Internalizing Borderlands: 
the Performance of Borderlands Identity

by

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ABSTRACT

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In order to establish a working understanding of borders, the critical conversation must be conscious of how the border is being used politically, theoretically, and socially. This thesis focuses on the border as forcibly ensuring the performance of identity as individuals, within the context of borderlands, become embodiments of the border, and their performance of identity is created by the influence of external borders that become internalized. The internalized border can be read both as infection, a problematic divide needing to be removed, as well as an opportunity for bridging, crossing that divide. I bring together Charles Bowden (*Blue Desert*), Monique Mojica (*Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*), Leslie Marmon Silko (*Ceremony, Almanac of the Dead*), and Guillermo Verdechcia (*Fronteras Americanas*) in order to develop a comprehensive analysis of the border and border identity development. In these texts, individuals are forced to negotiate their sense of self according to pre-existing cultural and social expectations on either side of the border, performing identity according to how they want to be socially perceived. The result can often be read as a fragmentation of identity, a discrepancy between how the individual feels and how they are read. I examine how identity performance occurs within the context of the border, brought on by violence and exemplified through the division between the spirit world and the material world, the manipulation of costuming and uniforms, and the body.
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Introductions

Almost every inquiry into the borderlands depends on an initial definition of what exactly the border is and what it means to those who exist on it. How the border is defined is a tricky process due to the nebulous use of the border as a region, metaphor, and symbol. It is a line in the dirt between two countries, policed by Border Patrol and aerial drones. It is a physical and mental location of violence and political turmoil, where two or more cultures and ideologies come into direct conflict. It is an imaginary construction, made by peoples and governments in order to control trade, populations, and any movement thereof. It is not restricted to a geographical location either; it is the division between the real and the spiritual, this world and the next. For the purposes of this project, I will define the border as a liminal space that includes all of the above.

Besides being a geopolitical location, the border is also a socially constructed space that forcibly ensures the performance of identity. Performance is crucial when examining borderlands identity as it must be enacted upon the body to be at all recognizable. Individuals are forced to negotiate their sense of self according to pre-existing cultural and social expectations on either side of the border, performing identity according to how they want to be socially perceived. The end result often appears as a fragmentation of identity, as the individual attempts to reconcile various “identities” that he or she performs in order to fit in to a social context.

Once the ability to perform identity is recognized, the ability to play with or manipulate the audience’s expectations through confrontation of stereotypes or tongue in cheek mimicry develops. Identity, therefore, is changeable according to the motives of the performer as well as the audience’s reception. This method of performance can be found in theatrical productions, creative fiction and nonfiction, and can be either directly embodied by the author’s writing, or through specific characters or performers. For this particular study, the performance of identity situated within borderlands theory is most usefully demonstrated in Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Monique Mojica’s *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, Guillermo Verdecchia’s *Fronteras Americanas*, Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead*, and Charles Bowden’s *Blue Desert*. In these texts, identity is constantly being created by (or created for) the individual, making the individual’s body its own border space, defined by varying modes of performance. My central proposal is that the individual, within the context of his or her community, politics, location, race, gender, and nationality (along with innumerable
other external factors,) become embodiments of the border. His or her performance of identity is created by the influence of external borders that have become internalized, read both as infection (a problematic divide needing to be removed) as well as an opportunity for bridging (crossing that divide).

Because I examine six central texts in this project, it would be prudent for me to situate each and briefly explain how they complement or complicate one another. I’ve divided them here according to genre for the sake of concision, although in my thesis it will be apparent that genre is, in fact, far less divisive. Performance of identity is most readily connected to theatrical performance, making the examination of the way internalized borderlands and fragmented identities are produced in dramatic texts pertinent. Mojica’s *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (debuted in 1991) and Verdecchia’s *Fronteras Americanas* (1993) have numerous structural and performative similarities, as well as the fact that they both debuted on Canadian stages only a few years apart. *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* is an inquiry into the role of First Nations women stereotypes and their development throughout the history of colonialism on Turtle Island. It is a two actor performance, each actor taking on multiple characters (in the original, 15 played by Mojica and 8 by Alejandra Nuñez) which transform over the duration of the production. *Fronteras Americanas* similarly explores stereotypes (focusing on the Latino/a) with only one actor alternating between two characters. By requiring every actor to play multiple characters in these dramas, it is apparent that identity construction is separable from the physical body. This use of transient characters, combined with frequent episodes of metatheatricality, allows for the creation of multiple identities. These identities can then be substituted for one another during the course of the play for dramatic effect and to further the negotiation of identity in the borderlands. In both dramas, the characters embody borderlands because of their fictional histories and confront the audience with direct questions regarding identity. Through these tactics, both dramas use identity reconstruction to interrogate pre-existing assumptions about race, gender, class and history.

Despite the usefulness of narrowing an examination to only Canadian sources, an examination of borders and identity must seek to be Pan-American and cross political and genre boundaries if it is to have any validity in the discussion of borders. An examination bridging

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1 I use Canadian due to their Canadian debut not in reference to the nationality of the playwrights—both who are decidedly resistant of such signifiers.
between genres will be necessary in order to process the various ways borderlands identity is performed by the individual and is identified by audiences, and how this process self-perpetuates. Thus, I have expanded my examination of performance to include fiction, namely, Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko’s works. Her creative analysis of identity is presented through fictional characters that embody instances of identity performance. The negotiation of performance, costuming and voice are very similar to that of *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* and *Fronteras Americanas*, and allow for a different approach based on genre. Silko’s texts also allow for the opportunity to draw connections and offer interpretations between the fictional events or characters in the text and the historical events or characters to which they bear striking similarity. The lines between myth and modernity, the spirit world and the real world are continuously crossed in *Ceremony* (1977) and *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), allowing for an examination of both the political realities and the spiritual implications of the border. The examinations of multiple characters per actor serving to confront the audience with issues of identity in the border space can also be easily extended to *Almanac of the Dead* where characters frequently exhibit multiple identities as a negotiation strategy and resistance to the colonial presence of the Destroyers.

I have also selected to examine Charles Bowden’s work, focusing largely on *Blue Desert* (1986), but expanding to several of his other publications, including news articles. Creative non-fiction and journalism allow for an interesting reading of identity performance, particularly in the way Bowden constructs himself as a character. This tactic is seen in some of the other texts, but does not have quite the same implied veracity that his work does. Many of the themes already mentioned in the drama and fiction are present in Bowden’s work, allowing his analysis to emphasize and expand upon the theoretical investigation through yet another genre. Because Bowden’s articles are politically based on the Mexico/US border, there is the added opportunity to ground the more openly fictional texts through his interviews and accounts of border patrol, undocumented migration, and police corruption.

Despite the unwieldy nature of a cross-genre approach, this method is useful because it reflects the authors being examined—all of whom resist being pigeonholed in a single genre. In addition to this, it allows me to analyze the different texts and performances without having to limit their strengths, authorial intentions, or performative modes to a discussion of genre alone. To say that Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead is only “A Novel”* (as could be presumed due to the
subheading of the text) is to miss the intricacies of what she as an author is achieving in her oeuvre. There is no need to force one genre upon a work that plays with such conventions, nor is this useful to attempt. In *Fronteras Americanas*, Verdecchia quotes Octavio Paz saying, “I am not at the crossroads: to choose is to go wrong” (74). In this case, it is evident that to choose one genre when it is clear there are other methods of analysis available (perhaps non-Eurocentric methods?) is indeed to “go wrong.” Reinforcing divides and boundaries between genres is counterproductive to borderlands studies, therefore making it important to look at the generic hybrids that exist in these texts and to redefine performance to include written text. I have to examine these texts and ideas in a trickster-like fashion: a juggling of texts, cultures, and genres.

Although the aforementioned texts have each been analyzed using Gloria Anzaldúa’s border theories, they have never been directly read against one another. Examining these texts in conjunction, with border theories and each other, will provide similarities and patterns regarding performance and how identity is formulated in the border space. Anne F. Nothof argues that “Anzaldúa believes that borders are experienced primarily as psychological conflict, and those [who] negotiate them experience ‘a kind of dual identity’” (4). It is this supposition that drives my critical interpretation: not only are borders a sign of a physical divide set in place by systems of governance, and the social/power dynamics which necessarily accompany them, but are also a site of internal conflict and trauma. The borderlands are, by design, violent spaces that force the physical body to submit to authority, through violence, racism, sexism and exclusion. In the first chapter, I examine the prevalence and treatment of violence in borderlands texts as a possible way to look at the internalization of borders in characters, as well as their methods of healing this violent rift. To use Cathy Caruth’s example of how “one’s own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another” and leads to the healing process of “listening to another’s wound,” (8) the power of storytelling is connected with the various processes of healing and reconciliation enacted in the texts.

As in any location, there are those for whom the border is home, and that liminal space is as much a part of them as they are a part of it. My second chapter examines trickster figures, witches, shamans and storytellers as borderlands inhabitants that use creation and manipulation of identity as a way of survival. These figures all serve as mediators between worlds, whether it is between political countries, spiritual realms, or that of the reader/audience and the text/performance. These diverse interpretations of what borders can be create a more fluid
definition of the borderlands itself and facilitate and complicate border crossings. Of course, the processes, intentions and outcomes of each approach differ slightly. Tricksters, witches, and shamans respectively are storytellers, each with varying powers of creation and destruction. The storytellers (authors, playwrights) being analyzed all take on characteristics of tricksters, witches and shamans in their art, thereby using methods such as manipulation, deception, humor, and healing.

My third chapter is based on the notion that performance of identity can be manipulated through social recognition of the use of uniforms and costumes. Clothing is a method of performance that can address facets of identity including gender, race, political alignment, and cultural coding. Physical shifts in costuming or the re-inscription of signs through the adaptations of ideological uniforms allow stereotypes and political statements to be taken on and manipulated by the wearer. Wearing uniforms or costumes to deliberately mislead the onlooker is a method of destabilizing signs and signifiers, inverting hierarchical control and established power dynamics. In order for this inversion to occur however, the individual manipulating the costume/uniform must perform within a social context that already has the recognition of the costume/uniform solidly in place. For example, the uniform of the border patrol officer is not useful if employed within a culture that does not have any experience or automatic recognition of that uniform and connotations it provokes.

The final chapter re-examines the body’s role in performing identity, and how the border can be written upon it. Revisiting the early chapter topics it is evident that the body serves as a host for all of these things. Gender, race, and nationality are central to the body’s performance as well as the function of the actor on stage performing multiple characters. The analysis of the body is not limited to humanness, allowing for a reading of the landscape as body. The internalized border identity in this manner becomes a reflection of the geopolitical border, demonstrating its social and performative role. The body can be injured, broken, and ultimately healed, allowing it to serve as a perfect metaphor for la “herida abierta” (25) or open wound that Anzaldúa uses to describe the border.

Performance, as it can be inferred from my textual selection and previously stated focus, includes the written text as it is both performed by the author through storytelling and through audience’s interpretation. Anzaldúa asserts that her stories are “acts encapsulated in time, ‘enacted’ each time they are spoken aloud or read silently” and that she “like[s] to think of them
as performances and not as inert and ‘dead’ objects” (89). This choice breaks down generic
convention and expands how we see the intersection of performance arts and literary analysis. As
can be seen in Anzaldúa’s multilingual text, literature can be read as performative, particularly
when discussing borderlands identity. Since my argument revolves around the central idea that
identity is performed, whether that performance is on a stage or the page, I must situate myself
and the methodology I am using to read these texts.

I have tried, to the best of my ability, to examine these texts through as non-Eurocentric a
lens as possible and keep my own cultural assumptions in check, although even my attempts to
do so are evidence of my position. Being a Canadian trained academic in a university setting
automatically positions and privileges me, yet I have had the wonderful opportunity to work with
professors who have continually emphasized the importance of looking beyond Western
dominated thinking. I do not approach the texts with attempted neutrality, but rather intend my
readings to be informed by my own experiences, particularly having been raised overseas. My
parents spent the majority of their lives travelling for work: my mother a Canadian teacher (born
in North Western Ontario) and my father a Belgian veterinarian (born in the DRC) working in
development through the UN. My brother and I grew up in various countries in Africa, the
Middle East and South America, eventually returning to Canada for a post-secondary education
in English. Being raised in countries that could be (problematically) labeled as “Third World”
has undeniably been an influence, as has been my experience coming to Canada. I was rudely
confronted with the fact that in this country, my experiences are invisible because of my
whiteness, and to be anything other than what you appear to be is a difficult task. Identity
performance is often a direct result of such lived experiences and communal acceptance.

To help with this particular project, I travelled to Arizona and New Mexico this year to
see the regions that Silko and Bowden write about and inhabit. I also re-examined my own
knowledge of border cultures and politics from my home border town of Thunder Bay (currently
the murder capital of Canada). These practices were useful in that they allowed me to immerse
myself temporarily and move beyond the analysis of the text, to the beginning of internalization.
In doing this, I confronted one of Helen Hoy’s central questions in How Should I Read These?:
“[s]o what’s a white girl like me doing in a place like this?” (14). The answer varies considerably
between simple tourism and academic research, but perhaps “[w]hat is at issue here is not just
how I read the text but how it reads me [and w]hat happens when a text asks one implicitly to
talk about it less and internalize it more” (Hoy 80). Traveling and physically experiencing, in addition to reading texts, is a way of acquiring knowledge through the body, and it is through this process of purposefully displacing oneself that some understanding can be internalized. Intellectual sympathies for others (for example, undocumented border crossers who die of dehydration every year in the desert on the Mexico/US border) were made real to me by physically going there. By visiting these places, they become realities that now include my presence, my footprints on the landscape.

The majority of attention is directed to the Mexico/US border region because it is an epicenter of current border politics and, if understood, can serve to expand an understanding of other borderlands. By traveling in Arizona and New Mexico for two weeks I was not necessarily touring the region’s hotspots for photophilic scenes or exotic foods (although it should be acknowledged that any form of voluntary travel involves elements of tourism,) nor was I forcing myself upon locals insisting they give me material for my own writing agenda. I explored, I went to major national state parks, reserves, museums, gardens, art galleries, cowboy re-enactments that relive on a daily basis the old Wild West. I came, I saw, I tried to understand. It is absolutely true that, however well intended, “self-reflexivity and self-questioning can certainly be forms of luxury and self-indulgence” (Hoy 18), for what justification can I give for tourism? As Jamaica Kincaid says in A Small Place, “a tourist is an ugly human being” (1228). The industry that has built around tourism has solidified the fact that the difference between tourist and witness is that of frivolity. And yet, when Bowden walks through the Sonora desert following an illegal immigration route into the US, or when Verdecchia travels home to Argentina after having left fifteen years prior, there is something gained, something witnessed. Conducting this kind of research “means learning theoretical frames from the work itself … surrendering to knowledges one doesn’t have … surrendering the safety of scholarly detachment and the protection of academic protocols and procedures” and ultimately, “taking responsibility for what our research performs in the world” (Mojica and Knowles 6). If nothing else, this thesis has caused me to question my own performance of identity and my role as witness in my academic research and personal travels.

