodi Byrd critiques the violences of “worlding,”[106] as a form of settler-colonial violence. She argues that the theoretical foundations of Deleuze and Guattari undermine Indigenous claims to sovereignty, since all settler worldings take place on stolen Native land. She argues that by failing to directly name and confront living structures of colonialism, affect scholars in the tradition of Deleuze perpetuate Indian as trace, as memory, leaving Native people in a state of ungrievability. She

---

[104] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri. *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1987, 494.

[105] This refers to Ursula K. LeGuin’s famous quote in her essay, “A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be:” “It seems that the utopian imagination is trapped, like capitalism and industrialism and the human population, in a one-way future consisting only of growth. All I’m trying to do is put a pig in the tracks.”

[106] Worlding is a term generally attributed to Martin Heidegger which means “being and becoming in the world.”

accuses Brian Massumi of worlding by refusing to signify the continued presence of Indigenous peoples, and criticizes him for deflecting attention away from the lived conditions of colonialism by theorizing emergent systems and possibilities that can live beyond dualistic constraints of race and individuality. Similarly, Gayatri Spivak is critical of any kind of worlding that de-centers grounded, embodied places and moves them into a matrix of "becoming." This is not unlike Claudia Rankine's accusation of a relentless white desire for "transcendence," or lines of flight.[107]

Similarly, Richard Dyer's *White* highlights a conundrum for poiesis, or embodied movement attached to White settler bodies. He traces how spiritualities, images, and discourses related to Christianity have organized white flesh, driving the notion of "enterprise." For Dyer, White embodiment has *enterprise*, and finds expression in imperialism and bounded individualism. The valuing of agency, expressed through enterprise, links White bodies to an "exhileratingly expansive relationship to the environment."[108] While enterprise at its weirdest and most disgusting might look like eyeing North Korean military sites as potential beach-front condos[109], enterprise is more insidiously linked to creative capitalism, urban development, and gentrification. Moreton-Robinson's *The White Possessive* critiques private property ownership, one of the "gifts" at the heart of colonial assimilation, she traces how the white property owning subject has become a symbol for the expansion of one's subjective self through the expansion of one's ownership of space. This kind of ownership is based on the liberal notion that possession of property is

[107] Claudia Rankine, Max King Kap, and Beth Loffreda. *The racial imaginary: Writers on race in the life of the mind.* (Albany, New York: Fence Books, 2015).

[108] Richard Dyer, White. Routlidge London, New York, 1997, pg. 15.

[109] http://www.businessinsider.com/trump-says-north-korea-beaches-great-place-for-hotels-condos-2018-6

synonymous with the possession of one's own body. Similarly, Dian Million links notions of spirituality and "healing" to liberal inclusion within consumer capitalism. Million implicates both a white desire to possess the worldview of others (through new age spiritualities), as well as more insidious forms of assimilation such as state-sponsored mental health initiatives based in settler-colonial values that prepare the individual for private property ownership and full economic participation. In other words, "worlding," or poiesis, must be theorized as spatial issues in order to grapple with ongoing legacies of settler colonialism and racialized, gendered configurations of space, language, and embodiment.

A primary problem here is colonial subjectivity as it circulates through whiteness and hierarchies of being. Jodi Byrd argues that any discussion of spatial justice must include engaging with *ongoing* violences against native bodies and land. Jodi Byrd is rightfully critical of scholars who "flatten space" through assuming the anteriority of Indianness, or notion of "Indians without ancestry." [110] Here lies a tension, or boundary, between affect and critical Indigenous theories. Perhaps this tension can most succinctly be named as the tension between the (largely settler) desire to imagine social life outside of state thought, and a Native need to contest all forms of thought/embodied practice that fertilize conditions for settler colonial hegemonies. In other words, settler sovereignty (movement) and Indigenous critique are in fundamental conflict.

At stake here is the possibility for conceiving an ethic of multi-species worlding that does not "world," that does not assist smooth flows of racialized, colonial capitalism, but makes room for each other's complicated, constructed, historicized embodiments. Is this

[110] Byrd, Jodi. *The Transit of Empire*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2011, pg. 16.

possible, or is this a fundamental, non-resolvable conflict? Critical race theorists accuse Deleuzian scholars of failing to historicize how all material and occurrent forms of creativity (including scholarship) are socially constructed through the author's specific embodiment. For example, while authors such as Frantz Fanon, Jody Byrd, Aimee Cesaree, and Audra Simpson consciousnesly engage the "gaze from below," settler authors often write from within privilege on behalf of larger, more universal oppressions. The aporia highlighted here is the complexity of race, positionality, and settler colonialism at the heart of language, philosophy and de-colonial scholarship. Mignolo argues that the problem with Deleuze as a de-colonial thinker is his lived position as a thinker *inside* the belly of the colonial beast. He cannot engage the gaze from below, but is bound to see through the lens of his position as a French philosopher. In his critical assessment of Eduoard Glissant, Khatabi, and Deleuze and Guattari, Walter Mignolo argues that while these authors share similar concerns, they are "complementary but irreducible—let me insist—to one another because of the colonial difference."[111] In other words, Mignolo does not draw upon Deleuze and Guattari's concept of nomadology because it is a framework that has emerged from within the Deleuze/Guattari's framework as French theorists, not built upon local knowledges. This does not make Deleuze *wrong*, per se, just limited by his particular lens. In other words, the historical and ontological place where we're standing has inevitably been constructed, determining our philosophical and lived, situated positions. And *yet*…

[111] Walter Mignolo. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 78.

Historicizing and Exceeding Narratively Condemned Status

Within the constraints of this particular tension, all forms of "worlding" become problematic: speaking, hearing, touching, belonging, settling. Existence itself becomes tenuous and problematic. For authors such as Gloria Anzaldúa, M. Jacqui Alexander, and bell hooks, the reclamation of "belonging" often means constructing identities and purpose outside the borders of whiteness, hegemonic frameworks, *and* one's racialized identity, which is often patriarchal, homophobic, and hostile. Celia T. Bardwell-Jones wrestles with these questions in her essay, *"Home-Making" and "World-Traveling:" Decolonizing the Space-Between in Transnational Feminist Thought.* The central issue Bardwell-Jones identifies is the tension between confining notions of "home," and psychic, spiritual restlessness that resists enclosure. She references Anazdúa's *La Frontera* and Chandra Mohanty's *Feminism without Borders* to illustrate how the multiply oppressed must occupy border zones of physical and psychic travel that feel like "the thin edge of barbwire,"[112] without abandoning conflicting identities and longing for connection. What space is there to exist, to embody life outside of constructed, racialized, and fixed identities?

The project of breaking fixed positions, or narratively condemned status, in many ways, means breaking all forms of narratives that define or fix in place. Lisa Lowe's *The Intimacies of Four Continents* and Monique Alleawart's *Ariel's Ecology* trace narratives that construct subaltern bodies as singular and monolithic within eco-criticism and American Studies. Alleawart theorizes how historical and cultural practices of splitting the enslaved black body into parts (literally and metaphorically), challenge western conceptions of human

[112] Anzaldúa, *Boderlands/La Frontera*, 35.

bodies as finite and bound. Ironically, the violence imposed upon slave bodies had the effect of expanding kinship systems beyond heteronormative nuclear families and the human. For slaves, the denial of human status provided a form of spiritual and fleshy resistance against colonization. Lowe joins Jodi Byrd, Walter Mignolo, and other scholars who deconstruct how liberal "selfhood," culture, and economics are implicated in the production of slavery, colonization, and current forms of neoliberal capitalism. In other words, If the heart of liberal humanist philosophy means constructing historical sense within a cohesive narrative of "wholeness" and benevolent histories of evolving human rights, these narratives can neutralize histories of primitive accumulation and slavery. Here, the state and liberal markets can evolve unimpeded as a natural and benevolent. Through historicizing literary, cultural, and political narratives, these authors illustrate how liberal humanist narratives reinscribe impossible conditions for Indigeneous and people of color within neoliberal conditions for citizenship.

Refusal and attention to lived, material effects of colonization are also primary concerns for feminist Indigenous scholars such as Audra Simpson, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Dion Million, Jodi Byrd, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who implicate settler-colonialism for continued violences against Native peoples. Building upon Tuhiwai-Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies*, a primary concern has been to reject methods and methodologies that assume the *fait accomplit* of removal and elimination, such as traditional ethnographies based in liberal forms of inclusion and recognition that render their communities "knowable." Indigenous scholars must wrestle with the dangers of reproducing the same ethnographic entrapments they intend to undo. For example, Simpson's *Mohawk Interruptus* is a "cartography of refusal," in which her task is not to reproduce an

ethnography that is embedded within authenticating frames of reference, such as linguistic and ethnological frameworks. Instead, by tracing political actions and stories of the Kahnasa:ke (Iroquois) community based in refusal of colonial subjectivities and inclusion, Simpson demonstrates that citizenship and belonging are living, evolving, affective processes that can't be explained through settler forms of reason. In fact "reason," or logic assumed to form a foundation for the common good, such as economic inclusion and citizenship, are the very "gifts" to be refused. Indigenous feminist scholars Million, Smith, Moreton-Robinson all draw upon queer theories to theorize expanded kinship systems that live *outside* of Western values based in nuclear families and the individual. Fragmenting notions of "self," "body," and "space," then, become central to the decolonization of life, both human and otherwise.

Sylvia Wynter confronts this issue in her essay, *1492: A New World View.* She argues that dualities produced by celebrants of Columbus and de-colonial dissidents fail to acknowledge how both of these groups are enmeshed in the same field of global, capitalist power relations.[113] These positions create certain groups of "we's," fragmenting frames of analysis capable of taking appropriate aim at the correct target: racialized, settler-colonial capitalism. Instead, Wynter argues that ethical de-colonization requires theorize "non-hierarchical relations of co-specificity" that reject territorialized notions of self and other. In other words, capitalist social relations based in private property ownership and construction of borders creates territorialized notions of "we" that perpetuate settler colonial violence. These terms re-enforce divisions that keep us from a truly de-colonial consciousness that

[113] Ibid, 164.

would de-center the right for *any of us* to exist as self-possessed, separate individuals. In other words, de-colonial scholarship must do more than resist and protest; it must de-link entirely from imperial knowledge systems.

De-linking from imperial knowledge systems must allow not only for refusal, but vibrant agency as well. Here, the concerns of eco-feminism and science studies join concerns expressed by queer and Indigenous scholars. Scholars Elizabeth Povinelli, Alexander Weheliye, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, provide examples of how placing seemingly incommensurable philosophies in conversation can reject the terms of cohesion at the heart of humanism. In order to move beyond oppositional binaries that prop up the terms of late liberalism, these scholars draw upon critical race/queer theory *and* Deleuze to theorize both immanence and refusal. Povinelli addresses this theoretical dilemma in *Economies of Abandonment* and *The Cunning of Recognition.* She aligns herself with immanent theory of Deleuze, the constructivism of Foucault, and Indigenous theories of refusal to provide friction for theorizing a "social otherwise" which neither transcends material conditions nor accepts them. She argues that in order to theorize an ethics of immanence, or precarious states that live between being and non-being, recognition and refusal, social belonging and exclusion, the terms of liberal humanism must be refused. Instead, new projects and possibilities emerge "in the queasy space of dwelling within potential worlds." [114] Moten and Harney name this space "the undercommons," a space of chosen homelessness which fractures normative territorialization in favor of precarity and solidarity with life.

---

[114] Elizabeth Povinelli. *Economies of Abandonment*. (Durham: Duke University Press), 2011.

Similarly, in *Frames of War*, *Senses of the Subject, Dispossession*, and *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler argues that co-poietic world-making exists within the gap between desubjugation and sensual world-making. Judith Butler argues that sovereignty, or livability, requires both defense of borders (bodies, lands), and violation of borders that constrain creative forms of resistance and social life. Since this perspective presents an impossible paradox to resolve within a liberal humanist framework based on shoring up a cohesive human subject, Butler argues that political goals need to recognize the fundamental condition of fragility, or vulnerability. While I will more fully theorize this in Chapter Five, the fundamental argument is that instead of rehabilitating broken, fragmented bodies, methodologies should place grief and fragility at the center of relational approaches in cultural theory. Povinelli, Wilhelye, Butler, and Harney and Moten agree that navigating precarious and unlivable social conditions require both radical critique of liberalism as well as ontological vulnerability and permeability with life as it exists *beyond* the skin of one's individual body. Butler argues in *Senses of the Subject,* our task is to work within the paradox that we are always being formed as subjects, yet also capable of fracturing normative formations. We both act and are acted upon simultaneously, and must move toward using language that reflects that paradox. Blowing apart what it means to be "human," then, provides a broader bridge to critiquing Western epistemologies/language/philosophies reproduced by Marxist and constructivist methods.

Fracturing language and its embodiment, then, is a concern that connects post-structural, new materialist, queer, Indigenous, Chicana, and women of color feminisms. For example, queer, constructivist and post-structural scholars argue that static notions of self, place and embodiment are problematic, given the disciplinary norms of language. Denise

Riley, Judith Butler, Paul Eakin, and Fredric Jameson consider the difficulty of accounting for the self when the "bonds of language enact productive constraints, or ideological constraints."[115] Telling stories, or believing language and its embodiment, can be an essentializing and disciplining form of affect, seducing us away from desire into cocoons of belonging. These concerns echo post-structuralist concerns for the paradox of language in speaking and articulating a "self" that can speak and exist, while fragmenting hegemonic notions of what it means to be a person. Judith Butler writes, "If the 'I' is not easily separated from those relations that made the 'I' possible," then speaking and writing as a subaltern presents a double bind.[116] In order to theorize this double bind, these authors struggle within the constructivism of Foucualt, while reaching for auto-poeitic processes capable of liberating language and being.

Other scholars such as Mel Chen and Alexander Wilhelye directly critique Foucault, accusing him of Eurocentricity bound within liberal humanist philosophical and linguistic structures. Since Western language structures distinguish between human/non-human, alive/dead, language privileges human subjects assumed to be coherent and autonomous. Instead, Chen draws upon affect and performance studies, cognitive linguistics, queer of color, feminist and disability scholarship to trace how "animacy hierarchies,"[117] are policed and mapped through images, rhetoric, and linguistic structures. She draws upon debates about sexuality, race, environment, and affect to consider how matter considered to be non-sentient animates cultural life. At the same time, she considers how language can re-animate

[115] Riley, Denise. *Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony. (*Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 4.

[116] Butler, *Senses of the Subject.* (New York: Fordham University Press. 2015), 11.

[117] Chen refers to "animacy hierarchies" as structures of value embedded within language, law, and philosophy that determine which lives matter.

itself as a vehicle for alchemical experiences that re-animate life itself. If, according to Christine Chen, life is affectively mediated through language and images in order to determine who is human and therefore deserving of rights and protection, scholars need new linguistic tools. At the heart of re-tooling words is the recognition that "non-subjects," or beings deemed non-sentient, inert, or animal, are bound within human language structures that foreclose upon the vitality of matter.

Through her critique of constructivism, Chen aligns herself with new materialists such as Jane Bennett, William Connolly, and Elizabeth Grosz. New materialist philosophy has roots in corporeal feminism, concerned for the enfleshment of the body in non-reductive, non-dual ways. Corporeal feminists, including Elizabeth Grosz, Judith Butler, Vicki Kirby, Stacy Alaimo, Alexander Weheliye, and Christine Chen, seek to overturn the mind/body duality that privileges linguistic critique over the sensing body. Instead of privileging a reductive return to animal embodiment, corporeal feminists take social, cultural forces that act upon bodies as productive friction for producing vital, sensing bodies that feel their way against biopolitical disciplinarity. Pioneering texts of corporeal feminism such as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies* (1994) and Vicki Kirby's *Telling Flesh* (1997), dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari, Luce Iragaray, Henri Lefebvre, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, and Julia Kristeva to lay a philosophical foundation for embodied feminism.

Here, bodies interact with specific, lived conditions. For example, Stacy Alaimo's *Bodily Natures* deconstructs how *specific* bodies are contaminated by toxins and heavy metals, arguing that environmental ethics, human health, and social justice are intertwined. While she argues that our fate as humans cannot be divorced from the poisoning of water, air,

and and soil, environmental ethics interested in "preserving" wild spaces separate from toxic human activity, often overlook the fact that there is nowhere that untouched by social and economic forces. By re-materializing the effects of a relentless drive to colonize resources, her goal is to displace humans from a central, sovereign position. Instead, she illustrates that bodies are permeable and "trans-corporeal," part of and therefore vulnerable to eco-systems in which they are embedded. The political goal of this work is not merely to protest the linguistic turn in the humanities, but to theorize environmental ethics which animate and imagine trans-corporeal, global networks of connection and concern in singular and murky ways.[118]

Other feminist science scholars such as Donna Harraway, Anna Tsing, Bruno Latour and Karen Barad share concerns for methodologies that engage with singular, mundane, murky interactions. Building on the tradition of Marxist, feminist science studies, Anna Tsing's *The Mushroom at the End of the World* and *Friction* draw upon affiliation with earth-bound, complex multi-species interactions. Instead of theorizing lines of flight away from capitalist value accumulation, Tsing is interested in what lives *despite* capitalism, or what manages to live in the ruins. Tsing and Harraway share a profound concern for how world-making projects, both human and non-human, overlap and make room for many species in

---

[118] A counter example can be found in Object Oriented Ontology (OOO). Timothy Morton's *Hyperobjects* theorizes the emergence of hyperobjects, or *thing-powers,* such as climate change, hurricanes and oil spills, that force us to reckon with the trauma and shock of ecologies shifting out of human control. Instead of seeing this truth as another problem to be feared and managed, Morton argues that the emergence of hyperobjects threatens the cards propping up the house of liberal humanism: anthropocentrism, racism, individualism, nationalism, and capitalism. While Morton acknowledges the intersectional violences of liberal humanism, his work does not account for the fact that humans don't share equal status as "humans," nor equal responsibility for our current ecological crisis. The authors of *Anthropocene or Capitalocene,* Alaimo, and agential realists argue that OOO, and any scholarship that does not historicize intertwined structures of race, capitalism and colonialism is not fundamentally useful for considering human effects on global warming. In other words, the category of "anthro" is problematic when it fails to account for the violent hierarchies embedded within liberal, multicultural capitalism.

murky, collaborative ways. If dreams of modern progress and cruel optimism in the American Dream are meant to lure us away from the vulnerable process of living within a precarious eco-system, scholarship must provide ways of deconstructing how capitalism turns people and other beings into resources, while turning us back toward shared affective concerns. Tsing argues, along with Judith Butler[119] that the condition of precarity, or vulnerability to others, is the affective condition at the center of relationality. Instead of seeking transcendence or purity, Tsing and Harraway argue, we should look to "contamination," or hybrid ecologies that both intersect and diverge to poke holes in myths of the modern progress narrative. Instead of seeking harmony implicit in progress myths, inhabiting the ontological *viscosity* of shared precarity might help provide the friction necessary to co-exist within a precarious ecosystem.

Tsing's notion of friction, or wearing away of capitalist value systems, is based on the notion of polyphonic (as opposed to Deleuze and Guattari's harmonic) music; each being carries its own perspective that contributes to the distinct melody and dissonance of a place. She argues that telling the story of a landscape or a forest requires a human author to use all of the tools they have available: stories, mindful interaction with place, archives, scientific reports and experiments. Here, she makes an intervention into the fields of ethnography and natural history, calling for a disciplinary alliance capable of practicing the art of "noticing." Here, Tsing's methods share an affinity with ethnographer Michael Taussig, who also calls for non-representational forms of noticing, where ethnography becomes art rather than providing a finished, closed argument. Taussig argues that ethnography should turn toward

[119] In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* London and New York: Verso Books, 2004.

what is alive and breathing, aiming for Barthes's "third meaning" that does not destroy that which it attempts to understand.

Similarly, Eduardo Kohn's *How Forests Think* draws upon Taussig, Tsing and Harraway to theorize how anthropology can think ontologically and monistically, moving beyond dualistic representations of self and Other. He argues that humanist and post-humanist social theories conflate representation with language, and argues that signs exist beyond the human. Drawing upon linguist Charles Pierce, he argues that while we do not share embodiment with non-human creatures, we share the fact that we all "live with and through signs," and are finite creates who will ultimately die. In other words, while social theory may insist that language defines us, Kohn's work is to show how symbolic language systems are permeable, "enchanted," and "animate." By opening analysis to sensory experience, dreams, and trans-species connections, Kohn considers the semiotics of becoming a "self" that moves beyond itself to engage ontologically with other sign systems. Thinking with Jane Bennett's argument that linguistic representations of things fail to grant objects life, Kohn illustrates that things have life whether we acknowledge their existence or not.

Alexander Weheliye's *Habeous Viscous* also rejects language as a primary medium for knowing, pointing toward human *flesh* as a primary site for deconstructing racial, gendered, sexualized assemblages of liberal humanism. Through employing a diffractive reading practice, Weheliye draws upon Deleuze, critical race theory, queer women of color feminism, and new materialist feminisms to illustrate how interconnected structures of race and political violence have resulted in displacement, exploitation, and violence. He turns away from European philosophers, correcting Foucault's notion of biopolitics through

placing race at the center of his methodology. Weheliye challenges Foucault's social position as a white, European scholar whose ideas are often transposed upon minority discourses in order to lend more power to arguments. Instead, he turns to women of color and Indigenous feminisms to illustrate how women of color literature and theory can provide a more fleshy, liberatory frame from which to deconstruct liberal humanist constructions rooted in racialized bodies, legal and linguistic structures.

Weheliye's methodology, then, provides a bridge for considering how literary and ethnographic forms create affective, ontological and political possibilities for "alternative spiritual publics,"[120] or "extra-linguistic frame-works of the the animacy concept."[121] By pushing against the boundaries of what can be named and explained through Western language structures, women of color feminism, theories of affect, and corporeal/trans-corporeal feminisms build bridges to precarity and grief by fracturing normative boundaries of identity, kinship structure, and human-centricity. Terms such as *Nepantala aesthetics* and *border thinking* challenge epistemological hierarchies of language and being, theory and art. Since liberal humanism depends upon coherent narratives that define who and what can be considered rational and human, many writers that are available to think with, both literary and scholarly, produce fragmented assemblages of words meant to disrupt linear, binary thinking. Moving away from both structural and poststructural methodologies, language is used to reveal affective, fragmented, jumpy, muddy, and always in process ontologies. Here, methods use theoretical and literary methods to move readers beyond one's static capacity to "know," in order to illuminate aisthetic forms of grief, connection and kinship. In order to

[120] See Elizabeth Povinelli's *Economies of Abandonment.*

[121] Christine Chen. *Animacies. Biopolitics, Mattering, and Queer Affect.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 9.

accomplish this, scholars experiment with language that writes both critically and intimately from *within* violent cultural conditions to reveal how these conditions defy linear thinking, scholarship, and storytelling.

The next chapter considers writing praxis as an activity for de-linking consciousness from liberal humanist philosophical and linguistic structures. De-colonial literatures, affect, and auto-theories provide examples of how mixing genres of memoir, fiction, biography, and cultural theory produce new theoretical knowledges. These genres conceptualize the embodied act of writing as a form of ontological, epistemic disobedience that removes the "post" from the post-colonial project. By simultaneously occupying a sensing, breathing body while displacing one's centrality as a cohesive, knowing subject, these texts place material and ontological decolonization at the heart of writing and speaking. Through simultaneously "worlding" and "unworlding," writing becomes an act which simultaneously privileges the senses and de-centers a cohesive, knowing self. These texts provide examples for Sylvia Wynter's argument that in order to re-write knowledge based in the conceit of Western liberal humanism, we need to re-think our human bodies as *praxis,* an always unfinished exploration into alternative ways of being, knowing, relating, and creating.

heal·ing
ˈhēliNG
transitive verb

1. (a) to make free from injury or disease : to make sound or whole[122]

self
noun

1. the union of elements (such as body, emotions, thoughts, and sensations) that constitute the individuality and identity of a person

[122] Meriam-Webster dictionary.

"*My body is a geography of selves, made up of diverse, bordering, overlapping countries.*"[123]

I am the grass, the mud of New York in Spring, the lilacs blooming outside my window, the Schoharie River in November when I check the ice with a crow bar. Can I skate on it yet? I am the witch. In kindergarten or first grade I called myself a witch and my teacher told me to shush.

I remember when I sat by the river with the cattails and the crickets and the moment I was not anything but a sensor between things—the contact point between worlds and things I wasn't anything at all but sensation and contact. And for some reason, in my six year old brain, that meant I was a witch.

My body is a shifting geography of selves. This one, that one, this geography of selves—the mother, the single mother, divorced woman, partner, gardener, massage therapist, writer, healer, Santa Fean, New Yorker, sister, daughter—daughter times two because I am a different daughter to my mother than to my father. I am I am not Dutch, Surinamese, West African, Welch. I am I am not Ellis Island immigrant.

My body is a shifting geographies of selves. I remember when—six weeks into a silent meditation retreat—my right shoulder started moving up and down all on its own—a kind of unwinding to which I was a helpless witness. My shoulder didn't belong to me, it belonged to itself.

And when I was told to stop sitting, to go outside and feed the birds, I learned that birds would take seeds out of my hands if I could make myself empty. If I could really be still, empty of tension, chickadees would land on the perch of my thumb before grabbing a seed and flying away.

What is a geography of self that is not a self, but all self, quiet and attuned to that which surrounds it? A sensor, a senseur, a contact point between worlds, neither reclaiming nor taking, but honing and shedding, more itself as a sensory being.

Sensory beings live on land.

A friend once said that he lives on the surface of a plastic tarp—the product of the European diaspora, of colonization and loss, but if he's lucky then someday his great great grandchildren might belong here on this land.[124]

My roots grew in New York in the mud of the Schoharie Creek, mud where Mr. Meade found Iroquois arrowheads and pottery shards, reminders that I have no right to own those fields, that these fields were taken by force, traded for trinkets and small pox.

But should I say this is not part of my geography of self?

---

[123] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
[124] This is part of a conversation with racial justice activist Scott Davis

Chapter Two—

Speaking / Telling Stories: Kaleidescopic Methodologies

"Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances?"

—Edward Said[125]

Last year, I attended an oral history training program at Columbia University. Part of the training involved pulling items out of our bag, and choosing five items that would represent the museum of our life, that could tell a story. Two of the items I pulled were coffee punch cards, both filled, but unused. I talked about my ambivalence with espresso, since touching others demands calm presence, but my academic work requires focus and intensity. Espresso, for me, represents a struggle between the tensions that currently define in my life.

One woman in our group, Rachel[126], held up a paper coffee cup with coffee and pink lipstick stains around the rim.

> *Here, I'm choosing this coffee cup to talk about myself. I have an unabashed addiction with coffee, and I'm not trying to give it up. It reminds me to have humility in the face of addiction; it's so hard to give something up that has control over you. If I have waited too long for coffee, sometimes I feel like flying over the counter and shaking the barista. Addiction has that much control over you, and I need to know what that feels like, what my patients go through.*

Earlier, Rachel and I had connected because we both worked in residential treatments centers for addiction. She works at a center based in the medical model in the Bronx, while I am a massage therapist at an integral treatment center in Santa Fe. While our facilities and role within these facilities are different, we face similar issues as storytellers and writers.

---

[125] Edward Said, *Opponents, Audiences, Consituencies and Community,* in *The Politics of Interpretation*, ed. WJT Mitchell. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983.

[126] This is a pseudonym to protect her privacy.

While our careers have been based in a commitment to sit with, and share, pain and despair, writing about what happens here is much harder. There is an impulse to share these stories and to make meaning, though how this ethically happens is murkier. Storytelling— as a way to make meaning or to join fragmented elements to make a cohesive whole— can be complicit with neoliberal technologies of "self." This can be true whether we are telling our own stories or the stories of others.

