

BORDER PLACES, FRONTIER SPACES
DECONSTRUCTING IDEOLOGIES OF THE SOUTHWEST

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DEDICATION

For Mom and Dad

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by

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In this paper, I bring together Border Theory and frontier ideologies in the Southwest to argue that the search for individual identity via the historiographic re-telling of stories is central to uncovering the metaphorical power of border places and frontier spaces. Cross-cultural re-tellings allow me to reconstruct these tropes syncretically to transcend individual difference with the aim of cohering the experiences of Anglo, Native American, Mexican-American, and Chicana/o cultures.

A close reading of works by Chicana/os, Mexican-Americans, American Indians, and Euro-Americans in the Southwest points to parallel ideas of the need for an inclusive, third space consciousness to usher social, political, and cultural change on the borderlands. The movement of the works I critically study through the lens of border theory involves a response, as well as a challenge to Euro-centered ways of seeing and presenting the world. Works by authors as diverse as Cormac McCarthy, Larry McMurtry, Leslie Marmon Silko, Arturo Islas, Américo Paredes, and Eve Raleigh and Jovita González, provide the base from which I examine ideas about storytelling, time, personal identity, and the bond between individuals and a Southwestern geography. Importantly, these works either demand alternative conceptions of understanding time, place, and space, or reveal how the linearity of Euro-centered conceptions of time, place, and space have resulted—ironically—in the false utopian visions of a conquering people.

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INTRODUCTION

A letter to my father from the Spanish Archives division of the General Land Office in Austin, Texas, dated May 5, 1977, reads: “Our records show that Manuel Barrera is the original grantee of the tract “La Tinaja de Lara” which comprised 25,684 acres located in Jim Wells County. On September 28, 1836, the grantee was put in possession of the tract, he having occupied it in 1833. It was patented to the original grantee on May 8, 1899.”¹

I remember early conversations about my family’s history and my great-great-great grandfather, Manuel Barrera. Often these conversations focused on the fact that my father, as heir to the descendants of original owners of the Spanish and Mexican Land Grants, now called the Texas Land Grants, petitioned, in association with the Asociación de Reclamantes, that he was eligible to claim certain monies Mexico accepted responsibility of owing due to an exchange of debts with a treaty signed by the US and Mexico on November 18, 1941. What did it mean that my great-great-great-grandfather was presumably the original grantee of the tract “La Tinaja de Lara,” which comprised all that land in Jim Wells County? Why was my family now in Laredo, and why were we not rich landowners? Could anybody really *own* the land, and what of the people or structures that occupied the area now? For that matter...what did it mean that I had Spanish, and likely Mexican and Indian blood and lived on what was once Mexican soil but was now the United States?

By the time I was seventeen, I was driving “al otro lado” into Nuevo Laredo without a thought that I was entering another country; it was all the same to me. The border was intrinsic to my worldview, and it was entwined in an expansive Texas landscape where people, goods, and ideas moved fluidly. The International Bridge that connected Laredo to Nuevo Laredo was just another road.

I was raised on the open spaces of South Texas. As kids growing up in the newly-developing suburbs of north Laredo, we spent our summers exploring the open terrain just two blocks from home. The land stretched forever it seemed, and we built forts and waded to our knees in natural ponds where we fished for craw-daddies. But that landscape is gone, taken over by malls, strip centers, and new suburbs. Today, I find my greatest solace, my most perfect moments of peace, when I ride my mountain bike over the rough terrain and through the *senderos* of my uncle's 5,000 acre-ranch off highway 359 in Laredo. On the way to the ranch, I pass a small *colonia* complete with its own ballroom. I feel rooted, grounded, on the ranch. What grounds me is the sameness of the dusty gravel under my feet, the constancy of the syrupy, bitter smell of mesquite. From the high ridges of this place, I see the mountains of Mexico; but I also see a new landfill. To the east and west the expanse of land is vast and what textbooks might term frontier-like, but this place has been called "the border" for at least 160 years. Where do the two intersect, if at all, and where does one end and the other begin?

Growing up on the Texas border necessitated that I grow up juggling often very conflicting ideologies and ways of being in the world. In Laredo, which straddles its Mexican "sister city" Nuevo Laredo to the south and an expansive frontier to the north, east, and west, this was not difficult to do. Almost everyone I came in contact with seemed to exist comfortably on both sides of more than one culture and language. Like U.S.-Mexico border writing, which José David Saldívar calls "bilingual and dialogic" (*Border Matters* 14), the daily lives of most Laredoans encompass, and indeed, flit between Mexico and the United States. But what has always held me, resonated with me, is the landscape, specifically how the metaphorical language used to describe the landscape has shaped both the region and the people.

In this dissertation, my goal is to uncover the historical connections between the border and the frontier in the Southwest so as to explore the continuing coexisting and contested relationships between frontier and border ideologies that remain—however transformed—today. With this in mind, I use border theory to critique the idea of the frontier as it applies to the historical conception of the Southwest; in this way, I interrogate borderland identities. Border theory, which emphasizes both physical and psychological borders and terrains, works to deconstruct a Southwest frontier mythology and illuminate the ways in which complex negotiations between individuals, cultures, and newly-emerging nationalities have factored into imagined spaces and places that inform our ideas about the Southwest border in the 21st century.

In order to fully understand how ideologies—lives—are mapped along the borderlands, we must re-situate the frontier within border narratives that are bound not by linear constructions of space, but by a “topospatial” (*Border Matters* 75)—to use José David Saldívar’s term—analysis that, in turn posits a significant counter discourse of “return.” This idea of “return,” I contend, is a missing element in the scholarship that informs the frontier paradigm; I believe this is a key failure of the frontier vision. In contrast, “return” is central to counter-narratives of nation-making and identity in many Chicana/o, Mexican-American, *tejano*, and American Indian conceptions of U.S.-Mexico borderland places. The idea of return is rooted not in the concept of physical boundary lines arbitrarily visualized and plotted in two-dimensional maps. On the contrary, an understanding of space and place as cyclical and non-linear roots geography and identity in such a way as to explode the mythologies and histories of the peoples of the Southwest. Throughout this dissertation, I propose that a cyclical deconstruction of border narratives rooted in pre-Columbian, Mayan notions of the interconnectedness of time and space, coupled with Hayden White’s musings about “historical time” (119) and narrative as an essential

component of the historical experience challenges the hegemony of the frontier in the American imaginary. The literary, filmic, and performative works that comprise this dissertation engage and critique the centrality of landscape—space and place—as imperative in uncovering the complex negotiations that take place within and between competing cultures, societies, and subjectivities.

Because borders and frontiers represent, and therefore, produce and reproduce entirely different social worlds of meaning, an understanding of the push and pull that is evident in frontier migrations and border crossings in the American Southwest can help us reconfigure traditional conceptions of space and place in the region with the purpose of re-situating the histories and myths of the American West and Southwest. Concentrating on a specific Southwestern landscape lends a cultural authority to people of particular racial or ethnic orientations. Because, in the words of Rosaura Sánchez, literature is both a “cultural and semiotic process” (114) works of fiction situated in the Southwest, and works by writers indigenous to the area, can open up previously closed windows onto other ways of imagining, and subsequently emplotting, to use Hegel’s term, frontier history. In the Southwest, this is crucial in order to uncover the narratives of Mexicans, American Indians, and later Chicana/o voices that were once relegated to the margins of the landscape itself—the figurative and literal border of the United States and Mexico.²

An analysis of the geographical region as it extends into ideology-making on the borderlands is crucial to understanding how individuals, and consequently cultures accommodated, subverted, or otherwise synthesized new structures and ways of being and living in the world. Moreover, within the productions and reproductions of borders and frontiers, there are crossings and migrations, and the motivations that guide these movements indeed seem to

vary between and among peoples and nations. These movements, grounded in history and historical patterns, can be seen as functions of individual and collective histories as well as ethnic and cultural memories. Additionally, these crossings, migrations, and movements speak to and produce future actions and activities.

The story of the U.S.-Mexico border has its origins in a frontier of exclusion, a frontier that existed solely in the interest of early Euro-American settlers.³ This is the frontier that historian Frederick Jackson Turner, who envisioned an imaginary line that ran from north to south across the United States, wrote about in 1893. For Turner, and the many who followed in his footsteps, the line was predicated upon an east-west movement that represented the boundary of a decidedly westward movement and the subsequent advance of “civilization.” Inherent in the Southwest is an East/West paradigm of early settler movement as well as a North/South paradigm of U.S.-Mexico race relations and racial politics. Border crossings in the 21st century are yet marred, or colored by historically constructed imaginings of place, space, and geography. With this in mind, José David Saldívar, in *Border Matters* attempts to situate the “histories and myths of the American West and Southwest in a new perspective” (ix), and in so doing recounts various stories that have challenged, and indeed, often deterritorialized cultural forms of what he calls a “*Transfrontera* contact zone”—that two-thousand mile long border that ostensibly separates the U.S and Mexico (13). Because, writes Saldívar, “U.S.-Mexico border writing is a continuous encounter between two or more reference codes and tropes” (14), it is both productive and necessary that we understand the historically constructed spaces that complicate previously-held, largely Eurocentric linear views of migration and immigration. In Saldívar’s view, only when we reorient discourses of citizenship, identity politics, and nation-building, can we begin to effectively intervene and work to “undo the militarized frontier ‘field-Imaginary,’”

an idea gleaned from the writings of Donald Pease. As a result, we can reconfigure this field-Imaginary within an emerging U.S.-Mexico *frontera* imaginary (xii) with the purpose of re-mapping American Studies so as to make space for alternative narratives of “ethno-racialized cultures of displacement” (7). The borderlands and the American frontier field-Imaginary that are enmeshed in the historical experience of this region, then, are also entwined in the political and social underpinnings of space and place.

José David Saldívar maps a discourse of the U.S.-Mexico border “as a paradigm of crossing, resistance, and circulation” to critique “the great discontinuity between the American frontier and *la frontera*” (xiii-xiv). Patricia Nelson Limerick writes that the “opening of the Mexican borderlands to American colonists and merchants made the region into what it remains today: a true frontier, in the European sense in which two nations confront each other and compete for control of the local resources and the routes to opportunity” (228). Mary Pat Brady’s analysis of Chicana literature examines the border as a “complex system with multiple and diverse nodes of production and reproduction” functioning within a “swirl of histories, temporalities, and narratives”(48, 49). The U.S. Mexico border, she writes does not engage a “linear narrative of national development” (50); it is not a site or a place. Drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre and Neil Brenner, Brady emphasizes the disjuncture between space and time in border crossings in terms of crossing from one temporality to another (50). Although Brady’s is a fruitful way to view any border crossing, it is especially apt in understanding crossings along the U.S.-Mexico border where each nation functions within its own geopolitical and socio-imaginary “aesthetic project” (52). Historical and contemporary accounts and narratives support this. But the question remains: How have conflicting cultures resisted, negotiated, and otherwise subverted ideologies and ways of living in the borderlands? Since the late 19th- century, the

border has felt the effects of a U.S. military presence, but in the 21st-century, the Southwest border has become increasingly militarized. With the passage of NAFTA, border crossings of both people and goods have risen dramatically. How do these shifts in the geopolitical structure affect the landscape? How might we begin to deconstruct the notion of a specific space such as Mexican, or *tejano* South Texas, as cultural geographer Daniel Arreola calls the South Texas borderlands region—a historically contested land of mostly rough desert terrain and limited vegetation—as integral to both the idea of the frontier as well as the border? Expanding outward geographically, what can we make of the idea of a Southwest that has been, since the creation of a “border” with a fairly fixed geographical line since 1848, a site of complex interaction imbued with both a sense of place as well as space?

In *The Frontier Experience and the American Dream*, David Mogen, Mark Busby, and Paul Bryant suggest that “we need to look at the frontier from the other side of the border—from the point of view of those who were either excluded from or ousted by the dream of possibility and promise,” which the authors imagine as the “dominant expression of frontier mythology” (6). Similarly, Eric Gary Anderson defines the Southwest from multiple, shifting points of view. In order to cohere the Southwest as a geographic, demographic, ideological place, he makes use of the term “alien” to uncover social, cultural, racial, colonial, nuclear, and other forces that have “been set in motion toward, across, through, around, and away from each other for many centuries” (4). The “aliens” Anderson identifies are produced and reflected in the migratory networks and relations between people and places. With this in mind, it seems reasonable to look at the frontier from the perspective of border theory, in particular as envisioned by Emma Pérez, Chela Sandoval, Gloria Anzaldúa and others who imagine and ultimately theorize the possibilities inherent in, and within, borderland identities. Border theory not only opens up new

possibilities inherent in the frontier, but also allows us to look at “inner” borderlands and psychic terrains.

This dissertation begins with an analysis of the American Southwest as a geographical region that extends into ideology-making on the borderlands as described by historians who interrogate space and place as a social process and product. The ideas of scholars such as Herbert Eugene Bolton, Jack D. Forbes, and Patricia Nelson Limerick push the boundaries of Frederick Jackson Turner’s Southwestern landscape to unlock the Southwestern frontier in terms of imagined mythologies that were historically contingent upon a bordered space. In the borderlands, where competing ideologies and peoples clashed violently or unremarkably, Eurocentric histories such as Turner’s original “Frontier Thesis” and Albert K. Weinberg’s *Manifest Destiny* (1935) oblige us to consider and ultimately accommodate new structures and more inclusive systems of understanding. For although the overarching idea and support of a Manifest Destiny historically reads as the dominant ideological construct in the Southwest, the creation of a bordered frontier/frontiered border within this geographical space must accompany any understanding of the landscape and its influence on transforming individual realities and narratives. A main goal of this dissertation is to build upon the existing scholarship in such a way that I construct my own framework, which aims to show how the search for individual identity via the historiographic re-telling of stories is key to discovering the metaphorical power of frontier spaces and border places. A close reading of cross-cultural, narrative re-tellings allows me to reconstruct the border and frontier as tropes that work to cohere the experiences of Anglo, American Indian, Mexican-American, and Chicano/a cultures.

The “frontier view of the land was ‘deplete and leave’ and thus included no attachment to the land” (Cook 199). This guiding principle of the frontier is deeply at odds with border

theorists and U.S. third space feminist views, namely Chicana, but American Indian as well, that take a postmodern approach to examining the gaps and specific moments of history from various points of view in efforts that interrupt linear, Eurocentric models of thinking and, consequently, writing history. Emma Pérez's "decolonial imaginary" bursts open history in transformative ways so as to conduct an understanding of the past that "opens up traditional categories such as the 'West' or the 'frontier'" (5). Similarly, Gloria Anzaldúa relishes and embraces the competing narratives of history that are enmeshed and entwined in her native *tejana* landscape: "What I want is an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian," she writes. "I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails" (44). American Indian authors such as Leslie Marmon Silko share the view that history is inextricably linked with present subjectivities: "Whoever we are, wherever we may find ourselves at this moment cannot be isolated from what we have been and where we have been prior to this moment" (qtd. in Coltelli 126). Likewise, Paula Gunn Allen communicates a feminist analysis of the effects of colonization that underscores a spirit-centered internal, rather than material, or economic external system of social and personal living. In her gynocratic view, acts of rape and colonization "or other acts of political or power-based violence result from a disorder of the relationship between person and cosmos" (206). These theorists and scholars press us to identify, extrapolate, and problematize historical ideas of a border/frontier mythology that speaks to the Southwest as a distinctive region in the imaginations and ideologies of the inhabitants who shaped ideologies as well as the geographical landscape itself. Works by such authors and theorists, as well as others who draw on the work of Henri Lefebvre and Hayden White, allow me to extend "illuminating metaphors for organizing reality, whatever their origins in particular disciplines or world-views" (White, "The Burden" 125) into the realm of

literary and historical space. White's proposal, although often present in the existing scholarship that critiques the juncture between borders and frontiers in the Southwest, solidifies the basis for a major point of my project: that border theory is a necessary means to deconstructing a frontier mythology still extant in the American Southwest.

This dissertation consists of five chapters and an epilogue, in addition to the present introduction. Chapter One, *Border Ideologies and Frontier Mythologies: A Historical Perspective* is historical and theoretical in scope. In this chapter, I begin with the idea that inherent in the Southwest is an East/West paradigm of early settler movement as well as a North/South paradigm of U.S.-Mexico race relations and racial politics that was often silenced in early historical accounts. The bulk of this chapter interrogates the language Frederick Jackson Turner first used in his influential 1893 address, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." A main goal of this chapter is to show how both border and frontier writings have historically tended to discount the dialogic nature of what I call the "bordered frontier" in the American Southwest. This chapter shows that only when we move fluidly between these systems as each has been rendered historiographically can we uncover the contradictions of a complex mythology. To reach this point, I present a survey of works, both historical and contemporary, that focus on the idea that the border and frontier are powerful tropes that configure identity on the borderlands. Moving from Turner's address to contemporary, highly provocative works such as Patricia Nelson Limerick's *Legacy of Conquest*, Eric Gary Anderson's *American Indian Literature and the Southwest*, Mogen, Busby, and Bryant's *The Frontier Experience and the American Dream*, and Kerwin Lee Klein's *Frontiers of Historical Imagination*, I situate the frontier as a complex mythology rooted in history, symbols, and cultural values. Central to this mythology, however, is a Southwest that "stands restlessly and paradoxically as a place where

alien, migratory cultures have been encountering each other and competing against each other for a very long time” (Anderson 3). According to Anderson, the moves these “alien, migratory” peoples make are metaphorical, metaphysical and physical. As such, his Southwestern boundary remains fluid and portable—this idea, which I delve into in this first chapter, is key to understanding the Southwest, and consequently the border and frontier, from multiple, shifting points of view.

The first part of Chapter One, which is largely historical, is titled *First Movement: The West as Space*. In this section, I move from historical accounts of the West and Southwest—accounts formulated by historians such as Turner, Limerick, John Francis Bannon, Herbert Eugene Bolton, and David J. Weber—to the idea that history is an encompassing indicator of the mythic process inherent in much of the literature of the Southwest. From this point, I also consider the nature of space, place, and time relative to the inhabitants of the Southwestern landscape.

The second part of Chapter One, *Second Movement: Border Theory as Place in Practice* extends into ideology-making on the borderlands as proposed by U.S. third space feminist theorists, Gloria Anzaldúa, Emma Pérez and Chela Sandoval. In this section, I critically examine the frontier from the perspective of border theorists who imagine, and, indeed, envision, the possibilities intrinsic to, and within, borderland identities. Importantly, border theory allows us to break open history, and, as such, the possibilities inherent in the frontier. Chapter One then, brings together frontier writings and border theory to suggest a means by which we can interrogate each system not as separate imaginings and ideologies but in terms of their intrinsic dialogic nature.

Chapter Two, *Occupied Spaces and Buried Places: An Exploration of Space in the Southwest* evaluates major works by Cormac McCarthy and Larry McMurtry, two foremost writers of the American Southwest, with the goal of critiquing the constraints and anxieties inherent in the idea of the Southwest as space. By focusing on space as a foundational metaphor for organizing reality and directing ideology, I show some of the ways that space in the Southwest is situated within a false, and often destructive cultural mythology. Additionally, by interrogating space within a methodology that prioritizes border theory, I show how we can more clearly identify instances where the vast spaces of the Southwest melt away and transmute into place, which is the subject of Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: *The Permanence of Place in the Southwest* is thematically linked to Chapter Two in that it continues along the same trajectory to expand my reading of geographical spaces to the ways in which place, specifically, one's "homeland," binds and coheres collective and individual consciousness. *Caballero* by Jovita González and Eve Raleigh provides an introduction to developing modes of consciousness in the crucial period following 1848, as well as strategies of resistance and struggle in borderlands places. A close reading of Américo Paredes's *George Washington Gómez*, Arturo Islas's *The Rain God*, and Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing* further allows me to focus on the fixity of place in terms of a politics of spirituality that either negates or underscores "return." This chapter, then, moves from the figurative and physical spaces discussed in Chapter Two to the ways in which such spaces yield to place in the Southwest. As such, chapters Two and Three work in tandem to coalesce my view that identities are inseparable from particular landscapes when we prioritize the reality that the earth, the ground under one's feet, represents rootedness and orientation—place—as opposed to uprootedness and disorientation—space.

Chapter Four, Recovering History Through Border Theory: Consciousness as Political Action focuses on the power of stories as historiographic devices in the search for individual and collective identity. In this chapter, I present two works that lend themselves to an analysis of this process. John Sayles's film, *Lone Star* and Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *The Almanac of the Dead* underscore how re-writing history from the "bottom-up" works to disrupt existing national, and in the case of Silko's novel, world orders, to dramatically re-vision history. The counter-narratives in these two works engage complex histories, identities, and ideologies that comprise the multifaceted, multiple, shifting points of view in the Southwest. These works not only challenge Euro-centered ways of seeing and presenting the world, but they reexamine the nature of storytelling, time, and personal identity as imposed by an attendant Euro-American culture.

Chapter Five, Princess Pocahontas on the Rio continues along the same trajectory as Chapter Four in two ways. First, this chapter focuses on the idea of place as a necessary element of the path, whether personal or collective, towards emergent forms of oppositional or differential consciousness, an issue I discuss at length in Chapter Four. This chapter, however, contracts the vast Southwestern landscape discussed in earlier chapters to focus on the inhabitants of my hometown of Laredo, on the Texas-Mexico border in South Texas. The people of Laredo, as likely the inhabitants of any town or city, play a large part in concocting and perpetuating a particular collective memory. A borderlands approach allows me to develop the relationship of identity to landscape in Laredo, with a quite different result. In Laredo, the Other exists within a fragile space where insider and outsider have survived symbiotically, and in the interests of an elite few. A cross-cultural reading of this particular geographic space allows me to show how border and frontier ideologies in one specific locality on the borderlands of South Texas have created and perpetuated a system of accommodation based in a complex system of

negation of Other. The Other in this paradigm is a historical Indian presence whose erasure was necessitated in order to first redeem and then continually regenerate American colonialist imperatives along the borderlands. What is remarkable in this particular border place, however, is the fact that alliances were not historically based on ethnicity, but on class.

My close examination of the Laredo George Washington's Birthday Celebration, held each year since 1898, guides an understanding of the need for an elite few to recurrently reaffirm "white" dominance at the expense of an indigenous Indian population. Chapter Five, then, focuses on race, class, and gender in a specific locality and during a specific historical time period. This is at least one element that makes this chapter unique.

In the Epilogue I reiterate my own subject position with regards to the Southwestern landscape as well as bring the reader up to date on the current situation along the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly the increased militarization of the border and the changes that NAFTA has effected in Laredo. Importantly, I also demonstrate how my work is situated both within and outside of current theoretical approaches surrounding border theory and frontier ideologies. Because my work focuses on the historical as well as literary, filmic, and performative spaces encompassing bordered frontiers/frontiered borders, my project contributes significantly, as well as speaks to, new trends and scholarship in the areas of border and frontier studies. The Epilogue articulates my desire to see more scholars interrogate the frontier through the use of border theory; for the Southwest frontier, as an imagined mythology, has, at least since 1848, been contingent upon a bordered space. It still is.

CHAPTER ONE
BORDER IDEOLOGIES AND FRONTIER MYTHOLOGIES:
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Borders. Frontiers. Liminal Spaces. How do these concepts function in our imaginary, and how do the ideas speak to each other? Is there a dialogic connection, in Bakhtin's sense of the word, or are borders and frontiers not in dialogue with each other, not on speaking terms, as it were? Indeed, the latter appears to be the case in the American Southwest, where—beginning in the 1890s with Frederick Jackson Turner and those continuing in his footsteps—scholars and historians have tended to largely ignore the impact of the border on the Anglo-American frontier and vice versa.⁴ Equally provocative is the question of liminality. If the vast frontier space, at least in the Southwest, “ends” at the border of Mexico, then do the deterritorializations of *la frontera* that Chicana/o and American Indian scholars and writers theorize in narratives of struggle and resistance represent liminal sites? Does liminality result from the crossing of one geopolitical zone to another; is it a function of crossing? And if it does and is, how then, might a state of liminality operate to transfigure, cohere, or perhaps even rupture identity?⁵ Equally valuable to my discussion are ideas of how race, class, gender, and ethnicity factor into the complex structures and systems entwined in border and frontier paradigms.

This chapter will look at borders and frontiers in the American Southwest to argue that although an intrinsic dialogic connection exists between the two, there exists, additionally, a complex dialectic rooted in a narrative of American consciousness that stems from the idealization of democracy predicated in a westward movement. As such, in order to uncover more fully the connection between the border and the frontier in the Southwest, and work to

answer some of the questions that I began this chapter with, we must situate the border within the frontier and vice versa. If we look closely at the fluidity of each system as it has been rendered historiographically, we uncover the contradictions and challenges of a complex mythology. Moreover, understanding the connections and contradictions between and within borders and frontiers at the regional and local levels possibly speaks to wider national, and perhaps global concerns.

Armando C. Alonzo, in *Tejano Legacy*, argues that South Texas was historically viewed as a space, largely unoccupied and vacant in the “Anglo mythic history” (6-13). His work, a reconstructive history of tejano land tenure in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, shows how, in this region of Texas, “as in other Southwestern regions, “later Anglo arrivals have appropriated the history of the pioneer effort for themselves” (6). His historical study, for which he provides both qualitative and quantitative data, begins in the early 18th century, with the origins of Spanish and Mexican society, and moves through the early 20th century. Of greatest significance to the present discussion is Chapter Four, “The Making of a Tejano Homeland, 1848-1900.” In this chapter he shows how tejanos, in spite of setbacks in the form of illegal barbed-wire fencing and Euro-American dispossession (some illegal, some not), nonetheless asserted control over a vast territory such that:

Despite fifty years of settlement by newcomers from Europe and the United States, south Texas remained a virtual Mexican homeland until the 1910s and 1920s, when large numbers of Midwestern and southern farmers, businessmen and professionals migrated to the region with the inception of intensive irrigated farming (111).

According to Alonzo, tejanos “identified with their place. To them, the land has always possessed meaningful cultural and economic values. It is their home, a special place (10).” This

is in sharp contrast to Euro-Americans who “saw the lands in the Lower Valley as a frontier instead of a settled place occupied by *mejicanos*” (6). As such, it is crucial that we interrogate the history, and the mythology of place—a “homeland”—as Mexicans, American Indians, and others who occupied the landscape prior to Anglo, or Euro-American intrusion held it. The writings of postmodern geographer Edward Soja allow us to break open specific geographical landscapes in order to discover relationships between people, indeed, whole cultures, with regard to the landscapes upon which they daily toil and dwell. Soja proposes a postmodern reconstruction of human geography that is centered on ideas of how we interpret the land we inhabit, how we are changed or altered because of our dealings with it, and how we interact with it. These ideas help us understand how the frontier in the Southwest, as an imagined mythology, was historically contingent upon a bordered space. The methodologies of social geography allow us to explode a main goal of Alonzo’s: the failure of writers and scholars of the Southwest “to see the inherent contradiction of a ‘no-man’s land’ existing in a place previously occupied by Spanish and Mexican settlers” (7).

In *Postmodern Geographies*, Soja describes the production of space as a social process. Space is a social product, not just a physical construct. Human patterns of being-in-the world exist simultaneously and dialectically in time and space and are necessary to understanding power struggles that extend through time and along geographical space. Daniel Arreola, in *Tejano South Texas* reminds us—much like Alonzo—that places create bonds among inhabitants who reside there, and those bonds are what give a place its distinctiveness. He encourages social scientists to engage emotionally with their study areas. In this way, he foregrounds his study of what he calls “Mexican South Texas” in an analysis of the physical details of the landscape as it is inextricably linked to the inhabitants, human or otherwise, who shape that landscape into a

place that must be viewed as a product of transformation, experience, and, ultimately, translation. He argues that we must view tejano South Texas in terms of a “socio-spatial” dialectic that is informed by human social relations that give form, function, and social signification to space (83). Although the periphery of Arreola’s study is confined to South Texas, Henri Lefebvre’s theories surrounding the social production of space, as well as the writings of Hayden White, allow us to expand Arreola’s analysis into the realm of literary and historical space. Equally compelling is the work of geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, who proposes that place signifies security and attachment, whereas space corresponds to movement and freedom. As humans, however, we require both, as they are poles by which we organize behaviors, thoughts, and experiences. Tuan writes, in human experience:

the meaning of space often merges with that of place...The ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (6).

According to Mogen, Busby and Bryant, the frontier is a complex mythology rooted in history, symbols, and cultural values. Additionally, the terms “border,” “frontier,” and the Southwest do not simply refer to geographical lines on a map, but, rather, ideas that embody space, place, and time in the historical as well as modern imagination. The works of scholars and authors examined in this dissertation help uncover complex associations between the border and the frontier. Additionally, a close reading of the actions and interactions of characters that people the literature of the Southwest can uncover new perspectives on American literary history, ethnicity, gender, and culture. Their relationships and attitudes toward the landscape, or how

they see themselves as part of that landscape allow for a critique of the frontier via various border theories as imagined, enacted spaces; the border and the frontier are tropes that configure identity on the borderlands. The literature of the Southwest shows that Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Chicana/os and *tejanas/os* have negotiated, often subverting yet also assimilating the idea, and ideals, of the frontier in efforts to claim a more inclusive identity that is inextricably tied to a native homeland.

Eric Gary Anderson's *American Indian Literature and the Southwest* makes clear "the need for a critical resituating of the Southwest" (195). Just as "southwesterling narratives" cannot be bounded by any one single thesis (3), neither can we "bound" the peoples of the Southwest by a border or even a frontier for that matter. The Southwest is a region in constant motion, writes Anderson, and it is constantly moved through. Additionally, the Southwest "functions as a highly active and complicated convergence point that proves difficult to contain inside any one disciplinary or critical sphere" (4). He writes that the Southwest "stands restlessly and paradoxically as a place where alien, migratory cultures have been encountering each other and competing against each other for a very long time" (3). Because the moves these "alien, migratory" peoples make are metaphorical, metaphysical and physical, his Southwestern boundary remains fluid and portable. Similarly, Michelle Jarman notes that "[b]order crossing can be a dynamic physical, material process as well as a psychological journey" (par. 45). Anderson cautions, however, that because historically and figuratively the Southwest is in constant motion it must be defined from multiple, shifting points of view. In this light, the Southwest is a "complicated convergence point" (4) where "Euro-American and American Indian cultures have for a long time been migrating *against* each other" (5). This Southwest in which Anderson's "alien" bodies are "produced by and reflected in migratory interactions

between peoples and places” (2) is the same Southwest that Gloria Anzaldúa reminds readers became the “homeland” of 100,000 Mexican citizens annexed by conquest upon the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. Home—Mexico—was ripped, swindled away from the Native Mexican-Texan; from one day to the next the U.S. Mexican border, the “*herida abierta*, where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” was conceived (25). Anzaldúa redefines the ground that she traverses in an effort to usher a change in consciousness in her readers. The geopolitical border, that line that separates the U.S from Mexico, metaphorically announces a physical border that tears through her body, her flesh. For Anzaldúa, as for those who reside there, the Southwestern borderline is not merely a physical presence. A great river that snakes through a vast, desert landscape marks the borderline. The river, like a living being, is a repository of struggles and memories. History, at least in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century however, has tended to undervalue the nature of the Rio Grande, once known as the Rio Bravo. But waters, like the migrations of peoples, recede only to surge and roll. If the stories of the people who associate the river with a homeland become silenced, they will, in time, spill forth.

First Movement: The Southwest as Space

At the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner first presented his now famous address, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in which he confirmed the closing of the first period of American history: the end of the frontier. In his speech, he discussed various frontiers throughout the history of the Americas, adding that the Western frontier “offered an exit into a free life and greater well-being among the bounties of nature” (*The Frontier* 43). For Turner, the so-called opening of the Western landscape was a specifically

White movement westward predicated on an “idealistic conception of the vacant lands as an opportunity for a new order of things” that could be found only in a vast, unsettled wilderness terrain (*The Frontier* 43). Turner lamented the vanished “free lands” (*The Frontier* 42) of early, hearty pioneers, largely immigrants from “Old World” European countries such as Germany and Scandinavia who imagined a “new order of society” (*The Frontier* 44). He wrote:

the fact is that here is a new product that is American. At first, the frontier was the Atlantic coast. It was the frontier of Europe in a very real sense. Moving westward, the frontier became more and more American...the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines (*The Frontier* 5).

In the Turnerian model, Euro-Americans moved west with a mind towards what he called freedom of opportunity, liberty, social advance, and “a resistance to the domination of class which infused a vitality and power into the individual atoms of this democratic mass” (*The Frontier* 43-44). For Turner, the country’s most effective social values, epitomized by a westward movement, were associated with democracy. Turner, however, spoke only for whites—specifically white, middle-class men. Even more problematic is the fact that Turner based the “closing of the frontier” on 1890 census data that reflected a Western population where most of the frontier land was comprised of individually owned property. The 1890 report, which observed that for the first time in the history of the census, “there can hardly be said to be a frontier line,” formed the basis of Turner’s thesis, in which he surmised the “closing of a great historical movement” (“Significance” 79). Turner continues: “Up to our day, American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an

area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development” (“Significance” 79).

Richard Slotkin begins his extensive history of what he calls the myth of the frontier with the legend of General George Armstrong Custer and all that the name invokes in popular memory. In writing about myth and historical memory, Slotkin argues that “a constellation of stories, fables, and images” (16) have organized historical memory in the American West. Slotkin’s *Fatal Environment* outlines an American historical narrative that takes place between 1800-1890, and so seemingly lies just outside the scope of this dissertation. However, Slotkin’s focus is largely the metaphorical language and the formal qualities and structures of myths as symbolizing functions that are key to understanding the culture of the society that produces them. Slotkin, who continues his study of the frontier myth as a symbolizing function of American culture and character in *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*, writes:

The myth of the Frontier is our oldest and most characteristic myth, expressed in a body of literature, folklore, ritual, historiography, and polemics produced over a period of three centuries. According to this myth-historiography, the conquest of the wilderness and the subjugation or displacement of the Native Americans who originally inhabited it have been the means to our achievement of a national identity, a democratic polity, an ever-expanding economy, and a phenomenally dynamic and “progressive” civilization (10). *Fatal Environment* begins with the idea that a story, a frontier myth positioned to explain American identity and ideology, is firmly entrenched within an expansive western landscape. Slotkin states that the “mythic space called the Frontier” is patterned by a historical sequence “infused with meaning in the form of a story, which converts landscape to symbol and temporal

sequence into ‘doom’—a fable of necessary and fated actions” (11). Accordingly, I comment upon what I equate as some of the “necessary and fated actions” Slotkin establishes and critiques in the various chapters of *Fatal Environment* in the next chapter of this dissertation. More direct to my purpose in situating the frontier myth as a function of Euro-American expansionist aims and storytelling in the Southwest, Slotkin’s *Fatal Environment* lays a foundation for deciphering Turner’s language, specifically Turner’s use of the frontier in the mid 1890s and onward. Slotkin writes:

The myth of the frontier was developed by and for an America that was a colonial offshoot of Europe, agrarian in economy, localistic in politics, tentative as to nationality, and relatively homogenous in ethnicity, language, and religion; yet the Myth has been most thoroughly and impressively set forth in the ninety years that followed the closing of the Wild West (15).

Historians and scholars, such as Patricia Nelson Limerick, Jack D. Forbes, Kerwin Lee Klein, and others have carried on Slotkin’s line of argument that a given narrative not just cements, but preserves, and perpetuates historical experience. In her highly influential and provocative work, *The Legacy of Conquest*, Limerick explains Turner’s frontier thesis as the “origin myth” of white America (322). The “burden” of Western American history, contends Limerick, lies with a mythology that ignores some very basic facts about Western history. Most notably, the fact that the myth, this “tale...bears little resemblance to the events of the Western past” (323). For Mogen, Sanders, and Karpinski, the myth is a “creation myth” that crafts a “Golden Age out of a vexed and complex heritage, artificially dislocating the present from the past” by viewing it with a time-fracturing nostalgia (19). As a result of the Turner paradigm, Mogen, Sanders, and Karpinski conclude that “Americans both romanticize their heritage and distance themselves

from it” (18). This fact is evident in the fiction of several of the authors presented in later chapters in this dissertation, namely Arturo Islas, Cormac McCarthy, and Larry McMurtry. The myth transforms the landscape as well as Europeans, now Americans:

Europe was crowded; North America was not. Land in Europe was claimed, owned and utilized; land in North America was available for the taking...Europeans moved from crowded space to open space, where free land restored opportunity and offered a route to independence. Generation by generation, hardy pioneers, bringing civilization to displace savagery, took on a zone of wilderness, struggled until nature was mastered, and then moved on to the next zone...the result was a new nation and a new national character: the European transmuted into the American. Thrown on their own resources, pioneers recreated the social contract from scratch...At the completion of the conquest, that chapter of history was closed. The frontier ended, but the hardiness and independence of the frontier survived in American character
(Limerick 322- 323, italics by Limerick).

In regards to the “depleted” landscape, Limerick adds, however, that “in the Far West of 1890 one-half of the land remained federal property” (23). Limerick’s West is vast and far-reaching and includes the present-day states of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Montana, Wyoming, and North and South Dakota. The West—this place that has historically undergone conquest and in, in fact, yet grapples with the consequences of conquest—nonetheless begs a certain fluidity.⁶ Furthermore, although the Turner thesis is the basis upon which much of early Western history rests, Turner’s model, as the origin myth of white Americans, obviously erases a

significant portion of the players—most notably Indians and Mexicans who occupied the vast expanses of the Western frontier prior to Euro-American movement westward.

Limerick highlights her ideas about a failed Western experience rife with a moral failure to achieve racial justice and democratic pluralism in a specific region. In Limerick's careful examination, the West's "moral burden" is comparable to that of the South, as is evidenced by the lingering injustice that an invading and conquering people did and still impose on a native population. This moral failure is a result of competition for land and natural resources as well as a struggle for cultural dominance (27). In the following chapter, I delve deeper into this idea to show how the moral burden of the West is further entwined in history and memory. Limerick, however, writes from a decidedly ecological and multicultural point of view to show how historians have failed to understand the environmental limits of the land itself. A re-writing of history with an emphasis on place allows her to take a more presentist approach and conclude that the dream of conquest has failed in the eyes of the conquerors (26-32). Deemphasizing Turner's "migratory, abstract" (26) frontier as process, as well as history based on a "frontier of exclusion" (226), Limerick contrasts this Anglo-American vision with a Spanish vision, theorizing that, along the borderlands, "the Spanish might well have had a 'frontier of inclusion' incorporating Indians into the colonial economy and society" (226). This evokes at least two of David J. Weber's earlier assertions. First, that Turner's use of the term "frontier" was often imprecise. Historians Limerick and Kerwin Lee Klein concur, with Klein commenting at length about "Turner's professed disinterest in precise definition" (15). Sometimes, states Weber, Turner used the frontier "to represent a place, sometimes a process, and sometimes a condition" (34). Weber further recognizes that frontier zones impact cultures, institutions, and peoples quite differently, acknowledging that we must take into account motives on "both sides of a frontier.

Spanish Americans, comparative historians tell us, attempted to assimilate indigenous Americans rather than push them back or annihilate them as the English generally did” (41). Besides, in the American Southwest, even after 1848, writes Limerick, “[t]he borderlands were an ecological whole; northeastern Mexican desert blended into southwestern American desert with no prefigurings of nationalism. The one line that nature did provide—the Rio Grande—was a river that ran through but did not really divide continuous terrain” (222). Whereas the Spanish northern borderlands of New Mexico served as a line of defense holding off Indian raiders as well as a strategic response to English and French imperial rivalry, Spanish colonization of Texas was a counter “chessboard” move against a French presence in the Mississippi valley. Russian and English interest in California similarly provoked a Spanish countermove “extending the unwieldy unit of the borderlands” ever southward (227).⁷ For my purposes here, Limerick’s approach is especially apt because it permits an opening to juxtapose contemporary elements and ideologies of the frontier alongside those of the past.

As does Limerick, the authors in *Frontier Experience* write at length about a frontier mythology. This mythology is a web patterned on a specific version of the “American Dream.” It is entwined in a cluster of images that surrounds a transitional setting, a “mythic” hero, and narrative structure that dramatizes a central conflict between Old and New Worlds and ideas (Mogen 22-28).⁸ According to Mogen, Busby, and Bryant, this mythology in American frontier writing is dialectic, or dialogic in Bakhtin’s sense of the word, and it is transformative in nature. In their introduction to *Frontier Experience*, the authors write: “understanding the dialectical and dialogical nature of this literary tradition will help open up the literary canon, by revealing how different regions, ethnic groups, classes, and genders have adapted frontier archetypes and enriched the American Dream, giving it new patterns and meanings” (5). Significantly, this

cluster of images in *Frontier Gothic* is further expressed as an expansion of consciousness that cannot be seen as mere flight from one place to another, but a “journey into the wilderness to confront forces that bring both destruction and a promise of a new life of the spirit” (Mogen, Sanders, and Karpinski 21). In Southwestern literature particularly, this myth is often expressed as a mythology of landscape. The landscape is a “complex cultural geography...which dramatize[s] the central values of the region’s dominant cultures: Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo” (Mogen, Sanders, and Karpinski *Frontier Gothic* 23). The authors in both *Frontier Gothic* and *Frontier Experience* emphasize the Southwestern landscape as a dialectical space that encompasses a fundamental conflict that has historically shaped much of the American literary experience: “the battle between civilization and nature, between the mental landscape of European consciousness and the physical and psychical landscape of the New World” (Mogen, Sanders, and Karpinski 15). Although history is an encompassing indicator of the mythic process inherent in much of the literature of the Southwest, we must also consider the nature of space, place, and time relative to the inhabitants of the Southwestern landscape, a discussion that I will highlight in later chapters.

