Stories to Bridge the Borderlands:

Anti-Colonial Writing in the Works of Gloria Anzaldúa and Leslie Marmon Silko

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Abstract

In my thesis, *Stories to Bridge the Borderlands: Anti-Colonial Writing in the Works of Gloria Anzaldúa and Leslie Marmon Silko,* I review the complete works of Anzaldúa and Silko. I focus on their seminal pieces including Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* and Silko's *Ceremony* and *Storyteller,* as well as on their non-fiction works, such as their interview collections *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko* and Anzaldúa's *Interviews/Entrevistas: Gloria E. Anzaldúa*. By comparatively analyzing these two authors, I find evidence of what Ashis Nandy has called a shared culture of colonization (Nandy 2; see also Smith 46-7). Both authors have been, and continue to be subjects of extensive analysis, sometimes appearing alongside each other in critical analysis in fields such as Post-Colonial Studies and Women's Studies. In this thesis I show the nuanced ways in which colonialism has shaped both authors' works and how they apply their writing as a form of anti-colonial activism. I approach the texts using a theoretical framework influenced by Multiracial Feminism, Indigenous Theory, and Post-Colonial Studies. In each chapter I review the authors' works comparatively from several different thematic angels. In Chapter One, I explore how the authors' acts of reclaiming multiracial and multicultural female figures in their writing functions as a method for reclaiming their own identities. The theme of Chapter Two springs from the feminist slogan "the personal is political." In this chapter, I look at Anzaldúa and Silko's use of oral storytelling respectively as tools for subverting Western patriarchal colonialism, showing how not only is the personal political, but the political is also highly personal, especially for women of color in Western-dominated post-colonial USA. Chapter Three is about the authors' hopes and fears for the future, and how they use utopian and dystopian themes in their writing to further a political agenda. With this thesis I aim to contribute to the awareness of the complex ways in which late 20th and early 21st century colonialism may affect multicultural (and in Anzaldúa's case, queer) women. My hypothesis is that examining the shared culture of colonialism between the authors provides new insights into the nature of modern-day colonialism in the USA. I believe that through their art, Gloria Anzaldúa and Leslie Marmon Silko showcase a politics of resistance, a politics which in turn has inspired readers across the globe to take up their causes.

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Dedication

To my Aunt Cynthia,
Niibidooniquay, Woman Who Weaves:
For your guidance, with gratitude and love.
Wado, miigwech, gracias, takk!

And of course, to Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa and Leslie Marmon Silko, always,
for creating works that are infinitely absorbing.

Giving thanks

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Many others deserve thanks, but there isn’t room enough here for the long list I keep in my heart. Please know that if you are reading this and you are one of the unnamed supporters of this process, I thank you dearly.

Finally, I wish to thank the tellers of stories. Without stories, I would not be me – without stories, I believe we would all be lost. In Silko’s words:

> Old stories and new stories are essential: They tell us who we are, and they enable us to survive. We thank all the ancestors, and we thank all those people who keep on telling stories generation after generation, because if you don’t have the stories, you don’t have anything (*Storyteller*, “Introduction,” xxvi).

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Introduction: “With these stories of ours”

she says “With these stories of ours
we can escape almost anything
with these stories we will survive.”
- Silko, from “The Storyteller’s Escape” in *Storyteller,* 239

Books saved my sanity, knowledge opened the locked places in me and taught me first how to survive and then how to soar […] and words, my passion for the daily struggle to render them concrete in the world and on paper, to render them flesh, keep me alive.
- Anzaldúa, Preface to the First Edition of *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 19-20

The following thesis argues that studying the works of Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa and Leslie Marmon Silko in conjunction provides new insights into the purposes behind their texts. I see Silko and Anzaldúa’s writing as a method of surviving and thriving in the U.S. despite their experiences of the country’s intersecting systemic oppressions. By reviewing their collected works, including not only their fiction, but also essays and interviews, I find parallels and divergences in how they describe and make use of their writing as a tool for healing from trauma. More than this, I show that they consciously apply their writing as a form of political activism; an activism profoundly shaped by their female (and in Anzaldúa’s case queer) multicultural and -racial identities.

In literary analysis and other fields, some studies have been written that deal specifically with Anzaldúa and Silko’s connection, usually including at least one other author. This work aims to add to these studies, contributing new insights into what can be gained from such a unified, in-depth analysis. Further, by viewing the authors as connected primarily by their shared colonial experiences as mixed-race women in the U.S., as well as by noting the ways in which they find strength in their Indigenous heritage, the theoretical framework I use is indigenist, post-colonial, and feminist.

Both authors look to Indigenous figures for inspiration in their work. Silko identifies with the Laguna Pueblo Indigenous figure known as Kochininako or Yellow Woman from Laguna oral storytelling tradition. She does so by portraying Kochininako as mixed-race like herself, and Anzaldúa uses a similar strategy when she reclaims the Nahua (Indigenous Mexican) figure La Malinche. In Chapter One I look at the meaning behind their use of these figures in their writing. The authors share other literary strategies as well, such as switching freely

between the languages of their heritage: Anzaldúa is well-known for creating her own multi-lingual style of writing: "I wanted to write in the mestiza style, in my own vernacular," she says (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* 189). Silko, in turn, is well-known for her stylistic integration of Laguna oral storytelling into her writing. In Chapter Two, I view the authors' use of stylistic innovation and multilingualism through the lens of the political slogan "the personal is political." I elaborate on this slogan by setting it in a multiracial feminist context, showing how for authors whose needs have not always been served by mainstream White feminism, the political is also personal. Finally, as both authors have shown a deep and ongoing concern for the future of humanity in their writing, in Chapter Three I focus on their utopian and dystopian predictions, looking at the ways in which they use their writing to promote their ideal futures for the human race.

As multiracial women, both Anzaldúa and Silko speak to difficulties with connecting to mainstream second wave feminism, the movement which was at its height during the 1970s and 80s, when both authors were in the early stages of their careers. Second wave feminism is often and justly criticized for catering to middle class White women. Anzaldúa speaks of one such experience in her interview with Karin Ikas in *Borderlands/La Frontera*: "I found that this…Feminist Writers' Guild, was very much excluding women of color":

> they were also blacked out and blinded out about our multiple oppressions…They wanted to speak for us because they had an idea of what feminism was, and they wanted to apply their notion of feminism across all cultures ("Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa, by Karen Ikas" 270).

I will address this topic further at the end of Chapter Two, relating what I perceive as the authors' multiracial feminism to the history of feminism with the help of Becky Thompson's article "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism" (337-60). Rather than attempting to conform to mainstream second wave feminism, I see Silko and Anzaldúa as forging their own feminisms. Multiracial feminism acknowledges the diversity of women's experiences and the intersectional nature of systems of oppression. It focuses on the experiences of women of color in particular. By viewing the authors through the lens of their own specific feminisms, which take into account the compounding effects of discrimination against women of color, I show that they are part of a tradition of multiracial feminists, with Anzaldúa as one of leading figures of this movement.

I use multiracial feminism as an overarching term with which I see these authors as connected with other women of color writers such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Cherríe Moraga, Paula Gunn Allen, Luisah Teish, and more. These authors variously represent intersecting fields, including among others Post-colonial-, African American-, Queer-, Chican@-, Native American-, and Women's Studies. The "@" at the end of Chican@ is used as an inclusive gender term rather than specifically gendered endings. While I have chosen the term *multiracial feminism* as a useful and sufficiently broad term to apply to these highly diverse works, other terms such as *transnational-* or *intersectional feminism*, for example, would have also been relevant choices. I considered, as well, Alice Walker's term *womanist* from *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose,* which, like Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, explores the intersections between race and gender politics, though these works are grounded specifically in African American female (and queer) experience. Both works can be found in the Recommended Reading section. When I first started writing this thesis, I exclusively used the term *multicultural-* rather than *multiracial feminism*. However, because of the emphasis Anzaldúa and Silko themselves put upon their experiences as being racial and not just cultural, as well as the authors' significant contributions to and interactions with *multiracial feminism,* I find this term equally suits the purposes of my thesis. For this reason both terms will be used throughout.

As previously mentioned, one of my theoretical approaches to this thesis is Indigenous Theory. While their indigeneity is by no means all that defines them, Silko and Anzaldúa both draw on this part of their mixed identities in their writing. Therefore, I will in my analysis rely on Indigenous Theory in addition to post-colonial theories and multiracial feminism. Works that have influenced me in this diverse field include Devon Abbot Mihesuah's *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians* and *So You Want to Write About American Indians? A Guide for Writers, Students, and Scholars*; Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*; and *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know* by Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe). These works can be found in the Works Cited section – these as well as others which are not quoted directly in the text but were nonetheless influential are listed in the Recommended Reading section. For the purposes of this work, I define Indigenous Theory as theories, methodologies, and praxes which center Indigenous ways of knowing. In the Introduction to *Critical Indigenous Theory,* a special edition of *Cultural Studies Review,* Aileen Moreton-

Robinson defines the intentions of academics wishing to participate in critical Indigenous studies as follows:

> As scholars we are politically and intellectually engaged in demonstrating how critical Indigenous studies as a mode of analysis can offer accounts of the contemporary world of Indigenous peoples that centre our ways of knowing and theorising (11).

In other words, by approaching my thesis from a place of Indigenous Theory, I seek to re-center my project away from prioritizing Western narratives and towards perspectives that are Indigenously oriented at their core. Such perspectives are prevalent in Silko, as we will see. She places herself firmly within the Laguna Pueblo Indian teachings that she grew up with. Anzaldúa, who has Indigenous heritage but does not identify as Native American, has a more complex relationship with this part of her roots. Nonetheless she emphasizes her Indigenous ancestry as influential in her writing; these nuances, in turn, shape my analysis. Anzaldúa uses the term Indigenous in a similar way to Inés Hernandez-Avila, who is of mixed ancestry including Mexican American Indigenous, explains this choice:

> I have chosen for much of my life to use this term as a political act, to call attention to the fact that Chicanos and Chicanas have indigenous cultural roots in this hemisphere -- in Mexico, to be exact ("To Native Americans, naming is identity").

Towards the end of this introduction I will include some personal reflections about my own heritage and about my intentions for writing this thesis, a practice that is quite common within Indigenous Studies.

Reading Silko and Anzaldúa reminds us – that is, reminds those of us who need such reminders – that U.S. citizens are still affected by colonization. Anzaldúa was a seventh generation U.S. American, dating back to when the land her family lived on was bought from Mexico by the U.S. in the Hidalgo Treaty (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 274). She, alongside many Mexican Americans, was often penalized for her heritage. Silko, too, documents some of her encounters with U.S. racism, and in the coming chapters I will show examples of how the authors delve into these matters in their writing. Anzaldúa and Silko are, amongst other qualities, minority writers. This adds to the scope with which they are able to write, so that it encompasses not only their personal experiences but also the broader historical and cultural context of the U.S. as a colonial power. For me, the experience of looking at Anzaldúa and Silko together affirms the necessity of these kinds of works in the study of American literature: until the field acknowledges the real ways in which colonization continues to negatively affect its citizens, it cannot be viewed as comprehensive.

Anzaldúa and Silko position themselves as critics of colonialism in the USA and globally. They focus on U.S./Mexico border relations, as a result of both having grown up near this dividing line; Silko in the Pueblo of Laguna near Albuquerque in New Mexico and Anzaldúa in the Rio Grande Valley in Southern Texas. They use their literary voices to protest the violence inflicted by colonial systems of power, which they see as being perpetrated through patriarchy, racism, and capitalism. While rejecting these systems they present their own alternatives. Silko does this first and foremost through her reverence of the traditional Laguna Pueblo culture that she grew up in, which she additionally extends to other Indigenous cultures in her fiction. Anzaldúa's presentations of alternatives to U.S. colonialist thought are made manifest when she brings together a range of perspectives in her feminist anthologies *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* and *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*. She expands her ongoing project of anti-colonial anthologies by embracing a broader spectrum of people, including White men, in her later collection *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*. A skilled academic, Anzaldúa also introduces alternatives in the form of theoretical concepts, first seen in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. In the following chapters I will explore why I think the authors are drawn to these strategies of enduring and flourishing in spite of U.S. colonialism.

Both authors have a high literary and academic standing and have had a considerable international influence in several fields. Silko launched her career in the 1970s, quickly becoming "a rising star of what has been called the Native American literary renaissance" (Arnold, Introduction in *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko,* vii). Ellen Arnold, editor of *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko,* a collection of interviews with Silko, cited the "variety and scope of [Silko's] writing" as what has "established her as one of the most creative and versatile of living American authors" (Introduction vii). Silko has been the subject of much critical writing, both within Native American literary criticism, and Post-Colonial- and Women's Studies, the two categories in which Anzaldúa's and Silko's works most often appear alongside each other.

This Bridge Called My Back, which Anzaldúa co-edited with Cherríe Moraga, was a groundbreaking women-of-color feminist anthology, and was followed by the anthologies *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras,* and *this bridge we call home: radical visions*

for transformation, which she co-edited with AnaLouise Keating. In the foreword to *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa,* an essay collection on Anzaldúa's lesser-known theories, Chela Sandoval describes how "Anzaldúa's ideas traveled globally" (xiii) and that the collection seeks to "outline Anzaldúa's theoretical and methodological contributions…to critical and cultural theory across disciplines" (xiv). Such disciplines include the range of studies which focus upon Mexican Americans and related groups – Chican@-, Mestiz@-, Xican-, and Latin@ Studies, to name a few. In the Introduction to the Fourth Edition, Norma Élia Cantú and Aída Hurtado claim that Anzaldúa's debut book *Borderlands/La Frontera* "[laid] the groundwork for critical interventions in the development of a Chicana Third Space Feminist approach in literary criticism as well as in popular culture and other disciplines" (9). Anzaldúa is also a leading voice within Queer Theory: she is frequently cited within Women's and Feminist Studies; is used in Creative Writing programs to inspire student innovation; and her works have been included in "emancipatory and peace studies" (Sandoval xiv). These are only a few examples of the reach of her career. At the heart of Anzaldúa's writing is a keen desire to "show the way" – and as Joan Pinkvoss put it, "therein lies her greatness" (Editor's Note, *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 16). With "unparalleled humility," Anzaldúa "[gave] herself over to the community she had helped create" – and with her writing, "she spoke to a needed change" (16).

In *Decolonizing Academia,* Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that the shared culture of colonizers and colonized signifies:

> that colonized peoples share a language of colonization, share knowledge about their colonizers, and, in terms of a political project, share the same struggle for decolonization. It also means that colonizers, too, share a language and knowledge of colonization (47).

Anzaldúa and Silko draw on their experiences of growing up as mixed-race women in the U.S., experiences that led them to the act of writing as a means of understanding themselves and their place in the world. I will argue that they also see writing as a means of manifesting a better future for themselves and for others. The authors position themselves explicitly as anti-colonial, exploring alternatives to the colonizing forces of mainstream U.S. American culture. This shared culture of colonization bridges the differences between their lives, connecting them to each other as well as to other writers and anti-colonial figures. As quoted at the start of this introduction, Silko writes that "with these stories we will survive"

(*Storyteller* 239), and Anzaldúa writes that "words, my passion for the daily struggle to render them concrete in the world and on paper, to render them flesh, keep me alive" (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 20). These quotes showcase the urgency with which Silko and Anzaldúa view writing and storytelling. Books "saved" Anzaldúa's "sanity" and allowed her to not only "survive" but "soar" (19).

Silko explains how writing helps her access hidden knowledge within herself:

> I have often said that I write fiction in order to find out what I know, what I remember…It seems that I conveniently forget things that my subconscious plans to steal and use later to construct my fiction ("Delight: An Appreciation of Henry James" 205)

Writing, then, is what keeps these authors alive and well, providing them with a profound source for self-realization. As mixed-race, multicultural women, this kind of realization often takes the form of exploring, through their writing, how to integrate the myriad parts of their identities. These sometimes-conflicting fragments of their selves are a consequence of the colonialism they have been objected to: "Fragmentation is not a phenomenon of postmodernism as many might claim. For Indigenous peoples fragmentation has been the consequence of imperialism" (Smith 29).

One way in which the authors deal with fragmentation is by interweaving the multiple languages of their cultures into their texts. Anzaldúa sometimes puts the impetus of translation and understanding on the reader, and both authors refuse to limit themselves to writing solely in the colonizing language English. Another anti-colonial strategy that Anzaldúa and Silko employ is writing autobiographically. This is a common method amongst post-colonial authors, meant to counter the devaluation and erasure of colonized voices. We can see this approach in Native American literature as well. In "“Spider Woman's Granddaughter": Autobiographical Writings by Native American Women," Sarah E. Turner explains why autobiographical writing is imperative to Native American women:

> Native American women's autobiographical writing addresses the issue of multiple marginalization through a historically constructed "othering" experienced by Native Americans today. The autobiographical project of Native Americans is unique in the sense that it is a reaction against a politically sanctioned attempt at extermination and a denial of culture, language, and beliefs (109).

Silko and Anzaldúa, with their emphasis on the necessity of stories and of constructing their reality through writing, purposefully step away from binary concepts of fact/fiction, blurring

the lines between these to help their readers understand that these distinctions are arbitrary. Their autobiographical texts do not fit easily within the label "autobiographical" because the texts also flow in and out of poetry, quotation, personal anecdote, manifesto, storytelling, historical accounts, drawings, photography, and more. For example, Louisa Thomas describes Silko's memoir *The Turquoise Ledge* as less an autobiography than an exploration of her close relationship with the natural and spiritual worlds ("Book Review - The Turquoise Ledge - By Leslie Marmon Silko").

Their use of storytelling and of figures such as Anzaldúa's La Malinche and Silko's Kochininako function for them both as a means of not only talking about their cultures, but as a means of actively affirming their relationship to their roots. Both Anzaldúa and Silko have White, Mexican, and Indigenous heritage, and in their texts, from fictional to non-fictional, they explore what this means, and describe how they have come to terms with these borderlands identities:

> To survive the Borderlands
> you must live *sin fronteras*
> be a crossroads.
> (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 217)

Sin fronteras means "without borders." This seemingly paradoxical statement – that to survive the borderlands you must live *sin fronteras* – comes from Anzaldúa's borderlands theory which she introduced in her seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera.* Published during the first wave of the Chican@ (Chicano/a) Movement, Anzaldúa's borderlands include both the literal geographical borderlands of the U.S./Mexico border as it exists in South Texas where Anzaldúa grew up, and the metaphorical borderlands of Chican@ identity. The borderlands can also be extended to include other types of borders:

> In *Borderlands/La Frontera* Anzaldúa establishes the border between these two countries as a metaphor for all types of crossings – between geopolitical boundaries, sexual transgressions, social dislocations, and the crossings necessary to exist in multiple linguistic and cultural contexts (Cantú and Hurtado 6).

As Cantú and Hurtado point out, Anzaldúa's borderlands are an expansion of W. E. B. Dubois' ideas on double consciousness. With time, her borderlands theory has come to be applied to borderland identities, languages, social systems, and more. Anzaldúa's borderlands are places, or *lugares,* where the subjects must actively cross, or rather, bridge, their disparate identities.

Silko and Anzaldúa exemplify the potential for alliances between people on the borderlands of the colonial world, people who suffer under colonial systems of power abuse and discrimination. They find strength in their positions as minority women through their stories, their languages, and their multifaceted perspectives as people with mixed identities. Through their writing they both emphasize the need for people to ally themselves together, not just with other minority groups but ultimately with *all* peoples. It is my hope that this comparative study of the authors will serve the purpose of encouraging deeper understanding of the shared cultures of colonization in the 20th and 21st Century U.S. Such an understanding, however, should not lead readers to false assumptions about homogeneity amongst colonized peoples. Instead, I hope with this piece to encourage nuanced perceptions of what it can mean to be multicultural and multiracial in the USA. While minority peoples may have differing experiences of and ways of dealing with systemic oppression, what Anzaldúa and Silko demonstrate with their writing is the power of art to bridge these differences. Both highly gifted authors, their dedication throughout their careers to bettering the world for themselves and for others through their personal/political art has served to uplift and enlighten generations of readers. I have no doubt that it will continue to do so for generations to come.

Terminology and language

Before entering Chapter One, there are a few notes I wish to make about terminology, spelling, and the theoretical concepts that will be introduced in the following pages. I have chosen to use the term Indigenous when referring generally to groups of people who have existed in a place or country for a long time before the arrival of other peoples – I extend this meaning to include Indigenous people who have been displaced by the arrival of others. Defining this label is, of course, more complicated than the sentence above may imply. When asked for her definition, Silko expressed that:

> When I say indigenous people I mean people that are connected to the land for, let's say, a thousand or two thousand years. But of course human populations were always moving, moving, moving…I use that term because I like to think about people all over the world. If I just say American Indian or Native American that is precise and that pinpoints what I am talking about for the moment. But my interest is in people

> that were connected to the land, indigenous all over the world including in Europe (Irmer "An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko).

In 1999, Michael Yellow Bird wrote in his article "What We Want to Be Called: Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Identity Labels," published in *American Indian Quarterly,* that "[No] clear consensus exists on which label is most preferable," referring specifically to the terms American Indian and Native American (1). This issue still holds true. Based on my research about North American Indigenous peoples, as well as my own experiences living in the U.S.A., I've settled on the terms Native American and Indigenous American. I do this knowing that these might not be the best terms and hoping that they will nonetheless serve well enough in this context. I capitalize the term Indigenous, a practice that is becoming increasingly common, just as I capitalize other identity markers such as White or Black when referring to racial identity, or Chicana and Mexican when referring to cultural or national identity. Where relevant I refer to the particular Indigenous group in question, for example the Laguna Pueblo Indians. Although I focus on the United States of America and to a lesser degree on the United Mexican States in this thesis, America includes all of the Americas, as my tia Silvia in Ecuador would remind me. I have tried to include this awareness in my use of these terms by specifying, where relevant, whether I am referring to the U.S. or Mexico, to U.S. Americans or Mexican Americans, and so on.

Other points worth mentioning before continuing are specific to the authors and their use of language and translation. Silko uses words and phrases written in the Keres language Laguna, and spelling variations of these will occur. This is because Laguna is primarily a spoken language. Examples of variant spellings the reader might find in the following pages are Kochininako/Kochinnenako, A'mooh/Ah'mooh, and humma-hah/hummah'hah. Furthermore, unless otherwise noted, translations of Spanish words and titles are mine. Anzaldúa, who uses Spanish words the most, sometimes translates these parts of her texts herself – where she does so I include the translation and note that it is hers. Anzaldúa also invents a lot of the terminology that she uses, terminology that is often bilingual. I will go into the meaning of and her usage of these terms as they are introduced throughout the thesis.

On a personal note

AnaLouise Keating writes in the Introduction to *Interviews/Entrevistas* that “one of the most important things I’ve learned from reading and teaching Anzaldúa’s works is the importance of risking the personal” (“Risking the Personal: An Introduction” 2). Like Keating, I struggle to follow Anzaldúa’s advice to always “put myself into the words I write,” however, in the spirit of Anzaldúa’s call to risk the personal, and because of my desire to adopt some of the practices demonstrated by many scholars within Indigenous Studies, I believe it is important to address why I have selected this topic for my thesis (1). I will also take some space to honor those whose teachings I’ve benefited from.