She went on to speak about heroism in storytelling, or a relentless desire for exploiting stories that arise from overcoming poverty and addiction. In her experience as a medical professional at a treatment center for addiction in the Bronx, these stories become exploited by well meaning digital storytellers, eager for a good story. She pointed to the Moth film, "The Fix," which explores the life of Junior Alcantara, a Bronx man at her facility who had found purpose in helping others struggling with addiction:

> *Look at the duality between "this is great," and the exploitative component. The Moth people walked away, but the hero is suicidal and feels worse. The story was important, but it was used. One patient after watching this said, "Why can't I be free, too?" It's a classic neoliberal tale. The patient feels worse, and the film-maker is a hero. I think about this all the time. When it's a palliative situation, I want those stories. There's no more trying to spin it… I'm determined to do that before I die. How do you get those real stories without a desire for heroism? Most of my patients have never left the South Bronx. I'm interested in the story of addiction as it relates to a community. Just listening, I'm not taking anything. But once I shape something into something that's mine, I'm taking.*

Here, Rachel is referring to differences of power, privilege, and position in our relationship to telling stories—especially in relationship to the act of writing, which Chandra Mohanty argues is always marked by class and ethnic position.[127] If we engage in the act of writing, there is no part of our embodiment that is not marked. Rachel's primary concern is

[127] Chandra Mohanty, *Decolonizing Feminism*: *Transnational Feminism and Globaliization*, London, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017, pg. 77.

humility and respect, but what that might look like is unclear, given her position of relative power and privilege as a light skinned, relatively affluent Jewish medical professional in the Bronx. Within these passages, the link to the humanity of her clients is expressed through the humility of her own addiction, though she has a longing for a deeper relationship to her clients through the practice of sharing stories. What kinds of stories point to uneven struggles of power that affect individuals and communities? She longs to tell a deeper story of addiction in relationship to that community that does not exploit, diminish, or make herself into the hero through spinning a good story of self transformation.

Often, ethnographers/storytellers/film-makers come and go within communities, sometimes speaking *for* communities and individuals. Research is often part of a larger journey moving toward the inclusion of the storyteller, or the ethnographer, within larger academic and creative circles. Often ethnography does not arise from engagement with one's own community, especially if the scholar is White. Traditionally, ethnography has encouraged studying Others, while retaining a neutral etic- (outsider) perspective as a foundation for objectivity. And almost universally, this perspective was presumed to be White, or operating within discourses conditioned by whiteness. Clearly, research is not neutral when operating through the language of scholarship conditioned by legacies of colonialism. According to Linda Tuwasi-Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Indigenous people have been oppressed by writing that employs an anthropological, ethnographic approach. She writes, "Anytime our origins have been examined, our histories recounted, our arts analyzed… theory has not ethically looked at us at all."[128] In fact, Smith argues that

[128] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies.* New York: Zed Books, 1999, pg. 2.

research, in the the pursuit of knowledge itself, is one way that the terms of colonialism and imperialism are reproduced.

In other words, acknowledging who is doing the writing, and for what purpose, is crucially important. As I talked about my research, a question that sometimes came up was, *That sounds great, but who are you to do this? Are you trying to be a good White woman?* Sometimes, teaching classes related to my dissertation, students were angry that I was not a woman of color. *Who am I to do this?* One advisor asked, *How are you not playing Indian*? In other words, my social position as a White woman, a relatively recent arrivant on this continent, necessarily marks my scholarship. At the same time, I found that justifying myself through claiming various intersectional oppressions, via my gender or genetics, entirely missed the point. What is at issue in this chapter is not my identity, nor ways I personally benefit from White privilege, but undermining the logic of "self" at the heart of liberal humanist discourses coded within ethnographic scholarship.

How is it possible to write as a *fully enfleshed* being, while not reproducing the terms of whiteness and settler colonialism? Richard Dyer points out that current conversations on whiteness have evolved out of liberal and intersectional feminism, often know as "identity politics," where authority to speak against structures of oppression are authenticated by one's self-identified position within a particular group that has identified a lack of privilege within a hierarchy of oppression. In other words, when hegemonic whiteness functions invisibly as a structure, it makes sense those who feel constructed and defined through this framework would reject it as alienating. The work of Toni Morrison and Edward Said make clear that white discourse functions to make sense of the racialized "other" in order to more clearly see itself. In other words, within these frameworks, the racialized other has no embodied

autonomy or claim to difference that can exist outside of biopoliticized frameworks of whiteness that mark people of color as "other" and Europeans as "human." When ethnographic research is about encountering and meeting an Other, there is an implicit reinforcement and realization of colonial codes and hierarchies guiding research.

Claudia Rankine and Max King Cap's *The Racial Imaginary* explores the dilemma of writing and speaking about race, without falling into well-worn tropes of "meeting the other," travelogues of seeing race, or of transcending race through desires for a post-racial utopia. In other words, whiteness functioning as colonial erasure exists everywhere: in literary writing, spiritual practices, and academic scholarship. For me, this means wrestling with the difficulties of writing when immersed in complicated, intertwined eco-systems of representation, privilege, and oppression. I hear Jill's need to deepen her connection to her own humanity that exists in the act of listening to and telling stories, but how can the affective experience of the felt-in-between-be expressed as the teller, the ethnographer, the witness, when the story is not simply about one's own oppression or the oppression of Others, but ways oppression is embedded within the fabric of our social relationships and lived landscapes? What happens when there is the realization that there is no "away," no place that can be separate from each other within racialized webs of coloniality that depend upon cohesive, definitive selves that define themselves through encounters with ethnic Others?

In other words, "White" is largely an empty signifier that depends upon difference in order to define itself. White identities are constructed identities. At the same time, whiteness travels through bodies, discourses, signs, policies, etc. in order to uphold what is commonly known as White supremacy, or hierarchies of being coded within colonial logic. This

presents a paradox that is crucial to confront. While neoliberal logic negates full personhood that is multiple and conflicted, justifying one's self within identity categories conditioned by liberal humanism reinforce those terms of "self." And yet, if one rejects culturally constructed identities and positions, one could be guilty of liberal multiculturalism, reinforcing whiteness, or speaking for others. Gloria Anzaldúa and Ana Louise Keating's *This Bridge We Call Home* deal with the difficulties of identities framed by liberal multiculturalism. Keating argues that liberal multiculturalism, embedded within binary ways of thinking about race, gender and ethnicity, relies upon fixed notions of identity categories which reinforce individualism at the heart of liberal humanism. In other words, claiming "White" as a cohesive identity, or centering a self-reflexive, narrating ethnographer can compound that problem, widening differences and reinforcing the same problems of "self" at the root of liberal humanism.

Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson argues that the problem with many anti-racist and intersectional frameworks is a focus on the "self-reflexive subject," or a self that use others to define and reflect upon itself. When we see ourselves or anyone else as ethnographic subjects, or as concrete, separate selves, we get caught in confession and truth telling as a political act, which doesn't do much to displace real structures of oppression and violence. On the street, I have heard this called the "Oppression Olympics," or the race to be "woke." Simpson argues that we should not be seeking authenticity, approval, or common humanity, since those acts continue to circulate neoliberal power relations.[129] This is a difficult paradox to confront in this historical moment as movements on the left have become increasingly

[129] Simpson, Audra. *Theorizing Native Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2014, pg. 211.

polarized and focused on policing the authenticity and correctness of behavior and speech in order to determine who belongs. For example, Chimamanda Ngozi, author of *Americanah*, recently argued in a New Yorker interview that the American left is increasingly cannibalistic, eating its own through acts of public shaming.[130] It's no secret that the American Right in 2016 drew upon these separatist discourses to shore up White identities, xenophobic, heteronormative, and white supremacist policies. In other words, separatist identity politics can often detract from neoliberal, colonial power relationships that are collectively killing us.

A primary difficulty I face in relationship to writing within and through multiple roles and positions revolves around binary traps of thinking that either center the "self" as a self-reflexive subject (an individual), or an omniscient critic who flips the colonial binary in order to historicize whiteness and settler subjectivity, effectively neutralizing embodied possibilities for full agency and collectivity. In other words, I am both a radically situated self— a racialized, embodied self constructed through historical privileges and oppressions— and a not-self, a sensory organism moving with and against complex and violent eco-systems of power. Any writing that fails to acknowledge both, or the complexity of being alive in a historically situated body, is likely to perpetuate whiteness hiding within multicultural, neoliberal logic. If writing is a self-representational act, an act of feeling my way through the world with the only senses that I have, I can never say for sure who or what that self actually is. Who I "am" in any given moment shifts based upon the context, who I am speaking to, and who is perceiving me. While writing my breathing self out of being is not an option,

[130] https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/political-scene/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-on-discovering-america

neither is claiming a fixed identity. In other words, when there is an author, a singular narrating "self" that is the central architect of meaning-making, there exists an impossible paradox related to identity when one is biopoliticized as White.

The problem of the self who writes is a representational problem that reaches across disciplinary lines. Constructivist and post-structural scholars argue that static notions of self, place and embodiment are problematic, given the disciplinary norms of language. Denise Riley, Judith Butler, Paul Eakin, and Fredric Jameson consider the difficulty of accounting for the self when the "bonds of language enact productive constraints, or ideological constraints."[131] Telling stories, or believing language and its embodiment, can be an essentializing and disciplining form of affect, seducing us away from desire into cocoons of belonging. These concerns echo post-structuralist concerns for the paradox of language in speaking and articulating a "self" that can speak and exist, while fragmenting hegemonic notions of what it means to be a person. These concerns echo post-structuralist concerns for the paradox of language in speaking and articulating a "self" that can speak and exist, while fragmenting hegemonic notions of what it means to be a person. Judith Butler writes, "If the 'I' is not easily separated from those relations that made the 'I' possible," then speaking and writing as a subaltern presents a double bind.[132] In order to theorize this double bind, these authors struggle within the constructivism of Foucualt, while reaching for poeitic processes capable of liberating language and being.

---

[131] Riley, Denise. *Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, 4.

[132] Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject.* New York: Fordham University Press. 2015, 11.

Butler sees speech as an act of performative agency, in which the speaking body can never overcome "prior and constituting dimensions of social normativity"[133] in which the individual is materially and structurally embedded. Butler argues that speech and personal narrative is not simply an expressive act, but also conditioned by biopolitical embodiment. We both act and are acted upon simultaneously, and must move toward using language that reflects that paradox. Since our capacity for speech is conditioned by the social worlds we inhabit, the body who speaks "is less an entity than a relation."[134] Since Western language structures distinguish between human/non-human, alive/dead, language privileges human subjects assumed to be coherent and autonomous. Within storytelling structures that presume the primacy of a coherent, rational, speaking subject, speech is an act of colonialism and anthropocentrism. Blowing apart what it means to write/speak provides a broader bridge to critiquing Western epistemologies/language/philosophies that assume wholeness and completeness of self, or any solid place to stand at all.

This chapter, then traces and theorizes a lineage of creative storytellers and ethnographers with whom I am speaking "with." Respecting the terms of Wynter's *decolonial sciencia,* I am not interested in simply undermining identity, but pointing out how cohesive identities, or "selves" are instrumental for colonialism. The writers I think with muddle within borderlands of thinking and embodiment, employing affect as a central mechanism for displacing de-personalized abstract thought and analogous critique. Walter Mignolo critiques the problem of scholarly representation when "understanding" is used more as an adjective rather than a gerund. He argues that scholars bound by western

[133] Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, Leticia Sabsay. *Vulnerability In Resistance.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, 19.
[134] Ibid, 19.

discourses are required to produce knowledge *about* people, objects, literature, etc., in order to produce serious theoretical knowledge.[135] Similarly, Eduoard Glissant challenges critical practices based in western epistemologies which fail to see the colonial practice of a "knowing subject describing and explaining a knowable object,"[136] effectively marginalizing diverse ontological and spiritual realities that, while different, are potential allies and collaborators. How can we take seriously the affective and trans-disciplinary movement toward restoring life to bodies and language?

Drawing upon Alexander Wilhelye's critique of Foucault in *Habeous Viscous* and Walter Mignolo's critique of Deleuze in *Border Thinking,* I am interested in drawing upon lived, local knowledges in order to construct an embodied, feminist de-colonial frame from which to refuse liberal humanist constructions of "self" (myself included). While storytelling is often an act of self, it can embody and express the complexity of being a self and a non/self in present time. The goal of *decolonial sciencia* is not simply historicizing; writing overturns colonial knowledge systems while creating new ones in affective and creative ways. For example, Aimee Cesare's *Discourse on Colonialism* and Edouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relations* put poetry and aesthetics at the heart of the de-colonial project. While *Discourse on Colonialism* critically links the de-humanization of the colonized to the colonizer, it simultaneously performs a poetic function by creating metaphors that feed the heart the de-colonial feeling/thinking. Cesaré writes that poetry is a necessary vehicle for breaking out of Cartesian, scientific knowledge paradigms because it is able to access experience as a whole, instead of compartmentalizing critique and feeling. I

---

[135] Walter Mignolo. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, 76.
[136] Edouard Glissant. *The Poetics of Relation*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1997.

argue that including the sensing self is not antithetical to the displacement of liberal humanism, though it is essential to write through one's colonial position. This chapter thinks through the intersection of auto-theory and poetry (poietics) that simultaneously de-center the writer while re-animating specific ecologies in which the author is embodied.

According to Alexander Wilheliye, Monique Allewaert, Walter Mignolo, Jodi Byrd and Mishuana Goeman, Indigeneous and women of color literature provide mnemonic devices, or sites of embodied memory, that link colonial violences enacted upon human/non-human bodies and land to spiritual and cultural survival. Literature becomes a boat for survival, in which the "I" that writes is necessarily multiple and multi-temporal. In the lineage of Audre Lorde and *This Bridge Called my Back*, writers shift voices and positions as a necessary condition for enfleshing one's lived reality that has been fragmented , roaming between fleshy border zones in order to hear and name something that is not obvious to the ideological "I." Writing become an act of willing dispossession, in which the body writes against hegemonic narratives of what it means to be a rational, cohesive self. For example, critical auto-ethnographies such as Gloria Anzaldua's *La Frontera* and *Light in the Dark,* use writing to dig into flesh to name larger structures of feeling. This tradition crosses between memoir, narrative, and ethnography, creating non-binary theoretical paradigms. Norma Cantu's *Canicula*, Zora Neal Hurston's *Mules and Men*, Jovita Gonzales's *Dew on the Thorn*, Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*, Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*, and Leanne Simpson's *Islands of Decolonial Love*, provide other examples of critical hybrid literatures, refusing disciplinary borders between subject and object, self and other.

Within academic writing, the experience of dispossession and doubt from a cohesive, recognizable self is directly expressed in the writing praxis of both Jacqui M. Alexander and

Gloria Anzaldúa, two scholars who use the act of writing to enflesh their existence into what Alexander calls the move from "secular to sacred citizenship"[137] as an alternative to neoliberal selfhood. For Alexander, the "I" that speaks and writes in *Pedagogies of Crossing,* is multiple and shifting. The "I" that emerges in the Introduction is not the same "I" that wrote *On Writing, Memory, and the Discipline of Freedom* or *Pedagogies of the Sacred*. In fact, speech is not an act of self at all, but a translation of the muse that appears *between* memory and identity. For Alexander, this muse only emerges in the process of consenting and surrendering to the process of "stripping," or the fleshy, literal way our selves get picked clean by the violences of Empire. It is the movement from the secular to the sacred, from dismemberment to (re)membering, the linear to the non-linear. Stripping is the mundane, painful way that "we come to know what we believe we know."[138] In this in-between *nepantla* between knowing and unknowing, self and not-self, we are not really the authors of our story. We are the conduit, the *senseur*, who physically puts words to paper.

Similarly, Gloria Anzaldua's posthumously published *Light in the Dark* provides a comprehensive theoretical outline of writing between and across impasses of identity, embodiment, spirituality, and belonging. For Anzaldúa, writing was the process of embodying Coyolxauhqui, the Aztec Moon goddess, who was dismembered by her brother, Huitzilopochtli, who sprang from their mother's chest as Coyolxauhqui and her 400 brothers tried to kill her. Huitzilopochtli chopped her to pieces, then threw her head into the night sky, where she became the moon. For Anzaldúa, Coyolxauhqui is the symbol for her felt sense of disembodiment within conflicting and multiple class, sexual, and ethnic identities

---

[137] M. Jacqui Alexander, Pedagogies of Crossing.
[138] Ibid, 17.

framed by colonial, patriarchal frameworks. Since there is no place to exist that can be whole, or a resolution of fragmented selves, the space of dismemberment becomes the lived space of *nepantla*, the in-between. For Anzaldúa, *nepantla* is defined as the liminal, transformational space of living between spaces of "knowing," where new knowledges are formed from within dismembered cracks. The speaker is de-centralized, fragmented, consciously not whole. *Nepantla* becomes a consciously lived space of resistance, in which categorical capture is always elusive.

The writing of Gloria Anzaldúa has been foundational for widening cracks and spaces between borders between what can be felt and said. Theorized as *nepantla* scholarship, Anzaldúa is unapologetic about speaking pain even as she leave safe spaces of "home" that make her legible to academic and male dominated Chicanx communities. Not writing to be legible, but to animate the full experience of her body, dreams, and Ancestral spirits (*nagualas*), Anzaldúa magnifies fault lines that contribute to her sense of fragmentation, creating a border zone of "self" in which sense of self defies boundaries of skin, geography, and cohesive identity. Similarly, Maria Eugenia Cotera uses the term *nepantla aesthetics* to theorize a politic of love in which solidarities based on "intimacy, relatedness, and affection for self and community"[139] provide a foundation for resisting cultural violences of patriarchy and colonization. Maria Eugenia Cotera draws upon Gloria Anzaldua's notion of *conocimieto,* or coming to know, within the border space of *nepantla.* While she draws upon literary examples of how characters are transformed in the process of occupying irreconcilable embodiments, she theorizes how scholars such as Zora Neal Hurston and

[139] Maria Eugenia Cotera. *Native Speakers. Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita Gonzalez and the Poetics of Culture.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008, 226.

Jovita Gonzales put the act of love at the center of their ethnographic and literary practice as an act of or coming to know that which is lived and embodied. Cotera argues that self love that extends outward toward community drives the need to name racialized and gendered conditions from within one's own subjectivity. This practice challenges ethnographic methods which necessitate an outsider (etic-) position to justify and validate observations. Instead, these women use the enemy's language, or the "science of man," to reveal a divergent way of thinking and knowing from within the systems in which they labor (academia), and identify (communities). Instead of leading us directly to insightful conclusions and critiques, readers are made uneasy by the recorded, uninterpreted acts of embodied oppression and displacement. She theorizes writers Deloria, Hurston, and González as simultaneously critical and literary, providing resistance to structural materialist arguments that categorize love, healing, and literature as a-political acts. These authors provide methodological examples of how language can be a critical vehicle for affect that is critical, that names, but also reaches across binaries (intellectual/affective, critical/literary, artistic/theoretical).

Speaking and writing within ontological gaps of consciousness becomes a practice of psychic survival, of enfleshing experience (including that not considered "rational") which cannot be recognizable by dominant epistemologies. This way of thinking necessitates the appropriation of language, methods and methodologies to create hybrid forms and languages. For example, "Bastard Spanish," or Chicano/a Spanish, is deployed by many authors, including Norma Cantu's *Canicula*, Viramonte's *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Anzaldua's *Borderlands*, and essay collections such as Irene Lara's *Fleshing the Spirit*. These hybrid forms perform the function of speaking between worlds, using words to invite the reader into

ontologies of pain and loss, without explaining, justifying, or erasing the lived experience of the writer. The effect is that the writer is able to speak, to express experiences that can't be contained or recognized within Western epistemologies.

For example, Jovita Gonzales's *Dew on the Thorn* presents a critique of celebratory, masculinist versions of border folktales in the tradition of Frank Dobie and Jose Limon. While Gonzales erases her subjectivity as writer, her sympathetic recording of the suffering of women on the border provides a visceral critique both to patriarchal practices and to individualism of Western epistemologies. The source of "crazy" for the *mujeres locas* of her story lies not in biological gender or spiritual "bewitchment," but in the cultural norms that confine their voices, sensual expressions, and movements. This produces a paradoxical dilemma for Gonzales's women of the border. While the patriarchal structures of their communities confine them, individualistic *Americano* culture offers no solace or liberation; it is the continuing source of assimilation and displacement of their people. This is the Borderlands, or psychic *nepantla.* When one is psychically displaced, not able to claim one identity over another (male/female, Indio/Hispano/Anglo, human/non-human), there emerges a kind of border ontology that she describes as swimming in an "alien element." Here, I would interpret "alien" as a kind of existence in which one's subjectivity is displaced, and therefore expanded beyond one's skin.

While Jovita Gonzáles created *nepantla* scholarship long before Anzaldua theorized it, it continues to appear as a theme in Chicana feminist and women of color writing. In *Fleshing the Spirit*, Chicana, Latina and Indigenous scholars write about the uneasy relationship between academia, spirituality, and social activism. Brenda Sendejo, in her essay *Methodologies of the Spirit*, writes about the difficulties women of color scholars face

when they disassociate from religious, patriarchal structures of their culture, as well fail to identify with the objective distance required as researchers. Sendejo writes about the difficulties she had as a researcher of Chicana women's healing practices, unable to separate the peace and spiritual satisfaction she felt from Catholic and curandera practices, from the "objective" research she was there to do. From within *nepantla*, the space of being torn apart by opposing belief systems, she argues that the subject/object binary of research must be challenged and re-thought. Instead, she argues that feminist ethnographic practice can serve a decolonizing function when it helps to re-claim soul, place and belonging for the researchers that are writing about and for their own communities.[140]

In *Translated Woman* and *The Vulnerable Observer*, Ruth Behar exemplifies *nepantla* scholarship by performing intellectual and literary border crossings in the tradition of Anzaldua. She argues that the discipline of anthropology should beware of "packaging truth" in the form of translating cultures to better know, understand, and manage Others. She warns that separation from affective, ontological, experiences as a writer/researcher is a problematic position, and argues instead that the vulnerability of the writer invites the vulnerability of the reader. She argues that being "lost" as a scholar, not knowing how a situation will act upon and transform you and the people you encounter, is at the heart of ethnography that does not "other." She argues that emotion does not diminish intellectual understanding, but provides an entry point for mapping "borderland spaces between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life."[141] The

[140] Facio and Lara. *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives.* Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2014, 68.

[141] Ruth Behar. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1996, 174.

purpose of scholarship, then, is not only to theorize, but to articulate grief and moments of witnessing as one who is stands within a situation, not outside as an objective knower. The issue, according to Behar, becomes the paradoxical practice of giving voice within the contradictions of representation and speaking for oneself. In *Translated Woman*, Behar patches together a new tongue between Spanish and English for Esperanza (her human subject), a *lengua* that cuts out Esperanza's tongue, while simultaneously giving her stories life. The new language becomes a talking serpent[142] by transgressing norms appropriate for Mexican village women as well as Western trained anthropologists. In allowing Esperanza's stories to speak for themselves, Behar calls herself a "literary wetback" by writing hybrid forms without entitlement or permission.

The question of permission, of what one is allowed to say within established frameworks and historical moments, then, continues to be an interesting question. Especially when the writer, or "me," is racialized as White. Writing, for me, is always a creative act of poiesis, of bring into being. However, there is an aporia that I must address as a person embodying legacies of *both* unmarked whiteness and settler (arrivant) status. If women of color scholarship is based in self-representation, or writing from one's unique subject position in order to write about and for one's *own* communities and ethnicities, what kinds of literary storytelling—from a white settler position—are useful for de-colonizing whiteness at the root of settler colonialism? I am still part of local knowledge production and existing eco-systems. To displace myself from how these knowledges are constructed and represented would be to exempt myself from the most pressing problem at the heart of this project; what

[142] See Gloria Anzaldua's *La Frontera.* Anzaldua refers to the mouth of the serpent as a symbol for women's sexuality, guarded by sharp teeth. The talking serpent is a symbol for speaking that which is considered dark and taboo.

does it means to exist together on the planet, to act in solidarity with and for each other. My task, then, is to confront neoliberal frameworks of "self" that make collectivity impossible, without reproducing the same logic.

Senseur Ethnography and Kaleidescopic Consciousness

1. You split the larger group into two, then into pairs who face each other.

You have everyone close their eyes. You guide the group into the felt sense of their bodies; into the soles of their feet, pelvis, abdomen, heart, throat, head.

You have them use their hands to draw a boundary around their body, like the shell of an egg.

They are to feel what it's like to be safe and secure in the felt sense of the body, here in present time and to slowly open their eyes and make gentle eye contact with the person across from them.

A woman with blonde hair and grey blue eyes looks up into the eyes of a very large bearded man with dark skin, eyes, tattoos. He looks at her gently.

The woman wells up with tears and looks down, her hands pressing outward from her stomach, pushing away."I can't look at him," she says, looking down, doubly distressed because she is aware that she now appears racist, and shame floods her face. "It's not him, it's all men," she says, tears streaming down her face.

The man stands calmly, tenderly gazing at her, occasionally looking down.

You ask her, do you feel safe? Can you feel his gentleness?

I do, she says, tears streaming down her face as she softens, trembles and stands with her eyes still closed. Her body shakes.

Afterwards, the woman says to you privately—"I am horrified. I know I looked like a racist, and I know that Joe is the kindest person in the world. It's just this fear in my body. I couldn't help it. I couldn't stop it.

Afterwards the man says to you privately, "I felt so badly. So sad. So many people are scared of me. They take one look at me and they're afraid." He looks at you hard and you both well up with tears. "I wanted to make her feel better. To tell her that I'm not a scary person. But I knew it wasn't about me."

2. You are participating in a workshop for racial justice at a conference.

Sitting in a circle of 150 people, you are asked to pair up. You turn to the woman sitting to your right. "Partner?"

She says, "No, I want to partner with a woman of color." She gets up and leaves.

You turn to the woman to your left. "Would you like to partner?" you ask.

"I want to partner with someone more ethnically…." she trails off as she looks around the room.

Unexpectedly, tears well up in you as you become seven years old, the girl with coke-bottomed glasses who couldn't find a partner in gym class. You are caught off guard by the emotion. You wish you could stop the tears, but you can't.

You look the young Iranian-American woman in her eyes. "What is it that you see when you look at me? What do I represent to you?" Tears stream hot down your face. There is nowhere to go with these tears, no way to stop them. They come from somewhere beyond your will.

She sighs and sits down. "It's not that," she says. "I just finished a very difficult dissertation and the most horrible people in my department were White women. I was treated so badly."

"I'm so sorry," you say. "I'm so, so sorry." Your hands find each others as you both well with tears.

When it is your turn to talk, you talk about the pain that got evoked by rejection. You told her that you had just experienced the sting of rejection, even though you understand, rationally. You understand why, but it still hurts. You wish it didn't.

"I know," she said. "I saw that. I just felt like I couldn't say no to you."

Later, someone publicly accuses you of White fragility, White Woman Tears, White Innocence.

Sarah Shulman's New Yorker essay "White Writer," wrestles with central problems of the writing through White embodiment and privilege. She argues that this historical moment, fraught with cultural conflicts and tensions, demands that White writers look in the

mirror and wrestle with racial complicity, both historic and within present time.[143] The essay was largely a response to controversial novelist Lionel Shriver at the Brisbane writer's festival[144] who pointed out that constraints within this discourse produce limits on creative imagination and potential solidarities that can be felt across constructed, and often imposed, boundaries of identity.[145] Shriver argues that demanding that one's fictional characters reflect the ethnic, sexual, and skin color of the writer creates normative constraints that presume—and enforce—cohesive identities. Shriver's speech was deeply problematic; she hoped that critique of "cultural appropriation" was a passing fad, and wore a Mexican sombrero during her speech. She referenced mostly White, European writers to make her case that much great literature would not exist if it were not for the human imagination capable of embodying itself in multiple bodies and identities. One writer, Yassmin Abdel-Magied—walked out of the speech, denouncing Shriver's "ignorance," and "vitriol" in a letter to the Gaurdian.[146]

What is interesting about this conflict is not the issue of cultural appropriation, but a question of rights and agency. There are paradox raised concerning power and identity: what characters, which constructed identities, can have agency, authority, and voice? What voices, which stories, can be authentic? Shriver's focus, without a de-colonial critique of cultural appropriation, focused on her "rights" as a writer, seems misguided. What she leaves out are critiques of power and agency that often fly un-noticed in writing by White authors.