Border identity formation creates the opportunity for both fragmentation and the reuniting of separate identities, making the border a destructive and creative force (much like the trickster figures and shamans who inhabit it). Violence, ideological subjugation of the body, and
the offensive and defensive nature of the border line, must each in sequence be addressed in order to begin understanding the ways of living the border and healing the body and the land. Borderlands are geopolitical, mythological, spiritual, metaphorical, personal, public, internal, external, written and performed. It is this versatility that allows them, and us, to be sites of change, sites of unspeakable violence, and sites of ultimate healing.
Chapter 1

Violence at the Border: Fragmentation of Identity

Political borders are human constructions designed to disrupt movement (of people as well as capital) and control others in its surrounding area. Gloria Anzaldúa explains that “a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (25), thereby making these borders aberrations; by design a violent space where power dynamics and fear are central, creating unequal levels of control through exclusion. Using Michel Foucault’s theory of bio-politics (Discipline and Punish) it is evident that the body is subject to the ideological control of whatever political or physical force controls the border. The body of the border crosser is necessarily under the scrutiny of such powers, and therefore must bear the weight of subjugation and systemic violence. Fiction that deals with borderlands reveals the oppressive nature of this space which damages not only the physical body of the characters but fractures and fragments their identities as well. Foucault’s systems of bio-power which encourage compliance of the body also appear to instigate the performance of such effects. It is the border and those who control this space that, when combined with explicit violence, forcibly ensure the performance of identity. I propose that individuals within the context of borderlands become embodiments of the border, and that their performance of identity is created by the influence of external borders that become internalized. Even though borders can exist outside of geo-political contexts, it is elite powers (institutionalized powers such as governments) that generally enforcers of borders, determining who is and who is not permitted to cross its territory. Especially in the case of the Mexico/US border, this power dynamic enforced by government, border patrol (private and institutionalized), and social stigma, is almost always the site of violence.

The term nepantla is useful in understanding the inherent relationship the border has with violence. A Nahuatl word for the in-between or middle, nepantla has the implication of invasion and conquest in its creation and although it has been adapted and used by other border

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2 I have intentionally resisted italicizing words in languages other than English (as often is the norm in academic texts) unless they are quoted as such. I draw on Katherine Ford who (examining Anzaldúa) claims that “the use of italics for Nahuatl and Spanish exoticizes these languages and, to a certain point, collapses their meaning into one language and culture [until]…. English is seen as the standard, as the norm, because it is expressed in the plain lettering” (86). In an attempt to break down this division, I will not italicize terms based on language.
Theorists, violence remains at its core. Anzaldúa explains in “(Un)natural bridges, (Un)safe spaces” that “nepantla es tierra desconocida, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement—an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling” (1). The legacy of invasion and violence is central to border politics of the Americas, a wound in need of healing. Despite the discomfort and disruption caused by borders, people still survive and live on the border because “for nepantleras, to bridge [between these worlds] is an act of will, an act of love, an attempt toward compassion and reconciliation, and a promise to be present with the pain of others without losing themselves to it” (Anzaldúa 4). Using this term offers a reading of the border that is both inherently violent and potentially healing for the individual living on the border. Before healing can occur in nepantla, however, the aggression and volatile nature of the border must be addressed. In fiction, creative non-fiction and drama, encounters with boundaries and manmade borders require an in-depth examination of the violence in this space.

The border between Mexico and the US according to Charles Bowden’s article “Exodus” allows an imbalance of power and control to exist between countries, largely contributing to the economic downfall of the weaker (in this case, Mexico). Although this is a systemic abuse that the US government has directed towards its neighbor, the attention is drawn towards the border itself as the physical embodiment of the political and cultural clash. Attention is also redirected there because of the threat of illegal immigration (read: invasion) even though, as Bowden claims, “there is only this fact: [w]e either find a way to make their world better or they will come to our better world” (10). There is a discourse of invasion being generated in reference to the undocumented migrants but the prevention of such immigration is also problematic. If the US forces these migrants to leave en masse, according to Bowden, “Mexico [will] erupt... and we [will] have a destroyed nation on our southern border and even greater illegal migration” (1), thus perpetuating and increasing the already critical issue. Undocumented immigration and labor are abused by those who benefit from them, creating a dependence which is inserted unofficially into the economic system—which in this case is both the US for benefiting from cheap labor costs and Mexico from having undocumented workers sending incomes home to family members. This system is a result of bio-power, relying on the “insertion of bodies into machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to the economic process” (Foucault 141). Undocumented immigration is at least partially tolerated because of the economic benefits which it creates and sustains in the US. The closure of these borders would
create terrible and immense devastation, leaving the only alternative as an uncomfortably semi-permeable state in order to maintain any degree of control and business gain. The borderlands between Mexico and the US are effectively nepantla, indicating “spaces between worlds” (Anzaldúa 1), potentially referring to the geopolitical and cultural divide as well as the economic difference (and interdependence) between the First World and the Third World. Although the terms First World and Third World are outdated and should not be perpetuated, I use them here to demonstrate the economic disparity between the two countries that defines their relationship.

The border is not always an obvious political marker like the Mexico/US divide, but can still create the same economic disparity. In Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*, the main character Tayo encounters a barbed wire fence that he has to break through in order to retrieve his lost cattle. The fence, in this case, is an unnatural barrier set in place by the elite white ranchers as a means of preventing anyone else from accessing the land. “The people knew what the fence was for: a thousand dollars a mile to keep Indians and Mexicans out; a thousand dollars a mile to lock the mountain in steel wire, to make the land his” (188). The land is held captive, stolen from “the people” (a term Silko uses to give precedence to indigenous inhabitants) through this material invasion. Barbed wire is a form of fencing that not only serves as a defensive measure (protecting either side from permeation) but as an offensive attack. The barbs cut through the flesh of trespassing humans or animals often causing serious injuries, making the fence almost animate in its ability to commit violence.

Despite the presence of barbed wire, trespassing and migration continue. The tactics for patrolling the border have increased accordingly, enforcing the threat the barbed wire represents. “[T]he ranchers hired men to patrol on horseback, carrying .30-30’s in saddle scabbards” (187) in order to protect the private property which otherwise is invaded by local hunters. The enactment of privatized law through the use of guards for personal property and individuals taking the law into their own hands depends on the violence that is deemed permissible because it occurs in the border space. The space itself is liminal in that it is both of the law and outside it, particularly when the ownership of the land itself is contested (whether it is private or governmentally/tribally owned—a differentiation that may not in fact be recognizable). Because the border is a no-man’s land, the authority and power of ideological institutions is redirected to whoever has the power to subjugate others, often through violent means. With the presence of a barrier that enforces an us/them dichotomy, a bio-power dynamic is created which makes
violence permissible. Without the presence of the fence which must be patrolled by armed guards (the institutionalized control over the body of the trespasser) the landscape is free from violence. The presence of the barrier, in this case the barbed wire, appears to encourage the involvement and participation of certain players in the acts of violence surrounding the border. In *Ceremony* it is evident that Destroyers are Silko’s supernatural players, who use the border space for their own purposes: to facilitate violence and death. At the end of the text, when Emo and Pinkie brutally torture and murder Harley, Tayo can see his “body hanging from the fence, where they had tangled it upright between strands of barbed wire” (251). The fact that during this scene Tayo is tempted to jam “the screwdriver into Emo’s skull the way the witchery had wanted” (253) indicates that violence breeds in this border space, inviting Tayo to join in. Parallel is the Arrowboy sequence explaining that “Ck’o’yo magic won’t work/If someone is watching [the witches]” (247). Tayo is Arrowboy, averting the witchery by watching without participating. Still, Tayo battles with whether or not to kill Emo and ultimately succumb to the Destroyers’ story. It is important to recognize that the barbed wire (with its established connection to the border) is used by the Destroyers to kill Harley and to lure Tayo toward participation in the Destroyers’ violence.

The players in Charles Bowden’s creative non-fiction text, *Blue Desert*, are individuals who take on almost theatrical roles performing their involvement in the borderlands. The border is a playing field for an elaborate game, juxtaposing geopolitical borders and animal migratory patterns but ultimately fixated on the competition between humans for survival, material gain, and jobs. In his section “Players,” each major player has a chapter titled for him, including: Frank Escalante, a man “mixed into this ground like straw and mud in an adobe block” (58), Mike Rios who is “convinced that the Bureau of Indian Affairs in particular and whites in general have crushed Indian families with their care and meddling” (71), Foreman, a member of the Earth First! organization, and the Arizona mining town, Ajo, in which the reader meets the Company Man. All of these figures are inhabitants of the borderlands who perform to prove their legitimacy or precedence over one another, whether it is through the rhetoric of heritage, nativism, environmentalism or the workers union. All of these players are directly involved in the construction or the subversion of the border, making violence a reality they face whether it be through the devastation of family life or ownership of traditional lands. Their business is both at the border and of the border. The discussion of border crossing in the final chapter “Blue”
introduces additional players, this time using the structure of a soccer match to describe the undocumented immigrants as players being refereed and watched by those in power. These migrants are invested in the “game,” juxtaposing a competition for survival with the frivolity of a soccer match played for amusement of others. Like the border patrol and the players “called wets by those who hunt them” (151), there is violence simply because their involvement in this war-like game requires it. At first it seems that the players are designated as those who play the game that has been designed for them by those who profit from their “wins” and “losses.” The final sentence of the chapter “Blue” states however that “[t]hey play a game here. We play a game here” (175). The shift from “they” to “we” not only disrupts the illusion of control that is held by those who create and facilitate the game, (read: those who profit from its existence and perpetuation) but also implies the reader’s involvement. The violence incurred by the game is no longer something that occurs to a vague other, but “us” as participants and audience. It is an unequal balance because of the circumstances which bring the players to the border in the first place, fundamentally because those on the suffering side are not participating by choice but for survival. Even Bowden, who mimics the journey taken by undocumented immigrants by trekking across the desert, admits that his participation is a much safer version of what he sees around him. He is a tourist in this deadly playing field, merely experiencing the surface level of the violence so many players endure.

Guillermo Verdecchia discusses the war zone-like state of the border in a much more humorous fashion through the character Wideload in Fronteras Americanas, transforming the players into tourists. Wideload, an inhabitant of the border, has the idea to create a “third-world theme park” in order to make money on what he calls the “Latino Boom” (24). Interestingly enough, the theme park analogy is also used by Luis Alberto Urrea in By the Lake of Sleeping Children in reference to American living (as represented by its media) as a Fantasyland. For the Mexican population across the border, it is described as living “right outside the back fence of Fantasyland...a few short steps away from tomorrow land” (10) where dreams of material gain are possible. Wideload’s theme park moves decidedly from Urrea’s Disneyfied Fantasyland to a perverted version of the theme park, thereby adding to author’s political commentary and defamiliarization. Even though the sequence is hilarious in that it juxtaposes the reality of border life with the surreal nature of the theme park, it does describe the violence and police corruption quite accurately. “You know, you drive up to like big barbed wire gates with guards carrying sub-
machine-guns … and as soon as you’re inside somebody steals your purse and a policeman shows up but he’s totally incompetent and you have to bribe him in order to get any action” (24-5). The scene ends with Wideload’s ultimate plan: to leave “de zone, de barrio” (24) and make a home somewhere else. When he asks the audience if they would like a Chicano for a neighbor there is an insinuation that somehow he would bring the border with him; that they (the audience? The country?) fear a contagion of otherness carried into their space. This works to generate again a rhetoric of invasion over the illusory impermeable social and political border.

By using the structure of the theme-park and then shifting shortly thereafter to a discussion of identity (including the definition of Hispanic,) the violence of the border zone is normalized and integral to the understanding of the individual’s sense of self. The barbed wire gates, the machine guns, and the police corruption are all normalized in the border zone, allowing the audience to be humorously swept along by Wideload’s dialogue. Wideload’s shift from a discussion of the theme-park to personal identity creates a sequence that is indicative of the border space, making his own sense of identity connected with the absurd theme park metaphor he uses to describe the border clash.

In the chapter “The Homeland, Aztlan,” Anzaldúa includes a poem that sums up the ambiguous nature of the borderland, “where the two overlap/ a gentle coming together/ [and] at other times and places a violent clash” (24). This seminal text has been widely regarded as crucial to the understanding of the border but what is interesting is the splitting of identity that occurs because of the physical presence of the border. It describes a literal division of the body and self using the same theme of barbed wire as in Ceremony and Fronteras Americanas:

1, 950 mile-long open wound
    dividing a pueblo, a culture,
    running down the length of my body,
    staking fence rods in my flesh,
    splits me     splits me
    me raja   me raja
this is my home
this thin edge of
barbwire. (24-5)

This excerpt demonstrates a creative fragmenting of the self, combining factual evidence regarding the border with the negotiation of identity generated by such a divide. The splitting described draws a parallel between the landscape that the fence is driven into, the physical body, and the sense of self. Urrea’s authorial position is similarly constructed as “some sort of ‘voice of
the border’...because the border runs down the middle of [him]...[he] ha[s] a barbed-wire fence neatly bisecting [his] heart” (4). The body is metaphorically and physically torn apart in both Anzaldúa and Urrea’s accounts through the use of barbed wire, a man-made object designed specifically to tear and brutalize the flesh. What is intriguing is that through this division, a sense of equality or balance is maintained, despite the violence being described. Being at home on the border becomes a discussion of the body as a place of violence, featuring the same images of barbed wire and flesh found in *Ceremony* to enforce violent action. The hemorrhaging of this wound can bleed a border culture, as Anzaldúa expresses, but any possible growth arises from the spilling of blood, steeping itself in the violence which the border readily produces.

Several characters in *Ceremony* and *Fronteras Americanas* develop strategies to manage the traumatic effects of the borderland, one being a physical rejection of the border. This is not to say that the border is avoided or ignored, which would be impossible since many of the same characters have already internalized its effects, but that the bodies of the characters try to purge it. Nausea and vomiting is the most literal incarnation of this metaphorical purge. Tayo spends much of his time in *Ceremony* vomiting, while in the scene “Travel Sickness,” Verdecchia explains that “whenever I travel I get sick” (48). Traveling, encountering or crossing borders are direct causes for vomiting. These physical reactions remain temporary coping mechanisms as long term or permanent rejection is damaging to the body. Therefore, it is perhaps not only a coping mechanism but an unstoppable physical reaction caused by borderlands and the fear or trauma which is created within them.

Let me turn my attention first towards *Ceremony*, for the complicated and multilayered reasons behind Tayo’s nausea deserve a close examination. Tayo’s vomiting begins with his traumatic experience in the Philippines during World War II, linking his physical rejection with his mental instability (if it can be defined as such) and the brutality of combat. Being in a war zone (a border in and of itself) causes him to break down as a result of his exposure to both the real and the possibly imagined deaths of family members Rocky and Josiah. In fact the first mention of his nausea occurs when “Tayo stood there, stiff with nausea, while they fired at the soldiers, and he watched his uncle fall, and he knew it was Josiah” (8). It is the trauma of viewing the killing which puts him over the edge, later to be defined as “battle fatigue” and “hallucinations [which] were common with malarial fever” (8). Bessel van der Kolk and Alexander McFarlane look at the effect traumatic experiences have on the body and psyche of
the traumatized in “The Black Hole of Trauma” and assert that “despite the human capacity to survive and adapt, traumatic experiences can alter people’s psychological, biological, and social equilibrium to such a degree that the memory [(conscious or unconscious)] of one particular event comes to taint all other experiences” (488). Trauma is often not dealt with until a particular sequence of events causes the repressed memory to rise to the surface. In this sense, Tayo is dealing with traumatic nausea continually attempting to purge itself. This wound of the mind, as Cathy Caruth redefines, “...is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that ... is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and therefore is not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor” (4). If Tayo is examined as having had a traumatic war experience, this certainly seems plausible since from the war onwards, every time Tayo comes into contact with a violent experience or a border encounter, he purges his body. The repetitive purging is in itself a reliving of the traumatic experience. Due to the intricate layering of themes in Silko’s text, I argue that this clinical explanation only in part outlines the fixation on the event and the physical reaction of vomiting.