What first led me to connect with these authors was my own mixed ancestry, which is mostly Norwegian and Spanish on my mother's side, and U.S. American on my stepfather and biological father’s sides. I grew up navigating these disparate cultures, and so much of Anzaldúa’s writing resonates with me because I have myself often struggled to bring together what felt like a fragmented identity. Moreover, I am drawn to learning more about Native American cultures in the U.S. because of my biological father’s ancestry. He is originally from Oklahoma and is of Western European (British Isles) and Eastern North American (mostly Cherokee, Choctaw, and Catawba) ancestry. His ancestors migrated from the Carolinas, to Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma prior to the Trail of Tears, and then from Oklahoma to Minnesota in 1973. My biological father’s family has lived in and around Minneapolis, Minnesota, where I was born, on land that is unceded Dakota and historical Ojibwe territory, since the late 1970s. While his family were mainly raised White without tribal or cultural affiliation, they were also raised with awareness of their history and with what my aunt calls “mixed-blood values.” Several of their generation have made efforts to reconnect to ancestral and/or local Native American peoples and cultures (mainly Cherokee, Dakota, and Ojibwe). Growing up and hearing about these efforts and learning about the mixed-blood values of my family generated in me a great curiosity about North American indigeneity.

When I set out to choose a thesis topic, my original plan was to write one specifically about Native American Literature. Silko fits well under this heading. Anzaldúa, on the other hand, does not, because despite her Indigenous heritage, she does not identify as Native American. At this point I should clarify: although I include a description of my family’s Eastern North

American Indigenous ancestry, I have no intention of claiming Native American as my primary identity, of appropriating anyone else's culture, nor of attempting to lend some false sense of authenticity to the parts of my thesis that touch upon the Indigenous aspects of Anzaldúa's and Silko's lives. My intention, rather, is to be transparent about how this family history of mixing and at times conflicting identities is part of what made me interested in Indigenous and multicultural peoples' stories. My ancestors, like those of Silko and Anzaldúa, include both colonizers and colonized. Like them, I have had to struggle with how this informs my understanding of who I am. Because I have lived in colonizer cultures in the U.S. and Norway, I know that I am coming from a colonialist place of learning, and that as a light-skinned person, I am benefiting from White privilege.

Not all knowledge and information comes from academic or literary works. It is important to me to acknowledge and give thanks to my Aunt, Cynthia Thomas, who has shared teachings through oral tradition. This includes storytelling, practical and cultural teachings, ceremony, illustrating through actions, and so much more – all the things that are not written. We do not rely upon writing to convey key teachings: learning happens in everyday life, side by side. Each time I visit Aunt Cynthia, I learn and grow beside her. Her guidance has been invaluable, and I am grateful in turn to those who have guided her. Among the most influential have been Tsalagi (Cherokee) Herbalist and Medicine Priest David Winston, Jaila Hansen, who carries medicines from Norwegian and Coast Salish ancestors, and her teacher, mentor, and beloved Auntie Tahnahga Yako Mashkiikiikwe, who adopted Cynthia in ceremony in 2005 and who is herself the granddaughter of Keewaydinoquay Mashkiikiikwe (Ojibwe).

Tahnahga Yako learned from elders in Michigan the importance of adoption, of bringing people back into the community, as well as of passing on teachings for the "ongoing of the people" (see Tahnahga Yako in Works Cited). I am grateful for her teachings, which have shaped my Aunt Cynthia, and a few of which have been passed along to me. Tahnahga Yako says that "The web of life is like the spider web." A single vibration travels through the web, speaking to "the interconnection of life" and reminding us that "what happens to one will happen to all" (Tahnahga Yako). Anzaldúa and Silko share this view, showcasing an awareness of the responsibility they feel to navigate what these histories mean to them, and to convey what they have learned into their writing. Reading the works of authors like Anzaldúa and Silko is helpful to my own process of understanding my identity, because their works are

roadmaps of how to knit many identities together into a whole. That is something that translates across cultural differences. My intentions with starting this thesis project took me on a path many such works take – a mixture of chance and curiosity and personal history led me to a topic somewhat different than originally planned, but no less interesting to myself, and, I hope, to readers as well.

Chapter One
Multiracial Feminism: Reclaiming Female Cultural Figures

In this chapter, I will note how the authors' backgrounds illustrate the connections between their lives and the selected two female figures that feature predominantly in their works; Silko's Yellow Woman and Anzaldúa's La Malinche. The connections between life and fiction are made explicit by the authors themselves. I view the authors' cultural backgrounds as the inspiration as well as the impetus for their authorship, centering my analysis around the tensions they experience as mixed-race, multicultural women. The significance of these figures is twofold: firstly emerging from the authors' treatment of the figures' sexuality, which functions as a rejection of Anglo-American and Mexican patriarchal structures. And secondly, they function as models of mixed-race/multicultural identity, through which the authors may process their own relationships to their identity. Silko sees her figure as heroic, noting how she saves her Laguna community in every story. Anzaldúa sees her figure with an empathy that acknowledges her roles as scapegoat and victim and reclaims her by viewing her through a loving lens. By reclaiming female sexuality through these figures, Anzaldúa and Silko also explore the advantages of transgressing both cultural and sexual norms and demonstrate multiracial feminist values. Through writing about Yellow Woman and La Malinche, I believe that Anzaldúa and Silko come to terms with their multi-racial and -cultural heritage.

The first part of this chapter is about Silko and her Yellow Woman figure. Silko's Yellow Woman, also known by her Laguna/Keres name Kochininako, appears not only as a named character but in many forms, for example as an unnamed protagonist in Silko's acclaimed short story "Yellow Woman" (*Storyteller* 52-60). She comes from Laguna storytelling tradition and was introduced to Silko through stories she heard as a child. Yellow Woman is not a single character in Silko's works, but rather a title given to a certain type of woman who gains mythic status through her deeds. For example, in "Yellow Women and Leslie Marmon Silko's Feminism," Louise Barnett identifies the character Ts'eh as the Yellow Woman of Silko's novel *Ceremony*'s, comparing her unfavorably with another of the authors Yellow Women:

> The Yellow Woman in Silko's 1977 novel *Ceremony* is the more complex figure of the complete myth, who combines sexual freedom with heroic action. Where the

> protagonist of the story "Yellow Woman" is a passive adjunct to Silva's actions, Ts'eh, *Ceremony*'s Yellow Woman, plays an active role (24-25).

A Yellow Woman is in these cases defined by her behavior and the good that her behavior brings to her community. In the first example, the titular Yellow Woman of Silko's short story may even be a pseudonym, used to protect the protagonist from being connected to the transgressive behavior of adultery. I will look at these and other examples of Yellow Woman's appearance in Silko's works.

In the second part of this chapter, I look at Anzaldúa's treatment of the cultural figure La Malinche's life and relate this to the author's own life as a multiracial, queer feminist. I also look at her borderlands and new mestiza theories, which she applies to her own identity conflicts and makes available to her readers through radical personal disclosure. While Anzaldúa's La Malinche can be found in some analyses, Anzaldúa's other figures, such as La Llorona, have gained more critical attention. There are times that these other female figures intersect with La Malinche, sometimes overlapping to the point of becoming indistinguishable. Although I will be focusing on La Malinche, the interrelationships between her female figures have made this choice more complicated than in Silko's case, a point I will return to. "La Malinche" is a title that references a real historical figure known by many names, amongst others Malinalli, Malintzin, Malinal, and later, Doña Marina. She was an Amerindian woman who played a key part in the Spanish colonization in the 1500s of what is now Mexico (Cypress ix). I translate the title of La Malinche, by which she is popularly known, as The Betrayer or The Traitor. "Very few Mexicans before the modern period were willing to accept [La Malinche] as anything other than a prostitute or a traitor," writes Sandra Messinger Cypress in *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth* (2). By looking at the historical significance of this figure, the use of her name as a derogatory slur, and by delving into her imagined psyche through poetry and more, Anzaldúa dissects the strained relationship she has with her roots. La Malinche is sometimes credited as the mother of the mestiza people, the generations of mixed Spanish and Indigenous Mexican heritage who came after the conquest. Anzaldúa's writing about La Malinche is interwoven with questions of mestiza and borderlands identity, and so I will additionally spend some time in this chapter exploring her new mestiza and borderlands theories.

Silko and Anzaldúa adopt the figures of Yellow Woman and La Malinche to discuss healing and trauma, both individually and in connection with the peoples they belong to. Malinche

and Kochininako (Yellow Woman) become healing figures for the authors. Through the act of examining these figures repeatedly and in multiple texts, the authors sift through their feelings about sexuality, race, and gender. In writing about their relationship to the figures and connecting them to their own lives, as well as to the histories of their peoples, Anzaldúa and Silko also complicate the lines between fiction and non-fiction, an approach they use in all of their works. By doing so, they are implying that distinguishing between fiction and non-fiction, which in dominant Western discourse might also be seen as fiction and fact, is arbitrary. In this sense their texts are inherently deconstructive. Story is history and history is story. With this in mind, when Anzaldúa gives Malinalli, or Malinche, a voice, she is rewriting history. Conversely, Silko's depiction of Yellow Woman is, according to the author, aligned with the traditional ways of depicting her. If any significant change is being made, apart from the natural variation from storyteller to storyteller, it may lie in her portrayal of Yellow Woman's sexuality. Silko has imbued her (arguably titular) protagonist with an earthy sensuality, an act that reclaims what she calls old-time values, thereby moving away from the newer and sexually restrictive Christian colonialist influences. Both Silko and Anzaldúa submit these figures as a counterpoint to, and in moments commentary on, centuries of Western patriarchal influence, with Anzaldúa additionally making the point that "[La Malinche's] lot under the Indian patriarchs was not free of wounding" either (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 45). In both authors' cases, they demonstrate an awareness of the Western patriarchal attempts to inculcate sexual shame in U.S. and Mexican Indigenous cultures. Moreover, they view the figures from their own mixed-race positions, exploring ideas of hybridity and giving the figures new roles as multiracial feminist icons.

Part One: Leslie Marmon Silko and Kochininako, Yellow Woman

I grew up at Laguna Pueblo. I am of mixed-breed ancestry, but what I know is Laguna. This place I am from is everything I am as a writer and human being (Silko, *The Man to Send Rainclouds: Contemporary Stories by American Indians,* 176).

Leslie Marmon Silko was born Leslie Marmon in 1948 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and grew up in the Laguna Pueblo Indian Reservation (Arnold, Chronology, xv). The eldest of three sisters, Silko had a close bond with her beloved great-grandmother "Grandma A'mooh" Maria Anaya Marmon (Silko, *Storyteller,* 31). "A'mooh" means "beloved" in the Keresan language of Laguna – Silko heard her great-grandmother call her beloved so many times that

she believed that was her great-grandmother's name (31-33.) Silko spent much of her childhood amongst relatives and other people in Laguna, visiting with Grandma A'mooh and other relatives, and exploring the landscape surrounding the Laguna Pueblo (Snodgrass 8-13). Pueblo means town or village. Her childhood landscape is frequently revisited in her writing, including in the short story "Yellow Woman" which I analyze in this chapter. Silko and her sisters grew up in a community where storytelling was part and parcel of their life, and Silko recalls these experiences in the introduction to *Storyteller.* In addition to Grandma A'mooh, Silko's Aunt Alice Marmon Little and Aunt Susie were influential figures in young Silko's life (Silko *Storyteller* xxii). They "were vigorous women who valued books and learning" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 63) and would tell her and her sisters many humma-hah stories rich with information about Laguna culture (Silko *Storyteller* xxii).

> The humma-hah stories are traditional Pueblo stories that have been told continuously for thousands of years about a time when amazing things were possible…The humma-hah stories describe the various supernatural beings and other worlds and other times that still exist right beside the present world and present time (*Storyteller* xx).

Silko is markedly fond of the Yellow Woman stories that she heard in her childhood. "Kochininako, Yellow Woman, represents all women in the old stories. Her deeds span the spectrum of human behavior and are mostly heroic acts," writes Silko in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today,* hereafter *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* (70). The Laguna Pueblo "cosmology features a female Creator," Silko states, arguing that because of this, women and men have equal status and "women appear as often as men in the old stories as hero figures" (70). Yellow Women stories are common to the area that Silko is from. In *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (hereafter *The Sacred Hoop*)*,* Paula Gunn Allen, who also grew up in Laguna, writes that:

> The Keres of Laguna and Acoma Pueblos in New Mexico have stories that are called Yellow Woman Stories. The themes and to a large extent the motifs of these stories are always female-centered, always told from Yellow Woman's point of view…Kochinnenako, Yellow Woman, is in some sense a name that means Woman-Woman because among the Keres, yellow is the color for women (Allen 226).

Although Silko often refers to herself as mixed-race in her writing, she presents herself as essentially Laguna Pueblo Indian. Her use of the Yellow Woman figure in her works is an example of this, as it springs directly out of Keres/Laguna storytelling tradition while simultaneously being a figure with whom Silko identified with from a young age. In the

titular essay of *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* Silko describes how Kochininako helped her reconcile herself to being different:

> The stories about Kochininako made me aware that sometimes an individual must act despite disapproval…From Yellow Woman's adventures, I learned to be comfortable with my differences (71).

She pictured her as mixed-race like herself: "I imagined that Yellow Woman had yellow skin, brown hair, and green eyes like mine" (71). In an interview with Larry Evers and Denny Carr in 1976, Silko spoke of how "[…] Stories were important for us Marmons because we are a mixed breed family" (Silko, "A Conversation with Leslie Marmon Silko," 11). To her, stories were and continue to be an essential tool for affirming identity. As a mixed-race woman, Silko was crossing boundaries just by existing. In *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* she relates that "I had sensed immediately [as a small child] that something about my appearance was not acceptable to some people, white and Indian," referring to her mixed-race looks (61).

In "Listening to the Spirits: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," Silko talks about her fear of losing the old ways of tribal people: "[What's] so special about the Americas and about the tribal people of the Americas [is] that impulse to say, no, wait, we'll keep what we can" (187-188). She tells interviewer Ellen Arnold that about her concern about how exclusionary practices in modern times make people "become like the destroyers" (188). The destroyers are Silko's shorthand for people who do evil, whose actions contribute to the destruction of nature and humanity. Speaking on the topic of racism, which she sees as a newer and destructive colonialist influence, she explains that in traditional Laguna society, distinguishing between people because of their external looks would have run counter to the community's values. She continues:

> That's why it's not valid to use race or skin color, and never has been. What matters about human beings, and that's what the old folks knew, what matters is how you feel and about how you are and how you see things, and not how you are on the outside. That's what's so tragic about the ugly lessons of racism that have seeped into Native American communities, because the really old folks didn't see things that way at all (188).

Thankfully, writes Silko, "I did not see any signs of that strain or anxiety in the face of my beloved Grandma A'mooh" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 61). Silko groups her Grandma A'mooh with those she refers to as "the old-time people" (61), positing that racism

is an evil of modernity and the increased influence of "the outside world" in Laguna, a world "where racism was thriving" (104). According to Silko, the old-time people value a person by "how that person interacts with other people" and "how that person behaves toward the animals and the earth" (61). In the "younger people, the generation that had gone to the First World War," Silko was able to "sense a difference" and even "On rare occasions" an "anger that my appearance stirred in them, although I sensed that anger was not aimed at me personally" (104). These experiences had a profound effect on her.

In the introduction to her book *Storyteller,* Silko places herself within a Pueblo storytelling tradition dating back "thousands of years" (xviii). If knowledge is power, then to Silko, storytelling is the traditional way in which Pueblo people pass that power along: "The entire culture, all the knowledge, experience, and beliefs, were kept in human memory of the Pueblo people in the form of narratives that were told and retold from generation to generation" (xix). Silko aligns herself with this ancient tradition and indicates why it has been integral to her own identity formation: "The people perceived themselves in the world as part of an ancient continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories" (xix). She indicates that if she can find a place for herself within the continuous story, a place that is interwoven with her beloved home of Laguna, she might be able to understand her own fragmented identity.

> I suppose at the core of my writing is the attempt to identify what it is to be a half-breed [sic], or mixed-blooded person; what it is to grow up neither white not fully traditional Indian (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* 197).

As a Laguna woman who has had to learn what it means to be "neither white nor fully traditional Indian" (197), writing herself into this "ancient continuous story" provides Silko with a sense of belonging (*Storyteller,* xix). Silko takes this part of her heritage and forges it stronger. In contrast, Anzaldúa likes no part of her heritage that well, or rather, is critical to all the parts of her heritage, and so takes a little from each part, ultimately creating something new – as we will see.

Norwegian critic Per Seyersted, who interviewed Silko in 1976, claims that she was "[spurred] by the love of storytelling and the strong oral tradition of her tribe," pointing to their long history of having "kept alive and renewed a rich store of tales about mythical,

historical, and current figures and events" (*Leslie Marmon Silko* 5). In Laguna, storytelling is a role in which everyone participates. There is nothing like the Celtic bard tradition in this culture, no one person who becomes appointed as the official storyteller:

> Who has the right to tell a story? "There were no "official storytellers"; everyone could tell stories, and everyone felt responsible for remembering stories and retelling them accurately" (Silko, *Storyteller,* xix)

Silko and her sisters grew up within the rich storytelling environment of the Laguna Pueblo people with an awareness of the importance of "the stories and remembered accounts" with which "an entire culture, an entire identity of a people" could be carried forward (6). Furthermore, as Silko reflects in *Storyteller*, elders like Aunt Susie "must have realized" that oral traditions had been "irrevocably altered by the European intrusion" (4). To survive as a people, cultural identity intact, it was essential to adapt to the changing times, as Silko herself does through transitioning into a written form of storytelling, rather than the traditional form of oral storytelling. Moreover, the written medium gives Silko the opportunity not only to construct her own identity and find her own place in the borderlands of her cultures, but also to share some of their accumulated knowledge with her readers. The Laguna community has existed since at least the thirteenth- (Seyersted 6) or fourteenth century (Ruoff 15), and perhaps even longer. In "Ritual and Renewal: Keres Traditions in the Short Fiction of Leslie Silko," A. LaVonne Ruoff states that "Silko emphasizes the need to return to the rituals and oral traditions of the past in order to rediscover the basis for one's cultural identity" (15). Silko's need to return to these rituals and traditions also pinpoints her discontent with at least some elements of modern-day Laguna culture.

Yellow Woman is known for her transgressive sexuality and exciting adventures with ka'tsina spirits, monsters, and strange men. The figure is usually a married woman who challenges the status quo by finding a "strong, sexy" man to sleep with (Silko, *Yellow Woman*, 70). Sometimes she is killed for this behavior. Whether or not the story ends with Yellow Woman's death, the end result for the figure's broader community is overwhelmingly positive; this is because Silko is underlining the essential function of female rebellious behavior in Laguna Society. Namely, Yellow Woman's sexuality has a power of renewal which ensures her peoples' survival:

> In the Pueblo spirit of creating stories to help oneself (and others) be strong, Silko has written of Yellow Woman again and again. Many of her positive women characters

> are recognizable as versions of Yellow Woman – a woman courageous in the service of her people and usually achieving success through sexuality rather than destruction (Barnett 20).

Through her fertile sexuality, Yellow Woman becomes a creator, her actions often coming at a time when change is sorely needed in her community.

Silko's background, as a Laguna native and as a woman struggling to feel like she fits in with her community, makes her exceptionally qualified to provide readers with many nuanced and thought-provoking Yellow Woman stories.

> Early on Silko seems to have tried out different versions of Yellow Woman, some mythic and others contemporary—all indicating her fascination with the permutations of the Yellow Woman role. *Storyteller* contains texts openly based on popular Keresan myths and texts in which some germ of mythic content is transformed into a modern experience. The common denominator of the Yellow Woman retellings seems to be escape from the narrow life of the feminine domestic world (Barnett 20).

She always emphasizes the communal importance of Yellow Woman, and as readers we can view this role as extending to her own life – I see her use of the figure as an expression of Silko's hope that her own role as an author will benefit her community.

To fully understand why "the need to return to the rituals and oral traditions of the past" (Ruoff 15) was so important to Silko, it is useful to look to the mixed heritage of her family and how this played a role in Silko's early life. The Marmon family home was positioned on the periphery, both figuratively and literally, of Laguna. This arrangement mirrors the place her family held in their community. In the interview with Larry Evers and Denny Carr, Silko states:

> Well, look where all the Marmon houses are here by the river, down in below the village. They put us in this place. I always thought there was something symbolic about that, sort of putting us on the fringe of things (Silko, "A Conversation with Leslie Marmon Silko," 11).

Something symbolic; yes, but not something that the author presents as inherently negative. Silko was raised wholly immersed in the Laguna community, as is evidenced in the way she writes about it. "Laguna and the inclusive, communal worldview that characterizes it remain at the heart of her later work as well," writes editor Ellen L. Arnold in the introduction to Silko's interview collection, *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko* (Introduction ix).

Nevertheless, as she came into awareness of her place in the wider world, Silko started to realize the ways in which she was different from most of those around her:

> From the time I was a small child, I was aware that I was different. I looked different from my playmates. My two sisters looked different too. We didn't look quite like the other Laguna Pueblo children, but we didn't look quite white either. (Silko, 'Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,' in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* 60)

The family looked different because of their mixed heritage: Laguna, Mexican, and Anglo-European. Tracing this heritage is a complex task – there are many tribes/nations represented in Silko's ancestry besides Laguna, including Plains Indian on her father's side and Cherokee on her mother's (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 196-200). Leslie Marmon was born to Mary Virginia Lee Leslie and Leland (Lee) Howard Marmon. Her paternal ancestry included as wide a range as German, Mexican American, and English. In *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* Silko commented on the reception of mixed-race families in Laguna:

> The white men who came to the Laguna Pueblo reservation and married Laguna women were the beginning of the half-breed Laguna people like my family, the Marmon family. The Marmons are very controversial even now; but I think that people watch us more closely than they do fullbloods or white people (197).

Looking back on those years, Silko generally emphasizes her inclusion in the life of the Pueblo. There is no evidence of a bitter Silko; rather, she has dedicated her career to writing extensively about Laguna Pueblo life. Silko is markedly full of admiration for her home village, at times to the point of idealization. Credit for these warm feelings must go to Grandma A'mooh and Aunts Susie and Alice, as well as other old-time people who modeled a way of life into which Silko was warmly welcomed.

Silko's Yellow Woman is a transgressive figure whose misbehavior is exactly what makes her valuable to her community. "You're in this situation, no one's ever seen it before. All of the old ways don't work. There's nothing to be done," Silko told Ellen L. Arnold in a 1998 interview (Silko, "Listening to the Spirits: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," 193). In such a situation, the solution lies in "an old Pueblo story" (193):

> That's why Kochininako goes off with Buffalo Man, that's why she has a propensity for adultery. Adultery symbolizes breaking with everything that's known or supposed to be. The people are hungry, and she goes off with the Buffalo people and makes that liaison, and the people survive…When everything that's been thought or known no longer holds, then that's when a person like myself, who doesn't fit in, who is a little

> bit frightening, a little bit strange to the others, that's where that vision comes in and is necessary (194).