[143] Sarah Shulman, White Writer, The New Yorker, October 13, 2016.

[144] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/13/lionel-shrivers-full-speech-i-hope-the-concept-of-cultural-appropriation-is-a-passing-fad

[145] Shriver's remarks were so controversial that the Brisbane Writer's festival temporarily took down her speech from the website.

[146] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/10/as-lionel-shriver-made-light-of-identity-i-had-no-choice-but-to-walk-out-on-her

According to critics such as Ken Kalphus of the Washington Post, the issue is not using the imagination to construct multiple and shifting characters, but how those border crossing characters reinforce or critique neoliberal, colonial power dynamics and stereotypes. In other words, Shriver's White, border-crossing and multi-identified body is less the issue than whiteness as a form of logic and unbroken wholeness as it travels through storytelling, or the assumed *right* to tell a story in whatever way a writer sees fit.

Coloniality and whiteness co-construct each other through agency, or what Richard Dyer calls the enterprise[147] of white bodies, or right to expand one's body in relationship to space. The notion of enterprise is linked to the concept of "worlding," or Heidegger's notion of being and becoming in the world. Writing, for me, is always an act of worlding. If being a scholar means writing and speaking, I must wrestle with how language does not reproduce the logic of wholeness trapped within whiteness. If language perpetuates violence through trapping matter in form, what kinds of language can both name structures of power, while exceeding its totalizing power to shape and name? Shulman raises a question that mirrors mine: What writers and scholars can I think *with* in this painful historical moment, both racialized as White and otherwise, when moved to speak and say *something* that doesn't reinforce colonial traps of identity and whiteness embedded within multicultural logic?

As an antidote to the enterprise of whiteness, Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues, "[White] belonging is derived from ownership as understood within the logic of capital and citizenship,"[148] which circulates discursively through national narratives of home (of the brave), pioneer myths, the right to exploit labor and to kill in order protect one's wealth and

---

[147] Richard Dyer. *White.* London: Routledge, 1997, 15.

[148] Moreton-Robertson, *The White Possessive.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. (pg. 128), 52.

property. While the American Dream is presented as color and class blind, all of these hopeful narratives of neoliberal belonging depend upon forgetting histories of Native genocide and removal. Settler colonialism and white nationalism are reified by narratives of migration, manifest destiny and private property ownership that depend upon the repression of Native histories in the name of progress and growth. Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that repressing Native dispossession works to protect white bodies from "ontological disturbance"[149] of their embodiment and right to belong. If whiteness functions through the possession of a privileged white identity, undermining subjectivities associated with this identity is crucial. If safety and belonging, if "home" is simultaneously driven by both by private property ownership and the ability to move, to be mobile if necessary, it's important to theorize ontological disturbance as an orphaned structure of feeling that interrupts whiteness as the *right* to cross borders, to tell anyone and everyone's stories.

Recent literary work has amplified the voices of those struggling with problems of language and representation associated with occupying a position of racial/settler privilege. Eula Biss's *Notes From No Man's Land*, provides an example of auto-theory that combines memoir and theory to wrestle with race, sexuality, and class in order to displace privilege and animate solidarity with multiple life forms. While Biss's work more classically reflects the memoir essay in the tradition of Joan Didion, Biss's whiteness is her subject. In *Notes From No Man's Land*, she turns her gaze onto her own white privilege, methodically deconstructing her own complicity with whiteness and gentrification. For Biss, displacement from white privilege feels like a blank space of place and identity, a no-(wo)man's land, in

[149] Ibid, 50.

which embodiment is necessarily displaced and confused. She expresses guilt and confusion for her part in “resource hoarding,” in which her abundance of access to resources, both for herself and for her children, reproduces spatial privilege. In her 2015 New York Times essay “White Debt,” Biss writes that “whiteness is not an identity, but a moral problem.”[150] This moral problem—of confronting the foundations of a cultural life based on violence, removal, and historical denial— is to confront existence historically rooted in these practices. Biss tears at her own flesh, her own complicity, to understand where she should stand. Her answer, reflecting the title *Notes from No Man’s Land*, is *nowhere*.

When attention turns toward specific embodiments and affects formed by legacies of settler colonialism, forgetting is no longer an option. The essay *Colonial Unknowing and Relations of Study*, collaboratively written by Manu Vimalassery, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Alyosha Goldstein, argue that forgetting is a necessary facet of colonial subjectivity. The authors argue that singular lenses such as stand-alone settler-colonial analytics, are too narrow and would be best served by collaborative analysis, or placing Black and Indigenous liberation struggles together in conversation. While the lived experiences and struggles are different, placing these frameworks together to dialogue is to de-center whiteness and colonial frameworks. The act of bringing “precise inter-articulations of these modes of power that does not collapse their distinctions, nor resort to the obfuscatory fog of analogy,”[151] is an act of dissonance that is interested in productive relationships and learning from each other’s struggles.

[150] Eula Biss. “White Debt.” The New York Times, December 2, 2015.

[151] Vimalassery, Manu, Juliana Hu Pegues, Alyosha Goldstein. *Colonial Unknowing and Relations of Study. Theory & Event, Volume 20, Number 4,* October 2017, pp. 1042-1054.

At the same time, dissonance is produced in White bodies, too, complicity with the enterprise of whiteness and settler colonialism become conflicting and unbearable. What kinds of ontologically disturbed, conflicted affects arise here, when rubbing against conditions that reproduce whiteness? What kinds of de-colonial solidarities can be forged here? A very real danger here would be to deflect attention away from structural oppression and toward anxious white bodies in an attempt to soothe what Robin DiAngelo famously calls "white fragility," or the affective ways that White bodies deflect the pain of racism.[152] This chapter does *not* present possibilities for settling setter anxiety, nor does it deny its existence. Instead, I am interested here in how displaced settler subjectivities actively contest neoliberal citizenship and colonization of space. Here, confused, murky forms of settler expression neither deflect histories of violence, nor negate the embodied existence of the settler. Indeed, there is a real fragility, here. By theorizing spaces in which settler bodies actively contest neoliberal citizenship, both materially and within a yet-to-be-imagined cultural imaginary, I am hoping to create space to enter conversations on race that take seriously ontologically disturbed affects in multiple and conflicted forms. While I will more fully theorize the affect of fragility (or vulnerability) in Chapter Four, my intention is to move beyond frameworks that reify static identity categories. Instead, what could it mean to refuse complicity with whiteness, neoliberal selfhood, or settler subjectivities? What could it look like to collectively refuse the terms of colonialism?

This remainder of this chapter aims to think through physical, embodied acts of settler roaming and dispossession— when they have *already been* named and disturbed in White

[152] DiAngelo, Robin. *White Fragility*. International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, Vol 3, 2011.

bodies. It assumes settler participation in the struggle for equal justice that is affective and embodied. This is, by its very nature, a murky act. It involves a willingness to inhabit/embody the unknown and pain of acknowledging one's colonial history and position, without moving on too quickly for a "precise articulation," or space to land. By mucking about within affective tensions around identity, settler colonialism, and belonging, I am interested in embodied possibilities for something *else*; de-colonial representation and embodiment that avoids capture and fixing in place as a trap. Instead, what happens when the lens is turned back on neoliberal subjectivities and discourses as they are displaced and dislodged in a quest for de-colonial, collaborative politics? When we can't go back, and we can't go forward, is it possible to imagine movement as co-poietic, made and felt together in service of undoing colonial, neoliberal subjectivities that assume "belonging," and individual "rights?" In other words, contrary to a singular "self' occupying its own sovereign territory, how are selves made and unmade through the act of de-territorialization, of purposeful displacement?

A currently unpublished poem written by Anne Haven McDonnell, Associate Professor at the Institute of American Indian Arts, reflects a ontologically disturbed White settler subjectivity:

Niwot's curse

i call this place *mine* to come from somewhere,
to know those blood-red plates of rock that tilt

towards the snowy divide as my own magnetic north
& the gulch choked with cherry and oak,

piles of seedy bear shit, still warm. i want
a place older than people. this city, my tribe

of next-best-places, my family of dead ends
at the edge of town, my people of forgetting – next to the creek,

just off the bike path, below Settlers' Park, a statue of chief Niwot kneels
on one knee in bronze buffed the color of river or whiskey.

Pigeon shit smeared on his head, he squints towards foothills that rise
as waves towards the high country – names that seem to cost

nothing in our mouths, looking west where the river is born from
Arapaho Glacier, Niwot Ridge, Pawnee Pass, Hiamovi Lake –

feeding the river that speaks in riffles & churns & sounds
like static beneath, or a murmur below this slick city

that i call *mine* because my parents will die here
and their parents came from the east, and their grandparents

came from hunger, passing on another hunger
i carry in my chest to that smell of sandstone & sumac

in rain. i learned to walk with mountains at my back,
a strength in my legs as I close my eyes, feel them rise behind

me – my hood, my antlers, my spine, the tethered deep tones
of my blood. But i know that old story, a curse Niwot left for the gold-

seekers who swarmed this valley: *those who saw the beauty*
*would stay & their staying would be the undoin*g – he said, after

first peace, before the murders at Sand Creek. This
morning i walk the bike path under good shade, in the freshly

rivered air, skateboarders and bikes and baby carriages stream
past, a steady hum of cars down Arapaho avenue in this

beautiful city, this river, this land we can no longer afford.
i'm leaving again, we are leaving, i tell him, but again,

i wonder, my voice filled with this river, these mountains
stuck in my spine, where do we go from here?[153]

[153] This poem is currently unpublished and shared with me as a friend.

Places like Boulder have all but erased Native histories except for *names that seem to cost nothing in our mouths*, while gentrification and growth feed a relentless march toward private accumulation and displacement. This is the colonial normal, the cruel optimism of the American Dream made visible. In Boulder, Santa Fe, and many other gentrified and gentrifying places, the American Dream is not cruel for those who can afford it. I included the above poem to capture the grief and confusion of whiteness, settler colonialism, and dispossession written from a woman who grew up in Boulder, Colorado, who now teaches creative writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts. Roaming the city on the bike path, *under good shade* (leafy non-Native trees planted in the high desert), Annie acknowledges her white mobility and privilege while Chief Niwot sits mute, still, covered in pigeon shit. She explores her grief and her longing to belong, to call this place *mine*—become we all *come from somewhere*. At the same time, she looks out at *this beautiful city, this river, this land* she *can no longer afford*. This land does not—and cannot—belong to her, though in some way she belongs to it because it is an ancestral home with which she is ambivalently attached. She promises Niwot to leave, but leave for where? With *mountains and rivers stuck* in her spine, is her only option permanent displacement from the place her body knows best? The home where she was born, where her parents will die? There is no resolution here, no-where to ethically belong, no-where to go.

Her poem names the profound grief over generational layers of ongoing violence: poverty, migration, primitive accumulation, genocide, gentrification, and displacement. Within this grief she feels a deep longing to love and belong, to honor both her ancestors and the original Native ancestors of the land. These feelings are unbearably incommensurable in her poem. *Where do we go from here*? When one sees and names violences in which they

personally are complicit, what are possibilities for inhabiting space, for moving and creating in the world? am interested in the subjective space that is concerned with mucking about within the paradox of arrivant being and becoming ("worlding"),[154] with Indigenous concerns for de-colonizing land and bodies.

Settler sovereignty (movement) and Indigenous sovereignty are in fundamental conflict. The presence of the settler presents an incommensurable tension that can't be resolved within colonial logic. The individual self, in whatever form it appears, is a central problem for imagining de-colonial worlding and embodiments, or decoloniality. As an experiment in writing outside of a cohesive, narrating self, I look to the work of multi-identified scholars who refuse occupation of a cohesive self, who look out instead at the violences acting upon their bodies and the bodies around them. Joao Biehl and Peter Locke's *Unfinished: The Anthropology of Becoming*, argues that ethnography must attend to the infinite possibilities and affective excesses that arise within the midst of social life. In other words, writing that inhabits the murk, the dark, and the confusion of our current historical moment is the generative space from which new possibilities may emerge. The notion of "placticity" emerges as a possibility for scholarly writing; instead of producing generalizable knowledge based in the realism of liberal humanist epistemologies, ethnographic writing attunes to particular and situated ways that worlds are always in process of becoming, unraveling, and creating. In this way, scholarship comes closer to its literary roots. In Biehl's *Ethnography in the Way of Theory,* he argues for movement toward cartography of language, instead of archaeology, or making meaning.

---

[154] This term is generally attributed to Heidegger in *Being in Time*.

Cartography is a play on surfaces, of making a map of the ordinary. Breaking linear, liberal humanist narratives and images into pieces as a kaleidoscope is useful for considering how language might illuminate moments of radical situatedness, aliveness, and possibility. Within this space, we can engage in many ways of thinking, knowing, touching, resisting, and creating. Kaleidoscopic methodology, or radically situated and temporal meditations, have precedent in scholarly forms. Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* provides a written example of his theory of the "optical unconscious," an idea meant to contest aesthetic hegemony used by the Nazi party, as well as Jung's Eurocentric notions of the "collective unconscious." In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin is a *flaneur*, a wanderer, roaming and recording how Parisian life is changing around him. In French, the word *flaneur* refers to "one who idles," who roams. Short vignettes capture glimpses of shared realities that Benjamin records as he wanders. He doesn't need to go outside of his own lived reality to find a subject. What he sees and observes around him is the subject. By recording ordinary moments of affective force, writing becomes an anti-fascist project of seeing and naming without providing a final analysis. In this way, theory becomes art, art becomes theory. Benjamin's fragmented ethnographic technique, often known as ficto-criticism, is useful for embodying the auto-theoretical act of writing through tensions grating at the border between identity and unfinished struggles for racial and social justice. Within this methodological universe, all actors occupy a position from within a fragmented, felt, always-in-motion universe.

My ethnographic method departs somewhat from Benjamin's position as *flaneur*. I am not focused on the sensory experience of seeing, but on the sensory experience of

interoception, or the "eighth sense."[155] While I will discuss the rise of neuroscience's interest in this sense in Chapter Five, interception is the felt, kinesthetic sense of the body. It is a way of knowing that arises through and within direct sensory embodiment. Instead of a *flaneur*, I am a *senseur*, one who kinesthetically feels her way through pressure points of tension and connection. In French, the noun *senseur* translates to "sensor," or "a device that responds to a physical stimulus (such as heat, light, sound, pressure, magnetism, or a particular motion) and transmits a resulting impulse (as for measurement or operating a control) 2 : sense organ.[156] As a massage therapist and meditation instructor, interoception is my primary way of knowing and understanding the world. As a massage therapist, I act as a sensor and translator for information that can't ordinarily be seen; only felt. Throughout my life, I have been discouraged not to trust this sense, but to dismiss it as untrustworthy and subordinate to reason. Instead of valorizing this kind of knowledge, my experiment as a *senseur* is only meant to provide another window into knowing and doing scholarship. The *senseur* vignettes that intersperse between chapters are meant to illuminate moments of cracking, of falling between spaces created by settler common sense, identifications, and identities.

Rather than mining and undermining "White" identities as an antidote to whiteness, I am interested in tracking orphaned, ontologically displaced structures of feeling as they travel between and through discourses and bodies. This may be a better way to investigate how whiteness travels through neoliberal and colonial agreements, rather than reifying unstable and constructed identity categories. By fully embodying the border zone between thinking/being, self/other, and dual roles as academic and bodyworker, a kaleidoscopic

---

[155] I will more fully enflesh this concept in Chapter Five, Haptics and Hapticality.
[156] Miriam Webster Dictionary.

framework allows for emergent ways of theorizing how relational spaces are forged and created within precarious, unequal, and endlessly changing social conditions. There is no center, no final resting place or resolution. Moments are fragments, selves are fragments, discourses are fragments. If something appears "whole" and unbreakable, it is an illusion. Necessarily, this has profound consequences for how stories are told and how scholarship gets done. For me, the problem shifts away from my White body, and toward ways that discourses and frameworks foreclose upon vital difference. Instead of prescriptive and ideological traps that reinforce binaries of thought and being, there are cracks and fissures between what can be seen and known. As a *senseur*, I'm interested in recording cartographies of unsettled moments *within* the open colonial wound. Resolution, or "healing," is not the point. Within spaces of brokenness, precarity, and grief, there are shared ontological spaces of refusal as well as border spaces of world making beyond universalized notions of a human self.

When I think of "border intellectual," I think of leaving home, of leaving safe attachments of understanding and belonging in order to participate in something larger, more uncomfortable, and perhaps shattering to cherished subjectivities, languages, and physical certainties. We cease to be legible and "whole," in favor of become multiple, permeable, beside ourselves. Whether we are a border intellectual (chosen), migrant (sometimes chosen) or refugee (never chosen), Alicia Smith-Camacho argues that traumatic separation from home intensifies longing, desire, and memory, making narrative an "essential instrument for staving off further loss."[157] Since border places are liminal spaces, whether physical or

[157] Schmidt-Camacho, Alicia. *Migrant Imaginaries*. New York: NYU Press, 2008, 6.

intellectual, they can potentially intensify traumatic, disembodied ruptures if there is no place for our bodies to connect, imagine new possibilities, speak, or act with and among each other. Elaine Scarry argues that the trick to surviving estrangement from the affective pleasure of the body is to find language, and to express pain. She writes,

> Through his ability to project words and sounds out into his environment, a human being inhabits, humanizes, and makes his own a space much larger than that occupied by his body alone.[158]

Rather than a space from which to *understand* the pain of Others, scholarship can be used as a tool for carrying writer and reader into *hapticality*,[159] or shared spaces of grief that imagine shared kinship and care as central to survival. Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, provides an example of how scholarship in the wake of slavery and continued historical violences against Black bodies means putting her own body at the center of grief. Writing from *within* the felt, lived cracks of grief become an entry point for considering an ethic of care from which to meet and feel each other in all of our singularity and difference. Writing from within the wake of history become an entry point for considering an ethic of care from which to meet and feel each other in all of our singularity and difference within the colonial wound.

Colonial legacies traveling through neoliberal laws, policies, and discourses, continue to uphold structures of whiteness that fail to grant vital agency to dark skinned bodies, non-human bodies, plants, animals, rocks, and everything that exists, whether we believe it is alive or not. Stephen Muecke argues that scholarship is implicated in this violence when we

[158] Elaine Scarry. *The Body in Pain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, 49.

[159] I will talk more about hapticality in Chapter Five, Touching, but this term is attributed to Fred Moten and Stefano Harney in The Undercommons (2013).

collude with secular materialism, writing about things as if they were already dead.[160] Cartesian and enlightenment philosophies that permeate western scholarship as a benchmark for what it means to be human, foreclose upon dialogue between healing, non-western knowledges and scientific inquiry. Instead, I am interested in how scholarship can contribute to *hapticality* as a way of both inhabiting one's body while transcending it through inhabiting a larger, shared, social spaces of world-making. World-making, in the form of shared songs, poetry, rituals, healing practices, and dance, densify shared community structures of feeling as tools of resistance against the alienation of neoliberal belonging. When scholarly language serves as a mnemonic device, whatever our social position or identity, it helps carry us into shared spaces of grief, longing, and shared concern for life that moves beyond bounded selfhood.

[160] Stephen Muecke, *The Mother's Day Protest and Other Fictocritical Essays*. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016.

re·demp·tion
rəˈdem(p)SH(ə)n/
noun

1.the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil.

whole·ness
ˈhōlnəs/
noun

1. the state of forming a complete and harmonious whole; unity.
2. the state of being unbroken or undamaged.

Chapter Three—

Reading: Redemption/Truth Telling as Colonial Strategy

The story of Michelle Jones presents an interesting conundrum for self narration and how we *hear* life stories. Jones had been serving a fifty year sentence for murdering her four year old son and burying him in an undisclosed location. While serving her shortened sentence, Jones had published widely lauded research on prostitutes in Indiana, whom she argued had been erased from history. This research—conducted in prison—earned her a spot in top PhD programs in history departments such as NYU and Harvard. The Harvard administration, however, rescinded her spot after professors who opposed her admission asked the university to re-consider her personal narrative. After she had been accepted and offered a place in the program, professors from the American Studies department accused Jones of "minimizing her crime to the point of misrepresentation,"[161] prompting university officials to rescind her offer of admission.

In other words, her narrative and how it was received, not her history of published scholarship and promise, became the center of controversy. One of her Harvard supporters, Elizabeth Hinton, called Jones "one of the strongest candidates in the country last year, period." The case "throws into relief," she added, the question of "how much do we really believe in the possibility of human redemption?"[162] While I appreciate this question, I believe it is the wrong question. For me, the right questions are, what do we mean by redemption, or transformation, and what if a story simply isn't redeemable? What if a story is

[161] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/us/harvard-nyu-prison-michelle-jones.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=photo-spot-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=0

[162] Ibid, 1.

impossibly painful and unspeakable, and can't exist within redemption frameworks, that don't leave us with a sense of feeling good—either about ourselves or for the narrator? What frameworks and alternatives do we have for narrating a "self" outside of these frameworks, especially when universities, academic departments, and publishing houses often determine which stories will be told and heard? Jones's case is interesting to me because her worthiness of inclusion into the academy depends not only upon the authenticity of her narrative, but the fact that her career choice as a historian posits her as a potential creator of new narratives.

Sara Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life* considers how refusing gestures of generosity within cultural norms, narratives, and institutions—especially when they are racist—can be considered "mean."[163] Refusing gestures of sympathy is shattering to the social contract, our collective sense of wholeness, our embodiment within webs of agreements. This presents an interesting dilemma: speaking critically, or *naming things*, often produces an affective, defensive wall in the reader when it threatens the listener's sense of order within a just world. But what are the rules of speech when one does not believe in justice being offered? If one occupies a position of privilege, do we expect stories of personal atonement and responsibility, such as Biss's *Notes from No Man's Land, or* "hyper-woke" social media postings? If one is a convicted felon, do we expect stories of reformation and transformation within a powerfully racist and punitive system? Our social location often determines what can be said and how it is received. A recent—and controversial—example is James Livingston's Facebook post in which he writes:

[163] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. 179.

> OK, officially, I now hate white people. I am a white people, for God's sake, but can we keep them—us—out of my neighborhood? I just went to Harlem Shake on 124 and Lenox for a classic burger to go, that would be my dinner, and the place is overrun with little Caucasian assholes who know their parents will approve of anything they do. Slide around the floor, you little shithead, sing loudly, you unlikely moron. Do what you want, nobody here is gonna restrict your right to be white. I herby resign from my race. Fuck these people. Yeah, I know, it's about access to my dinner. Fuck you, too.[164]

Livingston locates himself as part of the problem of gentrification; he occupies a White body occupying space in traditionally Black Harlem. However, as long as "little Caucasian assholes" don't join him in the colonization of space, there is an uneasy truce. As "the place is overrun," by "morons" of his own "race," Livingston is naming the violence of settler colonialism, gentrification, and white enterprise. Reactions to this post have largely been judged as racist. To right wing and liberal multicultural critics, his post is an example of reverse racism. What if the word Black was exchanged for Caucasian? Livingston's post prompted an investigation from Rutger's University, where Livingston teaches. According to a statement published by USA Today, "There is no place for racial intolerance at Rutgers."[165] At this writing, there has been no resolution of the matter. However, his post is part of a larger trend within universities of investigating the "hate speech" of professors. A recent example is the investigation of Jasbir Puar, Women's Studies professor at Rutgers, for her work exposing the racist and inhumane violence that Israel perpetuates upon the people

---

[164] https://www.newsweek.com/rutgers-white-people-resign-harlem-caucasians-professor-james-livingston-971019

[165] https://www.mycentraljersey.com/news/

of Palestine. While Puar kept her job, these incidents point to larger structural issues that are embedded within liberal multiculturalist institutions. Sara Ahmed distinguishes between diversity and racism: "Diversity as damage limitation. Racism as damage to whiteness."[166] Both Livingston and Puar threaten damage to whiteness.

Liberal multicultural institutions, in efforts toward inclusion and diversity, consent to hear and even amplify *certain* narratives of marginalized people that do not threaten the institution. In *Represent and Destroy*, Jody Melamed argues that English departments are often guilty of consuming the lives and pain of others in a way that solidifies race and class hegemonies by forming a link between higher education and philanthropy. By developing elite global citizens armed with knowledge about "deserving others," whiteness takes the form of a universal subject that expresses sympathy. By representing others as oppressed, as worthy of benevolence, liberal multiculturalism perpetuates racism by celebrating narratives that prioritize individuals' rights to neoliberal citizenship. Monique Allewart also attributes legacies of sympathy to romanticism inherent in environmental writing, which assumes a cohesive human subject ethically bound to care for Others. Liberal multiculturalism de-materializes oppression and violence created and perpetuated by the "melting pot" myth, celebrating others of difference. By enfolding Others within liberal frameworks of "inclusion" and individual rights, liberal multiculturalists fail to recognize how diverse ontologies can live outside of what can be considered rational and universal within the logic of liberal humanism. Chandra Mohanty argues that while life stories and autobiographies have proliferated over the past twenty years, their existence in the classroom is typically an

---

[166] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, 178.

exercise in celebrating difference and diversity, instead of de-centering hegemonic narratives or institutional oppression. Instead, she argues that a de-colonial feminist praxis demands understanding how life stories are "read, understood and located institutionally"[167] if colonial subjectivities and histories are to be dismantled.

Histories are relational, Hearing is relational. Limited capacities for listening judging/recognizing speech exposes colonial power dynamics underlie frameworks for hearing. In *Cunning of Recognition*, Elizabeth Povinelli outlines how liberal, enlightened logic seeks to avoid trauma, or breaking, at all costs by insulating itself from pain through the infallible logic of "recognition," or the ability to know and define others. It is this power to define and heal others through its imagined and assumed wholeness that is arguably the real enemy of an embodied political consciousness that exists outside of multicultural neoliberalism. If trauma is defined as "an event in which excitations from the outside are powerful enough to alter the mind's experience of time, self, and the world,"[168] then Povinelli's intention is to unsettle the liberal notion that believes that the fracturing of bodies and psyches is inherently bad, and to be avoided at all costs. She writes of Spencer of Gillen, anthropologists in the late 19th century who documented Arrente "deviant" sexual practices in aboriginal Australia:

> [They] chased a desire to be challenged but not un-done; and what they demanded of their Arrente informants was challenge but not to undo them."[169]

---

[167] Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2004, 77.

[168] Povinelli, Elizabeth. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, 98.

[169] Ibid, 98.

In other words, Povinelli names the way that rational critical discourse, founded on western enlightenment philosophies of bounded individualism, creates its own impasse at the juncture of its assumed rationality and what is actually experienced. In order not to break, in order not to become un-done, its logic subsumes what it can't understand into its own site of "recognition," in which others are understood, but only through its own lens. This logic seeks to be challenged and tittilated by exotic others, but must protect its power by understanding others in a way that doesn't threaten its own core of what is considered normal and rational. In other words, Michelle Jones' story, in order to be "redemptive," must reflect back something affectively satisfying to the reader that does not threaten the reader's position.

The rise of Oprah has given simultaneous rise to personal storytelling and memoir, especially redemption narratives that make meaning out of suffering. Kathryn Lofton's *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon*, names structures of affect driving Oprah's book club, deconstructing how "reading religiously" serves the cult of transformation without personal cost. Lofton notes that while Oprah admits that she "has seen new worlds and accumulated new ideas"[170] through the act of reading, she also appears to remain unchanged. Instead of personal transformation, the books she chooses become a reinforcement of her spiritual and moral values to impart to others.

In other words, stories become a form of "bibliophilic voyeurism" in which books provide a safe, distant space of pleasure from which to learn or reinforce what one already knows. Lofton quotes Oprah:

---

[170] Kathryn Lofton. *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011, 184.