Kerwin Lee Klein’s *Frontiers of Historical Imagination* frames the narrative traditions by which historians, anthropologists, literary critics, and philosophers have explored and understood the European occupation of Native America in the American West. His framework encompasses the changing philosophies that have shaped historical thinking, and consequently, written history. Beginning with Turner’s “frontier hypothesis” and moving fluidly through breakthroughs in ideas about culture by anthropologists in the second decade of the twentieth century, Klein closes his multilinear history with works by Chicanas/os and American Indian scholars who labor to re-imagine and re-populate American frontiers with a goal of multiethnic inclusivity. What is

provocative about Klein's study is his placing of narrative as well as "new subaltern heroes" (11) at center stage. Turner's attempt to formalize history and historical consciousness in the form of a cosmic drama built upon the ideals of 19th-century American idealism of the transformation from savagery to civilization, from wild past to democratic future, was a dominant narrative of American history until at least the 1930s. Not surprisingly, the heroes of Turner's sentimental narrative were white, middle-class Anglo males. However, by the second decade of the 20th-century, anthropologists like Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, and later, Claude Levi-Strauss brought culture to the fore in ways that threatened to dispense with history altogether.

A particularly compelling aspect of Klein's postmodern critique of the writing of the history of the American West in the years following the broad-based acceptance of the Turner thesis is his re-formulation of the hero or heroine of frontier narratives as a subaltern subject. Klein builds his view that history is the story of humanity's developing self-consciousness by foregrounding the idea that "[t]he making of new frontier tales has traditionally begun by marking out a new hero" (271-272). For Klein, the hero of a frontier tale has always been an "outsider," a "subaltern hero" (272). Even Turner's middle-class males, who Klein argues were yet subordinate to the "Great Men of Europe and the Atlantic seaboard," occupy this rank (272). So too do Walter Prescott Webb's arid westerner; William Christie MacLeod's "natives"; Américo Paredes's Gregorio Cortez; and Gloria Anzaldúa's new mestiza. To cogently argue his point, Klein highlights Hegel's ideas of world history as a narrative of humanity's developing self-consciousness and subsequent liberation of certain peoples from a "voiceless past" (7) alongside a Kantian dialectic to overturn Turner's metaphor that history is the colonization of the West. Commenting specifically on G.W. F. Hegel's *Philosophy of History* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of world History*, Klein acknowledges the need to understand history as the sum of a

trajectory that develops in space as well as time, because the “collision between people with and without history still structures public memory” (7).

In 1962, Jack D. Forbes, an American Indian scholar of mixed Powhatan, Delaware, and Saponi heritage, worked to liberate many of the silenced voices by commenting on the ambiguity on the term “frontier” as it was understood and developed by Turner and his disciples. He writes:

[t]o the Turnerians, as well as many other writers, *the* frontier consisted solely in Anglo-Americans (or, occasionally, other Europeans). That which the latter people were coming into contact with was not, to these authors, a part of the frontier; on the contrary, it was an obstacle to the frontier” (63).

The border, then, in the Turnerian model did not exist because it could not exist. A close examination of the language Turner used to describe the movement and ideologies intertwined in the frontier does not factor into the metaphorical sweep, the grandeur of all that the frontier promised: freedom, liberty, and a resistance to the “domination of class.” For Turner, in order for a border to exist, there must be no opposition to the continual westward expansion of Anglo and Euro-Americans. This fact is explained in part by Forbes when he writes: “the concepts of ‘westward movement’ (of Anglo Americans) and ‘frontier’ become virtually synonymous” to Turnerians who consider the frontier in terms of the one-way movement West of Euro-Americans (64). The vastness of the frontier was like democracy itself. Anglo and Euro-American occupation in the Southwest wrestled the land not from Indians or Mexicans, but from wild nature itself. Frontier excess in the Turner paradigm metaphorically spoke to democracy and democratic ideals—but only for Whites, only for those who moved westward in search of a New World. Those who already occupied the West or Southwest, those who called that place home, were equated with the landscape. Thus, although historical narrative for a time seemingly

failed to “emplot”—to use Hayden White’s term as put into practice in his work, *Metahistory*—the narratives of those “people without history” who call the Southwestern border home, Chapter Two of this dissertation will show how the landscape itself often retains such narratives in ways that work to subsume, or even counteract dominant frontier narratives.

By mid-20th century, scholars such as Forbes expressed a concern for the one-sided, ethnocentric view of the Turnerian concept of the frontier as virtually synonymous with the idea of “westward movement.” In Klein’s account, multiethnic inclusivity paves the way for new subaltern heroes—new voices—to emerge from the pages of Eurocentric narratives. Hegel’s notion of history as the collision between people with and “without” history fulfills the promise of a new story centered in the concept of a bordered frontier, a frontier predicated on the *necessity* of a border. Forbes’s study of all sorts of frontiers—both in Europe and in the Americas—attended the works of scholars, including Chicana/os, who would break open late 19th and early 20th century one-dimensional dialogues of the American Southwestern frontier. Importantly, Forbes’s definition of the term “frontier” applies to “all cases of frontiers, whether occurring within the United States or elsewhere” (65). With this in mind, Forbes defines a frontier as:

an *inter-group contact situation*, that is, as any instance of more than momentary contact between two ethnic, cultural, or national groups...an instance of dynamic interaction between human beings and involves such processes as acculturation, assimilation, miscegenation, race prejudice, conquest, imperialism, and colonialism.” (65)

In his definition, boundaries are not clear-cut and do not exist in the abstract; rather, they correspond to political boundaries. As such, Euro-Americans, Mexicans, and a multiplicity of Indian nations coincided within a dynamic landscape, in the American Southwest. Fittingly, then,

we must acknowledge, as does Forbes, that a “frontier complex, a multiplicity of frontiers in dynamic interaction” (69), has historically comprised the pattern of interaction in the American Southwest.

Because Turner’s language harmonized well with the faith of American Exceptionalism, his conservative myth-making that this one causal force—the frontier—could explain American development as well as historical consciousness, held sway for some time. In Chapter Two, however, I break open some of the ideologies entwined in the “grand narrative” (Cant 5) of American Exceptionalism, as does John Cant in *Cormac McCarthy and the Myth of American Exceptionalism*, to reveal how this narrative is a destructive, often false, unifying American myth. In Turner’s language, development, westward movement, and expansion equaled democracy.

In Klein’s schemata, the frontier was the “cause” and democracy was the “effect” (17). Klein explains Turner’s thesis in terms of a Hegelian dialectic rooted in oppositions and antithetical constructions: savagery/civilization; German historicism/American transcendentalism; East/West; history/nature. Turner’s story is a dialectic that “spreads out across the North American continent and may be read off the map from right to left, the synthesis of nature and history becoming more American and less European with each mile and decade traversed’ (Klein 79). Although Klein writes that Turner was not a metaphysician, Klein argues that, in dialectic, Turner “found a story line sufficiently compelling to narrate the growth of historical consciousness” (63). Although Hegel’s philosophy of world history as the working out of absolute spirit is beyond the scope of this dissertation, Hegel’s plot construction, or emplotment of world history is useful to understanding the idea of migration and movement in the American Southwest.

With regard to the historiography of the frontier, Hegel's idea of world history as he declared in *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History (1822-1830)* is provocative in at least two important regards. First, is Hegel's idea that "history had rolled from East to West in great dialectical waves of consciousness and the story of that journey was the story of liberation" (Klein 6-7). This view is in keeping with Turner's frontier imagery—a national anthem of westward expansion that consisted only of Anglo-American and Euro-American movement. Second, is the central idea of movement and migration, which in the West and Southwest, as in other parts of the world, and as Forbes so aptly argued in "Frontiers in American History," always resulted in the collision of cultures and peoples. The frontier, specifically the democracy and freedom the frontier pledged to its Anglo middle-class males, is the overarching metaphor. The collisions, the "opposed forces," Forbes's "inter-group contact situation," make for the oppositional forces that lift each other up into higher syntheses. It's hard to escape the language of Turner's model: "the advance of American settlement westward *explain* (my emphasis) American development" ("Significance" 79). If the frontier is the thesis, then is the border the antithesis? What about synthesis, the final element of the Kant's triad? Is there any way to reconcile the two—the frontier and the border—in such a way so as not to simply put the two to rights, but move past each in a way that simultaneously preserves and transcends each to form a new proposition, a third space possibly? Is this what Klein alludes to when he writes: "[t]he frontier was not just the place where civilization and wilderness made American democracy, it was the ragged edge of history itself, where historical and nonhistorical defied and defined each other" (7). By exposing the ragged edges of history, or more precisely, by de-centering historical subjectivities as they have often been emplotted, can we successfully reclaim not simply the landscape, but history itself? And if so, will we effectively break open historical narrative itself

so as to carve a space—a third space—for cultures and peoples whose histories have often been erased or silenced? With this in mind, a “dialogue between different histories” should be our aim (Klein 295). If, as Klein argues, history itself is the frontier, “the ragged edge of what can be thought, told, and lived” (294), then our challenge is not to abandon the narrative, but to embrace it in ways that emplot new voices, engage other visions, and re-member different ways of knowing the world.

Turner gave the frontier a national significance by adopting a certain terminology and point of view. This point of view, however, was entirely ethnocentric, as it viewed an inter-group contact situation from the vantage point of only one of the interested parties: the Euro-American. For Turner, the “most significant thing about the American frontier is that it lies at the hither edge of free land...the meeting point between savagery and civilization (4). Importantly, Forbes has noted that the term civilization “betrays an ethnocentric bias since it is based upon supposition by one party that those who are on the opposite side of the border are ‘uncivilized’” (73). According to Limerick, “Turner’s frontier was a process, not a place” When ‘civilization’ had conquered ‘savagery’ at any one location, the process—and the historian’s attention—moved on” (26).

Larry McMurtry provides a literary description of this pattern of process in his novel, *The Streets of Laredo*. Crow Town, so named after the countless crows that still feed on the more than fifteen thousand rotted buffalo hides that had once been left to fester in the heaping Texas sandhills skirting Crow Town, is an “evil” place that draws mostly bandits and outlaws. Years before the few rank huts and single dusty saloon of Crow Town were established, a large number of the great southern herd of buffalo had been pursued and killed by many hunters, including the Kiowa and Comanche. But the hide market collapsed and the buffalo hides were left to rot in the

sandhills about two hundred miles north of the Texas border. In time, to survive a stay in Crow Town became a “mark of pride to the young pistoleros along the border” (86). One outlaw, Tennessee Bob, became so maddened by the incessant cawing that he blew his brains out while playing a winning hand at cards. As Tennessee Bob tells it:

Like most of the temporary residents of Crow Town, he (Tennessee Bob) had gone there because he had more or less used up the West. His career had taken him from Memphis to Abilene, from Abilene to Dodge City, from Dodge City to Silver City, from Silver City to Denver, from Denver to Deadwood, from Deadwood to Cheyenne, from Cheyenne to Tombstone, and from Tombstone to Crow Town. Other renegades, whether Mexicans, Swedes, Indians, Irish, or American took the same route in different order. What they shared was a sense that there weren't too many places left where life was so cheap that the law wouldn't bother trying to preserve it (89-90).

McMurtry details the movements of renegades and outlaws to underscore the elasticity of the struggle over space in the West. His “list,” meant to metaphorically evince a mythology of the West predicated on lawless activity, nonetheless rests on the production of space as a highly social process. Along these lines, and in regards to Western literature, Jay Ellis writes that a generic trope of the Western novel is one in which “lawless men (or lawful men in a lawless space) enact the violent subjugation of space until it becomes a place so constrained that it can no longer tolerate their inclusion” (87). Importantly, Limerick—and to some extent Weber and Forbes—invite us to examine, and further break open the West as a place to be understood from within, from the point of view of those people who view the landscape as a center, a homeland, rather than an edge or periphery. Limerick's main thesis asks that we strive to understand the West as a place of historic conquest, a meeting ground where “Indian America, Latin America,

Anglo America, Afro-America, and Asia intersected” so as to better understand “the evolution of land from matter to property” (27). Regarding Turner’s Thesis, she writes: “Indians, Hispanics, French Canadians, and Asians were at best supporting actors and at worst invisible. Nearly as invisible were women, of all ethnicities” (21). According to Limerick, conquest of the West as place culminated in the drawing of lines on a map. The first stage of conquest involved the drawing of the lines; the second stage, which is still under way and contested, involves the giving of meaning and power to those lines (27). This echoes José David Saldívar’s questions:

How can a map tell us how the U.S.-Mexico borderlands were once an ecological whole, with Mexico blending into the present-day southwestern American landscape? Can maps represent how, with independence in 1821, Mexico took over the Spanish borderlands only to have to fight off the United States in its quest to fulfill its manifest destiny? Can maps show how the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 added what Paredes calls ‘the final element to Rio Grande society, a border’ (qtd. in *With His Pistol* 15), thus inaugurating a new phase of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands?” (*Border Matters* 18).

Any understanding of the frontier in the American West, and in this dissertation, the Southwest in particular, must begin with a consideration of the language Turner first used to describe the frontier, for it is his use of the term that stuck among academicians, scholars, and even lay people. By the 1950s or so, other ways of imagining the American West and specifically Southwestern frontiers appeared contemporaneously with the emergence of Chicano, and later Chicana historicisms. A precursor to this movement was the work of Herbert Eugene Bolton, a graduate student of Turner’s. Bolton’s narrative revised Turner’s and steered the knowledge that “for borderlands scholars natives could not be swept as easily into the wilderness

as they were for ‘mainstream’ historians” (Klein 262). For Bolton, just as for Mexicans, American Indians, and later Chicanas/os, the Southwest border and frontier necessarily bled into each other. This is the case both historically as well as in the present day. Early frontier writings, however, render invisible any contact situation between and among entire societies, cultures, and groups of people; consequently, 19th and early 20th century histories found in textbooks, academic writing, or monographs subsume the border into the larger context of the frontier. In the process, those people living on the fringes— Gloria Anzaldúa’s *atravesados*, Eric Gary Anderson’s “aliens”— indeed, entire cultures, or groups of American Indians and Mexicans, were not just pushed along the borders of the American frontier, but were additionally relegated to the margins of American history.

At present, both academically speaking as well as in the colloquial imagination, it seems that we hear much more about borders than we do about frontiers. In the Southwestern United States, the Border Patrol, the Border Wall, and the increased policing of the border between the United States and Mexico have taken center stage, and although the frontier exists, the border seemingly subsumes it. Although the focus has shifted, it has shifted not just for political or ecological reasons, it has shifted, rather, as a result of the dual nature of borders and frontiers.

If the frontier in the United States is historically associated with growth and expansionist aims, then border studies and studies that focus on societies and cultures that people borderland landscapes often work not just to revise earlier narratives, but to re-populate those narratives with “missing” players. The frontier is, or has become the border with inclusivity factored into it. But the American Southwestern frontier has always included borderlands peoples, whether the historiography has included such peoples or not. The relationship is not part to whole; it is whole to whole. One simply cannot exist without the other. Intrinsic to frontier stories—frontier

histories—is movement. In this regard, the history of the American southwestern frontier can be plotted from west to east. A north to south movement, however, was necessarily enacted not as a function of the frontier but as a movement in its own right, and with its own players.

Frontier stories, by their very nature, are decidedly future-oriented. As subsequent chapters will show, border stories tend not just toward the future, but coalesce within a timeless landscape predicated upon a synthesis of past, present, and future recollections and imaginings. In the Southwestern landscape, the push ever westward by Anglos and Euro-Americans was met with neither acquiescence nor concession from either the landscape or the people inhabiting that landscape. As we have seen, where there is a frontier, a border unavoidably hems that frontier space. The naming of the frontier in the American Southwest, in the words of Frederick Jackson Turner, supports the movements that help “explain” American development. Ascribing a name to a landscape or a geographical space—a name like “frontier” or “border”—coalesces the history, experiences, and values of those residing there. Just as the frontier is linked to specific narratives of American history, so, too, then, is the Southwestern border.

Second Movement: Border Theory as Place in Practice

By the 1960s, much of Western historical scholarship began to focus on the diverse and complex stories of minorities—American Indians, Chicana/os, Mexicans—many of whom had once numbered majority counts during earlier periods as well as in the 21st century. These later histories have served to fracture the chronological shape of Turner’s model. In Limerick’s assessment, the historical West was shaped by battles between people and access to the economic, political, and natural resources held by the terrain itself, rather than between groups of people themselves. The “unbroken past” of her title reflects the idea that the capitalist and

expansionist aims of the Western frontier are alive and well up to the time of her book's publication. She writes: "[t]he essential project of the American West was to exploit the available resources. Since nature would not provide it all, both speculation and the entrepreneurial uses of government were human devices to supplement nature's offerings" (86). A historian by trade, however, Limerick's astute conclusions are circumscribed by historical fact, and include few anecdotal and no literary critiques. Then again, Hayden White reminds us that "the historian can claim a voice in the contemporary cultural dialogue only in so far as he (sic) takes seriously the kind of questions that the art and the science of *his own time* (author's emphasis) demand that he ask of the materials he (sic) has chosen to study" ("Burden" 125). He urges a crossing of boundaries that ostensibly divides one discipline from another so as to open up "illuminating metaphors for organizing reality, whatever their origins in particular disciplines or world-views" ("Burden" 125). White recognizes "that there is no such thing as a *single* correct view of any object under study, but there are *many* correct views, each requiring its own style of representation," adding that "an explanation need not be assigned unilaterally to the category of the literally truthful on the one hand or the purely imaginary on the other, but can be judged solely in terms of the richness of the metaphors which govern its sequence of articulation" ("Burden" 129-130). With this in mind, I treat both the frontier and the border as ruling metaphors of identity formation along and within the borderlands. Furthermore, when we view the American Southwest frontier and the U.S.-Mexico border through the lens of border theory, as it has been conceptualized both historiographically as well as literarily, we can more easily privilege a thematic critique based in ontologies of space and place in a particular region.

In the borderlands, competing ideologies and peoples clashed violently or unremarkably. Eurocentric histories such as Frederick Jackson Turner's original "Frontier Thesis," with its roots

in a Manifest Destiny that justified expansion and westward movement of Euro-Americans could not accommodate new structures or more inclusive systems of understanding. Moreover, although the overarching idea and support of a Manifest Destiny historically reads as the dominant ideological construct in the Southwest, it is clear that any consideration of a bordered frontier within this geographical space must be accompanied by an understanding of the landscape and its influence on transforming individual realities and narratives. With this in mind, we must engage the “interplay of history and geography, the ‘vertical’ and the ‘horizontal’ dimensions of being in the world” that Edward Soja writes about in “History: Geography: Modernity” (137). In so doing, we can “re-entwine[s] the making of history with the social production of space, with the construction and configuration of human geographies” (Soja, “History: Geography” 137). Soja’s explanation of Foucault’s writings about the “history of space” and “external space” that envelop lived actualities and the relations between them is central to our understanding of frontier spaces and border spaces because it is a means for us to break open Foucault’s ideas of space as “central to the analysis of power” (Soja, “History: Geography” 143-4). Although I touch upon this theory often throughout this dissertation, I develop this critical line of reasoning in Chapter Five, when I delve into the power of “naming” as evidenced in my hometown of Laredo.

William Christie Macleod, in *American Indian Frontier* (1928) made the explicit point that the frontier implies two sides; thus, historical understanding must engage the memory of both sides. In this regard, the study of Native Indian cultures in the American Southwest threatened to escape historical contexts altogether as indigenous myth-making became antidote to chronological historical narratives. Indian culture was often shown as a counterweight to unilinear histories of progressive settler advancement and movement. The idea of “culture,” in

Klein's thinking "broke American history in halves, and...opened up a national memory divided by ethnicity and plot. With the creation of ethnohistory as a discipline in the 1960s, however, came a real turning point for frontier history in the West and Southwest.

In 1962, Edward Spicer published *Cycles of Conquest*. Like Bolton before him, and contemporaneously with Forbes, Spicer wrote about the Southwest as a space where American Indians, Europeans, Euro-Americans and Mexicans came together. These works and others opened up frontiers from the constrictive bounds that most history textbooks had featured to date. The frontier is an imaginative space where forgetting and remembering, and creation and destruction all take place. Like Forbes, Spicer saw the Southwestern frontier in terms of contact—an interethnic situation. For Forbes, ethnohistory was frontier history. Regardless of whether the "old" frontier histories focused on Euro-American experiences, these experiences presupposed "any instance of more than momentary contact between two ethnic, cultural or national groups" (Forbes 65). With this in mind, Klein writes, "Forbes's idea of frontier as a space where two opposed cultures came together aligned with broader trends in contemporary thought" (207). Such thought, evidenced at least in part by the naming of Aztlán—the legendary ancestral home of the *Nahua* peoples—as the homeland of the Chicana/o community in the late 1960s, focused upon borders, boundaries, ethnicity, and culture in such a way that "frontier and *frontera* became key words for multicultural textuality" (Klein 209).⁹

The guiding principle of the frontier, to "deplete and leave" (Cook 199), is deeply at odds with border theorists and U.S. third space feminist views, such as Emma Perez's and Chela Sandoval's, that take a postmodern approach to examining the gaps and specific moments of history from various points of view in efforts that interrupt linear, Eurocentric models of thinking and, consequently, writing history. Additionally, U.S. third space feminists attempt to meet on a

“broader communal ground” (Anzaldúa 109) that accounts for history, memory, and place such that movements forward—always forward, even in the process of return—become “crossings” in which individuals are not simply located within one time period, but an encompassing “historical sequence” (Soja, “History: Geography” 136-137). Edward Soja provides a clearer understanding of this idea when he draws upon the theories of C. Wright Mills, who stresses a “historical imagination” as not simply central to critical social theory but “the search for practical understanding of the world as a means of emancipation versus maintenance of the status quo” (“History: Geography” 137). I develop a formulation as it pertains to the “historical imagination” in Chapter Three.

Peréz’s “decolonial imaginary” bursts open history in transformative ways so as to bring an understanding of the past that “opens up traditional categories such as the ‘West’ or the ‘frontier’” (5). Similarly, Anzaldúa relishes and embraces the competing narratives of history that are enmeshed and entwined in her native *tejana* landscape: “What I want is an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails” (44). American Indian authors such as Leslie Marmon Silko share the view that history is inextricably linked with present subjectivities: “Whoever we are, wherever we may find ourselves at this moment cannot be isolated from what we have been and where we have been prior to this moment” (Coltelli 126). Likewise, Paula Gunn Allen communicates a feminist analysis of the effects of colonization that underscores a spirit-centered internal, rather than material, or economic external system of social and personal living. In her gynocratic view, acts of rape and colonization “or other acts of political or power-based violence result from a disorder of the relationship between person and cosmos” (206). These theorists and scholars press us to identify,

extrapolate, and problematize historical ideas of the border/frontier mythology that speak to the Southwest as a distinctive region in the imaginations and ideologies of the inhabitants who shaped ideologies as well as the geographical landscape itself.

In this dissertation, I align U.S. third space feminists alongside American Indian scholars and writers to underscore a shared vision of identity and politics. The overarching designation, “women of color,” in the words of Sonia Saldívar-Hull, is a political one that expresses “solidarity with Asian American, African American, and Native American women who share similarities in [our] histories under racism, class exploitation, and cultural domination in the United States” (46). Saldívar-Hull gleans a necessary element from Norma Alarcón’s essay, “Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of ‘the’ Native Woman” to develop the idea that Chicana feminists—*mestizas*—share political and ethnic relationships as well as “indigenous ties to Native American traditions” (45). Likely, there are just as many avenues of similarity as there are paths of difference with regard to the varied works of U.S. third space feminists and American Indian scholars and writers. In this discussion, I am concerned with a politics of spirituality centered in a specific geographical landscape.

Cherríe Moraga, like Anzaldúa, privileges a metaphorical language in which a specific, Southwestern landscape is politicized in such a way that what is personal is also political. “Earth. Dirt. Ground. Land,” Moraga writes in her preface to *Loving in the War Years*. With shovel, hoe, and pickax Moraga will uncover a “[s]pirituality that inspires activism and, similarly, politics that move the spirit to draw from the deep-seated place of our greatest longings for freedom—give meaning to our lives” (120). For Anzaldúa the struggle, the path towards a new consciousness, a *conciencia* that promises “return” is achieved in a synthesis of incompatible frames of reference that borderland peoples struggle with both physically and psychically. This

idea of return is central to border narratives that highlight the experience of being disassociated from one's homeland, whether by choice or through colonial imperatives. I will discuss the idea of return more fully in Chapter Three. In "*La conciencia de la mestiza*," Anzaldúa's culminating chapter of her groundbreaking *Borderlands, La Frontera*, Anzaldúa writes:

Chicano, *indio*, American Indian, *mojado*, *mexicano*, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian—our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people. The struggle has always been inner and is played out in the outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads (109).

In her ground-breaking article, "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," Chela Sandoval charts the meeting points of social actors who, in spite of varying courses of oppositional activity, engage in self-conscious modes of political opposition. She extends Louis Althusser's theory of ideology and ideological state apparatuses to develop a new theory of ideology that "focuses on identifying forms of consciousness in opposition" (2) by subject-citizens who self-consciously oppose the dominant social order with the end result of breaking with dominant, hierarchical forms of ideology. For Sandoval, "differential consciousness" is a powerful strategy of oppositional consciousness because it is mobile: "a kinetic motion that maneuvers, poetically transfigures, and orchestrates while demanding alienation, perversion, and reformation in both spectators and practitioners" (3). The bulk of her article is devoted to identifying the means and ways U.S. third space feminism functions on the periphery of a historically exclusionary hegemonic feminism. A main goal of Sandoval's is to show how U.S. third space feminism functions "just outside" a

commonly cited four-phase feminist history of consciousness consisting of ‘liberal,’ ‘Marxist,’ ‘radical/cultural,’ and ‘socialist’ feminisms (9). Recognizing the stance of U.S. third space feminism requires a paradigm shift that sets the stage for a new theory and method of oppositional consciousness—a “topography of consciousness in opposition” (9-11). This topography is not uniquely feminist in nature; rather, it allows us to identify the “modes the subordinated of the United States (of any gender, race, or class) claim as politicized and oppositional stances in resistance to domination” (11). This “differential” mode of consciousness is fluid, as citizen-subjects who engage it can and may move “between and among” other forms of oppositional consciousness in tactical ways to enact recoveries, revenge, reparations, or produce justice (14). A differential mode of consciousness, then, permits citizen-subjects to “choose[ing] and adopt[ing] the ideological form best suited to push against its configurations, a survival skill well known to oppressed peoples” (15). Liberation, freedom, and change among subordinated subjects become possible “within the realm of differential consciousness” where self-conscious agents “recognize one another as allies, countrywomen and men of the same psychic terrain” (15).

In *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Sandoval continues along this trajectory to deconstruct a selection of works by canonical Western thinkers. She argues that the works of Frederic Jameson, Roland Barthes, Hayden White, and Donna Haraway, among others, contain the seeds of postcolonial U.S. third space feminist aims. In Sandoval’s thinking, a “fundamental linkage” between these diverse thinkers is found in “similarly conceived and unprecedented forms of identity, politics, aesthetic production, and coalitional consciousness through their shared practice of a hermeneutics of love in a postmodern world” (4).

These ideas are reflected in the works of Leslie Marmon Silko and Paula Gunn Allen, as well. Allen, whom Gerald Vizenor calls “the most honored postindian warrior of simulations in literature” (21) labors to remap the boundaries of theory by incorporating orality as well as bringing Native epistemology to the fore.¹⁰ For Allen, “American Indians are not merely doomed victims of western imperialism or progress; they are also the carriers of the dream that most activist movements in the Americas claim to be seeking” (2). I would add that the activist movements most in line with Allen’s thinking are the dreams and desires found in the theories of U.S. third space feminists of color presented in this dissertation.

There is a complex mythology, then, that we have sought to uncover, and alongside this mythology is the feminist tenet that what is personal is political. Yet what is personal is tied to the landscape, and, more importantly, to one’s native homeland. This is evidenced in Allen’s words: the “social and personal life is governed by internal rather than external factors, and systems based on spiritual orders rather than material ones are necessarily heavily oriented towards internal governing systems” (206).

The literary texts that are the object of this study, then—Jovita González’s and Eve Raleigh’s *Caballero*; Américo Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez*; Arturo Islas’s *The Rain God* all reveal that the idea of the frontier, at least on the border, is entwined not in a physical border that was created with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848, but the idea of a physical border as necessary to perpetuating a mythology of the frontier in the Southwest. *Streets of Laredo* by Larry McMurtry, further highlights the nuanced push and pull of this mythology, such that an argument can be made that the border and the frontier compete, interchangeably, on the level of thesis and antithesis. Cormac McCarthy’s *No Country For Old Men*, a work I discuss briefly in the Epilogue, shows how the border/frontier mythology remains inextricably linked to

a still extant postcolonial condition in the Southwest. Theories and works by U.S. third space feminists break open this mythology by re-situating race, gender, ethnicity and history in a dialogue between physical and psychical terrains, as Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* so aptly demonstrates.

Emma Pérez, in *The Decolonial Imaginary*, “seek[s] origins that serve to impose false continuities” (xvii). For Pérez, the “decolonial imaginary” allows us to rethink history in a way that is transformative for those who have often been excluded from history—Chicana/os. This is the path I undertake in uncovering the history of borderland identities *within* frontier ideologies. Using Gloria Anzaldúa's assertion about the transformative power of the human soul in relation to the body, we realize that it is not just a matter of re-inscribing some margin or center, but an awareness that theorizes the politics of difference within a new paradigm. She writes: “For only through the body, through the pulling of flesh, can the human soul be transformed. And for images, words, stories to have this transformative power, they must arise from the human body—flesh and bone—and from the earth's body—stone, sky, liquid, soil” (97). Postmodern theory as applied by Emma Pérez allows us to move beyond the traditional boundaries of history to understand how borderlands peoples struggled—and still do—against and ultimately oppose colonialist structures to create a liberating third space. Chela Sandoval, in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, argues for one “singular apparatus”—Love—“that is necessary for forging twenty-first-century modes of decolonizing globalization” (2). The theories of these U.S. third space feminists, along with Cherríe Moraga's political theories of the body, expand categories of analysis that give form and expression to the lived experience of the ways race, class, and gender converge. In the Southwest, both frontier and border ideologies are alive and well today. McCarthy, in particular, demonstrates that greed and desire have simply taken new forms in a

contemporary world, with new commodities as the object of conquest. In this landscape, the idea of a physical border was a historically enabling aspect of a mythology of the frontier.

Importantly, border theory works to deconstruct a Southwest frontier mythology and illuminate the ways in which complex negotiations between individuals, cultures, and newly-emerging nationalities have factored into imagined spaces and places that inform our ideas about the Southwestern bordered frontier in the 21st-century.

CHAPTER TWO: OCCUPIED SPACES AND BURIED PLACES—
AN EXPLORATION OF SPACE IN THE SOUTHWEST

Introduction

In Chapter One, I looked at the history of the frontier and the border in the Southwest to argue that the terms “border,” “frontier,” and “Southwest” cannot be demarked by geographical lines on a map, but, rather, they must be understood in terms of ideas that embody space, place, and time in the historical as well as modern imagination; these terms represent imagined, performative constructs that shape borderland ideologies. This chapter will evaluate specific works that telescope frontier and borderland identities with the goal of commenting on the constraints and anxieties inherent in the idea of the Southwest as space. Chapter Three follows a similar trajectory, except that the focus there is on place. By focusing on space as a foundational metaphor that shapes and directs ideology, this chapter shows some of the ways that space, in the Southwest, is situated within a false and often destructive cultural mythology. Border theory allows us to more clearly identify instances where space melts away and transmutes into place.

In this chapter I also bring together border theory and frontier ideologies to explore the idea that landscapes in the American Southwest suggest the interiority of characters and their motivations. *All the Pretty Horses* and *Cities of the Plain* by Cormac McCarthy and *Streets of Laredo* by Larry McMurtry, works that memorialize and simultaneously subvert the arrival of Euro-American settlement in the Southwest—specifically the geographical area bounded by the Rio Grande—allow me to focus on identity formation along a specific geographic location. In this regard, all of the works that comprise this dissertation are situated along the trajectory of the 1,185 mile-long Rio Grande, which rises in the Rio Grande National Forest in southwestern Colorado and follows its course southward through New Mexico to the Gulf of Mexico at the tip

of South Texas in Brownsville. As we will see, crossings along this great river situate characters, both fictional and, as I will show in Chapter Five, non-fictional, in time and place within the broader geographical spaces that comprise the American Southwest.

The major international border crossings along the river, and within the texts I examine are: Ciudad Juárez and El Paso; Presidio, Texas, and Ojinaga, Chihuahua; Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas (often referred to as “sister” cities); McAllen-Hidalgo, Texas, and Reynosa, Tamaulipas; and Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Other notable border towns are the Texas/Coahuila pairings of Del Rio–Ciudad Acuña and Eagle Pass–Piedras Negras. By activating a dialogue with a select body of literature and border and frontier criticism, I base my study of the construction of individual identities along this bordered frontier in relation to what I argue are occupied spaces and buried places. As I argued in Chapter One, a Euro-American politics that not just defined, but necessitated the performance of a given spatial ontology, historically has done so in terms of colonial imperatives. However, when Euro-Americans moved westward into the already-occupied spaces of the American Southwest, the geography did not simply shift from an agrarian, pre-modern society to a more cosmopolitan one. On the contrary, such a “manipulation of space,” as Mary Pat Brady has termed it, yielded a palimpsest of sorts. This palimpsest may be read both geographically as well as on the body. Although space in the Southwest was often mis-taken from those—Mexicans, Chicana/os and American Indians—who revered the land as a place—their home—when we look to border places as part of a system “caught up in [a] swirl of histories, temporalities, and narratives” (Brady 52), we better understand the border as a site where the production of place often supercedes the fraudulent realities inherent in the manipulation of space along the bordered frontier. With this in mind, the characters whose movements I study in the next three chapters

can be understood in terms of a frontier ideology that allows us to read this geographical space in historical as well as on individual, and quite personal terms. These character's stories are rooted in the Southwestern geography, and consequently, in the ideologies that have shaped the landscape.

“the end of something”: Occupied Spaces in *All the Pretty Horses* and *Cities of the Plain*

In *The Legacy of Conquest*, Limerick restructures the history of the West by overturning Turner's perennial thesis in order to stress place rather than process, an idea developed in the preceding chapter. She organizes “the West [as] a study of a place undergoing conquest and never fully escaping its consequences” (26), to discover what she calls the moral significance of the West. For Limerick, the West's moral burden is akin to the moral failures of a southern social system founded on slavery. She concludes, however, that the West's failure rests in the landscape, as competition for natural resources and cultural dominance reflects a regional theme of conquest. In this regard, the western experience has been a failure, primarily a failure to achieve racial justice and democratic pluralism. But what she is also saying is that we have failed to understand the environmental limits of the land itself. Likewise, Mark Busby begins his essay on McCarthy's border trilogy, “Into the Darkening Land, the World to Come,” by rooting the author's works in a southern literary tradition bonded to the history of slavery, and a western tradition steeped in an east/west frontier mythology. Drawing on William Faulkner's ideas of the South and Lewis Simpson's *Dispossessed Garden*, Busby underscores the American South as a region whose inhabitants have “struggled with two opposing forces, the force of memory and history—the presentness of the past in southern life—and the historyless post-World War II alienated self” (142). These forces influence the individual in ways that 1) history and memory

merge to subsume the individual into the communal force of time, and; 2) the alienated consciousness of that individual struggles to wrest, and consequently, forge, a new future from a communal time. A third element that Busby attaches to McCarthy's work is that McCarthy adds to the older, east/west frontier formula, a use of '*la frontera*'—a North/South border between the American Southwest and Northern Mexico (142-144). In this chapter, I argue that when we consider the Southwest frontier, we must do so along an axis that interrogates the "presentness of the past." Placing this idea at the forefront of our thinking and subsequent analysis forces us to incorporate border ideologies alongside frontier ideologies so as to question traditional myths and narratives in order that we destabilize them. Just as the tragic, violent history of the slave-owning South looms in that region not just to color, but to direct ideology, and consequently, actions predicated on that ideology, so too does the history of a borderline that was created overnight with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, loom in the memories of inhabitants in the Southwest. The border is a region of memory.

The creation of a bordered frontier in the Southwest was never two-dimensional, as it appeared, and continues to be platted, on so many maps. On the contrary, the creation of a border in the American Southwest created a rupture in time whose lingering effects produce deep feelings of ambivalence for Euro-Americans, as we find especially in McMurtry's frontier novels. Because the Southwest is a land of borders, it is also, as Pilkington has argued, a land of "ends and beginnings," a place of "transition where the known and the unknown merge" (3). What sets the Southwest apart from the greater West is the border itself, which lends one a "feeling of existing on the outer limits of something" (3). I contend that the ends and the beginnings, the known and the unknown in Pilkington's equation must be sought in the landscape itself, for it is the vast spaces of the Southwestern landscape that engender and

perpetuate the mythology. Although Busby and others hint at this idea, what is missing in current scholarship is an examination of the necessary element of the border as place within a space that deemphasizes history so as to underscore the forging of new futures. In his study of *All the Pretty Horses*, Busby writes about Mexico as a land of history and the Southwest as one that deemphasizes history, yet he does not prioritize the history of the border in the same way. He writes:

If the American frontier hero pushes west into a historyless land, then when that figure turns south and crosses the border, he encounters a land with a strong and troubling past, for Mexico represents a country with a lengthy and distressing history, part of which involves a complicated story of dispossession of land first from the Aztecs and Mayans, then from the remaining *indios*, and later from the church (144-145).

Although Busby concedes a need for frontier heroes to acknowledge Mexico's turbulent history, as various history "lessons" in McCarthy's border trilogy attest, Busby's metaphorical sweep pushes past the border; he does not grant that the border itself is a place with a similar history. In Chapter Four, I will examine the dispossession of land from the Aztecs, Mayans and American Indians in my discussion of Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. In this chapter, I will focus on the Southwest as a historyless space and the border as a place of history. In so doing, I conclude that although the frontier vision is one of promise, it is nonetheless a static vision as it subsumes historical and familial memories in favor of greater communal, national ideals. A frontier mythology steeped in a language that historically prioritized space tied many of its proponents to a life of journeying and the search for fixity. Even as settlers made new homes, the history of buried places threatened those new structures, as is evidenced by McCarthy's border trilogy. McCarthy's young, male protagonists' wanderings and searchings are contingent upon a

landscape that prioritizes space over the fixity of place. McMurtry's *Streets of Laredo* complicates oppositions intrinsic to the frontier mythology by merging the dualities inherent in the bordered frontier to produce a synthesis of ideas rooted in the domestic imperatives of place, constraints that are left unresolved at the end of McCarthy's border trilogy.

Mary Pat Brady's reading of Chicana texts that narrativize the moment of border crossings is crucial to her enactment of the U.S. Mexico border in spaciohistorical terms that underscores subjectivities-in-process. The border, in Brady's Chicana feminist analyses, enforces and sustains multivocality and multilocality. The instances of "crossing the line" that she studies reflect a mestiza consciousness—racialized, gendered, subjectivities-in-process that are inherently entwined in the on-going production of the border as place. Brady's discursive approach allows her to interrogate identity not simply within the ongoing production of a specific place but amidst a subject's "buried and entangled relationship within time and space," a notion she likens to "mestiza consciousness" (52). The narratives of the Chicana literature she considers—works by Norma E. Cantú, Montserrat Fontes, Sandra Cisneros, and Cherríe Moraga, among others—"recogniz[e] a set of historical narratives, of family memories, of vectors of various national fantasies that have an effect on identity and agency and on the formation of subjectivity" (52). National fantasies drive the border crossings of Cormac McCarthy's hero, John Grady Cole, in *All the Pretty Horses*, the first installment of his border trilogy. But the absence of familial histories and memories to compel and, more importantly, situate John Grady's subjectivity-in-process instead leave him in a perpetual state of liminality—a non-place of transition—throughout his wanderings in Mexico. A familial history that has rooted him to the imperatives of space, both when crossing the border and throughout his stay in Mexico, leave him, as Gail Moore Morrison has argued, "adrift in time and space" (179). Furthermore, although

John Grady's lineage is entrenched in the landscape, a longer history that echoes of displaced nations and buried places, emphasizes a sense of permanence not for Euro-American settlers, but for American Indians who still occupy the landscape both metaphorically and physically. This idea, a subject of Chapter Four, is demonstrated by El Feo, a revolutionary leader in Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. El Feo states: "In the Americas the white man never referred to the past but only to the future. The white man didn't seem to understand he had no future here because he had no past, no spirits of ancestors here" (313).

All the Pretty Horses begins with the theme of death. When John Grady Cole's grandfather dies in the old ranch house that he built in 1872, his death announces the end of the Grady name, "the boy's mother was born and that was all the borning that there was" (7) as well as what Jay Ellis has called the "failed constraints" that underlie "rules governing McCarthy's descriptions of space" (4). Denis Donoghue, likewise, prioritizes McCarthy's use of both place and space to suggest that although McCarthy often does not ostensibly penetrate the interiority of characters, McCarthy's descriptions of exterior settings, what Donoghue calls "high passages," speak to values characters do not otherwise express, most notably, principles "for times not our times" (8). Several such high passages bookend John Grady Cole's comings and goings in *All the Pretty Horses*. Just after his grandfather's funeral, in the first few pages of the novel, John Grady rides out west from his grandfather's house—John Grady's home—"where the western fork of the old Comanche road coming down out of the Kiowa country to the north passed" (5). This place speaks of an earlier time and a very specific place:

like a dream of the past where the painted ponies and the riders of that lost nation came down out of the north with their faces chalked and their long hair plaited and each armed for war which was their life and the women and children and women with children at

their breasts all of them pledged in blood and redeemable in blood only. When the wind was in the north you could hear them...above all the low chant of their traveling song which the riders sang as they rode, nation and ghost of nation passing in a soft chorale across that mineral waste to darkness bearing lost to all history and all remembrance like a grail the sum of their secular and transitory and violent lives (5).

