

## ALMANAC OF THE DEAD: THE DREAM OF THE FIFTH WORLD IN THE BORDERLANDS

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Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* narrates the continuing saga of Old World-New World contact as the prophecies encoded in an ancient Yaqui Almanac come to fruition as the marginalized and dispossessed of the Americas dream the birthing of a fifth world in the borderlands. It is not the dream of the ancient mariner seeking to map the *orbis terrarum*; it is not the dream of the rich merchant eager to discover the quickest route to the Indies; it is not the vision of the conquistador eager to subdue resisting natives and plunder the Seven Cities of Cibola; and it is not the greed of the adventurer looking west as he conquers and tames the frontier in search of El Dorado. The dream of the fifth world in *Almanac* is contestatory, its impulse is revenge, and its game plan is the reclamation of stolen land.<sup>1</sup> The dream is a "vivid enactment of the long prophesied collapse of European domination and the simultaneous resurgence of the Native American peoples of much of the continent" (Birkerts 39).

The dream of the fifth world hinges on this central question—how can we negate and overturn the legacy of colonialism and its stultifying effects and contemporary manifestations in the Americas?<sup>2</sup> In this article I argue that we cannot fully appreciate the novel's engagement with this question unless we situate it in the transborder social and cultural economy of the US Southwest and read it as a border tale, as a narrative that registers the warp and weft of border crossings. This article addresses three things: first, it recontextualizes the ways in which writers and critics have conceptualized border phenomena in order to reconfigure the Southwest as a region frayed with multiple borders; second, it discusses how the novel reorients us to the myriad forms of border crossings in the borderlands<sup>3</sup> by focusing on the various narratives of the capture of the Indian "bandit" Geronimo, not so much to affirm the truth of any one narrative but to juxtapose

alternate versions of history to contest officially sanctioned history; and finally, it aims to show that by foregrounding the formation of a transborder Yaqui subjectivity, the novel effectively contests attempts to conceptualize border phenomena, primarily in terms of Mexican-American experience.

## BORDER CROSSINGS/BORDER STUDIES

Over the last two decades in North America, the trope of the border or border crossings has gained enormous critical currency in public and academic discourse to conceptualize contemporary attitudes toward culture, history, ethnography, and literature, among other things, and border studies has emerged as a legitimate field of study, having a recognizable canon of writers and texts and a panoply of organizational categories and interpretive frameworks. While geographically the US Southwest circumscribes the materiality of the field of border studies, sociologically the tendency has been to view the experience of displacement and relocation of Mexicans in the Southwest as paradigmatic of border societies. This is why several writers and critics including José David Saldívar, Ramón Saldívar, Gloria Anzaldúa, Norma Alarcón, Sonia Saldívar-Hull, and Teresa McKenna situate border studies in Mexican and Chicano/a historiography. To Anzaldúa, *la frontera* signals “the coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference [which] causes *un choque*, a cultural collision” (78). A study of border culture, notes José David Saldívar, “puts forth a model for a new kind of US cultural studies, one that challenges the homogeneity of US nationalism and popular culture.” It embodies a “synthesis of articulated development from dissident folklore and ethnography; feminism, literary, critical-legal, and cultural studies; and more recently gender and sexuality studies” (*Border Matters* ix–xii). Both Anzaldúa and Saldívar, like the other critics mentioned earlier, view the Mexican-American experience as paradigmatic of border phenomena.

But as Scott Michaelsen and David Johnson note, such a tendency amounts to a “policing of the border” based on a system of inclusions and exclusions, and the attempt to identify border cultures as Chicano cultures, they argue, “serves the dream of purity” (18). In a related context, while commenting on how border theorizations may run the risk of reifying existing patterns of marginalization, Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt ask: “to what degree will a focus on race and ethnicity obscure the functioning of other axes of affiliation within and across ethnic boundaries—such as class, economic niche, religion, gender, or sexuality?” (41).<sup>4</sup>

While recognizing the legitimacy of the historical perspective offered by Chicano/a writers and theorists, I take my cue from Michaelson and Johnson and Singh and Schmidt and raise the following questions: Is it theoretically and historically valid to view the borderland phenomenon *solely* through the lens of Mexican-American historiography? Do we only have three major players in this border drama—the Anglos, the Mexicans, and the Mexicans who eventually become Mexican Americans or Chicanos? What about the interaction among the Anglos, the Chinese, the Mexicans, the Chicanos, the blacks, and the numerous Native Indian peoples in the borderlands? How can we account for their presence and how do they shape our understanding of border cultures and societies in the borderlands? In addressing these questions, the following paragraphs argue for a reconfiguring of the borderlands, both geographically and discursively.

## RECONFIGURING THE BORDERLANDS

Anzaldúa's *la conciencia de la mestiza*, which embodies a mode of living in "psychic restlessness" and "states of perplexity" (78) engendered in the meeting of vastly divergent traditions and peoples in the borderlands, while functioning as a powerful trope for contemporary social and cultural formations in the Southwest, is grounded firmly in the archives of a pre-Columbian past. The history of the Cochise, the ancestors of the Aztecs, and the original inhabitants of the Southwest or, more appropriately for the Cochise, Aztlán, is important to Anzaldúa because it is their movement of travel southward in the twelfth century and later their return to the north, *as a different people*, beginning in the sixteenth century, that marks a pivotal historical moment. While the travelers to the south were pureblooded, the ones who traveled back to Aztlán returned as mixed bloods. The fateful encounter between Spain and the Aztec Empire spawned a new race of "hybrid progeny," what Jose Vasconcelos calls *la raza cósmica*, the fifth race (qtd. in Anzaldúa 77). When they returned to the Southwest, they came back to Aztlán, their original homeland, but with fundamentally different visions and perspectives of history, culture, and identity. Focusing on the Cochise and the Aztecs enables Anzaldúa to give Aztlán a material presence while also drawing attention to the cultural and sociological effects of the intermingling of European and Amerindian societies in central Mexico and the southwestern United States. To a large extent, this puts into perspective why Anzaldúa's conceptualization of *la mestiza* hinges so centrally

on the history of the Cochise and the Aztecs. The numerous references to Aztec myths, traditions, gods, and goddesses in her essays and poems underscore the archeological import of her endeavor to trace the contours of the webs of continuities between the past and the present.

Although to critics like Rafael Perez-Torres and Benjamin Alire Sáenz, such attempts to excavate Aztec myth and culture risk the formation of a narrow vision in which historical exigencies and the profound disjunctions they engender are glossed over in order to affirm unbroken ties to the past,<sup>5</sup> it is worth noting that Anzaldúa's focus on Aztlán displaces the Euro-American focus with a North-South perspective, an issue addressed in more detail later in the article. What is of concern is that her eloquent and poetic evocation of *la mestiza* as the central trope of border subjectivity and border crossings situates itself, for the most part and in large measure, in Mexican and Chicano/a experience and historiography. To be sure, she does acknowledge Mexican antipathy toward Indians and seems eager to undercut the internalization of this colonial mindset in Chicano/as, but it would be hard not to notice that Mexico, Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Chicano/as play a more central role in her configuration of *la mestiza* as a border subject. *Almanac* revises, on the level of history and discursive contestation, Anzaldúa's poetics and politics of the borderlands and *la mestiza*. It does so by reinscribing Yaqui history, their experience in the nation of Mexico, and their vexed relationship with Mexicans, as the structural framework within which to envision the final uprising of the dispossessed and marginalized of the Americas. To de-legitimize Anzaldúa's particular narration of border history is not the purpose here; rather, the impulse is to offer some comments on how a focus on Indian presence in the borderlands revises our reliance on Anglo-Mexican and Spanish-Aztec/Mesoamerican paradigms to conceptualize border experience and thus provide another socio-historical interface that foregrounds the multiple axes along which diverse societies and cultures have interacted in the borderlands.