I see Silko's use of Yellow Woman as a way in which she can symbolically explore her role in Laguna, as well as the role of others like her. Rather than victimizing herself or other mixed-race women because they risk becoming outsiders in their own cultures, Silko investigates what mixed-race peoples such as her have to offer their communities. As she says, when "the old ways don't work…that's when a person like myself, who doesn't fit in, [comes] in and is necessary" ("Listening to the Spirits: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko" 193-194). In *Ceremony,* it is the mixed-race characters like Tayo and the mixed-race animals like the hybrid cows (Mexican and northern Hereford) who are most capable of not only survival, but of meaningful contribution to the Laguna community. Not only is Silko's use of hybrid symbology one that I believe helps her reconcile with her own mixed identity; it is also a message of hope for the future, a vision in which human races mix, providing new generations which are adaptable, healthy, and more tolerant of difference.

In *Re-Orienting Western Feminisms: Women's Diversity in a Postcolonial World,* Chilla Bulbeck calls the new hybrid identities that post-colonial writers like Silko and Anzaldúa present "conflicting but productive," numerating as examples some of Anzaldúa's "Liminal categories" such as her mestiza- and frontera/borderlands consciousness (53). Hybridity was a term coined by Homi K. Bhabha, which Bulbeck argues was intended to "capture" the "process" of how "postcolonial writers suggest hybrid or mixed identities" to "encompass the contradictory history of colonisation" (53). Bulbeck, using Anzaldúa's terminology, posits that "'interracial' identities oppose dualistic western thinking with 'divergent thinking'" that is inclusive rather than exclusive (53).

Silko's vision of Yellow Woman is a hybrid figure whose transgressive behavior challenges the norm and pushes her people into change – undeniably a conflicting but productive figure. Models of hybridization and Yellow Women are numerous in *Ceremony,* Silko's breakout novel which was first published in 1977. The novel is set in the Laguna Pueblo, with a plot that interweaves many stories but mainly centers around the healing journey of army veteran Tayo. His struggles to find his place in Laguna as a mixed-race person should already be familiar at this point in my thesis – it is one of Silko's repeating themes. It is ultimately Tayo's ability to bridge his two identities of Laguna Indian and Anglo that saves his

community and the world from destruction. Tayo has many helpers on this journey, medicine man Betonie one of the most notable. Nevertheless, it is *Ceremony*'s foremost Yellow Woman, named Ts'eh, who, through her sexuality and wisdom, makes Tayo's act of heroism possible. With her help, surrounded by other hybrid figures, Tayo learns to adapt to his position in-between cultures, an ability that is his birthright as a mixed-blooded person.

Adaptability is one of the Laguna cultural qualities which Silko repeatedly emphasizes. This is ironic because in her novel, we see that many of the newer generations of Laguna citizens have lost sight of this skill, both by falling too deeply under the influence of colonizing U.S. cultures, both Spanish and Anglo-European, and by valuing pure-blood Laguna people over mixed-blood people such as Betonie and *Ceremony*'s protagonist Tayo. Examples of these issues are embodied in the characters of Auntie and Emo, who have both taken on toxic racist and sexist attitudes from the non-Laguna world. Silko's lesson here is that the hybridity is the way forward, yes, but more than that, she is showing her readers that this lesson is in fact not new. The old-time people, represented in her own life by Grandma A'mooh and others, were far more adaptable and accepting of hybridity. Rather than proposing a Western linear view of out with the old, in with the new, Silko presents a cyclical worldview, connecting her to her Laguna Indian heritage.

Author and critic Paula Gunn Allen, a Laguna native like Silko, is also intrigued by the role of Yellow Woman in Laguna society. She approaches the figure from a multiracial feminist perspective in her essay "Kochinnenako in Academe: Three Approaches to Interpreting a Keres Indian Tale," located in her highly influential essay-collection *The Sacred Hoop.* Allen ruminates on the tensions between Yellow Woman's transgressive behavior amongst Laguna people, whom she describes as "a people who value conformity and propriety above almost anything" (*The Sacred Hoop* 227). She argues that although "Many Yellow Woman tales highlight her alienation from the people," Kochininako can also be seen as "a role model" and even "the Spirit of Woman" (227). Challenging the fallacy of Western assumptions and misinterpretations of tribal narratives, including Western feminist views which she herself claims to have once prescribed to (237), Allen explains the Yellow Woman stories from what she calls a Feminist-Tribal perspective instead:

> The stories do not imply that difference is punishable; on the contrary, it is often her very difference that makes her special adventures possible, and these adventures often have happy outcomes for Kochinnenako and for her people. This is significant among

> a people who value conformity and propriety above almost anything. It suggests that the behavior of women, at least at certain times or under certain circumstances, must be improper or nonconformist for the greater good of the whole (227).

To contextualize Silko's story as existing within Laguna culture, it is important to include an understanding of how Anglo-European sexism and racism has influenced the culture. The complexity and nuance of how Silko presents these intermingled attitudes deserves to be given weight. "Sexual inhibition did not begin until the Christian missionaries arrived," Silko writes, and "New life was so precious" before this arrival "that pregnancy was always appropriate, and pregnancy before marriage was celebrated as a good sign" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 67; 67-8). Silko immediately frames the story "Yellow Woman" with a carnal sense of her protagonist's feminine sexuality, making it a key element of her story. The opening line of "Yellow Woman" is "my thigh clung to his with dampness" (*Storyteller* 52). Rather than setting it in ancient times, when such sensuality would be celebrated, the unnamed protagonist is contemporary, which allows Silko to venture into the ambiguity of female sexuality for a 20th century Laguna woman. She demonstrates an awareness of the tensions between old and new values, those of traditional Laguna Indians and those of the younger generations more deeply influenced by "the outside world" and its issues (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 104). I view the protagonist of the short story as a Yellow Woman, meaning she is fundamentally a representative of "all women" and as follows, her intrinsically transgressive behavior may be read as Silko's call to all women to embrace this side of their nature (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 70). When Yellow Women protagonists exhibit transgressive behavior through her sexuality, we can apply these Yellow Woman traits to Silko as well. Through the act of writing more explicit sex scenes than would be acceptable in general Laguna society, at least according to Allen's view that they "value conformity" above "almost anything," Silko too becomes a transgressor (227). She re-claims her Indigenous sexuality generally and Laguna Indian sexuality specifically through her writing, making her a real-life Yellow Woman.

In "A Conversation with Leslie Marmon Silko," the author relates how she as a young woman began to realize "the possibilities" of the arroyo (dry riverbed) by her home: "I used to wander around down there and try to imagine walking around the bend and just happening to stumble upon some beautiful man" (Silko 12). Silko writes about "the adolescent longings and the old stories" coming together at "twelve, thirteen, fourteen" as her "idea of the

possibilities for the river" grew and she realized that the arroyo could be "a place to meet boyfriends and lovers" (12). For Silko, the "old stories" and "longings" take form in the many guises of Yellow Woman. The arroyo can be seen as a location where the "fundamental female need to express desire" is made possible (Graulich, Introduction: Remember the Stories, 18). Silko refers to Kochininako as her favorite "because she dares to cross traditional boundaries of ordinary behavior during times of crisis in order to save the Pueblo; her power lies in her courage and in her uninhibited sexuality" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 70).

The arroyo has symbolic weight in *Ceremony,* too. In the novel, the character Auntie has been negatively influenced by the repressive Christianity in Laguna. She feels ashamed that her sister had sexual relations with a White man outside of marriage and punishes her nephew Tayo for being the product of these actions. Auntie tells Tayo a story to explain the "shame and disgrace" his mother inflicted on their family and which she sees him as incorporating (Silko 64). His mother had "been up all night," when Auntie went outside and "down toward the river," because she "Just had a feeling" (64). There she observed Tayo's mother:

> Right as the sun came up, she walked under that big cottonwood tree, and I could see her clearly: she had no clothes on. Nothing. She was completely naked except for her high-heeled shoes (65).

Auntie is attempting to explain and excuse "the distance she kept between [Tayo] and herself" (64). A surface reading of this scene may lead some readers to the same conclusion as Auntie: that the acts of Tayo's mother were shameful. A deeper look, however, especially if said readers are familiar with more of Silko's works, leads to a different conclusion. I have argued that the arroyo, or riverbed, is a place that Silko associates with female sexuality. It is a place which she in her young adult life fantasized about meeting "some beautiful man," a fantasy she explores further in her short story "Yellow Woman" which I will return to shortly ("A Conversation with Leslie Marmon Silko" 12). In light of this, we may replace, or simply add to, the impression of Tayo's mother as a tragic figure, the alternative view that she is a figure embracing her feminine sexuality. In *Ceremony*, Tayo's mother's choice to go to the arroyo for a sexual adventure costs her the experience of domestic life as Tayo's mother. As quoted earlier, Louise K. Barnett states that a "common denominator of the Yellow Woman retellings" is "escape from the narrow life of the feminine domestic world" (Barnett 20). Ultimately, the result of Tayo's mother's sexual liberty is, of course, Tayo. Her offspring is

the one who is capable, through his special position as a mixed-race person, of being a bridge between clashing races and cultures. Because of this quality he is able to save Laguna from the destroyers at the end of the novel. All these factors unequivocally qualify Tayo's mother, in my opinion, as a Yellow Woman.

Sexuality, as seen above, is one of a Yellow Woman's key characteristics. But what purpose does this sexuality serve? In *Ceremony,* the character Ts'eh is identified by many critics as one of Silko's incarnations of Yellow Woman (Graulich 13). In the novel Ts'eh is adventurous and sensual, a mountain demi-goddess enshrouded in mystery and indicated to have mystical powers. Through sex, she is able to heal Tayo's mental illness which has been overwhelming him since he returned from war. She guides him as he embarks on his own healing ceremony, and with her help, he regains his mental equilibrium and understands how to lean on his traditional Laguna knowledge, which he employs to save himself, Laguna, and the world. "Tayo is healed through recognizing what many of Silko's yellow women know: that through the stories he can understand himself and his place in his culture" (Graulich 13). In the Yellow Woman character of Ts'eh, we see an example of the far-reaching healing power that Yellow Woman's sexuality can have. *Ceremony* also reflects Silko's own philosophy of a return to traditional Laguna wisdom.

"Cottonwood *Part One: Story of Sun House*" in *Storyteller* is one of Silko's Yellow Woman stories, told in poetic form. In this story the protagonist breaks with sexual and behavioral conventions by leaving her family behind and by implicitly engaging in sex with someone who is not her husband. She left her home, writes Silko;

> her clan
> and the people
> (three small children
> the youngest just weaned
> her husband away cutting firewood) (*Storyteller* 62).

This action is taken because the protagonist is told by a mysterious male figure that she has to come with him ""You must / though the people may not understand"" (62). She leaves her home with him, realizing that although he looks like a man, "he *was* the Sun" and that she has an obligation to perform a ceremony of seasonal renewal with him. This ritual is most likely sexual, which some readers might miss if they are not familiar with the Yellow Woman stories. Read together with the rest of *Storyteller,* which includes multiple Yellow Woman

poems and stories, the sexual nature of the poem's protagonist's involvement with the Sun should be obvious. The protagonist goes with the Sun man in spite of the fact that her clan and family might not understand the "drastic things which / must be done / for the world / to continue" (62). The man in the figure of the Sun "was only pretending to be / a human being" (61). This is another common theme in Yellow Woman stories: men who are not truly men but rather spirits, animals, or spiritual representations of a natural phenomenon such as the Sun. In her short story "Yellow Woman," Silko also plays with this theme by creating uncertainty around whether the man with whom the protagonist has an affair with is a ka'tsina spirit. If he is, she can view herself as a Yellow Woman, thereby excusing her actions as conscionable and even beneficial to her community rather than just commonplace adultery. Ka'tsina spirits, also spelled ka't'sina and kachina, are benevolent spirits who sometimes have power over the elements, for example the ability to make it rain – a prized skill for dry Southwestern cultures such as Laguna Pueblo" (Snodgrass 352). If the male figure in the short story is merely human, a Navajo man named Silva, then her actions are adulterous rather than heroic. This question is not only relevant to the protagonist on a personal level, because if Silva is a ka'tsina spirit with power over the elements, then displeasing him could have dire consequences for her community, such as a dangerous drought (352). Conversely, pleasing him might bring rain to the protagonist's community. In "Cottonwood *Part One: Story of Sun House,*" the Sun character has the power to ensure the continuity of the seasons with the help of Yellow Woman "And so the earth continued / as it has since that time" (*Storyteller* 63). We will see this theme of Yellow Woman's role in helping her community again in the twin poem, 'Cottonwood Part Two: Buffalo Story' (65-72).

Silko has multiple Yellow Woman figures in *Storyteller,* reinforcing the idea that her name is a label awarded to characters who fulfill certain requirements rather than the name of a single character. A Yellow Woman must be a certain kind of woman, who has a certain kind of role to play in her society. Her stories differ, their outcomes for Yellow Woman ranging from a return to her home, a happy ending from a Western viewpoint, to murder at the hands of her husband or lover, what might be considered a tragic ending – these endings might also imply reward or punishment for her actions. However, what we see again and again is that Yellow Woman's deeds, whether leading to reward or punishment for her on an individual level, inevitably lead to well-being and prosperity for her community. Silko demonstrates that in Laguna culture, community is valued over individual, as the next story will demonstrate.

"Cottonwood Part Two: Buffalo Story," the text in *Storyteller* which follows and is intertextually linked with Part One, discussed above, describes a desperate time of drought in Laguna "It was one of those times / one of those times when / there had been no rain for months / and everything was drying up" (65). In this piece, the people of Laguna have so little to eat because "When it got dry / the deer went too high on the mountains" and "nothing was growing / none of the plants" and "the children would cry" (65). In this story, Yellow Woman at first sets out on her adventure not because of a man, but to find water for her family: "It was at this time / long ago / Kochininako, Yellow Woman went searching / for water to carry back to her family" (65). She goes "a long distance to the east" (66), traveling so far that by the time she discovers water, she has entered the land of the Buffalo People. Yellow Woman immediately notices the "very beautiful" Buffalo Man who has been bathing and still has "drops of water shining on his chest" (66). The sensual language used to describe him enhances the sense of Kochininako's desire through the way her female gaze lingers on him. Even as he starts trying to convince her to come with him and leave her family behind, her attention is mainly on his physicality:

> She saw him tying his leggings
> drops of water were still shining on his chest.
> He was very good to look at
> and she kept looking at him
> because she had never seen anyone like him.
> It was Buffalo Man who was very beautiful (66).

"Come with me," says Buffalo Man, but Yellow Woman protests, stating that "My family needs this water" (66) – an excuse which is promptly ignored. There is a parallel here to the character Silva in Silko's short story "Yellow Woman," who is another confident, beautiful male. Kochininako's resistance to the beautiful men's charms in both stories seems disingenuous (the term "men" being used flexibly in this context). In "Yellow Woman," the protagonist says "I'm leaving" but does make any attempts to actually do so. Silva's response when she tells him this is simply to smile as if there is no chance she will leave him: "He smiled now, eyes still closed. "You are coming with me, remember?" (52). In "Cottonwood Part Two: Buffalo Story," Buffalo man says to the protagonist: "You shouldn't have gone so far away / from your village," laying the blame on her before grabbing her and running "fast" so she "couldn't escape him" (67). Just as in "Yellow Woman," this is not presented as a traumatic kidnapping, but rather as an ambivalent experience where Yellow Woman is torn between duty and desire: although she protests that she "must carry this water back home,"

Yellow Woman is “still looking at him” because as the reader recalls; he was “very good to look at” (66).

Yellow Woman’s husband is often named Estoy-eh-muut, or Arrow Boy. In “Cottonwood Part Two: Buffalo Story,” Estoy-eh-muut “rescues” Kochininako with the help of Grandmother Spider, then kills all the Buffalo People who chase them, giving him and the people plenty of food. Yellow Woman is then also killed, but her husband, reportedly because she has come to love the Buffalo People. “I killed her,” Arrow Boy explains to Yellow Woman’s grieving father, “because she wanted to stay with the Buffalo People / she wanted to go with them / and now she is with them” (71). The father is not upset that his son-in-law killed his daughter; instead he cries because his daughter has chosen the Buffalo People “A’moo-ooh Kochininako…You have gone away with them!” (72). The question remains: is this story tragic, or triumphant? If read with a Western feminist lens, it is easy to view Buffalo Man, the husband, and the father as participating in violent sexism. However, Laguna is a matriarchal culture. How does viewing the story within the Laguna context affect our reading? What is the moral – if there is one? The answer may lie in Per Seyerstad’s observation that in Pueblo cultures, the group is valued over the individual: “Traditionally, they have economically had a communal system, encouraging cooperation and group good and toning down individualism” (12). The Laguna Indian, asserts Seyersted, “is wedded to place rather than time and to group rather than individual” (12). At the end of the story, Kochininako is praised for teaching the people to go East for food in times of drought: “So that was the beginning – the hunters would travel / far away to the plains in the East / where the Buffalo People lived” (72). Because of her, the people could now “bring home / all that good meat. / Nobody would be hungry then” (72). And:

> It was all because
> one time long ago
> our daughter, our sister Kochininako
> went away with them (72).

Whether Yellow Woman in ‘Cottonwood *Part Two: Buffalo Story*’ is a tragic figure or not, she is without a doubt a heroic one. She is credited with saving her people from hunger “Nobody would be hungry then / It was all because [Kochininako] went away with them” (72). Once again, Yellow Woman’s transgressive sexuality is a necessity because it has the power to save her people.

So many of Silko's heroic Indigenous female figures are imbued with a liberated sense of their own sexuality. Examples of this abound, among them Sister Salt in *Gardens in the Dunes*: Angelita La Escapia from *Almanac of the Dead*; as well as Ts'eh, Night Swan, and Tayo's mother in *Ceremony*. This sense of liberation should not be reduced to simply the broader second wave feminist movement to liberate female sexuality. Like many groups of women of color in the USA, Indigenous women are problematically sexualized:

> Today, pre-contact Native American women such as Disney's Pocahontas are stereotyped and portrayed as tall brown women dressed in deer hide mini skirts and matching tops. This portrayal and over-sexualization has led to an epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and the government has no mechanism to track the severity of the problem (Lim).[1]

Re-claiming Indigenous American women's sexuality, then, is an incredibly valuable task. Giving these characters agency and re-claiming their sexuality for the benefit of their Indigenous communities is a radical, multiracial feminist political statement from Silko. *Ceremony* is an internationally famous novel, and Silko's short story "Yellow Woman" is "one of the most reprinted stories in American Indian literature" (19). Through her voice as an author, and possibly the most famous Native American female author at that, Silko is able to reach broader audiences. Louise Barnett sees Yellow Woman as a figure who "adopts the male role of protecting the community but does so through her female nature" (20). Perhaps Silko, too, through the power of her authorial voice, may be able to protect her community by countering the harmful stereotypes of U.S. dominant culture.

Part Two: Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa and La Malinche

Irene Lara, introducing an interview with the author, writes that Anzaldúa was "Among the first Chicana writers to recover and rewrite Mexican histories and Mexica [sic] goddess figures from a feminist, decolonial perspective" ("Daughter of Coatlicue: An Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa" 41). She sees Anzaldúa as a "daughter of Coatlicue," explaining that:

> Coatlicue is the Mexica [sic] earth mother goddess of creation and destruction. In patriarchal Mexica mythhistory Coatlicue's daughter is named Coyolxauhqui, the Mexica

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[1] To learn more about this crisis, see CNN "Why Do so Many Native American Women Go Missing? Congress Aiming to Find Out" and "In Indian Country, a Crisis of Missing Women. And a New One When They're Found. - The New York Times."

> warrior goddess dismembered by her brother Huitzilopochtli, the God of War, and banished to the sky as the moon (41).

The story of Coyolxauhqui's dismemberment is "According to several feminist interpreters" one that "marks a shift in Mexica history from a gynecentric to androcentric ordering of life and the simultaneous divestment of female power" (41). She contextualizes this shift by remarking on the role of Spanish colonialization in "negatively construct[ing] Mexica culture, Coatlicue, Coyolxauhqui, and other indigenous sacred figures" to the point that they "were also demonized and fragmented" (41). These are themes that will be explored in the following pages. For Lara, Anzaldúa's "Engagement with Coatlicue's physically dismembered daughter" shows her "desire to suture the wounds inflicted by patriarchy and eurocentrism" (41).

Malinche, the female figure that I will be looking at in this section, is an Indigenous female figure who has been demonized and fragmented by colonialist sexism and racism. "La Malinche" is the derogatory title given to a 16th Century Amerindian woman known by the names of Malinalli, Malintzin, or in Spanish, Doña Marina (*Women in the Conquest of the Americas,* Maura, 2). Another way she is known is by the term La Chingada, a term "most often associated with Malinche" (Keating, Appendix 1: Glossary, 319). La Chingada translates into the crude title of "the fucked one" or the fucked woman (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 44). Anzaldúa writes that her name is used to mean "Whore, prostitute, the woman who sold out her people to the Spaniards" and whose "epithets Chicanos spit out with contempt" (44). La Malinche was "the indigenous woman given to Hernán Cortés upon his arrival on the continent," writes Keating, who became (in)famous for her role as sexual partner of and interpreter to Hernan Cortés during the Spanish conquest of what would become modern-day Mexico (319). She has been viewed historically as betraying her race by helping the Spanish conquistadores, and the continued popular use of chingada and malinche as derogatory slurs shows that many still view her in this way. Thus, La Malinche has the unenviable role as Mexico's scapegoat.

Anzaldúa, using Malinche as a representative of all Mexican and Mexican American women, writes that "The worst kind of betrayal lies in making us believe that the Indian woman in us is the betrayer," sardonically commenting that "Male culture has done a good job on us" (44). She credits the sexism and racism in her culture, represented by its treatment of this female figure, with making herself and others like her punish themselves: "We, *indias y mestizas,*

police the Indian in us, brutalize and condemn her" (44). Going further, Anzaldúa envisions Malinche, this Indigenous figure, as her "sombra," her shadow self, the "dark-skinned woman" who has been mistreated by "las costumbres" (traditions), and who has been "silenced, gagged, caged" and "bound into servitude," enslaved, "colonized by the Spaniard, the Anglo, by her own [Indigenous] people," "sterilized and castrated in the twentieth century" and forced to be "invisible" and silent for centuries (44-45).