John Grady rides long and far and when he stops to survey the landscape, he is “like a man come to the end of something” (5). On his way home, we are left with an image of the incorporeality of ancient Indian nations. In mythologizing these nations, specifically, Indian warriors, McCarthy suggests that such nations do not simply remain as a memory—whether lost to history or not—but as constants that imbue a sense of place onto the landscape: “but the warriors would ride on in that darkness they’d become, rattling past with their stone-age tools of war in default of all substance and singling softly in blood and longing south across the plains to Mexico” (6).

In the final two pages of the novel, we confront a similar vision, this time of living Indians camped just outside of Iraan, Texas, “a scattered group of their wickiups propped upon that scoured and trembling waste” (301). These Indians have “no curiosity about him [John Grady] at all. As if they knew all that they needed to know. They stood and watched him pass and watched him vanish upon that landscape solely because he was passing. Solely because he would vanish” (301). Unlike McCarthy’s earlier description of warriors who “would ride on in that darkness they’d become,” John Grady, at the novel’s end, is described as only one man, not a “nation” or “ghost of nation,” but one man, one shadow—albeit one shadow composed of horse and rider. This final image of John Grady who rides and passes “like the shadow of a single being. Passed and paled into the darkening land, the world to come” (302) provides an essential counterpoint to the earlier image of the Indians whose ghosts John Grady imagines

riding the landscape soon after his grandfather's funeral. John Grady's vision is peopled not by his ancestors, but by Indians who roamed the land freely, nations whose domestic ties were directly linked to the ground under their feet, and, as such, remain.

In Pilkington's analysis, John Grady's idealism is distinctly "American: he believes in individualism, free will, volition. He thinks that every man born on this planet is an Adam, free of memory and external constraint, able to shape his illimitable 'self' in any way he chooses" (175). And, indeed, this certainly seems to be the case. When John Grady first rides south to Mexico in *All the Pretty Horses* in search of what Ellis calls "a secure domestic space," which he further describes as "those things having to do with the primary domestic space, the house" (205), he does so in an attempt to reintegrate with the loss of not simply a domestic space, but the landscape itself. Although his friend Lacey Rawlins accompanies him on his quest, we know little of Rawlins' family life and are led to understand that he accompanies John Grady in the spirit of friendship and adventure. They ride out of west Texas headed south, "like young thieves in a glowing orchard, loosely jacketed against the cold and ten thousand worlds for the choosing" (31).

A main premise of Ellis's *No Place for Home* is the idea that McCarthy's characters "must take flight, or they must circle around within a larger constraint of space that usually cannot contain them" (4). With this in mind, he works through McCarthy's canon, from *The Orchard Keeper* (1965) to *No Country for Old Men* (2005) to suggest that all of McCarthy's protagonists suffer from constraints of space that in turn motivate a pattern of flight in each novel. He adds, "one of the many ironies in the hearts of McCarthy characters is their ignorance of what constitutes the plausible domestic responsibility to find a home in the world" (13).

The crossings John Grady and his companion, Lacey Rawlins undergo, unlike the Chicana crossings Brady explores, are rife with neither history nor memory. In fact, the history and memories of other peoples and other nations often subsume the frontier visions that spur them forth. Morrison argues that McCarthy's use of the journey archetype within a rite of passage is the structuring principle that leaves the young protagonist, John Grady Cole wandering in time and space. She writes that *All the Pretty Horses*, with its emphasis on both metaphorical and physical journeys, inevitably yields a "series of conflicts and confrontations" within the protagonists (179). She describes *All the Pretty Horses* as a *Bildungsroman* "where innocence experiences the evil of the universe and risks defeat by it" (178). She continues:

If in the novel's first chapter the promised land lies just over Coahuila's Sierra Encantada, that land of false enchantment has been stripped by the novel's end of its magic. Its refinement and civility have been revealed as thin veneer, and its moral code exposed as distorted and subverted (185).

Morrison is commenting on the refinement and civility that John Grady encounters at La Purísima, the Mexican hacienda that represents, for Ellis "a place of *comparative* (author's emphasis) leisure and luxury" (*No Place* 209). Moore's sense that John Grady's initiation into the world of experience (Mexico) overturns his "code of traditional values in opposition to the moral anarchy which threatens it at every turn" (185) misses the point, and underestimates the power of a conflicting borderlands code bathed in history, memory, and recovery. Mexico, and the border, for that matter, are hardly places of "thin veneer" and moral anarchy. John Grady's "code" is like so much clothing when he crosses the border. He is stripped of his frontier code of endless space and future promise when he crosses the border; his code means little in another country, another landscape altogether.

Well before their arrival in Mexico, Rawlins studies a map he's picked up in a café. "There were roads and rivers and towns on the American side of the map as far south as the Rio Grande and beyond that all was white" (34). Rawlins muses that the vast area to the south "aint never been mapped" (34), but John Grady explains that the area has indeed been mapped; however, this particular map does not indicate the mapped territory. When the two cross into Mexico for the first time, they have no map of Mexico; they face blank space. Because their progress into Mexico is decidedly future-oriented, this map serves their purposes. The dream, namely John Grady's utopian vision, necessitates a blank slate before them. Rawlins, who acts more as sidekick, never really shares John Grady's vision. In fact, Rawlins becomes increasingly aware that his friend's dream will lead to trouble; nonetheless, he concedes, "There aint shit down there" (34). Later, "[t]hey crossed the river under a white quartermoon naked and pale and thin atop their horses" (45). In time, the landscape becomes more barren and wild, just as do the people they meet, and finally, the various events that shape their lives. The vision, the dream of an awaiting paradise, however, remains. In the dimming light of day, which fades "from pale to pale of blue and then to nothing at all," Rawlins and John Grady muse:

Where do you reckon that paradise is at? said Rawlins.

John Grady had taken off his hat to let the wind cool his head. You cant tell what's in a country like that till you're down there in it, he said.

There's damn sure a bunch of it, aint there.

John Grady nodded. That's what I'm here for.

I hear you, cousin (59).

This passage underscores several key elements that factor in the boys', most notably, John Grady's failure to attain paradise: a linear narrative of nation predicated in a disregard of

narrative history and familial memory that invokes the ongoing production of place; herein lies the failure of the frontier. Alan Cheuse agrees: “having a map to the territory before you means having a past, both personal and historical, whose visions and outer signs you may easily read in order to find orientation” (141).

Furthermore, it is significant that the two, accompanied by the would-be outlaw Blevins, strip naked and unmask their bodies when they cross the Rio Grande. Ellis writes: “the meanderings of McCarthy’s characters back and forth across the border between the United States and Mexico imply a serious lack of historical knowledge on the part of those gringos” (90). Moreover, they build onto their non-history a story, a dream, whose vision is mythic. In Ellis’s view, McCarthy regularly “build[s] onto history stories whose meanings reach a mythic level” (“What Happens” 91). But the mere fact of gringos, “aliens,” crossing the border constricts and constrains the terrain all the while John Grady’s vision of a boundless frontier paradise remains. For Cant, McCarthy regularly recasts myth in his novels “in such a way as to point out the destructive consequences of structuring the consciousness of individuals by means of powerful mythologies which they are not in a position to live out” (9). Indeed, the deeper Rawlins, Grady and Blevins venture into Mexico, the more the dream becomes specter. The landscape grows wilder, and Rawlins’ prediction—“Somethin bad is goin to happen”—(77) indeed foreshadows irreparable loss and death.

A productive description of the novel is one in which the hero, John Grady, experiences the limitations of a frontier ideology marred by a physical border entwined in a history and ideology that his vision must necessarily undermine in order that it serve its purpose. If *All the Pretty Horses*, with its reliance on the archetypal journey and quest motifs, is, as Morrison suggests, “a poignant and sobering rite of passage” (179) that leaves our hero, John Grady, adrift

in a non-place, then it does so as a failure of the frontier vision. When John Grady surmises, “I don’t know what happens to country” (299) at the end of his Mexican adventure, he is musing on an abstraction, an ideal of “bringing space into the order of place” (Ellis, *No Place* 86). Indeed, this is what Ellis concludes when he writes that McCarthy “catches us trying to have our spaces without them turning into other people’s places” (87).

Much of Ellis’s focus in his reading of *Cities of the Plain* is concentrated on the ideals of courtly love and John Grady’s status as a “landless knight” (*No Place* 208-213). He concludes that the “final scene in *Cities of the Plain* suggests strongly that the chivalric roles promised by cowboy mythology are ultimately impossible to fill” (221). Both in *All the Pretty Horses* and *Cities of the Plain* John Grady develops a persona of the courtly lover who dreams and idealizes his love object. Yet, as even the *hacendado* notes, John Grady’s living out the “idea of Quixote” is at odds with the “monster” that is reason (*All the Pretty Horses* 146). Indeed, the dream so clouds John Grady’s reason that he makes remarkably unreasonable choices in the two romantic quests that structure each novel; both Alejandra, the *hacendado*’s daughter in *All the Pretty Horses* and Magdalena, the prostitute in *Cities of the Plain* are well out of his reach. According to Ellis, “[i]n Alejandra, he chooses a woman so highborn and virtuous that his relationship degraded her,” and [i]n Magdalena, John Grady chooses a woman so low and degraded that it is impossible to rescue her from the depths to which she so innocently and pitifully has sunk” (*No Place* 212). Regardless, then of the “odd durability for something not quite real,” of which the *Dueña* Alfonsa has already cautioned John Grady, is the added issue of class that further disturbs him when he talks to a *vaquero* soon after the *hacendado* remarks on his Quixotic vision.

Dígame, he said. Cuál es peor: que soy pobre o que soy Americano?

The *vaquero* shook his head. Una llave de oro abre cualquier puerta (147).

By the time we encounter John Grady in *Cities of the Plain*, his plans for reclaiming his grandfather's lost ranch that first set him in Alejandra's direction have somewhat diminished; his plans now are to fix up an old domestic space on the ranch he works. But before he wheelbarrows loads of trash from the old cabin at Bell Springs, he sells his horse for \$300, an extraordinary thing for a working cowboy to do. According to Pilkington, "[t]he horse in large measure created the myth, because it gave the cowboy a physical and psychological elevation—a perch from which to look down upon the world and to which, just as importantly, the world had to look up" (176). Thus, although John Grady's longings are quite reasonable: a home of his own with a woman he loves, the constraining space of a frontier mythology that cannot contain his imaginings yet surrounds him. Eduardo the pimp, who "owns" Magdalena imparts this lesson in *Cities of the Plain*, but it comes too late.

The guiding principles of the main characters in *All the Pretty Horses* and *Cities of the Plain* are grounded in the ideals of a frontier mythology predicated on a linear movement forward, and, as such, do not easily accommodate familial memories or alternative historical narratives. In fact, forward movements in these novels work to stifle or even negate individual histories. This is one message among many that the old traveler imparts to Billy in the final pages of *The Crossing*. "Our waking life's desire to shape the world to our convenience," says the old man, "invites all manner of paradox and difficulty" (283). The past in *All the Pretty Horses* and *Cities of the Plain* is circumscribed and gives way only to the dream. This is important when we consider Ellis's observation that "[d]reams in McCarthy point more to delusions, beliefs, and provisional truths, more than to larger truths" (*No Place* 5).

John Grady's dreams and wishes are, time and again, subverted by a reality recognized by characters who better "know" their history. In both *All the Pretty Horses* and *Cities of the*

Plain, Mexicans provide John Grady with history lessons. In *All the Pretty Horses* the Dueña Alfonsa tells John Grady: “In the end we all come to be cured of our sentiments. Those whom life does not cure death will. The world is quite ruthless in selecting between the dream and the reality, even where we will not. Between the wish and thing the world lies waiting” (238). This foreshadows another history lesson; this one provided by Eduardo the pimp in the border trilogy’s third and final installment, *Cities of the Plain*.

In *Cities of the Plain*, Billy Parham, John Grady’s good friend, whom we encounter in *The Crossing*, the object of study in the following chapter, has come to Eduardo the pimp to ask if he can “buy” the young Magdalena, with whom John Grady has fallen in love. Eduardo tells Billy that John Grady “has in his head a certain story. Of how things will be.” (134). But Eduardo also cautions Billy that the thing that “is wrong with this story is that it is not a true story. Men have in their minds a picture of how the world will be. How they will be in that world. The world may be many different ways for them but there is one world that will never be and that is the world they dream of” (134). Although John Grady is following his heart, which the blind pianist, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. McGovern all tell him is a good thing—“A man is always right to pursue the thing he loves” (199) says the blind pianist, Billy, who truly does love John Grady, concludes, by the trilogy’s end that John Grady has an “outlaw heart” (218). Billy and John Grady’s exchange, just before John Grady expects that Magdalena will meet him on the Texas side of the border so that they may marry and spend the rest of their lives together, is telling:

You just got an outlaw heart. I’ve seen it before. (Billy)

Because I said I could live in Mexico? (John Grady)

It aint just that.

Don't you think if there's anything left of this life it's down there?

Maybe.

You like it too.

Yeah? I don't even know what this life is. I damn sure don't know what Mexico is. I think it's in your head. Mexico. I rode a lot of ground down there. The first ranchera you hear sung you understand the whole country. By the time you've heard you don't know nothin. You never will (218).

Billy adds: Mexico is "another world. Everybody I ever knew that ever went back was goin after somethin. Or thought they was" (218).

The border and the frontier are alternate ways to experience and know the world. Memories are like scars, reminders of a past that will always remain, however changed. The Mexican police officer, the captain whom Billy visits after he identifies the body of Magdalena, evidences a subjectivity-in process in which the past must bleed into the present in order that events in the past are given their true weight. The captain tells Billy, "Every male in my family for three generations has been killed in defense of this republic. Grandfather, father, uncles, brothers. Eleven men in all. Any beliefs they may have had now reside in me. Any Hopes ... They are my Mexico and I pray to them and I answer to them and to them alone" (243).

In the end, during his fight to the death with Eduardo, Eduardo reproves John Grady once again for underestimating the reality of the border in favor of imagined dreams rooted in a frontier ideology of limitless pursuit and increase. Eduardo says: "Your kind cannot bear that the world be ordinary. That it contain nothing save what stands before one" (253). He continues, juxtaposing the vast, ever-containable spaces of an American empire with Mexico as a place with a solid make up: "But the Mexican world is a world of adornment only and underneath it is

very plain indeed. While your world—your world totters upon an unspoken labyrinth of questions. And we will devour you my friend. You and all your pale empire” (253). Eduardo is described as a powerful man of a “certain rigor” (198) in the novel, equally quashing the dream of the open frontier on both sides of the border. During a final scene in which he at last speaks to Magdalena about her lover John Grady, he is able to “see[n] into her heart. What was so and what was false” (213). Indeed, Eduardo “sees” what John Grady and Magdalena cannot, or will not see—that their love is based on false promises that cannot be reconciled given the violent subjugation of space that has become constrained by the imperatives of what has historically contained a Mexican place.

The characters in the bookend novels of the border trilogy fall prey to the trap that Hayden White’s cautions against: we must “establish the value of the study of the past, not as ‘an end in itself,’ but as a way of providing perspectives on the present that contribute to the solution of problems peculiar to our own time” (125). This is at least one lesson that Billy Parham, at the conclusion of *Cities of the Plain* learns from the unnamed traveler, “another such as he . . . solitary and alone” (266). The traveler, who tells a complex story of a dream within a dream, tells Billy:

[t]he world of our fathers resides within us. Ten thousand generations and more. A form without a history has no power to perpetuate itself. What has no past can have no future. At the core of our life is the history of which it is composed and in that core are no idioms but only the act of knowing and it is this we share in dreams and out (281).

Between the vision and the reality lies the certainty, the fixity of the border as place—a place of history, memories, and stories. The dream, the promise of the frontier, sustains John Grady’s imaginings. But in, or out of dreams, as the traveler tells Billy, we nonetheless see only

that “which [we] elect to see” (*Cities of the Plain* 271). Although he says much about dreams and history and the paradox of shaping the world in accordance with our dreams, he nears the conclusion of his tale with a language that John Grady never knew, yet that Billy touched upon himself in *The Crossing*. The old traveler tells Billy: “[f]or as the power to speak of the world recedes from us so also must the story of the world lose its thread and therefore its authority. The world to come must be composed of what is past. No other material is at hand” (286). This may be the most important lesson the old Mexican traveler imparts to Billy in the epilogue of *Cities of the Plain*.

Journey: *Streets of Laredo* and the Search for Place

The frontier vision as discussed in Chapter One involves unbounded space and boundless possibilities filling that space. The stories that play out along the bordered frontier in the American Southwest do so on physical and psychological ground; they encompass ideology, mythology, and history. In this geographical region, however, a clash of cultures and ideologies has necessarily ensued from the sweep of so many travelers’ movements. However, as the first lines of Macleod’s *American Indian Frontier*, suggest, it has often been too easy to understand the complexity of the bordered frontier in terms of simple binaries. Macleod’s long study of the American frontier from the Indians’ viewpoint begins: “[e]very frontier has two sides. Its movement forward or backward is the consequence of two sets of forces. To understand fully why one side advances, we must know something of why the other side retreats” (vii). On the surface, this statement renders inclusivity to Indian nations that had not been tapped by 1928, the time of the book’s first publication. But we must also take caution to avoid what Anzaldúa calls a “counterstance.” She warns: “it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting

questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions” (100). Acknowledging other cultures and other ethnicities is not enough. We must listen to other voices in the historiographic debate and, to extend an idea suggested by Kerwin Lee Klein, not just grant new forms of ethno-history “a room of their own tacked onto the original structure” (292), but we must work to deconstruct narrative habits that reproduce traditional binaries. With this in mind, we may ask ourselves what cultural ideas, values, and beliefs became subsumed or subverted within frontier and border ideologies? And, how might this carve, not a space, but a place in which we might re-populate the historiography of the Southwest that has often neglected “other” voices? This chapter identifies and expands the notion that at least some of the ways we may apply border theory to texts that embody the complex ideologies intertwined in *both* the border and the frontier—the bordered frontier.

Additionally, border theory necessitates that we acknowledge both internal and external realities to break open history in transformative ways, thus suggesting one “heuristic rule,” to use Hayden White’s term, by which negotiations of space are made meaningful and consistent. For White, the temporal dimension of history, that aspect of history that begs an awareness and accounting with the present climate while studying what is past, can be used to “effect an ethically responsible transition from present to future” (“Burden” 132). In fact, I argue that White himself anticipates a type of “third space” internalization that comes from the knowledge that human efforts in the past direct future actions, and, as such, visions of human connectedness associated with the landscape. Quoting from Balzac, White writes that when we reflect upon our histories, one’s spirit is “engulfed in the night of its own self-consciousness; its vanished existence is, however, conserved therein; and this superceded existence—the previous state, but born anew from the womb of knowledge—is the new stage of existence, a new world, and a new

embodiment or mode of Spirit” (qtd. in White, “Burden” 133). For White, memories run deep. With this in mind, this chapter also highlights some of the ways that memories of past generations work to cohere future experience. Historical knowledge must not be our burden, but the thing that incites us ever forward. In this regard, the histories of all of the characters that I consider in this dissertation all move forward given the impetus of events that have shaped their particular histories.

Just as McCarthy works on both historical and mythic levels, so too does Larry McMurtry, whose mythic appeal of his home state of Texas is couched in a deep ambivalence regarding the frontier myth. In Slotkin’s analysis, the values associated with a frontier mythology often produce negative results in the present. With this in mind he writes, “American attitudes toward the idea of a national mythology have been peculiarly ambivalent (5). Mark Busby prioritizes a mythic pattern of “escape and return” to conclude, “ambivalence toward Texas and the West, toward the values of the past and the mythic world of the cowboy god he [McMurtry] grew up paying homage to and toward writing and the artistic production” characterizes McMurtry’s body of work (43). Similar to Eric Gary Anderson’s thesis, the idea of movement—traveling—is a fundamental part of “a set of values, a set of beliefs, a set of traditions and customs that really went with the frontier way of life and that were designed to insure certain things, namely survival in the first place: not only survival of the individual but, hopefully, survival of the group, survival of the settlement” (McMurtry, “The Southwest as Cradle” 27-28). As we will see, many of the individuals who embody the spirit of the frontier vanish alongside the vast spaces of the Southwest. Those who remain to symbolize the frontier mythology do so at a cost, not of the dream as John Grady must, but a physical price written on the body, an idea put

forward by U.S. third space feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa. This is at least one major theme of *Streets of Laredo*, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

Tom Pilkington writes about the border in Texas as an area of transition where the known and the unknown, for frontiersmen and women, come together. Settlers who both “conquered” nature and incorporated its primitivism set in motion the feelings of ambivalence that McMurtry confronts and dramatizes (3-4). To this end, Busby concludes that McMurtry not only acknowledges the oppositions inherent in the frontier mythology, but merges the dualities to produce “a gestalt that is larger than the two forces by themselves” (48). If we consider this idea alongside Pilkington’s claim that McMurtry’s “ambiguous love affair with his homeland” stems from ideas surrounding “birth and death that he is most concerned with,” (174) we can conclude that McMurtry’s ambivalence synthesizes into a fledgling third space consciousness. When we engage border theory when deconstructing the resultant relationship between Call and Maria’s young daughter, Teresa, in *Streets of Laredo*, we can argue that their bond demonstrates a synthesis—both on the physical and psychological level—that embodies a tactical subjectivity of cultural accommodation that will necessarily de-mythologize Call’s history in a way that suggests a postcolonial imaginary.

Because, as Busby writes, “racism has not been central to McMurtry’s fiction” some may be tempted to overlook individuals who might otherwise be regarded as “minority” characters in McMurtry’s fictional narratives (58). This is not the case in *Streets of Laredo*, where both women and American Indians play major roles. Importantly, the self-reflexivity that characterizes all of McMurtry’s work—his own ambivalence regarding the southwestern frontier mythology—is entwined in Bakhtin’s “heteroglossia.” McMurtry’s sequels, especially *The Streets of Laredo*, which follows his Pulitzer-Prize winning *Lonesome Dove* (1985), often speak

directly to one another in ways such that characters that are presented in earlier texts have their lives “filled out” in subsequent texts. The “intertextual,” dimension, to use Kristeva’s term, is not restricted to earlier novels; more importantly, McMurtry’s discourse is in dialogue with prior discourse embodied in the myth of the southwestern frontier. Although Busby makes the point that “McMurtry’s novels enter into a dialogue with previous history, films, and fiction about the West” (60-6), they also enter into dialogue with complex ideologies based in frontier and border mythologies, and it is this idea that I will highlight here.

Busby designates McMurtry’s birthplace in Archer County, North Texas, as the hub of a “Southwestern legend” akin to Turner’s frontier mythology. An examination of the language Busby uses to describe McMurtry’s ambivalence regarding the southwestern legend shows a regional prioritizing of the wider mythic ideal that I discussed in Chapter One. The dialectic rooted in a narrative of American consciousness that stems from the idealization of democracy predicated in a westward movement, for McMurtry, resides in a type of dual consciousness. For Texans such as the McMurtry’s, who moved into the region in 1889, a Texas mythology, with its emphasis on freedom and opportunity clashed with a geography that reinforced an awareness of borders.¹¹

Louise Cowan, in “Myth and the Modern World” agrees with Busby regarding a Texas mythology that draws directly from Turner’s frontier mythology. For Cowan, the Southwestern mythology is entrenched in the ideas of the “impermanence of the past and the uncertainty of the future” (44). These scholars underscore Texans dual consciousness as a paradox couched in ideologies of space and place. Because western settlement involved movement, those settlers—men and women who advanced civilization into what they imagined as unsettled, unspoiled geographies—ironically insured the loss of those spaces they moved into. Captain Woodrow

Call's—the manhunter in *Streets of Laredo*—musings about the “old ones of the West” describe this idea, as he laments on the end of the adventure:

The exploring part of the adventure had ended, but not the settling part, and settling, in the time of the Comanche and the Cheyenne and the Apache, had plenty of adventure in it. Now, the settling had happened. Ben Lily and Goodnight and Roy Bean and, he supposed, himself—for he, too, had become one of the old ones of the West—were just echoes of what had been. When Lily fell, and Goodnight, and Bean and himself, there wouldn't even be echoes, just memories (336).

Although the vast Southwestern landscape inherently counteracts the idea of borders, its location on the edge of southern and western culture along the Rio Grande and the border of Mexico yet necessitate at least some awareness of place and borders. Importantly, physical borders in the novel evince mythological borders: Call moves from a “shadow” (38) of his former self, to an echo, to an “impostor” (574), and, finally, to an “absence” (583).

McMurtry's *Streets of Laredo* is a long, complex novel that encompasses the lives of many characters and ideas central to the theme of the West, and, specifically, in light of the many crossings that structure the novel, the Southwest. Entwined within the themes of loyalty, responsibility, and the “end of something,” are the various movements and journeys main characters undergo. Importantly, these journeys are both literal and metaphorical. The central action of the novel begins with a quest. Woodrow Call, “the most famous ranger of all time” (132) has been hired by Colonel Terry, the president of the railroad, to hunt the notorious bandit and train robber, Joey Garza. Joey, the son of Maria, has “a cold nature” that there “is no accounting for” (404). Although Joey hates Maria and considers her a “whore” simply by virtue of her sex, Maria nonetheless undergoes a long search for him in hopes that she can save him

from Call. It is said that Joey, who “steal[s] money from Americans” (191) learned his passion for violence and stealth from the Apache, to whom he was sold by a stepfather at the age of six. Joey, however, is a blond Mexican who is described as the devil in the novel.

The *Federales* had killed all the Apaches in Mexico, and those in the United States had been removed to Indian territory. Many people on the border had even forgotten the Apaches, and what they did to people. When Joey left the dead cowboy’s brains in the jail in Presidio, people began to talk about him as if he were the devil, not just a *güero*, a Mexican boy who was almost white. Only some of the older men and women remembered the Apaches, and how they cut (183).

In this regard, Joey is linked to the “devil pig” that terrorizes the inhabitants of Crow Town, a place “where life was so cheap that the law wouldn’t bother trying to preserve it” (90). The “most superstitious of the poor people believed the pig walked down to hell to receive instructions from the devil” (89). Maria is linked to both Joey and the pig, and this linkage emphasizes an ironic reversal in which Maria undermines the myth of the frontier, and, more importantly, the inherited discourses of gender roles and traditional power relations. Maria’s initial act upon entering Crow Town for the first time is to kill the devil pig with one shot—a feat hundreds of cowboys had attempted but had none been able to perform. Some “thought the woman must be a witch, to be able to kill the great pig” (259). Additionally, Maria’s tactical salvation of all of Crow Town’s women—all but the old Comanche woman Naiche, who refuses to leave—foreshadows the death of the outlaw haven. After Maria kills the pig, she is seemingly transformed; she is “a new woman” (261) and her strength and courage become almost as legendary as her son, Joey Garza’s, heinous deeds. Her final transformation comes with her death.

Larry Goodwyn in “The Frontier Myth and Southwestern Literature” identifies three important elements of the southwestern frontier myth: it is “pastoral” with a strong emphasis on primitivism; the legend is inherently masculine—women are not so much “without courage” but altogether missing; and it is “primarily racialist: it provided no mystique of triumph for Mexicans, Negroes [sic], or Indians” (161). Importantly, all of these elements in *Streets of Laredo* are overturned in such a way that major characters often use the mythology of the frontier to their advantage, revealing spaces of resistance. In many ways, McMurtry also prioritizes the feminine in *Streets of Laredo*: Lorena, Maria, and Teresa act as saviors, pushing the limits of inherited patriarchal codes. As such, McMurtry breaks open the boundaries of the Southwestern mythology in ways that presage both a *mestiza* consciousness and an American Indian epistemology that calls for return—a recovery of landscape. Both Call’s and Maria’s actions subvert dominant frontier ideologies; with Call, these are subtle movements couched in McMurtry’s own sense of ambivalence, with the end result revealing not stasis, but a mythos that privileges transformation. Maria’s movements, seeded in loyalty and responsibility for her murderous, spiteful son, Joey Garza, ultimately imbue her with ironic connections to the tale of *La Llorona*, connections that McMurtry explodes.

The imagery associated with the legend of *La Llorona* is powerful and pervasive: “*La Llorona* is every Mexican woman’s story, regardless of sexuality” (Moraga 145). In overturning the legend, in having Joey commit matricide rather than Maria commit infanticide, McMurtry overturns the ideology associated with the legend, ideas “about women being punished for the rest of their lives for some sin that happened somewhere in our [women’s] collective history” (Moraga 145). Early in the novel, we are told the story of Old Estela, a woman who bore thirteen children and outlived them all.

Old Estela had only a few clothes to wash because she had no family. Once she told Maria that she came to the river because she heard the voices of her dead children call, from the water. She had convinced herself that her children were not really dead. They lived in the river, with the frogs and the fish and the little snakes. God had given them gills, like the fish had, so they could breathe. Old Estela knew they were there; every morning, she heard them (99).

Of the legend, Moraga discusses the “official” version, the one in which a woman with an adulterous husband or lover drowns her children in a fit of rage or retaliation, as a “lie” (142-145). Instead, she allows *La Llorona* to “speak for herself” by invoking pre-Columbian Aztec deity, the “Hungry Woman.” Significantly, the Hungry Woman does not cry for her children, but for sustenance. The Hungry Woman “is the story that has never been told truly, the story of that hungry Mexican woman who is called puta/bruja/jota/loca because she refuses to forget that her half-life is not a natural born fact” (147). The half-life Moraga speaks of is indicted by a “male-defined Mexican motherhood” in which Mexican women, who have never “had the power to do the defining [...] wander not in search of our dead children, but our lost selves, our lost sexuality, our lost spirituality, our lost *sabiduría*” (147). The Hungry Woman can be neither satisfied nor contained. According to Swyt, “the hungry woman foregrounds the hybridization and manipulation of mythic meaning, tactics of a borderland consciousness” (190). In the end, when Joey kills Maria, who is also midwife to the town of Ojinaga, Estela hears Maria talking to her own children. Although the river “swirl[s] her blood away,” (513) Maria yet remains; significantly, her death re-centers the myth in such a way that the mythology encompassing *La Llorona* is not “monolithic,” or “uni-directional” (Swyt 191), but suggestive of the notion that

borders of meaning and intention are not contained by hierarchical structures that ostensibly bind them.¹²

Maria, like Lorena, and, more significantly, Call, undergoes transformations that posit a tactical subjectivity, to use Sandoval's term, so as to "recenter" depending upon the kinds of oppression she confronts. Before we meet Maria at the Rio Grande with Old Estela, a scene that foreshadows the female-centered legend of *La Llorona*, we are told that she suffered such shame and humiliation from men that "her spirit had become a crow. It flew to Crow Town to be with her son, the son she had to love, despite the bitter knowledge that he was no good" (80). This is the first of at least three transformations she undergoes. The spirit of the crow is linked to the Kickapoo, Famous Shoes, the "best tracker who ever lived," and who was "part eagle" (194). More importantly, however, the transformation of her spirit is the impetus that permits Maria to live after she is savagely beaten and dragged by the gringos who seek to hang Joey; what propels her is her children and her obligations in the present. Ironically, her home in Ojinaga—the place that will ultimately represent a haven for Call, Pea Eye, and even Joey—is aligned with the Southwest as space only when the gringos violate her. "Maria didn't believe in hell. If there was a hell it came to you in life. The Texans brought it. They had evil in them and they had exercised their evil on her, when they caught her in her house. That was hell, and it had happened to her in her own house" (97). Call also structures a significant memory for Maria—the memory of her dead father and brother—but Call's movements and actions do not spur her own, rather, they foreshadow a model of rebirth and recovery that effectively breaks free the limits of space in the novel.

The expansive Southwestern landscape is a repository of memories in *Streets of Laredo*. First, Call and Goodnight muse about it. "Often the two men would sit, largely in silence,

looking down into the canyon until dusk and then darkness filled it. In the dusk and shadows they saw their history; in the fading afterlight they saw the fallen: the Rangers, the Indians, the cowboys” (16). Yet, always, McMurtry’s ambivalence remains. The “old ones” of the West, as Captain Call calls them, are vanishing, their diminishing attire evidence of loss. Goodnight thinks about his cowboys, who “wore the[ir] guns from wistfulness ... they wanted to feel that they were living in a West that was still wild” (362). For Call, however, it is not diminished attire, but a diminished self of self that he grapples with throughout the novel. In this sense, he represents ambivalence in the flesh; as such, he anticipates the collapse of other key characters in this dissertation: John Grady, Sam in *Lone Star*, and Sheriff Bell in *No Country for Old Men*.

Woodrow Call, “the most famous Texas Ranger of all time,” (132) suffers from a diminished sense of self throughout the novel; by the end of the novel, his transformation, his rebirth, is complete. Along his quest to find and kill Joey, his arthritis at one point becomes so bad that several “days passed without his even unsaddling his horse. He was afraid he might not be able to pull the saddle straps tight again, with his sore hands” (372). Additionally, he begins to second-guess his decisions. Lorena entreats Call to let her ride with him to search for Pea Eye, but Call tells her, “I don’t know that I can protect you...I let the Garza boy slip right by me and kill Roy Bean. Then I let Mox Mox get away. That’s two poor performances in a row” (391). Call has never failed before, for he is well aware of the “way of the frontier. If you failed in vigilance, you usually died. Rarely would the frontier permit a lapse as serious as the one he had just made” (422-423). Call’s lapses, his failures, however, are not tests, as he has proved himself many times throughout his long career.¹³ Rather, they are steps he must endure as space yields to place in the novel.

The complex history that Maria and Call share is the means by which McMurtry accomplishes his most ironic reversal in the novel. Call killed both Maria's father and brother during his early days as a ranger.

The name sent a chill through her. She had loved her father and her brother. They had done no more than take back horses that the Texans had taken from them. No living man had caused her as much grief as Woodrow Call: not the four husbands, three of whom beat her; not the gringos, who insulted her, assuming that because she was a brown woman, she was a whore (61).

Maria, however, understands the nature of transformation, even conversion, having endured such through circumstance. Transformation is a key element in *Streets of Laredo* that allows characters to, in Emma Pérez's words, "remake and reclaim another story—stories of love, of compassion, of hope" (127). If we look at the novel through the lens of border theory, we see how McMurtry's ambivalent stance serves a broader historiographic function. Ideological transformations in the novel are written on the body, and they take place alongside shifts in power relations that arise from the questioning of male-dominant cultural practices. Lorena, the young prostitute we first meet in *Lonesome Dove*, who is now a schoolteacher and Pea Eye's wife, as well as both Call and Maria, all re-negotiate the politics inscribed on their bodies in such a way that conflict and control yield to negotiation and compromise. Lorena has transformed herself from prostitute to wife to schoolmarm and finally, savior. Lorena does not just physically accompany Call on his quest; her earlier transformation foreshadows Call's path to consciousness.

Call and Lorena embody Chela Sandoval's ideology that endeavors to identify "forms of consciousness in opposition" (2) by self-consciously opposing a dominant social order with the

end result of breaking with prevailing, hierarchical forms of ideology.¹⁴ Before she embarks on her journey with Captain Call to find her husband, Pea Eye, Lorena tells Charles Goodnight, “Mox Mox is a killer, and so is Captain Call. Send a killer after a killer” (242). We know that she harbors a strong dislike for Call, yet once she’s traveled with Call for several nights, and, in fact, is forced to amputate his leg in order to save his life, she tells Captain Call that what is written on one’s body is not written in stone. “If you live,” she says to Call, “you oughtn’t to stay a killer. I didn’t stay a whore!” (437). Earlier in the novel, Goodnight, also, reflects upon the nature of change on the frontier when he says, “Lorena did not stay a whore; no more did her husband have to stay a Texas Ranger” (363). Indeed, Lorena’s unbounded movement through the social/class hierarchy foreshadows Call’s transformation, his “call” to consciousness.

Call, seriously wounded by Joey Garza, suffers a bullet lodged close to his heart, has one leg amputated by Lorena, and is facing the loss of his left arm. Yet, he still lives, and Lorena does not understand what will become of him:

Even if she wrestled him onto his horse and got him to Presidio and they found a doctor, what could the doctor do? And what would there be left for him if de did live? He couldn’t hunt men anymore. He wasn’t a rancher. He didn’t farm. He had lived all his life by the gun, and now no one would ever want him for his fighting abilities again. Better that he had died—he wouldn’t have this suffering, and he wouldn’t have to live as an old cripple (454).

Yet when Call is taken into Maria’s home in Ojinaga, Maria, who has despised Call for much of her life, understands that he is no longer the same man. “Though he bore the name of the man who had killed her father and her brother, Maria knew that he was no longer that man, the one she had wanted to kill...To stab him now would be pointless—for she would not be

stabbing the Captain Call she had hated for so long, but only the clothes and the fleshy wrappings of that man” (459). In the long epilogue that follows the novel, Call’s transformation is complete, as he turns the painful gaze of his own history to his body. This ushers his emerging desire to connect with and ultimately carve an oppositional consciousness; he has broken with an outdated ideology and is well on the way to realizing an alternative to his bloody, violent history. Call concludes that on the morning of his injuries, the morning he wounded Joey—but did not kill him—it was his “untrustworthy eyes” that had “cost him himself: that was how he came to view it. Because of his untrustworthy eyes, he had been reduced to what he was now, a man with two crutches, a man who could not mount a horse” (544). Ironically, however, Call, in the end, has eyes only for Teresa, Maria’s blind daughter. Both Lorena and Clara Allen acknowledge Call “wouldn’t last long without Tessie” (577); she remains his “sole attendant” (543). Only when Call looks at Teresa is he even alive. “[B]ut except for Teresa, he had no one. Even looking at the Captain, unless he was with Teresa, was painful. Often when he was looking at Teresa, Call had tears in his eyes. But otherwise, there was nothing in his eyes—he was an absence” (583). Call is an empty vessel. Having been stripped of the mythology, he remains only when his presence is mirrored back to him in the eyes of young Tessie, “who had not only Maria’s look, but Maria’s strength” (583). Call’s final transformation is further evidenced by his advocacy that the “little money” (580) he has managed to save be used to pay for Tessie’s education at a special school for the blind.

Upon her deathbed, after having been stabbed by her son, Joey, Maria charges Lorena with the care of her two children, Teresa and Rafael. Maria’s three children are all “damaged” in some way. Like so many in the novel, her children are not absolutely “whole,” but function as part of a unit, a collective ultimately bound to Maria. Teresa is blind; Rafael is “soft” in the

head—“Teresa thought for Rafael”—and Joey has a “sick” soul (95). Joey is a static character who “belongs to death” from the start. Joey’s vicious hatred, moreover is a thing wholly unaccountable: “[h]is hate was just there, as fire is there, as blood is there, or desire, or sorrow, or sadness, or death. For her [Maria], the fact that Joey hated her was one more painful sorrow, like Teresa’s blindness, or Rafael’s poor sheep’s mind” (487-88).

Captain Call, too, having lost both an arm and a leg in the fight against Joey Garza, at the novel’s end makes his way to Pea Eye and Lorena’s farm in Quanah, Texas. Despondent at first, in time, he traverses the juncture between past and present. Crossing this point in time necessitates union with the Other, in this case, Teresa. Earlier in the novel, Teresa, upon her first meeting with Call, thinks the man “must be a king, from the way he made the air different when he looked at her” (289). Call, too, notices “something quick in her expression that was unusual” (289). It is this bond—that Teresa and Call equally feel—that finally gives Call the freedom to move from the vast space of the Southwest, a space the Easterner Brookshire knew was “beyond a world of ledgers...a world of space and wind, of icy nights and brilliant stars, of men who killed with bullets and men who burned dogs” (343). In the end, there is:

a crack, a kind of canyon between the Woodrow Call sitting with Teresa on the train and the Woodrow Call who had made the campfire that morning ...—he could remember the person he had been, but he could not become that person again. That person—that Call—was back down the weeks, on the other side of the canyon of time. There was no rejoining him, and there never would be (565-566).

Call, a man who “lived somewhere back in memory, across a canyon, across the Pecos; that man had been blown away, as Brookshire feared he would be, on the plains of time” (574), is reduced not to a shell of his former self. Rather, throughout the novel, Call is in the process of

“becoming.” Indeed, “birth and death,” those aspects of the mythology that Pilkington argues are major facets of McMurtry’s ambivalence, become synthesized in the body of Call. By the conclusion of *Streets of Laredo* the limitless spaces of the Southwest have vanished, as have most of the men who shaped the myth. What is left in the stead of open spaces is place, and a “shutting out” of the wild. The final line of the novel focuses on a life of domesticity: “Pea Eye shut the door of the oat bin, to keep out mice and snakes, and, at moments nervous, at moments relieved—at least she had called him *honey*—he followed his wife back to their house (589).

For Ellis, “in the McCarthy worldview there are no good houses, proper burials, and justifiable fences—nowhere to rest and no means of settling down and making reasonable distinctions between one part of the landscape and another” (*No Place* 18). McMurtry’s ambivalent stance toward the frontier mythology allows that such medial spaces between domesticity and the vastness of the frontier collapse in such a way as to produce a synthesis—a compromise. In *Cities of the Plain* what remains are so many of the traveler’s words about dreams and the “immappable world of our journey” (288). But the dream and the reality, regardless of how such worlds are evoked, touch in such a way that what “is sought is altogether other. However it may be construed within men’s dreams or by their acts it will never make a fit. These dreams and these acts are driven by a terrible hunger. They seek to meet a need which they can never satisfy, and for that we must be grateful” (287). However, what is immappable for McCarthy, in *Streets of Laredo* is nonetheless written on so many bodies.