> You still get a jolt of pleasure when you think about the Jane Austen novel that clued you in on sexual politics…You still leaf through those dog-eared volumes because they speak to the private in you, the one who understands that life, in all its rapturous, sorrowful variety, can be contained within a page, a paragraph, a sentence, even a single, perfect word."[171]

While reading is undoubtedly a personal aesthetic experience, books selected for Oprah's book club contain common themes that seek to connect readers across race and socio-economic divides. In general, Oprah has stated that she drawn to "voices of young girls, women in struggle, who ultimately have to triumph."[172] Through surviving against all odds, through the triumph of resilience, diverse readers can share emotional connection and cultural epiphanies with each other. In fact, the opportunity to "break your heart and heal it again,"[173] forms the general operational strategy of the Oprah show. Sort of like *Chicken Soup for the Soul* for progressive multicultural readers.

Progressive multiculturalism is bound within redemption narratives, and acts as a pillow for what Robin Di'Angelo calls "white fragility," or what many white-identified people feel when a critical race lens is turned back upon structures of racism to which White bodies are often complicit.[174] This fragility creates an affective problem for *hearing*, or bearing witness, to violences we may be complicit in perpetuating. Sara Ahmed writes:

---

[171] Ibid, 156.
[172] Ibid, 163.
[173] Ibid, 185.
[174] DiAngelo, Robin. *White Fragility*. International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, Vol 3, 2011.

> White fragility is this: a way of stopping the chain of causality, such that whiteness is defended against that which would trip it up, such that whiteness becomes that which would be damaged by a fall."[175]

Ahmed argues that speaking about racism directly makes one a "killjoy," or the one causing damage. Social bonds are broken and feelings are hurt when fragility is evoked. Walls are erected. Reflecting upon this impasse, Ahmed raises an important question: "If histories of hurt bring us to feminism, what do we do when our own critiques become the cause of other people's hurt?"[176]

In a relentless cultural desire for belonging, healing, and transformation of suffering, we miss opportunities for sharing political responsibility and grief. When we voyeuristically read stories that "break our hearts and heal them again," scholars, students of literature, and book circle members become complicit in a kind of rhetoric that celebrates diversity and activism, but does little or nothing to address structural issues of violence, imperialism, and more invisible forms of racism and bio-politics. Instead of rushing toward redemption and the cruel optimism of citizenship, how do we remain in the felt experience of breaking, or enduring that which cannot be quickly fixed or transformed? Along with Lofton, I argue that the aesthetic experience of breaking one's heart and healing it again is deeply complicit in neoliberal technologies, and does little to displace structures of capitalism and oppression. This chapter, then, engages with Jodi Byrd's call for scholars to place the "responsibilities of the lived conditions of colonialism"[177] front and center of the conversation.

---

[175] Sara Ahmed, *Living A Feminist Life*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, pg. 179.
[176] Ibid, 178.
[177] Jodi Byrd. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, xxv.

One of the aporias I write through in this chapter is the acknowledgment that legacies of racism and colonization have produced, and continue to produce, intergenerational trauma across class, racial, and gender lines. What happens when readers are forced to acknowledge not only that the pain of another is bound within one's own complicity, but that complicity perpetuates the ongoing source of that wounding? How can we hear these stories, especially when our own personal wounding might be triggered at the same time, invoking defense and a shoring up of "self?" When narratives of individualistic healing and redemption are interrupted, there is an unbearable wound to tend to, not just for the author, but for the reader. My interest is really here, in the affective dimension of colonial wounding, not just for Native people, women of color, women of the Global South, or any other marginalized group, but for colonial subjectivity itself. This knowledge makes treating historical trauma and related problems such as addiction, psychic/cultural fragmentation, and poverty, much more complex than current theories that place "resilience," or redemptive and cohesive narratives at the center of trauma treatment. My guess is that Michelle Jones' trauma extends much further back than her individual history, though I can't know. However, the subject of her research—the erasure of prostitutes from history—suggests a deep interest in enfleshing the ghosts of bodies made irrelevant, invisible, and un-redeemable. It seems ironic that she was rejected, via her personal narrative, on a moral foundation that might like to keep these stories irredeemable.

In order to feel with (not simply imagine) counter-hegemonic imaginaries for de-colonial acts of reading and hearing, I will provide a critical reading of Linda Hogan's memoir, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, as an example of narration that operates between theory/literature, self/not-self, animating a framework that does not redeem colonial

selfhood. Linda Hogan's memoir points not to transcendence of pain, but to the embodiment of flesh that continues to be torn apart by colonial racisms. Language doesn't abandon what is felt through the safety of theory, naming, and recognition of the problem. Instead, the authors' words produce tensions between earth, chaos, bodies, what is felt, and words, birth, actions in the world, clarity, and possibilities for justice. The goal is not to seek transcendence, but to magnify tensions and affects. Through her memoir, we see how structures of oppression are embodied, not simply "healed" through redemption narratives. Language becomes an affective vehicle for feeling with, but is not meant to be aesthetic. Reading these authors requires a different approach as a reader. Instead of narratives that exonerate settler colonialism and whiteness, where "difference" finds healing and resilience within a multi-racial society, settler-colonialism is forced to look back at its own acts of violence.

At the heart of literary analysis lies a belief in the power of language to effect social change by literally re-writing (and speaking) society. The late literary analyst Kenneth Burke articulated how literature is a "symbolic action," providing a site of resistance for the author to interact with their audience philosophically, historically, and aesthetically. We can see this argument at work within Mishuana Goeman's *Mark My Words* when she argues that native women writers demonstrate "spatial decolonization" through the use of imagery that challenges normative articulations of imagined geographies, physical space, and mobility[178]. She argues that these writings serve a purpose by moving the reader out of essentialized notions of indigeneity, demonstrating that Native women writers provide a politically viable

[178] Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2103, 206.

and direct challenge to settler-colonial normative thought by producing radically new psychological and geographic spaces. The power of truth-telling is also applied in another form within human service and arts organizations, based on trauma theories and human rights narratives that claim, "peace after state and civic violence is rarely accomplished by silencing victims."[179] This philosophy has given rise to truth and reconciliation commissions, monologue performances and memoirs, meant to heal victims of violence and oppression.

The claim that language, poetry, or truth-telling, can save us by affectively transforming political and spatial consciousness is a seductive one. But can it transform deeply embedded structures of heteropatriarchy and settler-colonial oppression that continue to exploit (and consume) bodies and land in the name of profit? Or is it a way to feel the catharsis of grief and survive within settler-colonial structures that we believe really can't, and won't, change? Or more perniciously, is reading memoir another way to voyeuristically consume the pain of others without challenging mental and political structures that perpetuate violence and exploitation? The "self" who transforms through trial and tribulation typically ignores ongoing histories of colonization, which are inconvenient to redemption narratives. We want the happy ending, the tidy transformation, and to uphold the cruel optimism that transformation will make us more likable, fit, employable, and marry-able. We can see this at work in popular memoirs such as *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, and lives on in what Leigh Gilmore calls the American neoconfessional.[180] Drawing upon Lauren Berlant, Gilmore argues that by centering normative, un-inspected values, redemption narratives shift

---

[179] Million, Dian. *Therapeutic Nations.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013, 2.

[180] Gilmore, Leigh. "American Neoconfessional: Memoir, Self-Help, and Redemption on Oprah's Couch." Biography, Volume 33, Number 4, Fall 2010.

attention away from the complexities of racial and gendered histories toward discourses of identity or self help.

In addition, Jodi Byrd argues that cultural, literary, and political scholarship in the United States has depended upon a post-colonial narrative that seeks to exonerate itself from the crimes of colonialism, reducing Native people to an ontological kind of authentic "Indianness" that both "affirms and forgets" the crimes of history through multicultural literature and scholarship that elides settler-colonial violence.[181] Jodi Melamed further argues how the field of Literary Studies has been at the center of the production of epistemic habits that normalize neoliberal discourses of multiculturalism, in which oppressed races "find their voice," and "win their rights" within democratic society[182].

The praxis I am reaching for is a direct challenge to liberal and progressive multiculturalism, which enfolds difference into the cocoon of the American Dream, or the hegemony of global capitalism masked as citizenship. By placing divergent lineages of feminist scholars in conversation with Linda Hogan, my intention is to show how Hogan simultaneously names and densifies historical trauma, while implicating late neoliberal concepts of multiculturalism, authenticity, and individualism that continue to perpetuate violence within indigenous communities. Without the insights of critical indigenous theory, we could read Hogan in a way that is complicit in liberal multicultural technologies, providing another avenue for dominant classes to intimately know racialized others. If read through liberal eyes, we could argue that these writings give a "voice," that "heals" violent pasts rooted in "post"-colonial violence. In fact, I chose *Woman Who Watches Over the*

[181] Jodi Byrd. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, xxv.
[182] Melamed, Jody. *Represent and Destroy.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2011, 40.

World because it could so easily be read as part of the liberal, spiritual project. It *could* be on Oprah's book list. She writes about both pain and love, and *does* find a certain place of rest. This shady gray area around "healing" is what makes reading this book so interesting.

If, as Schaffer and Smith claim, "All stories emerge in complex and uneven relationships of power,"[183] how are we to read a memoir such as Linda Hogan's, when "truth telling" works within capitalist rhetoric of human rights and trauma to create "healed" bio-citizens and good consumers? I am hoping that by placing critical indigenous feminist scholars in conversation with Linda Hogan's memoir, I can begin to open up space for larger issues of trauma and violence, land theft and exploitation, and how these processes operate through neoliberal narratives of healing that fail to address the violence of US bio-politics and global capitalist expansion. There is something that rubs against the notion of wholeness and healing, and that is the fact of interconnected bodies embedded within toxic systems. How is the reciprocal act of telling and hearing stories, of speaking and hearing the body in pain, simultaneously a felt experience of shared pain that simultaneously names neoliberal violences? How can the experience of hearing point to the necessity of breaking, or collective refusal, instead of "healing?"

Woman Who Watches Over the World

Before Linda Hogan tells her story in *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, she writes:

> As humans we've thought that if we find a story, tell it well, that it will contain a thread out of the dark labyrinth into light and wholeness. And if we can trace its

[183] Million, Dian. *Therapeutic Nations.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013, 76.

origins, we think there is a way to reach healing. But when the world is sick, there are no stories and there is no place to retreat.[184]

Hogan is telling us directly that her story won't save us; that it won't, and can't, heal us or the world. How are we to make sense, then, of the language of truth telling? In this section, I engage critical indigenous scholarship to show how Linda Hogan densifies pain through articulating the tangled threads of forgotten histories that live underneath the ongoing violences of multicultural neoliberalism. This kind of violence masked as healing shifts the responsibility of white settler-colonial violence onto "vulnerable populations" as sites of wounded-ness that are ripe for saving within hegemonic discourses of wellness that aim to produce individuated citizens within a free market economy.

Indigenous scholars such as Dian Million, Mishuana Goeman, and Joanne Barker argue that expanded notions of kinship form the heart of native epistemologies in a way that are incompatible with market capitalism and bio-politics. These imaginaries, living outside of human-centric heteronormativity and patriarchy, are at the heart of articulating a kind of "difference" that must occupy its own sovereign territory of body, land, and governance. *Women Who Watches Over the World* attempts to articulate and embody these counter-hegemonic imaginaries. If the assimilative work of colonization happens through bio-political strategies that disembody and separate people from land, kinship systems, rage and pain, Linda Hogan exposes how the continued colonization of geography and bodies lie at the heart of the "sickness" of the world. Any kind of healing that exists within that kind of violence is part of that continued violence. Both Hogan and Elizabeth Povinelli point to the

---

[184] Hogan, Linda. *The Woman Who Watches Over the World.* New York: WW Norton and Company, 2001, 20.

gap, or the trauma of undoing, that exists between abstracted, rational western forms of recognition and indigenous felt experiences of "difference" as geographic spaces that contain the seeds of political possibility. This contradictory consciousness produces a friction that can allow other expressions of embodiment to emerge and exist outside of the oppression of western "recognition," logic, and shallow promises of healing.

Throughout her memoir, Hogan reflects upon history as that which imprints upon Native bodies a "tangle of threads" of forgotten histories, forged through violence and the silence that accompanies trauma. Hogan writes, "History, like geography, lives in the body, and it is marrow-deep. History is our illness."[185] At the same time, Hogan recognizes and names a white desire to "consume" Native women's lives, a desire to romantically link Native people with "spirit, heart, and earth-based way of living" that elides white responsibility for acknowledging the truth of history and recognize on-going structures of settler-colonialism:

> Yet, there was then, as now, a search by Euro-Americans for what they thought American Indians represented. Not for the best of what we have to offer, our knowledge of the world, our complex theologies, our remembered ecology, but for a romantic tie to the earth the Europeans have forgotten and severed, and could now have back, but for self-deceit. [186]

Clearly, we are meant to read Hogan's story as a disruption of romantic multicultural narratives that abstract Native women's bodies as an ontological representation of "Indian-ness." But what then, is her language pointing us to? What are the "remembered ecologies,

[185] Ibid, 59.
[186] Ibid, 62.

knowledges of the world, and complex theologies" that are meant to unsettle bounded individualism? What kind of power does Hogan assign to language and storytelling to name and un-do these deceits that are reproduced through neoliberal, multicultural rhetoric?

While Linda Hogan never references "bio-politics" or "multicultural logic," she refers to how these processes manifest in native bodies and communities as pain. She writes, "I've concluded over the years that the two ways, Native and European, are almost impossible to intertwine, that they are parallel worlds taking place at the same time,"[187] and illustrates throughout her memoir how the European way has imprinted itself on Native society through the European desire to erase the "trauma of difference."[188] While this process of genocide/assimilation happened overtly through settler colonial violence in the 19th century, policies such as the Indian Act and The Relocation Act effectively imprinted heteronormative and patriarchal notions of the nuclear family and private property onto Native communities. This assimilative process continues its work today through neoliberal multiculturalism that celebrates diversity and the right for all Americans to be private property owners, married, empowered consumers. This form of rhetoric, while it claims to celebrate difference, effectively erases pain and the "density" of the lived effects of history. This erasure effectively functions as a map that imposes "God's true map" (manifest destiny) on lives and land through de-materializing native bodies as symbolic and recognizable within Western epistemologies that determine what practices and knowledges are rational and worthy of legal recognition. Central to the work of Jodi Byrd, Elizabeth Povinelli, and Joanne Barker, are how official definitions of cultural authenticity or "Indianness" have allowed neoliberal

[187] Ibid, 27.
[188] Ibid, 29.

imperialism to flourish within US, Canadian, and Australian legal structures. By exposing how patriarchal colonial laws and policies defined and enforced "Indianness" as primarily male, inherited through blood, and perpetuated through western, heterosexual norms of sexuality and marriage, we see how Native women and communities have been rendered vulnerable and disembodied, while simultaneously frozen in time as symbols of an essentialized romantic Native "other" within current multicultural logic.

According to Elizabeth Povinelli in *The Cunning of Recognition,* politics of "difference" and sovereignty are subsumed within western culture's rational public discourses of "reason" in which western scholarship depends upon the "unconditional nature of ethical and moral obligations and its relation to the enlightenment obligation to public reason."[189] Since current politics of multiculturalism arose out of enlightenment discourses and philosophies, it produces an interesting dilemma for scholars working with questions of affect and power within post-colonial discourses. It is in the conflict between embodied, subjective "moral sensibilities" (deontology) and objective, rational epistemologies that produce powerful points of tension with liberal democracies. According to Povenelli, multicultural logic skirts this tension by assuming an un-assailable moral position of inclusion, openness and encompassment. Through operating through a public discourse of reason that aims to unify hearts and minds through rhetoric of equality and nonviolence, multiculturalism "liberates" subaltern voices and subjectivities by including them in a grander narrative of cultural exceptionalism.[190] At the same time, indigeneity is reduced to an "aura," a possible site of colonial liberation from its historical sins. In this way, historical

[189] Povinelli, Elizabeth. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, 8.
[190] Ibid, 59.

trauma is rendered invisible, the inevitable result of the state's need to claim liberal laws, and the inherent rationality of the capitalist marketplace as the foundation of modern citizenship and consumer sovereignty. In this way, Povinelli argues that western enlightenment epistemologies, and its current manifestation as neoliberal multiculturalism, are incompatible with indigenous ways of knowing and being through its need to colonize difference.

Audra Simpson elaborates on this process from a Mohawk anthropologist's perspective in which she questions the anthropological use of "difference" in cultural analysis, in which a stable core of whiteness is measured against the difference of others. This assumed "self" is the territory of whiteness, against which all others (non-white) are measured and evaluated. She argues that through this epistemological lens, timeless portraits of Native people emerge, in which anthropologists, in speaking for others, create an indigeneity that would otherwise not exist as a construct. For Simpson, western definitions of Native identities and depictions of history, then, have produced "a complete disjuncture" between what has been written about her people and how her people define themselves and what matters to them.[191] At the heart of this dis-juncture is a western enlightened way of knowing that can't see itself outside of its own logic.

Audra Simpson argues that the work of de-colonial and critical indigenous scholarship is to name and thwart this logic instead of continuing to participate in morally acceptable discourses of "tradition," "authenticity," and "Indian-ness" that continue to produce disembodiment, powerlessness, and melancholy within communities that are

---

[191] Simpson, Audra. *On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity,"Voice," and Colonial Citizenship*. Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue (Dec. 2007), 69.

expected to "identify with an impossible object of an authentic self-identity."[192] Failing to confront the expectation to perform one's morally/socially agreed upon identity fragments the self and diverts attention away from the multicultural logic that produced the violence in the first place. Chris Anderson further supports this argument by claiming that native scholarship must use western analytic methods in order to thwart hegemonic representations that marginalize native bodies and ways of knowing, by turning its critical/rational lens on its own whiteness at the heart of multicultural scholarship.[193] Jodi Byrd further supports Anderson by arguing that Native scholarship must not simply focus on difference, but must use western logic to expose how "the impulse to world is the setting-to-work of the colonizer, even if that work is to reconfigure the world so that it might be kinder and gentler."[194] Throughout *The Woman Who Watches Over the World,* Linda Hogan turns her critical eye on white settler-colonialism as it operates invisibly and painfully, by providing words for what the body knows, but can't name. In her book, she discusses the joy of adopting daughters from her own tribe after the passage of The Indian Child Welfare Act (1978), but living with the frustration that her love couldn't heal them of "the tangle of threads and war-torn American history that other Americans like to forget."[195]

In order to more fully understand her daughter's pain, Hogan traces her daughter's embodied history to the Massacre at Wounded Knee in order to see "what forces led to the

---

[192] Povinelli, Elizabeth. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, 6.

[193] Anderson, Chris. *Critical Indigenous Studies: From Difference To Density.* Cultural Studies Review, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2009, 81.

[194] Jodi Byrd. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 38.

[195] Ibid, 77.

twisted violence, to the hatred of a mother's self the beautiful children born of her body."[196] In this way, Hogan names her daughter's pain as more than just the pathology/illness of an individual, more than something to be healed by the county workers that know her daughter by name, but as the direct product of US settler-colonial violence. Linda Hogan references this historic invisibility as "phantom pain," or pain that is known to the body, but not recognized or understood by science or the rational mind. If the limb is no longer there, how can there be pain? Hogan writes that "The problem with pain altogether is invisibility,"[197] then describes the felt experience of neoliberal settler-colonialism that has mapped itself onto her body:

> It is ironic that pain in the human body can seem so unreal, so invisible... while in history people believed in something as abstract as worlds that didn't exist. These worlds, with all their false flora and fauna, were even documented on European maps. It's as if it is easier to believe the human body tells lies but maps, books, and words do not.[198]

Here, Hogan is referencing the ways that historical trauma and its resulting pain is rendered "unspeakable" through the rational denial of its existence through the "fact" of maps and the settler-colonial imaginary. The same logic, applied to neoliberalism, would ask: if historical trauma and racism were resolved in the 20th century, the pain you feel must be part of your cultural pathology and failure to assimilate to the market. This logic is echoed in scholarship by Phil Lane Jr. and Sousan Abadian, who in failing to understand native

---

[196] Ibid, 78.
[197] Ibid, 196.
[198] Ibid, 197.

economies/relationships that lie outside of heteronormative structures of private property ownership, suggest that native cultures who adapt to western capitalism are more functional and adaptive.[199] This kind of scholarship articulates ways that "culture" can either be a vehicle for healing, or a source of pain for people due to their failure to "adapt" to contemporary economic conditions. By supporting such scholarship, academics are complicit in assimilative technologies by supporting the unassailable market logic that continues to consume Native land and bodies. By failing to name the "sickness" at the heart of global capitalism, our "world," we perpetrate violence not just toward Native bodies, but toward all life.

Ultimately, neoliberal thought fails to recognize how historical pain persists in bodies and communities of people who recognize relationships, both human and non-human, at the heart of cultural health and sovereignty. In order to silence or marginalize this perspective, multicultural rhetoric serves its bio-political function through dis-embodying this perspective, by making it irrational, other, and symbolic. Several scholars such as Jodi Byrd, Jody Melamed, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Scott Morgensen have illustrated how multicultural discourses effectively erase violence at the heart of settler-colonialism, creating a kind of "ontological Indianness" that functions symbolically in cultural, literary and political discourses. Jodi Byrd argues that while there exists a "narrative of regret" over past injustices within post-colonial theory, this discourse ultimately leaves Native people in a state of ungrievability and "transit," existing "everywhere and nowhere,"[200] The lived

---

[199] Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2103, 49.

[200] Jodi Byrd. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, xxiv.

experience of pain, therefore, becomes a phantom because there is no place within multicultural "rationality" that can recognize this pain as real or structurally functional.

It is this rendering of violence as invisible that shifts the responsibility of white settler-colonial violence onto its "victims" as sites of wounded-ness that are ripe for "saving," or "healing," within discourses of mental health and new-age rhetoric that aims to produce empowered citizens within a fair market economy. In *Therapeutic Nations*, Dian Million illustrates how the discourse of "healing" became embedded within state policies and programs meant to address Native poverty, violence, and addiction that were created through the same colonial logic that initiated the violence. Million writes that the act of healing within this discourse is "associated in a trauma economy as the afterward, as the culmination or satisfactory resolution of illness, or for the Indigenous, a promised safety and revitalization from prior colonial violence."[201] In other words, if Native people can be "healed" into nuclear-family-centric, private property owning citizens, they would enjoy the same consumer sovereignty as other Americans.

If the heart of the wound of colonialism is the "painful dismembering of families and societies,"[202] the current state solution to healing is to promote the family at the heart of Indigenous healing. While Native communities are often active in re-imagining new possibilities for their communities, Million argues that the results often support settler-colonial heteronormativity that produces continued violence against women, differently gendered people, and land. Instead, scholars such as Million, Goeman, and Barker, argue that expanded notions of kinship form the heart of native epistemologies in a way that are

[201] Million, Dian. *Therapeutic Nations.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013, 8.
[202] Million, Dian. *Therapeutic Nations.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013, 20.

incompatible with market capitalism and bio-politics. These imaginaries, living outside of human-centric heteronormativity and patriarchy, are at the heart of articulating a kind of "difference" that must occupy its own sovereign embodiment.

Hogan describes the colonial desire to erase difference with this line:

> The baby had two extra fingers on each hand, so beautiful and perfect and useful, but fingers that would mark her as different, and because of that, however perfect they were, they might be removed to keep her from the trauma of difference.[203]

Hogan's phrase "trauma of difference" evokes Povinelli's argument for western epistemologies to remain whole and unbroken as a source of universal exceptionalism and power. On the other hand, both Hogan and Povinelli point to the gap, or the trauma of undoing, that exists between abstracted, rational western forms of recognition and felt experiences of "difference" as geographic spaces that contain the seeds of political possibility. In a sense, this contradictory consciousness produces a friction that can allow other expressions of embodiment to emerge and exist outside of individualist western framework of rights, recognition, and redemption. It is a place to inhabit that lies outside of universalist abstractions that make others knowable. Scott Morgensen argues that the "spaces between us" are friction-rich zones of intersubjective activity that allow differences to forge more powerful alliances from which to resist multicultural rhetoric and assimilation.[204] Jodi Byrd names this "haksuba," or the jazz/chaos created by disparate voices, that has the power to break hegemonic narratives of redemption. Throughout her

[203] Hogan, Linda. *The Woman Who Watches Over the World.* New York: WW Norton and Company, 2001, 29.

[204] Morgensen, Scott Lauria. *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 213.

memoir, Linda Hogan points us toward the "between" place, even within the self, as a more truthful form of embodiment in which humans exist as "unity of selves, a juncture."[205]

Linda Hogan's memoir not only names pain, but provides a felt experience of embodied existence that lies beyond neoliberal logic. Million refers to the centrality of this task—felt theory— and Hogan's re-sanctifying of the body is not pointing us toward the triumph and power of our individual bodies, nor toward a notion of healing that seals and protects us from other, equally vulnerable bodies. Instead, she uses language that opens the reader to the ache of fragility and broken-ness that binds us to all bodies, human and non-human. In this way, our kinship is expanded not just to those humans we wish to protect (nuclear family or ties by "blood,") but to all creatures with which we share a temporary existence. Instead of healing her individual body, she speaks to a kind of brokenness that opens up a geographic space beyond her own humanity:

> Finally, my doctors became earth, water, light, and air. They were animals, plants, and kindred spirits. It wasn't healing I found or a life free from pain, but a kind of love and kinship with a similarly broken world.[206]

While one might be tempted to read these words as romantic or a reinforcement of an abstracted indigeneity, I argue that Hogan is pointing us to a kind of consciousness that in its felt/embodied connection *outside* of the bounded self, leads us to place that cannot ethically sustain capitalist market logic that depends upon hierarchies of value in order to exploit bodies and land. Instead of a "healing" that allows us to more powerfully assimilate and participate in market logic consumerism, the "breaking" is a felt experience of connection,

[205] Hogan, Linda. *The Woman Who Watches Over the World.* New York: WW Norton and Company, 2001, 172.

[206] Ibid, 16.

kinship, and compassion that recognizes others as simultaneously differentiated (not us), but fragile (like us).

This juncture is expressed as the capacity of humans to expand beyond themselves into kinship with other life forms, which directly confronts western religious epistemologies that locate the soul within the human body. Hogan contrasts Rilke's line, "what is within surrounds us" with a Native theology contrary to western conceptions of the self:

> the world creates and gives birth to us and our spirits, along with all the rest. The soul resides in the world around us; it shares itself with us.[207]

In this way, Linda Hogan brings forth a "complex theology and remembered ecology" that directly confronts western thought that insists on defining itself against what is different, and imagined outside of its own wholeness. Hogan further develops this idea by insisting on the role of language and storytelling to construct worlds that lie outside of an imaginary that can only see itself. According to Hogan, stories and language become the vehicle that can move us beyond imagined boundaries of the self, allowing for greater possibilities of articulating relationships and selves that are not confined by settler-colonial maps, definitions, and policies. In this way, we could argue that feminist Native literature and epistemologies, along with critical indigenous theories, have the potential to un-make bio-political geographies defined by a national economy that finds its fullest expression in exploitation of people and natural resources (often on Native land) for profit. Chris Anderson argues that Native epistemologies offer a direct challenge to this form of neoliberal settler-colonialism by "insisting that a society based in capitalist democracy and on the exploitation

[207] Ibid, 63.

of natural resources *for profit* is immoral,"[208] based on mutuality of relationships that exist at the heart of Native theology.

Ultimately, Anderson's argument leaves us with a paradox at the heart of this chapter. On one hand, I argue along with Linda Hogan that "words are the defining shape of the human spirit,"[209] in which new personal and political imaginaries are shaped. On the other hand, I also believe Linda Hogan when she tells us that stories can't provide a way out of the dark labyrinth of the sickness at the heart of the world, that her memoir is not meant to heal us or provide a map back to our remembered wholeness. It is meant to unsettle the places of naturalized wholeness where we stand, philosophically and physically. Instead, "breaking" points to the juncture between knowing and feeling, between words and experience, that operate outside of the logic of settler subjectivity. Instead of giving us a new site of healing knowledge from which to re-orient the settler self, Hogan is asking us to join her in the breaking, in the shared pain caused by settler colonial violences. In this way, Hogan's memoir is meant to function as a source of ontological disturbance, in which settler subjectivity, through the act of reading and listening, is forced to look back at its own complicity.