For Silko, raised on the Laguna Pueblo and with direct access to the traditional knowledge of her culture, a sense of Native community was always accessible – though in my opinion, Silko too seeks affirmation of her Indigenous identity through her art. Because of the historical mixing of Indigenous Mexicans with Spanish colonizers, however, many Mexicans and many of the Mexican diaspora that Anzaldúa is a part of do not have the privilege of being as closely acquainted with their Native heritage as Silko is. This is true, of course, for many other U.S. Indigenous peoples as well. La Malinche comes from the Indigenous Mexican part of Anzaldúa's heritage. This heritage is one of the great influences of the author's works: "My own indigenous knowledges have been crucial to my work," she wrote in an email dialog in 2002 ("Speaking across the Divide" in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* 288). AnaLouise Keating, Anzaldúa's editor and long-time friend, explains that "even before she became a published writer, Anzaldúa was intensely interested in the relationship between Native and Chicana identities and in the concept of indigeneity more generally" ("Speaking across the Divide," Editorial note in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* 282). "Speaking Across the Divide" represents, according to Keating, "one of Anzaldúa's most extensive discussions of these issues" (282). The fear of becoming someone who appropriates Indigenous identity is present in Anzaldúa's works. In a self-reflective analysis, Anzaldúa expresses concern that she herself might be "misappropriating Náhuatl language and images" ("Border Arte: Nepantla, el Lugar de la Frontera," hereafter "Border Arte" 178). While writing about another Chicana's work, Anzaldúa points out that "Like many Chicana artists her work explores indigenous Mexican [symbols and myths]" (178). The reason behind this, according to Anzaldúa, lies in the nature of Chicana mestizaje, that is, Mexican mixed cultural and biological identity. Anzaldúa's ancestry, which is "one of mestizaje" (282), causes her to have a complicated relationship to her own indigeneity. By re-interpreting these Chicana mestizaje symbols and myths in a contemporary context, Anzaldúa views the mestiza/Chicana artist she is writing about as able to reclaim her cultural identity. Ultimately,

Anzaldúa concludes that seeing this kind of Chicana art "boosts my spirits" and "that I am a part of something profound outside my personal self" (178):

> This sense of connection and community compels Chicana/o writers/artists to delve into, sift through, and rework native imagery (178).

In this chapter, I see as Anzaldúa as enacting the same strategy for herself through the figure of La Malinche.

One way in which Chicana artists such as Anzaldúa connect and interact with their Indigenous Mexican heritage is through female cultural figures:

> "The three "madres" Guadalupe, La Malinche, y La Llorona are culture figures that Chicana writers and artists "re-read" in our works." (Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 178).

Selecting which female figure that best summarizes Anzaldúa's depiction of her cultures was a more complicated task than in the case of Silko. Anzaldúa deals in a plethora of female figures, many of which overlap with each other in her writing, becoming hard to separate clearly. Like Yellow Woman, some are figures chiefly known through stories, such as Anzaldúa's La Llorona – a name Anzaldúa translates to English as Ghost Woman in her children's book *Prietita and the Ghost Woman/Prietita y La Llorona*. These figures also have historical links, such as Malinalli/Malintzin (variant spellings); some may be religious figures, such as Guadalupe; Aztec or Nahua figures, such as Tonantzin, Coatlique, and Coyolxauhuitl; and other female figures are primarily terms or concepts personified, such as La Chingada and La Malinche. While these names may seem distinct, La Malinche is by turns referred to by Anzaldúa as La Chingada, Malinalli, Malintzin, La Llorona, and more in Anzaldúa's writing. These interrelationships are part of what makes La Malinche such a rich figure for analysis.

In *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* Keating states that La Malinche is "the symbolic mother of the Mexican people" (319). In Anzaldúa's works, she functions as an intersection for many of the tensions that the author experiences between her three cultures: the Spanish Mexican; Indigenous Mexican; and European American. I translate the name to mean The Betrayer – the article 'La' in the title means that the gender of Malinche is feminine. Anzaldúa's treatment of this figure illuminates her painful relationship with her Mexican culture and with how she sees herself as a Chicana woman. Malinche represents Anzaldúa's feminist Chicana

act of re-claiming her culture and history, which contrasts with Silko's predominantly positive relationship to her Laguna Pueblo culture. As the symbolic mother of Mexican culture, La Malinche is more than just a concept and more than just a historical figure. She is a cultural icon. In *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth*, Sandra Messinger writes about the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish. "[The] invasion constituted a clash of cultures involving archetypal patterns that have formed a myth more consequential than the historical reality" (Messinger 1). The same interpretation applies to La Malinche: more than just a historical reality, she should be understood as a complex icon in Mexican culture, representing many things. In his work *Women in the Conquest of the Americas,* Juan Francisco Maura connects the "complex and often painful subject of Mexican national character" with "the personage of Doña Marina" – the Spanish proper name given to Malinalli (La Malinche). He claims that her personage is "the direct result of this complex Mexican way of thinking," by which he means the double standards with which Malinche is evaluated – an impersonation of the so-called Madonna/whore complex (92). Doubtless, Anzaldúa would agree with this part of his argument, as she herself uses La Malinche or "Doña Marina" to explore Mexican double standards towards women. Both authors identify the patriarchal influence of history that repeatedly seeks women as scapegoats, for after all, "It seems too much to place all the weight of responsibility for the conquest of Mexico on a single woman" (Maura 92). Most prominently in the context of Anzaldúa's works, Doña Marina/Malinalli/Malinche is "a symbol…of women in patriarchal culture" because of how "during most periods of history [La Malinche] has been maligned and mistreated, an exile in her own land" (Cypress ix).

It is not difficult to see why Gloria Anzaldúa has identified to strongly with the figure of La Malinche. Marginalized in the U.S. because of her Mexican heritage and looks, in her home because of her intellectual pursuits and not in the least, because of her queer identity in a home that valued heteronormativity, these and many other factors made Anzaldúa feel like an exile in her own culture(s):

> And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – *una cultura mestiza* – with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 44).

In chapters such as "Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan" ("Rebellious movements and the cultures that betray them") and "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," Anzaldúa condemns her Anglo-Mexican-Indigenous cultures for their role in perpetuating

sexism, while still finding a source of inspiration in the Indigenous Mexican figure of Malinche (*Borderlands/La Frontera,* 37-45; 75-86). She imagines an Indigenous foremother who "wished to speak, to act, to protest, to challenge" but was unable to (45). In her vision, this ancestor, sometimes named as Malinche, "kept stoking the inner flame" while the:

> spirit of the fire spurs her to fight for her own skin and a piece of ground to stand on, a ground from which she can view the world – a perspective, a homeground where she can plumb the rich ancestral roots in her own ample mestiza heart (45).

Inspired by this distant figure, Anzaldúa rebels against sexism in all of her cultures: "What I want is an accounting with all three cultures – white, Mexican, Indian" (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 44). Though Anzaldúa doesn't identify as an Indigenous woman, she views her Indigenous Mexican heritage as a resource: "I don't call myself an india, but I do claim an indigenous ancestry, one of mestizaje" (282, *The Gloria An*zaldúa Reader). Mestizaje, similarly to mestiza, means mixed. It is a Mexican Spanish word for mixed-race Indigenous and Spanish people. However, mestizaje is also its own theoretical term, which Chican@s in the USA have used, positioning "mestizaje as an alternative to the social contract of assimilation" ("Mestizaje | Encyclopedia.Com."). The term has spiritual and ideological connotations of rebirth, and can be used, as Anzaldúa does, as an "an antidote to modern anti-Indian and anti-Mexican sentiments" ("Mestizaje | Encyclopedia.Com."). Chican@ politics recognize three major "mestizaje" moments in history, three historical events that led to the mixing of races and cultures. The first was the conquest of what is now Mexico, and it is this moment in history from which La Malinche originates as she literally becomes a mother of the first generation of mestiz@s, whom Anzaldúa calls "the offspring of La Chingada, the india" (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* 70). The second historical moment of mestizaje was the annexation of half of Mexico as a result of the Mexican-American War, which as I will explain later in this chapter made the Anzaldúa family into Americans. The third moment belongs people like Anzaldúa, who are leaders in "the contemporary cultural interchange between Chicanos and European Americans" ("Mestizaje | Encyclopedia.Com."). La Malinche is the instigating figure of this history of mestizaje. Anzaldúa's participation in the third mestizaje wave gathers together themes of imposed patriarchal shame and rebellious feminist pride, all symbolized in this one figure. In "Let us be the healing of the wound," one of her later pieces, Anzaldúa reflects that "we always inherit the past problems of family, community, and nation" (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* 304). For this reason, the shadow-self of La Malinche cannot be ignored. Anzaldúa has to "seek a healing image instead" so that she may "see the positive shadow that I've also inherited" (304). If her ancestor was silenced,

scapegoated, maligned, then Anzaldúa has an "imperative to "speak,"" because "as an artist" her job "is to bear witness to what haunts us" and look at how to "repair el daño (the damage) by using the imagination and its visions" (304). Above all, Anzaldúa believes fervently in "the transformative power and medicine of art" (304). By offering a sympathetic depiction of Malinche in her art, she applies this powerful medicine to her own history.

As the mother of the mestiza race and as a central figure in the conquest of Mexico, Malinche embodies tensions of conquest and borderlands identity in Anzaldúa's works. To understand more of these layers in her writing, it is helpful to locate her within her own family's history of the borderlands. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa was born in Raymondville, Texas on September 26th, 1942 to parents Amalia and Urbano Anzaldúa and was the eldest of four siblings (Keating, Appendix 2: Timeline, 325). Her family were of Mexican, Spanish and Indigenous Mexican descent, and she was a seventh generation U.S. citizen (Anzaldúa, "Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa, by Karen Ikas," 268). This was because the Mexican land their family had lived on for many years became American land in 1848 as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (Portillo). Anzaldúa believes that the U.S. cheated Mexico of almost half of its land, and she states that "By doing so they created the borderlands" (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 274.)

These borderlands became the inspiration for Anzaldúa's borderlands theory, one of her most central theoretical concepts. These borderlands that she writes about represent the land that separates Mexico and the U.S. and they "addressed a condition which mestizas had been experiencing – born of two cultures, destined to navigate through various worlds at once" (Castillo, "Introduction to the Third Edition" in *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 240). After the publication of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera,* the term new mestiza has come to be applied not only to Mexicans with Indigenous/Spanish mixed heritage, but to any multicultural peoples and even anyone who can relate to the mestiza condition. Again, as in the case of Silko, Anzaldúa brings to focus the strain she experiences as a multicultural woman, but unlike Silko, she does not emphasize one part of her heritage over the others. In fact, she adamantly refuses to be limited to just one identity, claiming that "For me, being Chicana is not enough" ("Border Arte" 185). She applies the term mestiza to encompass all of her heritages, that is, not only her Spanish colonizer and Mexican Indigenous heritage, but also her Anglo roots.

> I was born and live in that in-between space, nepantla, the borderlands. There are other races running in my veins, other cultures that my body lives in and out of, and a white man who constantly whispers inside my skull (185).

Anzaldúa expanded the meaning of mestiza identity in 1987 when she introduced the concept of a "new mestiza consciousness" in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* She sees the new mestiza consciousness as something painful but empowering and visualizes "her metaphor of the U.S./Mexican border" as a "bleeding wound to the body, psyche and life experience of the mestiza" (Castillo, Introduction to the Third Edition, 240). Mestiza people were undergoing "a struggle of borders, an inner war" dating back to the complicated history of La Malinche's role as the mother of their race while also, whether willingly or no, complicit in the conquest of their motherland. The tensions of this inner war, writes Anzaldúa, "locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed…both are reduced to a common denominator of violence" (*Borderlands/La Frontera,* 100). However, mestizas have the ability, Anzaldúa believes, to move beyond a reactive state:

> At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes (100).

If mestizas can work through the struggle and attain a new mestiza consciousness, Anzaldúa posits, they can come into a mental state of hope and healing. By accepting the competing identities as part of a whole, she envisions mestizas seeing "through serpent and eagle eyes," by which she implies Indigenous "oppressed" and colonizer "oppressor" eyes (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 100). In doing so mestizas will be able to reconcile their warring identities and heal the trauma or "bleeding wound" of mestiza identity (Castillo 240). Anzaldúa is writing from a place of personal experience, and in fact would continue to explore "issues related to wounding and healing" throughout her career (Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* 249). In a poem last revised two years before her death, titled "Healing Wounds," Anzaldúa wrote that "to heal/there must be wounds" and "for light/there must be darkness" (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* 249). The poem indicates Anzaldúa's belief that trauma is innately beautiful – at least if the wounded person accepts their "damage" as part of what makes them who they are, or as she puts it, "the me that's home" (249).

Gloria Anzaldúa's answer to how exactly mestizas should gain this level of consciousness and acceptance was not definitive, yet she believed that by engaging in this struggle mestizas

will be “somehow healed” (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 100). In her view, there is a value to the struggle itself. She posits that “The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react” (101). The important thing, as she sees it, is to realize the power that is inherent within the mestiza position. She empowers herself and her readers through focusing on the unique perspectives that a borderlands position offers its subjects, namely a knowledge and acceptance of the uncertain: “The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity…She learns to juggle cultures” (101). Though many critics focus mainly on her earlier works, mainly *Borderlands/La Frontera* and *This Bridge Called My Back,* her later theoretical work deserve consideration as well. In later works, such as “Speaking across the Divide,” the e-mail dialog Anzaldúa had with Inés Hernández-Ávila from 2002, as well as in the last essay published during her lifetime, “Let us be the healing of the wound: The Coyolxauhqui imperative – la sombra y el sueño,” both found in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* Anzaldúa provides more nuanced discussions of some of the issues introduced earlier in her career (282-94; 303-17). Such issues include the pressing question of how to become “somehow healed.” In “Let us be the healing of the wound,” AnaLouise Keating writes that “Blending fierce anger with sustained optimism, Anzaldúa maintains her faith in the transformative power of art” (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* 303).

Gloria Anzaldúa is certain that the new mestiza will be “some kind of evolutionary step forward” (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 103.) The belief that hybridity is the inevitable next evolutionary step is also explored in Silko’s debut novel *Ceremony*: the main character Tayo’s mixed-race identity uniquely qualifies him to perform a healing ceremony that benefits his own community and the world at large. Additionally, the mixed-breed cows in the novel are integral to this ceremony and symbolize that future survival will depend on people of all races mixing together. The future is hybrid. Anzaldúa may very well have been right about the evolutionary power of the new mestiza –when she published these ideas in her seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* in 1987, it had a profound (re)volutionary effect, one that continues to unfold to this day. She was a key player in shifting the Chicano Movement in the States to include not only women, but also queer women:

> “The academic field of Chicana Feminisms, which was in its early stages in the 1980s, readily embraced the work of Gloria Anzaldúa – writer, public intellectual, and one of the first Chicanas to publicly claim her lesbianism” (Cantú and Hurtado, Introduction to the Fourth Edition in *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 5).

In this way she became a deeply influential icon for queer people, as well as for Chican@ people, and many others besides who could relate to her works.

By reclaiming the mother of the mestiza race, La Malinche, Anzaldúa established herself as an essential name of Chicana Feminism. Her willingness to apply her creative powers to inclusive practices is exemplified in for example *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation,* noted in the introduction for its inclusivity. Anzaldúa felt free to rebel against her White, Mexican and Indigenous cultures, and she was not afraid of showing her anger about the injustices in these cultures: "…yes, I was always angry, and I am still angry" (Anzaldúa, "Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa, by Karen Ikas," 268). That did not mean that Anzaldúa was "cultureless" – as she saw it, there were three paths you could choose as someone in her position; to completely assimilate, to be a border person or to be an isolationist (273). She chose to live in the borderlands, in the difficult space between cultures. From her perspective there were many advantages to this choice, one of which led her to seek inspiration from Indigenous Mexican figures such as Malinche*,* Coatlique, and La Llorona. At the same time she often wrote in English, expressing that "there is a lot of Anglo ideology that I like as well" (Anzaldúa "Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa, by Karen Ikas" 273).

> For me, being Chicana is not enough. It is only one of my multiple identities. Along with other border gente, it is at this site and time, where and when, I create my identity along with my art (gente=people, "Border Arte" 185).

Anzaldúa died in May of 2004 from diabetes-related complications (Keating, Appendix 2: Timeline, 335). At the time of her death, she was working on multiple projects, including a novel and a doctoral thesis – her doctorate was awarded posthumously. Thanks to her long-time editor and friend, AnaLouise Keating, some of these texts have been published post-mortem, and hint at the ways in which her theories had developed since *Borderlands/La Frontera* was published in 1987 – both *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* and *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality,* published in 2009 and 2015 respectively. Because of her early death we will never know the full development of her ideas, but I am thankful for what she shared with the world while she was alive, because the self-reflective and nuanced theories, theories that she developed and re-developed with over the years, are a joy to engage with on both critical and personal levels.

Chapter Two
Radical Voices: The Political is still Personal

[A lot of people] were complaining…about my work, [people] who think that Chicano or Native American literature, or African American literature, shouldn't be political. You know, easy for those white guys to say. They've got everything, so their work doesn't have to be political (Silko, "Listening to the Spirits," 163).

Writing within a 20th and 21st century post-colonial context, Anzaldúa and Silko's acts of artistic expression should be understood as a radical insistence on being heard and seen for themselves. They do this despite living in a country that they experience as having little room for multiracial female – and in Anzaldúa's case queer – voices. Both highly lauded, award-winning authors, the fact that these women were fighting against powerful currents of discrimination makes their stories of success all the more compelling. When Silko won the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in 1981 ("Leslie Marmon Silko - MacArthur Foundation"), she was asked about whether she believed her achievement was due to her being a minority woman – a notion she found laughable, pointing out "how few women have been chosen" for the award ("A Leslie Marmon Silko Interview" 56). The limited numbers of female minority writers who won accolades such as the MacArthur Fellowship at that time underscores the significance of Silko's accomplishment – in 1981 few women were chosen, and only two of the recipients were women of color ("Class of June 1981 - MacArthur Foundation"; "MacArthur Foundation"). Anzaldúa's public successes include her commemoration by the American Studies Association's "Gloria E. Anzaldúa Award," given in honor of her "outstanding career as an independent scholar […] along with her groundbreaking contributions to scholarship to feminist, women of color and queer theory" ("Gloria E. Anzaldúa Award | ASA").

Part of what makes both authors' writing so appealing is that they are inspired by their cultures to experiment with and invent new ways of writing that often break with generic convention. Their artistic voices gain a distinctness from the ways in which the authors incorporate their own Indigenous, Anglo, and Mexican cultures into their styles. In the previous chapter I analyzed their use of the figures La Malinche (Anzaldúa) and Yellow Woman (Silko) to explore their respective multicultural identities. Through explorations of sexual and gender identities, their works are always informed by their overarching multiracial feminist politics. The result is rich, engaging art. In this chapter, I will review examples of

Silko and Anzaldúa's authorial innovations, connecting them to the authors' cultural roots and commenting on the political significance of their contributions to literature. My premise for this chapter is summarized by the political slogan, popularized by second wave feminists, of "the personal is political" and by the elaboration on that slogan offered by Cherríe Moraga: "but the political is also highly personal" ("Tragedy and Inspiration: Cherrie Moraga on the LARB Radio Hour").

In Chapter One, I looked at the U.S./Mexican border, a border Anzaldúa views metaphorically "as a bleeding wound to the body, psyche and life experience of the mestiza" (Castillo 240). In the Introduction to *Borderlands/La Frontera*'s Third Edition, Ana Castillo writes that "To the tune of her day, like other radical feminists," Anzaldúa believed that "it was paramount to give voice of the Chicana who, until the late 60s to 70s, was kept at the margins of mainstream society" (240). She lauds the "courage of writers like Anzaldúa" who "took up the collective banner to speak for and on behalf of the silenced and silent" (241). In this Chapter I look at the urgency with which Anzaldúa insists on giving voice to her Chicana and other identities. She does so with her singular brand of radical intimacy. In ""A New Connection, a New Set of Recognitions": From This Bridge Called My Back to this bridge we call home," Héctor Calderón positions Anzaldúa's anthologies, starting with *This Bridge Called My Back,* as a turning point in feminist scholarship:

> By all accounts, 1981 was a turning point for women's writings. This was the year the first edition of This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, was published by Persephone Press, a Massachusetts-based, white feminist press. Bridge began in 1979 as a response by Anzaldúa to feeling like an outsider, as the token woman of color at a women's retreat just north of San Francisco (294).

What began as a conversation of encouragement between two individuals turned into group activism, bringing together the voices of women of color as a response to the intersecting problems of the left's "shaky and shabby commitment to women" and White feminism's exclusion of issues of race and class (Moraga, Catching Fire: Preface to the Fourth Edition, xiii). The anthology gave voice to women whose voices had been silenced for too long. Tired of waiting to be invited into the mainstream, Anzaldúa and her co-editor Cherríe Moraga, together with all the authors in the anthology, authors who included Luisah Teish, Chrystos, Audre Lorde, and the Combahee River Collective. It was a truly revolutionary anthology.

> *Los Chicanos*, how patient we seem, how very patient. There is the quiet of the Indian about us. We know how to survive. When other races have given up their tongue, we've kept ours (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 85).

> [We] have all had the conqueror's language imposed on us (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 57).

In the quotes above, Anzaldúa writes proudly about how her race, the mixed and new race of Chican@ mestizas, has kept their tongue in spite of struggle, naming their Indigenous heritage as the source of this ability, and Silko laments the imposition of "the conqueror's language," the tongue of colonizers forced upon the colonized. In this chapter I will focus firstly on Anzaldúa's textual innovations, how they are rooted to her complex identity, how she uses them to relate to others like herself who have been othered, and how she applies her innovations to combat systems of oppression. Secondly, I review Silko's textual innovations, including her integration of Laguna oral storytelling and use of her other cultures' languages. I see the authors as working towards similar ends, although their methods differ.

Both authors integrate other languages into their English-language writing, a choice I believe should be viewed through the feminist lens of the "personal is political." That the personal is political is a prevalent attitude in Anzaldúa's works, but is evident in Silko's texts too, in *Storyteller* as well as in her essay collection *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit.* I argue that Silko and Anzaldúa employ their multiple languages and styles as a strategy which serves to unify their at times fragmented sense of cultural identity. Moreover, I show how this choice is informed by early encounters the authors had with the colonialist U.S. educational system. These experiences impressed upon them how the English language is wielded as a tool of ongoing colonization, colonization with the aim of erasing non-White identities in the USA. For this reason, the authors are politically motivated to write in a manner that highlights the plurality of their cultural heritage. The resulting texts present multicultural identity as simultaneously fragmented and unified, with Anzaldúa's writing emphasizing the former and Silko's the latter. Their writing is a response to the challenge Audre Lorde famously presented in *This Bridge Called My Back:*

> What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable ("The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House" 94).