Todd Jude’s article “Knotted Bellies and Fragile Webs: Untangling and Re-Spinning in Tayo’s Healing Journey” focuses on the act of vomiting as connected to the act of storytelling and the rejection of lies. The question Jude posits is, “why is Tayo’s war trauma localized in his stomach?” (155). Through analyzing moments of Tayo’s nausea it is evident that it relates to the lies that Tayo has internalized, the crux of this argument being that “the importance of a storyteller’s belly explains why Tayo must vomit: he must purge and purify his stomach from the lies fed to him since childhood” (157). In Woman, Native, Other Trinh T. Minh-ha argues that stories are generated from the belly, the physical body housing and preserving them. This relationship between the belly and stories is confirmed on the second page of Ceremony, saying “in the belly of this story/the rituals and the ceremony/are still growing” (2). Orality and storytelling are deeply connected to the body (inverting the Western hierarchy of the written word as authoritatively based in the mind) as Trinh explains that the “further they [the stories] move away from the belly, the more liable they are to be corrupted” (136). If the stories are corrupted, then retaking them into the belly will only work to corrupt the host. What Tayo has taken into himself and internalized through his belly leaving him nauseous, are corrupt stories or lies that cannot exist within him without making him nauseous. The stories cannot be received
back into the body without corrupting because they are manifestations of the trauma experienced by the character. “It is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (Caruth 4). The stories themselves must be healed before Tayo’s nausea will abate. Tayo’s recognition of these corrupt stories as lies actually occurs at the border, while breaking through the barbed wire fence: “he cut into the wire as if cutting away at the lie inside himself” (191). Jude makes a valid point in arguing that storytelling is crucial to the transmission of lies which in turn cause nausea, but it is evident that in the case of Tayo the border itself is the central point of recognition for these lies. It is not until the border is actively being destroyed (through cutting the wires) that he is able to psychologically begin removing the damaging lies that he has internalized.

At the bar when Emo plays with a small bag filled with human teeth Tayo again experiences nausea: “clenching all his muscles against their voices; [Emo] didn’t know that Tayo was sweating, trying to fight off the nausea that surges at him whenever he heard the rattle in the little bag” (55). The nausea arrives in this excerpt in conjunction with the harmful stories Emo tells, accented with each rattle of the bag. It is not made explicit in the text, but it is very clear that it is connected with moments of the remembered violence of the war, whether these memories are fully fleshed and conscious or repressed experiences that haunt Tayo. Emo’s stories and actions are the work of the Destroyers, showing that Tayo’s nausea also stems from the interaction with the evil forces from the spirit world. It directly affects Tayo’s belly, since the belly houses stories, showing that the memories of violence or encounters with the spirit world provide evidence of more corrupt stories. Jude states that in this particular scene,

the word belly appears on that page five times, three times referring to Emo and twice to Tayo... one could say that the core of Ceremony is a battle between the bellies of these two men: Emo, a killer who serves the witchery, spins out stories of evil, destruction, and lies that pit one person against another; Tayo, a healer who serves the Earth, does his best to tell stories that unravel Emo’s lies. (161)

It is perhaps not only remembered violence which causes nausea, but confrontation with the border between the human world and the spirit world. When Tayo sees Josiah’s face instead of that of the dead Japanese solider, he still knows that “the facts made what he had seen an impossibility” (8). This experience opposes the logical reality that would have made it “impossible for the dead man to be Josiah, because Josiah was … thousands of miles from the

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3 I am referring specifically to Destroyers as not all spirit worlds are threatening or provoke nausea.
Philippine jungles” (Silko 8). Still, Tayo is uncertain as to what he should believe to be the truth. His nausea generates from the “logical” rejection of the spirit world, dismissing his fear as irrational. Due to other circumstances which provoke nausea (including moments prompted by Betonie, a medicine man), it can be inferred that Tayo’s vomiting in this scene is symptomatic of trauma, as well as indicating a bridge between the spirit world and the human. Betonie is in direct contact with the spirit world and Emo, an agent of the Destroyers. This would establish the borders Tayo crosses over the duration of the ceremony as bridges between worlds, made tangible through his physical reaction to them. War trauma, violence, uncertainty, lies, and an uneasy relationship to the spirit world where evil spirits or Destroyers are involved, are all found at borders and all provoke Tayo’s attempts to purge the harmful effects that he has internalized through lived experience.

“Travel Sickness” in *Fronteras Americanas* is set when Verdecchia arrives in Buenos Aires on his first trip home to Argentina after having avoided military service. His character explains that he throws up whenever he travels, for no conclusive reason, leaving him “shaking and sweating...with a churning stomach, no strength in [his] legs and unsettling dreams” (48). Nausea is experienced here physically and mentally through dreams. It is not until he leaves his car in Buenos Aires that he begins to feel nauseous, drawing a connection between the physical safety and anonymity of the vehicle and his physical reaction. Leaving the car creates vulnerability, making him fear that he will be taken away by the police (an ominous and ambiguous threat) because of fleeing his military service. Interestingly, this indicates that Verdecchia experiences vomiting in connection with the avoided military experience, just as Tayo vomits after refusing to shoot the Japanese soldiers. There is clearly a link between the institutionalized violence of war and the expressed need to purge the body in both these characters. In addition to this, there is also a correlation between the lie Verdecchia has spun about military service and his sickness which again relates back to the notion that internalized lies or corrupt stories must be purged from the body to prevent further corruption.

The act of entering into a liminal space through traveling from one country to another, especially within a context of fear or uncertainty, creates a physical rejection. The body cannot cope with the uncertainty and, thus, attempts to purge the experience. The purging must be acknowledged as dangerous in and of itself, for the body cannot exist in a continual state of rejection. Verdecchia continues to use rhetoric of purging in the “Other” (directly following
“Travel Sickness”) by re-enacting a conversation with his doctor which illustrates the dangerous and violent act of rejection. He informs the doctor that due to his Argentinean-Canadian hybridity, part of him “feel[s] not nowhere, not neither” and then finally asks him to...

“Find it.”
“Find what?”
“Whatever it is.”
“And when we find it?”
“Get rid of it.” (51)

This is an ambiguous request to not only purge but dissect the body from its connection to the border. The request to “[g]et rid of it” mirrors the violence of the border that causes the body to eliminate the association. It is reminiscent of the body described by Anzaldúa and Urrea as divided by barbed wire, yet it lacks the balance generated in their accounts (the body described by Anzaldúa and Urrea is divided but still a total sum of its parts). Rather, this excerpt from *Fronteras Americanas* can be read as a removal of all non-homogenous attributes, erasing the divided identity that the character is not able to reconcile with. Any removal of particular attributes will disrupt Verdecchia’s whole identity in a pseudo-colonial maneuver. If the excerpt is read as an act of “getting rid of” the border (or divide) itself, perhaps it is indicative of a desire for uncontested wholeness.

The borderlands as a war-zone or area of conflict not only causes physical rejections in those who encounter it, but also creates massive shifts in identity since “conflict, with its fiery nature, can trigger transformation” (Anzaldúa 4). Since the border is violent and war torn, the figure which most readily emerges is that of the warrior. In Monique Mojica’s *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* and Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*, several women temporarily adopt violent or warrior identities as a way of reacting to the ongoing violence. In both texts the woman warrior figure is an alternative identity that juxtaposes the vulnerable self with the persona created to battle in the borderland.

If the border is already considered a violent space, the amount of violence directed towards women must be addressed. Male gang culture and machismo results in a disturbingly high fatality rate, as a high number of men become involved in narco wars, while women are targeted specifically because of their gender. One need not look farther than Ciudad Juárez for a prime example of the femicide that has occurred in this space. There is a staggering amount of violence, specifically the kidnapping, rape, torture and homicide of targeted women in the hundreds. *Señorita Extraviada: Missing Young Woman* by Lourdes Portillo investigates the
disappearances and murders of women in Juárez through interviewing family members and analyzing the political responses. Police are often ineffective, corrupt, or perpetrators themselves, thereby leaving targeted women unprotected. In the time it took to film Señorita Extraviada alone there were 50 reported missing women—excluding cases that were dismissed, ignored, or unreported—validating the ineffectual work of police. In Juárez: The Laboratory of Our Future, Bowden discusses his early naivety, writing for newspapers with “a childlike faith in facts” (67) and trust in lawful protection. Bowden acknowledges his earlier inexperienced assumption that the systems of justice and government designed to protect citizens endeavored to be successful. As he interrogates the violence in Ciudad Juárez, he argues that the systemic corruption facilitates the homicides, solidifying his position by examining the involvement of different players, including the gangs, politicians, and media, as well as those explicitly accused of kidnapping, raping, torturing and murdering the missing women. This is reminiscent of Blue Desert where the author conceptualizes the different roles of individuals and organizations as though they were players in an elaborate economic game. The fact that a large number of the disappeared women worked for maquiladoras (most often international or US owned factories) also indicates the involvement of foreign players once again participating in the creation of an unsafe space at the border. The urge to create a strong warrior woman in fiction and drama who can inhabit and survive in the borderlands is unsurprisingly comforting when compared with the alternative: reality.

Mojica constructs the character of Malinche as developing out of Contemporary Woman #1, causing her to surface from the ongoing dramatic context like an angry volcano. The war zone being referenced in this case is that which ensues after the arrival of Cortés and the consequential borders between the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas and their colonial invaders. The first notable shift in identity is the alternating names being presented by the Musician (the other actress on stage), first calling the character Malinche “Puta! Chingada! Cabrona!” and then “Santa Maria, Santa Maria, Santa Malinche” (22). Immediately there is a discrepancy between these two identities that must be reconciled, as it provokes a Manichean duality of the virgin saint and the “Traitor! Whore!” (23). This “fixation, upon the savagery and the evilness of the native.... [and] then the European’s attempt to civilize [her] can continue

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4 This description should not negate the very real and important work being accomplished by real women “warriors” working in this region, but illustrate the desire for such figures to be represented in fiction and drama.
indefinitely” (JanMohamed 98-9) and indeed does within Mexican culture. Malinche herself tries to resist this dichotomy by renaming herself, saying “[m]y name is Malinali. Not Doña Marina, not Malinche, La Chingada” (22). Octavio Paz analyzes the use of “la chingada” (the fucked one) in his text Labyrinth of Solitude, coming to the conclusion that the act of being la chingada, “causes her to lose her identity: she is the Chingada ... She loses her name; she is no one; she disappears into nothingness; she is Nothingness” (Paz 77). The nothingness Paz refers to is not seen in Mojica’s rendering of the character as she is instead more resistant of the title and the passivity it entails. Resisting the title of la chingada allows her to resist the act of violence done upon her, on a personal level and as a commentary on the social dynamics of la chingada and el chingón (the fucker). Chingar, in Spanish, “denotes violence, an emergence from oneself to penetrate another by force.... to injure, to lacerate, to violate – bodies, souls, objects – and to destroy” (Paz 68). In the overarching narrative of machismo which is often associated with el chingón, there is a socialized normalcy (similar to Foucault’s institutionalized bio-power) which forces one gender (the female or the feminine) into submission. By not being passive, the character Malinche questions the amount of power el chingón has over her and reverses their roles through her transformation into a volcano.

Interestingly, Mojica specifically names the character “Malinche” rather than allowing her to remain ambiguous or neutral, choosing for her the identity of La Malinche. JanMohamed in “The Economy of the Manichean Allegory” explains that the “power relations underlying this model set in motion such strong currents that even a writer who is reluctant to acknowledge it and who may indeed be highly critical of imperialist exploitation is drawn into its vortex” (99). Mojica is navigating nebulous territory in her naming of Malinche, both ascribing to and resisting the allegory through the dialogue and character. Mojica as “Malinche” brings the discussion of power dynamics and the inherent violence of the chingón to the forefront of her performance. This is not intended to accuse the author of perpetuating myths of the savage and the civilized, but makes apparent the negotiation required to address binary opposition.

Although she is unwillingly placed in this position, Malinche recognizes herself as powerful, claiming, “I am a gift, claimed as value by this man in metal. I can change the words. I have power. Now I ride at the side of Cortés, the lady of the conquistador. Smart woman. I am a strategist. Dangerous Woman” (23). This power allows her to resist the passivity of being la chingada and instead be valued by the warlord Cortés and to be crucial to the Spanish conquest
of the Americas. By her description of la Noche Triste, it is apparent that she does not actually belong on either side of the battle; she neither abhors nor applauds the (short-lived) Aztec victory over the Spanish. Rather, she explains her ambivalence and her position by saying: “you say it was me betrayed my people, but it was they betrayed me” (24). This statement attempts to justify her allegiance to Cortés, not resulting from rejection or hatred, but as a method of survival in which she has truly excelled. Although Malinche physically transforms into a deadly volcano using a cloth prop, she is also symbolically a bringer of life: “[b]leed into this piece of earth where I grow, mix with volcanic ash and produce fertile soil... [b]orn from the earth, fed with my blood, anything alive here is alive because I stayed alive!” (24-5). The duality of violence, rape and the production of new life reaffirm the complicated nature of la chingada and her role as a physical embodiment of the borderlands. “The hijo de la chingada is the offspring of violation, abduction or deceit” (Paz 71) inhabiting the borderlands between races and social norms. It is through this relationship to la chingada that the mestizo population traverses a border between acknowledging their history and “condemn[ing their] origins and deny[ing their] hybridism” since the “strange permanence of Cortés and La Malinche in the Mexican’s imagination and sensibilities reveals that they are something more than historical figures: they are symbols of a secret conflict that we have still not resolved” (Paz 77-8). The violent figure of the volcano juxtaposed with this bringer of life is a duality based on the violation of la chingada, parallel to that of the virgin-saint/traitor-whore binary.

Also present in *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* is “Transformation 7: Deity/Woman of the Puna/Virgin Transfiguration.” Similar to the Malinche character who is presented ultimately as a bringer of life, the Deity tells the ironic story of how she transformed from the “warrior woman / rebel woman / creator/destroyer / womb of the earth / mother of all” (35) into a virgin. As in the previously analyzed passage, there is an obvious Manichean allegory at play creating the powerful goddess and the controllable virgin linked with the invading Spanish. This process is a recreation of identity as the Virgin describes being “separated from myself my balance destroyed, / scrubbed clean/ made lighter, non threatening” (37). The fragmentation of identity completes itself through the transformation, and yet there is the hint of resistance in the abounding irony of the transformation itself. Mojica juxtaposes the goddess virgin character with that of a contemporary woman smuggling bottles of liquor “in her vagina—the perfect hiding place” (38) to her imprisoned husband. Female genitalia and the resourceful
warrior woman are here presented as rebels against (dominantly male) authority, connecting the historically specific characters to the contemporary world.