Breaking, then, is not simply an affect of grief that is to be grieved and healed. It is a recognition that one cannot remain whole within the violence of the present moment. We consent to the shattering of cruel optimisms and illusions. If we refuse the terms of neoliberal citizenship that demand compliance with certain agreements that institutions,

---

[208] Anderson, Chris. *Critical Indigenous Studies: From Difference To Density.* Cultural Studies Review, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2009, 25.

[209] Hogan, Linda. *The Woman Who Watches Over the World.* New York: WW Norton and Company, 2001, 57.

economies, and histories are fundamentally benevolent and just, then how are we to "be" in service of solidarity? Without the logic of wholeness, where lie the political possibilities for existing together as shards? Jodi Byrd argues that within this break, we can't return to "healing" within settler logic, but "a re-imagining of Indigenous de-colonization as a process that restores life and allows settler, arrivant, and native to apprehend and grieve together the violences of US empire."[210] By assenting to grief and ontological disturbance, perhaps we may begin to re-imagine the terms of wholeness inherent to neoliberal citizenship.

[210] Jodi Byrd. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 229

vulnerable
ˈvəln(ə)rəb(ə)l/
adjective

1. susceptible to physical or emotional attack or harm.
2. (of a person) in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect.

resilience
/re'zilyens/
noun

1. The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness. "the often remarkable resilience of so many British institutions"[211]

[211] dictionary.com

"Albuquerque Girls' Killing is New Mexico's Latest Horrific Child Death"[212]

On her 10th birthday, Victoria Martens was raped, strangled, dismembered, and lit on fire by her mother's boyfriend and cousin. Her mother had arranged it.

Months before, eleven year old Ashlynn Mike was picked up in a van, raped, beaten by a tire iron, and left dead on Navajo land by Tom Begaye.

She couldn't stop tears each time the papers ran the headlines, for weeks and weeks, then again during the hearings and trials. Her own ten year old, going on eleven, asked her what was wrong when she flipped over the newspaper too quickly at the coffee shop.

That week, she talks with a friend who is a massage therapist in a hospital. "You know those kids you read about in the paper? If they're alive, and can be touched, we touch them. It's a different world down here in parts of Albuquerque, in rural New Mexico. Kids growing up in Santa Fe, on the North East Side of Albuquerque, are living a totally different reality."

Some heaviness, some unnamed grief, keeps her in bed, unable to write or move. It's not like she is a stranger to pain and violence, but she feels her head is being held underwater.

That September, they start the day around 11am at the Westside community center, holding hands in a circle for ceremony. The promatoras of the Kalpulli Izkalli sing prayers, and smudge the volunteer healers. Un-Occupy Albuquerque sponsors the annual encuentro, where practitioners offer free healings and ceremony for everyone in the community. An elder sits in a chair in the middle of the circle, blessing everyone with a light touch on their heads as they kneel down in front of her.

La Madrina—the mother of all children—holds the center of the alter, ringed by plants and photos of Ashlynn Mike and Victoria Martens, and many other children, a reminder that all children are our children and we failed to protect them.

***

I once was so poor that I had a friend.[213]

[212] Santa Fe New Mexican, August 26, 2016.

[213] These words were written by one of my clients at the Life Healing Center, in a poem written about what it's like to live on rice for days and days in a cheap motel in Albuquerque. It was part of a larger poem that has since been destroyed, but I remembered this line and he agreed to let me use it.

Chapter Four—

Feeling Vulnerable: Resilience, Recognition, and Warrior Consciousness

In December 2017, The Trump administration provided the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention with a list of words that were forbidden to be used in policy and budget documents. These words: "vulnerable," "entitlement," "diversity," "transgender," "fetus," "evidence-based" and "science-based."[214] This word ban clearly reflects the political priorities of the Trump administration: to discourage "entitlements" and "rights" in favor of self responsibility, to discourage gender flexibility in favor of heteronormativity, to legally abolish abortions, and to discredit the authority of science. But banning the word "vulnerable" is a fascinating choice.

My interest in looking at the word vulnerability is to not only to examine how it is deployed, but to think about how affective states of vulnerability are managed through discourses of "resilience" and resistance. Judith Butler argues that vulnerability is not an affective disposition, but "characterizes a relation to a field of objects, forces, and passions that impinge upon on or affect us in some way."[215] Within this lived, ambiguous condition, Butler argues that receptivity and responses become unclear and inseparable from each other. Instead of a feeling or a condition, the word "vulnerability" is a dense node in which interlocking affects and conditions intersect. This lived condition typically produces a binary: either vulnerability becomes a site of emotional authenticity meant to stimulate empathy, protection and care, or it operates as a site of resistance to feelings associated with the pain of

---

[214] Lena H. Sun, Juliet Eilperin. The Washington Post, December 15th. *CDC Gets List of Forbidden Words.*

[215] Judith Butler, Zeynap Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay. *Vulnerability in Resistance*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, 25.

vulnerability through a turn to "mastery." The former response is complicit with liberal feminism, politics of care and protection, and circulates discourses of vulnerability as an affect lacking political agency. On the opposite pole, politics of "resistance" that refuse vulnerability as a site of felt ambiguity perpetuate politics of "mastery," or self-contained, sovereign selves. Our lived pain can be projected onto Others, from whatever location we might stand. We make enemies of each other instead of systems that are killing us. Diving into the dense, affective node that configures how "vulnerability," and attendant responses—resilience and resistance—interact, has profound consequences for shifting controlling narratives around responsibility. Seeing *systems* as vulnerable and resilient, rather than individuals and communities, provides an opening for considering forms of consciousness that radically refuse the limits and confines of how these terms operate within frameworks of personal responsibility.

A conversation with María José Rodríguez Cádiz, director of Solace Crisis Treatment Center in Santa Fe, points to an opening for re-considering how we might re-define and decontextualize the word "vulnerable" into a more political and affective force. Solace Crisis Treatment Center, formerly the Santa Fe Rape Crisis Center, is a non-profit organization in Santa Fe, New Mexico that responds to individuals who are suffering from trauma, anxiety, and crisis. They provide clinical therapy services, advocacy, and rape crisis services such as on-site police and medical personnel. According to Cádis, their mission is to "help survivors and community restore strength in the face of adversity."[216] I chose to interview the executive director after attending a training on protecting children from sexual abuse. Since

[216] María José Rodríguez Cádiz interviewed by Kirsten Mundt, August 2016.

New Mexico ranks 50th out of 50 on child poverty and well being, Solace places themselves on the front lines of both "healing" and advocacy, consciously not separating the two. In an interview, I asked her how Solace specifically combines healing and advocacy in New Mexico:

> "*No matter to whom" is the most revolutionary thing that we can take under consideration because if we believe that, that we believe that the most marginalized have the worst of what wrong looks like. And if we believe that, then if we show with everything that we know works, especially first and most for people where everything intersects in terms of oppression, then we can guarantee that we can do a good job for everybody. If we believe that is our main goal, to never call someone vulnerable, but to call ourselves vulnerable if we can not meet your needs, then we know we're doing the right thing when something wrong is happening.*
>
> *K: Let me stop you there, because I think that's very profound. So you said, "not call ourselves vulnerable…"*
>
> *M: Not call our people who have been hurt vulnerable. It's so easy to say, "Our children are so vulnerable, our immigrant community is so vulnerable, our LGLBT population is so vulnerable. They aren't. They're strong, capable, deserving, amazing. What is vulnerable is a system that doesn't know how to serve them. So when you can change the paradigm of what do we call vulnerable, because that's where the responsibility resides. If I excuse myself because if what defines you as an individual is so complex, then I'm calling you vulnerable because of all the things that define you. I wish I could help you. If I'm only able to deal with the one thing that I know how to deal with, that makes me good for really nothing. So my point is that certain paradigms rule the level of responsibility that we think we have and if we can change those, it could be revolutionary.* [217]

The possibility of shifting "paradigms that rule the level of responsibility" is at issue in this chapter. This question provides an opening for considering the question of self responsibility connected with vulnerability and resilience. What are the paradigms that rule deployment of "vulnerability" and "resilience" as discourses of self responsibility for one's own well-being? The word "vulnerable" has two basic ways that it is deployed in contemporary discourse, and both are problematic as binary concepts. The first definition,

[217] Ibid.

susceptible to physical or emotional harm, is a universal condition of human experience and life itself. As humans and living organisms, we are vulnerable to our natural environment, to exploitation and abuse, old age, and death. All life is fragile; The entire natural world (human and otherwise) is vulnerable to climate change, environmental toxicity, and loss of habitat. This is the universalist, ontological definition of vulnerability; we are biologically and fundamentally fragile, subject to the same laws of nature as other living things. This vulnerability is inherent and shared as a foundational condition of being alive.

The second definition of vulnerability refers to individuals and populations that are differentially vulnerable due to circumstances and situations. The word "vulnerable" is often used to refer to situational contexts which exacerbate or ameliorate inherent vulnerability. For example, social and economic conditions reinforce hierarchies of value coded within cultural narratives, making some lives more precarious and vulnerable than others. Under these racialized, colonial conditions, certain individuals and groups face increased threats to autonomy, survival, and exploitation. Some feminist theorists refer to this condition as hyper-precarity[218] or surplus precarity[219], in which certain groups face structural threats to their interests and survival. Clearly, precarity produces "vulnerable subjects," or people with diminished autonomy within unequal and violent social conditions. Joel Anderson argues that a "person is vulnerable to the extent to which she is not in a position to prevent occurrences that would undermine what she takes to be important to her."[220] In policy literature, people

[218] Hyperprecarity is the word most commonly applied in the essay collection *Vulnerability in Resistance*, by Butler, Gambetti, and Sabsay (2016).

[219] Joel Anderson, *Autonomy and Vulnerability Entwined, in Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy.*

[220] Joel Anderson, *Autonomy and Vulnerability Entwined, in Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy.*

and species without full autonomy or existing outside of secure conditions for existence are classified as "vulnerable." In the IRB application, we are asked if we are working with "vulnerable populations" such as the elderly, children, addicts, or the homeless. In other words, Institutional Review Boards are concerned with the question of whether or not our research causes unnecessary harm those with diminished capacity for protecting themselves.

Between these tensions lie several conflicts for ethnographers and social theorists in relationship to theorizing/representing pain and the conditions that produce suffering. Recognition of shared vulnerability and suffering pokes holes in traditional ethnographic methods, and has given rise to self-reflexivity in contemporary ethnography. If, according to Clifford Geertz, traditional ethnography has typically meant recording a "Native" (emic) point of view, while keeping one's objectivity, or outsider status (etic) to that which a culture cannot see, what does it mean when the ethnographer becomes a full participant in grieving, submitting to affects that come from sharing lives? In other words, since we are all vulnerable to the grief and experience of shared conditions, is it appropriate—or even possible—to maintain objective observer status? Ruth Behar's *Vulnerable Observer* and *Translated Woman* have been foundational for a tradition of ethnography in which the vulnerability of the writer is central to constructing a narrative which pokes holes in the colonialist, masculist tradition of anthropological narrative. At the same time, seeing vulnerability solely as an affective disposition of shared humanity can mire ethnographic writing in self-reflexivity. I am not interested in my own affect of vulnerability as a scholar, though it is here. While there is no "away" from human fragility and colonial conditions of oppression, this universal truth cannot be the only focus, nor should deconstructing concepts of "vulnerable subjects" or "diminished capacity."

Instead, how are neoliberal narratives undermined through engaging the node of "vulnerability" on multiple levels; as personal sites of grieving and breaking, but also sites of resistance that refuse narratives that reproduce conditions that continue to produce surplus vulnerability? In other words, what kind of working framework for "vulnerability" can be instrumental, made more powerful for individual bodies and communities? Theorizing this question means engaging with paradoxes related to the personal and the collective, the universal and the particular.

Paul Formosa's essay, *The Role of Vulnerability in Kantian Ethics* distinguishes between "narrow" and "broad" definitions of vulnerability. For example, defenders of employing vulnerability in the broad sense argue that we are all vulnerable, and should acknowledge this shared condition as an opportunity to advocate for ethics that reach beyond concern for one's individual wellbeing. For example, Martha Nussbaum argues that placing the universal, ontological condition of vulnerability at the center of moral theory challenges Kantian ethics of personhood that gave rise to liberal social theory. If the Stoic definition of personhood is a capacity for individual reason and freedom, it interferes with the basic animal necessity to care and be cared for. Nussbaum argues that the "autonomous, independent adult subject of liberal theory"[221] is a myth that prevents the flourishing of interdependent relationships of care. Various strands of feminism have long argued for relationality, made possible through shared affective states of vulnerability, as a way of contesting neoliberal narratives of self. If a cohesive, powerful self is made possible through fantasies of colonial, masculinist sovereignty and invulnerability, then it makes sense that

---

[221] Catriona MacKenzie, Wendy Rogers, Susan Dodds. *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 5.

feminists would draw upon subjective states of vulnerability to argue for cultures of care, authentic (vulnerable) subjectivity as a place from which to speak and act.

On the other hand, defenders of vulnerability in the "narrow" sense argue that universalist definitions of vulnerability lack political force when faced with structural, material differences of power and inequality that affect certain bodies differently. In other words, claims of vulnerability only make sense when one's social position renders one more or less vulnerable than other groups of individuals. In other words, proponents of this view argue that universal definitions of vulnerability become useless when deciding who needs special, or differential protection (ie. children, the elderly, differently abled, prisoners, etc.) In other words, broad definitions could potentially normalize structural violences and unnecessary vulnerabilities that are unequally borne. This critique is especially important as a defense against Trump's ban on "vulnerability," and resulting political policies meant to reduce or eliminate special protection and programs for certain populations.

While defenders of vulnerability in the narrow sense have been instrumental in protecting populations and obtaining money for important social services and programs such as affirmative action, Catriona Mackenzie argues that "vulnerable subject" is a term firmly couched in liberal social theory and a set of economic, social, and political practices in which a "self" is independent, autonomous, and self-responsible.[222] For example, feminist psychoanalytic theory argues that projecting vulnerability onto others becomes a way of displacing one's own vulnerability in favor of masculinist narratives of protection. If others are vulnerable, but we are not, paternalistic fantasies of power can be claimed and made

[222] Catriona MacKenzie, Wendy Rogers, Susan Dodds. *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 36.

reality through pathologizing vulnerability. In addition, claiming disproportionate vulnerability as a disadvantaged group can both be a plea for protection, as well as sympathy, in pursuit of policy changes that protect vulnerable groups. Vulnerability can also be claimed by a dominant groups as a way to contain others and shore up positions of privilege. For example, the "vulnerability" of our borders and populations is a narrative used to build border walls, fund atomic weapons, and imprison people of color. Within this limited framework, narratives of vulnerability reinforce binary power positions that locate our bodies as either victims or paternalistic protectors. Within liberal frameworks, autonomy is restored through institutional protection, social democracy, and rhetoric of human rights.

Between these binaries lies my dilemma. This chapter critiques ways the words "vulnerable" and "vulnerability" are typically used in mental health and self help literature. In critiquing liberal and neoliberal uses of this word, however, I want to be clear that I am in no way supporting either binary, but interested in de-colonial possibilities for its re-definition and deployment. This is somewhat dangerous territory, since we are living in an era in which democratic institutions which provide protection for "vulnerable" populations (social services, medicaid, LGBT people, the environment, etc.), are being quickly dismantled to make way for the rationality of the free market and social Darwinism. Hence Trump's ban on "vulnerability." Instead of fighting for or against the word "vulnerable," however, what embodied, affective alternatives to liberal definitions of "vulnerability" and its attendant response—"resilience"— might be possible?

Through engaging an epistemic gathering of diverse feminist philosophers such as sociologist Brené Brown, Native writer Leanne Simpson, and ethnographic data gathered in the field, I'm interested in tracing nodes of power and possibility. Specifically, this chapter

will explore the following tensions: How are discourses around vulnerability and resilience used to produce good neoliberal subjects, and how do individuals and communities resist those technologies, using the felt sense to forge new relational possibilities? Vulnerability is a foundational human experience, but how we relate to and manage it determines imaginaries and possibilities for political/personal possibilities arising from this condition. What political possibilities may arise in the direct experience of vulnerability? Specifically as it relates to confronting settler colonial conditions that continue to produce and reproduce a surplus of this condition?

Precarity and Vulnerability

> *"The question is: What are the conditions under which we find that we are responsive to other human beings? Becoming responsive—seeing or sensing suffering, responding to it. I should say here that it's not just responding to other human beings, it's responding to an entire ecosystem that is also destroyed through war. It's responding to the evisceration of the conditions of life itself, not only human life."*
>
> *—Judith Butler*

The work of Judith Butler has been foundational in contributing to re-thinking philosophical foundations of Cartesian, western thought that perpetuate the following binaries: body/affect vs. political agency, and precarious (broad) vs. precarity (narrow) senses of vulnerability. In the essay collection *Vulnerability and Resistance*, Butler argues that contemporary ethical politics need to center interdependence and mutual vulnerability. Since vulnerability is an affective state shared by all living things (we are vulnerable to injury and death), we are inevitably subject to periods of dependency in our lives. As human animals living precarious and unpredictable lives, we are inevitably dependent upon how we

will be treated and received during those vulnerable periods of life. Since we are vulnerable to dependency upon other bodies and other lives, we can't conceive of "selves" as autonomous and distinct from others. Theorizing embodiment from within a framework of a separate, Cartesian "self" becomes faulty, erroneous, lonely, and an essential part of neoliberal life. We alone must be responsible for our health and periods of vulnerability such as young motherhood and old age. Butler and other feminist philosophers such as Zeynap Gambetti, Sarah Bracke, Elena Loizidou, Catriona Mackenzie, Wendy Rogers and Susan Dodds, argue for a relational politic not based in faulty frameworks of bounded individualism and self responsibility.

William E. Connolly argues that neoliberalism thrives in a climate of self-responsibility, while simultaneously diminishing conditions for its flourishing. He writes, "neoliberal ideology inflates the self organizing power of markets by implicitly deflating the self-organizing powers and creative capacity of all other systems."[223] In other words, through marrying the free market with the state and attendant discourses, power can be consolidated in the hands of the few while the majority focuses on self care, self management, and shoring one's own body against increasingly precarious circumstances. These policies and violences are not just affecting life for humans, but entire eco-systems and the planet as a whole. As life becomes more precarious, more fragile and tenuous, emotional tensions emerge as we feel more vulnerable. Connolly lists hundreds of ways the lived condition of fragility grates against neoliberal discourses and vice versa: growing precarity and economic inequality, pollution of water by the fracking and oil industries, destruction of

[223] William Connolly, *The Fragility of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013, 31.

natural habitat, increasing drought, earthquakes, and tsunamis, and interrupted loops between bees, viruses, and pesticides.[224] For Connelly, the point is not to separate the universal condition of vulnerability from neoliberal conditions that produce and support surplus vulnerability. Instead, muddling through this "living paradox" is necessary for imagining new forms of social life and citizenship.[225]

Similarly, Butler distinguishes between the words "precarious," a universal condition from "precarity," or material conditions unequally borne and distributed in certain groups. In Butler's *Precarious Life*, she argues how anxieties related to precarity, or the condition of insecurity in the face of changing social and economic circumstances, produce various personal and political responses to the embodied experience of vulnerability. While instability and chaos (vulnerability) may be the fundamental condition of life, Butler argues that embodied experiences of shock, "trauma," or coming undone, produce dynamic tensions and conflicting reactions. The affect of vulnerability prompts subjects to either relief and connection with others, or reach out toward nationalistic and neoliberal narratives to seek safety. In the absence of social safety nets and relational networks of support, neoliberal citizenship seems like a natural choice for survival. For example, one could argue that one populist response to vulnerability in 2016 was to vote for Trump: a vote for nationalism, closed borders, and protectionism. A border symbolizes clarity between self and Other. I am Me, not You. Long before the 2017 election, William Connolly predicted the election of Trump and the emergence of a "neofascist, mafia-type capitalism" due to the intensification of feelings of vulnerability around a perceived loss of entitlements associated with being

[224] Ibid, pg. 33.
[225] Ibid, pg. 37.

White after World War Two.[226] The election of Donald Trump and a Republican senate majority tipped the scales in favor of nationalism, individual responsibility, and consolidation of power. For many, the results of the election constituted a form of collective cultural trauma, deepening precarious and violent conditions for people of color, women, queer families, and the environment. Butler and Connelly are pointing out how fragility, or affective responses to instability contribute to unequal material conditions, dispossession, and historical trauma for *some.*

Both Butler and Connolly argue that while structural critique is helpful for pointing out how systems are held together, it is lacking imagination for what's emergent and possible. By placing the felt, lived, and shared condition of fragility at the center of the conversation, Butler argues that felt attention to vulnerability can expose binaries of thought that perpetuate sites of perceived victimhood (vulnerability) and agency (resilience, resistance) in order to reveal new forms of co-poieitic agency. William E. Connolly asks a similar question in *The Fragility of Things.* His primary argument is that exposing how neoliberal narratives contribute to the increasing fragility of life is meant to amplify this affect, creating space for new forms of social life. Affects such as vulnerability, grief, and fragility will necessarily increase as attention is drawn to what is actually lived and felt. The intention is not simply to draw attention to feeling, but to allow feeling to grate against discourses rubbing up against that which is lived. This is not pure structural work, but felt, affective grating that is meant to give way to co-poietic processes and possibilities for

[226] Ibid, 39.

exceeding neoliberal personhood that may be surprising and unforeseen. It's an amplification of the intolerable.

Liberal Vulnerability and Decolonial Resurgence: Brené Brown and Leanne Simpson

Relational possibilities for vulnerability are reflected in psychology and self-help literature, popularized by Brené Brown as an affective condition from which to connect with the shared vulnerability of life in order to increase personal courage. Vulnerability is seen as an affective source of strength available to individuals and communities that can't be accessed under paternalistic definitions of vulnerability. I reference Brown's work because when I talk about my project, many people say, "It's just like Brené Brown!" While I certainly engage vulnerability and connection in my work, accessing the felt affect of fragility is not the goal in and of itself. Instead, I wonder what kind of feminism can harness the energy of vulnerability, but not reinforce precarity or undermine collective responses to injustice.

In Brown's *Daring Greatly*, she argues that the affective condition of vulnerability often provokes a shame response that invites resistance to feeling. For Brown, vulnerability is excruciating, and feels "like I'm coming out of my skin."[227] While vulnerability is associated as weakness and defined by Webster's dictionary as "capable of being physically or emotionally wounded,"[228] Brown defines vulnerability as "uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure."[229] Even though the condition of vulnerability is most often associated

[227] Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly.* New York: Penguin Books, 2012.
[228] Webster's Dictionary.
[229] Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly.* New York: Penguin Books, 2012, 34.

with shame, fear, and disappointment, Brown argues that vulnerability—if attended to—is a wellspring of joy, love, empathy, and belonging. In other words, Brown argues that vulnerability is key to realizing that *feeling* is not synonymous with *failing,*[230] but provides an affective source from which to live wholeheartedly. Experiences of wounding provide a space for protective armor of the cohesive self to crack, allowing for deeper experiences of connection, courage, and intersubjectivity. Brown's work reflects many changes I have seen in my work in a trauma/addiction treatment center over the years. Making oneself vulnerable to others through sharing life histories, failures, and tears, has become a central site of therapeutic practice. Grieving together and recognizing shared wounds becomes key to healing and building social bonds.

Brown's solution to suffering caused by culturally conditioned responses to vulnerability point back to an individual self. If liberalism can be defined as a philosophy that advocates tweaks to the individual, as opposed to radical structural changes, vulnerability in this context is liberal. Healing practices that point back to personal affect can be classified in the "liberal" category, especially when they are focused on healing as another form of self responsibility. Brown's *Daring Greatly* suggest liberal solutions to the question: Who has responsibility for effecting change, and what kind of change are we seeking? *Daring Greatly* uses the words vulnerability and resilience to describe ways that *certain* people survive and flourish within various circumstances. The word "resilience" operates as a measure for the ways that humans (and nature) survive and thrive personally without directly confronting systemic violence. In regard to trauma resulting from war, sexual or physical abuse, poverty,

[230] Ibid, 35.

isolation, or living with continual fear and stress, Brown's research found that some people experienced "shame resilience." In other words, people who consciously cultivated joy, gratitude, boundaries, and support, were able to thrive despite traumatic wounding.

These are the basic tenants of positive psychology, which advocate for cultivating positive responses to pain and injury. Similarly, Brown's work rests upon narratives of optimism and resilience of "self" that are largely uncritical of how neoliberalism operates through citizens' agreements to personal resilience. The source of transformation comes from a focus on one's *willingness* to manage vulnerability, to be courageous in the face of the unknown. The cure for our social ills becomes the self who is daring enough to be vulnerable. Her framework doesn't address how wounding and worthiness are unequally distributed across racial and class lines, how colonization, patriarchy, and conquest are carried deeply in our flesh, perpetuated through institutions and power structures. While Brown addresses how impossible cultural messages have us measuring our worth against the perceived perfection of others, she deals in broad brush strokes that keep whiteness and neoliberalism functioning invisibly. While she performs a gender analysis around body image and pornography in *Daring Greatly*, she concludes that "vulnerability is the path and courage is the light."[231] In other words, intimacy is cultivated in vulnerability and a willingness to be open with pain. If we believe in our intrinsic worthiness and belonging, these feelings will grow through "wholehearted" practices of embracing vulnerability and imperfection.

---

[231] Ibid, 110.

Where Brown does not go far enough is in pointing out how vulnerability and shame are unequally distributed, borne, and relentlessly perpetuated by social structures. What happens when one's sense of self, of essential worthiness and right to be cared for, is challenged again and again by colonial, neoliberal narratives and power structures that are relentless, violent, and often invisible? Joel Anderson and Axel Honneth argue that the felt sense of "vulnerability" becomes deeply problematic when it fails to confront "surplus vulnerability," arising from avoidable and unwanted social circumstances,[232] such as racism, land theft (colonization), genocide, and poverty, sickness, disability, or old age. This is the specific condition of vulnerability Leanne Simpson names so painfully in *Islands of Decolonial Love.* What good is vulnerability and wholeheartedness when one's boundaries are constantly transgressed, when one's body matters less than others, when one is constantly struggling to be worthy within a system that can't acknowledge de-colonial equality because it is immersed within its own interests? Leanne Simpson critiques the popularization of the liberal vulnerability narrative as it circulates in therapeutic communities. Through many short vignettes of her lived experience, she grapples with her own wounding and possibilities (or lack of) for healing within a colonial model. These vignettes weave in and out of critique of Western mental health, exacerbating the differences between her lived experience and the experiences of her White therapist. In Simpson's writing, whiteness does not function as a given, but is part of a bio-political knot she names and exposes:

[232] Anderson and Honneth in *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

> i change the subject to anxiety. therapy-lady loves talking about anxiety. me the poor depressed indian. her the white fucking pathologizing savior.[233]

"Therapy lady" is simultaneously part of the knot and the unraveling of the knot, since Simpson's character is both seeking support for her suffering, while simultaneously recognizing how suffering is perpetuated within the framework with which her suffering is treated. For example, "therapy lady" points again and again toward acceptance of her wounding and vulnerability, a commonly accepted treatment goal within western mental health. Simpson writes:

> *I knew what every ndn knows: that vulnerability, forgiveness and acceptance were privileges. She made the assumption of a white person: they were readily available to all like the fresh produce at the grocery store.*[234]

This passage illustrates a paradox and tension at the heart of the paradox of "vulnerability." Within the terms set by liberal humanism, vulnerability is an affect associated with privileges of whiteness. It's a privilege to be vulnerable, to forgive, and accept when power structures aren't threatening you and your community with genocide and annihilation. Presented as a universal antidote to alienation, liberal applications of "vulnerability" circulate as a personal virtue. While we may all long for intimacy and belonging, especially to land, place, and each other, these embodiments are couched within settler colonial definitions of "vulnerability" that demand collusion with neoliberal selfhood as a path to healing.. To collude with these privileges is to collude with settler colonialism and neoliberal citizenship, producing greater

[233] Simpson, Leanne. *Islands of Decolonial Love*, Monitoba: ARP Books, 2015, 83.
[234] Ibid, 80

conditions of surplus vulnerability. Surplus vulnerability is at the core of abusive and unequal power dynamics, and Simpson's characters have had it.