Part One: Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa and Radical Self-disclosure

I remember being caught speaking Spanish at recess – that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler. I remember being sent to the corner of the classroom for "talking back" to the Anglo teacher when all I was trying to do was tell her how to pronounce my name (Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera*, 75)*

The quote above is one of many examples in Anzaldúa's works of how dominant society mistreats and abuses Mexican Americans in the United States. Examples of cultural erasure are also seen in Silko's works, as I will show later in this chapter. Given the United States' racial tensions, both historical and ongoing, it is unsurprising that these issues are intensified when the minorities in question are people of color. As evidenced in the opening quote of this section, Anzaldúa's early educational encounters with Anglo schooling were distressing, and were explicitly tied to the devaluation of her Spanish language in opposition to the relationship her school had to colonizing English. In spite of this, Anzaldúa chose to master the English language, and produced much of her writing in English. This was due to her early understanding of the power dynamics between colonizers and colonized and how these were reflected in language: "Western theories of composition force formerly colonized people to read and write according to western conventions situated in broader ideological systems" Anzaldúa told Andrea Lunsford in 1996 ("Towards a Mestiza Rhetoric: Gloria Anzaldúa on Composition, Postcoloniality, and the Spiritual" 272).

Anzaldúa saw how she might, through mastering English, challenge it from a position of strength, and she diligently pursued this goal. Like Silko, she was aware that "[We] have all had the conqueror's language imposed on us" (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 57). In response to this, Anzaldúa realized that she would "have to invent a new of mestizaje style of writing, a border aesthetics" (272). That she succeeded is a testament to her determination and skill as an academic. Anzaldúa was told – by her Anglo teacher – that "If you want to be American, speak 'American.' If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong" (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 75). Given U.S. politics under Donald Trump, where nearly 2000 immigrant children were separated from their families in only six weeks in 2018, the danger of such attitudes cannot be overstated (National Immigration Forum, "Fact Sheet: Family Separation at the U.S.-Mexico Border"). Anzaldúa was painfully aware of the consequences of racism upon Mexican and Mexican American bodies in the U.S.. She understood the role of language in fighting these injustices:

> *Cuando vives en la frontera*
> people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,
> you're a *burra*, *buey,* scapegoat,
> […]
> In the Borderlands
> you are the battleground
> where enemies are kin to each other (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 216).

She decided to use her languages as a fighting ground, to bend and shape them to fit her own mixed identity. *Cuando vives en la frontera* (when you live in the borderlands), Anzaldúa writes, your voice is stolen, and people make you their scapegoat – as evidenced by La Malinche in Chapter One. With a writing style that incorporates her multilingual reality and testimonies from her borderland existence, Anzaldúa pushes back against colonialism's attempts to label her and file her away as inconsequential. She exists in her crossroads, a unique place where you "Put *chile* in your borscht" and "speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent" (216). To live a borderlands existence also means that Anzaldúa, like Silko, was used to racial profiling and getting "stopped by *la migra,*" (immigration) "at the border checkpoints" for her Mexican Indigenous looks (216).

The English language, and by extension, English literature, is not so narrow in reality as Anzaldúa's schoolteacher and others would imply. To limit ourselves to "the conqueror's language" that has been "imposed" on us would lead to erasure not only of minority languages, but of some of English literature's best literary voices (Silko*, Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 57). As Anzaldúa shows, rather than limit language to monolingualism, which would not reflect the true multiculturality which forms U.S. culture and many other world cultures of the 20th and 21st centuries, the better action is to create new languages.

> For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves – a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 77).

Anzaldúa's use of her multilingual "patois," her "forked tongue," is a keystone of her political stratagem. In the quote above, she argues that there is no other "recourse" "left to them" – them being people like herself who don't linguistically fit into the confines of

monolingualism – than to "create their own language." This she did, wielding her polyglot style of writing as a tool in her fight to reclaim her identity, which had been so often denied her by all of her cultures. By shifting fluidly between Spanish and English, weaving in Nahuatl and Spanglish and her many other Mexican and U.S. American languages and sociolects, Anzaldúa's writing reflects the plurality of her innermost self. The result is a specific kind of personal style which is Anzaldúa's signature voice. If this effect of blending languages seems constructed at times, perhaps it is – but it is a construction of her choice, and a work she does to counter the attempts of others to diminish the full complexity of her pluralistic identity.

Anzaldúa's post-colonial linguistic act of rebellion – insisting on writing in her "forked tongue," her "variation of two languages," this language that she and other Chican@ peoples have created, is of course one of the reasons why she has been so influential in post-colonial studies globally. Silko too, even with her early loss of fluency in the Laguna Keres language, shows that language is an essential part of how she sees herself, to her sense of belonging, and to how she locates herself linguistically in her own metaphorical borderlands. Silko does so through integrating Laguna words she knows and their definitions into her writing, by which she is able to participate in carrying forward important knowledge from her Laguna culture. The reasoning behind the language politics Anzaldúa presents us with applies not only to many Chicanas and Native Americans, but equally to all multicultural, multi-lingual people, including myself: "For some of us, language is a homeland closer than the Southwest…And because we are a complex and heterogeneous people, we speak many languages" (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 77). Beyond writing in their respective first languages of Spanish and English as well as their second languages of English and Laguna, Anzaldúa and Silko both write in Nahuatl, perhaps seeking to reconnect as well with their Mexican Indigenous heritage.

For Anzaldúa, her works, irrespective of genre, all center around "Gloria's willingness to reveal the intimate details of her life," a strategy with which she "transforms herself into a bridge and creates potential identifications with readers from diverse backgrounds" (2). She succeeds in creating a remarkably intimate tone with her readers thanks to her understanding of "the importance of risking the personal" (Keating, "Risking the Personal: An Introduction" in *Interviews/Entrevistas,* 2). Anzaldúa's new mestiza style of expression is best realized when she shares her own innermost thoughts. She does so through intense self-analysis, in

candid interviews, and not in the least, through her collaborative work in the form of anthologies and published e-mail dialogs with those she refers to as her comadres and almas afines. Comadres has multiple meanings, including midwife, godmother, and gossip, and is used by some, including Anzaldúa, to signify a very close female friend. The other meanings of the word are relevant too: since Anzaldúa frequently applies comadre to friends who are editors and fellow writers, the term can also be read as a metaphor for the role these women play for each other in encouraging each other's work. Almas afines mean kindred souls – the latter group extends, in my view, to all readers for whom Anzaldúa's words resonate. Almas afines are people, primarily women of color, whom Anzaldúa's met through her academic activism, women who share her multiracial feminist visions. Together they make up what I see as Anzaldúa's chosen family. I believe that the intertextual relationships between Anzaldúa and her comadres and almas afines are a product of, but also feed back into, the intimacy that the author is able to create with her writing. Keating, in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* thanks Anzaldúa for this and more:

> Thank you, comadre, for your relentless acts of making soul, for your tireless quest for the self, for your other – which resonates so deeply with so many others, with our selves. Plunging so deeply into your work – sacrificing so much in the process – you give us lifelines enabling us to find ourselves and each other (Editor's Acknowledgements ix).

The comadres of Anzaldúa's life create a language between themselves, one that can be read in the three major anthologies Anzaldúa produced throughout her career. It is a language of radical intimacy, one which runs counter to what Audre Lorde sees as sexism's attempt to teach women "to either ignore our differences or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces of change" ("The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House" 95).

Anzaldúa shows an awareness of these impulses to "ignore our differences" (Lorde 95) and threw herself into fighting against them through her created community, a community that included writers such as Audre Lorde. The interview collection *Interviews/Entrevistas,* published in 2000, is dedicated by Anzaldúa "para almas afines": *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* is likewise dedicated "para almas afines" and "for everyone working to create / El Mundo Zurdo." El Mundo Zurdo, according to Keating, is "One of Anzaldúa's earliest, least discussed concepts" means "The Lefthand World" and generally "represents relational difference" (Appendix 1: Glossary, 322). It is the world of almas afines, those who exist in

"visionary locations where people from diverse backgrounds with diverse needs and concerns coexist and work together to bring about revolutionary change" (322). Anzaldúa, like Lorde, knows that:

> For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered. It is this real connection, which is so feared by a patriarchal world…Without community, there is no liberation (95).

Her work to build community sprung out of the need to create spaces in which she herself felt heard and welcome, and where she could fulfill that same need for others. Some of the key members with whom she created community were queer/lesbiana Chicana women like herself.

In "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House," Lorde criticizes White feminists for not educating themselves about the differences between White and Black women, stating that this is "key to our movement" and that failure to do so means allowing the oppressors to win (96). Rather than falling for the "old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns," in this case referring firstly to the pressure upon women "to stretch across the gap of male ignorance, and to educate men as to our existence and our needs" (96) and secondly to the new pressure upon women of color to do the same for White women:

> Now we hear that it is the task of black and third world women to educate white women, in the face of tremendous resistance, as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought (96).

Anzaldúa was similarly tired of trying to be heard in White feminist spaces, and this fatigue was what eventually inspired her creation, together with Cherríe Moraga, of their own multiracial feminist space, that is *This Bridge Called My Back.* Lorde's essay came from comments made at the overwhelmingly White Second Sex Conference in October of 1979, at a panel called "The Personal and the Political" ("The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House" 94). Una alma afina, a kindred soul to Anzaldúa, one of her core messages in this text is that "Divide and conquer, in our world, must become define and empower" and that the method for attaining this goal lies in how "our personal visions help lay the groundwork for political action" (96). The only way for feminism to win the day – and current political climes now, in 2020, should show us that this remains true – is through

acknowledging difference, through understanding that issues such as racism and homophobia "are real conditions of all our lives" (97). This has to be done, even if it means reaching "down into that deep place of knowledge" and touching "that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there" (97). It is only with this internal introspection that "the personal as political can begin to illuminate all of our choices" (97).

The personal as political, to Anzaldúa, means a commitment to baring her innermost thoughts – she did not hide away from the terror and loathing that Lorde writes about, adopting instead a writing style that helped her explore and accept her shadow self. One of the most honest ways in which she did so was through giving interviews. Anzaldúa sees interviews as a writing process in their own right. She states: "When I'm speaking it's kind of like I'm writing in process, orally, so that I have to express myself" (Anzaldúa quoted in Keating, "Risking the Personal: an Introduction," 3). Including these as an important part of her writing is part of her radicalism. She was, in many ways, anti-academic – drawn as she was to intellectualism, she struggled with the elitism she experienced within her work in higher education, especially because of "the way higher institutions have treated radical Chicanas" like herself (Pérez, *Radical Chicana Poetics,* 109). In *Radical Chicana Poetics,* Vivancos Pérez writes that:

> The case of Anzaldúa is paradigmatic. Her relationship with academia was marked by sustained attraction and rejection on both ends…her dissertation work was rejected several times for its lack of academicism. Months before her untimely death in 2004, Anzaldúa was informed that she had finally been awarded her PhD" (Vivancos Pérez, *Radical Chicana Poetics,* 109).

Although capable of, and indeed eager to wrestle with complicated, abstract ideas, Anzaldúa chose to write out her theories in a style that would be accessible beyond purely academic circles.

For Anzaldúa, the imperative to express herself is grounded in a need to foster understanding, to focus upon how to embrace differences rather than rejecting them. She commits to making her theories accessible, implying that not only is the personal political for her, but that she recognizes it as such for others and wishes to create a bridge between her own experience of the personal to the personal experiences of others. These others may be what Anzaldúa calls nepantleras. Anzaldúa applied this term to the experience of someone who inhabits the "transitional space of nepantla" – she herself identified, of course, as a nepantlera (*Light in*

the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro 47). Nepantla is "A Nahuatl word meaning "in-between space,"" Keating explains in *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro*, a word that Anzaldúa applied "to develop her post-*Borderlands* theory" (Glossary 245). Nepantleras, a term coined by Anzaldúa, are "threshold people" who are "living within and among multiple worlds" and who "use their transformed perspectives to invent holistic, relational theories" (245). Because of their position in Nepantla, nepantleras have a personal experience that "enable them to reconceive and in other ways transform the various worlds in which they exist" (245). Nepantleras like Anzaldúa exist on the Borderlands or in the "tense balances entremedios" in Nepantla. They may be in this space because they are multicultural or -racial people, or because they are "queer and bisexual people" like Anzaldúa "who must live in both straight and gay worlds" or they may be "rural people living in cities, stuck between the cracks of home and other cultures" (Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro,* 81). They are "not quite at home here but also not quite at home over there" (81). Because of their personal experiences as outsiders, othered. Because of this, they are excellent mediators who feel compelled to "negotiate the cracks between worlds," often as border artists who combine their creativity with political passion as "artista-activista[s]" (Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro,* 82). They understand that "we're all complicit in the existing power structures" (82-83) and seek to "dismantle" the "oppression and dominant power structures," upsetting "our cultures' foundations" and bringing about an epistemological "metamorphosis" (83).

Another set of methods that Anzaldúa makes use of to create that intimate quality in her works are something she calls autohistoria and autohistoria-teoría, which directly translated mean self-story and self-story-theory. These are terms that she coined, with which she claims that she is able to "create a hybrid genre, a new discursive mode" (*Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro* 6). This hybrid genre seeks to connect "experiencias personales con realidades sociales" (personal experiences with social realities), "result[ing] in autohistoria" (6). It is by theorizing about this "activity" that you get autohistoria-teoría (6). Anzaldúa sees this theoretical practice as "a way of inventing and making knowledge, meaning, and identity through self-inscriptions," and believes that with the use of "personal experiences" as the "subject of this study" the writer becomes able to "blur the private/public borders" (6). Autohistoria and autohistoria-teoría are related to autobiography: more than this, they are what Keating describes as "women-of-color interventions into and transformations of

traditional western autobiographical form" (Glossary in *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro* 241).

In Anzaldúa's new discursive mode, she plays around with our understanding of what is personal and what is public. This experimentation is politically grounded, or as Keating frames it, "informed by reflective self-awareness employed in the service of social-justice work" (241). In her introduction to *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa* (hereafter *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds*)*,* Keating describes Anzaldúa's autohistoria-teoría as something naturally lacking in a "comprehensive definition" because "these terms represented her ongoing attempts to enact, describe, and theorize her unique writing style and genres" ("Introduction: Shifting Worlds, Una Entrada" 6). Keating sees Anzaldúa's unique style as "a complex blending of cultural and personal biography with memoir, fiction, history, myth, theory, and other forms of storytelling" (6). Andrea J. Pitts, however, defines several key elements in Anzaldúa's epistemology. In "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's *Autohistoria-teoría* as an Epistemology of Self-Knowledge/Ignorance," she argues that "*autohistoria-teoría* is characterized by several important features: *autohistoria-teoría* is *collaborative, sensuously embodied,* and *productive* of critical self-reflection" (Pitts 357). The collaborative element is of particular relevance to this chapter. Anzaldúa realizes the relational aspect of her writing, for although she "focuses on [her] personal life story" as the autohistorian "she simultaneously tells the life stories of others" (Keating, Glossary in *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro,* 241). Rather than giving in to the pressure that Audre Lorde laid out earlier, the pressure from mainstream feminists on "third world women to educate white women" (96), Anzaldúa defines "the real conditions" (97) of her life and empowers her readers to do the same. Pitts proposes that Anzaldúa "writ[es] about her own experiences in a manner that hails others to critically interrogate their own identities," thereby "develop[ing] important theoretical resources for understanding, self-knowledge…and practices of knowing others" (353). Furthermore, Pitts shows, Anzaldúa's autohistoria-teoría highlights that "self-knowledge practices, like all knowledge practices, are social and relational" (353). Anzaldúa's new discursive style seeks, as I see it, to build community through personal storytelling. Autohistorians is able to "create interwoven individual and collective identities" through this method of storytelling, allowing them to "reread and rewrite existing cultural stories (Keating, Glossary in *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro* 242). I believe that Anzaldúa, like Silko, sees storytelling as the primary activist battleground for change.

To understand the circumstances which created Anzaldúa the autohistorian, the nepantlera, the woman seeking comadres and almas afines for her artista-activista pursuits of a better world, I look to Anzaldúa's formative years. As shown earlier, Silko's renditions of growing up at Laguna are very much colored by her admiration for the Laguna culture in which she was raised. Anzaldúa's experiences growing up contrast strongly with the near-idyllic recollections that dominate Silko's writing: "in the old-time Pueblo world, identity was acknowledged to be always in a flux" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 66-7). For example, when Silko was growing up, a young man from a neighboring village "wore nail polish and women's blouses and permed his hair," to which people in the community "paid little attention" and "No one ever made fun of him" (67). The phrase "women's work" was one Silko heard for the first time when she left Laguna for college (66). Anzaldúa, however, had a much more restrictive upbringing. She writes about feelings of alienation and shame because of her desire to pursue artistic and intellectual development, and because of her queer identity: the "feelings of being an outsider, an alien, generated in me the impetus to explain things to myself and others" (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* 187). Being a woman in Anzaldúa's household entailed doing "women's work," tasks that Anzaldúa protested against from an early age:

> Even as a child I would not obey. I was "lazy." Instead of ironing my younger brothers' shirts or cleaning the cupboards, I would pass many hours studying, reading, painting, writing. (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 38).

This *rebeldía* (rebellion) against the gender roles of her household had a high cost in Anzaldúa's life. She writes that "Every bit of self-faith I'd painstakingly gathered took a beating daily" (38). Nevertheless, the rebellious nature of Anzaldúa, seen already at this early stage of her life, was the driving force behind her creativity. Her refusal to conform to societal expectations, although it meant that "Nothing in my culture approved of me" (38), is part of what makes her writing so captivating for readers, academic and otherwise. In *Borderlands/La Frontera,* Anzaldúa feels "perfectly free to rebel and to rail against my culture" (43). This leads to a reckoning with all her cultures – "What I want is an accounting with all three cultures – white, Mexican, Indian" (44), for "if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture, *una cultura mestiza*" (44). Her primary mode of rebellion is through her writing. She is willing to criticize her Mexican American culture, despite her love for this part of her heritage and fear that her criticisms might hurt people she loves.

Another act of rebellion was her refusal to write exclusively in English. In addition to English, Anzaldúa integrates multiple languages into her writing, mainly Mexican Spanish, Nahuatl (an Indigenous Mexican language), but also many more. Her linguistic pluralism, which functions as a written reproduction of her Chicana identity, connects her to other Chicanas doing similar work. "Chicano Spanish sprang out of Chicanos' need to identify ourselves as a distinct people," she writes in her *Borderlands/La Frontera* titled "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (77). Amongst the many languages Anzaldúa, she lists a few:

1. Standard English
2. Working class and slang English
3. Standard Spanish
4. Standard Mexican Spanish
5. North Mexican Spanish dialect
6. Chicano Spanish (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California have regional variations)
7. *Pachuco* (called *caló*) (77).

Anzaldúa calls the latter two the part of "My "home" tongues" which feel "closest to my heart," and "Tex-Mex, or Spanglish" what "comes most naturally to me" (77). The seventh language of this list is one she calls "a secret language" and "a language of rebellion" against "both Standard Spanish and Standard English" (77). It is the language of her peers, one that not only outsiders are unable to understand, but even "Adults of the culture…cannot understand it" (77). To fully comprehend all of Anzaldúa's work, it might be necessary to have exactly the same generational and cultural background as she does. I don't see her goal of integrating all of her languages, including *Pachuco*, as motivated by a desire to exclude readers. At the same time, she clearly isn't motivated to be fully transparent to any reader. Instead, what she aims and succeeds at accomplishing is, in my opinion, to provide the reader with an unmistakable sense of who she is and where she comes from. In short, if a reader wishes to be immersed in an innately multicultural and -racial, female, queer experience, Anzaldúa is the author to seek out. Her multilingual and self-revelatory style further serves the purpose of illustrating to monolingual U.S. Americans, who may not have encountered texts such as these before, what it may be like to experience language barriers, as many U.S. citizens such as Anzaldúa have extensive personal experience with. Reading Anzaldúa can in this way serve an educational purpose for White people in particular. Not only because her works exemplify a Chicana experience which refuses to conform to Anglo-American expectations, but also by challenging White readers to move beyond their comfort zones. Anzaldúa's writing does not cater to the mainstream White reader, not in the least because of

the multilingual form it takes. Instead, it challenges the reader to come to it, to accept that they will not be able to understand everything, to embrace the intimate tone that makes it nonetheless accessible to read, and finally, to imagine themselves into the mélange of mestiza life.

Anzaldúa's works always have a through-line of politics. Her passion for fighting injustice with her activista-artista writing began, just as they did for Silko, with experiences she had in while she was young. For the first years of her life, Gloria Anzaldúa's family were migrant workers, traveling to different ranches in South Texas, often living on one ranch with three or four other families (Anzaldúa, "Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa, by Karin Ikas" in *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 267). During that time Anzaldúa was witness to injustices that would later become repeating concerns in her works, spanning from historical/political essays such as "The Homeland, Aztlán / El otro México" (23-35): to her poems "Mar de repollos" ("A Sea of Cabbages") and "We Call Them Greasers"; to her children's book *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado* (*Borderlands/La Frontera,* 23-35; 152-3; 156-7). When Gloria was eleven, the family settled near the small town of Hargill in Texas. Her father Urbano continued to do seasonal work without the rest of the family so that the children would have better educational opportunities. In "sus plumas el viento" ("its feathers the wind"), a poem that she dedicated to her mother Amalia, Anzaldúa imagines her mother's back-breaking life in the fields and earnest hopes for her children (*Borderlands/La Frontera,* 138-141.) She writes "*Ay m'ijos, ojalá que hallen trabajo*" ("Oh my children, I hope you find work" [Anzaldúa's translation]) "in air-conditioned offices" (*Borderlands/La Frontera,* 138-141.) Amalia's hopes for her children, recounted in this autobiographical poem, indicates something of what it must have cost Anzaldúa to pursue her intellectual and artistic ambitions. Anzaldúa relates that she would commute to school but come home to work in the fields: "Although I stopped being a migrant laborer while I was still very young, I continued working in the fields of my home valley until I earned my B.A. from Pan American University in 1969" ("Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa, by Karin Ikas" in *Borderlands/La Frontera* 267). Although Anzaldúa in her writing creates her "own feminist architecture" (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 44) she doesn't reject her culture entirely. She was deeply concerned with the conditions of Mexican and Mexican American migrant workers. Her own experiences in this field at such an early age led to enduring feelings of empathy for and alliance with her fellow Mexican and Mexican American migrant workers:

> So I had learned the hardships of working in the fields and of being a migrant laborer, myself, and that experience formed me. I have a very deep respect for all the migrant laborers, the so-called *campesinos*" ("Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa, by Karin Ikas" 267).

Anzaldúa valued this phase in her life, quickly benefiting from the perspectives it gave her as she entered the early stages of her educational career, which began with teaching high schoolers and even traveling with migrant families to teach "The experience also reinforced me in my work with migrant kids" (267). She became what she calls a "liaison between the migrant camps and the regular school teachers" and eventually took the position of "migrant director of the full state of Indiana" before she returned to Texas to pursue her Ph.D. (267-8). In those days, Anzaldúa claims, "I wasn't as political and feminist in the beginning," however, "I was always rebellious and political when it came to the cultural stuff" (268). As mentioned before, Anzaldúa's relationship to academia was always contentious, and as she moved more deeply into academic life in the seventies and eighties, combined with her simultaneous involvement with Chican@, feminist, and queer politics, Anzaldúa started to reach into her memories of the injustices she had witnessed earlier in life: "I was much more extreme, political and angry than I was before" (268).