The goal here is to contest the premise that the central tension in the borderlands is Mexican resistance to Anglo hegemony, because this premise evacuates the complex network of social relations that were formed in the borderlands, networks that gave rise to fundamental disjunctions in the formation of a transborder ethnic and racial imaginary. For instance, this includes the Tohono O'odham Nation of Arizona's attempts to secure border crossing rights for tribal members in Mexico to come to the United States for health care; the US Yaquis' concern with the observation of traditional ceremonies that requires

the presence of Mexican Yaquis in the United States; and the Mexican Kickapoo's involvement with the Bracero program of the 1950s and 1960s, which led to their working in the United States as migrant laborers (Luna-Firebaugh 159, 167-68). This is why it is important to study the US Southwest as an American Southwest in which "American Indian and Euro-American cultures have been migrating, most often against each other for a very long time" (Anderson 187), and also as a space in which the "multiple frontiers [that] were occupied by diverse cultural groups at disparate geographical points" were formed in the "culturally fluid contexts of the contact zones" in the borderlands (Lape 3).<sup>6</sup>

If we, following Anderson and Lape, reconfigure the Southwest as Indian country and fluid zones of social and cultural contact, we will be compelled to problematize the War of 1848 as a historical point of reference to theorize border phenomena and configure border history. The principal players in the borderlands are no longer Mexicans and Anglos. Instead, the close and often antagonistic forms of interaction among numerous Indian tribes, and the Mexicans and the Anglos compel us to redraw, in both a material and metaphoric sense, the boundaries that have been erected among them at various points in history. In the context of the Indians of the Southwest, to speak of 1848 would be quite parochial because the United States and Mexico did not deign to consider Native Indian presence in 1848. If the Southwest, in Anderson's view, "stand[s] restlessly and paradoxically as a place where alien, migratory cultures have been encountering each other and competing against each other for a very long time" (3), the nearly 2,000-mile-long border dividing the United States and Mexico becomes not the only border but yet *another* border line of separation among many others. The borderlands, in other words, are literally frayed with multiple, permeable borders—the borders that separate presidios and missions from the temporary dwelling places of the Apaches in Arizona and the Yaqui in Sonora and the small town-like settings of the Pueblos of New Mexico, and the borders that separate Indian reservations and sacred lands from Mexican and American national geographic spaces. What emerges in the borderlands testifies to "a turning of boundaries and limits into the *in-between* spaces through which the meanings of cultural and social authority are negotiated" (Bhabha 4). Border writing and border cultural critiques do not seek teleological and organic forms of social explanation, but strive for the possibility of historical agency in forging a practice of what Guillermo Gomez-Peña calls the "epistemology of multiplicity and a border semiotics" (130). Reconfiguring the borderlands in this way allows us to read *Almanac* as a border tale in ways that we cannot if

we subscribe to the restrictive view of the border theorists mentioned earlier. As Bernie Harder notes, the trope of the border is central to the novel:

The whole novel is concerned with examining the nature of borders and boundaries; state borders, treaty boundaries, and boundaries between white and Native America; between European religion and Native spirituality; between dehumanization and spiritual wisdom... All these borders, and more, such as those defining prisons, reservations, states, and private property, interact with each other; they are *different layers* of the geographical border. (98; emphasis added)

Harder argues that Silko offers a strong critique of oppressive state machineries that seek to impose boundaries on tribal lands, and of the ideology of nationalism, which imposes alien notions of space and time on native peoples. Harder stresses the need to recognize the "alternative views grounded in an older historical reality of the First Nations in North and Central America" (96). These "alternative views" include the affirmation of the "spiritual power of Native Americans ... anyone in harmony with the ancestral spirits" (96). Indeed, Harder goes so far as to give primacy to religious beliefs when he notes that "the relationship to society, territory, and the earth is based on understanding the teachings of the *spirits rather than on control based on human ideas*" (99; emphasis added). But even as Harder critiques the force and power of national borders, he views Indian spirituality as a discursive border marking the separation between indigenous and non-native ideas of human interaction with the natural world. While this border or "difference" may have some validity, it nonetheless runs the risk of lending credence to familiar stereotypes about the "Noble Savage" who, unlike the crass and utilitarian European, lives in some kind of spiritual and instinctual "harmony with the earth" (104). More importantly, however, inter-tribal border conflicts are subsumed within the broader discourse of national border crossings. Thus, Harder is not able to pay attention to the historical realities of cross-racial, cross-cultural, trans-national, and inter-tribal contact in the borderlands. In focusing on New Mexican Apaches and Sonoran Yaquis, this article attempts to tease out the social, political, and cultural transformations and effects of transborder, inter-tribal tensions in the border regions. The goal is to demonstrate that the grounds on which anticolonial and anti-imperial resistance can be fashioned involves a recognition of the myriad and complex ways in which tribal border crossings are impacted by national borders and inter-tribal contact shapes different nationalisms on both sides of the US/Mexico

border, albeit with profoundly different effects on Indian communities in the borderlands. It is in this context that *Almanac* seeks to dismantle the ideological structures that have legitimized the writing and inscribing of colonial history by revising its legalistic, legislative, and nationalistic language and codes. Such an endeavor involves acknowledging the various kinds of conflicts the border represents, a recognition of the *multiple positionings* of those who inhabit the myriad contact zones of the West, and the *negotiation* of the clash of different value systems in the borderlands. To Virginia Bell, *Almanac* "continues to emphasize the regional and global economic networks in which all the characters are caught" (27). Bell's emphasis on the transnational and the local as interlocked sites of struggle dovetails nicely with this article's attempt to read the novel as a border tale. This study of *Almanac* focuses particularly on the transborder movement of Native Indians and Mexicans across the US/Mexico border and the impact of these border crossings on the nature of Apache resistance, the formation of inter-tribal coalitions, and the fashioning of forms of contestation that take into account the multiple and often contradictory positionings of those involved in revolutionary struggles. While situating *Almanac* in this broad framework, the significance of the novel's dramatization of the clash among several different narratives regarding the capture and death of Geronimo, the Apache warrior is discussed. By studying these narratives we see how the history of the Apaches of Arizona is intimately tied to the Yaquis of Sonora south of the border, and the way in which a recognition of the animosity between Mexicans and Yaquis in Mexico provides a historical perspective on the attitudes of Mexican Americans and Chicanos toward people of Indian descent in the United States and Mexico. It is with these issues in mind that we can proceed with our discussion of the "capture" of Geronimo.