Simpson more directly names these violences in *As We Have Always Done:*

Over the past two hundred years, without our permission and without our consent, we have been systematically removed and dispossessed from most of our territory… our homeland has been stolen, clear-cut, subdivided, and sold… the last eels and salmon navigated our waters about a hundred years ago… our most sacred places have been made into provincial parks for tourists…we live with the ongoing trauma of the Indian Act, residential schools, day schools, sanatoriums, child welfare, and now an educational system that refuses to acknowledge our culture, our knowledge, our histories, and experience.[235]

Simpson goes on. She directly contextualizes the violence in which she, her family, children, and community swim. These are the historical and current conditions that subject communities to colonial violences that inhibit Indigenous responses for survival and ecological flourishing. Within these conditions, liberal definitions of vulnerability and resilience are another source of violence. Simpson's writing undermines vulnerability and resilience as personal virtues, pointing back at whiteness at the root of settler colonialism, the real source of wounding. While Simpson names the conditions that produce and reproduce surplus vulnerability, nowhere does Simpson present Native peoples as "vulnerable." Instead, she argues that she and her children have been "born into a centuries-old legacy of resistance,

[235] Leanne Simpson. *As We Have Always Done*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

persistence, and profound love"[236] that links the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg struggle to the struggles of North American Native peoples, to the struggles of Black communities, and others who are "working together toward a radical alternative present based on deep reciprocity and the gorgeous generative refusal of colonial recognition."[237] Operating out of embodiments that are always aware and critical of ways that settler colonialism persists as a force of destruction and domination, nowhere does Simpson use the word "resilience." Instead, she argues for the word "resurgence" as a force of refusal that imagines "our responsibility to work with our Ancestors and those yet unborn to continuously give birth to a spectacular Nishnaabeg present."[238] Through expanding far beyond liberal definitions of "self" and collusion with the neoliberal forms of self responsibility and resilience, alliances expand. No longer just responsible for oneself and one's own family, ancestors and future generations assist with creating a vibrant present that radiates both outward and inward. There is no resilient "self" here.

Resilience, Resurgence, and Warrior Consciousness

In summer, 2017, I taught a de-colonial art and activism course at the Institute of American Indian Arts for incoming first year students. As a group, we were talking about specific ways that students experienced environmental colonization in their communities. One of the upper-class mentors, Dakota Yazzie, shared a story with the group, then generously allowed me to share here:

[236] Ibid, 9.
[237] Ibid, 9.
[238] Ibid, 10.

I started working for the Arizona Conservation Corp in 2016. There's a Native Lands Crew, and was my intention to work with them. They restore old archeological areas. Instead, I worked with the Prescott Youth Conservation Corp. They hired us as their leaders through Arizona Conservation Corps. It was fascinating to see what these young minds thought about nature. We started small projects, cleaning parks here and there. We did some trail work. And I started becoming really curious about how the Forest Service really works to protect the forest. If I'm here, I get to investigate. What does the forest service do? Is the mission about securing funding, or conservation, or to give hand-outs? It's a little of all those things. I've seen them give permits to cattle ranchers, turning a blind eye. On one of the outings, we went to the base of the Verde, near Springerville. It's said that the Big Chino Aquifer and the Little Chino Aquifer feed the Verde River. We had to check the fish populations of the Verde river to see which fish were dominant in three different types of environments. The first environment we checked was a sandy beach environment, where there's not a lot of vegetation. Different fish lay their fish in the beach area. The second area was more rocky, and had little pools of stagnant algae. There's a certain kind of fish that thrive in that environment. The third is a mix between the two. What we found in all of the environments was that the native fish of the Verde River were the least populated. The reason for it was because fish from outside are more **resilient** *in those environments. They can live within all three environment; they don't need one particular environment to thrive in. They happen to eat aboriginal fish, and they create this whole new competition for the aboriginal fish. So over time, the outside fish in their* **resiliency** *become larger, they know how to hunt better, and they can*

traverse the river easier. And especially with issues of damming and flooding when all different fish populations would wind up in one area. Flooding season will come, fish will all be stuck in one area, and the most resilient fish will take the pot. When it comes time again for flooding, those fish will flow back into the river in larger numbers, and they'll take over the aboriginal fish's population. The aboriginal fish rely on the ecosystem to function properly in order for them to breed, eat, and migrate. And so, with issues like flooding and dams, and with other things like cattle ranching (allowing cows to trample through the river), if these cows change the environment.. the forest service in Prescott will look the other way. Because Arizona is stuck in this Southwestern Cowboy pastiche. So the aboriginal fish—their ecosystems are so precious—they need them to function within the seasons and migrations of other fish and other animals for their survival. But the more **resilient** *fish released into the Verde—sometimes by the Forest Service—will simply outnumber and over-encumber the native fish. And also, those fish will take away food sources and breeding sources of the aboriginal fish. They're quite remarkable in that they're so adaptable. They need minimal output from nature in order to thrive. It's not only fish. There are trees and bushes taking over the Verde, too. There was a time in the early 1900's when people from East Coast and Midwest that wanted to plant not aboriginal plants, but plants from their homelands. So tamarisk and substituting your own aesthetic into an environment will out-compete what is already there. So even having an aesthetic toward nature is a dangerous idea. It manifests in green lawns, alfalfa fields in the Southwest. In those same areas, people have to haul water for dozens of miles a day. So this idea of recreation—you want to fish—and the*

aboriginal fish can't keep up with the demands of how much people want their recreation. In the SW, a river system can maybe keep up with a tribe of 50 people, but not a town of 50,000. So when this happens, you have the forest service stepping in, stocking fish into these rivers where they didn't originate from. They get bigger much faster, and they yield to the needs of the consumer as opposed to the aboriginal fish, which only yields to the needs of its environment.[239]

The word "resilience" is ubiquitous, and is circulated through self-help books, therapeutic communities, and policy language, often linking it to the condition of vulnerability. If we can restore ourselves to the wholeness and optimism that existed prior to injury, we are presumed to be capable of continuing on as productive, resilient citizens. We too can reap the rewards of market capitalism, and have the responsibility to do so by cultivating personal resilience. The word "resilience" becomes synonymous with shock absorption,[240] a personal capacity to reap the benefits of consumer capitalism, and the fortitude to survive repeated and ongoing structural violences. Discourses of resilience, when they are deployed as pathways for increasing personal virtue, perpetuate neoliberal citizenship that reproduce surplus vulnerability. These discourses obscure both universal conditions of fragility, as well as precarity that is unequally born: victims of trauma and abuse, the poor, and communities of color. The words "resilience" is rarely used to point back at the systems of power that are *more* resilient; that produce and reproduce precarity.

---

[239] This story is pulled from a classroom discussion at IAIA when we talked about environmental issues Native communities face. This story was told by Dakota Yazzie, member of the Navajo Nation and student at IAIA.

[240] Sarah Brack in *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 54.

Dakota's story illustrates how the neoliberal concept of resilience gobbles up imaginaries and possibilities for ecological survival. Within neoliberal logic, if the invasive species are the survivors, it makes sense that the less resilient fish will adapt the same survival strategies as the more resilient fish. In other words, neoliberal logic assumes that the more "vulnerable" fish will become more "resilient;" they will either adapt or die. What Dakota's narrative makes clear, is that this assumption places all living things, the entire eco-system, at risk. The native fish are vulnerable to the resilient fish within a complex eco-system in which invasive species (tamarix, fish, settler bodies), are consuming *everything*, even themselves. Instead of using the word "resilient" to point to the capacity of his community to bounce back and survive, "resilience" points to nodes of power that consolidate within systems to shore up the survival of the invasive species. Here, the invasive fish are aided by the forest service, recreational fisherman, and settler aesthetics of nature. Dakota's story points to "resilience" as a complex stream of relationships formed through alliance with settler colonial structures of oppression—the forest service, arrivants, fishermen, and consumers. In this scenario, Yazzie points to several interlocking factors that collude to produce a hegemonic colonial system: a settler appetite for transplanting green landscapes to the desert, fishing for recreation, and cattle ranching. The Forest Service intervenes in the eco-system to feed this demand: they stock the Animas river for recreational fishing, manage ranching permits, and occupy publicly held land in service of American citizens and tourists. The Forest Service is clearly part of a romantic, nationalistic discourse on what it means to be American. Yazzie names this when he states that "Arizona is stuck in this Southwestern Cowboy pastiche."

The problem with white privilege, liberal humanism, and other systems that demand authenticity, cohesion, etc. is that they cohere around romanticized notions where human and landscape meet. Restorative power is given to landscapes as an entitlement that feeds liberal humanist agency that recognizes *itself* as the center of an eco-system. This is a direct example of how neoliberalism feeds itself, drawing upon interlocking systems of oppression in which the State (the forest service) and the market (tourist demand for fish) maintains itself. Dakota's story illustrates how the concept of resilience gobbles up imaginaries and possibilities not only for equal justice, but life itself, under conditions set by settler colonialism. Here, the word "resilient" points not to personal virtue, but to collusion with barbarism.

Here, the Native fish face a dilemma which directly parallels conditions for Native peoples facing interlocking sets of settler colonial systems and neoliberal discourses. The only real hope for Native fish is that all human collusion with settler colonialism must stop. Instead of focusing on the "resilience" of the Native fish, the lens must focus on settler subjectivity as it "worlds," as it colludes and mutates. Clearly, it's not enough for the aboriginal fish to be "vulnerable" and authentic, to form cordial and symbiotic relationships with the resilient fish, to find new ways to adapt. Neither is it enough to "resist" within the terms of colonial eco-system. They will either get eaten, or mutate into something else (assimilate). Within lived conditions of vulnerability in the face of the resilience of neoliberalism, what are viable responses both for the Native fish, and other "vulnerable" members of the eco-system? Is the alternative to vulnerability resistance? And can resistance prevail in such a rigged, resilient environment?

Warrior Consciousness

Reconfiguring binaries around "vulnerability" and "resilience" cannot happen within liberal humanist frameworks of bounded selfhood. Selves are not simply singular beings fighting for their own survival, but experienced as multiple and sacred within complex eco-systems of ancestors, planets, and non-human beings. Repeatedly, Sylvia told me that the word "vulnerable" is a colonized word, and argued for replacing the term "vulnerability" with "Warrior Consciousness." Over the course of many months, I struggled to understand what she meant by this. I'm choosing here to transcribe the conversation rather than speaking for her:

> *K: So now we're talking about holding the experience of pain and anger and injustice as it rises up. What do we do with the experience of anger as it rises up, while working to change institutions and power structures? What is real power, here?*
>
> *S: I would say that it's part of life, part of who we are, and why we're here, why we chose to be here in this time and place, and it SO fits in with the warrior. I think it's really fantastic that you're allowing the little girl to come out, and it's no wonder—the place of the child—and I know you've experienced this in the sweat lodge—that the place to the south is the place of the element of fire and the place of the child. But it's also the place of the warrior. And so listening to that child brings up passion, that flame, that fire. It's not just symbolic, it's the passion that burns inside of us that gives us passion for life, the passion for love, the passion for all of life, whatever it is. It's like they say in organizing—to go with the fire burning in your belly—but in terms of the warrior consciousness, it's that it brings up all these emotions, but it's almost like a warrior in the sense of defense. You're defending something over here—your land, your people, justice, whatever. All these things that you're feeling that passion for, is that for a moment at least, you can be on the offense. All those things you are fighting for, you can let go of. Then all of a sudden, you let everything happen, and you become very vulnerable. You're opening up and saying, "Let go and let God, basically!" And see what happens. And things start to fall into place. It doesn't mean that you sit there and do nothing. No. But as you let it play out, what you need to do starts coming to you and starts coming into clarity and into what you need to do. It starts coming not only from your heart, but also your mind, in terms of mind as the wind that comes from the east. It's the sun, the clarity, the light. All that starts to coming into place. So you begin to balance those energies.*
>
> *K: So it feels to me like—and I notice a very distinct shift—because I was feeling angry and frustrated and having all that pain—and ordinarily, I would react. So just*

letting that be, but holding that space, it shifted from anger and defense to…surrender. And that's warrior consciousness?

S: Yes. That vulnerability is where you allow to feel whatever comes, your heart, because you have no control. All those things you were feeling—that defense—is that someone else's stuff was coming at you. You put up that defense. But when you said, you know what,you can't hurt me, sorry you feel that way, and thank you for pointing those things out, and thank you, but I don't feel that way, and not allowing ourselves to fall into that game of their vulnerability and how they control. It's their feeling, so feel up on whatever you feel, do whatever you need to do, but let me do what I need to do. And whether you choose to stay in those spaces or not, again, there's a purpose because we learn from those situations. It's just a matter of how much you can stand. How much we tolerate because we learn, and that's what makes us a warrior.

K: But here we are, in this time in history where the vulnerability of some people—immigrants, undocumented people, so here we are in this vulnerable moment in history, and I think about this all the time— because this battle cry of "Resist!" is everywhere. And there's something important about resistance, but I'm trying to find the real power right now in this moment. Because Standing Rock, deportation, if we bring it to the larger level how power organizes against people. So I'm just wondering if we were to apply this idea of warrior consciousness to organizing and political consciousness, what would you see?

S: I think Standing Rock is a perfect example of warrior consciousness. They're standing their ground. I think 2 pm today is their deadline for evacuation. And they didn't really put on there what exactly would happen, they said, "As long as we have air, antennas, etc, we'll be on live." They're asking people to tune in and to pray. Because you'll be able to see everything that happens. But we don't know. But they're staying on the offense, because we are the water protectors, the earth protectors, we are the love and heart protectors. And so that's a perfect example. But I just wanted to say this to you. Because in terms of me, and we're in different places, so I want to make sure that you understand where I'm coming from. And I think you do, and that you have, but at the risk of sounding too far out there…

You know, you know what happened in 2012, and all the talk of the world ending, and the conflicts with the Mayan Calendar, and what does all this mean, and so again, I think there was push to incorporate fear as control factor. Just like there is now. People going frantic, and all that stuff. And the Mayan people, and my people, the Mezoamerican people, were just saying, this is what we know from our ancestors, this is what was passed down. It doesn't mean the end of the world, it just was a specific count, a specific point in which their would be a transformation, and then time would start over again. Now we've entered into the 6th sun, and my abuelos have been telling me, and have showed me the point on the Aztec calendar, but the 6th sun is the sun of harmony and balance. Because we are so out of balance right now in terms of masculine and feminine energy, and the whole duality. So that's what it represented, but like everything, including the Bible, God didn't create the world in seven days. In

some Bibles and translations, it says seven days is like seven million years. Even though they fight against evolution, it's not like 2012 is shifting into another thing immediately. Yes, consciously, we can help to move that and that's why we were told that it would be an acceleration of consciousness. And we're feeling it! But before any real period of transformation, there is a period of chaos. And we're in that chaos. We're caught up in the chaos and the movement of that consciousness and thank God for Trump! He's such a racist that we're coming together and uniting, and people are opening their eyes to that stuff. When we look at it on this plane and narrow it down right to the US, and to laws, we can try to change the laws and those things, but if you look on the broader energetic level, we're in this chaos, so what can we do right now other than accelerate that consciousness, really beginning here with our own consciousness, and to help and acknowledge all the good. That's why I said, "Thank God for Trump!" And all those people in the world that some say are bad and evil and ugly but they're just energies, and they're trying to find a balance. There's such an imbalance energetically that this chaos that it's causing can only help it. And almost every Native American tribe can tell you that our earth needs a cleansing. And we don't know what that's going to bring! It might bring nuclear war, the way Trump is talking, he's at war with everybody. We just don't know. But what we do know is that there will be a cleansing, and this is part of the chaos.

K: But you can't make it.

S: Exactly! Because we don't know what it's going to look like, or force it because we want it to look like this or that. No. We have to wait. And that's the hard part for us, this waiting. But it doesn't mean you sit still and do nothing. And something else my maestro told me. This was way back in the 80's, and you know my history in social justice and social change, and I would say, "Well, why are we doing this, then," if there's no justice. Because he was saying the 6th sun is actually the sun of justice and the sun of harmony. That's what will bring the harmony in. So I asked him, so why do this if there's no justice in this era we're living in? And he said, because justice is not an end result. It's the means. It's the journey. Because we don't know what that will look like or what that will bring! But you learn through involving yourself in the participation and whatever that means. That's your journey, whatever that justice is. And so, what I've come to understand because things have just exploded, I feel like my head is in a whirlwind and last week I was in Santa Fe twice at the Roundhouse. Trying to preserve and protect the acequias, the water. Water is life, life is healing. That's what I'm about. So, again, I was so tired. I got back on Monday and it was Food and Farm day, and pushing for nutritious food in the school. So I took my grandkids, and for some reason I was extremely tired when I got back. Afterward, I felt so bad because a friend called and I had no energy for her. It's that we come to a point where—you know what—I can't do and be everything for everyone. As mothers we feel that. We can't be everything and everywhere for our children, and so there's point to begin to look and say, I don't need to be at that meeting. And that's fine—we don't need to criticize. They're moving consciousness on that level. We all have a place! We all have a place in this chaos. People judge. We're supposed to be doing this, or this is the most important

> *issues, and you know… whatever we do, we're all at different places in this journey, and the most important thing is to know what is most important for us at this point in our life, and how I can contribute and be the most helpful. And that's my part. And support everyone else.*

From what I understand, warrior consciousness is a lived space of constant motion and navigation that is both the the means and the goal. Far from simplistic notions of "resistance," this consciousness avoids neoliberal capture through understanding that life and relational energies are emergent and constantly changing within larger planetary and ancestral eco-systems. Within this expanded framework, "selves" are neither resistant *nor* compliant with neoliberal frameworks. In other words, binaries that pit resistance (being *against* something) against collusion (adaptation, assimilation) are both inadequate for embodying agency that is not simply defensive, but *offensive,* operating within notions of time and space that are incompatible with colonized consciousness. Instead, warrior consciousness embodies endless motion created through the friction between constructed borders and boundaries that are "neither good nor bad, just energies." Here, the warrior is not just concerned with achieving just societies (because results are always just temporary), but acting on behalf of justice itself as the goal. Here, the physical self that exists in present time acknowledges its limited, but crucial role as a singular particle within the ongoing, cyclical nature of time that stretches for generations past and forward. In other words, warrior consciousness is not benignly "spiritual" as a transcendent form of escape, but a space from which to enflesh ancestral histories as knowledges as a strategy of embodied *offense*.

Through this lens, bodies enfleshed through ancestral histories have agency beyond selfhood that believes it is bound by colonial constructs of self and time. While colonial practices continue to produce surplus vulnerability and fragment selves from histories of oppression, the extent to which we can (re)member ourselves has much to do with

consciousness that informs current embodiment within time and space. I recently heard Rhonda Magee, law professor at University of San Francisco, speak about what revolutionizing contemplative practices (spiritual practices, including "mindfulness) might mean in this time of deep social and ecological fracture. For Magee, drawing upon her African ancestry, histories, and lineage of thinkers, there is pain, and remembering is not just "healing" of this body, but re-thinking how she experiences herself within the "long now," or the embodied practice of ensouling herself through connecting with lineages of complicated and violent histories. This is necessary a collective process, not just a project of "self." She wonders if remembering could be a source of "grace from which to embrace the challenges of this time?"[241] What political possibilities exist within a broader, intersubjective act of re(membering) ourselves into fraught and vibrant eco-systems, not just the remembering of one's personal pain?

Here, "self" is small, but a densely integral part of immense and ongoing energetic eco-systems that are never finished. Within this space, a "self" that is purely defensive cannot have full agency within a dynamic eco-system that is always chaotic, always in motion. There is another force, a historical ancestral "self" in order to embody "offense" rather than defense. Here, there is agency outside of colonial constructs of time and space, constraining what it means to be embodied, to be powerful. In other words, warrior consciousness is a space that is neither resistant to pain, nor mired in inaction and affect. Through fully embodying and naming hurt, especially hurt caused by systems, discourses, and fellow humans inflicting hurt— new forms of agency and solidarity may emerge that operate outside

[241] Rhonda Magee, CMind Conference, 2016.

of neoliberal logics of self and other. Within scholarly frameworks bound by materialism and constructivism, the notion of "warrior consciousness" doesn't make sense; it operates outside of what can be considered "rational" to colonial frameworks by challenging foundations of liberal humanist scholarship bound within colonial notions of time, space, and "self." Warrior consciousness demands its own framework for embodying both fragility (vulnerability) and agency (resilience) outside of colonially constructed binaries.

haptic
ˈhaptik/
adjective: haptic

1. relating to the sense of touch, in particular relating to the perception and manipulation of objects using the senses of touch and proprioception.[242]

hapticality

1. That which exceeds a phenomenology of experience[243]
2. The touch of the undercommons, the interiority of sentiment[244]

---

242 dictionary.com
243 https://www.womenandperformance.org/ampersand/rizvana-bradley-1
244 Harney, Stephano, and Moten, Fred. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study.* New York: Minor Compositions, 2013.

A young woman from Poland sits down and tells you she is sleeping with a married man. "I just want to know how to be happy," she says. She scans the woman's field, finding her not so much in her body, but floating somewhere just outside, just above. Like a baby in outer space. She has the young woman contact knots of fear and grief held in her stomach, has her cradle these feelings like a mother would hold a baby. The woman says she has been having many dreams of babies.

A woman, barely 20, describes giving birth to a still-born baby girl. She tells you how the body of her child was disposed as "medical waste." She repeats "medical waste" over and over, falling into the past. You have her look you in the eyes until she is fully back, connected to the room. You say, hold this child, and to talk to her. Tell her everything you didn't get to say. She does this, looking down into her empty arms. She sobs as she talks to her baby girl, telling her how she loves her and will always love her, how sorry she is that she "failed." When everything has been said, her eyes are soft. She looks up at you and says, "I don't feel her any more."

A college student tells you that she cuts herself, that the knife has become her lover. She likes to surrender her will to resist cutting herself. The pain is erotic, pleasurable. Underneath this pleasure, she feels like "waste."

A farmer has just come from the seed exchange up the road. He complains of gall stones and asks for abdominal work. You massage his stomach, but find this part of his body so tight and contracted, so full of pain, it doesn't do much good. You ask him if he has recently had a relationship trauma, some loss, where he felt punched in the stomach? He nods, tears up. You lift your hands off of his stomach, softening with this new tenderness. You repeat I love you, I love you, I love you without words for a long time as tears run down his face.

Chapter Five—

Haptics / Hapticality: Touch and Vital Agency

> *"I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. You can do anything. Grab 'em by the pussy."*[245]

> *"Touching you, I propose to you to receive, to touch. To touch is not to manipulate. I cannot force you to touch. I can coerce you, I can take your body against your will, but I cannot evoke purposefully, in you, the response to my reaching toward you. To touch is to tender, to be tender, to reach out tenderly."*[246]

I start with the above quotes by Donald J. Trump and Erin Manning to illustrate an important paradox around touch; touch can be both a violent violation of another (grabbing, coercing, objectifying) as well as act which co-creates a space of tenderness and (re)membering. The extent to which touch is violent has everything to do with how the one doing the touching conceives of self and Other. In other words, touching an Other non-violently requires that the toucher *feel* and recognize the full complexity and singularity of an Other. Other touches Other, Self touches Self. For Donald Trump, there is no reciprocity of being touched himself in the process of touching another, only the possibility of taking what he feels is rightfully his to take. He is not Other. The "pussies" in question are not full, animate selves with singular life and agency, but are attached to humans willing and available to be dominated. Subject touches Object. When coded within liberal humanist hierarchies of being, power and dominance are fortified through touch, whether it is consensual or not. The words and actions of Donald Trump as well as the rise of the #metoo movement serve to highlight how white male masculinity circulates as full personhood status

---

[245] In a 2005 conversation with Billie Bush on Access Hollywood, Donald Trump describes his attempt to seduce a married woman and indicated he might start kissing a woman that he and Bush were about to meet.

[246] Erin Manning, *The Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 12.

within liberal humanist logic that asserts its collective dominance upon Other. Within these conditions, how can touch serve as a political intervention? My intention here is to theorize co-poieitic, "interoceptive" touch, or *hapticality,* as a radical act that interrupts colonial, neoliberal subjectivities.

Exploring touch as a spatial, political act provides an avenue for considering touch as a language that may elude neoliberal capture when it is unrecognizable to the logic of bounded selfhood. Recently someone asked me what happens in a massage session, if it's like a spa massage. I told him my primary job is to feel, or to attune and listen to the experience of another, using my hands to meet that which is felt, but often not able to be spoken. Touch is not just the act of massaging muscles, in which I actively touch a passive recipient. Touch is a multi-sensory relational space that is animated between myself and another in which space becomes both densely singular and shared. Incommensurability and vital difference animate what cannot be spoken: an experience of vibrant presence in which both selves are dislocated from "self;" simultaneously singular, but connected through felt, shared ecologies. If I am fully located within this processual space, time gives way to lived motion. Here, bodies exist on their own terms. Sometimes emotions and memories trapped in the body reach out to shake off. Sometimes memories play like a movie, or emotions like rage, grief, or joy shake through the body. Sometimes people feel themselves hovering just outside their bodies, like James Joyce's Mr. Duffy.[247] Sometimes ancestors come to visit. My job is not to "heal" or make meaning out of any of this. My work is to stay attuned, respectfully present, and densely embodied within whatever is animated within the act of

[247] James Joyce, *The Dubliners* (1914).

shared touch. According to Lauren Berlant, "If body, there's always space in the middle, even when there is touching."[248] Something other than skin to skin contact animates touch.

Through the embodied act of touching within felt, lived ecologies of shared affect, bodies become decentralized and processual outside of colonial hegemonies of time and space. In order to move into motion, toucher and touched consent to displacement and de-centralized experiences of self, in which bodies share and touch. This experience fractures notions of a bounded self, moving touch outside the realm of what is ordinarily considered to be one of the five senses. While this perceptual sense has a long history in non-Western cultures, the closest theories I can find in Western neuroscience are studies of "interoception," activated through mindful awareness of one's internal body processes. Interoception, when theorized as the "eighth sense," is the experience of perception that filters through the felt experience of the body. More specifically, interoception refers to "the body-to-brain axis of sensation concerning the state of the internal body and its visceral organs."[249] Interoception differs from exteroception, or using our five senses to understand the world (hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling), as well as proprioception, or awareness of the body in space. In other words, if I focus my attention on my hands, I can feel pulsing, tingling, and warmth. If I pay attention to the felt sense of my body, I will know when I am hungry, thirsty, angry, sad, cold, or feeling lonely. If I can stay attentive and attuned to these sensations, I can stay present and tender to my own embodied experience. Within a state of homeostasis, interception is typically a pleasant experience. I can feel my

---

[248] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

[249] Sarah N. Garfinkela, Anil K. Seth, Adam B. Barrettb,c, Keisuke Suzukib,c, Hugo D. Critchleya, *Knowing your own heart: Distinguishing interoceptive accuracy from interoceptive awareness,* Biological Psychology 104 (2015) 65–74.

breath, my heartbeat, my hands and feet, and know that all is well. On the other hand, when a human is threatened or injured, the amygdala, or reptilian brain, activates a signal that fires infinite neural pathways affecting the musculoskeletal and nervous systems. In other words, interoception is not direct sense perception per se, but the *awareness* of sense perception.