If the dream in *Cities of the Plain* does not satiate men’s hunger, in *Streets of Laredo* we may, nonetheless, seek to understand what might. This however, requires us to not simply prioritize race, gender, and ethnicity, but to accommodate contending, bordered discourses that cannot be resolved into one voice, but, rather, plural voices that contain and are contained within

dreams and imaginings—“other” realities. Such analysis reminds us of Gloria Anzaldúa’s ideas concerning “theory in the flesh.” In a published conversation with AnnLouise Keating, Anzaldúa says: “the things that we really struggle with and need to work out, we need to work out on the physical plane” (Keating 117). However, external, physical realities necessarily include what Anzaldúa calls “alternate states” (Keating 117) of the spirit and imagination. Captain Call’s severed body—once wholly representative of the colonizer—does not remain simply as a symbol of impotence. At the novel’s end, he is “more” than the sum of the severed parts we externally “see.” Call, instead, represents disconnection, and an “interruption” of an earlier identity. By the novel’s end, we feel that Call’s body is yet “in the making.” McMurtry, in effectively de-colonizing Call’s body, prioritizes a multi-vocal discourse that is, in fact, written on the body. As such, Call’s orientation at the conclusion of the novel points towards a more inclusive, bordered consciousness—a place that accommodates often a neglected “other” voice.

In Chapter One, I posed the questions: if the frontier is the thesis, then is the border the antithesis? And if so, when we reconcile the two, does this result in synthesis—a movement that pushes the boundaries of each trope in a way that simultaneously preserves and transcends each to form a new proposition, a third space possibly? McMurtry’s use of the loss of body parts throughout *Streets of Laredo* is a metaphor for human loss—Call has an arm and a leg amputated; Pea Eye has toes shot off by Joey; Joey Garza cuts off the hands and feet of one of his stepfathers, Benito; Billy Williams shoots an ear off of Deputy Tom Johnson; the Easterner, Brookshire, continually fears that he will blow away in the gusty Texas wind; and when we finally meet Colonel Terry we find that he has lost an arm to the war. Maria’s children do not lose body parts as these others do, but, rather, they are born into such losses: Teresa has no sight, Rafael has no mind, and Joey has no soul. All of these characters are, in a sense, diminished. Yet,

what we are left with in Call is much more than “an absence” (583). A close reading of Call’s movements from an “echo” extant in a Southwestern landscape and mythology, to his strategic positioning not alongside, but contained *within* Teresa’s own blind eyes, her own psyche, obliges us to acknowledge transcendence and a new proposition. Call’s “absence” reflects a negation of space. Call’s attachment to Teresa underscores fixity, but more importantly, it represents a re-defining of boundaries. No longer is Call bound to the past, and no longer will he wander in search of whatever the frontier has to offer; instead, he will live out his days in the shelter of a secure domestic space, another’s home, much like Billy Parham at the conclusion of *Cities of the Plain*. Although not a home of one’s own, it’s a start.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE PERMANENCE OF PLACE IN THE SOUTHWEST

Introduction

Chapter Two of this dissertation focused on the constraints and anxieties inherent in the idea of the Southwest as space. The bookend novels of McCarthy's border trilogy act to destabilize the dominant narrative of the frontier as empty space and point towards a different historical trajectory, one in which place only reluctantly yields to the pressures of space, where the hero finds himself homeless in the end. The little house John Grady hopes to restore into a home for Magdalena and himself in *Cities of the Plain* proves a false vision, a false utopia centered in a dream of conquest rooted in a linear narrative; neither John Grady nor Magdalena will live to call the old cabin "home." Not ironically, the end of Magdalena's life is associated with the border, the river where her naked and torn body is found: "She lay as the rushcutters had found her that morning in the shallows under the shore willows with the mist rising off the river. Her hair damp and matted. So black. Hung with strands of dead brown weed" (229). John Grady's end, after he is mortally knifed by the *filero*, Eduardo, is met in a makeshift "clubhouse made from packingcrates" (257) in a street alley. To this end, Octavio Paz's observations in his short essay "Landscape and the novel of Mexico," which Alan Cheuse uses as a measure upon which to comment on landscape in *All the Pretty Horses*, is particularly useful.¹⁵

In describing the Mexican landscapes evinced by English writers D.H. Lawrence and Malcolm Lowry, Paz writes, "...It is something that is alive. Something that takes a thousand different forms; it is a symbol and something more than a symbol: a voice entering into the dialogue, and in the end the principal character in the story..." (33). Paz describes Malcolm Lowry's semi-autobiographical novel, *Under the Volcano* (1947) as an "age-old story of the

expulsion from Paradise” (Paz 14-15). Paz’s short critique of the novel’s protagonist, Geoffrey Firmin, a British consul in the small Mexican town of Quauhnahuac (Cuernavaca) parallels Gail Moore Morrison’s reading of McCarthy’s structural usage of the journey and quest motifs in her essay, “*All the Pretty Horses: John Grady Cole’s Expulsion from Paradise.*” As we will see, John Grady’s expulsion from Paradise, or more specifically, the Hacienda de Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción, is more related to a constricting linear narrative of nation that fails to account for the idea that “[a] landscape is not the more or less accurate description of what our eyes see, but rather the revelation of what is behind visible appearances. A landscape never refers only to itself; it always points to something else, to something beyond itself” (Paz 15).

In 1923, D.H. Lawrence wrote about “the Spirit of Place” that pervades the American West, where the “ghosts” of Indian nations yet persist (40). For Lawrence, Indian nations, though “dead,” remain “unappeased.” “Do not imagine him in his Happy Hunting Ground,” he writes. “No. Only those that die in belief die happy. Those that are pushed out of life in chagrin come back unappeased, for revenge” (40). Lawrence’s language is overtly psychoanalytic, outmoded in its phraseology, and his premise that certain American writers are spiritually starved is problematic in that it tends towards over-generalization; however, the precedence he places upon the Western landscape is quite telling. Writing from Lobo, New Mexico, he examines the work of Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman, to conclude that these American authors tell “lovely half-lies” (71), because they tell only half-truths as a result of their necessary dodging of “old ghosts” that yet occupy the landscape they dwell upon. These American artists, who greatly inform the canon, are caught between “the old master...like a parent...over in Europe.” (10). They inhabit a homeland where they have “physically and psychically denied the claim on the land and its spirit held by those prior Americans, the Indians” (Sanders 56). Although these

writers have all pushed toward a new American consciousness, it is a “false dawn” (Lawrence 11). According to Lawrence, “men (sic) are free when they are obeying some deep, inward voice of religious belief—obeying from within. Men (sic) are free when they belong to a living, organic, *believing* community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealized purpose. Men (sic) are freest when they are most unconscious of freedom” (12). His point is that the power of the American landscape is like a vengeful god that must not necessarily be appeased but *integrated* within the psyche of the artist. For Lawrence, the West is a place of timelessness where the writer must permeate the features of the earth in order to speak truth. “Never trust the artist. Trust the tale” (8), he writes. In this regard, Lawrence ushered a critical consciousness for the necessity of understanding mythic patterns that comprise the character of so much Western and Southwestern writing. This idea prefigures Dianne C. Luce’s conclusions regarding truth, human history, and the “telling” of stories in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Crossing*, a subject I will treat later in this chapter. For McCarthy, writes Luce, the ‘real’ story does not matter, for it has no witness; the ‘true’ story matters, the fiction, the one shaped by the witness/artist (202).

The scheme above is central to Chapter One, in which I showed how movement, openness, and freedom are central tenets of the mythology of the frontier. Additionally, within this frontier ideology we can move amid the boundaries of space to ultimately configure how borderlands peoples struggle against, and ultimately oppose, colonialist structures to create a liberating third space. In order to do this, however, we must first uncover the ways in which space yields to place in the Southwest. One example, as I discussed in Chapter Two, is McMurtry’s *Streets of Laredo*, which demonstrates an awkward compromise written on the body of the infamous Texas Ranger, Captain Woodrow Call. Additionally, in Chapter Two I showed how the pervasive spirit of place often remains to subsume the mythos of Western space, as was

the case in McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses*. In this chapter, I show that when we foreground place in Southwestern writing, we see that—like space—place is both a figurative and a physical reality. In turn, identities become inseparable from particular landscapes when we conceptualize the reality that the earth, the soil, the ground under one's feet, represents rootedness and orientation—place—as opposed to uprootedness and disorientation—space.

If we define the conceptual limits of the frontier in terms of space, then the border, situated in the American Southwest along the natural boundary that is the Rio Grande, is a specific, geopolitical site that displaces and, indeed, often disorients frontier mythologies. And although many scholars have written about the border in spacio-historical terms as well as via historical constructions of space along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands,¹⁶ works that deploy theories of both space and place are seemingly non-existent. In this dissertation, I suggest that within the bordered frontier we must necessarily look to both space and place so as to understand each as generative sites of ideology that inform both collective and individual identities. Works that not only re-create, but foreground Southwestern spatial topographies do so as a means to internalize constructions of both space and place. To understand place in the Southwest, however, we must acknowledge place as a repository of shared memories within a given ethnic community. This position is central to exposing what Stuart Cochran has called “primordial sentiments” (76) that speak to specific geographical places. Both Anzaldúa and Moraga allude to such sentiments: Moraga, who acknowledges that she must “dig[ging] up the dirt in an attempt to uncover a buried Xicana/o history” (iv); and Anzaldúa, whose work is an offering, an “Aztec blood sacrifice” whose power emerges from her own human body as well as the Earth's body (97).

Using the works of the above theorists as guides, I hope to show that when we conceive the Southwest as both an “originary place and a living presence” (Cochran 70) we expand categories of spatial analysis in ways that prioritize place. In this way, I will engage—both at the individual and collective levels—developing modes of consciousness and the means by which such reveal strategies of resistance and struggle. This chapter will explore texts—Americo Paredes’s *George Washington Gomez*, Arturo Islas’s *The Rain God*, and Cormac McCarthy’s *The Crossing*—that focus on the fixity of place in terms of a politics of spirituality that either negates or accentuates “return.” A discussion of González and Raleigh’s *Caballero* serves as an introduction to tactics aimed at resolving “the social crisis experienced by the Mexicans who first felt the full imperial power of the United States and who, after 1848, were left on the other side of the border to negotiate an uncertain fate” (Limón, “Mexicans, Foundational Fictions” 346). Additionally, by focusing on patterns of return, I show how certain characters either repress historical knowledge and enter into what Fredric Jameson terms “blind zones” (20) centered in a repression of history, or utilize what Mario J. Valdés has termed the “historical imagination” to disclose the author’s re-interpretation of history.

Strategies of Place: Assimilation and Resistance in *Caballero* and *George Washington Gómez*

In the South Texas borderlands, questions of identity, always germane, as cultural negotiations at least since 1848, were necessitated by the political re-defining of boundaries. In working to uncover patterns of emergent subjectivities in the borderlands, we can look to some of the characters in Jovita González and Eve Raleigh’s novel, *Caballero* to imagine the possibility in the Southwest of future worlds in-the-making. In *Caballero*, the frontier is a

manifestation of the American ideals of Manifest Destiny as an ideological construct that grinds against a Mexican economy of land ownership based in the centralist, conservative ideals of the Republic of Mexico of 1821. This clash of ideologies is made manifest in the narrative of the members of the Mendoza y Soria hacienda and the growing influx of Anglos into the area. The novel, which opens in South Texas in 1846, is a historical romance that complicates the contradictory relationships between Anglos and Mexicans at a time when South Texas was coming to terms with the politics of a re-defined geographical space. The novel, which was written in the 1930s and 1940s, mediates between the ideas and ideals of an earlier Mexican nationalist identity and a burgeoning Mexican-American culture. According to José E. Limón, “since 1848 all Mexicans *de afuera* or not, have carried on a cultural negotiation at some level with the United States” Arguably, he continues, “*Caballero* records the first such intense negotiation” (“Mexicans, Foundational Fictions” 342). It is my contention that the cultural negotiations at the heart of the main characters in the novel lay out the conflicting ideologies of an Anglo American frontier imperative and a newly-created borderline in the Southwest. González and Raleigh place gender roles and sexual relations at the heart of borderland encounters. As such, a feminist reading anchored by U.S. third space feminist theories allows us to explore emergent modes of differential consciousness amid shifting currents of power in South Texas. *Caballero* realizes both oppositional and assimilationist strategies to create something new for the future along the borderlands—what theorists would call a Mexican-American culture.

A brief introduction to the major characters in *Caballero* situates their various assimilationist strategies of characters as they struggle between older aristocratic traditions of Mexican/Spanish culture and a newly emergent American system of capitalism on the frontier.

Don Santiago, the proud patriarch of the hacienda, *Rancho La Palma de Cristo* rules with a nationalistic, heterosexist pride that confines his identity to a past life, an existence that must accommodate or become obsolete. He surveys his world, the great space that is South Texas and sees a place built on the toil of his ancestors. His vision, however, is near-sighted as it is built on a static vision: “Mine!” he roars, and continues:

All this that I can see, and far beyond, is mine and only mine...Power was a figure that touched him, and pointed, and whispered. Those dots on the plain, cattle, sheep, horses, were his to kill or let live. The *peons* down there, were his to discipline at any time with the lash, to punish by death if he so chose. His wife, his sister, sons, and daughters bowed to his wishes and came and went as he decreed (33).

Although at the beginning of the novel, we understand that this system of rule and justice has solidified Don Santiago’s realm in this particular geopolitical space, we are made quickly aware that the influx of *americanos* into South Texas necessitates a change of “heart and passions” (53) if the Mexicans, now Mexican-Americans or *tejanos* are to survive and, indeed, thrive.

Throughout the novel, Don Santiago *chooses* neither to accommodate nor assimilate, and it is this fact that dooms him in the end. He dies, having the lids of his eyes closed by his Anglo son-in-law Warrener, with his hand tightly clenched around a scoop of dry and parched earth. The past has suffocated him just as he now suffocates the soil in his dead grasp. Never having come to terms with present circumstances, he has no future. Don Santiago is a prisoner of a history that views time as linear; his ideology is shaped by a notion of time that does not encompass either the present or the future. However, when we trace the father-daughter relationships presented in the novel, we acknowledge that they underscore shifting ties and alliances between Mexico and the United States.

Emma Pérez reminds us that disenfranchised groups throughout history have often labored to create a postcolonial imaginary when they have otherwise not succeeded in breaking from their colonial formations. The key to this scenario rests in Hayden White's idea of "liberation" from a "historical consciousness" rooted in a past that regards neither the present nor the future ("Burden" 123-24). Don Santiago, a static character with "a fixed identity" (Cotera 344) remains a measure against which we can map the third space movements of the female characters in the novel. Although his body will not be re-mapped, we can read the boundaries of both place and space throughout the novel as they transcend to forge a new synthesis on the border—a Mexican-American epistemology that rejects the patriarchal aspects of a traditional culture that was becoming increasingly unsuitable with regards to a new social reality rife with necessary social, cultural, and political concessions. With this in mind, we can trace the negotiations by the women in the novel to unearth the means by which they engage in a differential mode of oppositional consciousness. As Chela Sandoval suggests, such a "tactical" mode is mediated by one's ability to "read the current situation of power" so that one may self-consciously choose and adopt "the ideological form best suited to push against its configurations" ("U.S. Third World" 15). Such a tactic, a survival skill well known to those in oppressed positions, is allied with Anzaldúa's *la facultad*, "an experiencing of soul" that allows especially "[t]hose who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world" to know the deep structures below surface realities (60-1). To this end, Shirley Lopez argues that the women in *Caballero* not just "prefigure" later Chicanas of the 70s and 80s, but "enact" the same identity later known as Chicana (17).

In contrast to Don Santiago, the opportunistic Texas frontiersman Red McLane courts and later weds Don Santiago's daughter, María de los Angeles (Angela) in an effort to succeed in

his commercial and political ventures in the newly-created border space. Whether or not he sees himself as racially superior to landed Spanish elites such as the Mendoza y Soria who emigrated to South Texas in the eighteenth century is not the point. The point is that he represents, much like the women in the novel, the new social reality leavened by the transformation of place in the Southwest through the growing influx of Anglos into the area. In Limón's view, "in González and Raleigh's hands he becomes a liberal who knows that Mexicans must be included in the new 'nation'" ("Mexicans, Foundational Fictions" 351). Nonetheless, "[i]t takes only a modest effort of the imagination to see America's grand venture in continental Manifest Destiny as it looked to Mexico: a shameless land grab and an aggressive attack on Mexican sovereignty" (Limerick 232). Angela, however, capitalizes upon her union with McLane as a means to further her own ambitions to help her people, most notably the *peons* who have seemingly left one position of powerlessness within the hacienda system for another under the new American capitalist system. According to Limón, theirs is a marriage of convenience that must be read in nationalist terms. Their marriage represents a pragmatic outlook that underscores the politics of compromise. With this in mind, I argue Red McLane's vision, which so fully represents the ideals of Manifest Destiny, is at least partially threatened by María de los Angeles. Angela "buys into" the imaginings of McLane's frontier vision, but she does so in an effort to continue to help her people, in this way anticipating much contemporary Chicana writing, as Cotera argues in "Hombres Necios." When McLane proposes in a letter to Angela, she and Susanita consider the very essence of "woman" in terms of what Chela Sandoval calls Elaine Showalter's third and final "female" phase of a feminist history of consciousness. Moving from Showalter's ideas in *The New Feminist Criticism* (1985) to Hester Eisenstein's in *The Future of Difference* (1985) Sandoval presents Eisenstein's ideas supporting this third phase of consciousness in which

“female differences originally seen as a source of oppression appear as a source of enrichment” (“U.S. Third World” 7). Thus, when Susanita says to Angela, “I often wonder if there isn’t a part of us that is completely ours given to us at birth which cannot possibly belong to anyone else. How can we completely belong to *papá*, if we have separate souls?” (213), she anticipates the voice of the “Chicana speaking subject during a historical period which witnessed the rise of nationalist movements among Tejanos in response to U.S. imperialism” (Cotera 339).

Caballero suggests that women have great agency as they consciously choose to mitigate patriarchal structures while forging new racial and social orders. For instance, although Luis Gonzaga, Don Santiago’s second son—far different in thought and action from the eldest son, Alvaro—says to Susanita: “you know there is nothing for any of us except what *papá* wills, don’t you?” (108), both initiate actions couched in personal freedoms, freedoms Don Santiago’s restrictive imagination cannot foresee. Luis Gonzaga, an artist who engages a homoerotic relationship with the Euro-American artist Captain Devlin, sees “clearly, that the real issue was not his consorting with an American, or even his leaving; the issue was a test of the mastership of his father over his family” (197). Luis Gonzaga leaves the ranch for the East Coast to study art with Devlin; Susanita, however, successfully “inverts” gender dynamics when she assumes the role of her older brother, Alvaro’s, rescuer. According to Andrea Tinnemeyer, “Susanita’s rescue of her brother defies Mexican patriarchal custom and, more, profoundly, subverts the very foundation for Alvaro’s actions as El Lobo, a *bandito* fighting against the Texas Rangers” (27).

When Susanita first learns that Alvaro has been taken by the Texas Rangers to presumably be hanged in the plaza the following morning, she rides through the night, unchaperoned and attended only by a male peon, because for her, “there was no question of what to do, for there was only one thing to do” (262). Although Susanita is instrumental in freeing her

brother, Alvaro's death at the hands of a Texas Ranger is nonetheless linked to his inability to abandon his hacendado "privileges." Although Alvaro dies on his horse, he dies as a direct result of his rage at a Ranger's boasting. Ironically, Alvaro's blood blends with that of the Ranger he kills "into a river of red" along the "uncaring" Río Bravo (307).

Additionally, Doña Dolores, Don Santiago's sister who marries Don Gabriel, does so not as a matter of convenience or circumstance, but out of love—something she could not have done within the old system. Don Gabriel, Don Santiago's neighbor and friend, tells Don Santiago: "I have concluded that unless we go to Mexico and stay completely Mexican we must conform in part. I have had Señor McLane record my land. It is men like him who will really build Texas, Santiago" (327). Both Don Gabriel and Angela reveal how cultural accommodation on the borderlands is necessary to succeeding within the new political structure. Don Gabriel is only able to do this when he lets go of his masculine pride, a thing Don Santiago and Alvaro can never do. He tells Don Santiago: "If I have bent down from my pride, it is because I thought it wiser to have pride suffer a little rather than have all the rest of me suffer" (327). Not ironically then, Dolores is only able to marry Don Gabriel in the new political climate. She concludes, "she would not have departed from custom and laid herself open to ridicule by marrying at her age. Not before the coming of the *Americanos*; not unless, as it happened, she had been in the house of one who put custom second if it served him better so, as McLane did" (329). Thus, like Angela, Dolores takes advantage of a heightened political consciousness rooted in a female subjectivity, but *only* when each understands that she can defy the "bordered designations of the self which nationalism and heterosexism construct" (Cotera 340), as both place and space along the bordered frontier are re-negotiated.

Perhaps most telling is the negation of a warrior hero code in *Caballero*, a code that seemingly has “no place in a symbolic map for the twentieth century” (Limón, “Mexicans, Foundational Fictions” 350). Don Santiago and Alvaro represent this code, and we will see this code once again in Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez*. In three separate instances, Don Santiago wrestles with an “alter ego” that Cotera concludes represents “the voice of ‘the other,’ a mediating force that allows the master to see himself as servant, the man to figure himself as woman” (344). For Don Santiago, then, the voice he hears represents the feminine aspect of the self that is locked in mortal combat with the fixed, unswerving patriarchal power that he so vehemently signifies: “Listen to me, Santiago,” the voice, the other, the “man with quiet eyes” says,

Who is master, the one who lashes, or the one who stays his hand? Learn first to master that most rebellious of servants—yourself...your choice is now. You can be the man you are, or the one I am. You know me. I am the part given you by your splendid mother and I once lived in you. Don Santiago scooped up earth and looked at it, and as he looked, possession took him in the grip of his pride, and he gave himself to it as a shameless woman to a lover. He struck out with empty hand at the man with quiet eyes, and struck again and again. He walked to the edge of the bluff, and saw the *hacienda* gleaming like an opal in a setting of gold. ‘Mine,’ he whispered. ‘Mine!’ (173).

Significantly, Don Santiago silences the voice by gripping a mound of earth, foreshadowing the “scoop of earth, brown and dry” (337) that trickles from his dead palm in the last lines of the novel. When Warrenner, now his son-in-law, finds his body, he wonders:

did Don Santiago see as he stood here and lifted his arms, on this day which he must have known was his last? Did he see the grandchildren, the guests, the activity and happiness

that might have been?...Or had he held to the last to the staff of his traditions, speeding his soul with his head held high in the right of his convictions, to stand unafraid before the God whom he had worshiped and, he believed, obeyed?" (336-7).

We know the answer, for the thing that Don Santiago most vehemently guards, the thing that he twice avows is "Mine! Mine!" in the novel, is the land itself, the soil on which he built his mighty empire. In fact, even Padre Pierre realizes that "the house of Mendoza y Soría had reached its ultimate in the present generation, and must inevitably go downward unless new and vigorous blood were united with it" (289). The answer, not to "what might have been," but is and will be, is also partly written on the bodies of Susanita and Angela. The women in the novel, unlike the adamant Don Santiago, realize what Mexican-Americans can and need to do in order to forge, and ultimately maintain their identity on the borderlands. As such, the women, and some of the men, remind us that although the history of relations between Mexicans and Euro-Americans has often been harsh, if not brutal, contact over time forced "uneasy accommodation[s]" by which "the exchange of obligations and commitments, and justice [were all] sometimes possible (Montejano 11). According to Limón, *Caballero* is a "symbolic document" that draws on the past to articulate a romance in the present in which it was written to imagine a future (352). In this sense, I would argue that the novel is a historiographic revision of borderland ideologies couched in the competing ideologies of the border and the frontier, competing ideologies entwined in the re-negotiations of space and place that serve to demythologize and subvert the hegemony of history.

As in *Caballero*, much of Paredes's complex novel, *George Washington Gómez*, is rooted in the continual bodily negotiations that a main character, in this case, Guálinto, must undergo. Although both novels were written during roughly the same time period, from 1936 to

1940, each depicts vastly different modes of resistance that Mexican-Americans and Chicana/os adopted. For George Washington Gómez, called Guálinto by his family, the South Texas borderland experience creates such a conflict of identity that incompatible ideas often result in behavior that appears contrary to his character, as his identity is entwined in an “actual,” as well as an “imagined” history. The “old ways,” as informed by a politics of vengeance at all costs, a politics akin to Don Santiago’s “warrior code” do not, in the present historical circumstance of the novel, work any longer. Guálinto, who as a child fantasizes about being a border hero, is, however, *not* a hero. Although he is smarter than most and he has the luxury of a stable household as well as loving and caring guardians, these facts do nothing to quell his resentment and animosity toward the various *angloamericanos* in the novel. The fact that he cannot, or will not, envision a future where he is not some sort of powerless Other dooms his vision in the end. Tragically, he gives up and gives in. In the end, he is only George, a man born in South Texas who will make money at the expense of “his people” and his land. This fact not merely makes him no better than the Anglo Americans he once despised, it paints a far worse picture of him.

Ramón Saldívar, in considering Guálinto’s subjectivity in-the-making highlights his “checkerboard consciousness.” Saldívar writes about the “utopian hopes and dreams of [Guálinto’s] father and mother, who optimistically project a future of reconciled differences with their crossed references to the child’s promised Mexican and American identities” (“Borderlands” 158-9). He continues: “the dialectic we encounter in the borderlands depends on the centrality of an ongoing dialogue between contending discourses, opposed in contra-diction, that cannot be resolved into one voice and thus has no equivalent in other conceptual systems” (159). Guálinto’s name, George Washington Gómez, implicitly positions him within a spectrum of possible identities “as a subjected representation of the imaginary relations to the real

conditions of existence in the early twentieth-century borderlands of south Texas” (158). I argue that the “sedimented, elastic environments of other words, belated desires, inchoate beliefs, and contradictory knowledges” (184) that Saldívar posits as the “dialectics of difference’ that historically shape Guálinto’s identity can be found in the fissure, the space between, the border and the frontier. Where the vastness of frontier imaginings promise freedom and plenty, the borderline cuts and separates. Thus, when Saldívar writes of the “dual fragments of Mexican and American social forms” (160), I believe that he is commenting on the conflicting forms entwined in border and frontier imaginings. Additionally, I would like to discuss Guálinto’s return, after a lapse of three years during which he is socialized and educated, to his homeland; for when he returns to Jonesville he has seemingly made a choice which grounds his worldview. To comment on his return, I draw from Héctor Pérez’s conclusions that the narrative structure of the novel encompasses a literary naturalism that prioritizes a kind of historical determinism whose philosophical depth is Paredes’s “lifelong insistence that Mexican-American folklore is rooted in the clash of cultures” (33) along the borderlands. The nature of setting in the novel, and that setting’s particular history sustain the complications of plot and intensify a counterdiscourse to the myth of the Southwest. I do not agree, however, with Pérez’s conclusion that the “novel’s overall vision, in keeping with naturalist literary projects, seems to be that major, significant social change is unaccomplishable” (45), but lean toward David G. Gutiérrez’s conclusion that, “Mexicans were simultaneously objects of subordination and active agents of political and cultural opposition and resistance” (534). Additionally, I hope that by prioritizing what Stuart Cochran calls the “primordial experiences” interlaced within a specific geographical place—an “essential” element as well as one related to ethnic identity—I can show how Guálinto’s seemingly impossible task of developing into a heroic figure lies in a failure not of historic

determinism but a failure to integrate the past into his future—a failure of what Mario J. Valdés calls the “historical imagination” (84).

In his article, “The Ethnic Implications of Stories, Spirits, and the Land in Native American Pueblo and Aztlán Writing,” Stuart Cochran makes a case for Southwestern writers—Chicanos and American Indians—who “speak for place, of their essential connection to the land, and of the ‘shared memory’ their ethnic communities construct from living on the land” (90). His study of works by Leslie Marmon Silko, Rudolfo Anaya, Simon Ortiz, and Jimmy Santiago Baca focuses on “cultural work” that “is precisely a return to the land: a reclamation of the originary space, literally and spiritually” (80). He makes his case by foregrounding Chicanos¹⁷ and American Indian’s “essential” connection to the land, an argument he is able to make via the theories of Charles Keyes, and Juan Flores and George Yúdice. He extends Flores’s and Yúdice’s ideas about identity as mediated and constructed through the struggle over language on the border—a struggle that yields “new social movements,” to successfully negotiate Keyes’s position that “ethnicity is [both] a cultural construal of descent” in which an “individual creates a personal identity from an ethnic identity that he or she appropriates from a cultural source, that is, from the public display and traffic in symbols” (75). These formulations surrounding such dynamics of descent as one’s native language and place of birth that result in lived experiences and yield social practice, allow him to move to the theories of Anaya and Anzaldúa, both of whom “internalize their borderlands origin into a psychological space in which their identity is realized through cross-cultural tensions” (75). What these two writers have in common, argues Cochran, is that they, like the other authors he studies, “are groping for the conceptual possibilities in and limits of their ‘primordial sentiments’—particularly the experience of being who they are in relation to a specific geographical space” (76). In their works, these authors offer

a “radically contracted form of essentialism...and a radically expanded form of constructionism” to arrive at what Anaya calls “a new consciousness,” grounded in the earth, yet bound by body and soul (“Aztlán” 239). Like Anzaldúa and Moraga, as well as Leslie Marmon Silko, who writes about the emergence of the Pueblo Laguna as a people unable to “conceive of themselves without a specific landscape” (“Landscape, History” 269), what is most important about these Southwestern authors is that only by prioritizing a specific place can each shift his or her emphasis from the constructed, narrative elements of ethnic identity, through a reassertion of spirit. This stance allows these authors to ultimately arrive at a theoretical model that, rather than merely reinforcing essentialist elements of place at the expense of the cultural construction of descent, integrates these in an effort to “primordially bind” a people to the land, and, in turn, advance renewal, recovery, and return.

This model is applicable to *George Washington Gómez* because the structure of the novel, significantly informed by patriarchy as well as the epic border *corrido* tradition, straddles an enforced Americanization all the while the main character, Guálinto, is struggling to survive, both physically and ideologically, in a newly-bordered terrain. The novel takes “as its moment the 1915 uprising in South Texas by Mexican Americans” foreshadowing both the Chicano Movement of the 1960s as well as the “coalition politics among Third space groups in the U.S.” (Saldívar, “Borderlands” 276). As such, the dispossession of a homeland, in which Mexican Texans found themselves “foreigners on their own native land, culturally Mexican, politically American, in reality, not quite either” (Saldívar, “Borderlands” 275) becomes a key racial memory that binds the burgeoning ethnic consciousness of the main character, Guálinto, to a specific time and place in history. Yet, he is no border hero, and his consciousness does not carve a third space, or any space, where he may achieve liberation. In fact, Guálinto represses history

in such a way that he will never be free from its burden; for Guálinto, the burden of history remains forever hidden under the weight of his own ignorance and shame. The tragedy of the novel lies in the fact that he *chooses* to disassociate and ultimately dis-identify with a cultural past and the place that binds him to his cultural, and ultimately spiritual, identity. In the end, Guálinto, remains just as unfixed in time and place as John Grady in *All the Pretty Horses*, and, as we will see later in this chapter, Billy Parham in McCarthy's *The Crossing*.

In "Native American Novels, Homing In," William Bevis writes about the marked contrast between American literary *bildungsgromans* and American Indian *bildungsgromans*. In American novels of this genre (*Moby Dick*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Huckleberry Finn* for instance) the hero leaves home, often in search of a new life; as such, the individual becomes the ultimate reality, with individual consciousness serving as the medium of such a reality (582). In contrast, the American Indian novels he studies—works by Marmon Silko, Momaday and McNickle to name a few—"homing in plots all present a tribal past as a gravity field stronger than individual will" (585). The pattern of return in the American Indian novels he follows suggests a "transpersonal self: "identity is not a matter of finding 'one's self' but of finding a 'self' that is transpersonal and includes a society, a past, and a place. To be separated from that transpersonal time and space is to lose identity" (585). Bevis points out that the plots of the works he studies are not "regressive." Although the characters he studies all return home in order to end *where* as well as *when* he or she began, these works reveal that knowledge is regressive in that it is collective, an idea epitomized in the writings of Leslie Marmon Silko and Paula Gunn Allen. Anzaldúa, too, writes about the importance of this "return odyssey" (33) in her *Borderlands* chapter, "The Homeland, Aztlán/*El Otro México*."

Importantly, American Indian “protagonists succeed largely to the degree in which they reintegrate into the tribe, and fail largely to the degree in which they remain alone” (Bevis 593). According to Vernon E. Lattin, who uses Annette Kolodny’s theories in *Lay of the Land* (1975), and the writings of anthropologist Mircea Eliade in *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (1958), to study the works of Rudolfo Anaya, José Antonio Villarreal, N. Scott Momaday and James Welch, among other American Indian writers, these authors reveal an intense desire to recapture and restate a sacred vision—a mythic vision—that has been lost as a result of “the lineal, judgmental, and historical view” espoused by a “conqueror’s religion,” Western Christianity (625). He writes:

The fiction of Native Americans and Chicanos reveals an intense desire to recapture and restate the sacred vision which physical conquest has not been able completely to destroy. This quest...[i]n its most complete form [it] recovers a vision associated with a world view found in all ancient people, a view that offers to modern America a mythic vision that has been lost ...In novels where the quest ends in racial and mythic unity, the fictional narrative itself becomes myth, thus truth; the secular novel becomes a sacred form, part of the living myth, part of the sacred history of the people (625-626).

When we consider, then, the connection that Cochran and Lattin posit between American Indian writers and Chicana/o writers, we can imagine a possible reason why Guálinto, at the end of *George Washington Gómez*, is consumed with “a feeling of emptiness, of futility,” the sensation that “he was not comfortable with the way things ended. There was something missing that made any kind of ending fail to satisfy” (282).

Some years after leaving Jonesville, Guálinto returns to South Texas an educated man, a lawyer. But unlike his childhood companions, Elodia and El Colorado, he is not an “organic

intellectual[s] in the making” (Pérez 45), for he chooses not to be. Earlier in the novel, before Guálinto kills Lupe García, aka Arnulfo Miranda, the seditionist who is later revealed to be his uncle, El Colorado admonishes him to use his anger, to use his past, to “get people to listen” (250). But Guálinto resents the fact that he has, since his birth, been asked to be a “leader of his people,” the ironic title of the last part of the novel. His resentment is manifested in the shame he feels towards his father. At one point, he yells at his uncle, Feliciano: “My father was just an ignorant Mexican! He got it into his head I was going to be a great man. A great man! And he saddled me with this silly, stupid name!” (193). At the novel’s end, Guálinto marries Ellen Dell, a blond with “a long Anglo-Saxon face” (283). The negation of all that his name promised his mother and father is complete upon meeting Ellen’s father, an ex-Texas Ranger who may have had a hand in killing Gumersindo, Guálinto’s father, during the last days of the uprising. Ellen’s father says to Guálinto, “You look white, but you’re a goddamn Meskin” (284). With this pronouncement, Guálinto decides to “legally change his name to George G. Gómez” (284). Not surprisingly, after this he entirely dis-identifies with his culture, his people, and the place he once called home. Neither his wife nor his children will learn Spanish, his native tongue, because, “[t]here’s no reason for them to do so.” What’s more, he insists that his children “will grow up far away from here” (301). During a final conversation with Feliciano, we realize the extent to which he has negated his own past, dis-identified with it, and in Bevin’s terms, separated from transpersonal time and space so absolutely that he is “an individual alone,” a man “without context” (590). After attending a political rally held by some of his old friends, the “members of the executive committee of Latins for Osuna” (292) Guálinto disdainfully refers to them as a “bunch of clowns playing at politics” (300). Feliciano, who has just learned that his nephew’s

job entails spying on his old comrades on behalf of the U.S. Army, ruefully retorts: “Then you see no future for us.” Guálinto replies,

I’m afraid not. Mexicans will always be Mexicans. A few of them, like some of those would-be politicians, could make something of themselves if they would just do like I did. Get out of this filthy Delta, as far away as they can, and get rid of their Mexican Greaser attitudes” (300).

In the end, then, Guálinto is nothing more than a pawn of the U.S. government, ironically the very faction that once stole his homeland from under his feet.

Unlike Guálinto, who refuses to live with the ghosts of his ancestors, but instead crushes them under the burden of his own history, Feliciano, successfully destabilizes the frontier ideologies that have worked to fissure his Mexican identity. In so doing, Feliciano orients himself toward a new, more inclusive, consciousness. Through Feliciano, who assumed responsibility for his nephew Guálinto, after Guálinto’s father’s murder at the hands of the Texas Rangers, “we get to see the political machine at work in Jonesville, where he and the Gómez family relocate” (Pérez 35) Feliciano, once a *sedicioso*, neither represses his history, nor wholly assimilates into an American system that seeks to erase the Mexican; instead, he subverts the frontier ideology in ways that empower Mexicans while undermining the new American system of government. He joins his old comrade, *El Negro*, the Chief of Customs now known as Santos de la Vega, in a “little venture” to import goods into Mexico duty-free. Both Feliciano and de la Vega understand that gold and land are “the only things that stay with you, the only real wealth in the world” (81). Although such a stance is reminiscent of Don Santiago’s, these men understand that they must put open bank accounts so as to borrow money and “buy into” the American system of capital. However, both men also acknowledge that the old ways of keeping

all of the gold that one can get out of the “Gringo banks” is important as well. During the Depression years, when the market crashes and the Gringo laws take over the banks, Feliciano who “never trusted banks” will use part of his money “to buy land from the old Gringo who rents to me now” (192). Importantly, he explains to Guálinto that the “backward *ranchero* way” (192) will allow them to come out ahead in the end. In this light, I agree with Saldívar that the “novel pulls from the residual elements of traditional culture the patterns that conceive the subject and then interrogates those patterns in the light of its dominant, modern formation to suggest other, untried designs for imagining a new ethnic consciousness” (149).

The memory of a homeland deeply flavors one’s aims for the future. In *George Washington Gómez*, Mexicans like Feliciano who embrace the past do so in an effort to mediate between an emergent American way of life and the residual knowledge of a very recent Mexican history. The forces at play in the construction of a border consciousness are entwined not just in an ideological battle at the subjective level, but conflicting narratives of space and place. In this sense, Guálinto remains an emblem not of place, but of the vast, blank expanse of Southwestern space, and, as such, he is utterly lost. Novels such as González and Raleigh’s *Caballero* and Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez* uncover avenues to uncovering avenues to a new ethnic consciousness within the positionality of border places and frontier spaces. In *Caballero* the “in-between existence” (73) that Paredes writes about in “The Problem with Identity,” gives way to accommodation and pragmatic cultural and social negotiation, fully realizing a Mexican-American outlook. In *George Washington Gómez*, the main character’s in-between state of being results in a “prefigurative instance of the state of Chicano literature and the Chicano subject at the end of the twentieth century” (Saldívar, “Borderlands 274). These portraits of border conflicts and the narrative resolutions they propose, given the specific geopolitical space each

occupies, are central to understanding the push and pull of the bordered frontier. Whether the security and stability of place yields to space, as in the novel *Caballero*, or whether one chooses to forego the attachments of place, psychically dislocating from time and space, as does Guálinto, the ambivalence that colors the works of the authors I studied in Chapter Two remains; as such, a multitude of voices are necessary to our understanding of modes and possible patterns of resistance. In the American Southwest the landscape is often the thing—that place of “primordial sentiments”—that holds the inner world of those who reside there and the outer world, with its rough and arid terrain, in balance.

Place, Collective Memory, and the Politics of Spirituality in *The Rain God*

I believe that when Gloria Anzaldúa attests, “[I]like the ancients, I worship the rain god and the maize goddess, but unlike my father I have recovered their names” (112) she is speaking of an ancient, continuous story that *mestizas* must recover on their way towards a new consciousness, a recovery that culminates in a synthesis of Indian, Mexican, and Anglo cultures. From an American Indian perspective, Leslie Marmon Silko writes, “the ancient Pueblo people depended upon collective memory through successive generations to maintain and transmit an entire culture, a worldview complete with proven strategies for survival,” further acknowledging that “the ancient Pueblo people could not conceive of themselves without a specific landscape” (“Landscape, History 268-269). Anzaldúa’s struggle—the struggle of the *mestiza*—culminates in return and rebirth, and the final image she presents us with in her chapter, “*La conciencia de la mestiza*” is one of sowing and planting on her homeland terrain in the American Southwest. “Growth, death, decay, birth,” she writes. “The soil prepared again and again, impregnated, worked on. A constant changing of forms, *renacimientos de la tierra madre*” (113). I contend

that a central tenet that links these two scholars ways of knowing the world is epitomized in Paula Gunn Allen's characterization of a central tenet of American Indian epistemology—"We are the land"—(119). Yet Anzaldúa, unlike Allen, offers the "steps" one must take on the journey towards a new consciousness. For Anzaldúa, when we put "history through a sieve" and reinterpret history through the use of new symbols and the shaping of new myths, as she says we must, we can follow the trajectory of those who aim to communicate such a rupture in the hope of deconstructing identities with the goal of re-constructing them so as to work to "transform the small "I" into the total Self" (104-105) The total Self, then, is achieved only as it is contained by a viable relationship to the terrain. Transformation, emergence and renewal occur—just as does consciousness—*within*; such changes are reflected in, and reflective of, outer terrains.