## RESISTANCE IN THE BORDERLANDS

The year 1886 marks a turning point in the history of the borderlands. It was the year in which the ever-resisting Apache warrior, Geronimo, met with two US Generals, in May with General George Crook and in September with General Nelson Miles, to negotiate the terms of his surrender. After eluding US cavalry for several years, after escaping from their clutches numerous times, and after avoiding a posse of more than 5,000 US soldiers, Geronimo gained a reputation in the American imagination as the "Bad Injun," the perfect embodiment of all the evil the Native Indians were capable of, namely, deceit, murder, bloodthirstiness, cunning, and savage brutality. His capture,

or rather surrender, in 1886 is significant not because a once-elusive bandit was ultimately brought under the long arm of the law, but rather, as Fredrick Turner III puts it, "the great adventure" of "making the continent" was over as "the last remnants of the human barriers to European expansionism in the New World had reached its final frontier" (44-45). With the "removal" of Geronimo, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 had finally come to complete fruition, and it is not surprising that the historian Fredrick Jackson Turner, in a slightly different context, announced the closing of the American frontier in 1890. Just as the wild frontier had finally been tamed, so was the Native Indian, the barbarian of the frontier, also "removed" to facilitate the onward march of Progress. In other words, civilization had finally triumphed over barbarism. The European race had finally realized its "manifest destiny" and through conquest and imperial practices either subdued those who resisted the advent of modernity in America, or domesticated and civilized the unresisting through religious instruction, English language learning, the establishment of reservations and schools, and introduction to modern technology. Never again would another Native American tribe or leader wage a serious war with the US government.

Geronimo's legacy is a legacy of resistance to the expansionist programs of white settlers in the United States. With dogged persistence, even when the other Apache tribes including the Chiricahua, Mescalero, Lipan, and Jicarilla had more or less acceded to the demands of the United States, and some Indians like Kieta and Martine served as scouts for the US soldiers, Geronimo and his army fiercely resisted the American troops and, to avoid capture, would travel with ease across the US/Mexico border into the terrain of the Sierra Madre in Sonora, Mexico. In addition to fighting with US cavalry, they would also frequently skirmish with Mexican government forces eager to support US soldiers in their attempt to capture him (Davis xxxix, li). After he eventually surrendered to General Miles in Skeleton Canyon in 1886, Geronimo and members of his band were frequently moved from prison to prison and camp to camp until, finally, they were sequestered in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and after 1907 the remaining survivors were given the option of either staying in Oklahoma or being shifted to the Mescalero Reservation, New Mexico (Davis lvii). To be sure, Geronimo's surrender was of such importance that on March 4, 1905, he rode in the presidential procession of President Theodore Roosevelt, but, as Charles Johnston, who recorded his own account of the event, observes, the native chieftain "did not deign to give" the Chief Executive "a nod of salutation" (308). Geronimo died on February 17, 1909 at Fort Sill in a military hospital.



*Almanac* problematizes these versions of Geronimo's capture and the mythic identity he assumed as the US government pursued him relentlessly. Old Yoeme, the Yaqui woman, tells her daughters, Lecha and Zeta, that since she had actually seen photographs of his surrender, she could speak with authority on the matter and instructs them to listen carefully to her version of the events and write them down in a notebook by way of updating the ancient almanac. Yoeme narrates the "real" story of Geronimo's capture, and while noting that "there has been too much confusion among white people and their historians" regarding Geronimo, she comments that "Geronimo" was simply not the real name of the Apache warrior. It was a name given him by the Mexican and US soldiers. Moreover, the man in the photograph taken at Skeleton Canyon, seen meeting with General Miles to negotiate the terms of his surrender, was "a man who always accompanied the one who performed the feat" (129). In Yoeme's story, the real Geronimo is portrayed not as a brave and vengeful warrior but rather as a medicine man who could perform "some feats." A few chapters later, Calabaza, a Sonoran Yaqui, who is "part of the new generation that the old-time people had scolded for its peculiar interest in 'now' and tomorrow" (222) and is involved in smuggling people and commodities across the border, has the occasion of listening to the ancient story about Geronimo, a story told by his aunts and elderly Yaquis, specifically Old Mahalawas. In these narratives, the Arizona Apaches and the Sonoran Yaquis overlook the old animosities they had toward each other prior to the coming of the Europeans, and together put up strong resistance to the encroaching Mexicans and the Americans. As Calabaza learns, Geronimo could elude General Miles's soldiers because Sonoran Yaquis hid him in the Sierra Madres when he crossed the Arizona border into Mexico. In addition to stressing the growing inter-tribal coalitions formed in the borderlands to oppose Mexican and American policies designed to drive the Indians further into the land and eventually dispossess them, these stories emphasize that the most fascinating aspect of Geronimo's story was that the whites did not capture the real Geronimo because there was no "real" Geronimo to begin with.

According to Yaqui legends, four Apache warriors had been often misidentified as Geronimo—Red Clay (the fourth Geronimo who dies in Oklahoma in 1909), Sleet, Big Pine, and Wide Ledge. These Apaches did not work together as a single unit but led separate bands of Indians to conduct raids and attack US troops. The central problem in such a scenario was the photographs Miles had taken of Geronimo's surrender at Skeleton Canyon in 1886. But according to Yaqui legends, even when all the warriors were captured at separate

times, when the photographs were taken, the image that appeared in the prints did not resemble any of these warriors. Several theories were advanced: the play of light, the polished crystal in the black box used to take the pictures, and the restless soul of an Apache warrior seeking vengeance and imprinting its image on the pictures. The surrender to General Miles was initiated by an old man, Pancakes, who "spent most of his time dozing under shady trees" (230), and conceived of a plan to save the other Apache warriors. He tricked Miles into believing that he was the real Geronimo and although Pancakes thought that the mistake might soon be recognized, he eventually became caught up in the political intrigues that plagued Washington, and soon the legend of the capture of Geronimo caught the imagination of the American public. Although two reporters for the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* suspected foul play, their photo-shoots of Pancakes resulted in the imprint of the same Geronimo who appeared in earlier photographs, a picture that did not bear any resemblance to any of the other Apaches mistakenly identified as Geronimo. These Yaqui legends not only complicate the veracity of the official account of Geronimo's capture by Miles, they also critique the very notion of representation, which validates the photographs as authentic copies of real events.

According to Wide Ledge, the whites believed that they could give names to people and things and this meant that the particular thing or person was given an unchanging identity and would thus become an identifiable object. Furthermore, the emphasis was on the unmediated process of representation embodied in photography: that photographs represented in exact detail and form the original, or whatever object or person was photographed. It is a notion alien to Yaqui thought, which stressed that a person "might need a number of names in order to conduct all of his or her earthly business" (227). In a larger sense, the Yaqui conception of reality as a variegated phenomenon and as perpetually changing counters the basic premise of US expansionist programs in the borderlands and, by implication, of European endeavors in the Americas: the religiously sanctioned mandate given to Adam (i.e., Man, to subdue the earth and establish control over nature), an act that defined the very "essence" of Europe and its peoples. While European attitudes toward the natural world hinged on an absolute separation between humans and nature, the Indian worldview did not allow such an absolute dichotomy. As Fredrick Turner III notes, Thoreau's fascination with the Indians hinged on his respect for their ability to view the land not as nature to be subdued but rather to "offer [themselves] to it in order to live with it" (14). The Native Americans viewed human beings "as participating with the natural

world in the huge cycle of life" (18), and were less inclined to regard themselves as opposed to nature and more inclined to view themselves as active players, along with the earth, in a cosmic drama, a drama in which man's future and well-being were directly proportional to the manner in which he treated and respected the earth and its resources. Thus, to the Yaquis, the idea that the photographs were not able to "capture" the presence of Geronimo through a static process of representation coincides with their conception of the natural order of things, in which the souls of the departed played an active part in human affairs, and in which reality could not be arrested in any chain of signification.