The establishment of the woman warrior is a borderlands position based on the presumption that woman and warrior are opposites of an established binary. In Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*, a multi-voiced narrative spanning 500 years, the in between position of the woman warrior can be seen in the character Angelita La Escapía. There are three chapter titles which name her directly, but with significant differences: “Comrade La Escapía and the Cuban” (309), “Angelita, aka La Escapía, the Meat Hook” (467), and “Angelita La Escapía Explains Engels and Marx” (517). From these chapter headings, it is evident that the character Angelita functions under several different names and combinations thereof, alternatively referencing her as Angelita, Angelita La Escapía, and La Escapía. There is never an explanation in the text where the name La Escapía came from or why she adopted it, but there is a striking difference between the two names. Angelita, a literally angelic Christianized name is juxtaposed with a striking image of violence. She states that she “did not care if El Feo teased her or called her by her war name La Escapía, all the time” (Silko 712), but in this statement it is evident that her war name is a more public and communally developed title than “Angelita.” Silko emphasizes the difference of these names repeatedly in the body of her text, as well as notably in the Five Hundred Year Map. Appearing at the beginning of the Almanac, the Five Hundred Year Map is a visual rendering of the physical movement of characters and major themes of the text (spanning five hundred years), designed to illustrate the intersections between people and places. On this map, Angelita and La Escapía are listed as two different identities separated by El Feo. El Feo is positioned in between the two names, indicating that he is central to the bridging between Angelita and La Escapía by facilitating the performance of both identities.

Michelle Jarman claims that in *Almanac of the Dead*, “self-reflective identity formation is one of the few avenues through Destroyer culture to an alternative perspective which seeks out and allows the strange, the unknown and the different” (161). Identity is therefore something that is not only malleable but open to modification. In being self-reflective, Angelita questions the names which she is given, but acknowledges their relative unimportance to her task at hand. This could be why she is given so many names and even epithets to describe her, all of which she

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5 The generic differences between theatrical productions and Silko’s fiction offer a new perspective to the discussion of identity as the effect of variations in naming become more pronounced when written.
acknowledges as her own while remaining unperturbed. George Melnyk’s *poetics of naming* claims that “personal names, how they come into being and how we relate to them ... are metaphors for us, interpretations of who we are, in our culture(s)...in personal names reside the totality of ourselves, our realities, the universes we inhabit both physically and psychically” (2). It is through the negotiating of her private and warrior selves that Angelita shifts from one name to the other with surprising agility. It is questionable as to which name holds more weight over her identity since neither appears to contain the totality Melnyk proposes. Angelita precedes La Escapía, maybe indicating that her personal identity is what drives her as a character; however, this is a Christianized assumption based on a first name being more personalized than a surname or nickname. The juxtaposition of her Christian name and her chosen name can also serve to represent another cultural border which Angelita La Escapía navigates. La Escapía could be interpreted as more demonstrative of her identity because it is not a Christian name; however, without a present explanation for its existence in the text, the reader is left without any real surety in this decision. She is known as Angelita and La Escapía, as well as a combination of the two, demonstrating an explicitly hybridized identity which neither name can individually or completely define.

There is also the presence of epithets in *Almanac of the Dead*, as both El Feo and Tacho-Wacah name “wild woman Angelita” (Silko 474). Wild Woman Angelita and Comrade La Escapía are almost paradoxical when considering that surely the angelic name is more appropriately matched with a communal identity and the wildness matched with the Meat Hook? Despite this seemingly bizarre pairing, it serves to reinforce the idea of non-hierarchical oppositions being paired within single characters. This is in accordance with Trinh’s discussion of the woman warrior where “destroying and saving...are here one single process...not two processes in opposition or in conflict” (132). The duality provides tension between the various identities, but it also indicates a need for balance (particularly spiritual balance) within the woman. The warrior woman must be peaceful and violent, destructive and creative in order to serve her purpose, indeed, in the case of Angelita, as a “warrior angel” (Silko 468). In order to be the woman warrior, she must reconcile these two components and move between them in order to pursue political and spiritual victory.

In terms of warfare and the borderland, it is evident that Angelita will be directly involved in the physical combat which will occur as the Twin Brothers, El Feo and Tacho-
Wacah, march North with their followers. The Twin Brothers in *Almanac of the Dead* must appear peaceful as they march to reclaim the land, in order to gain their followers and complete their mission. It does not initially appear that, other than their physical walking across borders, they will be warrior figures in any armed conflict that arises (which is instead relegated to Angelita and Rambo, leader of the Homeless Army). Rather, they are spiritual warriors, encountering the borderlands between reality and the realm of dreams much like Tayo does in *Ceremony*. The twins “in the old days … had answered the people’s cry for help when terrible forces or great monsters threatened the people” (Silko 475) and therefore must come again to the aid of the people. As they were parted from each other at birth, the Twin Brothers represent a coming together of fragments designating them as the spiritual figure heads for the march.

The peacefulness of El Feo and Tacho-Wacah contradict Angelita’s perception of the mission to retake the land because she does “not believe in leaving the people of the twin brothers defenseless, even if the spirit macaw had said the end of the Europeans in the Americas was inevitable” (Silko 712). The march and the Twin Brothers supposedly do have the protection of spirits, but this intangible insurance is not enough for the warrior woman. El Feo’s involvement with Angelita La Escapía and his agreement in her preparations for physical violence indicate that although he performs peacefulness for his followers and the international gaze, he facilitates her warrior behavior as they cross the border thereby creating duplicity in his own character. It is interesting then, that the Twin Brothers act as these symbolic figures in a peaceful manner while permitting Angelita La Escapía and Rambo-Roy⁶ to be the “human beings, warriors to defend the religious pilgrims” (Silko 712).

Reminiscent of El Feo and Tacho-Wacah are the Mayan hero twins from the *Popol Vuh*: reincarnated trickster figures that set out to overcome the evil Lords of Xibalba. If Silko’s Twin Brothers are versions of the Mayan hero twins, Hunahpú and Xbalanqué, the act of appearing peaceful while still supporting Angelita La Escapía’s warlike attitude could be read as an elaborate trick in order to accomplish their end goal. The Mayan twins often appear to be innocent or harmless in order to confuse the evil Lords, having other helpers do their work for them. For example, when told to collect flowers from the gardens of Hun-Camé and Vucub-Camé, they have hoards of ants (zompopos) fetch them while they themselves are in the House of Knives. Intended to destroy them, Hunahpú and Xbalanqué survive the House of Knives by

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⁶ A veteran soldier turned leader of the homeless, discussed further in chapter 3.
soothing them with the promise “yours shall be the flesh of all the animals” (146). The use of
animals to do the physical work and the promise of violence against said animals parallels
Silko’s twins El Feo and Tacho-Wacah who side step violence themselves but recognize the
inevitable danger to their followers. The followers are not without protection however, as they
have Rambo-Roy, protected by a fetishized green beret, and Angelita La Escapía, who “hear[s]
from spirits too- only her spirits [are] furious and they [tell] her to defend the people from
attack” (Silko 712). The reclaiming of the land is not only a physical endeavor with the
possibilities of open warfare, it is a spiritual battle against the Destroyers which must be led by
the Twin Brothers in order to succeed.

The border creates opportunities for violence and warfare because of its dependence on
bio-power hierarchies, institutionalized violence, and potential for subversion. The players (as
posited by Bowden) who interact, control, or live in the borders are either subject to or
perpetuate the violence that surrounds the area. Ceremony, Fronteras Americanas and
Borderlands/La Frontera discuss violence at the border as enacted through the physical
responses of the body, with attention to destroyer culture, spirits, and barbed wire. Princess
Pocahontas and the Blue Spots and Almanac of the Dead present the performance of multiple
identities (or fragmentation) in characters that react to the violence of political, racial and
cultural borders by becoming warriors in either physical or spiritual combat. The violence of the
nepantla is met with yet more violence by those traumatized by it, whether it is directed inwards
(such as Verdecchia’s urge to get rid of the conflict in his identity) or towards another (Angelita
La Escapía’s role in the Twin Brothers’ march). In all cases the individual characters take on the
characteristics of the border, performing through the body the in-between characteristics of
nepantla. Anzaldúa’s expressed possibility of healing in nepantla is continuously hinted at,
although it is undeniable that any need for healing must arise from a bloody and violent
beginning. In this chapter, I have begun to examine how the border affects those who encounter
it and adapt to it, but largely have looked at the violent destructive results of border interactions.
In the next chapter, I will continue to build from this line of study, moving into a more directed
focus on the border’s most “successful” inhabitants: those who have the unique ability to use the
border’s natural power dynamics and violent tendencies for their own purposes.
Chapter 2

Tricksters, Witches, Shamans and Storytellers: the Inhabitants of the Borderlands

When examining the borderlands it is important to consider how the inhabitants of this space facilitate or complicate border crossings. It is evident that several key figures are used as guides for those encountering borders (geopolitical and other), and creators through storytelling, including the trickster figure and the witch. The trickster figure is an inhabitant of the borderlands who is established through a state of play, (re)creation of identity, trickery and humour. The witch similarly manipulates or tricks those around him/her/it, often (though not always) with sinister undertones and, like the trickster, acts as a mediator between different realms. Storytellers, like the authors being analyzed, similarly engage in the behaviours adopted by tricksters and witches by crossing borders of genre to manipulate the reader. I will argue that the author as a created persona can be analyzed in accompaniment to the trickster and witch figures. Authors writing about the border are guides for those encountering it and must (at least in part) inhabit borderlands themselves.

The trickster figure is a transient one that adapts to situations and contexts; “Trickster is polytropic, which in its simplest sense means ‘turning many ways’” (Hyde 52). Those who take on trickster-like qualities exhibit the same sort of variability, making it difficult to present an accurate description of its characteristics. Jo-Ann Archibald explains that the definition of “English word ‘trickster’ is a poor one because it cannot portray the diverse range of ideas that First Nations associate with the Trickster, who sometimes is like a magician, an enchanter, an absurd prankster, or a Shaman, who sometimes is a shape shifter, and who often takes on human characteristics” (5). This fluid and diverse identity allows the trickster to be just about anything while still embodying core identifiers of the role. Archibald’s text Indigenous Storywork explains that one can appreciate “the Trickster as a ‘doing’ rather than a ‘being’” (6) therefore allowing performers the malleability and transformative qualities he/she/it needs to behave in a trickster fashion. A trickster that is limited to only one role denies it the possibility for transformation and shape-shifting which are central to its identity. Only if trickster is understood as an active “doing” is it possible for characters to take on the role of trickster.
Taking on the role of trickster\(^7\) is identifiable through the performance of trickster-like characteristics which include hyper sexuality, immoral or amoral behavior, and a combination of creative and destructive forces. Subverting dominant narratives, disrupting social expectations, and taking advantage of others for personal gains (often without realizing or acknowledging consequences) are also common to the trickster figure. These traits can be readily seen in the dramatic performances of certain characters in Monique Mojica’s *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* and Guillermo Verdecchia’s *Fronteras Americanas*. In both performances, certain characters exhibit trickster-like qualities, being highly sexual, humorous, subversive, and purposefully disrupting audience expectation. The sexual nature of tricksters is vital to the understanding of their function, including its sexual allure, promiscuity, and gender bending tactics. Not only does this root trickster figures’ creative potentials in the sexual act, but also allows for characters that use trickster-like tactics to manipulate their sexualities to fool audiences. Sexual or gendered “acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs” (Butler 73). Tricksters use these fabricated signs to trick their audience, demonstrating the socially constructed nature of identity through the trick itself. When combined with humor, barbed discussions of sexual stereotypes and other subjectivities offer new levels of social commentary. In *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* and *Fronteras Americanas* there is an oversimplification of personalities in the characters Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides (a version of Coyote) and Wideload, developing a character product which can be parodied and used to subvert audience expectations using trickster methods. This is not to say that Wideload is a specific embodiment of a cultural trickster, for as Hyde explains in *Trickster Makes This World*, “‘Trickster’ is abstraction enough, already distanced from particular embodiments like Hermes and Coyote … [and] actual individuals are always more complicated than the archetype, and more complicated than its local version, too” (14). Wideload rather employs trickster-like qualities to his advantage, just as Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides does, using sexuality and connections to consumerism to attract audiences to the parody before explicitly overturning it with the “laughter, humor and irony [that] permeate everything Trickster does” (Radin xxiv).

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\(^7\)I mean this as taking on trickster-like qualities or behaviors, not becoming the embodiment of a specific cultural trickster such as Coyote. I use the term “trickster figures” to differentiate between those characters taking on trickster behaviors and Tricksters.
In Mojica’s drama the trickster figure is explicitly designated in the list of character descriptions. This does not limit the trickster qualities to only one character but draws attention to that specific character’s manipulation and function as trickster in the drama. The character is Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides whom Mojica describes as “one of the many faces of the Trickster, Coyote ... a contestant in the Miss North American Indian Beauty Pageant and she is stuck in the talent segment” (14). She is a sexualized rendition of the Indian Princess trope, poking fun at the white, patriarchal structure of the pageant by her talent performance of “Indianness.” It is Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides who begins the performance (after being introduced by the Host) dressed in a “white ‘buckskin’ dress and carrying an over-sized ear of corn” (18) offering audience members cornnuts in a plastic bag, breaking the fourth wall in the process. This satirical version of a sacred offering is commercialized through the mass production of cornnuts (a wide step away from the natural or healthy) and then humorously readopted. In such a campy performance where the corn is directly equated with herself through the gestures of “(pointing to the ear of corn) Corn[,] (pointing to herself) Maiden” (19), she is drawing a connection between her physical body with the consumption of commercialized cornnuts. Even her name, Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides (an adaptation of a common idiom) relates her identity to an edible indulgence and at the same time indicates her ability to profit from doing two things at once. Profiting from duality is typically trickster, and reinforces the paradoxical nature of the character that can both embody and subvert simultaneously. Equating the body with the consumption of food for pleasure has sexual and colonial overtones that are later emphasized with the correlations drawn between food and sexual attraction between her character and Captain Whiteman: “[o]h Capitan Whiteman, you’re the cheese in my fondue,” “[o]h Capitan Whiteman, I’m your buckskin clad dessert” and, finally, “[b]e my muffin, I’ll be your marmalade” (26-27). The last quotation is repeated three times, emphasizing the relationship between food and sex, ownership and consumption. The notion of the “buckskin clad dessert” (26) however also indicates that although an overall rhetoric of food is being generated, it is the white conqueror/consumer who is literally feeding upon the native princess for pleasure. References to “buckskin” become signs that help identify connections between consumerism and the physical and exotic “Indian” body of the actress performing.

Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides is aware of her sexuality demonstrating that she is using this rhetoric as a trickster for her own purposes. “I’ll let you civilize me” (26) has more
consciousness and self-awareness than I initially expected from the Indian Princess trope, leading me to understand that this manifestation of the stereotype is not such a passive product of colonial manipulation. Most importantly her statements are delivered in a tongue-in-cheek manner that perpetuates the stereotype being presented and still works to deconstruct it through humor, continually crossing borders which demarcate stereotypes from “reality.” It must be remembered that throughout Princess Buttered-On Both-Sides’s performances on stage she is presented as though competing in the fictitious Miss North American Indian Beauty pageant, which is itself a farcical mimicry of general beauty pageants (where whiteness and Western stereotypes are most common). Other statements, such as standing “in front of the tobacco store, fighting for DEMOCRACY” (49), parody what is expected as a stereotypical indigenous beauty pageant contestant. Her statements are intentionally ridiculous, solidifying her role as trickster. The trick being played in this case is that by being the initial object of ridicule due to the over the top costuming, props and mimicking behaviors, Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides is able to implicate the audience’s involvement by thanking them for making her win, talking to them directly as the Cigar Store Squaw, and giving them cornnuts. By having audience members consume the cornnuts, they are directly equated with the consuming Captain Whiteman who sexually devours her as an exoticized woman. Asking the audience “was that not spiritual?” after do-wopping and then later expressing “I would like us to be friends, real good friends ... like blood brothers, and blood sisters” (27) creates humor in the contrasting parody, and forces the audience to recognize their connection with her. Because Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides speaks directly to the audience and creates this kind of bond, she also serves as a guide for their negotiation of the performance. The Storybook Pocahontas, Pocahontas/Lady Rebecca/Matoaka, Contemporary Woman #1 and the Spirit Animal are all performed in sequence by the same actress, allowing the audience to follow the levels of humor and subversion after having encountered Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides. The Miss North American Indian Beauty pageant serves as a framing structure for the drama as a whole, acting as a platform for the actors to build their subversive characters, bringing the audience members on a journey with each of the transformations.

Wideload in *Fronteras Americanas* performs in a very similar manner to that of Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides, using sexuality and its connections to consumerism to play off of the audience’s expectations. The tropes Wideload uses as his basis are those of dancing, the figure of
the Latin Lover, and the Saxon’s consumption of this sexual Hollywood product. He refers to the allure of the Latin Lover as being part of “the Exotica factor” (41), which assumes a series of stereotypes based on objectification of the Latino/a. William Nericcio investigates in depth the origins and implications of the Latin stereotype in his publication *Text(t)-Mex: Seductive Hallucinations of the “Mexican” in America*, particularly in a chapter focusing on the Latina bombshell, actress Lupe Vélez. He explains that “…Vélez and her handlers helped concretize an image of Latina ‘exoticness,’ sensuality, and silliness that dogs those who have inherited her mantle in film and, most importantly, those Latinas and Latinos not in film, whose lives unfurl in the powerful shadow of Hollywood’s convincing confabulations” (157). The propagation of this stereotype reaches beyond the life span of the actress, creating a niche for the exotic Latin Lover that Wideload references. “When you are dealing with the seductive hallucination of a ‘Mexican’ in the semiotic and cultural history of the Americas, especially in the United States of America, rigorous lines dividing animated puppet (Vélez) from animated puppet (Speedy) are hallucinations themselves” (Nericcio 158), which is to say that both figures, Vélez and the cartoon Speedy Gonzales, are representations of an exoticness made for Hollywood spectator consumption. The sexual implications are of course more directed to Vélez than Speedy because the age demographic that they are marketed towards is different, yet the act of construction and exotica remains.

The discussion of the Latin Lover in *Fronteras Americanas* is accompanied by an examination of historical Latin Lover archetypes through the media, where Wideload facilitates a journey through time for the audience to see the development and proliferation of this trope. “In his deconstruction of a ‘Latin’ identity, he is also working through his own sense of just who he is … and just how many of the ‘Latino’ characteristics as portrayed in the media he has internalized” (Nothof 7). Is Wideload himself an animated puppet (to borrow Nericcio’s phrase) or is he something else depending on his performance? He is certainly the guide through the mire of unreal expectations and assumptions, listing and demonstrating famous actors and actresses and magazines which create and perpetuate this stereotype, as well as being a live representation of the stereotype’s complexities.

By being a Mexican character and using the personal pronoun “we” in his discussion of the “Latin Lover Fantasy,” (42) Wideload implicates himself in the discussion with the audience. He is more explicit in his connection between his heritage and the “archetypes of men and...
women built for pleasure” than Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides, and questions the audience directly by asking “[w]hose pleasure mang? Your movie-going pleasure? The pleasure of de Fashion-Industrial-Hollywood complex?” (47). Wideload is simultaneously embodying the Latin Lover stereotype and ridiculing the audience for recognizing it. It is evident that he tends to embody the stereotype when it most benefits himself, such as when he shares the secret “Latins are no sexier dan Saxons,” and then adds “well maybe just a little” (42). As long as the insinuation that the sexual virility of the Latin Lover improves Wideload’s own sexual identity, it is adopted, but when the generalization continues to create negative stereotypes or assumptions, he rejects them. Nericcio’s explanation that “stereotypes imprint themselves upon their purveyors, their projectors, and their witness in a way that is hard to characterize without seeming to exaggerate” (164) seems relevant here because just as he claims Vélez was emulating the characteristics Hollywood had given her (making her just “so damn full of ‘her’ self” [164] at the end of her career) Wideload both emulates and resists the stereotypes he brings up.

The allure of Wideload’s character as trickster-like is not exclusively the sexual overtones of his Latinness, although this certainly can be considered a part. His unbridled humor, rather, seems to make the difference in building his character as trickster-like. Wideload makes hyperbolic statements that are superficially impossible or hilarious while maintaining an unsettlingly serious root (a tactic also seen in Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots). This allows for these characters to seduce the audience into laughing with them, and then laugh at or accuse the audience of inappropriate laughter. Near the end of the performance, Wideload attacks the audience by asking: “what is it with you people? Who do you think you are? Who do you think we are? Yes, I am calling you—I am generalizing, I am reducing you all to de lowest common denominator, I am painting you all with the same brush. Is it starting to bug you yet?” (76). Up until this point in the text Wideload has been generalizing frequently in his discussions of Mexican, Chicano/a, and Hispanic cultures, as well as expressing that he “want[s] to cash in on de Latino Boom … a very hot commodity right now,” (24) so when he begins to attack the audience in earnest, it is a trickster shift where the laughter is reversed. This particular tactic runs the risk of belittling Wideload’s subversive message but is sidestepped when Wideload explains that “it’s all been kind of funny this evening. Dat has been my mistake. I have wanted you to like me so I’ve been a funny guy” (76). Even in this admission of having been performing in a humorous fashion, Wideload implicates the audience by citing them as his reason for behaving in
such a manner. With the context of stereotyping that Wideload and Verdecchia have established thus far, the fact he has performed as a “funny guy” in order to be likable is recognizably problematic and should incite self-reflection in the implicated audience members. This is the trick the Trickster plays: performing as the object of ridicule, inciting complicity and laughter, and then making the audience uncomfortable as they realize their participation in creating the ideological narratives being depicted.

Humor is a tactic used by trickster figures, whether it is through generating laughter at their own expense or redirecting it back at those they are manipulating. The tricks played, however, are not always light hearted or free of danger. Because Tricksters are not specifically good or evil, their tricks often walk a border between the two, and the results of their actions depend on the perception of the tricked. Popular Tricksters include specific cultural deities such as Hermes, Loki, Anansi, Raven, Hare and Coyote, but it is the latter that attracts the most attention in the borderlands. Coyote is an Anglicized adaptation of the Nahuatl word coyotl and it is evident that prior to the Spanish invasion this figure enjoyed a large cult following. The “Aztecs had a god called Coyotlinauatl...whom they dressed in coyote skins,” as well as “another being called Tezcalipoca, who was supposed to be able to transform himself into a coyote” (Dobie 253). There is a historical basis, therefore, for this manifestation of the trickster in the region surrounding the Mexico/US border.

What pertains to the borderlands specifically regarding this particular trickster, are the various ways that “coyote” has been adopted into language. J. Frank Dobie’s *The Voice of the Coyote* argues that the “coyote’s domination of endless folk tales and superstitions has added to the name some shadings too elusive for definition or translation,” (258) making “coyote” the linguistic root for several plants, drugs, and actions concerning theft, smuggling, and sexuality. It is also supposedly synonymously used “for native, and is applied to Indians and mestizos (mixed-bloods) as readily as plants” (258), although by whom it is not clear. This definition that Dobie claims is used in New Mexico refers to “an individual who has “a mixture of Anglo and Hispanic bloods or of Caucasian and Indian – who is loyal to neither line” (259). This problematic argument hinges on how loyalty is read (since it could have multiple meanings in this case) though most relevant are the circumstances that allow the individual to perform or conceal his or her heritage and familial loyalty. If loyalty depends on the family’s acceptance of the child, thereby engendering feelings of belonging, then it is possible that a rejection from
either side could provoke this definition. Dobie’s assertion that there must be loyalty “to neither line,” however, is troublesome and does not function in the borderlands. When Trickster is added to this definition, combining the ambivalence to mixed heritage, there develops the possibility to interpret the coyote mestizo as being paradoxically loyal to neither and both simultaneously precisely because of his/her in-between positioning. I disagree with Dobie’s assertion that there must be “loyal[ty] to neither line” as it is an incomplete definition when the paradox of border identity is at hand. If the paradox is accepted, then it could become possible to define characters like Tayo in Ceremony, and even authors like Gloria Anzaldúa as “coyote” because their mestizo blood allows them to exist in an in-between state. This etymological linkage is fraught with issues, accompanied by Dobie’s questionable authority, but still it offers an interesting connection. “Coyote” could be related to the racialized and dispossessed that exist in the borderlands, perhaps indicating that those individuals are more likely to take on trickster-like behaviors in order to survive.

On the geopolitical Mexico/US border, “coyote” refers to human smugglers of undocumented individuals, acting as the personal guide for those trying to navigate across this space. It is obvious that this subversion of the law is done for profit, and since coyote as a mythological trickster figure often bargains it is not surprising that a modern adoption of the name has these connotations. Bowden’s article “Exodus: Border-Crossers Forge a New America” details the role the coyote plays in the act of smuggling. “Men with quick eyes look you over, the employees of coyotes, people smugglers...now you are a pollo, a chicken, and you need a pollero, a chicken herder” (Bowden 4). The coyote himself is rarely if ever seen, instead having his agents or employees dealing with the actual smuggling of the pollos, remaining as elusive and intangible as his mythological counterpart. Bowden describes a distinct lack of sympathy by the smugglers for the pollos which they transport north, explaining that “they fall between two worlds, and people such as [the coyote] wait in this space” (6). This emphasizes the ambivalence that the coyote has, not out of evilness or intentional spite, but because once his role in the trick (the subversion of the law) ends, there simply is no remaining attachment or moral responsibility.

Paul Radin, in the prefatory note to The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology, explains that Trickster “wills nothing consciously... know[ing] neither good nor evil yet is responsible for both...[h]e possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being” (xxiii). It is unsurprising that
the coyote profiteer “in Mexico now earn[s] at least $10 billion a year” (Bowden 8) and feels no remorse for smuggling people who, with the odds against them, could very well be deported or caught by border patrol. This negotiation of redeemable qualities (such as humor) and less attractive behavior (profiting from systemic abuse) make the coyote a questionable agent that is beyond moral admonishment or admiration.

Identifying the witch figure in borderlands texts might appear to be an easier task than distinguishing the trickster who is always shape-shifting and morally questionable, and yet there are levels of perception that complicate the process. Western culture’s reliance on scientific proof makes it difficult to identify the differences between the spirit world and imagined fantasy. As a cultural outsider there are times where I cannot immediately distinguish variations which might be obvious to an insider in works by authors like Silko. Nevertheless, the divide between the real and the “supernatural” is a predominantly Western construct which creates a boundary that must be navigated, allowing the trickster and the witch to serve as coyote smugglers in these borderlands. Even though recognizing witches often depends on differentiating evil beings from benign guides, there must be room made to allow for the necessary role of the paradoxical witch who, like the trickster, is neither good nor evil. This is not to argue that witches cannot be agents of evil, as Silko suggests the Destroyers are, but there is often the presence of a duality which complicates the characters and leaves the reader unsettled when encountering witches. Identifying and interpreting witches requires deliberation between danger and safety, often hinging on the individual perception of witches as well as the characters’ and the reader’s (such as myself) ability to accurately recognize them given cultural and personal expectations and assumptions.

Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* includes several witch figures; some of whom are readily labeled as such and others who exude witch-like qualities yet resist the title. The old Yupik woman who Lecha encounters is by most definitions a witch, using a spinning walrus tusk to captivate her audience and “special fur pelts” (156) to manipulate electrical currents and crash airplanes. It is evident that although the character is aware of her witch-like behavior, she is compelled to continue perpetuating this identity: “although the old woman had tried to stop roaming about the village after midnight to prevent further accusations of sorcery, she could not resist” (156). As she is an old woman actively summoning spirit beings for questionable purposes, she very easily fits the role of archetypal witch even though she should not be
dismissed as such, particularly as she actively tries to dissuade others from identifying her as a witch. Silko’s portrayal leaves the reader and Lecha to make the decision as to whether her use of magic is justified; crashing planes indiscriminately or, more likely, protecting the land from neocolonialism. The ambiguity of her identity, combined with the moral ambiguity of the magic she performs, creates an apprehensive insecurity as to how the reader should respond encountering such events. Like the trickster figure who is moral and amoral, good and evil, the Yupik woman resists the title of witch, thus proving herself to be aware and resistant of the evil connotations, but continues behaviors that found the accusation. She is a paradoxical figure; witch and possible warrior simultaneously.

Another character in Almanac of the Dead, who is attracted and even obsessed with the border between the supernatural and the real, is Mosca. He claims he is able to identify witches “only when he is in a moving vehicle,” (Baringer 108-9) asserting that there is “a split second to see a light—sometimes a flash, sometimes a glow—around the face or the feet” (Silko 602) distinguishing them from humans. Often they are concealed or masquerading as humans, such as the “dark wizard disguised as a clean-cut, young Hispanic college student” (601), leaving readers to rely entirely on Mosca to identify witches for them. The level of trust invested in the character necessarily alters the amount of belief the reader has in the presence of witchery, a tactic that Silko exploits through many of her characters. Mosca’s obsession causes him to seek out mediators between the human world and the spirit world when his shoulder begins to speak to him and he goes to both an “old woman who could talk to spirit voices” (606) and a fat reader. The differences between the two are again only noticeable through Mosca’s perception of how they aid him, which is particularly questionable when he only calls the old woman a sorceress after accusing her of “charg[ing] too much” (607). The fat reader, that he has a far more positive encounter with, is labeled a true healer rather than a witch. Like the incident with the old Yupik woman, reliably identifying witches is debatable because of their variability and shape-shifting.

Without any conclusive evidence (and it is impossible to be conclusive) I find that it is difficult to rely on a character such as Mosca as he “flits around in his truck in death-defying trajectories while abusing practically every type of substance except tobacco” (Baringer 108). This being said, there is documentation of many shamans using hallucinogens or other drugs in order to “undergo spiritual flight, enter into ecstatic trance, and [be] able to attract spirits in seance-like encounters” (Saunders and Sandstrom). Perhaps my own hesitation to believe
Mosca’s abilities is my upbringing in Western science that insists I find a chemical, rather than spiritual, explanation. Despite any personal quandaries I encounter, this ambiguity is no doubt intentional, blending the lines between the human world and the spirit world until they are almost indistinguishable from one another. Mosca’s ability to “detect wizards or sorcerers” as he drives past them (601) is in fact his ability to detect the presence of spirits which (as Silko hints at) is otherwise too often overlooked by characters and readers.