At the heart of Islas's *The Rain God* is the desert, and in the heart of the desert are found all of the saints and sinners that make up the Angel family. The Rain God, which serves as both the title of the book and the novel's final chapter, is metaphorically linked to the desert, where love and death continually merge. Miguel Chico, "the family analyst, interested in the past for psychological, not historical reasons" (28) is the central character whose developing consciousness I will trace. The novel, which spans the decades between the Mexican Revolution of 1910 to the late 20th century, weaves a spiral of stories with each of its six segments narrating episodes surrounding the various members of the Angel family. The first segment, "Judgment Day," introduces the Angel family as well as structurally foreshadows the final segment of the novel in which the family's matriarch, Mama Chona, dies. In the first segment Miguel Chico, at the age of thirty, and having undergone surgery which will leave him forever tied to a colostomy bag, muses on his childhood and "his family...especially its sinners" (4). Thus, are we introduced to two central themes of the novel: the narratives of the Angel family "saints and

sinner” and Miguel Chico’s longing “to return to the desert of his childhood, not to the family, but to the place” (5).

José David Saldívar writes that *The Rain God* is “a novel that meticulously and poetically re-creates the topography along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and the social, gender, and sexual relations of its people” (*Border Matters* 74). According to Saldívar, discourses of “return” as well as the psychology of la frontera are deciding factors of Islas’s rendering of “some five hundred years of U.S.-Mexico border space and time” in both *The Rain God* and *Migrant Souls* (74-76). Saldívar focuses primarily on Islas’s 1990 novel, *Migrant Souls*, which I only briefly touch upon here. I remark succinctly on this novel because Saldívar’s concentration on spatial, or “topospacial” elements, rather than the nuanced family history the novel ostensibly explores and comments upon, is central to my reading of Islas’s first installment of the Angel family, *The Rain God*. Central to the present discussion then, is Saldívar’s “topospacial” stance, which attends his conclusion that *Migrant Souls* “strips off layers of time and memory to disclose the unsaid, the repressed history hidden under the weight of ignorance, propriety, or shame” (80). Thus, in *Migrant Souls*, when Jesus Maria’s son, Rudy, now a lawyer in Washington D.C., proclaims during dinner one evening:

This was Mexico before it was the land of liberty and equality for some. And before that, it was Indian territory. They knew how to live in it. So where are we?... We are on the border between a land that has forgotten us and another land that does not understand us (165).

historicity and simultaneously spatial memories merge to suggest a topospacial reading. Such a reading shows a “profound interaction of space and history, geography and psychology, nationhood and imperialism, and [permits us] to define space as not just a setting but as a

formative presence throughout” (79). Yet what is missing from Saldívar’s topospatial reading is an equally necessary consideration of place, for it is in a very specific place that Rudy suggests an answer: “So what are we educated wetbacks and migrant souls to do?” He asks the silent family of Angels. “Let’s keep the border and give both lands back to the Indians!” (165) He replies, only half in jest. Importantly, however, *Migrant Souls* is more about the historical journeys and territorial structures the Angel family makes—migrant spaces—as they move across the border from Mexico into Texas than the places—parlors, hospital rooms, closets, and sickrooms that inform *The Rain God*, which I now turn to.

Rosaura Sánchez situates her essay on Islas’s *The Rain God* within an ideological discourse that surrounds “experiences of occupational and geographical mobility and changing power relations within the family as experienced by a child growing into adulthood” (114). In considering the larger networks of meaning that act to construe ideology among the various Angel family members, Sánchez argues that Islas’s novel moves “not so much within a historical time-space as within a subjective timeless frame in which historical references are blurred and earlier social practices are recalled and mapped out in order to be finally expunged from the character’s [Miguel Chico’s] memory” (116). By foregrounding Louis Althusser’s ideas regarding “ideology as illusion, as false consciousness and distortion, not of men’s [sic] real conditions of existence but of their relations to those conditions” (116), Sánchez concludes that the older generations in Islas’s novel conform to dominant ideological practices. Thus,

The snobbery Mama Chona and Tia Cuca displayed in every way possible against the Indian and in favor of the Spanish in the Angel’s blood was a constant puzzlement to most of the grandchildren. In subtle, persistent ways, family members were taught that only the Spanish side of their heritage was worth honoring and preserving: the Indian

in them was pagan, servile, instinctive rather than intellectual, and was to be suppressed, the Indian in them denied” (142).

The systematic denial of the Indian as Other is a subject I discuss at length in Chapter Five. For Sánchez, although younger generations in the novel reject embedded patriarchal practices, ethnic and class prejudices, and certain religious beliefs, they nonetheless do “not formulate a distinctive alternative,” but, rather, merely oppose, by nature of counterdiscourse, what they ironically affirm (118). Additionally, Sánchez maintains that “resentment is the major ideological strategy in the novel” by which Miguel Chico aims to free himself of a collective memory, specifically, an inherited discourse centered in a patriarchal family structure (119). Although I do not agree with Sánchez regarding her conclusion that the younger generation, specifically Miguel Chico, does not formulate a “distinctive alternative” to embedded practices and beliefs, in regards to ideology-formation, Sánchez makes several cogent points about generational conflicts and the means by which narrative, indeed the narration performed by various Angel family members, “becomes a strategy of struggle” (125).

Neither Sánchez nor Saldívar, then, prioritize place in *The Rain God* in such a way that foregrounds the Angel family’s essential connection to the land that internalizes their border origins into a psychological space that is realized through cross-cultural tensions as well as a generative site of ethnic identity. Yet it is precisely the “subjective timeless frame” to which Sánchez alludes that I believe lends the main character, Miguel Chico, an opportunity to recall a specific, geographical, ancestral site in such a way that place—the Southwestern desert—becomes a generative site of ideology. The reading I offer here, of the various Angel family narratives Islas presents in *The Rain God*, then, parts ways with Sánchez in that while she argues that the desert—the place that unites the novel’s six separate segments— “serves only as a

secondary motif and strategy” (126), I prioritize the desert as a necessary means to deconstruct the conceptual possibilities suggested by one family’s relationship to a specific geographical place—the desert Southwest.

Sánchez maintains that Miguel Chico longs for the desert of his childhood “not with nostalgia but with resentment” (119). By foregrounding the writings of Fredric Jameson in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984) Sánchez concludes that Miguel Chico’s near-death experience at the beginning of the novel compels him to come to terms with the past so as to be free of it, thus mirroring Islas’s necessity to achieve freedom from past hierarchical structures. She writes:

The novel itself ultimately is the answer; it assumes the form of a collective confession, an act of exorcism, a ritual within which the writer is both confessor and collective sinner. The narrative is thus a cathartic experience, a way of consuming the past, as well as of doing penance (119).

Such a stance moves Sánchez to determine that this act of narration “estranges” Miguel Chico in such a way that he becomes “free of this burdensome collective memory” constituted in traditional Western society in the form of gender roles, and power relations and values (119-120). In her discussion that follows, she traces Miguel Chico’s final dream, the dream in which he “exorcizes” Mama Chona, the family, and the patriarchal hierarchy that textualizes his resentment, which she writes is “the major ideological strategy in the novel (119). I believe, however, that the dream represents not Miguel Chico’s need to exorcise the past, but rather his compulsion to integrate racial memories to effectively re-direct his future. If, as Sánchez posits, the “home is truly the cave where the monster resides” (122); then the desert, the place that

“calls” Miguel Chico to return home in the novel’s first few pages, becomes a place of synthesis, and more importantly, renewal.

In the novel, the Southwestern desert represents Miguel Chico’s need to reclaim an originary space, both literally and spiritually. However, I believe that what complicates issues of ethnicity in the novel may be read as “primordial sentiments” that correspond to a “Homing In” theme that Stuart Cochran asserts as the most emblematic found in contemporary American Indian novels. William Bevis writes that in “Native American novels, coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call ‘regressing’ to a place, a past where one has been before, is not only the primary story, it is a Primary mode of knowledge and a primary good” (582). With this in mind, the desert is a dominant ideological strategy in *The Rain God*, the structural device that not merely cements the family’s history, but suggests an essential connection, what Cochran calls an “inextricable mixture” in which the primordial becomes “a part of the culture and community that constructs the people and the land in a primordial nexus” (82).

The evolution of various Angel family members as they travel from life to death is ensconced in the land as a sacred symbol of the persistence, and repository of primordial memories. When Antony, the son of Miguel Chico’s godmother, Nina, dies, the desert “comes” right to the back door of his house. JoEl, the favorite son of Felix Angel, Mama Chona’s oldest son, has a premonition on the night of his father’s murder in which the softly falling arid sands lift “the desert to their doorstep” and make “a sound that made him think of veils sliding against each other or the most delicate knives being sharpened...his mouth was as dry as the veils and knives outside (152). The young soldier who brutally murders Felix in cold blood enters the bar with the cold air of the desert trailing behind him, foreshadowing the smothering taste of the

dusty desert in Felix's mouth as he lays dying. Not surprisingly, the desert "exhales" (138) as Felix drowns in his own blood.

Symbolically, the novel's "Rain God" is an allusion to a past Mesoamerican or Aztec way of life that has survived in the Angel family, and thus in Chicana/os in general; it is part and parcel of their identity, their *mestizaje*. The Aztec rain god *Tlaloc* is associated with both water and blood, life and death, in Aztec cosmology. Felix and JoEl are most closely linked to both of these symbolic associations. As a child, Felix loved to run out into the desert storms and dance under the dark tempest overhead. No one could stop him. But when they tried, his retort was always a happy "I'll die dancing" (114). In later life, however, the desert storms scare him and make him feel "buried alive" (136). His son, JoEl has the ability to foretell the coming rains by the smell of the desert air; he envisions angels that bring the rains. Both JoEl and Felix exhibit homosexual tendencies, and both are the most "artistic" and "sensitive" in the family. Perhaps it is because they are so "open," ie. Felix acts against Mama Chona's wishes and marries Angie, and he is the family "clown"; JoEl actively experiments with drugs, that they are most closely aligned with the Rain God.¹⁸

Although Felix and JoEl appear to be significantly linked with the Rain God, so too is Miguel Chico, who is the narrative device that "links" the many stories of the Angel family. Miguel Chico's early memories of his childhood friend Leonardo, and his visits to the cemetery, cement the idea of the Rain God as both giver and taker: "love and death came together for Miguel Chico and he was not from then on able to think of one apart from the other" (19). At the novel's end, when Miguel Chico *feels* the Rain God come into Mama Chona's room just as she approaches death, the Rain God is unequivocally—and importantly for Miguel Chico—one of both life and death. He has dropped the hand of Mama Chona, the hand that she so effectively

held at the beginning of the novel. Mama Chona is dead, but the old ways, the ways of the Rain God, will forever remain with the Angel family, and especially Miguel Chico, in the desert and in their blood.

In *The Rain God*, Islas binds the bodies of so many members of the Angel clan to an ancestral cosmology grounded in the earth itself and around which a protective community is constructed. The Rain God remains an “umbilical connection to the past,” part of the “shared collective memory” that is not learned but part of Miguel Chico’s “ethos, symbols from the archetypal memory residing in the blood” (Anaya, “Aztlán” 236). As a child, part of his “instruction was to accompany Mama Chona on her visits to her sister and her daughters, where, she told them, they would learn proper manners.” Additionally, Miguel Chico acknowledges that “[m]uch of the children’s knowledge of the family’s history as well as its scandals came from these visits” (161). History, then, revolves around familial narratives, but it is the knowledge of the Rain God that finally gives Miguel Chico the courage to drop Mama Chona’s hand. Only when he feels the Rain God come into the room where Mama Chona lies dying can he say: “— Let go of my hand, Mama Chona. I don’t want to die” (180). He has come to terms with the monster of his dreams, the “manipulator and the manipulated,” the “victim and the slayer,” the loved and the unloved,” the “judge and the advocate” (159). Sánchez argues that the monster in Miguel Chico’s dream symbolizes “the family; the patriarchy...The plunge that in the dream the character takes off the bridge with the monster represents his decision to commit suicide with his violator, that is, to end the silence and begin writing the story of his family and thus of himself” (120-121). Here again, I differ with with Sánchez’s conclusions. I believe that Miguel Chico’s decision to take his dream monster—the monster that beckons him into its cave—with him represents his need to integrate the past in such a way that life and death become linked through

time and history, and, more importantly, remembrance and return. The logic of space and time is dissolved in *The Rain God* in such a way that Miguel Chico experiences wholeness and continuity of past and present. Miguel Chico is both analyst and historian who understands the burden of history as well as the necessary impetus to embrace Valdés' ideas surrounding the "historical imagination." Valdés writes,

Every aspect of the present is grounded in a past of its own, and the very birth of understanding is the imaginative reconstruction of what came before...The aim of the historical imagination is to utilize the fullest spectrum of perception as the starting point for the building of the past through which it has come to be. It is therefore a return to the headwaters of present experience (qtd. in Márquez 4).

Thus, upon awakening from his dream, Miguel Chico's primary mode of knowledge is his need not to banish the dead, but "to make peace with his dead, to prepare a feast for them so that they would stop haunting him. He would feed them words and make his candied skulls out of paper" (160). He conjures a traditional feast—the yearly Mexican holiday of the "Day of the Dead" not as an act of merely honoring his dead ancestors, as well as the Rain God, but to "feed them words," (160) to recall them yearly, and to re-write their often neglected histories as well as his own from a new vantage point. As Chela Sandoval writes of those who act in opposition to hegemony: the struggle, which both begins and ends with the body, brings "into view a new set of alterities and...demands that oppositional actors claim new grounds for generating identity, ethics, and a political activity" ("U.S. Third World" 9). In *The Rain God*, the "new" alterity that Miguel Chico formulates is directly tied to Paula Gunn Allen's assertion that "[t]he land is not really a place, separate from ourselves," but, as the words of Oglala Lakota elder Luther Standing Bear tell us, human beings "must be born and reborn to belong" so that their bodies are

“formed of the dust of their forefather’s bones” (Allen, *Sacred Hoop* 119). Miguel Chico must not banish his ghosts, but learn from them rather than be crushed by them.

Unrealizable Ideals of Place in *The Crossing*

If, as geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes, place signifies security and connection, and space corresponds to freedom and movement, and if, as Tuan further suggests, the ideas inherent in “space” and “place” require each other for definition, then, it is necessary that we examine the movements by which space renders place as well as the means by which place undermines the destructive imperatives of space—the subject of the previous as well as the present chapter. *The Crossing*, with its emphasis on story and temporality, complicates these ideas, as well as those of recovery, narrative, and the linearity of the frontier vision, suggesting that individual realities are contained in the narratives of our lives rather than the experiences that pattern and ultimately form them.

Cormac McCarthy’s *The Crossing* is composed of four sections, each consisting of an instance of crossing the border from the central character’s home in New Mexico into northern Mexico, around the state of Chihuahua. The main protagonist, Billy Parham, first travels into Mexico to return a she-wolf he has trapped; the second time, Billy enters Mexico with his brother Boyd to search for his family’s stolen horses after his parents have been murdered; the third and fourth crossings revolve around the search for Boyd and Billy’s subsequent return to the States to bury his brother’s bones. Entwined in these sections are various stories told from various positionalities in the form of different travelers. Time and again, in the form of stories from so many people, it seems that we are heading toward some inescapable conclusion of McCarthy’s. “Bits of wreckage. Some bones. The words of the dead. How make a world of this?”

How live in that world once made?” says the *gitano* to Billy (411). According to Luce, like language, in McCarthy’s vision, things such as these are only artifacts with which humans construct a “matrix of meaning” for the world. The language of the road, just as the language of the frontier, and the vast spaces inherent in that language, contains not essence, but only records, memories, things—artifacts that “prompt the imaginative recovery of the past [and] also misrepresent the vanished world they purport to symbolize and summarize (Luce 205). But the constraints of the “linearity of the road” (Luce 205) ostensibly keep the hero, Billy, from fully contributing to and partaking in the cultural matrix that he learns about in the form of so many tales. Likewise, Cant writes that McCarthy’s

texts do not assert a faith in the ability of new forms to say new things, but rather they assert that the old forms may be redeployed in ways which enable an individual voice to be heard, but a voice which, in McCarthy’s case, asserts that the violence and destructiveness of man is as old as man himself and that this aspect of human nature is unchanging” (107).

As we have seen, the bookend novels of McCarthy’s border trilogy reveal what Cant has called a “self-consciously mythic manner” (206). In these works, Cant writes, McCarthy “depicts the American side of the border as an arid wasteland, a sterile limbo, home to a myth that has lost its power. His Mexico is a mythic and exotic other that is increasingly shown to be as much a product of American fantasies as of indigenous reality” (206). *The Crossing*, however, is replete with Spanish language; indeed, the hinge novel of the border trilogy contains more Spanish than either bookend novel. Additionally, by recasting, indeed subverting, the codes inherent in frontier imaginings, Susan Kollin argues that in *The Crossing*, “Mexico becomes a region where the hero from the north of the border loses his bearings and his sense of identity. A

racialized geography, the space is continually mystified in the novel” (580). In these ways, Mexico itself, and the several Mexican and Indian characters, as well as the she-wolf Billy Parham attempts to “return” to the place he imagines is her rightful home, represent “the wild, the inscrutable, the unknown” (Kollin 580). Kollin concludes that the novel, in its attempt to “restore[ing] an ecological vision to the Western” (576), nonetheless narrates a “cautionary tale about trying to assert control over the unknown...the limits of human power over the world” (581).

Cant, too, concludes that a similar idea fundamentally structures the novel. In *The Crossing*, he writes, “the illusion lies in our apprehension of the world rather than in the world itself, in our notion that our experience is direct rather than culturally mediated” (207). In the end, we are forced, along with Billy, to suffer the knowledge that individual systems of knowledge and belief, on any terrain, are inadequate, as these are often epistemologies that we impose upon the world rather than what Cant calls “direct apprehensions of reality” (200). Thus, although Billy hears various tales throughout the novel, narratives that for McCarthy reflect the idea that “all is telling. There are no separate journeys for there are no separate men to make them. All men are one and there is no other tale to tell” (155-157) Billy, however, heeds little of the narrative messages he “witnesses.” As such, Cant surmises that he remains outside of the “cultural matrix” that both Luce and Cant explore in McCarthy’s work.

The Crossing, then, is a complex narrative that, itself, problematizes the essence of narrative all the while it comments upon many ideas I have touched upon in the preceding and the present chapter: ideas entwined in time, place, space, and history. The capability for narrative, says Luce of *The Crossing*, is the means by which human beings formulate the tales that contain our past and give meaning to our present (208). More importantly, however, the

novel “is the story of a boy who discovers too early and too crushingly what cannot be held and whose spirit suffers a grievous wound. [Billy’s] innate capacity for narrating the world” and taking part in its “vast matrix” is not restored in either this novel or the final action of *Cities of the Plain*, where, as an old man of seventy-eight, he is still homeless—a *huerfano* (Luce 211). In both novels, “Billy picks up the road metaphor with its connotations of wandering, avoidance and entrapment within the illusion of linear time-boundness” (Luce 212). All this being said, I maintain that it is Billy’s desolation at the end of *The Crossing* that empties the Southwest most poignantly of any sacred qualities it once held—whether real or in dreams. It is the final image of Billy holding his face in his hands and weeping for an old dog—“[r]epository of ten thousand indignities and the harbinger of God knew what” (424)—that illuminates the vast space before him as one fully defiled and profaned. The irony that the “false” dawn—ostensibly the nuclear explosion at the Trinity site that occurred on July 16th 1945—is what prompts Billy to call for the dog in the growing darkness is not lost on readers.¹⁹ According to Luce, Billy’s impulse to call back the crippled dog “is a small sign that his capacity for life and the right valuing of it has not been utterly extinguished” (212). This evokes what Luce calls the “environmental vision of *The Crossing*” (207), a vision we can position alongside Leslie Silko’s “necessary praxis of ecocriticism” (Cochran 79) found throughout her writing. This praxis, comprised of memory, stories, and a renewed reverence for the land” sustains Silko’s re-visionary stance in which a protagonist’s quest for identity is necessarily aligned with a particular landscape—an idea I take up in the next chapter (Cochran 79).²⁰ The atomic detonation in the final pages of *The Crossing* has set in motion that which can never be right again; nonetheless, Billy recognizes that his fate is tied to that of the old dog’s—both are part and parcel of the world’s matrix, regardless of Billy’s desolation at the novel’s end.

Jay Ellis, who explores the various disappointments of domestic spaces in the border trilogy, writes, “one of the many ironies in the hearts of McCarthy characters is their ignorance of what constitutes the plausible domestic responsibility required to find a home in the world” (*No Place* 13). The heroes of the border trilogy, while seeking domesticity, nonetheless continually flee domestic places, often for complicated reasons such as in *All the Pretty Horses*, in which John Grady leaves home in part because the “cattle-ranching West that was his history is now passing away, the security of his boyhood likewise dismantled as he watches his world radically change” (Kollin 570). Indeed, as Ellis states, there is “a recurrent ambivalence toward both domesticity and flight that suffuses” the border trilogy (*No Place* 29).

With regards to Billy in *The Crossing*, Ellis writes, “Billy’s beginnings, however, were never as dependent on interior space as were John Grady’s” (*No Place* 218). Although it is true that Billy is not long in any domestic place in *The Crossing*, Billy’s actions reveal a connection and innate knowledge of “primordial sentiments” of place that, while not directly binding him to the landscape, reveal his longing to embrace “what cannot be held” (127) Two actions contain the theme of crossing in the novel: Billy’s compulsion to return the trapped she-wolf to Mexico, and his necessity to return his brother’s bones to the U.S. It is the first of these “returns” that I wish to comment upon, for it is Billy’s first quixotic quest into Mexico which not only patterns his later crossings, but solidifies the insurmountable losses that pattern the rest of his life.

Wallis R. Sanborn uses S.K. Robish’s essay, “The Trapper Mystic” to conclude that in trapping the she-wolf, Billy sets her “towards incorporeality, for one can neither possess nor know a wolf” (136). Indeed, the Mexican master trapper, Don Arnulfo reminds Billy that

the wolf is a being of great order and that it knows what men do not: that there is no order in the world save that which death has put there. Finally he said that if men drink the

blood of God yet they do not understand the seriousness of what they do. He said that men wish to be serious but they do not understand how to be so. Between their acts and their ceremonies lies the world...and all the animals that God has made go to and fro yet this world men do not see. They see the acts of their own hands or they see that which they name and call out to one another but the world between is invisible to them (45-46). It is this liminal state of being where Billy finally traps the she-wolf—her belly full with a litter of pups—that both Robish and Sanborn argue that Billy “anchors” and traps himself within “open space” (Sanborn 136). In addressing the “mythology of the trapper,” in which trapper and wolf are in a blood covenant and, as such, are part of each other’s collective unconscious, both agree that “the success of the trapper results in his own extinction as well as his prey’s” (Sanborn 135-136). This idea is related to the story about the “order of things” and the idea that “evil is in fact the thing itself” that the blind man relates to Billy. He continues:

This man of which we speak will seek to impose order and lineage upon things which rightly have none. He will call upon the world itself to testify as to the truth of what are in fact but his desires...It is rather that the picture of the world is all the world men know and this picture of the world is perilous (293).

Of this, Luce concludes, that “narrative,” for McCarthy, represents a true form that “is equivalent to spiritual insight into the world itself: a vision that is not related to eyesight, but that penetrates to the black mystery at the core of things” (210). The wolf, who obeys only “[o]ld ceremonies. Old protocols” (25) is “at once terrible and of a great beauty like flowers that feed on flesh” (127). And when Billy buries her in the mountains of Mexico, after being forced to kill her out of mercy, we appreciate that this act is the “doomed enterprise” that divides Billy’s life “forever

into the then and the now” (129). Finally, this act brings him to wish “to become again the child he never was” (129).

According to Cant, Billy’s eventual “fate is in part due to his crossing of a cultural border, of his failure to appreciate the meanings that will be mediated by Mexican culture” (204). Yet his tragic fate as “un hombre del camino” (414) appears more a result of the fact that he tells no tale of his own, but merely acts as repository for narrative. If “all is telling” and Billy is a witness to a myriad of tellings, why does Billy tell no story of his own either in *The Crossing* or in *Cities of the Plain*?

Time and again, the travelers Billy meets allude to a space between, a thing he cannot possibly know given a life that, for Billy is characterized “by suppression of vision and denial of his potential for understanding” (Luce 210). Sometime before Boyd’s death, a Mexican *ganadero* “hold[s] his hands forward one above the other, a space between. As if he held something unseen shut within an unseen box.” With this gesture, he tells Billy:

You do not know what things you set in motion. No man can know. No prophet foresee.

The consequences of an act are often quite different from what one would guess. You must be sure that the intention in your heart is large enough to contain all wrong turnings, all disappointments. Do you see? Not everything has such a value (202).

Cant suggests that Billy’s need to “apprehend the world directly” is linked to his need “to gain the wolf’s direct sensory apprehension of the world, an experience unmediated by a cultural matrix” (210) and thus an experience that needs no structuring narrative. Billy tries

to see the world the wolf saw. He tried to think about it running through the mountains at night. He wondered if the wolf were so unknowable as the old man said. He wondered at the world it smelled or what it tasted. He wondered had the living blood with which it

slaked its throat a different taste to the thick iron tincture of his own. Or to the blood of God. (51-52).

Billy's attempts to restore order to the wolf's world by seeking to deposit her safely home in Mexico mirror his attempts to find a place, a home of his own. Although he seeks to connect with a knowledge that he can never know, he is given insight into the cultural matrix that can connect him to such; nonetheless, he remains a wanderer. In seeking to connect with the Other, most clearly represented by the she-wolf, he seeks to connect with a mythic narrative in which he can secure direct knowledge of the world. But this need will cost him the wolf, his family, and his home. His alignment with the wolf, however, is one of responsibility, and he knows he is "a man entrusted with the keeping of something which he hardly knew the use of" (79). As such, just as "the wolf knew nothing of boundaries" (119) neither does he. But he will learn, and this lesson will cost him any sense of place he once embodied. The consequences of Billy's quest to restore the wolf to her place in the world cost him any sense of home, of security and attachment, he once had—however tenuous.

As readers, we know that Billy "made her [the she-wolf] promises that he swore to keep in the making" (105). What promises he made, in their exactitude, we do not, however, know. But what we come to understand is that with her death, Billy comes to know "what cannot be held," and perhaps it is for this reason that he must pursue a nomadic existence. Thus, on his wanderings, when he meets an old man who tells him "that he must cease his wanderings and make for himself some place in the world because to wander in this way would become for him a passion and by this passion he would become estranged from men and so ultimately from himself" (134), we know that these words are not foreshadow but actualities.

Billy's first encounter with a wolf pack takes place during his childhood, in 1931, the year he and his family first moved into Hidalgo County, New Mexico.

They were running on the plain harrying the antelope and the antelope moved like phantoms in the snow and circled and wheeled and the dry powder blew about them in the cold moonlight...and the wolves twisted and turned and leapt in a silence such that they seemed of another world entire. They moved down the valley and turned and moved far out on the plain until they were the smallest of figures in that dim whiteness and then they disappeared (3-4).

This elegiac beginning, Sanborn writes, "is McCarthy's statement of the wolf's mythic timelessness; time will pass, and the wolf will be eradicated, but the wolf's essence—its social and predatory skills—will exist so long as one wolf exists in the wild" (141). Although we cannot be sure that the she-wolf of Billy's later quest is the "last" wolf in New Mexico, or the Southwest for that matter, as Billy's dreams increasingly become nightmares, and as he loses everything he once had, we are forced to reckon with the limits of human power over the wild. Billy's attempt to encroach upon the wild places of the she-wolf's territory, and his subsequent attempts to restore the animal to her primordial space underscores the dream encapsulated in a Southwestern mythology that ends with the revelation that such a dream is but an illusion.

Some time before Billy is forced to shoot the she-wolf in an act of compassion, we find her watching him "with her yellow eyes and in them was no despair but only that same reckonless deep of loneliness that cored the world to its heart" (105). This "reckonless deep of loneliness" foreshadows Billy's own grief at the novel's end, as he calls and calls for the old dog whose howl is a sound "[s]omething not of this earth. As if some awful composite of grief had broke through from the preterite world" (425). Even in his absolute isolation, Billy shoos away

the old dog only to call it desperately back, and finally, to be left alone in “that inexplicable darkness” (424-425). This last episode of the novel harkens back to the gypsy’s vision of Billy’s two brothers, one alive and the other dead. When Billy tells her he has only one brother, she says “Es mentira. Tiene dos” (369). Who is the “other” brother she speaks of? Additionally,

She said that the rain which befriends can also betray one. She said also that while the rain fell by the will of God evil chose its own hour and that those whom it sought out were perhaps not entirely lacking of some certain darkness in themselves. She said that the heart betrayed itself and the wicked often had eyes to see that which was hidden from the good (369-370).

Should we be surprised then when the “horribly crippled” dog that “stood there inside the door with the rain falling in the weeds and gravel behind it and it was wet and wretched and so scarred and broken that it might have been patched up out of part of dogs by demented vivisectionists” picks up Billy’s scent, and nudges the air with its nose to try and “sort him from the shadows” (423)? Not really. Billy has paid the price of the dream. Billy has always been in the same situation as the wolf, and now the old dog. Just as the dog has, written across its body, “ten thousand indignities,” so too is Billy’s body thus writ in the language of his own travels. In *Cities of the Plain*, we are privy to Billy’s hands as an old man, full with “ropy veins that bound them to his heart. There was map enough for men to read. There God’s plenty of signs and wonders to make a landscape. To make a world” (291). Perhaps the dog, like the she-wolf, is more attuned to the heart of things, and Billy’s driving away the dog remains, as Luce points out “a cowardly disavowal of his connectedness to the matrix of the world that includes horror and loss and grief” (212). This appears to be evidence of McCarthy’s own ambivalence regarding the fatal nature of the Southwestern mythology that informs the actions of old cowboys like Billy;

the unknowable is written on the body of the old dog just as it is written on Billy's old hands. Even so, Billy's ultimate failure rests in the "doomed enterprise" that is his initial quest, and it is this which gives power and resonance to the final image of Billy as he weeps, alone, on a road that will, once again, take him to no place, but, rather, more empty spaces.

CHAPTER FOUR
RECOVERING HISTORY THROUGH BORDER THEORY:
CONSCIOUSNESS AS POLITICAL ACTION

Introduction

As the preceding chapters have shown, in the borderlands of the American Southwest, subjectivities are not just geoculturally split, but they are fractured by competing interpretations and continual re-interpretations of history. In this sense, space, place, and history are mythologizing, discursive elements that we must examine both textually and ideologically. In an effort to interrogate identity on the borderlands, as well as forge an answer to the question of the relationship between the idea of both the frontier and its intrinsic connection to the border, we must acknowledge the places and spaces of the Southwestern landscape as imagined, fluid ideologies. The American identity in the Southwest is grounded in the consequences of a violent, imperialistic, colonizing history; this is the history we must uncover and examine. In this sense, the personal search for self speaks to and of an entire history, and a people that share the same culture, stories, and ways of being-in-the world.

Both this chapter and the next will focus on the power of stories as historiographic devices in the search for individual and collective identity. Two works lend themselves to an analysis of this process—John Sayles’s 1996 film *Lone Star*, and Leslie Marmon Silko’s 1991 novel, *The Almanac of the Dead*. Both of these texts underscore the idea of re-writing history from the “bottom-up.” In *Lone Star*, the transformation of one man’s identity that attends a revision of his own personal history is contingent upon his search for the truth in the form of the varied remembrances—told in the form of stories—of the inhabitants of the fictional Texas border town of Frontera. Moving from the personal to the global, Leslie Marmon Silko’s novel,

Almanac of the Dead, presents a worldwide vision of whole peoples—American Indian, Latina/o, African American, women, and the underprivileged—that aims to disrupt the existing world order to dramatically re-vision world history.

The search for identity via a historiographic re-telling of stories is central to Sayles's *Lone Star* and Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. As such, I will utilize border theory as envisioned by Gloria Anzaldúa, Chela Sandoval, and Emma Pérez, to uncover the metaphorical power of frontiers and border spaces so as to reconstruct these tropes as syncretic constructs that transcend individual difference and work to cohere the experiences of Anglo, American Indian, and Mexican-American cultures. I argue that *Lone Star* and *Almanac of the Dead* “telescope” parallel ideas of the need for an inclusive, third space consciousness to usher social, political, and cultural change on the borderlands. The “movement” of both works involves a response as well as a challenge to Euro-centered ways of seeing and presenting the world as well as a “reexamination of the very ideas about storytelling, time, and personal identity that form the basis of Euro-American culture” (Sol 28). Both works force us to acknowledge that, as Angelita La Escapía says in *Almanac of the Dead*, “we must reckon with the past because within it lay the seeds of the present and future” (311). The historical retellings and narratives of the various characters in these two works force us to acknowledge that the re-telling of stories is not just structurally necessary to each work, but essential to larger revisionist, political aims.

In an interview with Laura Coltelli, Marmon Silko acknowledges that the “use of the flashback” in *Almanac* underscores “the realization that time is not linear, that the past is not left behind and the past is not dead. All the past goes into the creation of this present moment” (126). Similarly, the narrative structure of *Lone Star* forces us to question the lessons of history from

competing, often conflicting points of view; the film's flashback scenes are seamless, and reinforce the idea that the past bleeds into the present.

In Chapter One, I wrote about Eric Gary Anderson's Southwest as a migratory space where the relationships between the physical environment and the ideologically driven constructions of borders create a complicated convergence point of fluidity and tension. For Anderson, the Southwest is a "home place—not a "regional" periphery, but a "center for a rich variety of Indians and non-Indians" (3). The movements and migrations of Southwestern peoples he studies are metaphorical and metaphysical, as well as physical, and in this way, so-called boundary lines, such as those plotted on maps, remain fluid and portable. Historically and figuratively, the Southwest is in constant motion. As such, Southwestern spaces must be defined from diverse, shifting points of view. Anderson's Southwest is the same Southwest that Gloria Anzaldúa reminds us became the "homeland" of 100,000 Mexican citizens annexed by conquest upon the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. In one day, the *herida abierta*, that open wound "where the Third space grates against the first and bleeds," became the "unnatural boundary" where the "prohibited and forbidden" live (25). Under the threat of "Anglo terrorism," those living in this place of constant transition remain "separated from our identity and history" (30). This homeland, this place, this geopolitical line that separates the U.S from Mexico, metaphorically announces a physical border that tears through Anzaldúa's body, her flesh. It is a:

1,950 mile-long open wound
dividing a *pueblo*, a culture
running down the length of my body,
staking fence rods in my flesh,
splits me splits me
 me raja me raja
This is my home
this thin edge of

barbwire (24-25).

Donelle N. Dreese argues that Anzaldúa, in ushering forth a New Mestiza who blends Anzaldúa's Mexican, Indian, and American heritage, "reterritorializes" the psychic terrain that is her body, mind, and soul in an effort to live in harmony with her sense of self and the world around her (57-58). Anzaldúa's continuation of her poem ends with a specific vision: the landscape that once belonged to Mexico and the "people whose true homeland is Aztlán [the U.S. Southwest]" (23) will be reclaimed.

This land was Mexican once,
was Indian always
and is.
And will be again (25).

Anzaldúa accepts the interstices of her material existence and moves beyond these toward what Sonia Saldívar-Hull insists is above all a "feminist consciousness," attaining in the sense what Chela Sandoval argues is a "differential consciousness" to "construct a new activist subject who can re-inscribe Chicana History into the record, re-legitimize Chicano multiple linguistic capacities, and trace the ethnic/racial origins of Mestiza *mexicano-tejanas*" (9). The end result is a life committed to social action.

U.S. third space feminists such as Anzaldúa caution that it is not enough to reinscribe some margin or center; rather, we must fashion an individual awareness that theorizes the politics of difference within a new paradigm. Images, words, and stories are imbued with transformative power, but they must come from both within and without—from one's own body as well as from the body of the earth (97). The postmodern theories of Emma Pérez in *The Decolonial Imaginary* further push our understanding beyond the traditional boundaries of history to understand how borderlands peoples struggle against and ultimately oppose colonialist structures to create a liberating third space. The history of a diaspora, writes Pérez, "of a people

whose land also shifted beneath them” forces us to acknowledge *desire*—“desire as a medium for social change, desire as revolution, desire as love and hope for a different kind of future—a postcolonial one (xix). Chela Sandoval, who argues that Love is the “singular apparatus” which can build twenty-first-century “modes of decolonizing globalization” (2), alongside Cherríe Moraga’s political theories of the body, further expand traditional theoretical categories of feminist study to give form and expression to the lived experience of the ways race, class, and gender converge. With the theories of these U.S third space feminists in mind, I examine the juncture of love and desire of the main protagonists in *Lone Star*. Whereas in Chapter Two, I argue that Captain Woodrow Call’s body at the end of *Streets of Laredo* suggests an awkward compromise of frontier imperatives entwined in place and space, in *Lone Star*, I submit that the bodily transformation of Sam Deeds suggests more than compromise; rather, Sam’s body reflects a movement towards a third space consciousness.

Border Theory and the Politics of Place, Space, and Memory in *Lone Star*

“People liked the story we told better than anything the truth might have been.”

—Big Otis to Sam Deeds

John Sayles’s *Lone Star* (1996) reminds us that history lives in the present much more than it does in the past because revelations about the past invariably reflect the present as well as future actions. This fact is made evident in the choices of several of the film’s main characters who, when confronted with more accurate stories of their past, utilize the knowledge to effectively redirect their futures. The film mingles elements of the thriller—western, mystery, and romance—and stylistically and symbolically reveals that the people of Frontera, where whites, Blacks, Chicana/os, and Black Seminoles have historically co-existed, all remember the

past in different ways.²¹ *Lone Star* suggests that a certain fluidity has always characterized life in Frontera; the divisions between an imperialist, hierarchical history and emergent patterns that threaten old systems of living are in constant dialogue in *Lone Star*.

The movie, set in the fictional town of Frontera on the Texas-Mexico border, explores the dynamic role of history through the development of both literal and metaphorical borders. While the preceding chapters have indicated that U.S. third-world feminists have written extensively about expanding categories of analysis that give form and expression to the lived experience of the ways race, class, and gender converge, in this chapter, I use border theory as conceptualized and utilized by U.S. third space feminists to open up and explode stories—histories—on the margins, and of the marginal, that have been silenced, erased, or otherwise left out of the historical record.

U.S. third space feminism fluidly moves within and among genders, races, and classes to insist on “a new subjectivity, a political revision that denies any one ideology as the final answer, while instead positing a *tactical subjectivity* (author’s emphasis) with the capacity to recenter depending upon the kinds of oppression to be confronted” (Sandoval, “U.S. Third space”14). This idea, along with those presented in the introduction to this chapter allow us to envision complex negotiations, subjectivities, and newly-emerging epistemologies of the body. If we look, then, through the lens of these theories at John Sayles’s *Lone Star* we understand that the main protagonists of the film, Sam and Pilar, have, by the end of the movie, entered into a new dissident consciousness in which love is the path towards a reformation of identity, and subsequently the space they inhabit in the border town of Frontera. Shot in Super 35mm format to emphasize the long, flat “horizontal look” (West & West 17) of the border, the film’s visual

style accommodates literal and figurative frontiers that result from the characters preoccupation with the historical past.

In the film, history and identity are reinforced through Sayles's thematic treatment of seamless camera pans, which link past subjectivities and identities to the present. Through the lens of history, and in a postmodern, revisionist context, *Lone Star* not only questions traditional myths and narratives, but also works to destabilize them. Of the western genre, Janet Walker writes that westerns "incorporate, elide, embellish, mythologize, allegorize, erase, duplicate, and rethink past events that are themselves—as history—fragmented, fuzzy, and striated with fantasy constructions" (13). Walker's observations are helpful in looking at how *Lone Star* posits an alternative "western" paradigm. At the heart of the film is the 40-year old mystery of the death of former sheriff Charley Wade, played by Kris Kristofferson, and the re-kindling of a romance between the present Sheriff Sam Deeds, played by Chris Cooper, and Pilar Cruz, played by Elizabeth Peña. But throughout the film, the audience realizes that the film is more about people trying to live together in a liminal space in dialogue with contested ideologies of race, ethnicity, and gender. These people's histories set the scene, as it were, for the development of other ways of understanding both history and narrative.

Broadly speaking, *Lone Star* is a revisionist western that serves a "counter-historical function" in that it "prioritize[s] perspectives outside the white-dominated mainstream" (Walker 11). Because many of the anti-racist, social theories of U.S. Third space feminists often emphasize a body politic and forms of "embodied knowledge" that enable a motivating force and thus inform theory, the idea of an identity politic that focuses on individual subjectivity can help us identify a common ground, a "differential consciousness" based on identity and difference that is both anti-essentialist and socialist in scope. U.S. third space feminist theories of the body

help us see that it is not a simple matter of reinscribing a margin or center, but an awareness that theorizes difference within a new paradigm. In this sense, Sam and Pilar take up the challenge, as Cherríe Moraga says we must, not just to look at the nightmare of internalized racism within their own bodies and each other, but to confront it and love it (49). We must seek to identify new relations of power and knowledge that do not further marginalize, but more closely examine those binary relationships that produce marginal subjectivities as a consequence of some center. Although the narrative structure of the film forces us to question the lessons of history from competing, often conflicting points of view, the flashback scenes are seamless and reinforce the idea that the past bleeds into the present.