Interoception has been of great interest to Western neuroscience and psychology in recent years. Antonio Damasio's *The Feeling of What Happens* (1999) is a recent Western scientific challenge to Descartes's argument that thought produces reality, and that "reality" produces a rational, knowing, bounded self. He argues that Descartes's "I think, therefore I am," is fundamentally flawed, unaware that thought itself is already constructed and conditioned. Damasio's focus on the body, on the directly felt sense, directly challenges the primacy of our five senses as a benchmark for understanding reality. Damasio's work theorizes his clinical observation that pain sensation and pain affect (emotion) are separate neurological processes. In other words, while pain and emotion are often linked together as a singular, monolithic and inexpressible experience of *pain*, they can be de-coupled through the act of conscious witnessing. If an organism develops the capacity to witness direct experiences of pain and emotion, witnessing creates space to "feel" feelings, and the direct, physical experience of pain itself, creating a gap between sensation and affect. Further, Damasio argues this witness consciousness provides a direct challenge to the stability of a concrete and knowable "self." In other words, that paradox of witnessing—through directly experiencing the felt sense of the body—directly challenges liberal humanist notions of a separate, bounded self. Pain ceases to be something that is "mine," or owned, but a physical

experience that shifts, morphs, and provides a window to the felt reality that the self is similarly multiple, shifting, and plastic.[250]

Neuroscience's increased interest in witness consciousness and the felt sense has given rise to fields such as haptics, somatics, and mindfulness practices as therapeutic treatment modalities. For example, over the past twenty years, embodied trauma practitioner/scholars have been increasingly focused on felt, embodied experiences as the most effective way to heal trauma, specifically childhood and pre-verbal adverse experiences. Scholar practitioners in neuroscience and psychology such as Pat Ogden, Bessel VanderKolk, Daniel Siegel, and Peter Levine have been instrumental in reclaiming the felt sense in western trauma treatment, popularizing various somatic treatments such as Hakomi, Somatic Experiencing, and the rise of mindfulness as "The Medicine of the Future."[251] Western neuroscience can now measure and "prove" what happens in the brain when touch and interoception are actively employed. For example, a 2004 study conducted by Michael Meany at the University of Montréal found that positive early life experiences are directly linked to touch. They found that baby rats with high-licking mothers had lower levels of stress hormones.[252] This research supports more recent findings that high-touch human mothers children. Bodies are not just changed psychologically when touched, they are changed biologically and socially. This has never been news to mothers, bodyworkers, and traditional healers, but has only been of recent interest to Western neuroscience.

---

[250] Antonio Damasio. *The Feeling of What Happens.* New York: Mariner Books, 2000, 143.

[251] TIME Magazine Special Issue: *Mindfulness: The New Science of Health and Happiness.* September 2, 2016.

[252] *Montreal Gazette*, 2 October 2004.

Somatic Experiencing, mindfulness, and other sensory practices are becoming mainstream therapeutic practices, challenging Cartesian separation between mind and body. On one hand, as a professional massage therapist and meditation teacher, this is good news. I can scientifically "prove" that my work has value. This is not my interest, however. What interests me is how neoliberal technologies of "self" hide themselves within colonial frameworks related to touch and the human senses, while also *exceeding* neoliberal capture. There is an under-explored paradox here: the marriage between contemplative practices and western neuroscience can both be complicit with neoliberal technologies, but also may also be instrumental in undermining them. The extent to which this is possible depends upon how we understand and employ de-colonial frameworks of the senses, intersubjective experiences of touch, and deployment of critical scientific methodologies.

Within Western epistemologies, touch is considered to be one of our five senses. The word haptic comes from the Greek word haptestai, "to touch," and is related to the word "tactile," or that which is perceived through touch. When I did a casual internet search on "touch and neuroscience," the first thing that popped up was a book/manual called, "Haptic Brain, Haptic Brand: A Communicator's Guide to the Neuroscience of Touch." While I couldn't obtain a print copy of this book, it exists on-line as pdf's, slide presentations, and marketing materials. Produced by Sappi North America,[253] in collaboration with neuroscientist Dr. David Eagleman,[254] the book provides a scientific rational and techniques for marketing products through the scientific understanding of the felt sense of touch, or the

[253] Sappi North America is a Boston-based company that produces paper products, bio-fuels, packaging and bio-materials.

[254] David Eagleman PhD, is a popular neuroscientist who has written extensively about touch, time, synesthesia, time, and the brain.

science of haptics. The basic argument is that since our brains are hard-wired for touch, understanding how sensory experiences shape decision making is crucial for marketing products. On their website, Sappi marketers write,

> Brands that really know how to engage their customers are brands that have mastered the science of touch. They understand how to leverage haptics to create impactful marketing pieces that forge memorable and meaningful connections between brand and customer."[255]

What is most interesting here is that a paper and packaging corporation has become deeply entangled with neuroscience and processual, sensual forms of communication. The advertising campaign from which this quote comes from is a promotional, educational campaign called *How Life Unfolds*, and has the stated goal of helping to "stem the decline of paper use and increase the demand for paper-based packaging."[256] This advertising campaign links neuroscience, consumer, manufacturers and importers together for the greater good of the paper industry. The notion of "unfolding," here, ties back to the notion of auto-poiesis, being and becoming of the self, that clears pathways for smooth unfolding of capitalist relations.

Capitalism is sensual, and organized by felt subjectivities and desire. Foucault argued that the construction of modern subjectivity is dependent upon organizing and controlling bodies through linking sovereign sensuality to capitalism.[257] Adorno argued that bodies are organized not just around law and order, but ontological, felt, technologies that link self to

---

[255] http://www.howlifeunfolds.com/gallery/the-neuroscience-of-touch/

[256] http://www.howlifeunfolds.com/about-us/

[257] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Random House Books, 1978.

capitalism. While I agree with these critiques, there is often a spoken and unspoken expectation that Western scholars will adhere to secular materialist and constructivist commitments, and renounce personal subjectivity as relevant to one's scholarship. Louis Komjathy argues that this hegemonic notion of excluding sensory subjectivities from scholarship means the writing self typically is framed within an either/or dichotomy within the insider (emic-)/outsider (etic-) dichotomy,[258] perpetuating Cartesian dualities that separate mind from body. Within constraints of constructivist, materialist scholarship, the felt sense is seen as suspicious, as something to be suspended in order to see critically. In other words, underlying assumptions about what scholarship fundamentally *is* must be challenged in order to open possibilities for felt subjectivities to subvert neoliberal structures of oppression.

In other words, circling back to the concerns of Chapter One and Two, a both/and location in relationship to touch is explored as a challenge to either/or frameworks in relationship to humanities/science, language/subjectivity. Rather than trying to either prove the legitimacy, or validity, of healing touch within Western scientific or ethnographic frameworks, I'm interested in animating felt possibilities for sensory kinship that moves beyond touch as a bounded sense. The reason for presenting ethnographic experience is not to "recognize" it as legitimate, but to animate possibilities for sensory perception as it crosses borders and boundaries of "selves," space and time. While sensing, feeling and touching that which can't be directly seen or known has always been operational within the province of traditional healing, it is not unique or particular to certain (ethnically categorized) groups of

[258] Louis Komjathy, *Introducing Contemplative Practices.* Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Press, 2018.

people, even though healing practices draw upon particular traditions, places, stories, and histories. Instead, these cultural specifics are what make healing perception "historically dense,"[259] shaped by a person's specific relationship to culture, land, community, and ancestral legacies. It is simultaneously specific *and* transpersonal as it interacts with time and space that is not neutral, but socially constructed, lived, and embedded in the flesh.

What I'm interested in here is expanding the investigation of touch and healing practices outside of ethnic, religious studies, and ethnography, while not universalizing touch or healing practices through the hegemony of Western neuroscience. Explorations of healing spaces have typically been presented ethnographically as a set of shared beliefs and geographies, typically trapping healing perception within Western philosophical frameworks. Healing becomes the province of an ethnic Other to be recorded and ethnographically trapped: the Amazonian shaman, the Mestiza *curandera*, the witch doctor. Within Western scholarly frameworks, perceptual knowledge of healing is limited to what is considered "rational" within colonial frameworks that define the terms of the conversation.

Mark Rifkin argues that what is important about this perceptual space is not a need for recognition or "proof," but rather how perceptual embodiment interacts with colonial dynamics always at play within constructed notions of space and time. Specifically, Rifkin argues that Native people are always forced to use normative language to describe experiences that cannot be recognized by normative frameworks that are incongruent with lived realities. Rifkin argues that these densely specific but trans-personal embodiments are incompatible with settler constructs of "reality," challenging how bodies experience time and

[259] Rifkin, Mark. *Settler Time*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, 28.

space. Felt experiences through touch present material and embodied spaces for refusing settler notions of linear clock time as "real," or a site of collective agreement. Being-in-time becomes a site of temporal multiplicity as a foundational site for engaging difference and contesting settler colonialism and neoliberal selfhood. Instead of seeking recognition within frameworks that separate body/spiritual knowledges from political intentions, this chapter animates possibilities for ecological, embodied knowledges that grate against frameworks of bounded selfhood. Universal theories of touch (haptics) give way to hapticality, or shared, felt experiences that exceed colonial limits of bounded selfhood, language, and linear notions of time and space.

Phenomenology, Mindfulness, and the Neoliberal Self

Posed within a lineage of continental and post-structuralist philosophies, the felt sense is not a new concern. Jacques Derrida, Alfred North Whitehead, Deleuze and Guattari, and Bruno Latour, have all been concerned with how the felt sense and language both create and exceed biopoliticized expressions of life. Concerned more with direct experience than interpretation, this preoccupation is echoed in lineages of western philosophical thought: phenomenology, post-humanism, object oriented ontologies, new materialism, etc, and have a long history. For example, Spinoza challenged the hegemony of Cartesian rationality in his writings on his intimacy with the knarled surface of trees. Alfred North Whitehead, linguist Charles Pierce, Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Emmanuel Levinas, are all interested in the immediacy of directly felt, relational experiences. The larger umbrella of phenomenology considers the possibility that objects external to one's self have their own life existing prior to and apart from the viewer's subjective perception of the Other.

What is problematic about using phenomenology as a philosophical foundation for this project, however, is that I could be in danger of philosophical entrapment, theorizing touch within a European, masculinist tradition that mirrors the domination of Western neuroscience and attendant problems of "self." It's not necessarily that parallels can't be drawn, but it is not the philosophical tradition through which I can enflesh my own experience, or theorize touch that is simultaneously culturally constructed *and* exceeds what is considered to be sensory. Continuing to return to European, masculinist, and neuroscientific models continues to occlude ways of seeing and being that have always been marginalized through western humanist philosophies that separate mind from body, self from other, humans from nature, and ancestral presence to present embodiment.

Equally problematic would be to theorize touch through an Eastern philosophical lens. The question of ontological immediacy is arguably intrinsic to Eastern philosophies, and where this exploration gets sticky and tricky for western scholars in the humanities. My master's degree is in Eastern Classics, and time and time again I have wanted to jump out of the limits of western knowledge production into Eastern texts such as *Nagarjuna* and the *Diamond Sutra* to animate interoceptive touch. A problematic conceptualization of interception would be through fetishizing Eastern practices of Buddhist meditation or more secularized versions of mindfulness. Eve Sedwick's essay, *Pedagogy of Buddhism,* argues that western adaptations of Buddhism have been flattened, orientalized and colonized through limited ways that western minds are able to receive these philosophies. She points to early romantics such as Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Jung as examples of Western men who speak for a universalized Eastern psyche, whose philosophies continue to reach toward transcendent notions of wellbeing and transformation. Similarly, Linda Heuman's essay *A*

New Way Forward, argues that transplanting Eastern practices upon post-Cartesian Western minds can unwittingly reinforce hegemonies of thought that reinforce scientific, rational realities. While the felt, direct experience of touch has a long lineage in the Western philosophical tradition, it is not my intention to reduce or fetishize any of these distinct philosophies.

At the same time, there is something important here to be reckoned with as our current historical moment yokes Western neuroscience and therapeutic practices to traditionally Eastern practices. Mindfulness meditation, divorced from context, can be secularized and adapted to fit any circumstance, ignoring plurality of history and meaning.[260] Within a de-contextualized, secular model, mindfulness can be another tool of biopolitical management contributing to self improvement and emotional management within violent social fields. For example, while the rise of interception as a recently legitimized sense has largely made inroads in western society through decades of Buddhist presence, mindfulness practices continue to be secularized, commodified, and absorbed within western therapeutic models that fail to critique neoliberal citizenship. Mainstream mindfulness training are rarely by donation, and are increasingly adapted and sold to corporatized, militarized, and profit-making institutions, making it anything but neutral or innocent. For example, John Kabat-Zinn, the founder of MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction), teaches mindfulness to banking leaders in Davos. Mindfulness is taught to snipers in the military. Mindfulness is taught in hospitals, treatment facilities, and public schools, where it is used to help people manage their nervous systems within toxic, unhealthy, or even violent environments.

[260] Linda Heuman. *A New Way Forward*. Tricycle: The Buddhist Review. Spring 2015.

I have no argument with critics of mindfulness. I will not argue that it can, and often is, a reinforcement of western, liberal, and secular notions of "self" that can only see versions of itself. Notions of "self-care" and "self-help" can be dangerously close to neoliberal selfhood when they collude with that which is killing us. In other words, frameworks of neuroscience that theorize haptics and brain health as projects of self optimization and improvement collude with neoliberal technologies of bounded selfhood. At the same time, through my experiences teaching mindfulness in a trauma treatment center, and working as a somatic bodywork practitioner, I do know how contemplative, embodied practices can challenge bounded self-hood. I see possibility here, but I believe the conversation must necessarily situate itself outside the fraught term "mindfulness" and collusion with neoliberal technologies of "self." If not properly critiqued, the twin forces of neuroscience and mindfulness may strengthen neoliberal technologies that de-contextualize bodies in time and place, de-politicizing selves.

While developments in neuroscience such as the notion of neuro-plasticity, which links the practice of mindfulness to shifting patterns in the brain, may be promising for alleviating individual forms of suffering, deployment of these findings can be problematic given colonial definitions of "self" and time. When given responsibility for our own brain as a form of self responsibility, neuroplasticity fits neatly with neoliberalism and self-governance. Again, suffering becomes the province of self responsibility. While "interoception" and "haptics" are widely used in Western neuroscience and therapeutic literature, I have never seen these terms used in de-colonial literature and theory. Instead, the felt sense is named and presented in languages particular to writers' lived experiences within various locations, histories, and identities. What is shared is a felt experience of inter-being

as a valid form of knowledge and theory making that challenges western experience divorced from the body and the bodies of others. While "interoception" is a useful word for linking this exploration to current trends in neuroscientific and therapeutic research, it is not meant to be an overlay onto already existing knowledges.

Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's concept of "hapticality" presents a de-colonial contrast to haptics, or frameworks for touch bound within the confines of the sensory system of an individual:

Hapticality, or Love

Never being on the right side of the Atlantic is an unsettled feeling, the feeling of a thing that unsettles with others. It's a feeling, if you ride with it, that produces a certain distance from the settled, from those who determine themselves in space and time, who locate themselves in a determined history. To have been shipped is to have been moved by others, with others. It is to feel at home with the homeless, at ease with the fugitive, at peace with the pursued, at rest with the ones who consent not to be one. Outlawed, interdicted, intimate things of the hold, containerized contagion, logistics externalises logic itself to reach you, but this is not enough to get at the social logics, the social poesis, running through logisticality.

Because while certain abilities – to connect, to translate, to adapt, to travel – were forged in the experiment of hold, they were not the point. As David Rudder sings, "how we vote is not how we party." The hold's terrible gift was to gather dispossessed feelings in common, to create a new feel in the undercommons. Previously, this kind of feel was only an exception, an aberration, a shaman, a witch, a seer, a poet amongst others, who felt through others, through other things. Previously, except in these instances, feeling was mine or it was ours. But in the hold, in the undercommons of a new feel, another kind of feeling became common. This form of feeling was not collective, not given to decision, not adhering or reattaching to settlement, nation, state, territory or historical story; nor was it repossessed by the group, which could not now feel as one, reunified in time and space. No, when Black Shadow sings "are you feelin' the feelin?'' he is asking about something else. He is asking about a way of feeling through others, a feel for feeling others feeling you. This is modernity's insurgent feel, its inherited caress, its skin talk, tongue touch, breath speech, hand laugh. This is the feel that no individual can stand, and no state abide. This is the feel we might call hapticality.

Hapticality, the touch of the undercommons, the interiority of sentiment, the feel that what is to come is here. Hapticality, the capacity to feel though others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you, this feel of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem. Or perhaps we could say these are now recomposed in the wake of the shipped. To feel others is

unmediated, immediately social, amongst us, our thing, and even when we recompose religion, it comes from us, and even when we recompose race, we do it as race women and men. Refused these things, we first refuse them, in the contained, amongst the contained, lying together in the ship, the boxcar, the prison, the hostel. Skin, against epidermalisation, senses touching. Thrown together touching each other we were denied all sentiment, denied all the things that were supposed to produce sentiment, family, nation, language, religion, place, home. Though forced to touch and be touched, to sense and be sensed in that space of no space, though refused sentiment, history and home, we feel (for) each other.[261]

I included a large passage here from *The Undercommons* as an entry point for considering differences between "haptics" as a tool of neoliberalism and "hapticality" as a site that defies neoliberal management. If haptics is a neuroscientific discipline operating within agreements of what it means to be bound by skin, to be settled, to optimize human adaptation, hapticality is the feel of the political undercommons, where feeling with and for each other is the place of passage away from "self," time, and space. Here, resilience, adaptation, and resettlement are not the point. Instead, hapticality refuses the terms of collective agreements that define who is a person, what it means to be a person, how to *be* a person: *It's a feeling, if you ride with it, that produces a certain distance from the settled, from those who determine themselves in space and time, who locate themselves in a determined history.* Instead, dispossessed, affective selves—denied humanity—live within, between and among bodies, refusing terms a the liberal humanist "self" that is whole, settled, unified.

This sympoietic state lives too far outside of bounded individualism and ways that western therapeutic technologies could possibly heal "selves" because these terms confound the goals of settler colonialism and neoliberal narratives. Not only does hapticality challenge colonial notions getting settled, of "making it" on settler terms, but life in the *hold*

[261] Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons*.

undermines all forms of bio and geo-political management: *this feel of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem."* By dislocating one's body from all terms of coloniality—history as past, bodies bound by skin in present time, and private property ownership, *hapticality* becomes a lived feel that is simultaneously densely personal and vastly trans-personal, completely dislocated from bounded notions of place, home, and self: *Though forced to touch and be touched, to sense and be sensed in that space of no space, though refused sentiment, history and home, we feel (for) each other.*[262]

Touch, though it is a "sentiment with its own interiority," is not born of "self," or "soul,"[263] but connected to shared histories and ancestral experiences that are heard and felt. For example, Soul music is an expression of lament for broken hapticality, created and enforced through slavery and forced separation from family, community, and land. Far from historical, these violences continue to live in the flesh as remembered ancestral violences living in our DNA. Facing the embodied legacy of violence is not merely accomplices through historicizing or naming, nor does it involve forgetting the violences of history in order to move on and adapt. Instead, (re)membering becomes a site that is so unbearable and painful that it must be shared, must be transmuted through trans-embodiments not bound by one's skin:

This is the feel that no individual can stand, and no state abide.[264]

[262] Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons*.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid.

The felt experience of sharing and enfleshing history becomes the field through which to forge connection and solidarity outside of colonial constructs of time, space, and "self." It is not just the pain of this lifetime, but the felt acknowledgment of broken ancestral ties, geographies, and oppressions. The felt, living sense of history, then, becomes a crucial site for imagining self-hood beyond the confines of a body occupying a particular point in time. Instead of managing pain as personal trauma, as something to be "healed" in a lifetime, the felt sense of time stretches backward and forward, including ancestors and generations to come. From what vantage point, or what point in time, could we say that "healing" has been accomplished? And to what end?

Bracha Ettinger's *The Matrixial Borderspace* provides another entry point for considering hapticality, or ways that embodied, pre-verbal and non-verbal experiences of childhood, ancestral pain, and historical atrocities, continue to experience lives of their own in our flesh. She writes about the wounding of those who have come before us, who have left traces of wounded-ness on our own bodies and psyches. She argues that "the past is not past but is not present, but from scattered and animated remains of a continuing, though not continuous, trauma."[265] We access these traces not necessarily through language, but through lived intensities, embodiments, touch, and art. This embodiment often lives outside the realm of representation, and evades colonial capture that would demand wholeness, or a complete and cohesive healed "self." By shifting attention from one's individual knot of

[265] Bracha Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace,* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006 (viii).

suffering to the shared, "matrixial web of borderlands,"[266] subjectivity is enlarged and expanded beyond self.

In her own embodied praxis, Ettinger uses the act of painting to access and transmute shared pain and suffering. Instead of pointing viewers toward an aesthetic experience of suffering, she considers the transmutation of trauma that happens in the border zone of endless touch and movement. "There is a transmutation of trauma that is not the same as its full and knowing articulation."[267] In other words, pain is not simply "worked through" to a logical end, but animated within co-poietic ecologies. Ettinger's theories and painting practices provide a space to contemplate the fact that we are never fully individuated individuals.[268] We can't be, since we are connected on a psychic level that exists prior to individuation, unspeakable to the 'I.' "Only as broken up can the image appear."[269] Speaking of "I" or "we" is not possible here. Instead, subjectivity emerges as temporary, lived encounters within shared border spaces between partially-formed subjects, both connected and different. Instead of identity is a complete "I," identification emerges within a space in which traumas and desires of others become our own. This view of encounter emerges as anti-oedipal; the relationships and selves that emerge are co-poietic, co-emergent and dependent instead of separate and "whole." The matrixial borderspace is a space of matrixial difference that allows for conductive affect, able to give voice to body-psyche interacting and co-emergence with the world.

---

[266] Ibid, 103.
[267] Ibid
[268] Ibid, x.
[269] Ibid, ix.

Similarly, Erin Manning's *The Politics of Touch* considers how touch as affect interrupts settler constructs of self-in-time and space, interrupts concrete boundaries between self and other, and the myth of secure borders. While constructivist scholarship assumes that the body is already signified, always bio-politicized, what happens when we think about touch as a political process of lived intensities between bodies *as* lived intensities? Manning argues that the problem of the body in western scholarship and policy is that we treat it like a distinct agent. Naturalization of the body by marking it as gendered and racialized, renders bodies recognizable and territorializable. Nation states rely on these markings to govern the larger body politic through multicultural politics of difference. A politic of touch, then, considers how bodies have agency within colonizing frames through refusing notions of the body as singular and concrete. Instead of a politic of the "narratively condemned," bodies hold agency to shape democracy. Since bodies are simultaneously constructed, ephemeral, and changeable, the space between bodies is less an object of analysis than a gesture, a becoming-in-relation:

> The body is never its-*self*. We have several bodies, non of them "selves" in terms of subjectivity. Touch as reaching toward already alerts us to the downfall of discourses of subjectivity: if my body is created through my movement toward you, there is no "self" to refer back to, only a proliferation of vectors that emerge through contact.[270]

Within this co-poeitic space of becoming-in-relation, our senses reach beyond the security of what it means to be "whole," to be human. Manning argues along with Brian Massumi and Baruch Spinoza that while we can't know the full potential of bodies because

[270] Erin Manning, *The Politics of Touch*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 137.

bodies exceed our knowledge of them.[271] Real sovereignty, or power, exists within this excess, or the "infinite abstract" in which a body seeks to touch what it does not yet understand but seeks to know, but cannot ever know. Instead, bodies are vectors of contact, *senseurs*, that are moved through affects that play on the surface of our senses. What are bodies, here, in relationship to the State? Bodies can only partially be made members (citizens) because they cannot be secured in place. In the interoceptive act of touch and being touched, of reaching for each other, we become a continuum of selves instead of a "self," fundamentally altering settler space and time. Manning writes, "bodies are never completely enslaved to the state because bodies are never completely reducible to either Nature or the State. Bodies emerge on a continuum that evolves in relationship to pacts formed around institutions of power and compliance."[272]

Within this continuum, *hapticality* as method and methodology provides a strong challenge to western knowledge production and the de-politicization of touch and healing. What possibilities emerge for language and scholarship of feeling *with*, both recognizing and evading colonial technologies? The degree to which neoliberal complicity is reinforced or undermined has much to do with conflicts that emerge when language attempts to define and manage the terms of suffering. Even the term "hapticality" is limited when attempting to access the *feel* of suffering since language has the power to separate experience, the actual feeling of pain, from the body. Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* argues that pain shatters language and the ability to speak. She argues that when pain does begin to speak, it tells a story, and yet, due to its inability to be grasped, it causes a split between one's reality and the

[271] Ibid, 143.
[272] Ibid, 147.

reality of others, making torture and structural violences effective tools of bio-political citizenship. Violence, when it is inflicted by war, torture, or structurally through institutions, affects how individuals either speak or remain in silence. Sandra Soto suggests that the process of naming, of defining, or using metaphors to "footnote the confounding manifold ways that our bodies, our work, our desires are relentlessly interpolated by inequivalent social processes,"[273] is equally a trap. Instead, she suggests listening to *what is not said* in order to ward off "ontological impoverishment" and "epistemological disciplining"[274] that comes from Western academic knowledge production.

For many Indigenous and scholars of color, this is less a project of enfleshing selves in relationship to personal pain, but yoking haptical, ontological immediacy across bodies, space, time, and linguistic agreements in order to *densify* how histories and bodies co-construct each other. The subject becomes not the personal self in pain, but how pain continues to be inflicted by tools of "civilization" such as scholarship and narratives of history that occlude colonial violence. For example, Ned Blackhawk's *Violence Over the Land* (2006) performs a corrective to colonial versions of Native American history by re-writing history using violence as both subject and method. In other words, Blackhawk's retelling of history through Western Shoshone eyes both reckons with the racialized violence upon which America was built, and uses language to perform violence to American historical narratives as places of comfort and innocence.

Similarly, Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, argues that being and writing *in* the wake, from within the "continuous and changing present of slavery's as yet

---

[273] Soto, Sandra. *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010, 6.
[274] Ibid, 126.

unresolved unfolding,"[275] means inhabiting history in ways that do not see the past as the past, but continuously unfolding within and around us. For these scholars, the felt sense of history, of the ancestral continuing into the present, and felt sense of responsibility for future generations, is a necessary corrective to bounded selfhood. Hapticality becomes the method, the means, and the goal of scholarship. In other words, yoking the past to the present to the future performs an ethic of care and repair within continued violences of history. If some of the more pernicious sites of epistemological disciplining rely on colonial hegemonies of language that reinforce agreements related to self, space, and time, Black and Indigenous Scholars have been at the forefront of challenging these colonial constructs.

Necessarily, the question then becomes, what does hapticality look like for descendants and perpetrators of privileged colonial legacies: scientists, scholars, writers, White, mixed-race, and other orphans—for writing in the wake, embodying and employing hapticality as a challenge to neoliberal, settler subjectivities? Is it possible to imagine dispossessing ourselves of privileged positions and subjectivities associated with coloniality and whiteness to embody solidarity with de-colonial embodiments, ancestral histories, and ecological possibilities? In other words, if we consider hapticality as method, what possibilities exist for dialoguing across disciplinary/racial/ethnic/gender lines in order to imagine non-hierarchical, ecologically just futures?