But what is at issue here? It is not just to point out that in broad terms the European tradition differed significantly from the Indian worldview. Rather, by complicating the narrative of the removal of the Indians and the conquest of the frontier, the novel inserts in the public imagination a long tradition of native resistance to white settlers in the borderlands. It is not enough to note that whatever the Indian perspective, Geronimo was indeed captured, and since there is no denying this fact, the Americans had finally subdued the Apaches. The purpose here is not so much to disprove this fact but to call into question the *import* of this fact itself—if the Apaches do not think that Geronimo is captured, then fact or fiction, fancy or magic realism, for all practical purposes there is no end to the war between the United States and the Apaches, since the terms of engagement are understood in fundamentally different ways. David L. Moore views the multiple Indian narratives of Geronimo as a "performance of semiotic play" that contests "colonial projections," which, in this context, can refer to the value and importance given to non-Indian historiography about Indians (166).

In a similar vein, in her short story titled "A Geronimo Story," Silko underscores the shaping power of language and narrative as alternative modes of contesting domination. Andy, a young Laguna man, accompanies his uncle Siteye as a scout on an expedition with US army officers to hunt for the Apache warrior. Although they fail to lead the army officers to Geronimo, the story, as Helen Jaskoski notes, "resonate[s] with the theme of Andy's initiation" (62). Andy learns about techniques of riding, corralling, saddling, and feeding horses, about the ancient bed of lava in Navajo myths, the colonizing impulses of white settlers, and the desperate anger of Apache warriors. Thus, the hunting expedition for Geronimo turns into a rite of passage for this young Laguna, especially as Siteye narrates to his nephew stories of his past, of the mesa and the harshness of the desert, the dryness of rocks, the secret caves filled with food and water for

hunters and wanderers. The story of Geronimo is, in more ways than one, really not a story about Geronimo the man, but about the emergence of various narratives of his life and deeds, particularly his stringent opposition to US efforts to dispossess Indian tribes in the Southwest, which begin to circulate among the Indians. The power of Geronimo lies precisely in his absence, in the traces and tracks he leaves behind. His tracks can only be read as a meaningful text of resistance and strategic contestation by Indians, such as Andy, who learns the power of language and how it functions as a fluid, open-ended, and paradoxical process of representation, and how language can be used both to track the history of the past and to imprint the meaning of the present on individual and tribal consciousness.

This is why to Silko, tracking the one true and official story of Geronimo is a task best suited for constructing narratives of conquest and settlement, and not the sustaining of tribal subjectivity. The tribal impulse in narrating and listening to the many narratives of Geronimo becomes an act of remembrance. Learning to "destroy [the] enemy with words" (92) and to "remember the way, the beauty of the journey" (94) constitute Andy's rite of manhood. Interestingly enough, Silko's refusal to use, in the title of the story, the determinative article "the" and her use, instead, of the partially signifying "a" points to other Geronimo stories waiting to be told and heard, and demonstrates the transformative power of narrative to empower and reintegrate members into a tribal community.

These alternate narratives of Geronimo, then, both in the short story and in *Almanac*, authorize continued Apache resistance to the Americans and the Mexicans and also validate the relevance of Laguna, Navajo, and Yaqui mythology in the formation of a border consciousness whose gaze is multiply encoded. This border consciousness looks both ways, north and south, toward the United States and Mexico, toward the past and the present, in order to negotiate the terms of its territorial, cultural, and political sovereignty in the present. Such a perspective affirms Yaqui resistance as embodying productive practices of opposition and reclamation that *Almanac* underscores as the new American drama for the millenium.

But it is important to bear in mind that the "new American drama" is not post-nationalist in the sense that the nation/state, both as a category of analysis and as a socializing force in contemporary society, has now become irrelevant in the new millennium. In mapping an alternative, tribal historiography, the novel avoids this teleological impulse for reasons that become clear only if we pay attention to the formation of Apache and Yaqui tribal coalitions to thwart the US and Mexico's attempts to subsume them within a national imaginaire.

Historically, however, it is the forced relocation of Yaquis within Mexican national space that makes any perspective that is dismissive of the nation as a relic of the twentieth century a myopic argument. The apache resistance to US policies of nation formation and the Yaqui's opposition to Mexican practices of nationalization are not meant to be affirmed as an idealization of a pan-tribal American identity in which the nation and national borders lose their determinative power. It is to foreground the nation as an ideological apparatus that legitimates particular forms of colonization grounded in racialized discourses of separatism and dispossession that the novel takes as one of its primary concerns. Having said this, what do we make of the Yaquis in Arizona? When did they become border crossers and relocate in the United States? What historical events precipitated their migration from Sonora to Arizona? In addressing these questions, this article hopes to show that the crossing of national borders does not mean that national borders do not matter anymore. Rather, it is precisely the historical event of Yaquis' migration north of the US-Mexico border that engenders *other* forms of bordered cultures, languages, and identities among the Yaquis. How national border crossing engenders a process of intra-tribal othering and why this is relevant to *Almanac's* affirmation of pan-tribal identity in the Americas is addressed next.

## YAQUIS IN THE BORDERLANDS

The word "almanac" in the title of the novel refers to a "notebook," a collection of "thin sheets of membrane . . . stretched and pressed out of horse stomachs" on which are inscribed stories, sayings, proverbs, diagrams, instructions, pictures, poems, and songs of the Yaqui and other Native Indian tribes which Yoeme, a "wild old Yaqui woman" (125), gives to her grand-daughters, Lecha and Zeta, for safe-keeping. The almanac, as Bell notes, "repeatedly and overtly reminds" us that it "move[s] between the hands and unnamed historical persons and tribes," and as such it is "not the property or even the process of just one imagined community" (26). The history of the Yaquis in the borderlands aptly bears out Bell's observation. In the early 1900s, when they were hounded and pursued by the Mexican Federales in Sonora, thousands of Yaquis fled north and crossed the border into Arizona and moved into other parts of the US Southwest. The almanac survives because a group of boys and girls were given the task of smuggling the manuscript across the border, a plan that was successfully carried out, and the almanac was eventually passed back to Yoeme, although, during the journey across the border, some of the pages

got lost or used for various purposes by members of the group. The almanac thus testifies to the resilience of the Yaquis and their desperate attempts to avoid surrendering to the Mexicans, and also, in the novel's context, Indian resistance to US hegemony: "Even then, when the heart of every Yaqui was crying out, no Yaqui ever said 'surrender.' It was the same war they had been fighting for more than four hundred years" (234).

The almanac is important not only because it contains information about agricultural methods, harvesting techniques, the weather, floods, plagues, and famines, but also because it tells them about the "days yet to come" (137), a future the novel gestures toward as the time of the birthing of the fifth world embodying the reclamation of native land. The almanac is thus central to the novel's thematic concern—the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy encoded in its brittle pages. The question arises, why did Silko foreground Yaqui history in so central a fashion in her novel? This question gains added significance since there are numerous Indian tribes whose histories of dispossession and conquest could just as well have substituted for the Yaquis. A study of Yaqui history reveals a range of issues that are crucial not only to the program of reclamation Silko affirms in the novel, but also to the manner in which these programs are conceived of and envisioned. It would be helpful at this point to briefly illuminate these concerns in order to contextualize the centrality of Yaqui history to the novel's thematic concern.