For instance, during one scene that at first seems to have little to do with the main storyline, Pilar, who teaches history at the local high school, says to a group of angry, white parents—who resent her inclusionary policies of teaching history: “We’re not changing anything, we’re just trying to present a more complete picture.” The parents believe that history should be told from the perspective of the “winners” (Sandoval, “The Burden” 79). For historian Tomás F. Sandoval, this deliberate revisionist strategy suggests alternate remembrances of things past. But more importantly, “the townsfolk are fighting over Frontera’s history not because of what it says about the past but because of what it says about their present” (79). In this sense, Sandoval argues that the town is searching for its “true” self in the past. In his reading of *Lone Star* Sandoval prioritizes Hayden White’s directive that the historian “establish the value of the study of the past, not as ‘an end in itself,’ but as a way of providing perspectives on the present that contribute to the solution of problems peculiar to our own time” (“Burden” 125). Furthermore, when we consider the politics of identity through the lens of Hayden White’s idea that narrative is an essential component of the historical experience, we recognize that the characters in *Lone*

Star attempt to reconcile the past with the present in a way that is liberating rather than restrictive. For instance, the past and the present combine in long pan shots in two crucial flashback scenes that cement the idea that the truth is often “hidden” in a character’s memory. Panning shots in the film’s two murder scenes—the first of Eladio Cruz and the second of Charley Wade—erase any signal that a boundary in time has been crossed. Both scenes are narrated by characters that dig up a distant past in their memories, further emphasizing the collapse between history and the present.

Emma Pérez proposes a “decolonial imaginary” where the oppressed, the silenced, the “colonial other” not simply flits between colonial and postcolonial spaces, but negotiates identity in a way that works to uncover subaltern histories (7). In order to decolonize otherness, Pérez argues that we must look to a “rupturing space” which she calls “the time lag between the colonial and postcolonial, that interstitial space where differential politics and social dilemmas are negotiated” (6). By redefining Foucault’s discursive archaeology as a method uniquely suited to discover the silences within the interstitial gaps that interrupt European and Euro-American historical models of time, she works to reconceptualize individual histories with the intent of uncovering alternatives to written history. Although Foucault’s archaeology, which explodes disciplines and categories is important, what is most crucial in the present reading of *Lone Star* is Pérez’s use of Foucault’s “genealogy,” which “recognizes how history has been written upon the body” (xvi). Her challenge to the “written story and its myth” (xvi) is postmodern in the sense that there is “no pure, authentic, original history. There are only stories—many stories” (xv). Traditional historiography produces fictive pasts that serve to negate “other” histories. To this end, Pérez employs the theories of Homi Bhabha, Michel Foucault, and Chela Sandoval, among others, to hone in on the articulations of third space agency within what she calls “interstitial

gaps” to “rethink history” (5) with the goal of “freeing” history (127). Her book’s title, *The Decolonial Imaginary* refers to that which “teeter[s] in a third space [and] recognizes what is left out” of history (55). In this sense, *Lone Star* allows for a discussion of how Perez’s concepts play out in contemporary treatments of historical pasts.

Chicana/os are not the only ethnic group struggling to define their identity in Frontera. Freedom for African Americans in the historic west remains ambiguous, and it echoes Emma Pérez’s notion of a decolonial imaginary that reflects a third space which does not fully represent liberation, but, rather, a transitory space of possibilities not yet realized. Through its reliance on revisionist methods of identity politics, *Lone Star* demonstrates how colonialist impulses of western history have generally erased African Americans from the landscape because they do not fit into the neat, white-centered mythology of the west. However, in the film African-Americans actively work to create their own postcolonial imaginary so as to re-mythologize the history of the west from the African American point of view. Big Otis, the proprietor of “The Big O,” has earned the honorary title “Mayor of Darktown.” When his grandson, Chet, visits him for the first time, Otis shows him around the “museum” of Black Seminole and border artifacts he displays in a back room of his bar. Otis recounts the story of the Texas Seminoles who once worked alongside the predominantly white U.S. cavalry as scouts. The artifacts and photos that Otis displays inform the history that “continues to live in the present” through the local army base, a military presence in the border that dates back to the mid nineteenth century, as well as through, Otis and his grandson. (Sandoval, “The Burden” 72). Otis makes the point that in Frontera, history has always been “fuzzy” and ambiguous. An individual’s “place” is a type of “cognitive map” represented by fluid identities that are contested at the political, cultural, social, and, finally, individual level. Only when Chet connects with his own Black Seminole forebears can he

envision his future. Historical amnesia has, to use Hayden White's term, lifted the "burden of history" (121) and paved the way towards a new consciousness. Just as Sam Deeds labors throughout most of the film to uncover the "truth" of history by working through past events via the uncovering of stories in all of their "present-ness" (White, "Burden"132), Chet is beginning to understand that history is dynamic, a crucial realization because many of the characters in *Lone Star* choose which aspects of their past they will actively engage in creating their present-day identities. Truth comes at a price, and the young Chet—like Sam and Pilar—soon realizes that the truth is contingent upon one's stance on a tenuous border that was historically created and sustained by the politics of identity.²² We can take the narratives of history as they are, or we can make a final distinction between history as it has been written and intervene to create histories of our own. Such a treatment of history is evident when Pilar says to Sam: "We'll start from scratch. All that other stuff. All that history. To hell with it, right? Forget the Alamo."

In *Methodology of the Oppressed* Chela Sandoval examines the juncture which connects the disoriented first world citizen-subject who longs for a new sense of identity and redemption in a postmodern space, and a form of oppositional consciousness as developed by subordinated or colonized Western citizen-subjects (9). In *Lone Star* this juncture is represented by both the town of Frontera and the complicated history that ostensibly separates Sam and Pilar. Chicana/os are making strides, politically and socially in Frontera, as evidenced by the town's Chicano mayor and the Chicano deputy who will presumably unseat Sam Deeds next year as Sheriff. In this sense, Sam's body becomes a site of negotiation between a colonialist historical past and his newly developing consciousness. This negotiation is both personal and political, and echoes Cherríe Moraga's "meditations" surrounding the histories that are inscribed within our bodies. What is unique about Moraga's theory is that she locates sites of complex political and personal

negotiations within and on the body. In *Loving in the War Years*, she encourages readers to examine the personal pieces of themselves and their oppression, which she writes are both “given and taken” within the body; applying her theory against oppression begins with our own bodies, our own selves, “under the skin” (54). The body is not immutable. It is a field of inscription on which complex social codes and negotiations are constantly being written, challenged, and re-written. Moraga decodes the processes of the inner discoveries that we must make in order to free ourselves from the silences and oppressions within us all; this we must do in order that we take full responsibility of our roots, our histories.

Rosa Linda Fregoso, in her reading of *Lone Star*, argues that the film does not truly represent a new social order because it does not de-center whiteness and masculinity. She writes: “the white father-white son structure keeps the center intact and multiplicity at the margins of the story world” (56). For her, the masculine conflicts are “resolved” but the conflicts implicating the female characters—Pilar and her business-owner mother, Mercedes—are not. Although she rightly posits, when referring to the symbolic realm, that the film is first and foremost John Sayles’s “reconstruction and vision,” (60) and that the point of view of most of the film (in flashback or not) is masculine-centered, as it is Sam Deeds’, she makes this point from the perspective of feminist film theory that revolves around cinematic mechanisms of spectatorship and identification. In this light, she writes that she refuses to participate in the “white patriarchal gaze” and racial structures of vision that inform this film” (61). I would add, however, that we must consider that Sam and Pilar, during the first half of the film negotiate the gaze equally, as they can only glimpse each other—first through bars, then through various “invisible lines” (Magowan 24) of glass. This is one way in which Sayles, who describes this film as “a story

about borders...where I end and somebody else begins” (West & West 14) metaphorically evinces the ways in which all sorts of borders—race, class, sex, age—separate people.

Unlike Fregoso, I see Sam’s *will*, or *necessity* to uncover the bones of a buried local and familial history as evidence of what Chela Sandoval calls a “decolonizing stance” (*Methodology* 4). Sam is the product of an Anglo-American father who was instrumental in perpetuating an imperialist regime in Frontera, but Sam’s quest for knowledge and truth turns the painful gaze of his own colonialist history to the construction of his own identity, his own body. His search for knowledge ushers what Chela Sandoval calls “a coalitional consciousness” that marks the beginnings of a new “hermeneutics of love” with Pilar in a postmodern space (*Methodology* 4). In this sense, I believe that Sam and Pilar symbolically represent a type of mirror image of the same decolonizing gaze. Sam, in his willingness to deconstruct and uncover the truth of his own history as evidenced by the colonialist, imperialist imperatives of his father, Buddy Deeds, and Pilar, in her stance as a teacher who daily frames history in terms of revisions, counter narratives, and multiple voicings.

Literary critic José E. Limón argues that *Lone Star* works to revise the history of a traditional iconography of relations between Anglos and Mexicans that reproduces a dominant colonialist imperative. In his analysis of the enduring American cultural iconography of Anglo-American and Mexican relations in Texas, he revisits traditional representations of the American cowboy, the Mexican female figure of illicit sexuality, and the “prim and proper” Anglo female figure to flesh out a theory of ambivalence that plays out in partial and unconscious challenge to the ruling cultural order (“Tex Sex-Mex” 604). Although Limón links Pilar to traditional images of the “racial-sexual Other,” he concludes that her character actively “revises the image of the Mexican woman at the sexual and social margins of society” (“Tex Sex-Mex” 612). Through her

position as an educated woman with activist inclinations, Pilar “appropriates the traditional image of the Anglo schoolmarm” (“Tex Sex-Mex” 612). Her body, the body of the colonized, becomes “a site for witnessing a fissure or decentering within the colonizer” (“Tex Sex-Mex” 610). Moreover, he argues that Pilar’s social status as a public school teacher sets her on equal footing with “whatever cultural capital still accrues to [Sam] as an Anglo in the 1990s” (“Tex Sex-Mex” 612). Importantly, Limón privileges the space—a café owned by Pilar’s mother, Mercedes—where Sam and Pilar finally unite physically. He concludes in the words David Montejano that “the politics of negotiation and compromise have replaced the politics of conflict and control” (qtd. in Limón 613). I would push Limón’s analysis further to argue that the lover’s union signals the beginnings of a “rhetoric of resistance” in which their bodies, in the language of Chela Sandoval, transform into a methodology of emancipation based in a differential consciousness. For Alan P. Barr, it is love that provides the means for Sam and Pilar to “cross divides,” transcend barriers” (372) of race, and, as we learn in the last moments of the film, incest, to venture toward “new frontiers” (372). Crucially, their union signals the means by which love becomes “reinvented as a political technology, as a body of knowledges, arts, practices, and procedures for re-forming the self and the world” (Sandoval, *Methodology* 4).

Soon after Sam and Pilar rekindle their romance, we are led to believe that Sam’s life, at least since his return to Frontera, is as “empty” as the blank walls of the apartment he’s been living in for the past two years; he’s been waiting for Pilar to continue the story of his life. When Pilar asks him why he’s hung no pictures on the walls, he answers, “There’s nothing I want to look back on.” They continue:

Pilar: “Like your story’s over.”

Sam: “I’ve felt that way. Yeah.”

Pilar: “It isn’t. Uh Huh. Not by a long shot.”

Cherríe Moraga writes: “Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression, without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place” (44-45). This applies to both Sam and Pilar, who, like the audience, are yet ignorant of certain truths “in pointed contrast to Frontera’s suppressed knowledge” (Magowan 23). Sam admits to Pilar that he returned to Frontera because “you were here.” But it was the unearthing of Charley Wade’s skull, and Sam’s subsequent “poking around” in the history of Frontera that led him, finally, to Pilar. In Moraga’s theory, which she labels not a theory as such, but “meditations,” fear and memory take place within the body and it is the body that remembers, and more importantly, negotiates the historical, political, and social realms surrounding us all. Sam and Pilar take up the challenge, as Cherríe Moraga says we must, not just to look at the nightmare of internalized racism within themselves, but to confront it and love it (49). Sam’s willingness to traverse the juncture between past and present represents his emerging, however unconscious, desire to connect with and ultimately carve an oppositional consciousness. This fact is epitomized in the re-kindling of his love for Pilar, which, in fact, has never died. Traversing this juncture necessitates union with the Other—Pilar. Bridging this gap, however, is key to unlocking a new-world citizenship that encourages a decolonizing global force as envisioned by Sandoval in *Methodology of the Oppressed*.

In this light, I believe that the historiographic function of John Sayles’s vision in *Lone Star* rests on the fluidity and re-negotiation of a politics inscribed on the body that culminates in the revisionist impulses of the historical truth by the main characters. Whether or not an authentic, lasting alliance between Sam and Pilar will be forged remains to be seen. At the film’s

end, it appears that Sam has come to terms with the primary source of his own oppression, as signaled by his willingness to uncover the truth of his father's "deeds". While investigating the death of Charley Wade, Sam increasingly becomes more willing to destroy his father's image, thus metaphorically subverting the patriarchal, imperialist hegemonic rule symbolized by the "mythic" Buddy Deeds's, tenure as sheriff. Throughout the film, Sam has worked to uncover the primary source of his own oppression. The fact that Pilar and Sam decide to remain together despite the knowledge that they share the same father symbolically speaks to the idea that the two have chosen to engage in a type of "bodily" activism. It is the actions that we take and not just the knowledge of our history that informs powerful, committed social change. Moraga insists that no authentic, nonhierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of one's own oppression—we must know and name the enemy both within and outside of ourselves (45). The work of Emma Pérez reminds us that historically, disenfranchised groups have often created their own postcolonial imaginary when they can otherwise not succeed in breaking from their colonial formations. With this in mind, the lovers use their bodies as sites to map a rhetoric of resistance, in turn ushering a coalitional consciousness centered in a hermeneutics of love in a postmodern space.

The final scene in the film concludes with a long shot of Sam and Pilar facing a torn, blank drive-in movie screen. They have agreed to suspend the "rule." When Pilar says, "I can't get pregnant anymore if that's what the rule is about" it is not merely the biological rule against incest that they have suspended, but a rule inscribed in the narrative that dominates the burden of history. At the film's end, the hope that the lovers envision is shared by the audience; we can imagine that Sam and Pilar, who have successfully destabilized the historical narratives they at one time believed they had been "born" into, have made strides in de-mythologizing history so as

to, in Emma Pérez's words, "consciously remake the narrative" (127). As such, *Lone Star*, which assumes a multitude of resonances of borders and frontiers, shows how Chicana/os and African Americans are key players in creating a third space where liberation is achievable, however transitory. In this regard, the film makes a distinction between history as it has been written and counter-hegemonic, mythological interpretations of that history.

Almanac of the Dead: Recovery and Re-Defining the Terrain

Where *Lone Star* focuses on the inhabitants of one town, Frontera, to emphasize the search for identity in an effort to forge a new consciousness and re-write history from the perspective of some of "the losers" who now inhabit the Southwest borderlands, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* challenges versions of history and identity on a pan-global level. The novel is a complex narrative that spans 500 years, contains over 70 characters, and navigates the continents of North and South America as well as Africa and Europe. The structure is circular; all of the stories and characters are somehow connected to each other. According to Silko, the novel "is about the whole Earth trying to save herself" (Coltelli 131). Adam Sol convincingly argues that the novel represents an "encyclopedic narrative" whose contained almanac envisions a "pancultural movement in the process of emerging from years of suppression" (26). The novel retells the historic past, straddles the present, and imagines events in the immediate future. By anchoring *Almanac of the Dead* in American Indian forms and beliefs about Native ways of viewing the earth and oral storytelling, the novel "calls for an upheaval in the world order and a dramatic revision of world history" (Sol 24). Importantly, Sol adds, "Silko gleans from Native American tradition a more fluid understanding of personal identity, one that retains power for the individual and allows for change and shifting" (41).

According to Bridget O'Meara, *Almanac of the Dead* "imagines possibilities for building broad-based political coalitions among a wide range of individuals and groups, across time and space, national and legal boundaries, social formations, and ideological positions" (70). Similarly, Channette Romero argues that the

cross-cultural spiritual coalitions made up of 'tribal internationalists' would provide a more powerful means of combating the social, political, and economic injustice faced by American Indians (and many oppressed peoples around the world) than secular politics based on ethnicity and race alone" (623).

This utopian vision is reminiscent of Gloria Anzaldúa's and Chela Sandoval's writings about differential forms of social movements. The work of these U.S. third space feminists foregrounds Silko's aims, which Silko states are "political rather than literary" (Coltelli 133). Anzaldúa's Mestiza Way not only envisions a "conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and traditions" (104) to arrive at a place where all people can "meet on a broader communal ground" (109). Anzaldúa makes evident that the "struggle is inner" (109). More importantly, as I illustrated in Chapter Three with regard to Islas's *The Rain God*, the struggle, she argues, "brings return" (110). Moreover, in *Almanac of the Dead* a connection to the land provides a spiritual sustenance to the characters, as earlier evidenced in *The Rain God*.

The characters in *Almanac of the Dead* tackle the struggles of whole peoples—American Indians, African Americans, and Latinos. Importantly, however, Romero points out that the American Indian view, in particular the "Keresan [Laguna Pueblo] view of the connection between land, history, and time forms a sharp contrast to the 'borders' privileged by the dominant American culture" in the novel (628). As such, Silko uses traditional cartography, which plots political borders in such a way that land is represented as "a space to rule, delineate,

and build over” (620) against itself to show “just how artificial the distinctions are between people, time, belief systems, and land” (629). Additionally, Michelle Jarman writes that the intertwined stories, times, and places in *Almanac of the Dead* “counterbalance the erasure of non-dominant narratives by reinstating lost histories” (par. 30). One of Jarman’s main objectives is to expand border notions of hybrid identity, but she also acknowledges that the “main cultural project” of *Almanac of the Dead* “is primarily one of historical restoration” (par. 30). Time, history, and the landscape itself are the tools necessary to Silko’s vision of social change, but these must be re-covered from Euro-American traditions that privilege a disconnected view of the land as well as a history that proceeds “from a fixed point in creation and progressing in a linear fashion toward a better, transcendent future where Jesus Christ reigns” (Romero 625). Although this discussion of normative Christian views is beyond the limits of this dissertation, Romero cites Lynn White, Keller, and Radford Ruether to critique the normative Christian transcendence over the earth.²³ In the present discussion, what is significant about Romero’s conclusion is that it invites us to reckon with the idea that Silko is herself challenging readers to advocate for a change in peoples’ attitudes and behavior towards the land and each other within their environment, rather than advocating that people simply eschew all knowledge associated with European culture, a criticism levied on *Almanac of the Dead* by several critics, among them Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Arnold Krupat.

In *Almanac of the Dead*, just as in *Lone Star*, history is evinced through stories, and various characters in the novel acknowledge that the full knowledge of stories of stolen land, unequal distribution of resources, slavery, torture, and genocide can entice people towards action and, as such, effect social change. For instance, in the novel, Clinton, a one-footed African-American Vietnam Veteran, says, “[t]he powers who controlled the United States didn’t want

people to know their history. If the people knew their history, they would realize they must rise up” (431). Bridget O’Meara, in discussing the ecological politics of *Almanac of the Dead*, foregrounds her analysis in the idea that the novel is both history and prophecy. She writes that the novel “explores and critiques interlocking histories of oppression that inscribe the land, labor, and bodies of indigenous peoples...recover[ing] and recreat[ing] the submerged (fragmented, partial, transformed) knowledges of oppressed peoples, while affirming and strengthening vital social, ecological, and spiritual relationships” (65). Importantly, O’Meara concludes that “the dialectic of historical struggle” in the novel is “not simply a backdrop but rather is both its protagonist and driving force, through which gender, class, and race are articulated and rearticulated in specifically counterhegemonic ways” (65). The intertwined voices, the many stories in *Almanac of the Dead*, coalesce in the idea that “through dissent, the discomfort of owning one’s involvement, and a greater collective awareness, a groundwork of ethical relationships might be established” (Jarman, par. 46).

Some of the ideas discussed above are further evidenced by Clinton, who joins with Rambo in *Almanac of the Dead* to lead the Army of the Homeless, also known as the Army of Justice. Clinton predicts and facilitates the coming together of great American and great African cultures “to create a powerful consciousness within all people” (Silko 416). El Feo, a leader of the indigenous People’s Army, along with his twin brother Tacho, represent twin male spiritual and revolutionary leaders who will lead the cross-cultural uprising of oppressed peoples in the novel. El Feo and Tacho lead the uprising that begins in southern Mexico to make its way toward Tucson. The second narrative strand of the novel, which Sol calls “the spiritual center of the novel” (28), revolves around a second pair of twins, Lecha and Zeta, part Yaqui sisters who live on a private ranch on the outskirts of Tucson, and who are in the process of recopying a series of

notebooks given to them by their grandmother, Yoeme.²⁴ This fourth book, which Adamson refers to as a “living book that has been continually updated and expanded” (141), was originally compiled by the Maya. It represents a “book of days” smuggled out of Sonora, Mexico during the regime of Porfirio Díaz in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Four children escaped to the north with the sacred almanac:

According to the story, the four children left at night with pages of the almanac sewn into their ragged garments... They were carefully instructed before they set out. They were told the ‘book’ they carried was the ‘book’ of all the days of their people. These days and years were all alive, and all these days would return again. The ‘book’ had to be preserved at all costs (246-247).

The coming revolution foretold in *Almanac of the Dead* was first prophesied five hundred years earlier in the fragments of this fourth Mayan almanac contained within the novel. In the novel, Silko conceives this fourth almanac as quite unlike the three known almanacs present today in the cities of Paris, Dresden, and Madrid. The fourth almanac, and the complex narrative that connects Indigenous peoples throughout time and the wide geographic expanse of the novel, “reflects Pueblo/Keresan and many American Indian belief and cultural systems’ views regarding the relationship among land, time, and history” (Romero 625). The notebooks are not static, but have been continually updated and added to through the years; greatly influenced by orality, and containing several languages, the notebooks are transcriptions of many stories. Because the novel spans a wide range of time periods, from days of ancient legend to the imminent future, time in the novel is “cyclical and rhythmic rather than [as] lineal and ‘progress’ oriented” (Sol 35). Indeed, as is evidenced by the many passages in the novel that reflect the idea that days, years, and even centuries are circular and necessarily encompass “return,” the novel

underscores the reader's experience of history in such a way that stories, "where the word has the power to make the world" (Sol 31), connect people and root them in an otherwise unstable environment.

The idea of the connectivity of past and present, and historical and personal is also evidenced in Silko's *Storyteller* (1981). Part poetry, part fiction, part autobiography, and, not surprisingly—given Silko's fluid movement between oral and written language—part photojournalism, *Storyteller*, with its fluid, circular design, shows how writing can become reality itself. Like the fourth almanac in *Almanac of the Dead*, the text merges past and present in such a way that the reader and storyteller actively engage each other. Hirsch writes: "the reader's responses to the various episodes" become a part of the "larger, ongoing story these episodes comprise while simultaneously allowing the episodes to create the contexts which direct and refine these responses. In this way the stories continue" (3). In this regard, *Almanac of the Dead*, like *Storyteller*, moves beyond the split that Western culture often evidences between orality/language. Silko not only appreciates both as integral to cultural identity and reality, but engages a complex web of textuality in which stories and the telling of stories do not approach reality, but rather, are reality.²⁵

Adam Sol writes that Silko both draws from and adds to American Indian traditions to challenge methods of storytelling to "systematically challenge[s] the 'modern myths' of our culture, from versions of history to concepts of time and identity" (47). Additionally, Adamson argues that the fourth almanac with its

fragments of pre- and post- Columbian 'American' almanacs, personal testimonies, and other miscellaneous information, Silko's keepers are creating a text that insists that indigenous peoples and their environments are not the ground and matrix of Euro-

American action, but alive, responsive, resistant, and capable of articulating their own perspectives about the world and their place in it (144).

In the novel, the re-occupation of indigenous land advances from various geopolitical, social, and spiritual centers, and the “transgressive networks” (O’Meara 67) the characters engage are forged along multiple axes. A growing consciousness embedded within various characters hastens their efforts to recover history and escape “the vampires and werewolves of greed,”—Silko’s “Destroyers” (312). A coalition of transgressive networks by so many from so many points on the globe is the means to implementing alliances across time, space, national and legal boundaries and ideological positions. As such, Tacho and El Feo had “been initiated by the elder men in the ancient fashion” (Silko 469); El Feo “believed in the land” (Silko 513). Importantly, El Feo recognizes that a growing consciousness is the key not only to restoring the balance of nature, but envisioning an inclusive movement necessary for developing strategies of political action:

People had begun to gather spontaneously and moved as a mob or swarm follows instinct, then suddenly disperses. The masses of people in Asia or Africa, and the Americas too, no longer believed in the so-called “elected” leaders; they were listening to strange voices inside themselves. Although few would admit this, the voices they heard were voices out of the past, voices of their earliest memories, voices of nightmares and of sweet dreams, voices of the ancestors...With the return of Indian land would come the return of justice, followed by peace (513).

In this way, *Almanac of the Dead* expands the grounds for borderland identities, insisting on multiple, intersecting histories and embodied experiences to forge a more life-sustaining worldview.

Crossing national borders, argues Jarman is “a larger contextual frame for the psychological transition inherent in the borderlands of ethnicity, sexuality, and disability” (par. 45). According to Jarman, a keystone of *Almanac of the Dead* is found in the character of Calabazas, an old-time Yaqui-Mexican drug smuggler. Calabazas’ final pronouncement to his comrade Root represents a cultural perspective that necessarily integrates hybridity. He says to Root: “Those who can’t learn to appreciate the world’s differences won’t make it. They’ll die” (203). Jarman argues, “[w]ithin this context, only a commitment to difference, an imperative to adaptation, and a revolutionary demand for diversity...will allow a productive form of evolutionary agency” (par. 40). Root’s sudden onset of disability (he suffers a brain injury) allows him to see his family from an “outsider position” (Jarman 36). According to Jarman, “Silko’s choice to represent brain injury is important because this impairment necessarily involves a cognitive restructuring of the self” (38), an idea that harks back to Anzaldúa’s notion of transforming the “small I into the total Self” (104-105) that I discussed in Chapter Three. Additionally, Jarman deploys the work of disability scholar Mark Sherry to argue that Root’s impairment produces in him a “borderland identity” that “shuttles in between frontiers” to conclude that his cognitive restructuring results in non-standard knowledge. With this in mind, Jarman concludes with the words of Trinh Minh-ha to argue that the character of Root represents “a working out of and an appeal to another sensibility, another consciousness of the condition of marginality: that in which marginality is the condition of the center (qtd. in Jarman, par. 38). In this sense, I argue that Root is like Sam in *Lone Star*. Sam subverts (the memory) of his father’s legacy, and is confronted with the necessity of viewing his family from the same outsider position that Root inhabits. Sam suffers no injury; his is a conscious act of defiance. But he personally overthrows an earlier family structure. Root, like Sam, embarks on a journey of self-

reflexive identity while coming to terms with his complicity. Root acknowledges that his own “great grandfather had got rich off the Apache wars. [He] understood why his parents and Tuscon’s ‘social elite’ had so little interest in local history” (589-99). According to Jarman, Silko suggests through Root that “one of the few avenues through Destroyer culture [is] an alternative perspective which seeks out and allows the strange, the unknown, and the different” (par. 36).

In *Almanac of the Dead* characters that continually subvert the idea and ideals of the frontier do so in an effort to “repair” the cyclical nature of time. Hayden White wrote: “we require a history that will educate us to discontinuity more than ever before; for discontinuity, disruption, and chaos is our lot” (“Burden” 134). The Southwest frontier myth encompasses the profoundly American symbols of individual capitalism, the relationship between settled society and so-called “primitive” territory, and a narrative structure that dramatizes a central conflict between the ideas bound by an imagined Manifest Destiny and the lives, cultures, and social systems of entire peoples who once claimed that Southwest frontier as home. At the heart of the frontier myth that drew European peoples to the Southwest lay expectations of a vast, unmarked territory where life could begin anew and new communities could be formed—not where old communities would be assimilated or re-established. The divisions between an imperialist, hierarchical way of life and emergent patterns that threaten indigenous systems of living are at constant battle in the Southwest borderlands. Zeta, who helps her sister Lecha interpret the hidden transcripts of the almanac within *Almanac of the Dead*, knows this all too well. She states:

There were not, and there never had been, a legal government by Europeans anywhere in the Americas. Not by any definition, not even by the Europeans’ own definitions and laws. Because no legal government could be established on stolen land. Because stolen

land never had clear title. Zeta could recite Yoeme's arguments and crazed legal theories better and better as time went by. All the laws of the illicit governments had to be blasted away (133).

Importantly, O'Meara argues that both Lecha and Zeta transgress time and space. Lecha does this by harnessing the energy and anguish of recent murder victims as well as ancient ancestors who died of disease, murder, war, and dispossession, and Zeta in her transgression of national and legal boundaries in her support of the emergent, ongoing forces of colonial and imperial resistance. To this end,

the sister's rejection of imposed borders, linear time frames, and governmental legislation is reiterated in the 'Five Hundred Year Map' at the beginning of the novel, which foregrounds interpersonal, historical, and spatial relations and movements in place of a conventional, static Eurocentric map that would deny present/past/future conflict and rebellion" (69).

In an interview with Laura Coltelli, Silko says that the embedded almanac in the novel is like "a map of the past five hundred years—that is, a 'map' made out of narratives" (Coltelli 119). *Almanac of the Dead*, which "tells how the spirits of this continent hate the white man" (Cook-Lynn 61) is also like a blueprint for understanding time in the Mayan sense. Silko argues that her narrative is "less like a Western European almanac and more like an old Mayan almanac in which all days, all months, and all time are living beings who are interconnected" (Coltelli 122). The cyclical nature of time permeates Silko's use of flashbacks in the novel. Crucial to *Almanac of the Dead* is the "proper" representation of time in the Mayan, as well as the American Indian sense. Silko states: "[t]he past does not die. The past is alive, side by side with the present" (Coltelli 125-6). The flashbacks, she argues, force the reader to come to intimate

terms with characters in their historical circumstance. “Whoever we are, wherever we may find ourselves at this moment cannot be isolated from what we have been prior to this moment” (Coltelli 126).

Angelita La Escapía, a Mayan warrior who follows Tacho and El Feo, points out time in the Mayan sense, as she is compelled to understand Marx, time, the power of history, and the necessity of re-telling stories. La Escapía imagines Marx “as a storyteller who worked feverishly to gather together a magical assembly of stories to cure the suffering and evils of the world by the retelling of the stories” (316). Marx, who “caught the capitalists of the British empire with bloody hands” (312) insisted on remembering: “For hundreds of years white men had been telling the people of the Americas to forget the past; but now the white man Marx came along and he was telling people to remember (311). This idea is reminiscent of Silko’s feeling, or suspicion, that

in the days before monarch’s maps with boundary lines, the tribal people of the Americas thought the whole earth as their home, not just one continent. Humans used to feel that way until the rise of the nation-state fiction, which sought to destroy ancient liaisons between people on opposite sides of the newly-created borderline” (Coltelli 123).

Crucial to this discussion is Silko’s belief in stories, whether written or oral, to effect social change. According to Romero, storytelling is a central component of the “Keresan cosmology and requires an active relationship between the storytellers and the listeners of a story” (630-631). This reminds us of Billy Parham’s “witnessing” of so many tales, as discussed in Chapter two of this dissertation. With regards to *The Crossing*, Dianne C. Luce reminds us of McCarthy’s insistence “that witnessing, that tale-telling, is man’s essential act” (201). Luce writes, in McCarthy’s own words drawn from Hegel, that “[v]erification of one’s story to

someone else is essential to living...; our reality comes out of the narrative we create, not out of the experience themselves” (qtd. in Luce 202). As such, the storyteller at the end of *Cities of the Plain* tells Billy:

The events of the waking world...are forced upon us and the narrative is the unguessed axis along which they must be strung. It falls to us to weigh and sort and order these events. It is we who assemble them into the story which is us. Each man is the bard of his own existence” (283).

This view is linked to the idea that in *Almanac of the Dead*, the revolution of numerous peoples, which does not actually occur in the novel, but is *suggested* by the many people and plans that come together in the “Meeting in Room 1212” in the final pages of the novel, must be waged on a spiritual rather than on a material, physical level: the idea that “the battle would be lost or won in the realm of dreams, not with airplanes or weapons” (475) is reinforced throughout *Almanac of the Dead*. This harks back to Silko’s 1998 interview with Ellen Arnold, in which Silko states that the “retaking of the Americas” will be waged with a “spiritual...change in consciousness” that is born from “walking on this land” (171). In the novel, then, “Native peoples who still maintain ties to their heritage are constantly shown to have a strong relationship to the land, while those without roots in the land mistreat and are subsequently mistreated by the landscape itself” (Sol 40).

Just as stories are not static, neither is identity. Romero acknowledges that Silko includes “so many different peoples and plans for revolution in the meeting in Room 1212 and by ending her novel before the actual revolution begins” so as to leave an opening for “multiple possibilities and endings” (635). The story of so many individuals and communities who respond to the voices in their bodies and their dreams to join a revolution dedicated to social justice is

entwined in ancient “spirits” that yet inhabit the landscape—it is up to us, via stories, however, to connect with them to effect change:

Word by word, the stories of suffering, injury, and death had transformed the present moment, seizing listeners’ or readers’ imaginations so that for an instant, they were present and felt the suffering of sisters and brothers long past. The words of the stories filled rooms with an immense energy that aroused the living with fierce passion and determination for justice (Silko 520).

Perhaps this is the greatest lesson of *Almanac of the Dead*: stories of injustice and resistance have the power to propel readers to “rise up:”

One day, a story will arrive in your town. The story may arrive with a stranger, a traveler thrown out of his home country months ago. Or the story may be brought by an old friend, perhaps the parrot trader. But after you hear the story, you and the others prepare by the new moon to rise up against the slave masters (Silko 578).

In order to understand the migrations, encounters, and myriad “stories” of the Southwest, we must explore the eclectic visions of the peoples who have moved “toward, across, through, around, and away from each other for many centuries” (Anderson 4). It is not just a matter of understanding the Southwest as a site of migration and encounter long before the arrival of Euro-Americans. In the Southwest, the border and the frontier still live and breathe. They still factor and fracture identity, but they are not in dialogue with each other; they are not on speaking terms. They share no dialectical nature. Like Anzaldúa’s borderlands where the *atravesados* live, they are two worlds, two ideologies, two modes of thought and ways of life and living that grate and bleed into each other. The remnants of this grating lie dead and desecrated, but many are yet scattered over the Southwestern landscape in the form of fighting peoples with conflicting

ideologies. Some of these were settlers, explorers, and capitalists who ventured into the frontier in a spirit of Manifest Destiny. These Euro-Americans were intent on making history, money, towns, and what they deemed “civilized” systems of living. They forged a new world for themselves and their people. But Indigenous peoples—Indians and Mexicans, saw no frontier; they saw only a homeland. Further, as *Almanac of the Dead* evinces, today many are still fighting and resisting in efforts to hang on to a history, a memory that yet courses through the blood. The memory is real; it is made of ancestors, ways of life and living in the world, cultures, and civilizations. The stories that result from all of these encounters reveal that identity, and the reclaiming of identities, is inextricably entwined in the land itself, an idea that I will once again take up in Chapter Five. For American Indians, Mexicans, Chicana/os and Mexican-Americans, in the present-day, the Southwest is a place. For settlers, for Silko’s “Destroyers,” the Southwestern frontier is a space to be controlled, transformed, capitalized. In effect, then, the tales and histories that these conflicting peoples weave are still, and historically have been, at odds.

The work of Emma Pérez reminds us that throughout history disenfranchised groups have often created their own postcolonial imaginary when they can otherwise not succeed in breaking from their colonial formations. *Lone Star* shows how Chicana/os and African Americans are key players in creating a third space where liberation is achievable, however transitory. In this regard, the film makes a distinction between history as it has been written and counter-hegemonic, mythological interpretations of that history. When Sheriff Sam Deeds crosses the Mexican border to inquire about the unsolved murder of Eladio Cruz, he is given a lesson in history from an old friend of Eladio’s—“*El Rey de las llantas*” (the king of the tires). This lesson, in the form of a map drawn in the sand, foreshadows Sam’s cognitive re-mapping; by the

film's end, these boundaries are erased and Sam is longer bound, imprisoned by arbitrary lines. This lesson in the politics of place reinforces Magowan's idea of place as "a thing that can be cognitively mapped" (22). The Mexican *El Rey* draws a line in the dirt with a bottle and tells Sam: "The bird flying south, you think he sees this line? Rattlesnake, *javelina*, whatever you got...you think halfway across that line they start thinking different? Why should a man?" This obliges us to consider Silko's words: "Western European maps are used to steal Indian lands, to *exclude*, to imprison, to cut off, to isolate even segments of the human world from one another" (Coltelli 120).

Hayden White reminds us of the power of history and the need to tell history in order that we not only make sense of, but that we make *crucial* the daily experiences of our lives, when he writes: "only history mediates between what is and what men [sic] think ought to be with truly humanizing effect" (134). We must look to the narratives of our past with a heightened scrutiny and acknowledge that the stories we tell ourselves, the narratives we weave become the myths and ideologies we pass onto future generations. As such, they are only interpretations of the truth; this is the subject of the next chapter. This chapter has shown how historiographic revisions work to de-mythologize and subvert the hegemony of history. Read as counter-narratives, *Lone Star* and *Almanac of the Dead* engage the complex histories, identities, and ideologies that straddle the multifaceted, multiple, shifting points of view in the Southwest. Most importantly, these works acknowledge the simple truth that we must view the frontier, and the border that was created to contain it, through a prism with its many glorious, constituent stories and colors, not through a single, colorless lens of white.

Nothing could be black or brown or only white anymore. The ancient prophecies had foretold a time when the destruction by man had left the earth desolate, and the human

race itself was endangered. This was the last chance the people had against the Destroyers, and they would never prevail if they did not work together as a common force (Silko 747).

CHAPTER FIVE

PRINCESS POCAHONTAS ON THE RIO GRANDE

Introduction

This chapter continues along the same trajectory as Chapter Four in two ways. First, this chapter highlights the idea of place as a necessary element on one's personal path towards emergent forms of oppositional or differential consciousness; in this chapter, however, individuals play a large part in concocting and perpetuating a particular collective memory. Secondly, this chapter focuses on the performative actions of individuals as they are grounded in the consequences of a history of colonization. In Chapter Four, using John Sayles's *Lone Star*, and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* I demonstrate how these texts foreground the re-writing of history from the "bottom-up." The performances I study here—those endorsed by the Laredo Red Men, precursors to today's Society of Martha Washington, as well as the Princess Pocahontas Council in particular—reveal how the history of one specific border place has ostensibly been written from the "top-down" by a powerful colonialist elite who "felt a need to institute a local Americanist identity ritual" (Dennis, par. 5) Additionally, whereas *Lone Star* foregrounds the personal search for Self, as I showed in Chapter Four, this chapter speaks to and of a history and a people that share the same culture, stories, and ways of being in the world—both similar, and, yet quite different from the various peoples who share a common vision in *Almanac of the Dead*.

Readings of counter-narratives that I present in earlier chapters engage the multifaceted histories, identities, and ideologies that straddle the complex, multiple, shifting points of view specific to the Southwest to explode linear, Euro-American histories that have often suppressed crucial—Other— narratives. As such, earlier analyses of works, such as those by Islas, and

González and Raleigh, reveal how both Spanish colonial and American colonial narratives systematically deny the Indian as Other. In this chapter, I hone a borderlands approach to develop the relationship of identity to landscape in my hometown of Laredo, Texas, with a quite different result; in Laredo, the Other exists within a fragile space where insider and outsider have survived symbiotically, and in the interests of an elite few. A cross-cultural approach allows me to show how border and frontier ideologies in one specific locality on the borderlands of South Texas have created and perpetuated a structure of accommodation based on a complex system of negation of Other. The Other in this paradigm is a historical American Indian presence whose erasure was necessitated in order to first redeem and then continually reinforce American colonialist imperatives along the borderlands. What is remarkable in this particular border place, however, is the fact that alliances were neither historically nor primarily based on ethnicity, but on class. These alliances, contend Yoder and La Perrière de Gutiérrez remain: “In contrast to conditions found in major Hispanic places throughout the United States, the stark social disparities that exist in Laredo are not racial or ethnic in nature” (75).

I argue that the Laredo George Washington’s Birthday Celebration is a defining factor of individual and collective identity. An examination of the popular celebration held in Laredo every year since 1898 guides our awareness of the need for an elite few to recurrently reaffirm “white” dominance at the expense of an indigenous Native population. This fact mirrors Philip J. Deloria’s conclusions surrounding “playing Indian” and the role and meaning of race in U.S. history. Because “Indianness lay at the heart of American uniqueness,” Deloria concludes that there was “no way to conceive an American identity without Indians. At the same time, there was no way to make a complete identity while they remained” (37). Historically, this is a crucial fact of life in the bordertown of Laredo, where, in the words of Dion Dennis, “George

Washington was recoded as a South Texas foundational and legitimating signifier for the [earlier] patronist system” (par. 12). This chapter, then, focuses historiographically on race, class, and gender in a specific locality. This is at least one element that makes this chapter unique. Although other chapters, specifically Chapters Two through Four, often delve into race, class, and gender, this final chapter brings together these elements to demonstrate the accommodation of a Eurocentric, linear narrative in which a Native genealogy is not just negated but made virtually invisible by the widespread adoption of a particular legitimating story. An examination of the historical imperatives ushering the widespread adoption and dissemination this narrative helps uncover ideological, psychic borderlands that pave the means towards an understanding of the ways in which individual agents engender a collective memory at the expense of an inclusive, and truly multicultural national narrative. The historical accommodation of Anglos and Mexicans in one bordered space on the far edge of the American frontier in Laredo allows us to see how a very particular national identity was carved within a fluid, highly permeable geographic space. Those with money, land, and means wrote, perpetuated, and participated in the story; all others in the space became, and yet are, subject to it.