The Ancestral Speculative and Speaking for the Dead

Veronica Golos's *Rootwork* (2015) is a speculative poetic experiment that moves back and forth through time, enfleshing the ghostly body of Mary Day Brown, as she

---

[275] Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, 14.

dialogues with her abolitionist husband John Brown, and other historical figures of the abolitionist period—Frederick Douglass, Lucy Stone, and Sojourner Truth. "Rootwork" is another word for hoodoo, for a form of healing that crosses worlds in order to seek balance and harmony. As part of a poetry project with the Black Earth Institute, poets were asked to pick a date in September and to see where it led them. Golos chose September 16th, the same day that John Brown was hanged in 1857, after the Dred Scott decision inflamed racial tensions. One of the most infamous Supreme Court decisions in US history, the court majority argued that all citizens of African descent—whether slave or free—could not be US citizens (because they were not "persons,") and that property could not be taken away without due legal process. Golos draws upon historical documents, letters, and journals, in order to bring the voices "from those drowned, ghosts beneath the sea, from runaways, from the land itself,"[276] as a form of world making that performs a "call and answer between American History and Myself."[277] In other words, through enfleshing and dialoguing with the ghosts of history, Golos explores her own here-ish as a White citizen occupying complex historical and social ecologies. For Golos, political activism informs her poetry as an "act of bringing history alive as a form of protest."[278]

In other words, Golos's own social location as a White woman becomes simultaneously displaced and centralized as she feels into the words and histories of the Browns, of other abolitionists and slaves, and explores what can be felt and said when feeling *with,* instead of on behalf of. Her poetry shape-shifts in time, space, and voice as she

---

[276] Golos, Veronica. *Rootwork,* Taos: Taos Press, 2015, XIX.
[277] Ibid, xvii.
[278] Ibid, xviii.

speculates on what has been lived and felt. For Golos, the subject of slavery becomes an entry point for a speculative dialogue with ancestors, land, and ghosts to enflesh and inform present time. Her writing "self" is decentralized and moves between selves and voices. In coming to know and understand Mary Day Brown—a White woman who committed her life to ending slavery—Golos found herself increasingly "inside" of her subject. As Golos moves back and forth through time, tracing Mary's days before and after John's hanging, she records vignettes that fuel Mary's rage and determination over the violence she sees around her:

> That day, my host
> called the boy inside & his father followed. "Sing, boy,"
> the host said. The boy began to sing all
> Christian hymns; after the first song,
> he was urged to a second; after the second
> to a third. The boy's lips grew dry, we could
> see. His father turned to stone as the white
> man demanded another, and another, the
> boy swaying on his feet.[279]

Through feeling history alive via the historical words of another becomes a defining feature of border crossing between worlds, of coming to know and see more clearly the violences inflicted upon bodies that are not necessarily one's own. Less an act of empathy than an act of critical mourning, Golos/Brown endeavors to illuminate history through the

[279] Ibid, 16.

practice of hapticality, not only as it is felt between Golos and Brown, but as it expands to include the voices of other humans, ghosts, and land. The felt sense, or hapticality as it crosses between human, spirit and natural worlds, becomes a defining feature of coming to enflesh history in present time. Traditional slave canticles frame Golos's original poetry, shifting attention away from Mary Day Brown's body into a lived, shared space animating relationships between multiple, connected worlds:

Just before day I feel them. Just before day I feel them.

My sister, I feel them. My sister, I feel them.

All night long I've been feeling them.

Just before day I feel them. Just before day I feel them.

The spirit, feel them. The spirit I feel them.[280]

One could certainly critique Golos for imagining herself inside bodies that are passed, bodies that are not *hers*, bodies that share neither her skin color or experiences. One could argue that there can be no truth here of lived experience. It is simply a speculative experiment of the imaginary. She could be accused of misrepresentation, or speaking for others. What interests me, here, however, are the ways that Golos's speculative strategy of hapticality opens possibilities for writing that challenges materialist confines of colonial time, space, and self. Hapticality, or feeling with the ghosts of history, becomes a necessary method for understanding the present moment, for how Golos's current embodiment has been co-constructed with histories of slavery. The goal is less self-understanding than a co-poietic exploration of whiteness and patriarchy as they continue to travel through time and

[280] Ibid, 93.

history. By assuming multiple locations and bodies, traveling through history as a non-linear construct that moves backward and forward, Golos challenges embodiments constructed in *this* time, *this* space, *this* body. Bodies become processual, lived, animated in time and space.

An example of Christina Sharpe's "theory in the wake," Golos looks back at violences occluded through histories of forgetting; an act that contradicts the White masculinist American narrative of Home of the Free, Home of the Brave. Golos evokes the Star Spangled Banner to juxtapose nationalist songs with slave canticles, physically naming slave women on whose backs America was built. By focusing on the names and songs of women, Golos enfleshes the legacy of women slaves, still so often occluded from histories and narratives of slavery:

ghost code. *america*

Oh Say Can You See
O. Say. cn u c

O sway ships

Desire, Hope, Henrietta Marie, Adelaide, Cora, Margaret
Scott, Sally, Whydah

Womenships slip by
us

away in the waves see sea o can u

in the sea waves of limbs[281]

Perhaps this form of haptical poetry can best be theorized as the ancestral speculative, or a form of grieving that Donna Haraway might theorize as the work of "Speakers for the

[281] Golos, Veronica. *Rootwork,* Taos: Taos Press, 2015, 92

Dead," an important job in her imagined future. In her piece of speculative fiction, *The Camille Stories*, she imagines that Speakers for the Dead hold important positions as healers; not for individuals, but for "strengthening the healing that was gaining momentum across the earth"[282] as a sympoieitic densifying of interconnected communities and eco-systems. Through the act of vital memory, through the work of mourning, or (re)membering, the essential role of Speakers for the Dead is to "not forget the stink in the air from the burning of witches, not to forget the murders of human and non-human beings in the Great Catastrophes named the Plantationocene, Anthropocene, and Capitalocene, to keen and mourn the "dismembering of the world."[283]

In other words, hapticality as a lived site of relationality between selves, past, present, and future, challenges touch as a sensory act that reinforces boundaries of self and other within bounded sensory systems. Instead, hapticality becomes a site in which all things to which one is in relationship to—both alive and dead—can be animated from within its own vital self-hood. All forms of worlding, here—Speaking, writing, touching—become mobile sites of felt recognition in which self and other exceed colonial constraints of time, space, and "self."

[282] Donna Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, 166
[283] ibid, 166

optimism
noun
\ ˈäp-tə-ˌmi-zəm \

1. a doctrine that this world is the best possible world

as·pi·ra·tion
\aspəˈrāSH(ə)n\
noun

1. a hope or ambition of achieving something.
2. the action or process of drawing breath.[284]

[284] I am drawing the notion of "aspiration" from Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. This definition is from Webster's dictionary.

There is a young immunologist in the room who tried and failed to take her own life. She is blonde and tall and thin. She doesn't want to exist.

You have the group sit and relax with their breath. You ask them to notice how they are relating to the breath.

The young woman says, "My relationship to the breath is fine as long as I don't feel anything."

Afterwards she says, "When I was in college, I studied acupuncture and traditional healing and thought about the relationship between plants and herbs and people. But I got trained out of that way of thinking in my PhD program, and now we're creating all sorts of superbugs. Unless we start thinking in terms of ecosystems, we're toast."

You look at each other for a long moment before the young woman turns away to put on her shoes.

Conclusion—

Aspiration: The Haptical Imaginary and the Ancestral Speculative

> "Facing the fact that no form of being in the political or politics—including withdrawing from them—will solve the problem of shaping the impasse of the historical present, what alternatives remain for remaking the fantasmic/material infrastructure of collective life? Is the best one can hope for *realistically* a stubborn collective refusal not give out, wear out, or admit defeat?"[285]
>
> —Lauren Berlant

> "In sympoiesis, the monarch critters, human and other-than human, drank from the healing tears of the living and the dead."[286]
>
> —Donna Haraway

Conclusions present an opportunity to tie up loose ends, to sum up a tidy argument. Staying with the metaphor of the kaleidoscope, however, a conclusion can never stay a conclusion; an impasse can never remain an impasse. We continue on, despite the nightmares we have created and continue to create. But optimism and aspiration are not the same thing. Returning to Lauren Berlant's notion of cruel optimism, affective structures of optimism are cruel when they compel a person to return again and again to fantasies which disappoint again and again. If one believes that this world is the best possible world, fair and a-historical, optimism makes sense. We can trust democracy and the American Dream as natural processes that unfold on their own divine terms. We can have faith in what is already here. We can trust that we—as human beings—will find a way to survive the mess we have

[285] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
[286] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

made. Perhaps technology or artificial intelligence will save us. Perhaps we won't need to break or admit defeat; we can keep whole-ing ourselves within discourses and neoliberal institutions that we cling to for survival. Perhaps we can hire professionals to "heal" us, to help our brains feel more optimistic and hopeful.

Aspiration, on the other hand, leaps out of accepted constructions of reality. It doesn't necessarily trust what is already here, but breathes its way into something it can't yet see, only feel. This entire project has been one of sympoeitic aspiration; feeling my way toward something I can feel, but not see. Practicing touch therapies provides a continued space of aspiration and possibility every time I enter into space in which breath, time, and space are unbound and shared. This is not transcendence, but a form of mutual nourishment honed within paradox and the complexities of being a living organism. This form of nourishment can't heal the violences of settler colonial capitalism and de-humanizing hierarchies of being at the root of these violences. Necessarily, there is the hard truth that we continue to dwell within these conditions, though we are constantly shaping and re-shaping those terms we call "culture," "reality," and "consciousness." What could a future look like in which co-poietic, sympoietic terms prevail; in which the terms of existence do not hold allegiance to liberal humanist lineages of colonial selfhood? Terms that imagine mutual relationality not limited to members one's own tribe, or species, but practices that feel *with,* understanding that organisms have singular lives and speech? Terms which understand that we inevitably co-construct each other from *within* these ecologies; there is no "away," no organism that is self maintaining, existing outside of precarious and delicate eco-systems of power and dominance?

Linking aspiration and radical forms of imagination and creativity to our colonial-created bad dream has been, and continues to be, the challenge. As neoliberal social conditions continue to de-humanize and exploit in pursuit of profit, we need aspiration not necessarily as a source of personal hope, but as a force for yoking collective inquiry to matters of justice and survival. Aspiration is needed for imagining ways that trans-disciplinary inquiry can be more than self serving, rejecting the terms of neoliberal turf wars to reach further than we can yet imagine. If the necessary constraints of this dissertation operate within the realm of the material, yoked between critical theory and lived experience, in what ways can writing think outside both the realm of the *realistic*, the strictly material, or acceptable boundaries of scholarship? What about speculative ethnography? Ethnographic neuroscience? Ancestral ethnography? Crossing borders of every kind to imagine alternatives to colonial hierarchies and neoliberal barbarism. We need each other's visions and knowledges.

For example, neuroscientist Lasana Harris applies principles of trans-disciplinary, critical inquiry to theorize dehumanization.[287] If dehumanization can be defined as Othering in order to ignore, exploit, or kill, his research theorizes the mechanisms that produce and perpetuate senseless violence. For Harris, neuroscientific research is helpful for understanding how the brain and social behavior interact and evolve together. Harris is less interested in the brain itself than in a broad inquiry that includes other fields such as Evolutionary Anthropology, sociology, and Marxist theory to gather as much information as possible related to understanding the underpinnings of dehumanization. Harris argues that

[287] Lasana Harris. *Invisible Mind: Flexible Social Cognition and Dehumanization* Boston: MIT Press, 2017.

since human beings are motivated by reward and punishment, it's hard to create social change when individuals and communities are intensely attached to ways that one's identity provides rewards. While value is subjective and what is rewarding is determined by us, reward structures are wired in the brain and difficult to change if there is not some form of value, or reward attached. This is especially true for rewards that are linked to power, growth, and enterprise. If the majority of power is held by the minority, and is consolidating at a rapid pace, change within the system will not come from convincing those in power that they should (ethically) give up power and resources. Ensuring survival for ourselves and our offspring becomes our primary occupation, a site in which we are likely forced to co-operate within the terms set by social structures.

At the same time, our cultural realities are filled with tensions, and are always changing. We make culture, it makes us, and we respond. Culture responds to us because we are the principals of culture. If we accept the reality of change as a fundamental truth, we are never narratively condemned. We can construct new realities. When I publicly asked Harris what he thought about the role of speculative fiction in helping us imagine new relational possibilities for reward and cooperation, he said aesthetics could be a promising way of imagining social worlds outside of current frameworks. Since capitalism is highly flexible and adapts to changing human values, focusing exclusively on human needs is not likely to produce a shift in values that prioritize "self." Harris wondered how the imagination could produce rewards beyond what we can currently, collectively imagine. Using literature and speculative fiction as a site of inquiry, he wondered if minds could be plastic enough to open to ambiguity, or the unknown, as its own reward?

Speculative Strategies

I would like to conclude with a turn toward aspirational possibilities explored in speculative writing that moves backwards and forwards in time, imagining life as both historically constructed *and* fluid, densely embodied and widely connected. The recent work of adrienne maree brown and Donna Haraway draw upon science fiction writers Octavia Butler and Ursula K. Le Guin. Brown's edited collection of science fiction essays, *Octavia's Brood* (2015)*,* and Haraway's *The Camille Stories* in *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) provide examples of how critical theories and speculative writing harness each other to imagine new social worlds outside of colonial, neoliberal frameworks. Language reaches outside of the imagined present to inform, report back, mourn, and provide insight, challenging bounded notions of time, space, and self as "real." Instead, all forms of writing and organizing become potential sites of aspiration and speculation:

> Whenever we try to envision a world without war, without violence, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fiction. All organizing is science fiction.[288]

Writing oneself and one's descendants into the future becomes a revolutionary act, challenging narratively condemned status. It's especially relevant that many of the writers for this volume aren't established science fiction writers, or sometimes even writers at all, but all are engaged in various forms of social justice praxis. Here, imagination within the lived context of one's life becomes an expanded vehicle for imagining what can't yet be seen. In Octavia's Brood, there is no collective vision emerging from the authors; each story and

[288] Adrienne Maree Brown, and Walidah Imarisha, ed. *Octavia's Brood*. Oakland: AK Press, 2015.

essay is a reflection of specific lived experiences of each individual. At the same time, there is a common thread of aspiration, of desire, to imagine one's way through the prison house of Empire.

Some stories, such as Alixis Pauline Gumbs's *Evidence*, are hopeful, dialoguing with descendants who report back from the future to soothe intergenerational characters, over many generations, that capitalism has been vanquished; that "everyone eats. Everyone knows how to grow agriculturally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually… Each everything is an opportunity and we are artists singing it into being with faith, compassion, confusion, breakthroughs, and support."[289] The point is to strengthen and imagine. Many stories in this collection, however, aren't utopian at all, don't jump out of our mess, but imagine embodiments for surviving together within the ruins. For example, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Children Who Fly* works its way through and out of the narrator's body to imagine multiple planes and worlds for existing, despite the fact that "there are still kids being raped. There are still prisons, functioning in the middle of the gaping maw of utter disaster. There are still bombs being made." [290] What is left, however, are the "care webs," in which backyards, hoarded grains, mushrooms and tinctures, and ancestral/spirit worlds remind them that "no one is alone."[291] For Piepzna-Samarasinha, using what communities have always had—each other, knowledge of plants, and healing practices—are what work, "more than guns or negotiation, to win the war that is left."[292]

---

[289] Adrienne Maree Brown and Walidah Imarish, *Octavia's Brood*. Oakland, CA: AK Books, 2015, 40.

[290] Ibid, 253.

[291] Ibid, 253.

[292] Ibid, 253.

In other words, for these authors, and for the other authors of *Octavia's Brood*, the imagined way forward is through expansive, sympoietically dense communities of care as cruel optimisms continue to crumble and fail us. This is similar to Donna Haraway's vision, as she follows her character Camille through five generations of living and dying, tracking how communities of resistance identified allies and shared knowledges for the purpose of shared survival. Through the character of Camille, Haraway illuminates how knowledges emerge and shift over time, both fertilized and limited by the epistemic conditions of that generation. For example, Camille I, born in 2025 and died in 2100, inhabited the time of "The Great Dithering," 2000-2050, a period of widespread environmental destruction and mass extinctions. These conditions gave rise to "Communities of Compost," planet-wide communities of several hundred people, migrating "to ruined places to work with human and nonhuman partners to heal these places, building networks, pathways, nodes, and webs of and for a newly habitable world."[293]

Healing and activism became intertwined, sparked by love, outrage, and grief, in response to accelerating rates of genocide, extinctions, and exterminations. For Haraway, healing was not oriented toward wholeness or justice that one could see in one's lifetime, but part of the "love and rage which contained the germs of *partial* healing even in the face of onrushing destruction."[294] By tracking evolution over multiple generations, Haraway uses her imagination to place her own body within lineages of the living and future dead. Her own life becomes part of the long now in which seeds of *partial* hope might germinate in

---

[293] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, 137.
[294] Ibid, 137.

future generations of living beings. With each incarnation of Camille, new knowledges and insight emerge, building upon the limits of the previous generation.

When my mother dedicated her PhD dissertation in Clinical Psychology to my brother and I in 1989, she wrote, "Beat this." In many ways, my own knowledge making processes are always in process of engaging with and exceeding my parents and teachers, though likely not as much as I would hope. Abandoning hope for theorizing a magic bullet that might prevent the suffering that is coming, that is here and likely increasing from global warming and climate change, is a humbling truth. It is a final paradox to inhabit; operating alone, doing all I can within the limits of this dissertation, and within the limits of my hands, will never be enough to stop barbarism. Colonial capitalism, or what the Zapatistas call the *capitalist hydra,*[295] might never end. Knowing this as true, I can end this deeply flawed and limited dissertation knowing that my knowledge can only be partial, determined by how far I am able to see. Instead of aspiring to total knowledge, scattering seeds of partial hope will have to be enough. Here is my very particular hope, my very particular contribution: Perhaps by radically reimagining time, space, and selves in relationship to living worlds (alive and ancestral), painful orphaned structures of feeling—grief, dispossession, confusion, pain—may yoke themselves to multiplicitous, tentacular, and singular acts of love and rage. Perhaps within these emergent, sympoietic, relational spaces, we can begin to reconstitute new imaginaries from within the colonial rubble.

[295] From Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh *On Decoloniality*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2019, 29.

Coda

You are shopping for jeans at the thrift store.

Out of the corner of your eye, sitting on an overstuffed plaid couch for sale, is a woman gazing at you. From your peripheral vision, you see that she is elderly, maybe mid-eighties, and that she almost looks, or feels, like a child. Like an angel or cherub in a Raphael painting. Her gaze feels wide, innocent, warm.

You turn to her.

"You are so beautiful," she says, without a transitional sentence like, "Excuse me, I'm sorry but, forgive me…"

Just like that. You in your sweat pants and ponytail.

In the same breath, without thought, you say, "Funny, I was just thinking the same thing about you."

She smiles and you return to the $8. jean rack.

You think about your godmother, who after 40 years as a brilliant therapist on the Upper West Side, is descending into Alzheimer's. You are growing closer because you believe her when she tells you that she goes on nighttime support missions with teams who come and get her. They have important work to do. There are beings who need help, and this is her new job.

(re)Insurgents everywhere.

thank you.

Bibliography

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Ahmed, Sara. *Living A Feminist Life*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self.* Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010.

Alexander, Jacqui M. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Allewaert, Monique. *Ariel's Ecology.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Anderson, Chris. *Critical Indigenous Studies: From Difference To Density* Cultural Studies Review, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2009. Print.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands, La Frontera; The New Mestiza.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books. 1989.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *This Bridge We Call Home.* New York: Routledge, 2002.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *La Frontera.*

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark*

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1948.

Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1970.

Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Behar, Ruth. *Translated Woman.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Behar, Ruth. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Berlant, Lauren. *Desire/love.* Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2012.

Biehl, Joao, and Locke, Peter. *Unfinished: The Anthropology of Becoming*. Durham: Duke, 2017.

Biss, Eula. *Notes from No Man's Land.* Minneapolis: Grey Wolf Press, 2009.

Blackhawk, Ned. *Violence Over the Land*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Brown, Adrienne Maree. Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds. Chico: AK Press, 2017.

Burstow, Bonnie. *Psychiatry Disrupted.* Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014.

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* London and New York: Verso Books, 2004.

Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.

Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London and New York: Verso Books, 2010.

Butler, Judith. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013.

Butler, Judith**.** *Senses of the Subject.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.

Butler, Judith, Zeynep Gambetti, Leticia Sabsay. *Vulnerability In Resistance.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Byrd, Jodi. *Transit of Empire.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Cantu, Norma. *Canicula: Snapshots from a Girlhood en la Frontera.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

Cervenak, Sarah Jane. *Wandering: Philosophical Performances of Racial and Sexual Freedom.* Durham: Duke University Press. 2014.

Cesare, Aimee. *Discourse on Colonialism.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1955.

Chen, Christine. *Animacies. Biopolitics, Mattering, and Queer Affect.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Choudhury, Suparna. *Critical Neuroscience: A Handbook of the Social and Cultural Contexts of Neuroscience*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012.

Clough, Patricia. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Coole, Frost. *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Cotera. *Native Speakers. Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita Gonzalez and the Poetics of Culture.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.

Cvetkovich, Ann. *Depression: A Public Feeling.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Damasio, Antonio. *The Feeling of What Happens.* New York: Mariner Books, 2000.

Das, Veena. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Das, Veena. *Affliction. Health, Disease, Poverty*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.

Das, Veena.*The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. *Anti-Oedipus.* New York: Penguin Books. 1977.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

DiAngelo, Robin. *White Fragility*. International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, Vol 3, 2011.

Dyer, Richard. *White*. New York: Routledge Press, 1997.

Eakin, John Paul. *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Ettinger, Brach L. *The Matrixial Borderspace.* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Facio, Elisa and Lara, Irene. *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives.* Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2014.

Fanon, Franz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1952.

Fanon, Franz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* New York: Grove Press, 1961.

Fassin, Didier. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry Into the Condition of Victimhood.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Garcia, Angela. *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande* Berkeley, University of California Press, 2010.

Garfinkel, Sarah; Anil K. Seth; Barrett Adam; Keisuke Suzuki; Critchley, Hugo. *Knowing your own heart: Distinguishing interoceptive accuracy from interoceptive awareness* Brighton and Sussex Medical School: Biological Psychology 104 (2015) 65-74, 2013.

Gidwani, Vinay. *Capital, Interrupted: Agrarian Development and the Politics of Work in India.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Gilmore, Leigh. "American Neoconfessional: Memoir, Self-Help, and Redemption on Oprah's Couch." Biography, Volume 33, Number 4, Fall 2010.

Gilmore, Ruth. *Golden Gulog*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Glissant, Edouard. *The Poetics of Relation.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2103.

Golos, Veronica. *Rootwork,* Taos: Taos Press, 2015.

Gonzales, Jovita. *Dew on the Thorn.* Arte Publico Press, 1997.

Gonzales, Patrisia. *Red Medicine: Traditional Indigenous Rites of Birthing and Healing.* Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2012.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth.* New York: Columbia University Press. 2008.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Becoming Undone*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Grusin, Richard. *The Non-human Turn.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2015.

Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Haraway, Donna. *Staying With the Trouble.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Harney, Stephano, and Moten, Fred. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study.* New York: Minor Compositions. 2013.

Harris, Lasana. *Invisible Mind: Flexible Social Cognition and Dehumanization* Boston: MIT Press, 2017.

Hendrickson. *Border Medicine: A Transcultural History of Mexican American Curanderismo.* New York: New York University Press, 2014.

Hogan, Linda. *The Woman Who Watches Over the World.* New York: WW Norton and Company, 2001.

Holmes, Christina. Ecological Borderlands: Body, Nature, and Spirit in Chicana Feminism. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

Hurston, Zora Neal. *Mules and Men.* New York: Quality Paperback Books, 1932.

Jadronski, Jan. *Arts Based Research: A Critique and a Proposal*. Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers. 2013.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Seeds of Time.* Irvine: The University of California Press, 1994.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Kautzer, Chad. Insurgent Subjects. https://www.academia.edu/28723026/Chad_Kautzer_Insurgent_Subjects_Hegel_Césaire_and_the_Origins_of_Decolonial_Phenomenology_corrected_proofs_.pdf

Keating, Ana Louise. *Transformation Now: Toward a Post-Oppositional Identity Politics.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014.

Kirby, Vicki. *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Kirksey, Eben. *The Multispecies Salon.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Kleinman, Arthur. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition.* New York: Basic Books, 1986.

Kleinman, Arthur. *A Passion for Society: How We Think About Human Suffering*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016.

Kohn, Eduardo. *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Komjathy, Louis. *Introducing Contemplative Practices.* Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Press, 2018.

Latour, Bruno. "Why Has Critique Lost Its Steam?" *Critical Inquiry 30,* Winter, 2004.

LeFebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991.

Lepselter, Susan. *The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFO's in the American Uncanny*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016.

Lofton, Kathryn. *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Manning, Erin. *Ephemeral Territories: Representing Nation, Home, and Identity in Canada*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Manning, Erin. *The Politics of Touch*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Manning, Erin and Massumi, Brian. *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Marmon-Silko, Leslie. *Ceremony.* New York: Viking Penguin Press, 1977.

Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Massumi, Brian. *What Animals Teach Us About Politics.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

McLaren, Margret. *Decolonizing Feminism: Transnational Feminism and Globalization*. London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017.

Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution.* New York: Harper and Row, 1983.

McKittrick, Kathryn. *Sylvia Winter: On Being Human as Praxis.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Melamed, Jody. *Represent and Destroy.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2011.

Mies, Maria and Shiva, Vendana. *Ecofeminism.* New York: Zed Books, 1993.

Mignolo, Walter. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Mignolo, Walter and Walsh, Catherine. *On Decolonialty: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Million, Dian. *Therapeutic Nations.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* boundary 2, Vol. 12, No. 3, *On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism*. (Spring - Autumn, 1984), pp. 333-358.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2004.

Moraru, Christian. *Reading for the Planet*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

Moraga, Cherrie and Anzaldua, Gloria. *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* Oakland: Kitchen Table Press, 1981.

Moreton-Robertson, *The White Possessive.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Morgensen, Scott Lauria. *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013

Nelson, Maggie. The Argonauts

Nelson, Maggie. Bluettes.

Perez, Laura. *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spritual and Aesthetic Alarities.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Povinelli, Elizabeth**.** *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. *Economies of Abandonment*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. *Geontologies.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Minneapolis: Greywolf Press, 2014.

Rankine, Claudia, Kap, Max King, and Loffreda, Beth. *The racial imaginary: Writers on race in the life of the mind.* Albany, New York: Fence Books. 2015.

Rifkin, Mark. *Settler Common Sense*

Rifkin, Mark. *Settler Time*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

Riley, Denise. *Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Riley, Denise. *Impersonal Passion: Language as Affect.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Rosaldo, Renato. *The Day of Shelly's Death.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Scary, Elaine. *The Body in Pain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Sedgwick, Eve. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Salleh, Ariel. *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx, and the Postmodern.* New York: St. Martin's Press. 1997.

Said, Edward. *Opponents, Audiences, Consituencies and Community,* in *The Politics of Interpretation*, ed. WJT Mitchell. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983.

Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Shaviro, Steven. *The Nature of Things: On Speculative Realism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Shiva, Vendana. *Staying Alive.* Brooklyn, New York and Boston, Massachussetts: South End Press, 2010.

Schmidt-Camacho, Alicia. *Migrant Imaginaries*. New York: NYU Press, 2008.

Siegworth, Greg, and Gregg, Melissa. *The Affect Theory Reader.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony.* New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Simpson, Audra. *On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity,"Voice," and Colonial Citizenship*. Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue (Dec. 2007). Print.

Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk Interruptus.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Simpson, Leanne. *Islands of Decolonial Love.* Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2015.

Simpson, Leanne. *As We Have Always Done*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies.* New York: Zed Books, 1999.

Solnit, Rebecca. *A Book of Migrations*. London, New York: Verso Books, 1997.

Soto, Sandra. *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Spivak, Gayatri. *Can the Subaltern Speak? Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.* Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988.

Stengers, Isabelle. *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*. Lunenberg: Open Humanities Press, 2015.

Stewart, Kathleen. *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Stewart, Kathleen. *Ordinary Affects.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Stoller, Paul. *The Power of the Between.*

Sze, Julie. (editor). *Sustainability: Approaches to Environmental Justice and Social Power.* New York: New York University Press, 2018.

Taussig, Michael. *Colonialism, Shamanism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Taussig, Michael. *The Nervous System.* New York: Routledge, 1992.

Taussig, Michael. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Taussig, Michael. *What Color is the Sacred?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Taussig, Michael. *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Trujillo, Michael. *The Land of Disenchantment*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2015.

Tuck, Eve, and Yang, Wayne. *Decolonization is not a Metaphor.* Decolonization: Indigeneity,Education & Society. Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-40.

Vanhouten, Christina. *bell Hooks, Critical Regionalism, and the Politics of Ecological Returns.* Politics and Culture, Spring 2014.

Vimalassery, Manu, Juliana Hu Pegues, Alyosha Goldstein. *Colonial Unknowing and Relations of Study.* Theory & Event, Volume 20, Number 4, October 2017, pp. 1042-1054.

Viramontes. *Under the Feet of Jesus.* Plume Books: 1996.

Weheliye, Alexander. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theory.* Durham: Duke University Press. 2014.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Wilson, Chris. *The Myth of Santa Fe*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Wolfe, Patrick. *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies.* Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center, 2016.