There is an unmistakable difference between the witches Mosca and Lecha encounter in *Almanac of the Dead* and the medicine man featured in Silko’s *Ceremony*, although the possibility of paradox remains. Benson Saler who “describe[s the] Palmar Quiché beliefs about *nagual*, witch, and sorcerer” (326) concludes that the primary differentiation to be made is that “the witch has obtained superhuman help, whereas the sorcerer has not …[t]he sorcerer, though evil, still remains a man” (321). While this statement makes large assumptions regarding the medicine man’s abilities to use supernatural forces and reestablishes a good/evil binary (which has already been found to be impractical) it is true that the difference between the witch and the sorcerer (or shaman, or medicine man) is that the latter retains his/her humanness. The witch is either an already supernatural being or becomes mostly supernatural through witchcraft, while the shaman’s abilities to use magic or access the spirit world do not affect his/her humanness or moral compass. Ku’oosh and Betonie are medicine men/shamans in *Ceremony* using spiritual forces to try heal both Tayo and “this fragile world” (36). They are both, in this way, manipulators of spirit beings akin to the witchery described in the text, but differentiated due to their stance against the Destroyers. Ku’oosh, as a traditional healer, fails to serve as a ceremonial guide for Tayo because he is unable to adapt to the evolving and strengthening evils set loose by witchery, including the war Tayo has returned from. Tayo realizes that Ku’oosh would not have believed white warfare—killing across great distances without knowing who or how many died. It was all too alien to comprehend, the mortars and big guns; and even if he could have taken the old man to see the target areas, even if he could have led him through the fallen jungle and muddy craters of torn earth to show him the dead…Ku’oosh would have looked at the dismembered corpses and the atomic heat-flash outlines, and said something close and terrible had killed these peoples. Not even oldtime witches killed like that. (37)

It is Ku’oosh’s inability to comprehend what Tayo has experienced that prevents him from treating his mental wounds effectively. The more adaptive Betonie leads Tayo on a modified ceremonial journey that will better confront the Destroyers. It is a journey through the
borderlands between the spiritual and the human, to prevent the Destroyers from “finish[ing] off this world” (141). The humanness of Ku’oosh and Betonie distinctly sets them apart from the witches Mosca encounters in *Almanac of the Dead*, for although they have the same potential to communicate with and control spirits, they are ultimately healers for the earth and for Tayo.

Saler’s examination of the transforming witch is useful in analyzing Betonie’s character because of his helper figure, Shush, or bear. Silko includes a note to the reader to recognize the differences between “bear people and witches,” the difference being that witches only “crawl into the skins of dead animals” while bear people are “not conscious of being different from their bear relatives” (121). Witches retain their evil objectives while taking on the form of the dead animal intentionally to manipulate and deceive. Shush, and other bear people, do not take on the physical appearance of bears in order to deceive onlookers as witches do, rather, they *are* bears, trapped in human form. Bear people exhibit their humanness through their living form, not through a carcass meant to deceive. Witches often use animals as part of their magical arts, the type of animal signifying the type of witch or witchcraft at hand. Shush is both bear and human, and if we assume that the familiar in some way mirrors the sorcerer, his human form can be seen to reflect Betonie’s own humanness. Betonie is still deeply entrenched in the magical and spiritual manipulation of the world’s fate, but as Saler explains, “some of the extra-human forces which influence human life are favorably disposed, or can sometimes be persuaded to be favorably disposed, toward individual persons” (311) thus allowing Betonie to be a healer; witch-like but not a Destroyer. He is an inhabitant of the borderlands in that he exists between worlds, as well as working in an ambiguous role of potential witchery where the ability to create and destroy are both at hand. There is fear in the community that his modifications to ancient ceremonies are dangerous and evidence of such witchery, but he himself asserts that they shouldn’t “be so quick to call something good or bad … [t]here are balances and harmonies always shifting, always necessary to maintain” (120). Evaluating his good or evil attributes is mostly irrelevant to his performance as medicine man, although it certainly does make it difficult to ascertain whether he is a witch. In this manner, his character is similar to the trickster who is impossible to pin down because he is “at one and the same time creator and destroyer” (Radin xxiii) even as his moral and human bearing situate him apart from the Destroyer culture Silko at times equates with witches.

To solidify the role of the witch as a guide for the borders between the real and the
supernatural, the human and the spirit world, the character Verdecchia in *Fronteras Americanas* goes to el Brujo (Spanish for male witch) to help him heal his “border wound” (71). The notion of witch as healer or shaman opposes Silko’s definition of the witch as a Destroyer, and offers further possibilities to these characters. El Brujo is called upon by Verdecchia to heal the wound which neither the therapist from Vienna nor the Western trained doctor has been able to identify, let alone heal. Just as Ku’oosh was unable to help Tayo because of his (Ku’oosh’s) resistance to change, Western medicine fails to help Verdecchia because of its inability to acknowledge the spiritual nature of the wound. There must be “no contradiction in employing multiple systems of healing in response to the growing complexities of contemporary life” in order for these wounds to be healed, a tactic that the Oxford English Dictionary claims to belong to the modern shaman (Saunders and Sandstrom). The border itself appears to be manipulated through this intervention for when Verdecchia asks “Where is this Brujo, Jorge?” the response is: “‘En la frontera.’/ ‘Where?’/ ‘Bloor and Madison’” (70). The border is supernaturally transported to a corner of Toronto, demonstrating that although the border is a geopolitical space, it is also fluid, metaphorical and supernatural.

The border wound that Verdecchia’s character suffers from is the conflict of an internalized border which can exist independent of the geographical location. The screen projection in this scene reads: “we now inhabit a social universe in constant motion, a moving cartography with a floating culture and a fluctuating sense of self” (70). This excerpt presents the moving cartography of the border (as can be seen by having la frontera in Toronto) and equates it with the division of identity being exhibited by the character. Inhabiting this space allows el Brujo to exist within the borderlands of the human/spirit divide as well as the internalized borderlands that Verdecchia’s character struggles with. The first hearkens back to the same divide seen in *Almanac of the Dead* and *Ceremony* through fluctuating definitions of reality, while the second appears through the snapshots of Verdecchia’s memories that el Brujo provokes and manipulates. By experiencing a fragmentation of memories and sense of self while in an in-between state of wakefulness and sleep, el Brujo serves as a guide to heal the internal border wound that exists in Verdecchia’s sense of identity. Without the aid of el Brujo, these fragments are irreconcilable.

C.G. Jung claims that “there is something of the trickster in the character of the shaman and medicine-man, for he, too, often plays jokes on people … besides that, the shamanistic
techniques in themselves often cause the medicine-man a good deal of discomfort, if not actual pain” (196). This is evident in Fronteras Americanas where el Brujo reveals a physical wound that is “ugly and ragged and spotted with freshly dried blood” (72). The power of the healer resides in his or her own personal sacrifice, “[t]his willingness to deal directly with potentially dangerous spirits—or, through the use of hallucinogens, to enter into the spirit realm personally on behalf of clients or the community” (Saunders and Sandstrom). The revelation of the physical wound causes Verdecchia to finally accept that he has entered into nepantla or psychic borderlands. Furthermore, el Brujo uses a trickster technique through the cryptic cliff hanger statement, “the Border is your...” (74) leaving the audience without any real understanding until Verdecchia fills in the gap later on. The fact that Verdecchia finally comes to the self-realization that “I’m not in Canada; I’m not in Argentina. I’m on the Border. I am Home” (75) demonstrates the true internalization of the border, but in this case as a healed wound. The reconciliation of conflicting sides “can trigger transformation” and healing, “by focusing on what we want to happen … the healing images and narratives we imagine with eventually materialize” (Anzaldúa 4-5). The wound el Brujo first identifies was inflicted because of the conflict arising from the seemingly irreconcilable parts of Verdecchia’s identity (nausea as one of the symptoms). Through having el Brujo heal this wound and learning to “call off the Border Patrol” (78), Verdecchia is able to find a sense of balance in identity, despite the continued internalization of the borderlands. It is the realization of this internalization that allows him the self-awareness he needs to heal.

The trickster and the witch use transformation and external forces to do their work, whether that is to injure, heal, or simply manipulate those around them. Another trait they have in common is their status as sacred creator figures. Even though one appears as a far more positive creator being while the other introduces sinister undertones, both oppositions are necessary when examining the process of creation that carries within it the potential for destruction. Coyote is often given powers of creation, although at the same time his powers are mocked and belittled because of his buffoonery. He is not legitimized as a proper creator, and yet is often included within a pantheon of gods. For example, Hamilton Tyler argues that if Coyote’s role in a Zuñi tale “had been treated more seriously Coyote could have easily become a deity, by being responsible for setting the universe in motion” (165). Tricksters often are included within groupings of other deities (Hermes and Loki, for example, belong to pantheons) but it is the
Coyote’s clown-like behavior which sets him apart and prevents him from being an undisputed creator god, instead forcing him to traverse a boundary between mortality and godliness. As trickster, however, it is evident that this humorous and clownish approach still allows him to be an agent of creation, whether or not he receives credit for it. In another Zuñi origin myth in which Coyote accidentally creates the seasons, he is “responsible for the loss of paradise, but his behavior also sets in motion things as they are and, as motion is essential to life, his action is not wholly evil” (Tyler 166). It is most likely this habit of accidental creation which situates Coyote as an ambiguous figure, because there are no intentions or motivations present beyond personal gain or amusement. By subverting the authority of other gods by stealing fire, or boxes containing the sun and the moon, he is an amusing scoundrel that releases these powers from the control of the gods, which ultimately benefits human kind even if it is initially seen as a devastating mistake.

Coyote is also responsible for the origin of witchcraft, which is a far more sinister creation than those included in Zuñi myths. According to a Hopi-Hano story which Tyler briefly recounts, “there were never witches before that, but the girl married a coyote and from that time there have been witches. That is the reason why people are witches now. They have been taught by Coyote” (169). What Coyote has in fact taught them, is the technique of shape-shifting, a fundamental trickster quality. The fact that witches and tricksters share this unique ability raises the question, why is Coyote not seen as a malicious or evil being? “In the Pueblo world Coyote is variously First Witch, a pet of witches, or the animal into which witches or their victims are transformed” (Tyler 168). Despite this, even the most sinister depiction of Coyote as a death figure still emphasizes his ability to maintain a practical harmony on which life depends as, for example, “for every birth there must be a death, otherwise there would not be enough food” (Tyler 167). Coyote dances skillfully between good and evil, creating witches while avoiding being stigmatized himself, committing theft that is forgiven because of its subsequent result in creation, all the while remaining curiously endearing because of his laughable character. His dual nature and creative qualities allow him to walk a permeable border between god and demon, clown and creator.

Witches, although clearly connected with Coyote, do not receive the same forgiveness because they are typically designated as evil beings, therefore earning cultural suspicion rather than laughter. Like their trickster creator, they too vacillate between creation and destruction.
Silko’s *Ceremony* includes witches that use stories to create life, the most notable being the story of the conference of witches. In a creepily fascinating story of what the white man will do upon arriving in the “new world,” the witch calls him and his race into existence. The story itself is told during other witchery, including boiling pots of “dead babies simmering in blood” and “skin bundles of disgusting objects” (124) and yet wins the contest, frightening the other witches in the process. Trinh T. Minh-ha examines this passage from *Ceremony*, insisting that: “[a] story is not just a story. Once the forces have been aroused and set into motion, they can’t simply be stopped at someone’s request. Once told, the story is bound to circulate, humanized, it may have a temporary end, but its effects linger on and its end is never truly an end” (original emphasis, 133). Storytelling as a method of creation is made literal through the loosing of white people by the witch. Once set in motion, the story is able to change and adapt. At first this is a frightening prospect, especially when faced with the accounts of violence, disease, destruction and fear that the white people bring with them, but leaves a window of opportunity open for healing.

When Silko’s *Ceremony* is looked at as a whole, it is clear that Tayo has the ability to begin altering the story into one that is more balanced. Initially a destructive and violent creation, the story brought to life becomes its own entity, evolving according to what it encounters. “[I]t’s end is never truly an end” (133) as Trinh says, but this does not predestine the story either. Subsequent storytellers are able to respond and manipulate the story, in a trickster-like fashion, twisting the destructive force to one that is less harmful, or alternately, more harmful. Tayo is depicted as a storyteller when very early in the text it is told that “he made a story for all of them, a story to give them strength...[t]he words of the story poured out of his mouth as if they had substance” (12). He is in direct conflict with Emo, “a killer who serves the witchery, spins out stories of evil, destruction, and lies that pit one person against another” (Jude 161) and must meet such stories by telling his own. The power of story is immense, making the responsibility of the storyteller just as important. The storyteller perhaps only takes on particular aspects of the trickster as a playful, subversive, and ironic means toward his or her own creative ends.

As all writing automatically places the author within the constraints of performance, the role of the author or storyteller as a created persona can be analyzed along with the trickster and the witch as they engage in surprisingly similar behaviors. As Gloria Anzaldúa says, “[t]he writer, as shape-changer, is a nahual, a shaman” (88). Not only is this established through the obvious role of storytelling as creation (like the witches in *Ceremony*), healing (like the shaman
or the medicine man), or the use of humor and satire (as in *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* and *Fronteras Americanas*), but in that they too are border crossers. Anzaldúa and Silko in particular all cross borders of genre in their works, melding together multiple genres per text for desired effect. In addition to this, Anzaldúa, Bowden and Verdecchia use personal construction to manipulate the reader and use personal (hi)story to give an impression of authenticity or authority. In that all of these authors are writing about the borderlands, they too serve as guides for those encountering the border (the reader, the audience) and must, at least in part, inhabit the borderlands themselves.

Genre crossing is clearly evident in Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* which brings together personal anecdote, theoretical framing, poetry, and the use of multiple languages (often without translation). This multi-layered approach is formidable and demonstrates her work as embodying borders which are not only political or racial, but ideological, linguistic, and generic. The use of multiple languages in her text puts the onus on the reader to be responsible for translation. According to Helen Gilbert, “a reader will rarely read or sound out each word of an unglossed text, preferring simply to skip over to the familiar” (118), and without a translation ready for the reader’s consumption, Anzaldúa’s text forces the reader to experience the uncertainty of a linguistic border. Katherine Ford discusses this tactic in depth explaining that “[t]he reader is required to enter into this bilingual word and submerge him/herself in it in order to comprehend the words themselves and the larger project that Anzaldúa puts forth. The reader is given an active role in the production of the text—a role that is always more demanding in a border text than in any other” (84). Not only does this replicate the experience for the reader, but also makes physical the identity divide Anzaldúa as an author claims to have. The format of the text is just as provocative as its content. In an interview with Anne Reuman, Anzaldúa explains that her technique often disconcerts her readership because “all their lives [they have] been taught to read and write in a certain way and here I come with my text, with collage, code-switching, genre-switching, and I’m actually practicing what I preach, and they’re not used to that” (8). It is one thing to discuss such tactics within the set parameters of an institutionally recognizable format, and quite another to actually embody it. The embodiment of this fracturing, where there is not even the illusion of completeness generated through familiar forms, leaves the reader on what Reuman calls “shifting grounds” (8). If this notion of performing fractured identity through language is related back to the language of trauma, it is evident that Anzaldúa’s
style is also a methodological healing tool as well as a means to confront her audience. By performing the fracture through linguistic barriers, she is offering up the alternate sides of identity (through language) as something for a readership that must first learn to care before they will take the time to understand.