Since 1898, Laredoans on the Texas-Mexico border in South Texas have carried out an elaborate month-long celebration in honor of George Washington’s Birthday. This celebration underscores a class-based hegemony over the region and the beginning of the capitalization of a particular border space. A close look at this event facilitates an understanding of how one border space allowed for the conflictive coexistence of dialectically opposed temporalities: one Mexican, agrarian, and pre-modern, and the other a U.S. cosmopolitan modernity. The role of narrative as well as the transformations of the production of space in which that narrative is performed facilitates an un-burying of memories of alternative spatial narratives hidden beneath

the façade of an imperialist nostalgic imagination promulgated by an elite, powerful few. Specifically, in this chapter, my close reading of *The Princess Pocahontas Pageant* solidifies a major goal of this dissertation: to bring border theory and frontier ideologies in the Southwest together to show how the search for individual, and ultimately collective identity through the telling, or re-telling of stories is a key to unlocking the metaphorical power of frontier spaces and border places.

Chapter One began with a study of the Southwest as a geographical region that extends into ideology-making on the borderlands. As I have shown in preceding chapters, and as cultural geographer Daniel Arreola asserts, cultures are produced and subsequently reproduced through forms and practices ensconced in spaces. Although cultural geography is only one way to assess culture, and in Arreola's study, an apt model to study the evolution of the cultural features of a distinct ethnic region, such a model occasions us to explore the spatial abstractions of region, place, and landscape in terms of individuals who shape, and are consequently shaped by, a particular region. Importantly, Arreola's regional study of South Texas, which stems from ideas postulated by the Annales School in early twentieth-century France, point towards an understanding of

the ancestral geographic roots of the residents, how the region came to be formed politically and demographically, how identity is vested through cultural representations, and how the region is emblematic of a particular identity, and, therefore, different from other cultural regions (4).

Because, Arreola argues, different cultures "make place" in quite particular ways, diachronic studies of "human-place bonds" (4) yield insight into signifying frameworks particular to the social situation of individuals in a given landscape. People are not just bonded to the places in

which they live and dwell, but the landscape “can act as a signifying framework through which a social system is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored” (5).

This chapter will show how Laredo has shaped its identity through its cultural expressions. Laredo as a border place, however, is highly permeable, as is seen in a vernacular that exemplifies and nurtures the use of a distinct Laredo dialect enmeshed in a unique mixture of Spanish and English—Spanglish. Linguistic registers, however, are beyond the scope of this study. Naming practices, on the other hand, reveal imperialist objectives and further reinforce a nationalist push to forge a new nationalist, colonialist identity. As such, I identify a few key examples of name changes in Laredo to show how public spaces in Laredo are identifiers of broader hegemonic practices that had taken root by the end of the 19th-century. These practices transformed Laredo into what it is today: a burgeoning bi-national, bicultural city that identifies itself as “The Great International Gateway of the Two Republics” (Arreola 152), and “the primary trade route connecting Canada, the United States and Mexico” (*LDF online*).

Significantly, the George Washington’s Birthday Celebration functions as an integral part of the city’s collective memory. Nonetheless, those not familiar with Laredo culture, politics, and social life often question the seemingly contradictory impulses behind this time-honored, often outlandish celebration—with good reason. Why does a city that boasts a population that remains over 94.9% Hispanic in 2007 (*LDF online*) so vehemently and garishly celebrate an American icon who is generally not associated with either the U.S.-Mexico border or the American Southwest?

What’s In a Name?

In 1755, Laredo was officially designated *Villa de San Agustín de Laredo*, “said to be so named after the town of Laredo on the Bay of Biscay in Santander, Spain” (Wilcox, “Laredo During” 86). By 1848, the name of the province had changed. After 1848, Laredo became a decidedly “American” town; Laredoans who desired to become part of Mexico founded the adjacent city of Nuevo Laredo on the other side of the Rio Grande. However, early competing, hegemonic forces wrought changes and laid the groundwork for the emerging identities of *Los Dos Laredos*, as the region is commonly called in the 21st century; this coincided with an emerging nationalism and an industrialized worldview that sought to define, and often re-define itself at the local level. Dennis observes, “[b]ecause South Texas maintained much of the population, culture, language and sensibility of an adjacent nation, Mexico, the definitional distinction between and American and Mexican identity was (and often still is) extremely precarious and vulnerable” (par. 5). As such, we can look to specific instances of national patriotism and citizenship among Laredo’s early elite who shaped identities and ideologies that remain extant today. As earlier chapters have shown, when we push conventional methodologies of geography and social science to look beyond traditional disciplinary lines of inquiry, we can un-cover the power relations at work in the construction of individual and collective specialities as well as the consequences of those constructions. As Soja and Hooper have concluded, “[s]pace cannot simply be metaphorical; it is connected to material geographical realities and it is constructed out of unequal social relations of power” (185). In Laredo, we can read these relations of power as they have become “tied to relations of production rather to national origin” (Sánchez, *Chicano Discourse* 19). Although in *Chicano Discourse* Sánchez takes a Marxist approach to mainly construct a theoretical framework to study “Chicana/o Spanish” on the border, her study is based on the principle that the language of any particular region is a product

of that area's social and cultural history (32). Language, like culture, of course, is not static, and Sánchez's conclusion that "[c]onsumption of the dominant ideology...is the consumption of values and a political perspective" (22) helps us prioritize the ways in which a ruling elite used what James C. Scott calls "hidden transcripts" to ensure the cultural survival of postcolonial political and social agendas. Significantly, for Scott, such a process was the domain of the subaltern. This practice, then, becomes an ironic reversal by the ruling elite to cement relations of power.²⁶

Public records indicate that the original families who settled in Laredo in 1755 came from Spain; along with them came Mexican Indians from the interior of Mexico, probably Tlaxcaltecas. The end of the US-Mexico war of 1848 created a boundary of the Rio Grande and divided the land holdings of Laredo families. Early naming practices show that the earliest settlers in Laredo borrowed their neighborhood names from churches they later established, as in San Francisco Javier. Names that designate landmarks, such as Chacón (so named after Chacón Creek), El Tropezón (The Big Stumble), Cantaranas (croaking, or singing frogs), and *Siete Luces* (seven lights, named after a local cantina) are additional early neighborhood names that indicate a strong network of family and neighborhood allegiances rather than "civic activism" (Green, *Laredo Neighborhoods* 1). Anglo newcomers, who began arriving after the 1880s, however, appropriated and conquered in many ways, not just militarily—a pattern begun with the founding of Fort McIntosh in 1849, and by which "for the next 100 years, with two brief exceptions, the United States Army and its influence would be present in Laredo" (Thompson, *Sabers* 165).

Newcomers to the region often named and renamed towns, places, and sacred spaces. Laredo historian Stan Green describes the impetus behind the naming of some of Laredo's earliest neighborhoods: "immigrants from Mexico did not bring with them the same traditions as

did the immigrants from Europe [...] civic impulses found their scope not in the general body politic, but in that nearer realm of the neighborhood” (*Laredo Neighborhoods* 1). El Azteca, chronologically the second neighborhood to appear in Laredo, is the oldest surviving neighborhood. Located east of the historical central business district, at least a portion of this barrio was named El Ranchero for a store that would grind corn and sell the masa (cornmeal) to local residents (Yoder and La Perrière de Gutierrez 63). This southern-most barrio was home to an early laboring class of mostly Mexicans. The first Laredo neighborhood, *San Agustín*, was composed mostly of leading ranchers who built their town residences as close as possible to the San Agustín church and plaza. Historically, the third of Laredo’s neighborhoods was St. Peters, “which became home to the Anglo Americans and Europeans who poured into Laredo after the railroads came in 1881” (Green, *Laredo Neighborhoods* 5).

In 1755, Laredo as a city was officially designated, Villa de San Agustín de Laredo (Juarez). At this time, there was only one church, San Agustín Church. The area around the church, San Agustín Plaza, in keeping with the Spanish colonial practice of designating plazas as sites for “public meetings, corrals for wild cattle during Spanish round-ups, and places for relaxation” was designed to serve as the center of civic life and the pivotal space from which the entire town’s plan evolved (Nixon-Mendez, “Historic District” par. 1). In 1902, Mayor Albert Martin (1889-1972) officially changed the name of the plaza to “Martin Plaza.” Albert Martin was the son of Raymond Martin, who emigrated to America from France in 1849, and who by 1860, “was the wealthiest man in Webb County” (Thompson, *Laredo: A Pictorial* 114). The name was made official in the city records. It is unclear when the name was officially changed back to San Agustín Plaza; the name had been changed by May 2001 when the Webb County Historical Commission officially “adopted” the plaza (Juarez). Originally, the street names

surrounding San Agustín Plaza were: Calle Real, Calle San Francisco, Calle San Jorge, and Calle del García. Other streets in the colonial settlement were named for the institutions they led to; for instance, there is Calle Convento (Convent Street), and La Calle del Agua (Water Street).

Another instance of the naming of a crucial, identity-making public space that shows the thrust of a U.S. nationalism on a previously native Mexican identity is seen in the changing name of another plaza. According to proceedings initiated by the Historic District Landmark Board of Laredo, on August 29, 1995, it “is interesting to note that Laredo is the only South Texas town on the border with more than two plazas.” The plaza known today as “Bruni Plaza” has undergone various changes in naming throughout its history. The 1885 Sanborn Map shows the block as a “public square.” In 1900, the name “plaza” is used to indicate the site. In 1891, the *Hijos de Juarez* (Sons of Juarez), a mutualist society that provided relocation assistance, burial insurance, and fraternal networks for Mexican immigrants, occupied the large building on the west side of the plaza. Due to its proximity to this building, the plaza came to be known as “Juarez Plaza.” On September 1st 1931, however, the plaza was named in honor of Antonio Mateo Bruni, an Italian immigrant who came to become one of Laredo’s most prominent citizens (Nixon-Mendez, “Historic District” par. 4). In a memo from Historic Preservation Officer Nina Nixon-Mendez to Alfredo Castillo, Director of Parks and Recreation dated November 30, 1994, Nixon-Mendez writes: “Bruni Plaza ...is a reminder of two important developments in Laredo’s history. It embodies the spirit of the Spanish founders who carved a town out of the brush country. Secondly, it is a testimonial to the progressive minded citizens who emigrated to Laredo in the latter part of the 19th century” (par. 1). The naming of the plaza appears to be one way to show the population, which was mostly Mexican and who remained politically tied to the Mother country from which it had been severed in 1848, who was, or who was trying, to be boss. In the

21st century, the evidence, embossed on a memorial on the grounds of Bruni plaza, remains in the words of A. M. Bruni: “God has given us political power to be used for the welfare of the people.”

In 1767, Juan Fernando de Palacios, the governor of Nuevo Santander, New Spain, “officially designated Laredo as a villa, a central plaza laid out, and issued porciones or land grants” (Nixon-Méndez and Thompson 1). After the Civil War, Mayor Samuel Jarvis expanded the traditional Spanish plaza town plan. Edmund J. Davis appointed Jarvis mayor of Laredo on July 15th 1868 through an order from Major General D.C. Buchanan, then Commander of the 5th Military District. On August 17th 1868 Mayor Jarvis’ first signature appears in the city Minutebooks. The entry, by an unnamed alderman, pertains, in some measure to the width of the city streets. The entry is in Spanish. The second entry, that of January 2nd 1869, acknowledges that a “new map,” which appears to have been devised by Mayor Jarvis himself, be instituted in place of the old. This entry, too, is in Spanish: Se resolvío: que el mapa nuevo de la ciudad hecho por el mayor sera conocido [unintelligible word] de esta ciudad en lugar de el Viejo.²⁷ According to archivist Joe Moreno of the Laredo Public Library, no copy of the original city map, before 1869 is available. By the time Jarvis’s term as mayor had ended, in 1872, the city minutes had shifted to the English language.

With his new map, Jarvis named Laredo downtown streets alternately for Mexican and Mexican heroes. In true confluence of state and religion, as well as in the spirit of binationality, Jarvis and the city fathers named out the streets coming from the river as alternating generals and military heroes from Mexico and the US—Zaragoza, Lincoln, Hidalgo, Farragut, Matamoros, Washington, Victoria, Scott. The intersecting avenues were given religious names: San Eduardo, San Jorge, San Enrique, and San Francisco (Laurel 7-8). More importantly, however, is the fact

that Jarvis named certain streets after his children: Santa Cleotilde, Santa María, and Zarita. Important to the present discussion is the implication of power Jarvis held in designating what Laredo streets were to be called as well as changing those names he deemed necessary. Jarvis, a native New Yorker from a wealthy, socialite family ultimately expresses the role of the colonial power to rename. Like the Washington's Birthday Celebration, this practice of naming in accordance with imperialist objectives further reinforces the nationalist push to forge a new national identity.

In regards to naming practices of public streets and plazas in Laredo, a Euro-American, colonialist influence to push and further instill a US nationalism on a population of residents who had, at one time, been Spanish, then Mexican, and who often called themselves *tejano*, attempted to erase, or at least, cover up an earlier identity. The naming of streets in public spaces in the border town of Laredo is one way of showing that the established order corresponds to those who assume responsibility for the naming (Cantú). In nineteenth-century Laredo, several forces intent on making the national identity of the community correspond with a geopolitical identity of the new elite, however at odds this may have been with an earlier geo-cultural identity, coalesced to rename these public spaces in the heart of this old city. This short discussion on naming and re-naming initiatives is an apt introduction to the Washington's Birthday Celebration held each year in Laredo since 1898, for it underscores how Euro-Americans re-defined public spaces in their efforts to chisel the landscape to fit their nationalistic ends. As I will show in the following discussion, Euro-Americans ultimately appropriated a story—that of the Sons of Liberty/Red Men—tied to a cultural hero and bound to an existing “American” discourse; in this way, early Laredoans with power and means garnered the impetus to construct and ultimately perpetuate a specific ideology based in a mythology of the Indian as Other. As we will see, the beginnings of

the George Washington's Birthday Celebration are tied to an American ambivalence in which Indians serve as "oppositional figures against whom one might imagine a civilized national Self" (Deloria 3). Although the GWBC has ostensibly "forgotten" its original purpose, this chapter will show how the Princess Pocahontas Celebration and Pageant has seemingly "picked up" the trajectory of the early Red Men. Further, the events of the celebration that I highlight here—the Colonial Presentation and in particular, the Princess Pocahontas Presentation—are "peculiar representations of nationalisms and identities in the interzone between languages, cultures, classes, genders, and histories" that "differentially express the historical, material, and semiotic motifs that mirror the logics of power in this interzone on the Rio Grande (Dennis, par. 3, 4). Most importantly, these two events are performances by which successive generations of Laredoans—myself included—have, and continue to be, socialized. As such, they are instrumental in the production, dissemination, and ultimate persistence of an identity-politic rooted in power relations and the colonizing idealizations of elite Laredoans.

February 1984, Laredo, Texas:

I am 'Princess Happy Butterfly,' and I represent the great Cherokee Tribe of Tennessee. I am hot, nervous, and decidedly *not* happy. This is all my mother's fault...her idea. My faux-suede costume of fringe and beads, which took ten protracted months to design, weighs 30 pounds, and the feathers in my hair itch. I did not have a *quinceañera*; instead, I, and fourteen other high school girls are "presented" in the annual Washington's Birthday Celebration as members of the Princess Pocahontas Court of 1984. My escort, Henry, does not want to be here either. I have never been to Tennessee.

“¡Ay! *m'ijita*, I just love it! All that *history*!

My mother beams when I ask her about her membership, since its beginnings in 1980, in the Princess Pocahontas Council of Laredo. It is an integral part of her elite identity and position in Laredo social circles. She is not a “Martha,” a member of the most privileged social club in Laredo, but she has a voice in choosing who will portray Pocahontas and receive the key to Laredo in the yearly Washington’s Birthday Celebration; this, in her vision, constitutes social clout. Yet it is her response to my question of why she spends so much time on an event that lasts one evening that is especially telling. The space that she negotiates with her reply is huge and brilliant—just like one of those \$25,000 “Martha’s” gowns. The Spanish prefix “¡ay! *m’ijita*,” which rests so comfortably within a predominantly-English sentence solidifies my roots as a Laredoan. But it is the tight, little square my mother’s mouth forms as she exuberantly delivers the word *history* that speaks volumes. She is passionate...resolute; one utterance has projected her into a space where she imagines she is in total control.

Washington’s Birthday: A Study of Mimesis and Imperialist Nostalgia on the Texas-Mexico Border

When Laredo was founded on May 15, 1755 by Don Tomás Sánchez de la Barrera y Garza, it was little more than a small villa under Spanish colonial rule (Thompson, *Laredo A Pictoral* 11). Two years later, on July 22, 1757, Don Jose Tienda de Cuervo, who was sent by the Viceroy of Mexico, Marques de las Amarillas, rode into town with a small caravan on his inspection tour of the settlements in Nuevo Santander. Months later, upon his return to Mexico City, Tienda de Cuervo reported to the viceroy that Laredo “...is important and that it is expedient that it increase in size, for the sake of the crossing from the interior provinces to Texas” (Thompson, *Laredo A Pictoral* 13). From its early beginnings, and throughout its many

incarnations as ruled under Spain, The Republic of Texas, and, finally, the United States, the identity of Laredo has been shaped by two factors: its early isolation and its unique position as a vital portal to Mexico. Historically, seven flags have flown over Laredo—Spain, France, Mexico, The Republic of the Rio Grande, Texas, Confederate, and the US—rather than the customary six flags of Texas. The flying of the seventh flag, The Republic of the Rio Grande, is just one indication of Laredo’s unique history and the pride residents today take in their roots and heritage. Although there are other Texas inland port cities such as Brownsville and El Paso, Laredo has become “the primary trade route connecting Canada, the United States and Mexico” (*LDF online*). Most notably, Laredo boasts a population that is over 94% Hispanic (*LDF online*). It makes sense, then, that in his analysis of South Texas as a Borderland Cultural Region, Daniel D. Arreola writes that “Laredo may be the most Mexican place in the United States” (150).

Since its inception in February 1898, and unabated by a Mexican Revolution, two World Wars, a national Depression, and the 1970s oil crisis, Laredoans have carried out an elaborate celebration in honor of George Washington’s Birthday. Importantly, participants of the celebration have always numbered the oldest, wealthiest, and most powerful families in Laredo; recurring family names are constant reminders of the elite class structure represented by the event. In 1848, when Laredo came under U.S. rule, Euro-Americans began arriving, and after 1881, the year the Texas-Mexican Railroad first came to town, Anglo-Americans with capital, business connections, and political influence had begun to make their mark on Laredo. At this time, Laredo’s population was comprised “of about eighty percent of Mexican extraction and twenty percent of American ancestry” (Wilcox, “Started in 1897” par. 5). Significantly, Elliott Young cites the coming of the railroad in Laredo as coincidental with the city’s full integration into the international capitalist system and, more importantly, “American society.” Utilizing the

language of the 1889 Laredo Directory, which includes a list of local residents and a narrative on the city's progress, Young advances the idea that the railroad not just physically, but symbolically marked the divide between a Mexican past, with its 'jacal and adobe shanties' and an Anglo present and future with 'capitalists, artisans, and two-story brick buildings'" (52). The George Washington's Birthday Celebration further underscores a marked attempt to break with a Mexican past. An early *Laredo Times* article by noted Laredo historian Seb S. Wilcox, which chronicles the inception of the George Washington's Birthday celebration by the Improved Order of Red Men, a secret fraternal order of all male membership linked to the early Sons of Saint Tammany societies formed in 1783 by former officers of the Continental Army (Davis 59), lays the foundation for understanding the impetus behind the bordertown extravaganza.

In 1897, veteran San Antonio newspaperman Charles M. Barnes, traveled to Laredo with the express purpose of organizing a lodge around the patriotic Improved Order of the Red Men (IORM), of which he was District Deputy and Great Sachem.²⁸ The Laredo charter, whose motto is "freedom, friendship, and charity," was issued on May 29, 1897, and designated the local chapter Yaqui Tribe No. 59. "The local lodge grew [...] and soon numbered among its members the most prominent men of Laredo of both American and Mexican ancestry, all loyal citizens" (Wilcox, "Started in 1897" par. 4). According to Robert E. Davis, Great Chief of Records, Great Council of the United States, early Tammany Societies, such as those established as early as 1789 in New York and Philadelphia, and later in Rhode Island, Kentucky and Ohio (Deloria 47), have "direct links to the Society of Red Men [not to be confused with the IORM] formed at Fort Mifflin in 1813" (70). He writes: "Each May 12th the Society held a 'grand celebration' in honor of Chief Tammany, with Indian dances being performed at some public place" (70). According to Davis, with each successive year the celebrations became more raucous. With the War of

1812, Secretary of War General Henry Dearborn ordered “all military persons to cease from taking part in the excesses of the Tammany Society” (71). After 1812, the celebrations ceased entirely and the society slid toward extinction. However, writes Davis, the majority of “Tammany ideals” were passed along to a new order called the Society of Red Men. Davis adds, however, that there is dispute as to “the exact date the first tribe of the *Improved* Order of Red Men was organized and the reason why the old Society of Red Men, reorganized by William Muirhead, had not been successful and had ceased operation” (154). Regarding the name change from the early Tammany societies to Red Men, Davis writes that the reason for the name change was fairly simple:

They wanted a *new* organization. One not tainted with politics...What could be more natural than to turn to that rare breed of men who loved freedom more than life and fought to the death to protect their liberty, a simple people who lived with nature, but were fierce and proud, the American Indian (85).

Davis concludes in a note on page 160: “From the founding of the Grand Council of Maryland on May 20, 1835, we can truly date the origin of our order. Even though the name “Improved” had not been used, the Indian terms for the offices came into being and in only a few short months the ‘Society’ would emerge like a butterfly from a cocoon as the Improved Order of Red Men. He continues: “If we look at the real birthplace of our modern Order, it must be Maryland. From there came the early leadership that reshaped the organization. While Pennsylvania had been the ‘Mother,’ Maryland was the ‘Father’ of the Improved Order of Red Men (162).²⁹

According to Wilcox, before 1898, and prior to Barnes’s arrival in Laredo, Laredoans in this border space had only celebrated Mexican holidays such as *Cinco de mayo* and *dies y seiz de*

septiembre. Charles Barnes and the new IORM, that “patriotic body of Yaqui Tribe No. 59 conceived the idea of fittingly celebrating a purely American holiday [...] to kindle the fires of patriotism in the hearts of a border city” (“Started in 1897” par. 5). Historically, and today, the Laredo Washington’s Birthday Celebration is a distinctive extravaganza that “blurs all sorts of traditional boundaries while producing new ones” (Treviño 46). It is a social drama charged with political import and valuation based in a revisionist historical narrative that dates back to the “oldest fraternal order of American national origin” in which upwardly-mobile married white men “summoned up an imagined mythic past in which risk-taking and male hierarchies were celebrated through secret macho rituals of racial transformations, first from a ‘paleface’ to a ‘red man’ and then up the hierarchy from a brave to a ‘sachem’ or ‘a keeper of the wampum’” (Dennis, par. 6). The reinscribing, then, of “Indianness” as an icon of uniquely white male privilege, instilled an important, and lasting, political point. From as early as 1905, full-time politicians made their way to Laredo to join the festivities, where politicians and Laredo elite learned early on that “[i]t was the best occasion of the year to make a political point” (Green “A History” 248). Furthermore, writes Laredo historian Stan Green, the Washington’s Birthday Celebration gave birth to the phrase that “every February the State Capitol was transferred to Laredo” (242).

The two events that, arguably, comprise the heart of the George Washington Birthday Celebration: the Colonial Presentation and Ball, and the Princess Pocahontas Celebration and Pageant, are performances that represent fields of negotiation entwined in the politics of identity and exclusionary rituals that separate Laredo’s newer and older elite. Historically, border scholars such as David Montejano, Jovita González, and Daniel Arreola have argued that “being Mexican” in Laredo derived its meaning within the social and political context provided by local

class structures. However, the legacy of colonial rule in Laredo is grounded in the fact that Mexicans and Anglos have historically worked together to represent and propagate a social order that partially derived from a localized structure and system of class rather than race. In this sense, the memory of the Laredo chapter of the Fraternal Order of the Red Men, Yaqui Tribe #55, remains a palimpsest of social and cultural relations in Laredo today.

Historically, most 19th-century Laredoans—rough-hewn ranchers and their families—spoke mainly Spanish, even after Laredo “was given American political structure for city and county” under Captain Mirabeau B. Lamar during the Mexican War of 1846-1848 (Green 3). Throughout this period, and in the decades to come, European and American newcomers tended to marry into local families, thus resulting in an on-going process of Americanization and Mexicanization. In this light, David Montejano’s “relaxed class analysis” of race relations in Texas is integral to an understanding of class, ethnicity, and ultimately, identity in Laredo. He delineates four “race situations”: Incorporation 1836-1900, Reconstruction 1900-1920, Segregation 1920-1940, and Integration 1940-1986, to examine the complex, ultimately accommodationist relations between Anglo-Americans and Texas Mexicans—*tejanos*—in Texas from 1836 to the present. This notion of cooperation is important in understanding the Washington’s Birthday Celebration as a major force that embodies central social struggles of Laredo’s population and ultimately shapes the public memory.

The 1898 *Laredo Times* article which professed the annual commemoration of Washington’s Birthday as an effort to “awaken patriotism on the border and make us realize that we live in the United States” is integral to understanding the idea of what is at stake in the hearts and minds of the powerful elite who have fashioned a tenuous identity for Laredo throughout its history (Young 55). Scholars Montejano, Gilbert Hinojosa and Jovita González all agree that

Mexican families provided an entry for whites in Laredo's elite circles and helped to mitigate racial tensions. In this regard, Laredo's demographic and political structure historically compelled inclusionary practices among *tejanos* and whites. However, in Laredo, "Mexicans could be invited to join the U.S. nation as equal partners because a significant portion of them held political and economic power" (Young 55). This economic and class structure, in which the seeds of the WBC were sown, remains today.

The 1898 Washington's Birthday Celebration, a civic success which led in 1923 to Laredo's receiving a state charter, is described by Young as a "ritual of inversion" in which the civilized elite—mostly Anglos but at least one Texas Mexican—"played Indian" in a mock attack against City Hall. The lower classes and visitors watched the performance from the sidelines. This spectacle "pitted Laredo's forces of order, including its primary political institutions, against the forces of disorder—" the Native and African Americans (Young 58). *Tejanos*, who considered themselves "white" Mexicans, in re-enacting a scenario from the region's history reinforced a sense of common destiny among Laredo's Mexican and Anglo population. Whites and *tejanos*, then, exoticized American Indians as "Other" and set in motion a system—which remains today—in the language of class and culture, in which *tejanos* occupied a "transitional position in the racial hierarchy" (Young 71). Montejano argues that whites and Mexicans, during the period of "segregation," enjoyed friendly and relaxed associations where Mexicans owned land and had political power. Being "Mexican," he argues, drew its meaning within the social and political context of local class structures (252). His analysis of the 1930 census solidifies his evidence that *tejanos* often identified themselves as white. In the mid-19th century, writes Jerry Thompson:

Laredo thus developed a somewhat different socio-political pattern than that which characterized other areas of the state. True, Laredo came to experience discrimination, but discrimination of a different nature, meaning that the discrimination was socio-economic rather than racial. The upper-class, both Anglo-American and Mexican-American, tended to discriminate against the lower class of the town with a force perhaps worse than that in any other area of the state (*Sabers* 161).

Even during the early twentieth century, when racial violence had spread throughout South Texas, Laredo never experienced the brutal mass killings and lynchings that occurred throughout Texas. Jovita González argues that on the border, “descendants of the old grantees” demanded and retained certain privileges (qtd. in Montejano 114). This mirrors Hinojosa’s assertion regarding the security that was claimed by both Laredo Mexicans and whites via stable family relations. He concludes that “the complex relationship that developed between Euro-Americans and Mexican Americans was often mutually beneficial and never outwardly hostile. The coalitions that evolved were not principally ethnic; instead, they pitted the privileged, whether Anglo, European, or Mexican, against the poor” (68). In Laredo, elite members of Mexican and Euro-American families “intermarried so long ago that no one in their right minds would attempt to make ethnic distinctions” (Swartz par. 16).

Princess Pocahontas: The Birth of a New Elite

By 1923, the events comprising the George Washington’s Birthday Celebration had grown to such a magnitude that a corporation was formed. On February 2nd, 1923, the Washington’s Birthday Celebration Association of Laredo, Inc. (WBCA) received its charter from the State of Texas. During the 1924 celebration, “social and civic minded ladies of Laredo

conceived the idea of a gorgeous night pageant depicting Martha and George Washington and the original 13 colonies” (Wilcox, “Started in 1897” par. 32). This production proved so popular that in 1939 Monsignor Dan Laning founded the Society of Martha Washington (Green, “A History” 14). The grandiose Colonial Pageant and Ball have remained under the auspices of the Society of Martha Washington to this date. Although the figure of Pocahontas has been represented since the earliest Washington’s Birthday Celebration in 1898, it was not until the fall of 1980 that a group of Laredo women conceived the idea of “creating an organization to enhance the role of Princess Pocahontas during the annual festivities of Washington’s Birthday Celebration and keep alive the customs and legends of a vanishing race” (Barrera, “The Princess” 215-216). According to Dennis, the Princess Pocahontas Pageant and Celebration represents “an alternative American Indianist ritual” meant to “reflect the legitimacy logics of the emerging professional class” (par. 13). In this way, the women of the Princess Pocahontas Council—upwardly-mobile *tejanas*— “display[s] each year a romanticized, ‘Orientalized’ (in Edward Said’s sense of the term) version of the ‘American Indian’ that is absolutely benign, compassionate and benevolent” (par. 15). It is this re-configuration of “Indianness” that allows the members of the Council to effectively distance themselves from Mexicanist identifications, and instead absorb a re-imagined (and highly improbable, as it is tied to an Algonquin figure, rather than Yaqui, Toltec, Comanche, Apache, or Aztec figurehead) ancestral history. The resultant dis-identification with the actual and the Native is reminiscent of the generational dis-identification already discussed with regard to Don Santiago in *Caballero*, Mama Chona and other older members of the Angel clan in *The Rain God*, and, perhaps most tragically, Guálinto in *George Washington Gómez*. Such dis-identification, however, ostensibly relegates the goals of

the Princess Pocahontas Council alongside the older, more firmly-entrenched performances of the Society of Martha Washington.

In 1904, Pocahontas, in her first WBC incarnation as “bearer of peace,” appeared on the scene when the Yaqui defeated the settlers during a performance—described by Nething as “a classic cowboy-and-Indian spectacle of several chapters” (211)—at Laredo City Hall. After the cowboy and Indian skirmish in which the Yaqui ransacked city hall and the cavalry came to the rescue of the local cowboys:

A bugle was heard playing. Attention now focused on the East end of the plaza where the beautiful Queen of the Yaqui Tribe appeared with her entourage. After Pocahontas arrived at City Hall, six braves lent assistance as she gracefully dismounted...the captives were brought downstairs so she could meet them (Nething 212).

Pocahontas was then given the key to the city of Laredo—a practice that continues today—in a symbol of peace and goodwill. Beginning with the first Pocahontas performance by Naty Matherne in 1898, all subsequent performers have received the key to Laredo in the WBC; this practice signals the start of the month-long celebration as well as the Grand International Parade. Perhaps most telling is the title that the Princess Pocahontas Council (PPC) gave the 1998 celebration: “A Celebration of Peace—Our Dawn of Democracy.” The 1998 Pageant Overview provides crucial insight into the relationship between the WBC and Pocahontas:

As delegates of the newly independent American colonies, Mr. Benjamin Franklin and Mr. Thomas Jefferson met to discuss certain communications received from President George Washington. [...] As the two gentlemen leave, they reflect upon the tranquility that has existed among these [tribal] nations since the early 1600s when Chief Powhatan, of the Powerful Powhatan Confederacy, had provided the basis for that peaceful co-

existence. They also reflected upon the role that his daughter, the beautiful Indian maiden Pocahontas, with her friendship and genteel manner, had added to that peacefulness and to the successful colonization of Jamestown. At that time, Chief Powhatan had hosted a great celebration to commemorate this peace which still prevailed in their homeland. Let us return to the early 1600s and share in that celebration (6).

Initially, The PPC was formed as a result of Laredoan Velia Uribe's interest in the annual role Pocahontas played in the WBC. According to the 1998 *Princess Pocahontas Council Periodical*, the group's interest was threefold:

- 1) To support and enhance the role of Pocahontas and her court in the celebration.
- 2) To provide greater opportunity for the community to participate more fully in the celebration by sponsoring youth-oriented activities.
- 3) To revise and promote interest in the customs and legends of the American Indian culture (2).

Although the PPC retains this spirit, in past years it has become increasingly evident that the Princess Pocahontas Pageant is making strides to approach the level of ostentation of the "Marthas," members of the Society of Martha Washington—who clearly reflect position, wealth, and class in Laredo. When I was "Happy Butterfly" in 1984 my beaded gown cost about \$600 to make. During this same year, the gowns of many of my friends who were "Marthas" cost \$5,000 to \$6,000. In 1992, when my brother René was Ysela Tijerina's PPC escort, his costume cost roughly \$5,000 to make; Ysela's costume cost roughly \$7,000. Today, each Colonial gown generally costs upwards of \$20,000 and each PPC outfit may cost upwards of \$12,000 to \$14,000. Indeed, it is ironic "that families would spend so much money on a daughter's debutante gown in a city with some of the poorest people in the country" (Young 84).

The Society of Martha Washington, which, since 1940, has yearly sponsored the increasingly extravagant Colonial Presentation and Ball is arguably the most elite social club in Laredo. Furthermore, although my mother and the other members of the Princess Pocahontas Council—all women—have a voice in choosing who will portray Pocahontas and receive the key to Laredo in the yearly Washington’s Birthday Celebration, the PPC Pageant has been called the “poor cousin” to the Colonial Ball and presentation by at least one scholar (Young 83). The members of the Pocahontas Court often cannot afford to be “Marthas” and they do not fall into the strata of working-class young women in Laredo who are socialized by means of a *quinceañera*; they are, rather, middle and upper-middle class young women who dress up in imagined Indian garb to “help Laredo project an image of racial and national harmony” (Young 85).

Ontologies of Space and Identity-Making

The Laredo Washington’s Birthday Celebration is a testament to the complex negotiations of power between affluent Mexicans and Euro-Americans that serves to demark class structures in a given geopolitical space. Mary Pat Brady’s analysis of what she terms the “manipulation of space” in her hometown of Douglas, Arizona facilitates an appreciation of the colonialist imperatives that have historically defined the space of the Washington’s Birthday Celebration and its basis in a fraudulent, nostalgic reality. Brady’s analysis, which begins with an understanding of the 1912 building of the Southwestern Railroad Depot in Douglas as a symptom of the triumph of Anglo hegemony over the region and the beginning of the capitalization of the border, helps us realize how one border space allowed for the conflictive coexistence of dialectically opposed temporalities: one Mexican, agrarian, and pre-modern, and

the other a U.S. cosmopolitan modernity. However, any analysis of a communal, identity-making performance through the years must focus on the role of narrative as well as the transformations of the production of space in which that narrative is performed. To this end, the work of Raúl Homero Villa, and the theories of postmodern geographer Edward Soja, further explain the production of space as a social process. Villa, who reveals that memory is central to understanding the spatial practices that produce form and meaning in the *barrios* of Los Angeles, helps us understand various Chicana/o battles for communal physical space. Although in Laredo, the radicalized social activism of protest and dissent which forged the Chicana/o activism of Los Angeles was seemingly “worlds away from most of us on the border,” (Treviño 39) studies such as Brady’s help un-bury the memories of alternative spatial narratives hidden beneath the façade of an imperialist nostalgic imagination promulgated by an elite, powerful few.

Following the footsteps of French Marxist theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, who by the mid-twentieth century began to incorporate spaciality in postmodern geographical analyses, Soja, in his book, *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), prioritizes space alongside time and human geographical patterns. He writes that organized space is not structured by its own autonomous laws, as earlier 20th-century Marxist analysts proposed, but, rather, it is “a dialectically defined component of the general relations of production, relations which are simultaneously social and spatial” (78). Simply put, and as earlier chapters suggest, Soja demands that geographers, as well as social scientists, consider the idea that human patterns of being-in-the world exist simultaneously and dialectically in time and space.

Ultimately, the performances of the WBC must be viewed as negotiations of power that involve crossing from one spatial-temporal continuum to another. History, and more importantly, the *memory* of a particular accommodationist history, figures greatly in the production of identity

and power in Laredo. As such, Brady's analysis of the transformation of space in Douglas, Arizona—a model that delineates the processes that shape how places “are understood, envisioned, defined, and variously experienced” (7)—helps elucidate the idea that subject formation relates to spatiality and the on-going production of a place at a local level. In her analysis of how perceptions of space have altered due to a changing, increasingly globalized economy on the border, she argues that the production of place is entwined in ontologies of time and space. More important, however, is her idea that the production of a “particular national border” further demands the production of subjectivities (52). She uses the term “subjectivity-in-process” to argue that a “mestiza consciousness” emerges in relationship to spaciality and the ongoing production of border spaces. Place-making, then, is integral to identity-making. “The border is produced through a nostalgia that imagines its (former) tranquility and that necessarily belies the three centuries of conflict that have engulfed it. In other words, these border narratives depend on an understanding of space, of place, as immobile and fixed not as process” (51). According to Brady, identity-making activities create place.

Historically, the Washington's Birthday Celebration was instituted as a patriotic celebration to unite Laredo to the greater U.S. Nonetheless, “the historic, geographic, and demographic significance of Mexico and Mexicans on the border had to be incorporated into the very concept of America...Indians, however, who held little or no political and economic power on the border, were portrayed as foreign enemies” (Young 50). This idea of a native elite cooperating on a social, political, and cultural scale in a complex mimetic performance entwined in a falsely nostalgic mythos of a “Native” history is at the heart of identity formation and politics in Laredo. The Washington's Birthday Celebration encompasses an institutionalized public memory in which Laredoans have historically treated American Indians as abject.

Ironically, however, like the members of the Princess Pocahontas Council, who actively seek to “revise and promote interest in the customs and legends of the American Indian culture” (1998 *Princess Pocahontas Periodical* 2) the abject have become a metaphor for the social transformations necessitated by White and Mexican elites in order to cling to a tenuous economic and political stronghold. Importantly, the presentations occur each year, and participants often know since birth that they will be “presented.” In the words of Dennis, then: “the abject returns, returns and returns (par. 19).

Performance, Mimesis, and Community

Today, the month-long birthday celebration, which attracts over 400,000 visitors to the city and is vital to the local economy, culminates, during the final weekend, in the Colonial Presentation and Ball and the Princess Pocahontas Celebration and Pageant. These elaborate galas no doubt baffle the uninitiated outsider: one troupe of hand-picked young women—seniors in high school—dons elaborately-beaded, hand-embroidered “American Indian” gowns as part of the Princess Pocahontas Celebration, while another set of hand-picked female seniors embodies the wives, cousins, and sisters of the American Founding Fathers in even more outrageously-garish colonial-era costumes. As a member of the 1984 Princess Pocahontas Court, I portrayed a mythic figure from an imagined past –“Princess Happy Butterfly”—the name given to me by the all-female members of the Princess Pocahontas Council. For one year prior to our “presentation” in the pageant, I and fourteen other “debutantes” endured countless tea parties and luncheons, learned professional horsemanship skills, and were formally instructed on how to publicly present ourselves in a graceful, confident, and genteel manner.³⁰ Furthermore, although my escort Henry and I represented the Cherokee Tribe of Tennessee, neither of us, or the other

members of the Court for that matter, were ever “instructed” in any way regarding specifics of the tribal nations or peoples we were portraying; we were merely “representatives” who were chosen by a cadre of elite women to participate in their conception of history. In this sense, we were mimics, *repeating* rather than *re-presenting* (author’s emphasis) a vision of history (Bhabha 125). We were playing roles, just as my friends who served as debutantes in the older, more traditionally established Colonial Ball played the roles of “Marthas” by portraying ladies and contemporaries of the founding fathers. Both festivals, which involve “masked” performances and processions and serve as a type of “coming-out” ritual for each young woman presented encompass a “desire to emerge as ‘authentic’ through mimicry (Bhabha 126). The play-actors of the Washington’s Birthday Celebration represent an “*ironic compromise...the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (Bhabha, italics in original, 122).

Additionally, Julia Kristeva’s idea of the abject further sheds light on the complex rituals of inversion, namely the Princess Pocahontas Pageant, which comprises a large part of Laredo’s annual Washington’s Birthday Celebration; importantly, the ceremony both denies and glorifies American Indians in a complex mimetic ritual. Regarding abjection, Kristeva asserts, “abjection is above all ambiguity” because “it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it” (9). More importantly, one experiences abjection only if an Other has settled in place and stead of one’s Self. The Self must not simply identify with and incorporate this Other, rather the Other “precedes and possesses” the Self, and such possession causes the Self to be (10). Furthermore, spatial ontologies as they relate to Victor Turner’s view of the “*communitas*” of performance that involve a liminal, transitory experience from one symbolic domain to another further illuminate

the underlying stakes negotiated in the “playing out” of the dramas entwined in the WBC performances.

The Princess Pocahontas Pageant “reaffirms the cohesion of a social group to its communitarian structure through participation in a time of revitalization” (Mesnil 191). In her analysis of the social and historical reality in which carnival operates, Marianne Mesnil utilizes the works of Mircea Eliade and Michel Freitag, as well as Mikhail Bakhtin, to demonstrate how the “dynamic nature of the carnivalesque festival is thus a function of the relation between the reference group and the global society in power” (190). In Bakhtin’s societal model, the carnivalesque festival is rebellious and oppositional to the hegemonic society. In this sense, the performances of the Princess Pocahontas Court become especially charged with political import as they represent fields of negotiation for the politics of identity.