In *Yaqui Resistance and Survival: The Struggle for Land and Autonomy 1821–1910*, Evelyn Hu-DeHart notes that from the time of first contact with the Europeans in the sixteenth century, up to the early decades of the twentieth century, Yaquis were able to maintain a distinct identity both as an ethnic group and as a tribal nation. Until the time the Jesuits were expelled from northern Mexico in 1767, the Yaquis and the missionaries maintained strong relationships of interdependence and the period was "one of peaceful acculturation and material development" (Giddings 6). As Edward Spicer notes in *The Yaquis: A Cultural History*, the attitude of the Yaquis was "not that of a conquered people, nor was it that of a tribe too lacking in policy or organization to resist infiltration" (16). With the Jesuits, the Yaquis were able to maintain a strong position to negotiate their terms of contact, and often their involvement with the Jesuits was voluntary. The missionaries did not conquer them as did the secular Spaniards who subdued and exploited other native tribes in Central Mexico; indeed, the missionaries often helped the Yaquis resist Spanish attempts to claim their land and expel them, with the result that secular Spain expelled the Jesuits toward the

end of the eighteenth century, thereby hoping to hasten the process of conquest (Spicer 4-6).

From the time Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, the Mexican government spared no effort in trying to convince the Yaqui people to join the new republic and become part of Mexico. In 1902, during the era of Porfirio Diaz, the Yaquis were subjected to "their most violent repression" (Hu-DeHart 155) as Diaz initiated a brutal campaign of terror and intimidation. Thousands of Yaquis were systematically hunted down like animals, rounded up, and sent to Yucatan. The employees of the Yaquis also incurred the wrath of the Mexican police who had created a special force—Eleventh Rural Corps, or the Special Auxiliary Force—for the express purpose of tracking down Yaquis in residential areas and businesses, whose owners were threatened with fines and destruction of property if they refused to give information regarding their Yaqui employees or continued to hire them. By the time this program of deportation was officially called off in 1908, thousands of Yaquis had lost their homes and were separated from their families, a fact which "finally succeeded in breaking the spirit of the Yaquis, rebels as well as pacificos" (182). While thousands of Yaquis were relocated in Yucatan, thousands more fled northward and crossed the border into Arizona, into the southwestern United States, where they found refuge and employment because American businesses were eager to hire cheap labor and hard-working people. Their usefulness as a cheap labor force in the Southwest was so significant that during Diaz's program of deportation, several newspapers published detailed accounts of the Mexican government's cruel policy toward the Yaquis, and the business people petitioned the American embassy in Mexico and tried to persuade Secretary of State Elihu Root to discuss the matter with the Mexican ambassador in Washington (Hu-DeHart 172). This marked a turning point in the history of the Yaquis as a nation. The last revolt against the Mexican government took place in September 1926 when several Yaquis attempted to meet Alvaro Obregon, who had just retired from the presidency, and whom the Yaquis supported during the tumultuous years of the Mexican Revolution. Unfortunately Obregon tricked the Yaquis and called in government troops. More than 20,000 federal troops entered Yaqui territory and massacred them, and the Mexican government launched an air attack to bomb their pueblos. Today, the Yaquis can no longer lay claim to their own land and are a "wandering tribe, a people in exile, burning eternal candles to a lost idea of a homeland." Moreover, the deportation of the Yaquis "forced greater and more permanent exodus of Yaquis across the border, to southwestern and western United States . . . Consequently, Yaquis became the

*most widely dispersed native people of North America, covering a thirty-five hundred mile expanse from southern Mexico to southern California*" (Hu-DeHart 172, 202; emphasis added).

These Yaqui border crossings engendered a new Yaqui border consciousness that registered the effects of their forced dispersal and their attempts to fashion a new life in the United States. Soon Yaquis on either side of the border would begin to differentiate themselves. Edward Spicer notes that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Sonoran Yaquis used the word "Yoeme" to refer to themselves, and the English rendition of its meaning would amount to "we most human of people" (307). It was a self-referential term whose use would denote group inclusivity, and non-usage would signify exclusion from the group based on language use and familiarity. Those who did not speak Yaqui were automatically excluded from the group. Language was thus central to group identification among Sonora Yaquis.

But the Arizona Yaquis used the term "Yaqui" to refer to themselves. They did not speak the language but were in some way connected to Yaqui culture and to Yaqui people, and thus identified themselves as Yaquis since they, to some degree or another, participated in Yaqui life. A person who spoke the language would be termed "muy Yaquis" (very Yaqui) while one who did not speak the language and had only rudimentary understanding of Yaqui life while still related to them would simply be called "Yaquis." A related term is "Yori," used to refer to the Mexicans who, in Yaqui myth, originated from the Yaquis. It means "light color" or the color of ashes. As opposed to Yori, Yoeme signified deeper immersion in Yaqui culture, philosophy, and religion (Spicer 307). As is evident, language both registers the impact of border crossings on the Yaquis and also shapes their understanding of the differences that emerge between them on both sides of the border. It is precisely the changes and readjustments of tribal society during exile, in the time of dislocation, and in the anxious moments of migration that gain significance for our study. I want to focus on that which emerges as "new" and "other" and "different" as peoples cross the borders of tribe, language, and nation.

The Yaquis, as we have seen, were adept at the art of survival, and the attempt to negotiate the tension of affirming Yaqui identity and heritage on both sides of the boundary engenders a Yaqui border subjectivity. But interestingly, Silko's use of the almanac shifts our focus away from the tenacity of a single Indian tribe to draw attention to the forms of contact between the Yaquis of Sonora and the Maya of Yucatan. It is during their stay in the Yucatan peninsula, having been relocated by the Diaz regime, that the Yaquis come into contact with the Maya, and that is also where the almanac, which is modeled after



Mayan codices, as Joni Adamson points out, passes hands and falls in the hands of Yaquis who later move north, and some of them, eventually, into the United States (142–43). That the almanac still exists in the twentieth century, even after the rise and decline of the Mayan civilization (ca. AD 300 to 900) and its eventual disintegration upon contact with the conquistadors in the sixteenth century testifies to its enduring power. The power of the almanac lies in its having survived the exigencies of migration and relocation through a process of transformation. Preserving the almanac because it is an authentic Mayan document holds little value to the Yaquis. Even as they use the information it contains, they make their own additions to it, thus altering its status as an incontrovertible sign of indigenous history, culture, and society. The almanac becomes a hybrid text in script, form, status, and genre, whose meanings and interpretations are constantly changing as its preservers struggle to maintain a sense of continuity in the face of European domination, and hundreds of years later, to maintain a sense of autonomy to resist jingoistic attempts to subsume the Yaquis and the Maya into the Mexican national imaginary. As Adamson perceptively notes, it is a “text that insists that indigenous people and their environments are not the ground and matrix of Euro-American action, but live, responsive, resistant, and capable of articulating their own perspectives about the world and their place in it” (144).<sup>7</sup> And while, as Ami M. Reigier observes, it “exists in the narrative as a pantribal grouping of indigenous writings from various periods and tribal groups” (201), the almanac is also a text of resistance and signals the possibility for adaptation and survival. Interestingly, in light of one possible etymological history of the word which traces its usage, sometime in the thirteenth century, in Iberian Arabic as “al—manakh,” (Moore 177), Silko’s grounding of the novel in the traditional mythos of the Maya, and specifically the Yaquis, underscores the importance of pre-conquest Euro-Arabian histories of travel and trans-Atlantic migration to conceptualize the multiple forms of allegiances that the almanac engenders across national and hemispheric boundaries and across the borders of imagined communities struggling to determine their destinies and futures as they negotiate the legacy of conquest and the power of the nation/state. Thus, the novel encodes its narrative heterology in, as Daria Donnelly notes, “the prophetic mode with all its weird and disruptive energy” (246), while also traversing, as Caren Irr sees it, the “transitive ground between past and future” even as it seeks to forge hemispheric and global forms of social and political association (226). But what forms do resistance and opposition take in the borderlands? This is the question addressed next.