The use of alternative writing styles is also used by Silko in *Almanac of the Dead* which is not only reminiscent of oral storytelling but can be read as almanac with its nonlinear form and over 70 characters. Printed on the cover of the text, is the classification “A Novel,” an odd addition intended for marketing purposes. Without the clarification of “A Novel” Silko’s text would likely make her audience as uncomfortable as Anzaldúa reports hers does. The structuring of *Almanac of the Dead* and Silko’s abstruse designations of characters as Destroyers or spirit beings create nebulous interpretations as to what particulars of the story are “real.” This again can be unsettling, but works to the text’s credit if it is read as story and almanac rather than as fiction according to Western literary genres. Marketed as “Novel,” *Almanac of the Dead* becomes more accessible to a non-Native audience that might otherwise not know how to begin to navigate its format.

The author as a personal construction within the text is often overlooked, presenting an illusion of objectivity and authority. For example, if I use the personal pronoun “I,” you as a reader are suddenly brought into direct confrontation with my written persona. To assume, however, that the “I” being used is a “real” representation of the author’s “self” is of course naive, but it is this assumption that is played upon to sway the audience or reader. Anzaldúa does this through telling personal stories, allowing the reader to relate more closely to her as a storyteller and thereby to understand the basis for her ideas. Bowden similarly uses this same technique in his creative non-fiction writing that combines journalism and personal accounts, allowing the reader to feel as though they are receiving a more honest and direct version of the events. Despite the creative license he takes with sections of his text, and the caricatures and allusions he makes of certain players (see *Blue Desert*), there is an impression of reliability in his work that is generated out of this first person voice. This same reliability is created in Verdecchia’s drama, through the use of himself as a character. *Fronteras Americanas* is probably the most direct author/character construction since the character shares the same name as the author, was originally performed by the author, and is contrasted with a highly fabricated (or so it initially appears) stereotypical character of Wideload. It is clear that Verdecchia, even if he is
using his own personality and history to relate to the audience, is still a character being performed in a particular way for a particular effect. Wideload, after all, is another persona created and performed by Verdecchia the author. The forward to the script by Urjo Kareda discusses this creation:

“Through ‘Verdecchia,’ the playwright extends his grasp to the poetic—in the emotional meaning beneath the tango’s angularity—and to the mystical—in his spiritual search for integration. […] But the satiric, the sardonic and the ironic are all counterweighted by the extraordinary personal candor of the writing. It is here—in Guillermo Verdecchia’s brave commitment to the truth of ‘Verdecchia’—that the work opens up and absorbs. (10-11) As can be seen, the use of the self as character is immensely powerful in reaching the audience, and yet is trickster-like in the author’s ability to both be writing from and fabricating a “personal” position at the same time. Because of the context of the borderlands which the authors are writing out of, it is evident that their construction of “I” is a performance of an inner fragmentation. The true self (if there is such a thing) cannot ever be completely translated onto the page, and yet its creation (the text) informs and outlives the physical storyteller.

Because the storyteller is the voice through which the story is transmitted, the role of guide falls to them to lead the listener (reader, viewer) into the territory of which they speak. Similar to the smuggling coyote and the medicine man figure, the storyteller holds the same responsibility when it comes to traversing the border. It is demonstrated through Anzaldúa and Silko that the storyteller facilitates and complicates the traditional norms of story, drawing the reader in and then making them uncomfortable as they encounter the unexpected. Not knowing how to read the text because of its non-Western non-linear format can cause considerable resistance. A useful approach is that of the first person so that the reader/audience feels as though they are not isolated or alone in their journey. By asking the audience to “call off the Border Patrol” (78) immediately after explaining that he himself already has, Verdecchia is sympathizing with and seducing the audience in a show of camaraderie. The authors also act as shamans or healers in their respective texts, dealing with the traumatic effects borderlands and fragmented identity have had upon them personally (I say personally, as it has been demonstrated through personal pronouns). Caruth in Unclaimed Experiences compellingly argues that “we can also read the address of the voice here, not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his own past, but as the story of the way in which one’s own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another’s wound” (8). The healing act performed by
the author is the performance of the crying wound, and it is through the participation of the audience that it may be healed, at least in part. The audience’s involvement is continuously implicated by various characters, forcing them to commune with the performance and confront their own sense of trauma that has been caused by physical, metaphorical, or spiritual borders. The author is very much like the shaman who must take on and embody the physical wound in order to heal the wounded. The trickster figure, the witch, and the author all perform similar techniques of humor, subversion, creation and mediation in the borderlands, navigating between the material world and the spiritual world. In most cases, it is evident that there is no room for Western hierarchical binaries in this space, only a nepantla state in between nonhierarchical oppositions. The trickster figure and the witch are inhabitants of the borderlands playing with audience expectations and modes of thinking, while the author takes on their roles through the act of storytelling.
Chapter 3
Uniforms, Costumes, and Fetishes: Performing Borderlands Identity

The performance of identity is never made clearer than when it is demonstrated through physical shifts in costuming, and instances where the physical marker is adopted as a synecdoche for whatever is being relayed to the audience. This can be achieved through the dress worn in drama, as well as the descriptions of costuming in other genres of literature, where it is evident that the characters are using clothing or props to insinuate or complicate a recognizable, socially constructed identity. Stereotypes, political statements and embodiments of border culture are all established through this method, allowing individual identity or subjectivity to be taken on or removed in order for the individual to either fit in to a community or differentiate his or herself.

One aspect of dress “is that it links the biological body to the social being, and public to private… mak[ing] it uneasy territory, since it forces us to recognize that the human body is more than a biological entity …[but] an organism in culture, a cultural artefact even, and its own boundaries are unclear” (Wilson 147). Using dress as a way of interpreting the individual’s relationship to both identity and the border is made relevant through this example, even more so when Elizabeth Wilson argues that “[d]ress is the frontier between the self and the not-self” (148) in how it functions socially. To narrow my examination, I will look at uniforms, theatrical costumes and props (both in drama and fiction) that demonstrate an internal fragmentation. I argue that not only is a fragmentation present, but these physical signs or objects are often endowed with spiritual significance as fetishes. Characters who depend on these fetishes (whether they are costumes, uniforms, or props) can be seen to fragment their own identities through a synthesis or replacement of their sense of self with the fetish, deconstructing the border that marks the animate and the inanimate.

It is difficult to discern the differences between a uniform and costume when examining their uses in performance, although the two are used very specifically in language to denote particular associations. The term of uniform is used to classify “distinctive clothing worn by members of the same organization” (Oxford Reference Online) while costuming tends to denote an artistic or performative purpose. The difference is the role ideological institutions play in the recognition and response to the clothing. Hilda Kuper writes in “Costume and Identity” that the different terms should be classified in the following manner: “… ‘uniform’ for clothing
prescribed for ceremonials (defined as conventionalized secular performances) and ‘costume’ for clothing necessary for the effectiveness of rituals (defined as performances with a mystical or sacred quality” (349). While this definition is limited by its Eurocentric basis, it can help at least partially to navigate the territory between the two modes of dress. Uniforms, as a conventional performance, serve as such because they are readily identifiable to a large audience as a sign of an ideological institution, while costumes are more directed towards a niche as cultural stereotypes. These terms are unwieldy because of their overlapping natures and the playful subversion of their traditional use, however, there is still the opportunity for insight in understanding their role in the construction of identity.

The performance of identity is achieved through the use of important material signifiers, such as costumes or uniforms. Judith Butler addresses these issues within the context of performed gender in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” stating that “the act that gender is, the act that embodied agents are in as much as they dramatically and actively embody and, indeed, wear certain cultural significations, is clearly not [one’s] act alone” (original emphasis, 906) for it is something that must be recognized and accepted by the social group. Although Butler focuses on the performance and naturalization of gender, it can be used as a starting point for examining how other cultural assumptions and stereotypes undergo similar processes of naturalization. Identity as recognized by a social group, according to Butler, is “instituted through a stylized repetition of acts,” (original emphasis, 900) including the use of props or clothing that reinforce the identity being performed. The prop or costume is not only something for the individual to use in order to self-realize his or her identity, but one that acts as a sign for the larger community (or communities, considering the borderlands consist of multiple groups). The object must be grounded in a larger continuity in order to be effective, whether it implies connections to an ideological institution or connotations of cultural or racial stereotypes.

Objects that take on particular importance in the life of the individual or community can be analyzed as fetishes. Central to the fetish is the belief that it is a physical embodiment of a spirit, and that through ritual one can access the spirit world through the fetish. In Zuñi culture, fetishes are ritualistically fed, dressed, and cared for—a ritual incorporated into Catholicism through the dressing and feeding of saints. There is a respect for the object, a cultural sensitivity for the power it wields, and a meaningful connection made between the human body and the object whether it is established through prayer or training. Ami M. Regier’s article “Material
Meeting Points of Self and Other: Fetish Discourses and Leslie Marmon Silko’s Evolving Conception of Cross-Cultural Narrative” examines in depth the similarities between the established sacred fetishes and commodities. “Other objects affiliated with commodity culture rather than tribal religions also gain the human ability to ‘desire revenge’; in the course of the narrative, fetishism spreads infectiously” (Regier 190). The object in Almanac of the Dead, regardless of its sacred or non-sacred status, has the ability to behave as fetish. There is some disagreement with Regier’s article, as Marcelle Kosman differentiates her argument using the example from Angelita La Escapía: “the maker of a thing pressed part of herself or himself into each object made … [s]ome spark of life or energy went from the maker into even the most ordinary objects” (520). Kosman argues that Regier’s “idea of fetishism assumes an object to be lifeless without the individual to turn into a fetish. But objects, as Angelita demonstrates, are sentient beings born from their creators, whether human or the earth itself. It is thus not fetishism that gives life to objects, but their very creation” (Kosman 16). There is the tendency, however, as Regier claims, “to move the object ever closer to the self, so that it affects the self and has some power over it, [which] means that the self can no longer be singular nor exist easily within a monocultural setting” (190). The subject and the object together make up one identity, and the removal of either part (object or subject) results in a fragmentation of identity. Thus, the object takes on a life of its own (at times at the subject’s expense) through the act of creation and the endowment of spiritual significance in a process of fetishization.

As demonstrated, it is possible for a fetish to have its own agency, but for the reader or audience to encounter a fetish as a subject there must be a human connection to facilitate any communication. This is not intended to minimize or redirect the fetish’s power, or to relegate its meaning to that of the Eurocentric understanding of an object with special (but ultimately inanimate) significance to a human. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that the human connection allows the audience to view both the body and the fetish as physical manifestations of a fragmented borderlands identity, crossing borders between the subject and object as well as the human and spirit worlds. While an in depth inquiry into the nature of fetishes and specific cultural significances would surely unearth many useful understandings of how they function, for the sake of clarity and concision I must limit myself. Regier discusses the Opal which Tacho has given to him, as well as how “Seese uses a kilo of cocaine as a kind of charged object equivalent to her missing child to try to intervene in a scenario of addiction and loss” (192). I will instead
redirect this same discussion to focus on the costume or uniform as fetish, how this affects the ideology being propagated, and the development of communally recognized social roles and identity.

The object or fetish that is granted special importance for the character acts as an addition to the use of the uniform or costume, often synchronizing itself with the rest of the individual’s identity. The object is a component of the character’s identity, and its physical separation from the character’s body is demonstrative of a more internalized fragmentation of identity. Michel Foucault discusses the uses of objects (particularly weaponry) in the creation of docile bodies as a “body-object articulation ...[where d]iscipline defines each of the relations that the body must have with the object that it manipulates … outlin[ing] a meticulous meshing” (*Discipline and Punish*, original emphasis, 152-153). In terms of ideological control it is clear that the object or fetish is an instrument which represents the authoritative power structure, working as a recognized sign whether it be a gun (military control, warfare, etc.) or a sombrero (racial, cultural stereotypes). The way they are used, however, can also alter whether they reinforce or subvert established power dynamics as well as overturn or propagate stereotypes. The object as an extension of ideology however, is only a part of an overall understanding of fetishization. The weapon that Foucault discusses as being meshed with the body creates a subject-object hybrid, giving the object life and the subject power.

Following with Foucault’s example of the weaponized body, the first area of study I will undertake is that of the militarized body. The solider embodies a peculiar borderlands position because he/she takes on a personal relationship between the living and the dead, the mechanic and the organic, the killer and the hero, the oppressor and the oppressed. There are the same power dynamics as seen in the discussion of borderlands in previous chapters, outlining the possibilities for violence, destruction, and transient figures.

In *Almanac of the Dead*, the character Rambo-Roy has obvious connections to a larger social dialogue based on warfare and the ideal warrior. Due to the fact that identity exists within a social realm, the personal identity of Rambo-Roy is automatically merged with the social conception and associations of his name. The name “Rambo” invokes the image of Sylvester Stallone’s *Rambo* which, according to Rambo-Roy, problematically represents the Vietnam War. While Roy must reconcile his experiences (real or imagined) with the fictional film representations in order to accept the nickname, once he does, he “never even think[s] of
when the guys call [him] Rambo … [for he is] more Rambo than Stallone” (Silko 392). His adoption of a US military uniform however does create some direct correlations between himself and the Stallone performance, disrupting the lines between what is real and what is Hollywood. Roy takes on the identity of the publicly recognized fictional figure because that is precisely what makes him identifiable. Without his similarities to the image Stallone presents, he would not function with the same profile nor be able to base his identity on this relation. Roy’s transformation into Rambo is heavily based in the adoption of material signs which are recognized communally to create his identity. Roy specifically dresses in military regalia despite the fact he is no longer in service, nor in the location of warfare. As Trigg says, “the combat boots and the camouflage T-shirt made the guy ‘Rambo’” (Silko 389) thus indicating that Roy is publicly recognized as Rambo due to his uniform. It is the communal significance of the uniform that gives it its power, to the point that “Americans got paralyzed with fear every time they saw a Vietnam veteran still wearing combat clothes… [and that] Rambo enjoyed the advantage this gave him” (Silko 390). The paralysis described is generated through the recognition of a shared violent history, and the threat of having a faraway violence brought home. The fear created by veterans wearing combat gear implies that the war is not finished, and that the soldier, despite having returned to civil society, remains in part a killer. The uniform Roy wears Others him and makes onlookers uneasy as they grapple with wartime memories. He is differentiated from civilians due to his uniform for, while dressed as a solider, he inhabits a position outside of civil society—a role that, evidently, the onlookers are desperate to forget.