Part Two: Leslie Marmon Silko and Laguna-inspired Innovations

When compared to her Anglo and Mexican cultures, it is not difficult to understand why Silko values her Laguna Pueblo culture above the others. Her father had an aggressive style of discipline that included physical punishment in the form of whippings, which ran counter to Laguna parenting philosophy (*The Turquoise Ledge* 60). His mother, who was of Mexican, German, and English heritage as well as "one quarter Texas Indian," was the person from whom Silko's father had learned these behaviors. "[S]omeone on Grandma Lillie's side of the family had begun the practice of whipping young children": these were "terrible whippings" which were "administered" by Silko's paternal grandfather "Stagner the German" (30). The "legacy" of the whippings went back multiple generations, earning Grandma Lillie's grandmother Josephine Romero the nickname "Grandma Whip" (32). In Silko's memoir *The Turquoise Ledge,* published in 2010, she reveals recent shocking insights into her paternal family's history. The family was composed of Lunas and Romeros, two founding families of Los Lunas, New Mexico. There, Silko's Grandma Lillie had been "mothered" by a Navajo woman named Juana who "had been captured by Mexican slave-

catchers when she was just a little girl," a woman whom Silko had always been led to believe "came to work for the family when she was an adult" (32). Notably, Silko says, this would have been "after Lincoln's [emancipation] proclamation" that freed U.S. slaves (32).

In 2006, when Silko wanted to write about Juana and asked her father about her background. With shame hidden by an "off-handed manner," Leland Howard Marmon told her about the "Four young Navajo sisters" who were "captured by the Spanish Slave hunters" during the 1823 military campaign against the Navajo's (35):

> The four captives came into the possession of Grandma Whip's brother…If Grandma Whip was quick to take off the leather belt to whip her small grandchildren, imagine what [her brother] was like…After he whipped the young Navajo girls, what other perversions? Was he one of those slave dealers who participated in the drunken public rapes of young Indian girls at the slave markets? His abuse was unbearable, so the three older girls poisoned their torturer (35).

Retaliation was immediate – the Los Lunas family was prominent, and fear of copycats was high. One sister was spared a hanging: Juana, "the only remaining Navajo child," four or five years old, was "inherited" to be Grandma Whip's "servant" – code for slave (35). In this way, "Poor Juana came to be part of the strange and cruel family" of Grandma Whip and her Mexican English husband (35). Silko identifies most strongly with the culture that she experiences as the most nurturing and whose cultural values she has the most respect for. This opinion has only strengthened with time as Silko has uncovered more about her non-Laguna ancestors. Unlike Anzaldúa, Silko at least has a culture to turn to which she can admire without reservation.

Silko remembers her great grandma Helen "vividly" – she was the generation between Leland Howard's mother Lillie and his great-grandmother "Grandma Whip" (32). Grandma Helen "hardly seemed to notice us great grandchildren," writes Silko (32). Grandma Helen was "so different from our beloved great grandma A'mooh" (32). The beautiful and sweet Maria Anaya, or "Grandma A'mooh," spoke Laguna fluently, and early in Silko's life they would speak Laguna with each other. The main languages Silko grew up with were English and Laguna, as well as some Spanish. Laguna is primarily an oral language and is more commonly referred to by linguists as the Keres Pueblo language or just Keres due to the closeness of "the languages spoken by the Pueblo people of Acoma, Cochiti, Laguna, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Santo Domingo, and Zia Pueblos" ("Keres Language and the Keres Indian Pueblos"). Keres is also spelled as Keresan, Queresan, and Queres. In Silko's writing the

language is simply referred to as Laguna. Although not fluent in Laguna, she integrates Laguna phrases and vocabulary into her works across the fiction-non-fiction spectrum, often in an instructive manner: "she called "*Deeni!* Upstairs!"/*because the entrance* [in traditional Laguna Pueblo homes] *was generally from the top*" (*Storyteller,* 37). Silko's decision to integrate Laguna into her writing in this way expands upon the notion formulated in the previous chapter; that her authorial choices communicate her personal/political stance of caring deeply about her Laguna identity and wishing to share her culture with her readers. Silko conveys Laguna wit and understanding with statements such as "[Although everyone] minded everyone else's business they did so quietly, without interference, because to interfere would be bad manners and could cause open confrontation" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 90).

Silko grew up with English as the main language spoken at home and was only immersed in Laguna for a shorter part of her childhood. Just as Anzaldúa's access to English was barricaded in certain ways because of colonial racism, the same was true for Silko, in the form of both school and internalized racism in her family. Silko's early introduction to the language was as stated through Grandma A'mooh, one of the major figures in her upbringing. Grandma A'mooh and other older Laguna community members were active participants in the way Silko and her sisters grew up, nurturing their curiosity, teaching them about Laguna ways, and not differentiating between them and the other full-blooded Laguna children:

> I was fortunate to be reared by my great-grandmother and others of her generation. They always took an interest in us children and they were always delighted to answer our questions and to tell us stories of the old days. Although there were few children of mixed ancestry in those days, the old folks did not seem to notice (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 104).

Before Silko could attain lasting fluency in Laguna through her conversations with Grandma A'mooh, she started kindergarten at the local Bureau of Indian Affairs school where the first thing the teachers taught them was that "talking Indian was forbidden" (*The Turquoise Ledge* 41). It was there that Silko encountered what Anzaldúa, in her essay "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," calls the "linguistic terrorism" of U.S. American colonialist education (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 80). Silko shares that "I learned about racism firsthand when I started school. We were punished if we spoke the Laguna language once we crossed onto school grounds" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 105).

Grandma A'mooh also stopped speaking Laguna with her. In *The Turquoise Ledge,* Silko wonders: "Why did she stop talking Indian to me?" (43). A "great believer in education," Silko is certain that Grandma A'mooh "must have been concerned about us children speaking English at school" but that "there must have been something else at work too" (43). This something else was probably, in Silko's mind, the Anglo influence of Christianity, because Grandma A'mooh was "a staunch convert to the Presbyterian Church" (43). While Aunt Susie and Aunt Alice would happily tell Silko and her sisters traditional Laguna stories, and while her great grandmother did tell them "a great deal of local history and family history," she "would not tell us the hummah-hah stories" (43). This was because "hummah-hah stories reveal the Laguna spiritual outlook toward animals, plants and spirit beings, one which was at odds with the Presbyterian view of the world" (43). Although Grandma A'mooh's reasons were surely to do "what was best for us grandchildren," the loss of her Laguna language, what should have been a birthright, haunts Silko to this day (44). "Over the years, whenever I tried to learn a language, all the ghosts of the past reappeared," she writes, recounting her anxiety-inducing attempts at learning simple Diné phrases when she taught at Diné College (44). Poignantly, she finishes the chapter with: "How could I learn Diné when I never learned Laguna?" (44).

Silko describes the reasons for this loss of language with sadness for her own sake but empathy for the position her great-grandmother was in. "Silko recognizes how language figures in the conquest and alienation of peoples via arbitrary boundaries," and her understanding of this motivates her to use "her writings to warn of allowing language variation to disunite and foster suspicion and dissension" (Snodgrass 191). Both Silko and Anzaldúa experienced linguistic policing by dominant Anglo culture, both directly and through internalized racism. Grandma Lillie never learned to "talk Indian" after marrying Silko's great-grandfather Hank from the Laguna Pueblo. If she had, muses Silko, it "would have caused a stir among the wealthier Los Lunas relatives who fancied themselves too good to associate with Indians":

> After all, our Los Lunas relations had been merchants of everything at one time, including Indian slaves (*The Turquoise Ledge* 44).

She shows an awareness of the parallels between other colonized peoples and the relationship this creates in "post"-colonial times: "There are a great many parallels between Pueblo

experiences and those of African and Caribbean peoples – one is that we have all had the conqueror's language imposed on us" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 57).

> Coming from one of 20 pueblos in the Southwest that speak six or seven disparate languages, the author esteems language as an introit to multiculturalism - the acceptance of all beings into the family of Mother Earth (Snodgrass 190).

Silko's view of the oral tradition of language versus the written is innately Laguna, because as Brewster E. Fitz points out, Silko partakes in "a tradition in which the oral and the written are already linguistically and culturally irrevocably interwoven" (qtd. in Snodgrass 190). This is perhaps due to the storytelling efforts of Aunts Susie and Alice, as well as her father, who "started taking me to the ka'tsina dances" – traditional Laguna dances – "at the village plaza before I could walk" (*The Turquoise Ledge* 44). Due to these influences, Grandma A'mooh's efforts at shielding her great-granddaughters from "Laguna religion and ceremonies" was "to no avail" (44). To be sure, American literature would be poorer if Silko had lost her culture entirely, because it would have lost wonderful books such as *Ceremony* and *Storyteller*.

In contrast to Anzaldúa, Silko's creativity and intellectual pursuits were strongly encouraged by her family, both close and extended. Silko describes that her mother "always helped us with our homework and encouraged us at whatever we wanted to try" (*The Turquoise Ledge* 60). Grandma A'mooh, Aunt Susie, and Aunt Alice, the women who "spent the most time answering" Silko's questions and telling her stories "were also women who pored over books on their kitchen tables after their families were fed" (28). Silko credits their pride "to be women of the book as well as women of the spoken word" to the hardships at the Indian boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, a boarding school that her Grandpa Hank also went to and suffered at (28). These women, Silko reasons, had "obtained their book knowledge the hardest, loneliest way: in long years of exile" (28). Silko's experience of being surrounded and supported by an intellectual and artistic family – her father was a skilled photographer who always told Silko that she should be a writer (28) – may go a way towards explaining why the source of Silko's creativity is, so often, Laguna. Silko creates her own distinct style through her attempts at emulating Laguna oral storytelling in her writing. She likens "Pueblo expression" to "a spider's web":

> with many little threads radiating from the center crisscrossing one another. As with the web, the structure emerges as it is made, and you must simply listen and trust, as

> the Pueblo people do, that meaning will be made (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* 49).

To fully appreciate Silko's writing, I recommend reading multiple of her works, because some of the most interesting insights come through comprehending her pieces intertextually. The synthesis of this idea is most apparent in *Storyteller.* Silko's most multi-generic work to date, *Storyteller* is a collection of images, poems, photographs taken by her father, autobiographical writing, short stories, and more. Some of the texts are a blend of genres, for example the autobiographical poems "It was a long time before" and "This is the way Aunt Susie told the story," the latter of which also includes educational asides about Laguna culture and language. Though some of *Storyteller*'s content, in particular the short stories, can function well as standalone texts, reading the collection in full is, as the author herself points out, necessary for Silko's "structure [to emerge] as it is made" (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* 49). Silko experiments with how to approximate Laguna Pueblo oral storytelling, which she describes in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* to be a highly deliberate and time-consuming process. Desiring to make her texts accessible to a wider range of readers, and aware that the discrete written form cannot perfectly replicate oral storytelling, what Silko accomplishes instead is a wonderful blend of both.

Mary Ellen Snodgrass, in her comprehensive *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Literary Companion,* pinpoints Silko utilization of oral storytelling in the written medium as a representation of her desire to "[validate] the transcoding and transmigration of one body of native lore to others in a cross pollination" (191). Silko conveys the beauty of Laguna through her artistic representation of its culture. One form this takes is integration of Laguna words and their meaning into her storytelling. The following call and response quote conveys to me the slow, quiet beauty of Laguna storytelling:

> *The Laguna people*
> *Always begin their stories*
> *with "humma-hah":*
> *that means "long ago."*
> *And the ones who are listening say "aaaa-eh"* (*Storyteller* 36).

Reading Silko's works adds to this call and response description a feeling that there is a certain rhythm of understanding within the Laguna community. The interferences of outside colonialist, racist, and sexist forces that Silko describes threaten to interrupt this harmony.

What happens when the call starts diminishing or even stops coming? When Laguna language is lost to a Laguna person, is her Laguna culture lost as well? Silko's response to these concerns is to use her art as a continuation of the call and response. Despite dominant Anglo society's attempts to quash her Laguna Indian language, she takes what she has and weaves it into her writing, lending it a longevity not only for herself but for her readers as well. Silko explains her integration of Laguna oral traditions and language as part of the old Laguna way, where adaptation is the key to survival. Through writing, Silko connects to her culture and writes herself into it. Despite the loss of most of her Laguna language Silko finds a way to engage with it which is different, but deeply meaningful to her.

Although the Laguna Pueblo is so evidently important to Silko, she lived in Alaska for a time while writing her debut novel, and later moved to Tucson, in time settling at a Tucson ranch bordering the Sonoran Desert. Separated from the daily life of Laguna while writing *Ceremony*, Silko found ways to cope through writing. In her preface to *Ceremony,* Silko writes about her difficulties being away from Laguna landscape and climate and adjusting to the Alaskan climate: "The change in climate had a profound effect on me; I spent all of June, July, and August fighting off the terrible lethargy of a depression" (xii). Writing the novel had a therapeutic effect on Silko:

> Once I started writing the novel, the depression lifted…the novel was my refuge, my magic vehicle back to the Southwest land of sandstone mesas, blue sky, and sun…I remade the place in words; I was no longer on a dark rainy island thousands of miles away. I was home, from time immemorial, as the old ones liked to say to us children long ago (xv).

Her writing had a ceremonial function; it helped her reconnect to the land she was missing. Because she was also "homesick" for "the people and the storytelling," Silko "incorporated into the novel [an] old-time story," which she sees as an indulgence because the old-time stories "evoked a feeling of comfort I remembered from my childhood at Laguna" (xv). Silko was "conscious of constructing the novel out of many different kinds of narratives or stories to celebrate storytelling with the spoken as well as the written word" (xv). With her writing, she is able to bring Laguna with her wherever she goes, not just the landscape, but the people, and even the deeper spiritual power that Silko draws on with her art:

> As I neared the end of the novel, I knew what I had to write; all that remained was to do it. I remember typing that last word, "Sunrise," and feeling great relief and happiness that the novel and "the ceremony" were finished (xvii).

In her essay "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective," Silko asks readers "to approach language from the Pueblo perspective, one that embraces the whole of creation and the whole of history and time" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 49). Anzaldúa emphasizes the specificity of language, bringing her multiple ones, including what she calls the secret language *Pachuco* to the fore. Silko, instead, argues that the specific language used is not as important as what one does with it. Mary Ellen Snodgrass postulates that with Silko's use of language "she is writing for people who have been "othered" like herself; in doing so, she, like Anzaldúa, seeks to create an "antidote to "othering"" (*Leslie Marmon Silko: A Literary Companion* 191). Silko applies the Pueblo theory of language in praxis by exploring holistic and non-linear ways of thinking about time, history, and the nature of truth. What she presents in the essay "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective" is an epistemology that contrasts with Western chronological meaning-making – history and time in Laguna are a spiderweb, non-linear, and therefore, *story* is the best medium for truth. In *Storyteller* we see an example of this idea in praxis as Silko "interweaves text and photographs in the service of self-narration" and "emphasizes interpenetration of past and present" (Wong, *Picturing Identity: Contemporary American Autobiography in Image and Text,* 59).

Like Anzaldúa, Silko can be quite critical of academia. In *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Literary Companion,* Mary Ellen Snodgrass notes how Silko in her letters with poet James Wright "remarks on the fastidious sneers of the English Institute at Harvard University at the thought of native versions of English" 190). Snodgrass sees Silko's knowledge of the inventive and diverse nature of Pre-Columbian languages as the reason behind her "exuberance" for her "constant winnowing of words and terms to explain human thoughts and needs" (190).

> Silko recognizes that there is no standard language, no single lexicon that translates human attitudes and principles. In *The Turquoise Ledge* (2010), she demonstrates her willingness to explore petroglyphs and other forms of communication dating into prehistory. She retreats into two Nahuatl dictionaries in hopes of inspiration from the unknown" (Snodgrass 190).

Silko has a holistic approach to language that is based on what she titles a "Pueblo theory of language" in which what language is spoken is not nearly as important as "what the speaker is trying to say" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 49). Silko argues that language itself "*is* story" (50). Her essay points to a broader Native American theory of narratology:

"this emphasis on the story itself stems, I believe, from a view of narrative particular to the Pueblo and other Native American peoples" (50). This demonstrates Silko's own attitude to language in her stories. Again, as in the case of her use of the Yellow Woman figure, her treatise on language and literature is reflective of her desire to find a place for herself as someone always a bit on the outside – it is not her looks or her blood or her language proficiency that defines her, but what actions she takes with what she has access to. "[We] are all part of a whole" writes Silko, and "we do not differentiate or fragment stories and experiences" (50). By linking the Pueblo theory of language to the Pueblo Creation story, in which Tse'itsi'nako (Thought Woman) "thought all things" into being, Silko shows us that a Pueblo understanding of language is rooted in an essential view of all things being united (50). Summarizing, Silko states that with this origin story "we know who we are," namely the "Laguna people" (50).

Storyteller's story-poem "Cottonwood: Part One," seen already in Chapter One, is a prime example of Silko's skill in interweaving oral styles into her texts: "(But you see, he *was* the Sun, / he was only pretending to be / a human being)" (61). The narrator's use of asides, marked here in parenthesis, invoke the comments a Laguna storyteller might make in a physical setting as they tell their tale directly to an audience. Silko's story-poem allows the readers to consider the difference between what is written and read and what is experienced in a social storytelling setting. It calls up the living elements of a storyteller's performative mode of communication and creates a call and response within the text. Silko's multicultural identity exists in-between cultures and ethnicities; she is neither White American nor Brown Laguna, and this becomes mirrored in the text's liminality as it hovers between story and poem, between written and oral form. For her writing to represent her identity, these dualities must coexist.

Another innovative way in which Silko shakes up writing conventions is in her use of images as part of her texts. They do not always illustrate something that is spoken – rather, they are texts themselves, which must be read together with the words she writes in order to follow her stories. Silko's father was a photographer, and *Storyteller* features many of his portraits. Silko is also drawn to photography as a medium, and in *Sacred Water* the pictures she includes are even more prominent than in *Storyteller*. Photographs in Silko's works often represent the Laguna way of understanding things by locating them within the known landscape – in *Storyteller* and *Sacred Water*, the photos are often of Laguna landmarks that

locals would know are connected with certain stories. By including the photographs, Silko eases the reader closer towards an oral storytelling experience.

> I am intrigued with photographs [...] that form a part of the field of vision for the reading of the text and thereby become part of the reader's experience of the text. The influence of the accompanying photographic images on the text is almost subliminal (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* 169).

In *Picturing Identity: Contemporary American Autobiography in Image and Text* (hereafter *Picturing Identity*)*,* Hertha Wong calls *Storyteller* a "hybrid autobiography," pointing out Silko's juxtaposition of genres within the text as well as her use of photographs (63). Wong shows how through *Storyteller,* Silko:

> emphasizes the community, the land (which is inclusive of all time), and the stories as central aspects of individual subject formation, illustrating that individual identity is actually always collective identity (Wong, 63).

Hertha Wong's analysis also observes Silko's familiarity "with the history of ethnographic and photographic documentation" (63). She connects Silko's careful use of photographs with an awareness that photography has been on are of "domination that has served as a powerful tool of colonization" (63). Wong registers Silko's awareness "of the problems of objectification, commodification, [and] detachment…of some photographic practices" and implies that the author has found ways to subvert these issues (63).

Silko counteracts the colonialist history of ethnography and detached commodification of Indigenous peoples by personalizing the image/text relationships and interconnecting with other threads in her storytelling web. *Storyteller* opens with "There is a tall Hopi basket with a single figure," in which Silko immediately localizes the pictures that will be shown throughout the book as stemming from "the tall Hopi basket" of her childhood home (1). On the following page is a family portrait of her great-grandparents Robert G. Marmon and Maria Anaya Marmon holding "my grandpa Hank" (2). "Photographs have always had a special significance/with the people of my family and the people of Laguna," writes Silko. Taking a picture of someone is "a serious business" that is not to be trusted to "just anyone" (1). Silko shares that it wasn't until she started writing *Storyteller* that she realized the special relationship between the photographs in the woven Hopi basket and the stories (1). Framing *Storyteller* in this way from the first page allows readers an understanding of the history of the images themselves; Silko asserts that each photo has an oral story attached to it, and that this relationship is reciprocal because "many of the stories can be traced in the photographs"

(1). The photographs are not simply playing a decorative – or illustrative – role as they accompany the texts in the collection. Looking at them, the reader can imagine the stories that may have been brought out from the Hopi basket with each individual picture – sometimes Silko shares an accompanying story, but often she refrains from doing so, allowing the pictures instead to speak for themselves.

Silko's use of photographs can also be seen as a method for destabilizing Western constructs of time. "In her photo-text autobiographies," Hertha Wong states, referring to *Sacred Water* and *Storyteller*, "Silko moves back and forth between Western linear time and Pueblo cyclical time and emphasizes the coexistence of past and future in the present moment" (Wong, 59). While it may be tempting for the reader to assume that the texts we read in the collection are the same stories that have been told to Silko as a child, the author disrupts this assumption through, as Wong puts it, "freefloating" pictures, that is, leaving the photographs uncaptioned and unexplained.

> "I am interested in images that obscure rather than reveal; I am intrigued with photographs that don't tell you what you are supposed to notice, that don't illustrate the text, that don't serve the text (Silko, "As a child I loved…" in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 169).

In this way, Silko succeeds at creating and "develop[ing] a reciprocal gaze" between *Storyteller* and the reader because they must engage their imagination as they move through the pages of the book (63). Only by observing the whole does the reader catch a glimpse of its deeper meaning.

Cherríe Moraga, Anzaldúa's co-editor from This Bridge Called My Back, said in a recent interview that "[My work has] straddled that line, that feminist line that the personal is political but also the political is highly personal" ("Tragedy and Inspiration: Cherrie Moraga on the LARB Radio Hour"). As Becky Thompson, author of "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," indicates, feminism runs into problems when it relies solely on individual experience:

> If the only issues that feminists deem political are those they have experienced personally, their frame of reference is destined to be narrowly defined by their own lived experience (347).

Thompson and other critics show how multiracial feminism developed alongside mainstream second wave feminism, influencing it with its intersectional politics, and ultimately

broadening feminism's scope for future generations ("Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism;" see also Crenshaw "Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later"). Anzaldúa is credited as one of the generators of the multiracial feminist movement alongside authors such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty and her "critique of "imperialist feminism"" as well as Laguna Indian author and critic Paula Gunn Allen with her ""red roots of white feminism"" (Thompson 337). By looking at examples of Silko and Anzaldúa's authorial innovations, connecting them to their cultural roots and childhood encounters with racism and sexism, and commenting on the political significance of their authorial choices, we see how colonialism, racism and misogyny are at work in their lives. The autobiographical/personal and theoretical aspects of Anzaldúa and Silko's writing outlines the real and personal cost these issues have. Moraga and Thompson's quotes neatly frame the political, self-disclosing style of both authors, pointing towards a deeper purpose in their writing than simply establishing their own identities. Anzaldúa and Silko demonstrate how the political *is* personal to marginalized peoples such as themselves.