The fact that the Yaquis are one of the few Indian tribes who have persisted and partially succeeded in maintaining their unique sense of identity for hundreds of years and well into the early twentieth century serves as a useful model, in the context of the novel, to configure native resistance to the legacy of colonialism. Hu-DeHart notes that since the time of first contact the Yaquis responded variously to the Jesuits and later to the Spaniards and Mexicans. At a very general level their responses followed three impulses: "acceptance, acquiescence, or accommodation; the autonomous or self-reliant Yaqui rebellion; and alliance with, or incorporation into, a larger political party or movement. Within each pattern type are variations, again according to the conditions of the times. *This flexibility has consistently characterized Yaqui history*" (5; emphasis added).

While recuperating tribal histories and cultures in order to construct contemporary forms of social agency and gain economic and political power is an important concern in *Almanac*, the significance of its alternative mapping of history and modernity lies in its sensitivity to the power of neo-colonial networks that privilege native elites, and the resiliency of local events and forces to shape and determine the impact of globalization in the hemispheres (Sadowski-Smith 106-08).<sup>8</sup> Thus, transnational indigeneity offers no easily discernable divisions between oppressor and oppressed, between the powerful and the dispossessed. Neither does it yield to the tendency of most theories in border studies that prioritize a Mesoamerican heritage in order to draw parallels among different marginalized peoples in the Americas, or view Anglo-Americans as the primary antagonists or even consider Eurocentrism as the most significant threat to the formation of a transborder social and cultural imaginaire. It is a mark of Silko's achievement that she refrains from giving in to sentimental and nostalgic longings for a pre-Columbian era when life in the Americas was Edenic and all the native peoples lived in harmony with occasional conflicts and disturbances. The dream of the fifth world is not so much a return to a lost paradise but the forging of a "one world/many tribes" in which organic notions of ethnic and tribal identity, *sangre pura*, and national conceptions of time and history yield to the determining power of transborder processes and the unpredictable nature of local forces acting upon the international flow of people and cultural commerce in the Americas.

To be sure, most of the characters in the novel who are actively involved in subverting and contesting hegemonic pressures are all, in some way or another and to some degree, products of the very system they are eager to resist. Gregory Salyer's perceptive comment regarding "Western and Native abuses of technology" (114) in the novel

can just as well be applied to the novel's characters. Roy, a Vietnam veteran, works for Triggs's plasma center and recruits homeless people; Tacho, the Indian, works as a chauffeur for Menardo, a Mexican businessman, who lusts after wealth and is willing to go to any extreme to realize his dreams. The female protagonists are equally solipsistic and individualistic. Lecha abandons her son Ferro; Zeta is incapable of love and both sisters become drug addicts; Algeria and Angelita La Escapia sometimes indulge themselves to suit their own ends. While the novel, as Janet St. Clair views it, "critiques the entire worldview of Western Europe, in a general sense, a worldview that cherishes a capitalism-at-all-costs, unchecked individualism, and rampant commodity fetishism" (141-42), Salyer pointedly notes that "the characters of *Almanac*, whether native or European, embody decadence that is rarely matched in American fiction" (98). Structurally, also, the novel embodies a sense of this disorder and tangled kind of existence. Silko herself notes: "It was as if you had shattered a two-hour movie. Some of it didn't have dialogue. Like if you took two hours of a feature film and tore it or chopped it up and mixed it all up" ("Interview" 150). Sometimes, with its constant piling up of sentences with the same word order, the syntax of the narratives almost numbs the reader into a state of vertigo. Thematically, structurally, and stylistically, the novel embodies the struggles and conflicts of the borderlands. Yet, the novel does not give in to despair and hopelessness. Instead, it reconfigures the very notion and terms of resistance and rebellion by linking postcolonial discourse analysis and programs of decolonization with postmodern insights into the instability of language and representation, and the signifying nature of power and knowledge, all of which underscore an important idea—that there is no outside space available to the resisting subject that can be inhabited to launch or initiate resistance.

### THE DREAM OF THE FIFTH WORLD AS A PRACTICE OF NEGOTIATING

*Almanac* foregrounds the contradictions and complex negotiations that emerge in anti-colonial resistance. Although Roy, the Vietnam veteran, begins working for Triggs in recruiting homeless vets to become organ and blood donors, after befriending Peaches, Triggs's secretary, and realizing the insidious plans of his employer, Roy begins to form an Army of the Homeless for a final confrontation; Clinton, the black Indian, focuses on the inter-racial animosities that threaten to tear apart their plans of staging confrontation with the government

and the law. To Clinton, being a minority or a victim of discrimination does not automatically make a person incapable of racist practices, as racism and oppression come in many guises and are not confined to any single racial or ethnic group.

Angelita La Escapia, a Cuban Marxist, teaches Marxism in Mexico to the peasants and villagers with a view to inciting them to revolt. Simply because Marx is a European, he and his ideas are not dismissed for not being native or indigenous. To Angelita, Marxist thought is intimately connected with the particular circumstances of their struggle for autonomy and land, and although Marx "as a European had misunderstood a great deal," he nonetheless had a "primitive devotion to the worker's stories" (520) and understood and appreciated the power of oral tradition and stories to shape reality itself. Angelita even turns against her lover and comrade, Bartolomeo, because he "falsely discredited and endangered the people's army for the sake of cheap Marxist propaganda" and believed that the Indians were "Jungle monkeys and savages [who] have no history" (525). According to Tamara M. Teale, Marxist thought appeals to Angelita because it views history as the discursive terrain on which an alternative worker-conscious, anti-capitalist historiography can be inscribed. However, her embrace of Marxism is tempered by her sensitivity to the common values that underpin both Marxism and capitalism, namely, the industrial development of the earth, which are antithetical to indigenous thought (157-58). And instead of abiding by the law and being model American citizens, the twins, Lecha and Zeta, along with Ferro and his accomplice Paulie, actively smuggle drugs, weapons, and people across the US/Mexico border, and Awa Gee, the Korean, an expert in telecommunications and computers, disrupts telephone lines, intercepts official electronic signals like the emergency signal to warn people, hacks into government records and data to alter and delete confidential information, and even creates "new" identities for illegal aliens. Interested in "the perfection of complete disorder and disintegration," Awa Gee dreams of creating a computer program "that would destroy all existing computer networks" so the US "blackout would be complete" (690). Like Angelita, Awa Gee does not reject computer technology per se on nativist grounds, but is interested in using whatever is at hand to master it and then use it against the oppressors.