Performances are “generic means of tradition making...whose repetitions situate actors in time and space, structuring individual and group identities [...] provid[ing] an intricate counterpoint to the unconscious practices of everyday life insofar as they are stylistically marked expressions of otherness” (Kapchan 479). As ritualized modes of cultural expression, performances carry a high degree of reflexivity and agency for the individuals involved. In her historical analysis of performance, Deborah A. Kapchan utilizes Victor Turner’s “symbolic view” of performance to stress that large-scale cultural-display events must be examined as “semiotic modes of cultural expression” (480). In Turner’s view, socially dramatic performances like carnival not only fabricate meanings in highly condensed symbols, but also comment, critique, and often subvert those symbols in such ways that they can work to transform the social, psychological and emotional being while continually “enfolding” the individual into the larger community (480). The communal action, while highly self-reflexive at the individual level,

works to create a shared reality. For Turner, this shared, communal reality, which he called “*communitas*” is most often experienced in liminal states—in the “transition from one symbolic domain to another” (Kapchan 480-481).

In this regard, the falsely nostalgic vision entwined in the WBC performances remain a testament to the ever-present racial, gender, and patriarchal hierarchies that have historically oriented both White and Mexican subjectivities in the border community of Laredo. The elite cadre of established Laredo families represented by the Society of Martha Washington who, year after year, fashion a “royal” ensemble in order to propagate a vision of power and wealth do nothing to undermine the efforts of the Princess Pocahontas Council. In fact, both groups are equally complicit in creating, sustaining, and finally, participating in a forced political theorization of power based on the subjugation of history. Bakhtin’s theory of carnivalesque illuminates how the WBC represents a tradition of temporary inversion and transgression in which the political, legal, and ideological authority of the power elite is seemingly, but not entirely, inverted so as to create a temporary space of liberation for the community at large—for the majority of people in Laredo can only afford to *view* the chosen few on display as part of the Grand International Parade rather than participate in the masked events.

Bakhtin called metamorphosis “a mythological sheath for the idea of development—but one that unfolds not so much in a straight line as spasmodically, a line with ‘knots’ in it. This chronotope structures time around moments of biographical crisis which show how an individual becomes other than what he was” (Morris 181). This is an important concept relative to the young members of both the Princess Pocahontas Court and the Colonial Presentation—their is a rite of passage that is construed around a particular national identity as well as class structure. The members of both parties represent costumed manifestations of what Renato Rosaldo has

labeled “mourning for what one has destroyed” (107), and by so doing perpetuate an invented image of racial and national harmony, an “authorized version[s] of otherness” (Bhabha 126). In this sense, elite Laredoans, themselves colonial agents, “mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed” (Rosaldo 108). What is most important to understand, however, is Rosaldo’s idea that this nostalgic vision transforms the “colonial agent into an innocent bystander” (108). Both parties flatter and perpetuate what they wish to acknowledge as their own civilized identities. Yet they can only accomplish this by referencing an imagined past in which their complicity in destroying an American Indian populace is conveniently erased. Moreover, although this border landscape has changed greatly in recent decades due to factors of migration, urbanization, and industrialization, Mario Barrera’s model of internal colonialism, which he posits as “a structured relationship of domination and subordination, where the dominant and subordinate groups are defined along ethnic and/or racial lines, and where the relationship is established and maintained to serve the interests of all or part of the dominant group” (193) is particularly useful in understanding the historical dynamics that helped manipulate the expansionist and exclusionary policies of a select few who have wielded economic and political power since the late 19th-century. By further foregrounding the ideals of nation-formation in Laredo in a theoretic which underscores time, space, and the ironic compromises of a mimetic performance on the border, we can see how a particular action, embedded in the nostalgia of a false historical memory, figures in the production and concretization of identity in a particular border space.

Conclusion: Towards a New Paradigm

As Deloria argues, “[a]lthough the meanings of Indian Others depended on the changing social and political struggles of white Americans, they also relied upon the shifting circumstances of real Indians” (43). Just as by the mid-1820s the American government began to systematically remove American Indians west of the Mississippi, so too did this movement usher the removal of American Indians from American life and into American history.³¹ Joanne Barker, in trying to understand “how the narrative [of Pocahontas] works” argues that there are “as many versions of the story of Pocahontas as there are representations of her in U.S. popular culture” (316). In her search for the “real” Pocahontas, Barker employs the writings of Cherokee scholar Rayna Green to conclude that the “transfiguring” of Pocahontas by a multitude of incarnations within “U.S. nationalism’s mythic structures” has worked generally to “serve[ing] U.S. colonial men and interests” (316-7). The appropriation of Pocahontas’s story serves the interests of erasing “a multitude of historical and cultural sins from the pages of U.S history” and, as such, continues even into the present day—as the story of Princess Pocahontas on the Rio Grande evidences—the systematic removal of Indian nations from their lands, nations, communities, beliefs, and languages (318-9).

Similarly, Paula Gunn Allen, in what can be called her “biomythography” of Pocahontas, cautions that readers must negotiate the narrative of Pocahontas on various levels in order to fully understand her world. Pocahontas cannot be known as “fact;” more importantly, neither can she nor her people be known outside of the spirit-centered world of the Indian. Facts alone, often privileged in Western narratives or biographies, cannot account for that “which moves through a people...its heart, its manito” (*Pocahontas* 10) Pocahontas’s world, her narrative, exists as continuity within a Native “life system” that encompasses a “community of living things, geography, climate, spirit people, and supernaturals” (4). Gunn Allen, then, must locate

Pocahontas within that space that Brewster E. Fitz posits “points both forward and backward,” using a language much like that which comprises Silko’s “ontologically privileged Mayan text,” (239-40)—that fourth almanac in *Almanac of the Dead* that has the power to unite whole peoples and cultures to dramatically revise world history. Just as Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* challenges traditional historical documents, so too does Gunn Allen’s “mixed-breed or hybrid study” of Pocahontas (*Pocahontas* 7).

In her examination of modern American Indian literature, Allen writes that imaginative writings, just as stories, must reflect “the deepest meanings of a community” by “carrying forward archetypes through the agency of familiar symbols arranged within a meaningful structure” (“Tradition and Continuity” 565). The nature of continuity, she writes is “to bring those structures and symbols which retain their essential meaning forward into a changed context in such a way that the metaphysical point remains true, in spite of apparently changed circumstances” (“Tradition and Continuity” 573). This trajectory is manifest in Islas’s *The Rain God*, in which Miguel Chico locates a subjective equilibrium within a continuous interplay of the forces in his ethnic and cultural universe. But what happens when that “metaphysical point” is based on a false collective motivation, a “manufactured” reality? Just as colonial patriots—forebears of the Improved Order of Red Men—dressed as Indians not to disguise themselves, but to signify rebellion and British separateness, so too do Laredoans continue to “play Indian” to separate themselves from a nebulous identity based first in a denial of Indian as Other, and secondly in a avowal of an extant hierarchical class structure based in early colonialist formations.

Early colonialist imperatives remain firmly entrenched in Laredo social and civic structures, as is evidenced by the Princess Pocahontas Pageant and Presentation. The

appropriation of Indian culture and identity—what Shari M. Huhndorf calls “going native,” in her book *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination*—has for years remained encoded as part of the racial dynamics of conquest in Laredo. Although it is important, then, to frame the Washington’s Birthday Celebration, and specifically the Princess Pocahontas Presentation and Pageant, in Laredo within a theoretic of space, it is also imperative to comprehend Laredo’s unique history in terms of the demographic and geographic significance of Mexico and Mexicans who, from the outset, were incorporated into the politics of nation-building and identity-formation. Because, in Laredo, the demarcation of Other exists along a tenuous continuum where insider and outsider have survived symbiotically, and in the interests of an elite few, a historically-based, postcolonial analysis of the physical details of the landscape as it is inextricably linked to Laredoans who actively shape that landscape into a space of liminality and negotiation yields crucial insight into the continuing pattern of classism that has historically split not different races or ethnicities in Laredo, but different classes.

The analysis I present in this chapter shows how space and place are inextricably linked through a mimetic ritual via the re-enactment of historical, colonialist imperatives enmeshed in a greater United States history that historically established, and today, reinforces a sense of common destiny among Laredo’s Mexican and Anglo elite. As we have seen, however, the bordered frontier is a site of continual complex negotiations—both bodily and otherwise—and in the 21st century, the South Texas landscape has altered dramatically. How then does the changing landscape of South Texas, especially given the ongoing commodification of nature and means and practices of production after the passage of NAFTA in 1994, factor into our spatialized understanding of nationhood along the borderlands? In the 21st century, the world, and, as such, the South Texas borderlands have become increasingly globalized. Economically, NAFTA has

been very convincing, but many people, like environmentalist and *LareDOS* newspaper owner Meg Guerra, who live and breathe the effects of NAFTA argue that “it’s also caused a lot of harm in Laredo and along the border” (Guerra). Additionally, on September 15th 2006 the U.S. Department of State issued a pronouncement cautioning against “the rising level of brutal violence in areas of Mexico...particularly in border areas including Nuevo Laredo and Matamoros,” (U.S. Dept. of State par. 1, 3). What might the future of the borderlands hold, and how can we continue to—as U.S. Third space feminists maintain that we must—break open the histories of borderland peoples to cohere the experiences of Anglo, American Indian, Mexican-American, and Chicano/a cultures?

The stories of the places, spaces and peoples of the Southwest cannot be seen as linear narratives. Rather, like works in progress, the stories entwined in the spaces and places along the Southwestern borderlands encompass works of the imagination, constantly reinventing themselves, and, therefore, the history and people who yet inhabit the landscape. Throughout this dissertation, I have suggested that what is unabated, what is eternal in the American Southwestern mythology is a sense of place. Yet, in the 21st century, the borderlands remain fluid sites of cultural exchange and negotiation where the contradictions and challenges of a Southwestern mythology yet endure. We might ask, then, how might we best dismantle frontier and border ideologies, ideologies that are necessarily ensconced in a homeland, a place for so many, that remain today? How do we unravel the complexities of place given the continued commoditization and increased militarization of the border effect borderland peoples and communities?

Perhaps the answer lies hidden just beneath the surface of the landscape itself. Perhaps, as Kerwin Lee Klein suggests, when we expose the “ragged edges of history” we can subsequently

“reclaim” history itself to arrive at a “dialogue between different histories” (295). Just as boundaries and borders are not clear-cut and do not exist in the abstract, neither are stories; neither are border or frontier narratives clear-cut and abstract. Perhaps, like Silko’s Mayan codices, that, in Fitz’s words, achieve ontological “being” in a “web of cultural syncretism, interweaving the Western and the Indian,” (8) the answer lies in patterns of language as explorations of reality that comprise just one of many threads of the textual web. As I have shown, both Silko and Gunn Allen raise their work to a level that is akin to a meditation on language and being. Silko writes:

So long as the human consciousness remains *within* the hills, canyons, cliffs, and the plants, clouds, and sky, the term *landscape*, as it has entered the English language, is misleading. ‘A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view’ does not correctly describe the relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings. This assumes the viewer is somehow *outside* or *separate from* the territory he or she surveys. Viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on (“Landscape, History” italics in original, 265-6).

Perhaps it is language then that has separated border and frontier systems for much of the historiographic record; consequently, perhaps our challenge lies in how we choose to continue to tell the many stories intertwined in the bordered frontier.

In “Leaving the Dark Night of the Lie,” Linda Townley Woodson approaches McCarthy’s border trilogy by means of the theories of Julia Kristeva and Friedrich Nietzsche to conclude that McCarthy’s trilogy, among other things, explores “how language transforms reality, of how reality transforms language” (271). Woodson’s exploration of language in the trilogy reminds us that language is the human activity that “works to separate us and to establish

dominance” (268). For Nietzsche, “the will to power, the basic human motive, is an effort to gain control over chaos” (267). However, human beings cannot know the world absolutely, but rather by memory and the recording of patterns in writing. “Only the recording of these patterns historically,” Woodson continues, “makes possible acts of aggression among groups as large as those involved historically in Manifest Destiny” (268). Language becomes a “false dance” in the will to power, the means by which human intellect “detains” specific moments in existence to forge individual and national identities (269). Woodson’s conclusion that “McCarthy asserts the idea that truths can never be known in conscious reasoning through language, that humans use language as a way of becoming and of holding against the other” (270) then, is at least one means we can lay bare patterns of dominance and resistance along the bordered frontier.

In Laredo, elite Euro-Americans and Mexican landowners forged a distinct community patterned on a language of American nationalistic thought in order to systematically deny the Indian, and, arguably, the working classes as Other. As I showed in Chapter One, Frederick Jackson Turner gave the frontier a national significance by adopting a specific ethnocentric terminology that emphasized space in such a way as to seemingly erase place. Similarly, many of the characters presented here—Mama Chona, Don Santiago and even John Grady Cole—show that the consequences of withdrawing oneself from the matrix of the bordered frontier, narratives that necessarily encompass both place and space, can lead to a fracturing of self, an inability, as the blind man suggests to John Grady in *All the Pretty Horses*, of humans to bring about the consequences of their own will (195). The denial of the Indian in the American Southwest reflects nothing less than a denial of place, of landscape. In this regard, we can align the works of Silko, Gunn Allen, Islas, McCarthy, and McMurtry with McCarthy’s border trilogy, specifically Billy Parham’s “lesson” in *The Crossing*.

Edwin T. Arnold, in “McCarthy and the Sacred,” writes about the ecospiritual matrix that ties humanity to the environment, the immediate landscape surrounding us. “A matrix,” he writes, “can be conceived in two ways: as both the primal substance, the ‘mother,’ out of which other essences or forces develop and, in more modern terms, as a network of interconnected or intersecting forces” (218). Billy Parham, at the close of *The Crossing*, witnesses the first nuclear explosion on U.S. soil at the Trinity site in New Mexico. It is this act of witnessing of the possible destruction of the natural matrix by humankind in an act of tremendous hubris that places Billy, finally (and although he may not know it) in a position to acknowledge “a way to recognize the individual worth of the other without destruction and without further speeding up of the destruction of the natural world, the ‘darkening land, the world to come’” (Woodson 283). “Debemos escuchar,” (292) the blind man apprises Billy in *The Crossing*. “This sanctity of hearing the narrative of others,” writes Woodson, is, as Kristeva explains, a “reverant acknowledgement of the existence of the Other. This sanctity of hearing the narrative of others, narratives of their individual and created histories, offers to the other his or her individual worth” (280). If we couple this idea with American Indian ways of knowing the world as “part of an ancient continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories” (Silko, “Landscape, History” (268), we may begin to unravel, story by story, the intertwined narratives that comprise the complex matrix of the bordered frontier.

EPILOGUE

The last time I visited Laredo, I took my mountain bike with me; I always do. I don't need an excuse to ride at the old ranch on Highway 359. But I found a new lock on the gate. Determined to ride, I suited up and rode along the barbed-wire fence. I knew what I was looking for. After riding east for about half a mile along the southernmost fence line skirting the ranch, I found it: a crawlspace where the fence had been loosened and lifted up carefully to permit entry. I crawled through and dragged my bike after me. I've seen these crawlspaces all my life; the Mexicans traversing the landscape in the dead of night make them. The ranchers fix the cuts in the fence, and Mexicans pursuing the American Dream, or a job, or a chance to re-connect with family members who have successfully made the journey, cleave through them. It's all part of the same cycle. Sometimes I find evidence of their journeys: discarded wrappers, bits of foil, empty water bottles caked in dirt. When I make my way to Frog Pond and the little cabaña where my uncles like to cook fajitas on Sundays, I sometimes notice that Epifanio, the rancher, has surreptitiously left several gallon water jugs by a grove of mesquite trees. One day I asked Epifanio, who was born in Nuevo Laredo, but who has legally lived and worked on the ranch in Laredo for over twenty years, about the jugs. A quiet man of few words, he smiled and softly said, "Están para los que cruzan el río, los que tienen tan poco."

I love this place. Each thing that shoots up from the forever-parched earth sticks, pricks, or prickles the skin. The thorns and spines that flourish here force you to look and step closely. Rushing through the natural landscape is not just dangerous, it is impossible.

Life on the ranch has hardly changed since my youth, but Laredo has changed. For most of my adolescence and well into my twenties, Laredo's population stood at about 80,000—mostly of Mexican descent. Today, Laredo's population—still predominantly Mexican-

American—has skyrocketed to over 230,000 inhabitants (not including those who live and work in the area without official residency papers). The infrastructure is notoriously disorganized and the new wealth and substructure created by NAFTA have wrought havoc on the ecological limits of what was once a sleepy border place. With the impending possibility of a border wall, the “immigration debate,” and the ever-increasing military presence looming along this desiccated stretch of earth, it remains to be seen what the future holds.

But one thing is certain: the myth of the frontier is alive and well, as evidenced by the increasing extravagances of the yearly Laredo George Washington’s Birthday Celebration. Yet, in the 21st century, the myth of the frontier has become increasingly linked with the ongoing experiences of globalism and imperialism. If, as Sara Spurgeon writes, myths “are what we wish history had been—a compressed, simplified, sometimes outright false vision of the past but a vision intended to serve a specific purpose in the present and, just as importantly, to bequeath a specific shape to the future” (3), a major reason to reconstruct the past—to study history—is to effectively revision the future.

What I have aimed to do in this dissertation is to look at the history of a specific geographical space—the border—alongside the stories of the people who occupy that space. Just as the “illegal” Mexicans cut holes in the fence lines along the bordered frontier, so too have their stories always slipped through. The evidence, the stories of the Other, may yet appear scant, but, as Emma Pérez reminds us, the once-silenced voices of colonized Others are the negotiating spaces of the decolonizing subject. As I have shown, the legacy of a mythic past necessarily intrudes upon the vast spaces of the American Southwest, as is evidenced by the stories of Maria and Call, of Billy Parham and Miguel Chico. The stories in the literary works presented here—like so many stories on the bordered frontier yet to be told—problematize frontier and border

tropes to ultimately critique imperial ideologies and offer insight on themes and consequences of frontier mythogenesis. The stories are endless, and for lack of space I was unable to include others that speak to the intertwined voices of the bordered frontier. Among these are: Norma Cantú's *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*; Montserrat Flores's *Dreams of the Centaur*; Leonor Villegas de Magnón's *The Rebel*; Mary Austin's *Cactus Thorn*; Fabiola Cabeza De Baca's *We Fed Them Cactus*; Arturo Islas's *Migrant Souls*; and Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*, to name a few.

In 2007, Joel and Ethan Coen's film adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* garnered best picture of the Year by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. A grave, evocative film, I think the selection says a lot about what's on the minds of Americans in the early decades of the 21st century. Joel and Ethan Coen, who wrote the screenplay for *No Country for Old Men*, remain true to the beat of the novel's lyric dialogue, often lifting entire pages of McCarthy's drum-like, rhythmic prose. In the film, there is a puzzlement that violence engenders that forces us, like Ed Tom Bell, the veteran East Texas sheriff played by Tommy Lee Jones, and the narrative center of the film, to turn violence on its head and examine its nature; this involves a deep questioning of our own human hearts and desires.

The movie opens with the haunting voiceover of Sheriff Bell telling the story of a young boy he once sent to the gas chamber. Ruminating on the nature of evil and a world that is sometimes beyond human understanding, Bell's voice, and later his persona, structures the film in which the would-be hero "gradually grows uncertain" and all but abandons the truisms he once believed (Cremean 26). In the end, argues David Cremean, Sheriff Bell finds consolation only in uncertainty itself, and this uncertainty is predicated upon an increasingly violent landscape where narcotics and narco trafficking have taken center stage. "[T]his aint goin away,"

says Bell. “And that’s about the only thing I do know. It aint goin away” (216-17). Bell, of course, is referring to America’s seemingly insatiable drug lust and the increasing violence of the border region.

The film’s action begins with Llewelyn Moss (Josh Brolin) hunting antelope near the Texas border in Sanderson Texas. Thinking he’s made a kill, Moss follows a path of blood through the desert only to come upon a wagon train of dusty pick-ups, a bunch of dead Mexicans, and one dead dog. Realizing that the “last man standing” must have gotten away, he follows a path in the sand to ultimately find the last man, now dead, slumped over a case full of money. Moss takes the money and seals his fate, setting in motion the haunted chase scenes that follow. The men—Bell, Moss, and the nebulous killer Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem)—are both hunter and hunted throughout the film. Although their shadows only hint at intersecting, each man’s move is a carefully orchestrated dance contingent upon the other’s.

I read *No Country for Old Men* after I had undergone surgery and was under the influence of painkillers. The dark, measured beat of McCarthy’s words terrified me, and like all of McCarthy’s novels, I was transfixed by the stark beauty of his narrative style. But the thing about McCarthy that never ceases to amaze me is the clarity of his vision. One of the most important American novelists of his generation, McCarthy offers a stark, almost transcendent portrait of our American reality. He reminds us of what we *must*, all of us, absolutely *know* to be true, but often in the mad rush of life, seemingly forget. The human truths about good and evil, and darkness and light are ancient, and their course, just as ours, is unknown. We can never separate an act from the thing itself. A moral compass can guide us, but only truth will sustain us. As Chigurh says, “and then one day there’s an accounting. And after that nothing is the same” (57).

We must not simply examine and tear open the stories on both sides of the bordered frontier. We must account for them by examining, in painful moments of self-reflexivity, the marks of the Other that yet dwell within ourselves—the ones even we’ve tried to erase or silence through myth-making. Gloria Anzaldúa and other U.S. third space feminists know this. What is evident across national borders in *No Country for Old Men* is pushed into the realm of globalized nightmare in Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*. We depend, of course, on the myths that we challenge. But when we break open connections on levels that traverse time and space as well as Western narrative structures, such as Silko and other American Indian scholars and writers propose we must, we can deliberately transgress all manner of boundaries. *Almanac of the Dead* ends on the brink of social-ecological crisis for a reason that obliges us to ask the question: what will happen if we fail to come together in dialogue to work for a more socially and environmentally just world? The answer, of course, is uncertain. But perhaps, like Ed Tom Bell learns, disengaging with old truisms is a start.

For this reason, I think that just as the United States, and the world have finally recognized that we may have no option but to “go green”—from the local to corporate and national levels—we must follow suit as we address the literature, stories, histories, and narratives of our world. It is our responsibility to learn to converse with all of the actors that have a stake in not just human survival, but the earth’s survival. Jodi Adamson writes that Silko’s vision in *Almanac of the Dead*, with its “unruly, uncategorizable” almanac “provides us with ‘a place to see’” (161). This place is a “middle place,” a site of liminality, a “third space.” Just as American Indian environmental philosophies “demonstrate conceptualizations of nature which, by their very contrast, hold a mirror to Western capitalist notions of commodification,” (Dreese 6) a slowly burgeoning environmental justice movement that includes dialogues of race, class, and

gender *alongside* theories of ecocriticism can help re-territorialize identities, persons and meanings along the bordered frontier, and possibly, globally. It seems to me that ecocriticism is a door by which to enter a dialogue whose time has come. Ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and ecological literary criticism—interdisciplinary approaches that examine the centrality of landscape and environments as intrinsic to conceptions of self and identity making—initiate a dialogue where all stories are heard because there is a real need for us to not just hear them, but to develop a relationship with them. An activist discourse rooted in inclusive, multicultural conceptions of the landscapes we inhabit, a dialogue that inherently negotiates for transformative change—of peoples, of landscapes, of ideologies, of worlds.

ENDNOTES

¹ In the interest of full disclosure, the family of Gabriela Gonzalez also has a claim to the descendants of Manuel Barrera and the land tract, “Tinaja de Lara.”

² Because American Indians use tribal names such as Cherokee, Comanche, or Laguna Pueblo to refer to themselves and classify members of sovereign nations, I will use specific tribal names when appropriate, and American Indian when discussing members of varying Indian nations. When I use the term “Mexican,” I am referring to indigenous peoples who occupied a Mexican, rather than American space. Additionally, I use the term Chicana/o when referring to self-proclaimed Chicanas or Chicanos. A good historical overview of the designation Chicana/o can be found in Shirley Lopez’s dissertation, “Remembering the Brave Women: Chicana Literature on the Texas-Mexico Border, 1900-1950,” University of Iowa, May 2004.

³ For more information on the early Spanish, French, and British-American colonial history before the era of liberal nationalisms in the U.S. Southwest region I discuss throughout this paper, see Josefina Saldaña’s “*Indios, Españoles, and Etranjeros on New Spain’s Northern Frontier*,” Keynote Speech Sponsored by the Department of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio May 1, 2009 at University of Texas San Antonio in San Antonio, TX.

⁴ Weber writes that Herbert Eugene Bolton, whom he calls the “founder of the Borderlands school, recognized at an early date the wisdom of applying Turner’s thesis to Spanish-American frontiers” (35). Furthermore, although “the Bolton school offered a valuable balance to the chauvinism of the Turnerians, who had come to see the term ‘frontier’ as synonymous with the Anglo-American frontier” (37), Weber nonetheless concludes that “Bolton’s extraordinary academic progeny concerned itself more with archival research and the reconstruction of the particulars of the past than with theory in general or with the impact of the frontier on Mexican society or institutions in particular” (38).

⁵ For further reading, see Victor Turner’s ideas on liminality in *The Ritual Process* (1969). Also, José David Saldívar in *Border Matters* discusses liminality in terms of border crossings, specifically in the work of Helena María Viramontes (pages 98-105).

⁶ Limerick emphasizes patterns of conquest and so, argues that other states that exhibit the same patterns of competition over legitimacy of language, culture, religion and property such as Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana and Alaska can also be included in her definition of the West as place.

⁷ See Bannon’s *Spanish Borderlands Frontier* for more information on the historical borderlands as well as Jack D. Forbes, “Frontiers in American History,” and Jerry Thompson’s *Sabers on the Rio Grande* for information regarding José de Escandón and the Spanish border province of Nuevo Santander. See also Alonzo, Weber, Handleman, Gutiérrez, Montejano, and Hinojosa.

⁸ “New World” is used by several authors cited in this study. Although the term is problematic in that it presupposes empty space in the Americas as well as renders invisible indigenous cultures

(American Indian or otherwise) prior to European contact, I will use the term only when referring specifically to the works of Klein or Mogen et. Al. In the sense that these authors use the term, “New World” is meant to establish the idea that the Americas were “new” to Europeans who previously thought of the world as consisting of only Europe, Asia, and Africa, collectively termed the Old World.

⁹ Alurista, the nom de plume of Alberto Baltazar Urista Heredia, is generally credited with popularizing the term *Aztlán* in a poem presented during the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado, March 1969. For more information, see *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, Eds. Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco Lomeli, 1989, as well as *Movements in Chicano Poetry: Against Myths, Against Margins*, 1995 by Rafael Pérez-Torres.

¹⁰ Vizenor describes simulations as the absence of tribal sovereignty in the American historical and contemporary imagination. In contrast “tribal imagination” is both experience and remembrance. These are the “real landscapes in the literature of this nation; discoveries and dominance are silence” (10). See Chapter One: “Postindian Warriors” of *Manifest Manners*, Wesleyan UP, 1994.

¹¹ McMurtry writes: “I grew up in a post-frontier mentality in Archer County in the 30s and 40s, and yet my grandparents were among the very first white people in my county; and I knew, as I was growing up, numerous people who had been really, literally, in the first generation of white people in West Texas and who settled the land, and who, in settling the land, had acted upon and developed a set of values, a set of beliefs, a set of traditions and customs that really went with the frontier way of life and that were designed to insure certain things, namely survival in the first place: not only survival of the individual, but, hopefully, survival of the group, survival of the settlement (“Southwest as Cradle” 27-28).

¹² For more on the legend of *La Llorona* as a female-centered legend see: Jeannie B. Thomas’s “Woman and the Wilderness Legend: An Intolerable Margin of Mess” in *Pacific Coast Philology* 26.1/2 (July 1991); Ana María Carbonell’s “From Llorona to Gritona: Coatlicue in Feminist Tales by Viramontes and Cisneros” in *MELUS* 24.2 (Summer 1999); Norma Alarcón’s “Traddutora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism in *Cultural Critique* No. 13 (Autumn 1989); and Domino Renee Perez’s *There Was a Woman: La Llorona From Folklore to Popular Culture*, UT Press, 2008.

¹³ Captain Woodrow Call’s exploits are well detailed in Larry McMurtry’s *Lonesome Dove* (1985); *Dead Man’s Walk* (1995); and *Comanche Moon* (1987).

¹⁴ This idea is reminiscent of Montserrat Fontes’ *Dreams of the Centaur* (1996). The novel, set at the turn of the twentieth century in rural Arizona and northern Sonora, explores history and memory to, in the words of Mary Pat Brady, “invoke the historicity of the border...draw[ing] attention to the subterfuges people employ to rework the border for their own needs” (*Extinct Lands* 63). Although Montserrat’s novel is beyond the scope of this dissertation, Brady provides

a brief, yet cogent analysis of this novel in terms of memory, crossings, and what she terms “Border Amnesia.”

¹⁵ Many of the writings of Octavio Paz become arguably “problematic” in a study such as this that prioritizes U. S. Third space feminism and border theory to break open borderland ideologies. Both Chicanas and Chicanos have noted Paz’s inconsistencies in his interpretations of Mexican history, often due to the subjective nature of his observations about culture—notably the pachuco, and La Malinche (Chapters 1 and 4 of *Labyrinth of Solitude*). Thus, although I do not agree with Paz’s bastardization of the Chicana/o, and especially with many of his patriarchal observations in his fourth chapter of *Labyrinth*, “The Sons of La Malinche,” I briefly touch upon both Paz and Malcolm Lowry, two “privileged” male writers, to extend my discussion of D.H. Lawrence’s observations regarding the mythologizing power of the American landscape; I do this partly because the works of both Alan Cheuse and Mark Busby et al., which I use to some extent, both engage Lawrence’s *Studies in Classic American Literature*. For more on Paz and the on-going Chicana/o controversy see: “Octavio Paz and the Chicano” in *Latin American Literary Review* 5.10 (Spring 1977) by Luis Leal; “Gender, Race, Raza” in *Feminist Studies* 20.1 (Spring 1994) by Amy Kaminski; and “Saying Nothin: Pachucas and the Languages of Resistance” in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 27.3, 2006 by Catherine S. Ramírez.

¹⁶ See George J. Sánchez *Becoming Mexican-American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (1993); Renato Rosaldo *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (1989) and José David Saldívar *Border Matters* (1997).

¹⁷ Cochran only uses the term Chicanos, not Chicanas, although he uses Anzaldúa as a basis of his argument.

¹⁸ Many scholars have written about the sexuality and sexual politics, including Islas’s homosexuality, as a structuring, narrative device of *The Rain God*. Such devices were not central to my reading, and so, I did not include them in this discussion. For more on this topic see Marta E. Sánchez’s “Arturo Islas’s *The Rain God*: An Alternative Tradition” in *American Literature* 62.2 (June 1990); also useful, although a more general discussion of sexuality on the borderlands is Emma Pérez’s “Queering the Borderlands: The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard” in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* 24.2/3, 2003.

¹⁹ Dianne C. Luce in “The World as Tale in *The Crossing*” notes a conversation between James Campbell and Cormac McCarthy in which “McCarthy’s descriptions of the flash of light Billy encounters and the reactions of the animal-life he notes are drawn from the published accounts of witnesses of the Trinity explosion” n.19, p. 217.

²⁰ In *Almanac of the Dead*, the “old ones” warn against uranium mining because “all the people would pay, and pay terribly, for this desecration against all living things” (305). Additionally, the resolution of Silko’s *Ceremony* (1997), ends at the Trinity site, and it is here that the novel’s protagonist, Tayo, reintegrates his individual consciousness with a Pueblo consciousness. At the site, Tayo makes the connection between the Japanese and the Laguna Pueblo, indeed, all peoples: “from now on, human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers

planned for all of them, for all living things” (246). For more on the eco-critical implications of Silko’s work see: Lee Schweninger’s “Writing Nature: Silko and Native Americans as Nature Writers” in *MELUS* 18.2 (Summer 1993) and Jace Weaver’s “Native American Authors and Their Communities” *Wicazo Sa Review* 12.1 (Spring 1997).

²¹ The Black Seminoles established small, albeit thriving communities along the borders of the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas—what is today the Southwest Texas-Mexico border. Often called “Buffalo Soldiers,” the Black Seminoles of Brackettville, Texas, Kinney County, referred to in *Lone Star* are likely the descendants of 19th-century soldiers stationed at the U.S army base, Fort Clark. The story of the Black Seminoles from the early nineteenth century through the twentieth century in Texas has been well-documented by Hancock. For more on the Black Seminoles of Texas see Ian F. Hancock’s: “Creole Features in the Afro-Seminole Speech of Brackettville, Texas” in *Society for Caribbean Linguistics Occasional Papers*, No. 7. Mona, Jamaica: Society for Caribbean Linguistics, 1977; *The Texas Seminoles and Their Language*. Austin: UT African and Afro-American Studies Research Center, 1980. Other works include: Sara R. Massey’s *Black Cowboys of Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M UP, 2000); Kevin Mulroy’s *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, and Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock: Texas Tech UP, 1993); Sherman W. Savage’s. “The Negro Cowboy of the Texas Plains” in *Negro History Bulletin* 24 (April 1961); Doug Sivad’s *The Black Seminole Indians of Texas* (Boston, American Press, 1984); and Quintard Taylor’s *In Search of the Racial Frontier: 1528-1990* (New York: Norton, 1998).

²² Ian Hancock argues that Black Seminoles retained an ethnic identity based in part on their linguistic distinctiveness. Because the African American presence that I discuss here focuses on the historical presence of Black Seminoles in a specific geographical site, any further discussion must rightly focus on a sociolinguistic history that touches on African American multilingualism that shows how African Americans often acquired and utilized various European and American Indian languages while intermingling or serving as cultural mediators between whites and American Indians as guides, or scouts, and interpreters. This discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For more information see Hancock (n. 1 above) and Lauden, Mark L. “African-Americans and Minority Language Maintenance in the United States” in *The Journal of Negro History* 85.4 (2000): 223-240.

A few examples serve to illustrate the racial divide that has historically fragmented African Americans, Mexicans, and Anglos in Texas. Research shows African Americans along Texas borders were generally the targets of bitter, anti-black racist tactics. In 1886, a sign reading, “Nigger, don’t let the sun go down on you in this town” was posted just outside De Leon, Comanche County (Young 63). Conflicts between Black soldiers at Fort McIntosh in Laredo and Mexicans erupted three times in 1899. Texas Army Commander Colonel McKibben concluded that “the trouble at Laredo is due primarily to race prejudice between Mexican residents and the soldiers, and the association of these soldiers with Mexican women” (Young 64). Historian David Montejano observed a propensity for whiteness among upper-class Mexicans along the border. He argues that Texas Mexicans occupied a transitional position in the racial hierarchy—if they had enough money or married Anglos they had the moral and material qualifications to

become “American” (251-252); the same did not apply to either American Indians—as Chapter Five shows—or Blacks.

²³ For more see Janet St. Clair’s “Uneasy Ethnocentrism: recent Works of Allen, Silko, and Hogan” in *Studies in American Literature* 6.1 (Spring 1994); and Lynn White, Jr.’s “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis.” In *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens, U of Georgia P, 1996), 3-14.

²⁴ The Yaqui refer to themselves as “Yoeme,” which comes from the word "yoemem" or "yo'emem," which means "people." The Yoeme originally lived in the valley of the Rio Yaqui in the northern Mexican state of Sonora and throughout the Sonoran Desert into the Southwestern state of Arizona.

²⁵ For an intelligent discussion of Silko’s use of oral literacy as a tool of cultural survival, see Brewster E. Fitz’s *Silko: Writing Storyteller and Medicine Woman* (U of Oklahoma P, 2000).

²⁶ Ricardo L. Garcia, Walt Wolfram, and Rosaura Sánchez all stress the significance of social standing in a given community in their analyses of language variations, patterns, and usage. For more, see: Ricardo L. Garcia’s “Toward a Grammar of Chicano English.” *English Journal* 63.3 (1974): 34-38; Walt Wolfram’s. “Why Languages Have Dialects” in *Dialects and American English*. (NJ: Center for Applied Linguistics, 21-39) and ; Rosaura Sánchez’s , *Chicano Discourse: Sociohistoric Perspectives* (Boston: Newbury House Publishers, 1983).

²⁷ The city ordinances, minutes and deeds books provide an early example of post-annexation politics. On February 27, 1872, the first English entry by Laredo city alderman who recorded the proceedings and events of the city council meetings was entered into the official Laredo Minutes (*Laredo Minutebook A. May 15 1867 – Oct. 13. 1877*). Importantly, this admission in the Laredo Minutes concerns the sale of tracts of land in Laredo. It is noteworthy that this first English entry is a “double” entry. The English entry, which is found on page 46 of this book, is a duplicate entry of a Spanish entry from page 42 of the same book. For reasons unknown, the unnamed alderman felt it necessary to translate the Spanish entry found on page 42 to English on page 46. A further noteworthy element of the English entry on page 46 is the fact that the introduction of aldermen was not altered and remains in Spanish. Only the text regarding the sale of city lots was translated to English. The translated text on page 46 reads:

At the meeting of the board of aldermen it was resolved that from and after the first day of March 1872 the [unintelligible word] of city lots shall be ten dollars each in gold and that not over two lots shall be sold to one person (sic) But if anyone many desire to have a larger number he may make his application and the board will decide if his petition be granted

The Laredo City Ordinance books, Volume 1 and 2, which date through September 5, 1873 are recorded in Spanish. There is no book with entries between September 5, 1873 and January 1st 1874. The entirety of Laredo *Ordinances, Vol 2. Jan. 5 1859 to Sept. 1873* is documented in Spanish. The next Ordinance book in the sequence, *Ordinances, Vol. 3 Jan. 1 1874 to Jun. 29*

1883 is entirely in English. The city's books of deeds are recorded in Spanish through July 13, 1869. The deeds books show a gap between July 13, 1869 and November 1872 as well. The volume titled *Deeds Nov. 1872 to June 1888* contains, about mid-way, the first entry for Deeds in English. This entry is dated January 30, 1874. This volume reveals a gap between December 1, 1873, for which the deed entry is in Spanish, and the first English entry on January 30, 1874. Once more, it is noteworthy that this volume details a seemingly abrupt shift from the Spanish language to English. Significantly, this first entry in English also concerns the sale of land tracts in Laredo:

The State of Texas, the County of Webb know all men by these presents (sic) that the corporation of the City of Laredo for and in consideration of the fencing and improving—to M. Botello have granted bargained sold and conveyed and do by this presents (sic) grant bargain and sell and convey until the said Maxamalliano (sic) Botello a certain tract of land situated on the west side of the Arroyo Chacon and within the corporation limits to have and to hold the same tract of land for a term of five years free of rent provided he fences and improves the same. Attested by Hugh James, Secretary and Benavidez Mayor. Jan. 30, 1874.

These three collections of books, which encompass the earliest Laredo City Council minutes and records reveal abrupt shifts in two of the three sets. Both the deed books and the Minutes books shift unexpectedly in mid-volume from Spanish language entries to English entries. The Ordinance books, although they contain no language shift mid-way, show an almost four-month gap between Volume 3, which is recorded in English, and Volume 2, which is recorded in Spanish. The change in public records, then, is as follows: The City Council Minutes moved to English language usage first, on February 27, 1872; the City Ordinances followed suit on January 1, 1874; and the first volume of deeds books in English was recorded beginning January 30, 1874.

²⁸ David Lintz, current director of the Red Men Museum in Waco, Texas verified that Charles M. Barnes was one of 87 members of Natchez Tribe #4, instituted in San Antonio, Texas in 1896. Barnes held the position of Chief of Records and Sachem of the tribe (perhaps the first Sachem), early terms of which lasted only 6 months. Additionally, Barnes served as Great Representative for Texas. Barnes ran for Great Senior Sagamore (1st Vice President for Texas) in August 1897 and lost. After this date, his name does not appear in the State Proceedings, although he is still listed as a Past Sachem for Natchez Tribe #4.

²⁹ Robert E. Davis writes in *History of the Improved Order of Red Men and Degree of Pocahontas 1765-1988* (Waco: R. E. Davis, 1990) that there are three dates that have, at one time or another, designated the beginnings of the IORM. The first date he cites is October 14, 1833. He writes that this date was established by a committee of the Great Council of the United States in 1887. He concedes, however, that he finds no source for arriving at this date. The second date he provides is March 12, 1834. He cites: Lindsay, *History of IORM*, 1893 as the source for this date. The third date he lists is May 20, 1835. He cites: Gorham, *History of IORM*, 1884. Given these dates, Davis concludes in a note on page 160 of his text: "From the founding of the Grand Council of Maryland on May 20, 1835, we can truly date the origin of our order."

Even though the name “Improved” had not been used, the Indian terms for the offices came into being and in only a few short months the ‘Society’ would emerge like a butterfly from a cocoon as the Improved Order of Red Men.”

³⁰ There is no “set” number of participants in the yearly presentation, but there are generally 13-17 young women presented as part of the Princess Pocahontas Court. The members of the Court are determined in two ways. First, young women—all high school seniors—with mothers who have been active members in the Princess Pocahontas Council for at least three years, are eligible to be presented in the February presentation, as well as join in any other Court events. Additionally, each Laredo high school selects one female senior to represent its school. Young women from participating high schools are nominated and selected by their classmates. The young women being presented select the young men who serve as their escorts.

³¹ For further reading on the Removal Era of American Indians see Richard White’s *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991); Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Ed. London: Verso, 1991); and Roy Harvey Pierce’s *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998).

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