Chapter Three
Utopian Vision, Dystopian Fear: Writing for a Better Future

"There will be no peace in the Americas until there is justice for the earth and her children" (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 137 and 151)

In this third and final chapter, I consider Silko and Anzaldúa's reflections upon the present and predictions for the future. Both authors express hope and fear in regard to the future of the human race, focusing both upon the injustices perpetrated by our own species upon ourselves, and the injustices committed by humans towards the earth. I view the authors in connection to a transnational Indigenously-located ecopolitics. Building on the first chapter, which was about multiracial and -cultural female identity-formation, and the second chapter, in which I looked at personal/political significance in Silko and Anzaldúa's authorial innovations, in this third chapter I look at their concerns for the future of Earth. All three chapters show how the authors' multicultural heritages and mixed-race female (and queer) identities inform their politics, be they feminist, environmentalist, indigenist, or other – all of which are, of course, interconnected. In this chapter I will look at their visions for a better future, a future to which they dedicated so much of their creative, activist efforts.

Part One: Leslie Marmon Silko's Revolución

"We are the army to retake tribal land. Our army is only one of many all over the earth quietly preparing…We wait. We simply wait for the earth's natural forces already set loose, the exploding, fierce energy of all the dead slaves and dead ancestors haunting the Americas…We must protect Mother Earth from destruction"
(Silko, *Almanac of the Dead,* 518)

In Leslie Marmon Silko and Gloria Anzaldúa, we have two visionary artists capable of vividly invoking imagery in the minds of their readers:

> Great thick whorled clouds fold over themselves bubbling up rising like silvery yucca soap suds. Veils of white rain soften and smear into pastel blues of towering sky dragons and cloud bears fishing in a fast river of wind (Silko, *The Turquoise Ledge,* 282).

> 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 (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 44).

The quotes above illustrate this ability, Silko with soft meditation, Anzaldúa with visceral carnality. For Anzaldúa, visualization, whether figuratively on the page or literally through her visual arts, is an essential part of her artistic process:

> In creating artistic works, the artist's creative process brings to the page/canvas/wood the unconscious process of the imagination….By awakening and activating the imagining process in the viewer, la artista empowers us. La imaginación gives us choices and options from which to free ourselves from las jaulas that our cultures lock us in (La artista=the artist: la imaginación=the imagination; las jaulas=the cages, Anzaldúa quoted in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 217.)

As noted in the previous chapter, both authors broke with literary conventions in their works, blending genres and inventing new ones. One way in which they refused to be restrained by generic convention was through their use of images in their works – not simply their literary imagery, but actual visual arts. Silko's use of her own art in the poetry collection *Laguna Woman* and of what Hertha Wong calls "photo-text narratives in *Sacred Water* and *Storyteller* (62) were key to the success and reach of these works. In Tucson, Arizona, from 1986 to 1987, Silko painted a mural and inscribed it with the words:

> La gente tiene hambre. La gente tiene frío.
> Los ricos han robado la tierra. Los ricos han robado la libertad.
> La gente exige justicia. De otra manera, Revolución.
> (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 149).

The mural refers to how the people are going hungry and cold, and how the rich have stolen their land and liberty. Surrounding the words are painted nature motifs and symbols including thunderclouds and a new moon; beneath them is the central motif of the mural – a giant snake. "When I painted the snake, I knew what it said. He had the skulls on his stomach and the reflection in his eyes got a skull too" (Silko, "The Past Is Right Here and Now: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," 99). The figures painted represent fertility, life, death, hope, and finally, the promise and threat of the final words in the mural, which translate as follows: "The people demand justice. Or else, Revolution." Silko painted this piece while pushing herself "in desperation" to finish her novel *Almanac of the Dead,* her "763-page magnum opus" ten years in the making (Ramírez 135). In the 1992 interview with Ray Gonzales quoted above, Silko further states: "I realize now that [the snake] was a unifier. It always was a unifying figure or image" ("The Past Is Right Here and Now" 99). Its unifying message, though, was not aimed at the "asshole power figures" in Tucson (99), the local police who "killed people and beat them up" (100), nor at the people responsible for the "torture" and "hate" directed at "anything from Mexico or anything brown or indigenous"

(102). Instead, Silko focused on the citizens of the "very mixed" neighborhood in which she was living, the "Hispanic, African-American, and poor students, poor Whites" (99). Silko was struggling "to find something that I could relate to and still connect with that was positive" (100). The creation of this mural was part of her writing process, as well as reflective of her broader methodology of exposing the evils of the world while also finding the hope and strength to go on. For her, such strength comes from "the people," that is from grassroots communities and Indigenous communities and other likeminded groups fighting for a better world. Despite how Silko often in later years has referred to the isolating process of being a novelist, she can also be seen as creating connections and community through her art, be it written, visual, or other. With her painting of Stone Avenue Mural – and I will show how this is repeated across other works – Silko enacts a ceremony to demand justice for the people – or else, as she threatens, they will rise up, and there will be a revolution.

Stone Avenue Mural represents the synthesis of Silko's politics. Fueled by her despair and anger at the injustices she was witness to in Tucson, Silko took comfort from her deep faith in Laguna and other Native American prophesies that promise better for the future:

> All the Native American tribes have prophecies that predicted the invasion by the Europeans; but the prophecies also say that all things European will gradually disappear from the Americas (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 137).

By incorporating this belief into her own art, Silko takes on the role of prophet herself. She does so in speeches, visual arts, novels, and in her other written works, making them the platform for her prophecies. Silko communicates warnings alongside hope for the future. It is the instances when her hopes are expressed in a deterministic fashion that I interpret as prophetic: by wording them in this way, I see Silko as sometimes performing ceremonies to usher forth a new and better era. In a review of Silko's epic novel *Almanac of the Dead,* Elizabeth Tallent, writing for The New York Times, points to the death-defying character, Yaqui woman Yoeme, who believed that "power resides within certain stories . . . and with each retelling a slight but permanent shift took place" (Silko qtd. in "Storytelling with a Vengeance"). At another point of her novel, Silko's character Angelita builds on Marxism to inspire revolution: "The words of the stories filled rooms with an immense energy that aroused the living with fierce passion and determination for justice" (520). In the 2006 preface to *Ceremony*, Silko implies that for her, the act of writing the novel was a healing ceremony:

> "The title of the novel, *Ceremony,* refers to the healing ceremonies based on the ancient stories of the Diné and Pueblo people" (xv).

As the reader will recall from Chapter Two, this statement can be viewed together with Silko's recollection of "feeling great relief and happiness that…"the ceremony" [was] finished" at the end of writing her novel (*Ceremony* xvii). Seen in view of her "Pueblo theory of language," also introduced in Chapter Two, the above quotes illustrate Silko's belief that words are a part of creation and that we should learn "to approach language from the Pueblo perspective, one that embraces the whole of creation and the whole of history and time" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 49). When she applies language as ceremony, Silko is not only healing herself but placing what power she has into healing the world:

> The only cure
> I know
> is a good ceremony (*Ceremony* 3).

Silko's utopian vision for the future starts with a grassroots, Indigenous-led global uprising, one in which humanity is allowed to survive because it is finally evolving. One example of this vision is in *Almanac of the Dead.* Elizabeth Tallent writes that the novel "follows a far-flung conspiracy of displaced tribal people to retake North America toward the millennium's end" ("Storytelling With a Vengeance"). The character of Yoeme gives her daughters an "ancient, fragmentary almanac" that she and others believe has a "living power within it, a power that would bring all the tribal people of the Americas together to retake the land" (Tallent). From interviews to fiction, Silko consistently shows little to no faith in official systems of power, instead believing in change from the bottom up. I see her compulsion to paint the "unifying figure" of the 12x36 foot snake in the Stone Avenue Mural as a call to action "The Past Is Right Here and Now" 99. This utopian prediction is paired with the devolvement of borders and a return to tribalism, the rise of (updated) social systems such as communism and regionalism and, not in the least, with humans treating the earth with the care and respect dictated by Laguna (and other Indigenous) traditions. In *Howling for Justice: New Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead,* a collection of essays, Jessica Maucione lays out some of the core aspects of the novel:

> The place-based radical political terrain of Silko's *Almanac* denaturalises what capitalism has rendered "absolute" and links interconnected local and global indigenous land reclamation movements to nature and natural processes. For some, this is dangerous; for others, Almanac engenders hope of healing and renewal ("Competing Mythologies of Inevitability and Silko's Almanac," 162).

Elizabeth Tallent agrees: “While the novel stops short of the ultimate crisis, the signs point one way, implacably,” she writes, indicating that the inevitable ending is the success of the Indigenous global uprising. Silko’s dystopian warnings for the future also include denouncements of capitalism and other social systems which she sees as oppressive and dangerous. In her dystopian future, humans have pushed the earth and each other too far:

> Across the West, uranium mine wastes and contamination from underground nuclear tests in Nevada ruin the dwindling supplies of fresh water. Chemical pollutants and heavy metals from abandoned mines leak mercury and lead into aquifers and rivers (Silko *Sacred Water* 76).

The consequence in Silko’s dystopian vision of the future is that the human race is slowly but inevitably destroyed to regain balance on Earth. The majority of her works arch, instead, towards the hopeful utopian future where humans regain balance in time to survive. On a subjective level, Silko is implying that she would prefer the future in which the survival of humans is assured. Despite this, she presents both her utopian and dystopian visions as objectively equal in value. Perhaps this attitude is similar to the Laguna view that everything that is important will be remembered. Just as Laguna traditionalists believe that “what is forgotten is what is no longer meaningful,” so Silko infers that if humans cannot make themselves worthy of survival, they will disappear and be forgotten (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 134).

In “The Past Is Right Here and Now,” Silko writes about the significance of snakes in her Stone Avenue Mural: “I was consciously able to figure out that the snakes are messengers from the Underworld where the Mother Creator is. The Stone Snake is a messenger” (99), she writes, explaining further that in “Native American prophecies about the gradual disappearance of Europeans [the] snake messengers were really important” (101). Snakes appear in one form or another in many of Silko’s works, often as messengers from Mother Earth. One example of this is the yellow snake that appears to Tayo in *Ceremony*. As mentioned in Chapter One, the color yellow signifies women – note also that in Laguna, the creator is a woman, Ts’its’tsi’nako, Thought-Woman, whose every thought becomes reality and who “named things and/as she named them/they appeared” (*Ceremony* 1). Therefore the yellow snake’s symbolism is connected to womanhood and creation both. In this scene, towards the end of the novel, Tayo has finally been healed of his depression and made whole again by the Yellow Woman “who had filled the hollow spaces with new dreams” (204).

Tayo sees the snake after this healing, when he has fully awakened to the wholeness of his own self.

> Up ahead, a snake stopped and raised its head alertly; the tongue slid in and out and then stopped when it located him. It was a light yellow snake, covered with bright copper spots, like the wild flowers pulled loose and traveling. It crossed the wash and wound its way up the slope, disappearing into the grass (205).

Tayo is grateful for the snake's visit, recognizing that he has been honored. He kneels and fills the "delicate imprints" that the snake has left with "yellow pollen," a small but important act of ceremony (205). The message he receives is about the vibrancy of the world: "As far as he could see, in all directions, the world was alive" (205). Intuitively "he could feel the motion pushing out of the damp earth into the sunshine" and realizes the snake's connection to the underworld "the yellow spotted snake the first to emerge," and he thinks of how the snake is "carrying this message on his back to the people" (205). The message to Tayo and to the people is a reminder to follow the path of the Laguna holistic worldview, showing respect and gratitude to the earth for sustaining human life, instead of abusing this privilege and taking it for granted.

Snakes have significance in Silko's autobiographical writing as well. From 1953 to 1982, a uranium site was in operation in the Laguna Pueblo Reservation, near the village of Paguate, one of the seven villages on the reservation ("Jackpile-Paguate Uranium Mine | Anderson Engineering"; Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* 126). It is, according to Talia Quandelacy, "the world's largest open uranium mine":

> Uranium mines proved essential to the successful creation of the atomic bomb and nuclear reactors. They were also key components of the health problems and the environmental effects that uranium radiation inflicted on the Laguna Pueblo and its people ("Nuclear Racism: Uranium Mining on the Laguna and Navajo Reservations" 6).

Silko tells the story about how suddenly, on a spring morning in 1980, a "giant stone snake formation was found…by two employees of the Jackpile uranium mine" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit,* 126). Although people "from Paguate village and other Laguna Pueblo People" know and have "a name and a story for every oddly-shaped boulder within two hundred miles," nobody had ever seen this stone snake before. There "was a great deal of excitement among Pueblo religious people" because in the stories there is mention of "a giant snake who is a messenger for the Mother Creator" (126). When uranium deposits had been

discovered near Paguate in the 1940s, Laguna Pueblo elders had fought against opening the mine and

> declared the earth was the sacred mother of all living things, and blasting her wide open to reach deposits of uranium ore was an act almost beyond imagination (127).

The pressure from the U.S. government due to "the advent of the Cold War" was impossible to withstand, says Silko, and later, "changes within the communities themselves" as younger generations went to wars overseas meant that "increasing numbers of Laguna men, and later, women, began working the mine" (128). This in spite of the "dire results" predicted by "Cranky old traditionalists" at this "desecration of the earth" (128).

Terrible consequences would indeed come to haunt the Laguna Pueblo in coming years in the form of a teenage suicide pact and murders (130-131), all "especially painful and confusing" in a society that places "emphasis on balance and harmony" and values "non-aggression" above all else – as the Laguna Pueblo elders would say, "none can survive unless all survive" (130). This "extends to all living things, even plants and insects" (130). Silko connects these acts of self-harm and violence to others to the opening of the open uranium mine, inferring that this is a natural consequence of the disruption of balance between humans and earth because "destruction of any part of the earth does immediate harm to all living beings" (131). Silko names the giant stone snake "Ma ah shra true ee, the sacred messenger" and indicates that site where she appears is "a sacred spot" (134). She reminisces about visiting the snake the year she appeared and how "offerings of spirit food" of "had been sprinkled over the snake's head" (132). Silko sees this sacred messenger as part of "what is true" which "will resist" in spite of "everything" – nothing can stop her appearance, not even a uranium mine (134). In her essay "Fifth World: The Return of Ma ah shra true ee, the Giant Serpent," Silko transmits the messenger's warning:

> "She's angry with us,"
> the people said.
> "Maybe because of that
> Ck'o'yo magic
> we were fooling with.
> We better send someone
> to ask our forgiveness" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 134).

Ck'o'yo magic is from traditional stories, and signifies bad or evil magic performed by Native Americans who have followed the path of the destroyers. Carol Mitchell, in

"“Ceremony” as Ritual," points out the way Silko combines traditional and contemporary stories in *Ceremony*, implying their allegorical meaning:

> with the loss of the rituals the people have turned to the white man's “magic” just as the War brothers were blinded by the magic of the Ck'o'yo medicine man. Again Silko describes a contemporary scene that is parallel to the traditional story almost immediately after the traditional story (30).

In *Ceremony* and other of Silko's fiction, as well as in Silko's essay quoted above, this type of Ck'o'yo magic is used as a metaphor to show the dangerous consequences of losing the old rituals and giving in to the negative influences found within, as well as those brought to Laguna by White people. I see both *Ceremony* and "Fifth World: The Return of Ma ah shra true ee, the Giant Serpent" as having overarching prophetic messages that, if not heeded, spell out the eventual failure of the human race.

Silko's faith in the futures she foresees does not make her serene about human cruelty towards each other and towards the earth. A passionate environmentalist, she expresses frustration that "it has to take environmental catastrophe to reveal to us why we need the rainforest," alongside hope that "perhaps we might spare ourselves some tragedy by listening to the message of sand and stone in the form of a giant snake" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 132). She suggests that "comprehension" might come from more "subtle indications" than the "destruction of the ozone layer" such as the miraculous appearance of a stone snake (132). To her, the snake's purpose is also to "remind us that violence in the Americas – against ourselves and against one another" can run "only as deep" as "the deepest shafts with which humankind has pierced the earth" (132). This ecoindigenist sentiment is a comfort of sorts: even the destructive actions of humans have limitations.

> human beings desecrate only themselves; the Mother Earth is invioable [sic]. Whatever may become of us human beings, the Earth will bloom with hyacinth purple and the white blossoms of the datura (Silko *Sacred Water* 76).

On the penultimate page of Silko's self-published book *Sacred Water*, she writes about waste and contamination from uranium mines and underground nuclear tests, the spread of chemical pollutants and heavy metals, all of which taint water sources (76). Such desecration is all the more serious because:

> The old-time Pueblo people believe that natural springs and fresh-water lakes possess great power. Beneath their surfaces lie entrances to the four worlds below this world (20).

In *Sacred Water,* Silko tells us that the sacred snake messenger, Ma'sh'ra'tru'ee, once lived in the beautiful lake west of Laguna that is the Pueblo's namesake (Laguna means lake in Spanish). This lake is called Kawaik or Ka'waik, meaning beautiful: "the beautiful lake place, *Kawaik*" (*Storyteller* 9). Because the lake was connected to the four worlds below this one – in Laguna belief gods and other beings live on other worlds than ours – the "gentle snake" was able to travel "down below" and visit "Mother Creator" (*Sacred Water* 23), bearing "the prayers of the people" to her (24). Thanks to Ma'sh'ra'tru'ee, the people had rain and food and plenty. Then, as we have seen in other Silko stories, human fallacy cost the people the benevolent gifts of the Mother Creator – the lake dried up and the gentle giant was never seen again – at least until 1980. Silko shows us that human survival is tenuous, and the goodwill of Earth and other worlds must be nurtured. Angelita in *Almanac of the Dead* gives us a glimpse of the bounty that such nurturing may grace humans with:

> When they had taken back all the lands of the indigenous people of the Americas, there would be plenty of space, plenty of pasture and farmland and water for everyone who promised to respect all beings and do no harm (518).

Sacred Water was published in 1993: the books were limited in number and handmade by Silko herself. The creative freedom self-publishing gave her allows readers to see Silko at her purest, without editorial interference – though her other avant-garde works evidence her ability to stay true to her visions despite commercial pressures. Like *Storyteller, Sacred Water* interweaves images and text; here the pictures are all taken by Silko herself, and are all nature motifs in grainy black-and-white. The final page of the book, which follows depressive page about toxic human waste, features a fertile cluster of cholla cacti. In the image there are two tall and stately cholla with a grouping of smaller cholla at their feet – following the passage on the previous page, this hardy native of the Sonora Desert in Tucson strikes the reader as the embodiment of Mother Earth's inviolability. Cholla protects its water more fiercely than almost anything on earth. This sentiment of Silko's at the end of *Sacred Water* is echoed elsewhere, but it is also contradicted by the times in other works where she despairs over the harm that humans cause to the earth. In this way she swings back and forth between stoic optimism at the power of nature to balance itself and angry grief at the power of human destruction.

In her most recent book, *The Turquoise Ledge: a memoir,"* Silko writes about the removal of boulders and sand in her rural neighborhood in the Sonoran Desert – land that is supposedly

protected by the government from such interference – "with a great deal more damage done to the arroyo by the man and his machine" (202). The reader may recall from Chapter One that an arroyo is a dry desert riverbed: during the heavy biannual rains of the Sonoran desert arroyos flood, providing an important source of water in the desert. The damage to the ecosystem that she describes in *The Turquoise Ledge,* then, includes the loss of "precious water" because of the removal of the sandbars which capture it, and includes the deaths of the "small creatures in underground nests – the lizards, snakes, tortoises and tiny owls" who were "crushed under the wheels of the machine" (202). Silko's memoir mostly consists of meditations on her experiences of nature in her walks in the Tucson Sonoran Desert, ruminating on her findings of turquoise.

Another theme is her spiritual connection to what she names Star Beings, and the ways in which they directed her life during the time she was writing her memoir (315). These elements of the memoir move slowly, at a meditative pace; however, her fiery sense of right and wrong jolts energy into the memoir when she writes about the damage her neighbor and others like him do to the endangered environment they live in. *The Turquoise Ledge* mostly reads like a journal spanning one year of Silko's life, with much of the movement of the piece communicated in her near-daily walks through the desert. Silko's anger and sadness at the destruction caused by man and machine to the arroyo is evident in her observation of "a reddish basalt boulder broken open in the middle of the arroyo as if he planned to take it next" (295). "All the good energy I'd felt on the trail suddenly vanished. I felt sick" (295). This anger is coupled with an awareness of the slowness with which Mother Earth is able to react: "Here is the catch with karma, or curses and witchcraft: they often don't take effect fast enough. Karma may not even things until your next life" (295). In this instance, Silko was compelled into action by the Star Beings who "reminded me it might take years before the boulders crushed the man on his machine: if I wanted to speed things up I must do something" (308). After being "directed by the Star Beings" she painted "small white crosses" (309), so that "All humans were put on notice" that "violators would pay terrible consequences" if they "disturbed the boulders" (308). At the end of the memoir she regales with humor how the "machine man" (318) apparently interpreted the symbols she had painted as "gang graffiti," only once more disturbing the environment by moving a final boulder to "block the arroyo from further visits from gang members" (318). After that the arroyo was left alone, the "machine tracks were smoothed by the rain," and "A number of the small white crosses already looked old and faded" (318-319), receding "into the basalt and

quartzite with every raindrop" (319). Describing this peaceful resolution and the "Gentle warm rains" that have "graced us" (319) since the "sudden violence" (319) of the incidents of the previous year, Silko ends her memoir on a note of gratitude to the balancing forces of nature. To Silko, the results of her actions has a higher meaning. She writes that "the emblem of the Star Beings penetrated the psyches of the newcomers" – the "machine man" and other white people in the area – "who got the message: indigenous forces are present to oppose you" (317).

Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* was first published in 1991. Elizabeth Tallent writes that the novel "burns at an apocalyptic pitch – passionate indictment, defiant augury, bravura storytelling." It is Silko's most overtly political work. Such angry politics coming from a woman of color sparked many responses that were "notable for their venom" (Irr qtd. in Tillett 6):

> many immediate critical responses were negative…Such responses reacted to, among other things, the violent politics of the text, its depiction of alternative subaltern histories and successful uprisings of the dispossessed, and its publication on the eve of the quincentennial celebrations of Columbus and New World Colonization" (Tillett 6).

Amongst these negative critiques were Sven Birkerts' "[claim] that Silko's "enactment of wish-fulfilment scenarios" was indicative of a serious "common sense deficit"" (qtd. in Tillett 6). From my point of view, the wish-fulfilment scenarios are neither lacking in common sense nor as limited in scope as "wish-fulfilment": instead, they are indicative of a serious political will and hope for an anti-colonial, tribally-led Indigenous future.