As is evident, all of these characters are deeply implicated in the social structures and institutions they seek to contest. But the realization of the manner in which they have become cogs in a capitalist machinery run amok, and the awareness of the marginalization of their history, language, and culture, lead them to form strategies of

resistance and survival across racial divisions and national borders, a mode of resistance that Gayatri Spivak views as the practice of negotiating (72).

In summary, we began with a discussion of the way in which the Southwest can be reconceptualized as the borderlands in which various contact zones overlap and intersect. We then focused on the novel's problematization of the narratives of Indian removal and the subduing of the frontier and studied the transborder processes that link the Arizona Apaches to the Sonora Yaquis, and we then moved on to a brief study of Yaqui-Mexican relationships in the early decades of the twentieth century. We have also seen how the narrative of Geronimo dramatizes the clash of "incompatible frames of reference" (Anzaldúa 78) and the import of such a clash to the program of reclamation, and the formation of a revolutionary border consciousness whose strategies of symbolic, ethnic, and national affiliation often register the disjunctive effects of the overlapping of multiple contact zones in the borderlands. Indeed, the stakes for the inhabitants of the borderlands are very high. As this discussion shows, "it's about time, and what's called history and story, and who makes the story and who remembers" (Silko, "Interview" 151). And it's also about fundamental shifts in realigning hegemonic geo-political boundaries and their normative ideologies. The aim is to create alternate centers, alternate historical perspectives, alternate aesthetics, and an alternate politics.

The large map spreading over the first two pages of the novel contains the names of numerous characters that are all arranged according to the places they inhabit or from which they originate. The map does not show the US Southwest but the regions that make up parts of Arizona and Sonora. The social and cultural center of the novel is Tucson, which is positioned right in the middle of the map, and there are several arrows pointing toward Tucson from various places—San Diego, the Laguna Pueblo Reservation, New Jersey, Albuquerque, El Paso, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Mexico City, and other arrows pointing toward Buenos Aires and South Cartagena—all of which ultimately lead to and close in on Tucson. The islands of Haiti and Cuba are distinctly shown along with the names of the characters who hail from these regions. Tucson is the center, the place where the oppressed peoples of the Americas would converge and launch their final offensive. Silko's gesture is reminiscent of José Martí, in the late nineteenth century, and Roberta Fernández Retamar, in the late twentieth century, who sought to establish Havana as an alternate center in the Americas to enable Latin American countries to contest US hegemony. Such a repositioning allowed these writers to establish an oppositional

standpoint, in a very material sense, to deflect the flow of power from north to south. Such a standpoint enabled them to conceptualize an alternate politics and poetics of the Americas, which gave voice to marginalized native tribes, the poor, the disenfranchised, and the dispossessed. As Arnold Krupat perceptively notes, such a repositioning of centers alters the traditional east-west paradigm used to configure American thought and culture in order to prioritize the south-north interconnections in the Americas, a reconfiguration which seeks to subvert the Eurocenteredness of the hegemonic east-west directionality (51).

Finally, a word about the ending of the novel. The novel begins with the banishment of Sterling from his Laguna reservation in Arizona because of his alleged conspiratorial behavior with a Hollywood film crew in allowing them to film the sacred land of the stone snake. This lack in foresight rekindles, among the Laguna, an earlier sense of betrayal by the white US government officials who had stolen their idols and eventually displayed them in a museum as rare cultural artifacts. It is a betrayal that is still as fresh in the minds of the Laguna as if it had happened just yesterday, although the actual event took place more than eighty years ago. The Tribal Council views Sterling's betrayal in a more severe light because he is a Laguna, which is tantamount to an "inside" betrayal. Banished from his tribe and in exile, Sterling boards a bus to Santa Fe, but accidentally gets off at Tucson and eventually, but just as purposelessly, joins Ferro's drug-trafficking gang. In addition, in the 1940s, the US government pressured the Laguna peoples to open up their lands for the construction of uranium mines to help in World War II. While the "old timers" (34) thought this was sacrilegious, the new ones, if not eager, are not too disheartened, because this meant employment and some form of economic stability for the Indians, with the result that among the Pueblo tribes the Laguna were the first to benefit, in some measure and ironically, from the devastation of native land. While the novel begins with this theme of exile, it ends with Sterling pondering the implications of the "last big Indian war" (756) when he returns to the reservation to be "alone with the earth" (757) and the giant stone snake. His earlier skepticism regarding "religions and spirits had meant nothing" because he constructed his worldviews by reading magazines like the *Reader's Digest* and *Police Detective*. But now the ancient prophecy of the eventual reclamation of the Americas seemed to be coming true, which meant that the "old time—ways" and "old beliefs" (762) were not dying out. Sterling turns to his own tribe's oral traditions while recognizing that, as St. Clair observes, "wholeness comes from acts of remembrance" (154).

Sterling's return to the Laguna reservation can be viewed as marking his spiritual and cultural "arrival," that is, as a moment that "ends" his forced migration. In insisting on such a return, the novel undermines the influence of what Manuel Luis Martínez refers to as "movement discourse" in border studies, a discourse that "articulates the American faith in 'mobility' as being ultimately redemptive and progressive" (54). Whereas border studies tend to view border crossing and travel, and therefore mobility itself, for whatever reason, as the structuring principle of border cultures and societies, *Almanac* raises the question of collective and individual desire not for a different kind of or access to mobility but for halting, deflecting, and sometimes even reversing the direction of the flow of ideas, peoples, and memories in the borderlands. To put it another way, movement, like fixity, as Martínez notes, is also a "function of power" (60), and as we have already seen in this paper's focus on Apache rebellion and Yaqui migration, it would be more productive to study the power of the nation-state to enforce and create the national boundaries that result in enforced migration, and of nationalism to lend credence to such an exercise of power in relation to the continuing influence of inter-tribal forms of contact in the borderlands. Pan-tribal identity and commonality can be assumed only in so far as European experience in the Americas becomes the central vantage point in the writing and conceptualizing of history in the Americas.

But when we study the different responses by the Indian tribes to various European settler colonies and communities in the Americas, the assumption of a pan-tribal consciousness becomes problematic as the history of the Yaquis makes it clear. Native Indian patterns of social and cultural movement in the Americas predate European arrival, and while it is important to acknowledge that inter-tribal rivalry often resulted in forced relocation and migration, numerous Indian tribes also lived a nomadic life that was dependant on seasonal change and the availability of natural resources for daily sustenance. Thus, Sterling's return to the reservation has just as much to do with the Laguna tribe's attempts to deal with the legacy of European colonialism, which also positions them sometimes in antagonistic relations with other Indian tribes, as it has to do with the continuing attempt of corporate businesses to use their land without their consent and often to the detriment of the health and well-being of tribal communities. Certainly, *Almanac* does insist on a certain kind of return or "arrival," but it does so not so much to affirm the recuperation of an authentic Laguna spirituality as to point out that the border subject in this instance is not an Anglo settler nor a Mexican migrant but an Indian who re-crosses not the US/Mexico border but the border

of the Laguna reservation, a recrossing that contests the primacy of national borders to shape and influence tribal sovereignty and cultural history.