Some critics saw the novel more positively. U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, "a member of the Mvskoke Nation and belonging to Oce Vpofv" (Hickory Ground) (Joy Harjo "About"), "applauded *Almanac* as a warning to America in the twenty-first century" (Tillett 6); Linda Niemann "identified the text as "a radical, stunning manifesto"" (Niemann quoted in Tillett). Evidence of warnings and manifestoes in the novel are manifold. Earlier I quoted Silko's statement that all the Native American tribes have predicted both the European invasion of the Americas and how they will, with time, disappear again. These prophecies are in *Almanac of the Dead* as well: the Indigenous character Tacho recalls arguments about "the eventual disappearance of the white man":

> Old prophets were adamant; the disappearance would not be caused by military action, necessarily, or by military action alone. The white man would someday disappear all by himself. The disappearance had already begun at the spiritual level" (511).

With the White man's disappearance, all European ideas and beliefs will "wither and drop away," thinks Tacho to himself – so will the "fools" who pretend to be White men, i.e. those who follow White ways (511). It is a process that will "take place over hundreds of years and would include massive human migrations from continent to continent" (511). Five years later, in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, Silko elaborates on these predictions, this time in her essay "Fifth World: The Return of Ma ah shra true ee, the Giant Serpent." For one, the disappearance of the Europeans may not be solely in the form of death or migration out of the Americas – it may through assimilation, Silko explains: "the longer Europeans or others live on these continents, the more they will become part of the Americas" (124):

> The prophecies foretelling the arrival of the Europeans…do not say the European people themselves will disappear, only their customs. The old people say this has already begun to happen, and it is a spiritual process that no armies will be able to stop (125).

Silko's predictions, then, may not come fully into fruition until hundreds of years have passed; however, her view that they are already happening is evidence of her faith that these changes are inexorable. Whether they spell out survival or disaster for the human race is still up for debate.

Part Two: Gloria Anzaldúa's Evolución

"We know what it is to live under the hammer blow of the dominant *norteamericano* culture. But more than we count the blows, we count the days the weeks the years the centuries the eons until the white laws and commerce and customs will rot in the deserts they've created, lie bleached…*nosotros los mexicanos*-Chicanos will walk by the crumbling ashes as we go about our business…possessing a malleability that renders us unbreakable, we, the *mestizas* and *mestizos*, will remain" (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 85-6).

Anzaldúa's politics are unapologetic, despite, or more probably because of the trauma she experienced in her life at the hands of her Mexican American and Anglo American cultures. In her Mexican American family, there was a lot of internalized racism which led to a fear of being perceived as Indigenous:

> "Don't go out in the sun," my mother would tell me when I wanted to play outside. "If you get any darker, they'll mistake you for an Indian" (Anzaldúa, "La Prieta" in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* 38).

The family held an even deeper fear, seldom voiced, of being perceived as having African heritage: "When I was born, Mamagrande Locha inspected my buttocks looking for the dark blotch, the sign of indio, or worse, of mulatto blood" (38). Although her grandmother, of Spanish and German heritage with blonde and blue-eyed looks, loved Anzaldúa very much, she also instilled in Anzaldúa a sense of shame for her lack of whiteness. "[Too] bad mi'jita was morena, *muy prieta*": "Too bad" Anzaldúa was Brown-skinned and very dark, Anzaldúa recalls her saying (38).

The quotes above are from Anzaldúa's autohistoria La Prieta. A reminder to the reader: autohistoria was a term Anzaldúa coined and used for "women-of-color interventions into and transformations of traditional western autobiographical forms" (Keating, Appendix 1: Glossary in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* 319). In other words, while related to autobiography, Anzaldúa's autohistorias are a response to the Western autobiographical genre and seek, through "reflective self-awareness," to encompass not only the individual story of the author, but to "simultaneously [tell] the life stories of others," all in the service of social justice work (319). La Prieta is a piece in which Anzaldúa deals with her early experiences with internalized racism. It also delves deeply into some of the traumatizing experiences she had throughout her life: her sense of alienation due to the painful disability she had which caused her to start menstruating at the age of three months; being mugged in 1974; and an excruciating hysterectomy (38-50). La Prieta is one of Anzaldúa's most standout examples of radical self-disclosure, and is beautifully written. As with so much of Anzaldúa's writing, in Prieta she is able to locate her trauma as the root of her inspiration – from the metaphorical menstrual blood of her infancy she draws red ink with which to write out her developing spiritual activism. From the "old ghosts" and "old wounds" of "our own racism, our fear of women and sexuality" (39), Anzaldúa explores what she sees as her life's task and burden: "to be a bridge, to be a fucking crossroads for goddess' sake" (47). She sees herself as a bridge between races, sexualities, academic disciplines, religions, and more. Critical as she is of her own cultures, she asks this question with the goal of inviting self-reflection and open-mindedness from her readers: "Where do we hang the blame for the sickness we see around us – around our own heads or around the throat of "capitalism,"

"socialism," "men," "white culture"?" (47-48). Anzaldúa shares her encounters racist White feminists and other colonizing peoples, but she also illustrates the internalized racism in her own family and the prejudices between minority groups towards each other. She allows that "racism is not just a white phenomenon" and asks of herself and of her readers to "let go of our comfortable old [racist] selves so that the new self can be born" (48).

The wider injustices practiced upon Mexican and Mexican American bodies and minds in her birth country are at the forefront of Anzaldúa's writing. Descriptions of such maltreatments range from her being told to "go back to Mexico where you belong" and being shamed for speaking Spanish, as we saw in the previous chapter (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 75). They extend to her depiction of violence against Mexican migrant workers in the U.S., for example in the poem "We Call Them Greasers," which is told from a White man's perspective as he views the workers in contempt that culminates in rape, murder, and plans to lynch the raped woman's man (156-7). Poems such as this one can be hard to read – not only are the actions brutal and vivid in detail, but because the point of view is full of malice and hatred, it can give the reader a sense of being tainted, complicit. And this is what Anzaldúa wants us to understand – we are all complicit in the dynamics of our society, even if some perpetrators are more extreme than others. For change to be possible, we must all confront our inner racism, our inner prejudices of all kinds. Where Silko can be generalized as being focused on outer political change, Anzaldúa's focus is on inner work as an indispensable foundation for outer change:

> The struggle is inner: 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 (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 109).

Despite her trauma as an individual and the struggles of the peoples she identifies with, such as Chican@s, queer people, Indigenous peoples, migrant workers, and more, Anzaldúa wants to build bridges through her writing even unto the "Anglo in power." She sees the possibility of a better future and believes that this can be achieved through "inner changes," arguing that outer change is impossible without society first doing this internal work. To this end, much of her theory is based upon her own experiences in embracing her trauma and trying to heal what she sees as her fragmented self.

Anzaldúa's most well-known theory of this sort is that of the new mestiza consciousness. As noted previously, she debuted this theory in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* One of the methods of the new mestiza is to break down dualistic thinking and start to heal the split between these dichotomies:

> The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to an end of rape, of violence, of war (*Borderlands/La Frontera,* 102).

Her belief in the power of healing through inner struggle was strong, and even stronger was her vision of a world in which people of different races, genders, sexualities, and more could live side by side in peace. Here lies the true parallel to Silko – their authorships both include repeated expressions of hope for a peaceful, harmonious future, and both have visions of how humanity may achieve these goals. There is a sense in Silko's works mainly, but also in Anzaldúa's, that communicating these ideas again and again through their writing might have an effect beyond influencing readers. It becomes a matter of ritual, of ceremony, and sometimes it becomes a prophecy threatening dystopic or utopic outcomes, depending on our collective actions as human beings.

The last work that was completed before Anzaldúa's death, in her honor and with her blessing, was the anthology *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds: New Perspectives on Gloria Anzaldúa* (hereafter *EntreMundos*). In the Foreword, Chela Sandoval, associate professor of Chicana Studies at University of California at Santa Barbara, explains that "Entremundos is "another way to name the borderlands" that Anzaldúa "thought out loud":

> For Anzaldúa, entremundos is a science fiction world-of-possibility born of privilege, oppression, hope, and horror. Horror and evil always result from the inequities of oppression, Gloria says, but so too do hope and goodness. In Anzaldúa's hands the methodology of the oppressed transformed into a promise, a way to implement a global methodology of emancipation. Anzaldúa was a resolute theorist of hope (xiii).

Balancing a burning idealism with knowledge of the horrors that humans commit against one another, Anzaldúa's entremundos was the continuation of her borderlands theory from *Borderlands/La Frontera.* What Sandoval calls a "methodology of emancipation" is one of

the examples of how Anzaldúa gives instructions for and hope of a better future (xiv). In *EntreMundos*, Anzaldúa creates a "dialectical interchange" between the five sections of her book with which she aims to "comprise an internationally useful methodology for emancipation which has risen out of experiences of oppression" (xiv).

This intrepid hope is palpable as well in Anzaldúa's poem "No se raje, chicanita" translated into English by the author as "Don't Give In, *Chicanita.*" Anzaldúa opens her poem with the words "Don't give in *mi prietita*" (*Borderlands/La Frontera*, 224). Don't give in, my dark one. In this poem she talks to her inner "dark one," her shadow-self, telling her to "tighten your belt, endure," because although the "Gringos" (White people) have "taken our lands," "they will never take that pride / of being *mexicana*-Chicana-*tejana*" (224). Her multicultural roots are "like those of the mesquite" and only grow by "digging underground" to "the soul of *tierra madre*" – that is, to the soul of mother earth, her "origin" (224). In contrast, Anzaldúa writes, think of "when the Gringos are gone - / see how they kill one another" (224). This sentiment, that of predicting the downfall of Western society by its own hand, runs parallel to what we have seen in Silko's writing on the future. Another similarity is that they both see the White man/gringo as responsible for a high amount of social issues, while maintaining sight of the issues that happen within their own communities of people of color as well.

Anzaldúa closes the poem with the following prediction of revolution, calling to mind Silko's own cry of "De otra manera, Revolución." I've included the Spanish original stanza as well as Anzaldúa's own translation. As with many of Anzaldúa's translations, she makes as she goes from Spanish to English. Here, she shifts the order of some of the statements, conceivably for reasons of poetic flow. The English translation stays true to the sentiment she is communicating:

> *Sí, se me hace que en unos cuantos años o siglos*
> *la Raza se levantará, lengua intacta*
> *cargando lo major de todas las culturas.*
> *Esa víbora dormida, la rebeldía, saltará.*
> *Como cuero viejo caerá la esclavitud*
> *de obedecer, de callar, de aceptar.*
> *Como víbora relampagueando nos moveremos, mujercita.*
> *¡Ya verás!*
>
> Yes, in a few years or centuries
> *la Raza* will rise up, tongue intact

> carrying the best of all the cultures.
> That sleeping serpent,
> rebellion-(r)evolution, will spring up.
> Like old skin will fall the slave ways of
> obedience, acceptance, silence.
> Like serpent lightning we'll move, little woman.
> You'll see.
> ("No se raje, chicanita" in *Borderlands/La Frontera,* 223; and "Don't Give In, *Chicanita*" 225)**.**

It is remarkable how similar Anzaldúa and Silko's utopian visions of the future are in this moment. The people, be they Indigenous or *la Raza* (the race), will rise up, they will shed their old skins of subaltern submission to colonialist forces and move "like serpent lightning." Both authors share the long view of history – even if change takes centuries, they say, it is coming. In Anzaldúa's vision the "tongue" is "intact" – this tongue is the same as the titular "Wild tongue" of *Borderlands/La Frontera's* fifth chapter: it represents mestiza language, mestiza voice. I understand this as Anzaldúa's call to overcome a tradition of silence, that is the historical ongoing repression of people based on gender, sexual orientation, skin color, and more.

"No se raje, chicanita"/"Don't Give In, *Chicanita*" spells out Anzaldúa's hope for a future in which the voices of all peoples are represented, freed from oppression and fully able to take form in their diverse richness. *La Raza,* carrying the best of all the cultures, also brings to mind Silko's hybridity and Anzaldúa's *mestizaje*, explored in Chapter One. The future, they both indicate, is hybrid, mixed, taking only the best from all cultures, those traits that are worth remembering, and carrying them into the better future of the human race. The poem is dedicated in both its Spanish and English iterations to "Missy Anzaldúa" (pages 222 and 224), and the poetic voice is directed at la chicanita, little woman, whom I read as Anzaldúa's inner child, her Prieta, her little dark one. By including this poem in both its forms, Spanish and English, Anzaldúa is making the poem accessible to a wider spectrum of readers which includes Spanish-language readers, an intention that harkens back to her belief that her role in life is to be a bridge for others.

AnaLouise Keating, in the Introduction to the Third Edition of *Borderlands/La Frontera,* writes that "Interconnectivity is key and serves as [Anzaldúa's] theoretical framework for social change," which Keating reads as essentially holistic (248). With her "theories like mestiza consciousness, la facultad, the new mestiza, the Borderlands, and nepantla," most of

which I've discussed in this thesis, Keating argues that "Anzaldúa develops and enacts her holistic worldview" (248). I believe that we can see in Anzaldúa's theories a hope for, a roadmap to, a sustainable future for humankind. By drawing on this "radical interconnectivity," Keating states, Anzaldúa "develops new strategies for survival, resistance, and transformation" (248). Anzaldúa "painfully/joyfully transforms her inner struggles into images and words" with which she is able to "[create] points of connection with diverse readers" (248). In the struggle towards social justice, I, like Keating, believe that Anzaldúa's authorial activism "inspires us to change" (248).

One of the repeating themes in this thesis has been the differing ways in which Silko and Anzaldúa represent their cultures in their works. Throughout my analysis I view Silko as presenting her traditional Laguna Pueblo ways of knowing in overwhelmingly positive terms, in contrast to Anzaldúa's reflections on her Chicana and other cultures, which I perceive as more critical. These two attitudes reflect a divide in the authors' political activist strategies: by idealizing Laguna traditional culture, Silko is provides readers with an already-existing cultural model for how to live a more ethically responsible and spiritually harmonious life. On the other hand, while Silko's highly political non-fiction writing does idealize Laguna culture, her fiction showcases more nuance. Examples of this include her deft portrayals of internalized racism and sexism in *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead*. In her memoir *The Turquoise Ledge,* Silko's brief detours into family history show an emerging awareness and openness about the complicated history of her own family. This writing is some of the most engaging in Silko's memoir, and some critics, me included, hope to see more of this kind of writing from her in future. Conversely, Anzaldúa's critiques of all her cultures emphasizes that all people are flawed. In this way she destabilizes traditional Western colonial ideologies which have historically positioned Western (Anglo and Spanish) and Non-Western (Mexican and Indigenous Mexican) cultures in dualistic opposition. From this critical stance, Anzaldúa seeks rather to create her own cultural models, ones made up of the best fragments of her own cultures and even some borrowed from others.

Conclusion: Where do we go from here?

In comparatively analyzing the works of Anzaldúa and Silko I have shown how colonialism has shaped both authors' writing, and how they apply their authorships as a form of anti-colonial activism. Although the authors' struggles have not always been the same, nor have they always made use of the same strategies, I have found evidence of what Ashis Nandy describes as a shared culture of colonization and what Chandra Talpade Mohanty calls "the common context" of "third world women," locating their works within the multiracial feminist movement (Nandy 2; Mohanty qtd. in Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism,* 159). In this thesis, I have looked at how not only is the personal political, but the political is also highly personal, not least for women of color in the Western-dominated post-colonial U.S.A. Thus, the authors' acts of reclaiming multiracial and multicultural female figures in their writing functions both to showcase the injustices enacted upon colonized peoples in their cultures, and as a method of understanding, and further, celebrating, their own fragmented identities. In this way, Silko and Anzaldúa's works can be read as political projects. This is the context in which I have examined the authors' macro explorations of the future, arguing that they make use of utopian and dystopian themes to fight for a brighter tomorrow for the human race.

In *This Bridge Called My* Back's Catching Fire: Preface to the Fourth Edition, published in 2015, co-editor Cherríe Moraga reflects upon the changes she has seen since the anthology's original publication nearly thirty-five years previously:

> I was twenty-seven years old when Gloria Anzaldúa and I entered upon the project of *This Bridge Called My Back.* I am now sixty-two. As I age, I watch the divide between generations widen with time and technology (xix).

I have been very fortunate in that I was raised by a mother who took women's studies and a family that is deeply invested in the rights of people of color. Growing up, Maya Angelou, Elaine Showalter, Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, Beverly Hungry Wolf, Alice Walker, Isabel Allende, Gloria Steinem, Louise Erdrich, and many, many other influential women, many of whom were women of color, were represented on my mother's bookshelves. As I entered my university years, I had access to this diverse feminist library at home, and this, paired with conversations with my family, shaped the direction that my studies took. When

twenty-first century feminists come into their political engagement, will they be privileged to know the words of Anzaldúa, Lorde, hooks, Silko? Moraga continues:

> I watch how desperately we need political memory, so that we are not always imagining ourselves the ever-inventors of our revolution; so that we are humbled by the valiant efforts of our foremothers; and so, with humility and a firm foothold in history, we can enter upon an informed and re-envisioned strategy for social/political change in decades ahead (Catching Fire: Preface to the Fourth Edition xix).

With the current new surge of engagement in the Black Lives Matter Movement in the U.S.A. and across the world, there is a hope that anti-colonial activism will reach more people than ever before. Colonial statues are being beheaded, toppled, set on fire, and tossed into rivers and lakes (IndianCountryToday.com "Columbus Is Torn down, Set on Fire, Tossed in the Lake"). There is hope that we are seeing a resurgence in peoples' commitment to political change – especially White people, who too often have let our privilege blind us to the need for change. Silko and Anzaldúa write to fight for this change. They do so without shying from the atrocities that have been and that continue to be.

> In the face of world-wide misogynist atrocities and intimate violences, we cannot escape recurring self-doubts about the actual power of our acts of resistance against global patriarchy. I admit I have long days of doubt. Perhaps it's my age, the knowledge of the lengthening list of sisters/compañeras who've passed, and the sense of my own diminishing years. As so many others have said before me, *I don't imagine I will live to see the revolution.* I smile at the arrogance of this; that we imagine that our work begins and ends with us (Moraga, Catching Fire: Preface to the Fourth Edition, xxiii).

We mustn't forget those who have gone before. Silko shows the importance of this with her endorsement of the Laguna old-time peoples' wisdom; Gloria Anzaldúa advocates this too, even in death, through the work that continues to be done in her name and honor, such as the work of The Gloria E. Anzaldua Foundation ("The Gloria E. Anzaldua Foundation"). Neither author believes in adhering to old ways without adapting them to fit current needs; rather, with their writing they encourage readers to look at the ideas developed by others, such as Karl Marx, and "see if there's anything we can use" (Silko, "Listening to the Spirits: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," 187). In 2003, only seven months before she died, Anzaldúa wrote that "[I] abhor academic censorship of any kind," encouraging "any of you estudiantes" (students) to "please feel free to unravel [my]" concepts, because: "once they go out into the world they cease to "belong" to me" (Anzaldúa, "Disability & Identity" in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader,* 300).

I, like Moraga, am worried about the loss of political memory. There is comfort in Silko's recollection of what the old-time people in Laguna believed: "They said that what is important to our children and our grandchildren will be remembered" (*Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 134), and in both authors' predictions of global uprisings. Current events – the ways in which people have supported each other through the COVID19 crisis, and the massive global demonstrations in support of the Black Lives Matter movement – make me wonder whether we are already seeing what Silko and Anzaldúa imagined. As with everything, uprisings are complex and often followed by dangerous backlash, and we can only hope that word by word, book by book, we move closer to the best version of our global humanity.

In Siobhan Senier's essay "Decolonizing the Archive: Digitizing Native Literature with Students and Tribal Communities," published in *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities,* she takes the political standpoint that "sustainability requires a commitment to anticolonialism" and "unsettling" the hierarchical and "appropriative practices that have structured academic-indigenous relations." She is able to "derive some hope" from "collaborative anticolonial digital projects" that prioritize "human-environmental" relations, working towards what she calls "the sustainability of our future's past." In the final chapter of this thesis, I looked at Indigenously-oriented and environmentally conscious visions in Silko and Anzaldúa's works. Senier, who works with "the sustainable humanities," highlights the relationship between sustainable practices in pedagogical practice and in the human race's "ecological resilience." She claims that "literature scholars nowadays" understand that "literature is the place where human beings imagine worlds otherwise." Authors such as Anzaldúa and Silko embody this ability, imagining our own world into ecological harmony. Senier identifies Indigenous authors as favored by their connection to older cultures:

> In indigenous literature, communities with the benefit of very long-term existence in place have described worlds otherwise. Sustainable pedagogy, at the very least, means teaching our students to listen and training them to help protect and promote those worlds and visions.

Authors such as Silko and Anzaldúa have much to teach current and future generations. However, they do not exist within a vacuum. Paraphrasing Cherríe Moraga, it is of utmost importance to realize that we have to do more than simply imagining "that our work begins and ends with" the few "alternative" authors like Anzaldúa and Silko that are accepted into mainstream literature (Moraga xxiii). One of the joys of reading the works of these authors

lies in realizing their intertextual relationships they have to each other and to so many others – names that immediately come to mind are Anzaldúa's colleagues and friends Chela Sandoval, Cherríe Moraga, and AnaLouise Keating, as well as Laguna critic and author Paula Gunn Allen and Silko's friends, poets Mei-mei Berssenbrugge and James Wright, to name a few. Silko and Anzaldúa exist in an intertextual web of literatures that range from mainstream White authors to literary colleagues to as-of-yet little known authorial voices.

Reading Anzaldúa and Silko's works should not be a limited nor a limiting experience. Anzaldúa used her anthologies as a platform for coalition work, at first building alliances between women of color, and later including a wider range of diversity, because by then, as she saw it, that was the more pressing issue. Silko uses her platform as a leading figure of the Native American Literary Renaissance to uplift other Indigenous and multiracial literary voices. Most citizens of the world have access to shared cultures of colonization, but many of us do not know to look beyond the colonialist canon, thereby limiting the scope of our own understanding. Anzaldúa and Silko's works, written from their position as mixed-race women living in the borderlands, contribute to our wider understanding of the contexts in which we live as colonizers and colonized.

Collectively, I hope my thesis may help raise awareness of the complex ways in which late 20th and early 21st century colonialism can affect multicultural (and in Anzaldúa's case, queer) women. My hypothesis is that examining the shared culture of colonialism between the authors provides new insights into the nature of modern-day colonialism in the U.S.A. I believe that through their art, Gloria Anzaldúa and Leslie Marmon Silko showcase a politics of resistance, a politics which in turn has inspired readers across the globe to take up their causes.

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Recommended Reading

The following bibliography contains works which have been in some way influential to my own writing, most of which are not quoted directly in the thesis.. These are texts that I recommend to readers curious about the topic of this thesis who wish for additional resources than what can be found in the Works Cited section. I do want to make it clear that there are many texts which I strongly recommend in the Works Cited section as well! Not in the least the works of Anzaldúa and Silko – of which I've added a few here in case readers are looking for a place to start. Note also that in the early stages of this thesis project I was educating myself about Indigenous research methodologies, theories, and more; for this reason there are a high amount of such works in this section.

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