In this sense, the novel gestures toward reimagining tribal history, culture, and identity in their transnational and trans-tribal dimensions. But as we have also seen, *Almanac's* focus on Mexican antipathy to Yaqui presence in Mexico, the eventual formation of US and Mexican Yaqui communities, and the influence of Mayan culture and history on the Yaquis in Yucatan, compels us to resituate transnational, inter-tribal, and trans-border forms of movement and political allegiance within a larger network of intercontinental sociocultural and economic commerce linking Mesoamerica to the Iberian peninsula. Thus, in one sense the borderlands mark the site of the "local" in a hemispheric, global economy, but, in more ways than one, the terms in which the local gets to be read as "local," and the terms in which Sterling's return to the Laguna reservation can be read as an "arrival," hinge on what Sadowski-Smith refers to as "transnational indigeneity," which departs from the emphasis on bloodlines and a common Mesoamerican heritage that has gained currency in border studies (94). However, as Eric Cheyfitz points out, the "national" in the transnational, and other related terms like "tribe," "nation," and "sovereignty," emerge as part of an official language of Federal Indian legal discourse, and thus necessitate a fundamental revising of their meaning and usage (408). Tribal movement in the borderlands should also be viewed in the context of Indian nomadism, and not just within the context of national border crossing. This view also complicates governmental focus on individual ownership and productivity of land as the only substantive evidence for incorporation into the national body politic (Karno 2). Thus, to affirm a transnational indigeneity as Sadowski-Smith does should also involve an acknowledgment of *Almanac's* exploration of the continuing significance of kinship-based social relations, clan formations, nomadism, and bloodlines in shaping Pan-Indian anti-imperial, anti-colonial political endeavors in the Americas. Sterling's return or "arrival" is also a moment that portends a different kind of future for the oppressed people of the Americas, a future in which they must revisit the archives of the past in order to re-narrate the contemporary meaning and significance of the histories of psychic dismemberment, forced migration, dispossession, exile, and border crossings, and thus literally fashion a new symbology to suit the needs of the present. Sterling acknowledges the power of the spirit world and the authority of indigenous traditions and he waits, along with the stone snake, eagerly looking southward, hoping to see on the distant horizon the regathering of native peoples



of the Americas readying themselves for a final uprising and the birthing of the fifth world in the borderlands.

## NOTES

My colleagues Lorryne Carroll and Nancy Gish carefully read earlier drafts of this article; I thank them for their helpful suggestions and nuanced criticisms.

1. In her discussion of the novel, Ann Folwell Stanford argues that medicine, as practice, social structure and institution, as vocation, belief, myth, and scientific discourse is questioned and forced to acknowledge its own complicity in dispossessing the poor and those without access to power. The crucial problem, as Stanford observes, is that "not all bodies are rendered fodder for scientific and medical gain, but predictably, those that are deemed worthless (and Other) by the dominant society," (32) including the homeless, drug addicts, prostitutes, minorities, illegal immigrants, and the victims of war, all of whom are part of the indigenous pan-tribal coalitions envisioned in the novel.
2. To Janet St. Clair, the effects of colonialism in the Americas amount to a "nightmarish wasteland" engendered by the "misogynist, arrogantly hierarchical, and egocentric traditions of Western liberal individualism" characterized by "insane solipsism and phallogocentric avarice" (141).
3. By linking the US Southwest to Mexico's northern provinces, the term "borderlands" provides a trans-national focus. As such, it is more helpful than the term "Southwest" to refer to the states, on both sides, that abut the US/Mexico border.
4. It is important to bear in mind that Mexican and Chicana/o experience is central to any analysis of border societies; therefore, the work of the critics mentioned here is invaluable and a welcome change from the narrow perspectives offered by earlier scholarship on the Southwest in which Anglos are the single most important players in the West and all non-Anglos are either denied agency and voice or are relegated to the periphery as marginal peoples.
5. Perez-Torres underscores the importance of reading Aztlán less as symbolizing a return to origins and more as a discursive sign (104). Sáenz finds Anzaldúa's "fetishi[zing of] Aztec and Indian culture" "disturbing" since it "offers very little" to borderlanders who "live mostly in urban settings" (85).
6. The force of Maureen Groover Lape's arguments becomes clear when we take into account the writers she studies, who include John Rollin Ridge, Onoto Watanna, James Beckworth, and Sarah

Winnemucca. In studying these writers, we are unable to sustain our reliance on race and ethnicity to explain the complexity and paradoxes that emerge in the borderlands. Two brief examples from Lape illustrate this point well. John Rollin Ridge, a half Cherokee, writes about a Mexican bandit in *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta*, and Onoto Watanna, a Chinese American, writes about inter-racial romance in *Miss Numé of Japan* while fashioning for herself a Japanese identity. But the questions Lape raises are interesting: How can we explain why an Indian, or rather a mixed-blood, fashions a narrative about a Mexican bandit, and why a Chinese American chooses to pass, not as white, but as Japanese in the Southwest? In a similar vein, in his deconstructive reading of *Joaquín Murieta*, John Carlos Rowe argues against viewing the text as a clear instance of Mexican subaltern opposition to American presence in the Southwest. While it overtly adopts an anti-American tone, the text, Rowe notes, affirms the American myth of individualism and uses American ideals to displace an emphasis on nationality and ethnicity in order to inscribe in the narrative individual sanctity and privacy as the primary loci from which to conceptualize a "multicultural and multi-regional" subjectivity in the Southwest (115). Similarly, Laura Browder notes that by appropriating accepted symbols and practices of ethnicity, those who "impersonate" ethnicity manipulate the "idea of ethnicity as performance" (11) through a "strenuous performance of American authenticity" (53). The emphasis on the Asian appropriation of Mesoamerican mythology in the borderlands that Sadowski-Smith emphasizes in her reading of Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* aptly demonstrates both the problem of relying on Chicanismo philosophy to theorize border societies and the usefulness of Browder's theory of ethnicity as performance.

7. The relevance of the birthing of the fifth world in the sense in which *Almanac* dramatizes it becomes clearer in light of recent events in Chiapas, Mexico, an issue that Adamson addresses in detail. She draws attention to the attempts of Mayan rebels who, in 1994, led by a non-Mayan, Subcomandante Marcos, and calling themselves Zapatistas, led public protests demanding that the Mexican government initiate land reform policies including land redistribution in the state of Chiapas. The government's response was swift—it suppressed the rebellion by sending in its military and accused the Zapatistas of pandering to the machinations of a non-Mayan and to foreigners (128–36). Adamson argues that the government's response was grounded in essentialisms about Mayan identity, and, more importantly, it misconstrued the forms

of political action initiated by the Zapatistas. By going beyond tribal forms of affiliation, and by building an international network of supporters, the Mayans affirmed nontraditional and non-Indian forms of solidarity to achieve their local, social, and political goals. While noting that the government relented and began to make concessions by investing in the development of the state's economy and infrastructure, Adamson observes that this incident is a form of "syncretic resistance" (152), an idea that is closely related to my own argument about how the novel gestures towards the formation of postnational and transborder subjectivities and the dynamics of political involvement in the borderlands.

8. The trope of the border and of border crossings to imagine new forms of transnational affiliation and transborder activism gain greater significance when viewed through the refractory optics of the diasporic imagination, an optics that frustrates the search for the transparent vision by unsettling the balance afforded by a stable, hermeneutic ontology. This is why, to Sadowski-Smith, the diaspora becomes a primary category of analysis to theorize an alternate global politics and subversive border cultures in the borderlands. As such, she reads *Almanac* as foregrounding the historical and contemporary effects of "diasporic displacements" while engendering "new modes of cross-cultural and transnational myth-making" in the Americas (91-92).

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