Clothes have no intrinsic meaning except that which the individual or the community place upon them. “[F]ashion may then be understood as ideological, its function to resolve formally, at the imaginary level, social contradictions that cannot be resolved” (Wilson 150-1). Uniforms which represent a connection and solidarity with the ideological institution of the military provoke the recognition of that institution as well as the inherent connection with violence and war. This is particularly insightful regarding the green beret, which is a fetishistic object for Rambo, and recognized as important by onlookers: “cops and railyard bulls had been strangely transfixed by the green beret” (Silko 390). What is interesting about Rambo’s choices of costuming is that they are replications of the real uniform. The beret that Rambo wears is purchased from an army surplus store, not the “green beret [that] had protected him from harm”
(Silko 392) during his service in Thailand. This complicates the beret as a fetish, since it is not the specific beret that protected him, but a fetishized reminder of it. In this way, the idea of the beret becomes the fetish, rather than the object as a singular entity. The use of replications of the real military garb deconstructs the authenticity of his uniform (since they were not used in combat), but still creates his warrior identity because they are recognized and associated with authenticity (like the beret that is both fetish and not simultaneously).

The adoption of military uniform for private use is problematic as it manipulates how onlookers interpret it as a sign. Once the uniform is removed from the institutionalized organization that it connotes it begins to behave in a different manner. Menardo, the head of his own elite security force disguised as an insurance company, privatizes his militia and raises his social profile until he too needs the protection it provides. Shortly after, he develops an obsession with a bullet proof vest given to him by Sonny Blue (the son of Max Blue, an accomplished assassin). He begins to wear it at all times, reading the accompanying brochure over and over as a kind of personal charm. “Without the vest, [Menardo’s] sleep [is] lacerated with nightmares” (Silko 335) thus endowing the vest with special powers in the dream world as well as protection against assassination. Rambo-Roy “does not, unlike Menardo, wear the beret at all times to cheat death… [r]ather, [he] takes care of the beret in ways that are meaningful to him,” building a relationship “with objects demonstrat[ing] respect rather than mastery” (Kosman 19). To Menardo, however, the vest is “an inanimate object [that he] worship[s] for its supposed magical powers or because it is considered to be inhabited by a spirit” (Stevenson). The vest takes on its own life and powers through Menardo’s obsession. Fetishes must be cared for appropriately in order for them to retain their magical powers, otherwise they revert to objects or, in extreme cases, turn against their worshippers.

Menardo already has a tenuous relationship with his cultural and racial heritage, depicted through his conflicting desires to relate to his grandfather and to deny his roots. He turns to capitalism and privatization as a means of success, and yet holds on to Tacho as a dream interpreter and the vest as a magical amulet. This hesitant fascination with Indians (as he refers to Tacho and his own grandfather) and stories straddle an uneasy border between capitalist venture and magic, leading him to aspire to become “…a man invincible with the magic of high technology” (Silko 503). Regier explains that Menardo …fall[s] victim to a destabilizing realization that objects are not necessarily so separable
from [his] own subjectivity as [he] would like to believe. Menardo’s death collapses the distance between the subject and object, between the man of Western capitalism and his ultimately uncontrollable possession. (193-4)

Menardo tries to control every aspect of his life through ownership, and yet fails to recognize that the bulletproof vest is beyond his control precisely because he has endowed it with abilities of supernatural proportions. As nouveaux riche capitalist elite, Menardo is designated as a target by vengeful spirits, as “the spirits must be fed with the blood of the rich and the royal” (Silko 336-7). His own ventures lead to his demise because he is unprepared to treat the fetishized vest properly, which he might have learned the dangers of if he hadn’t been so focused on denying his indigenous roots.

Military uniforms, as established with Roy-Rambo and adapted by Menardo, create fear due to their connections with institutional authority, violence, and death. The uniform itself then is an important tool that can be adapted for various purposes, including the privatization of select items (such as Menardo’s vest). The adoption of such uniforms for other kinds of security forces, such as the Border Patrol, is an interesting tactic. This is not to say that Border Patrol security has an identical uniform to that of the military or even the police, but that they have a recognizable, institutionalized uniform that endows them with the authority they need to enforce the law of the state. The function of the human enforcers of institutional rights or geopolitical borders is to perform on the behalf of the owner, whether that is the state or the property owner. Even in Silko’s *Ceremony* when Tayo is caught by the rancher’s personal guards, they are dressed similarly: “boots scuffed and dusty, jeans faded to the same shade of blue; even their shirt-sleeves were rolled to the elbow in the same manner” (119). They lack an official uniform; there is no recognized name or institution badge on their clothing. This particular patrol is without markers to designate them as official enforcers of the law, but within the context of the private ranch they are still the uniformed security, their similar appearances making them a unified extension of a privately enforced law. The officially institutionalized Border Patrol (as recognized by the government, rather than individuals who engage in vigilantism on behalf of the state) is the presence of the institution itself.

In order to appreciate the design and use of uniforms it is important to take a moment to analyze the US Border Patrol. A part of homeland security and the US Customs and Border Protection, the US Border Patrol was created in 1924 to defend the country from illegal entry from both Canada and Mexico. In 2007, the US Border Patrol uniform was adapted for the first
time in fifty years, specifically “to look more like military fatigues and less like a police officer’s duty garb” (Elliot Spagat, “Border Patrol Uniform Gets First Makeover Since 1950’s”). Spagat’s news article reports that this is demonstrative of how border crossing has evolved over time, and that the old uniforms were simply not up to scratch. The new, militarized, uniforms now include “quick-release belts … designed to prevent drownings in the Rio Grande,” “two large pockets with Velcro flaps [to] hold ready-to-eat meals, flashlight batteries and global positioning system devices” as well as “new nameplate[s] match[ing] the olive green uniform to make agents less visible to people who are trying to hide” (Spagat). Not only this, but a switch “to a lighter .40-caliber handgun” (Spagat) in a more easily accessible plastic loop completes the uniform. The news article is completely right in asserting that border crossing has evolved, but fails to acknowledge that this evolution has occurred due to the militarization of the border as a war zone. According to “Ramon Ramirez, an agent for 10 years ... the new garb looks more military, ‘like you mean business’” (Spagat). If the Border Patrol uniform is more similar to a military uniform, then the behavior of the Border Patrol has similarly been militarized. The alterations in the uniform allow for the power dynamic of the Border Patrol to change along with it, implicitly granting them a more militarized authority. They are designed quite consciously to threaten and intimidate illegal immigrants by appearing as a military force.

Charles Bowden references the use of uniforms in *Blue Desert* as well as several of his articles which discuss the politics of the Mexico/US border. The references are brief, yet informative in how they are received and used to manipulate. In the article “We Bring Fear: A Reporter Flees the Biggest Cartel of All—the Mexican Army” Bowden discusses the corruption of the Mexican army under the political control of President Felipe Calderón. Corruption of the army and police force in Mexico are not new developments in the political history of the country, but the military responses to suggestions of corruption are relevant to this analysis. Bowden explains that reports “issued a common explanation by Mexico’s defense department: Yes, there would almost certainly be a spate of robberies and rapes committed by men in uniform but these were to be explained as the deeds of drug traffickers disguising themselves as soldiers to embarrass the Army” (2). This tactic of shifting the blame from the army to an anonymous force of drug traffickers (supposedly unconnected with the army) is enacted through the use of the uniform. The uniform as a sign is destabilized as it no longer is the accurate result of the signifier and signified. Instead, it creates an uncertainty, and lack of confidence in the institution itself.
Once the uniform as a symbol is manipulated in this way, what it stands for is disrupted and previously static interpretations become ambiguous. It becomes a disguise, and the subversion of the institutional uniform creates an overall fear of the uniform because of its variability.

Guillermo Verdecchia’s *Fronteras Americanas* does not dwell on the use of uniforms specifically, but does address the trauma of uncertainty that occurs when signs are manipulated by ideological institutions. When the character Verdecchia goes to Santiago, Chile, he views a shooting on a sidewalk from his apartment window. Prior to the shooting itself Verdecchia claims to have seen “the police men, one per block it seems” and wonders, “what was it like under Pinochet? A policeman in every house?” (38). Policemen are already a source of fear for him since he had avoided his military duty, but it is their lack of response to the shooting he witnesses that troubles him. Similar to destabilization of the uniform in Bowden’s analysis of the corrupt Mexican Army, there is a lack of stability in the role of the policemen in Verdecchia’s experience.

I take photographs as still more policemen arrive waving things that look like Uzis. I take photographs with a pentax MX and a 35 mm. F2.8 lens as the dying man, one of his shoes lying beside him, his gun on the road, gives up reaching for the legs around him. I take photographs from my room in the Hotel de Don Tito, Huerfanos 578, moderate in Fodor’s, as the press arrives and NO AMBULANCE EVER COMES. I take photographs as the policemen (all men) talk to each other and I wonder if anyone had seen me and I take photographs as the policemen smoke cigarettes and cover him up and I take photographs and I realize that I have willed this to happen. (39)

The display of weapons by the police demonstrates authority and power, and as it is an unnecessary display, it is evident that they are merely performing their power. The guns are dangerously real, however, allowing their performance to remain uncontested. The lack of aid given to the dying man similarly contradicts the purpose of the police designed to protect citizens, not let them die on a sidewalk where “NO AMBULANCE EVER COMES” (39). Verdecchia is understandably traumatized because this sequence contradicts most of what he (having lived in Canada) has come to expect. His reactions display a fragmenting of identity through the repetition of words, the act of photographing and self-incriminatory realization that he has willingly participated.

Verdecchia’s use of the camera demonstrates the fracturing of his identity through the physical displacement between his body and what he views. What haunts him as a victim in the way he relays the scene is “not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known” (Caruth 6). Verdecchia does not fully internalize
what he is seeing until he believes that he has “willed this to happen” (39) by taking photos. He repeatedly describes the various films and lenses he uses, offering a distanced account of his participation as he purposefully avoids saying that he has “seen” anything himself. The camera is a powerful object in this case, and seems to both take on the role of witness that Verdecchia is thrown into, as well as necessitate a tragic outcome. The photographs hold meaning because they document a failure on the part of the police in Santiago, so in the sequence of events, the subject must die in order to make the photos substantial. In photographing, Verdecchia’s memories are replaced and catalogued as photographs, static images. Trauma, as suggested by Caruth, creates a “barrier of sensation … that protects the organism by placing stimulation within an ordered experience of time” (61). Bearing witness causes a fragmentation between Verdecchia’s body and memory, turning his eyes into lenses and the events into snapshots. Although the camera is not fetishized in that it does not explicitly take on its own life, Verdecchia does transform it into an external method of perception, perhaps alleviating some of his guilt in the process.

While Verdecchia experiences uncertainty through the misuse of uniforms by ineffective police officers, Bowden’s “Exodus” further explores the discussion of uniforms as a means of disguise. Rather than focusing on the misuse of signs by authoritative systems, he redirects attention to the subversion of authority, and the use of disguise in smuggling undocumented Mexican immigrants over the Mexico/US border.

He spent two days in the coyote’s house waiting. Then the man came and said, Put on this soccer uniform. The man said, If the Border Patrol agent asks you where you are going, you say, “San Antonio.” If they ask you if you have papers, you say, “Yes,” in English. They practiced these simple answers. Then they rode up to the U.S. checkpoint. The Border Patrol agent asked the two questions, got his answers and waved them through. In San Antonio, the coyote took back the soccer uniform. (7)

This example isn’t as immediately threatening as the use of military garb being appropriated by rapists and drug traffickers (as claimed by the media); although the intent, to manipulate the assumptions of onlookers and feign authenticity, is the same. It does not have to occur through an identifiable institution (as quoted above) it is the stereotype of the Latin American soccer player being used to create an impression of legitimacy. Bowden explains that undocumented migrants often “meet smugglers who’ve brought American clothing so they will look normal” (6) and blend in. American brand names serve the purpose of ideological conformity and wearing them constitutes a uniform of the consumer equated with Americanness. Hilary Cunningham’s article “Transnational Social Movements and Sovereignties in Transition: Charting New
Interfaces of Power at the U.S.-Mexico Border” examines the movements of undocumented immigrants (often refugees) from Central America into the US with the aid of Sanctuary Activist organizations like Borderlinks and Humane Borders. Often these organizations “give refugees clothing to make them look Mexican, and tell them to say they were Mexican if picked up by U.S. Border Patrol” with the rationale being that if they were “picked up and perceived as Mexican, Central Americans would simply be deported to Mexico” thus protecting them from being returned to the country from which they fled (Cunningham 188). In order to do this, the activists smuggling them across the Mexico/US border worked hard to dress undocumented immigrants in an ideological uniform that would present an illusion of “Mexicanness.” “Shoes therefore were replaced, clothing was thoroughly examined for any telltale labels, in some cases hairstyles were reconfigured—in an effort to create a disguise that would ‘fool’ the state” (Cunningham 188). This manipulation of appearances designed to trick the US Border Patrol and the Mexican immigration police (known as la migra) is achieved through the manipulation of signs and stereotypes, just as was seen in the example of the Latin soccer player.

As can be seen in the analysis of uniforms in “Exodus,” a discussion of stereotypes is necessary for this investigation even if the negotiation of stereotypes and their roots is complex. There must also be a re-examination of the terms “uniform” and “costume” in order to establish how the terms inform the theoretical reading of stereotypes. Because the term “uniform” has institutional connotations, costume must be used where there is no such institutional branding, even if such costumes are as recognizable and specific as uniforms are seen to be. Uniforms often disguise individual identity, and while costuming at times functions similarly, they are more often used to promote an individualization of a larger stereotype. To clarify, costumes have the potential to be used as individual manifestations of stereotypes while uniforms always imply a large mass of conforming identical representatives of an overarching ideological structure. Costuming as a means for performing identity is highly effective in the propagation and the subversion of stereotypes. “Stereotyping is one way of demeaning through parody and ridicule, reducing complex social or cultural differences to a simplistic caricature” (Nothof 5) but also opens up the possibility of complicating and ridiculing the use of the caricature itself in a manner that is deconstructive and satirical. Monique Mojica uses costuming to visually invoke stereotypes in Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots, to the point where it could be argued that the entire play itself is a social examination of the stereotypes of Native women. Mojica
confronts multiple stereotypes but none as deeply as that of the character of the Indian Princess.

The Indian Princess is a Eurocentric creation that elevates the Indian woman to the elite, thus creating a circumstance whereby the colonizer may justify his fascination. The status of princess is itself a European construction that did not exist in many First Nations cultures, but by elevating the Native woman to Indian Princess, she is made whiter (or at least, less Indian) as a result. Philip Young briefly mentions this in his article “Mother of Us All: Pocahontas Reconsidered” when discussing the Pocahontas story’s “wide acceptance … with proudly celebrating Virginians, who appeared to have forgotten that by their rules the girl was colored” (398-9). It is precisely because of this social elevation whereby her race is willingly overlooked that the Pocahontas narrative is transformed into one that conforms to the dominant culture’s social requirements. Originally, “James Stuart demanded to know if her commoner husband had not committed a treasonable act in marrying a princess” (Young 393-4) even though her title was merely a Eurocentric equivalent designed to exoticize rather than redistribute power. As a leading literary race theorist, Ian F. Haney López says that “social renditions of masculinity and femininity often carry with them racial overtones, just as racial stereotypes invariably embody some elements of sexual identity” (970) and it is certainly true in this case. The Indian Princess, as discussed in chapter two through Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides, is portrayed as highly sexual and it is this exotic sexualization and the “princess” title that completes her as an object for white consumption. Scantily clad in buckskin to highlight her exotic sexual appeal, the Indian Princess is not a single character in the drama, but rather a stereotype that is reproduced and then complicated through the characters Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides, Storybook Pocahontas and Pocahontas/Lady Rebecca/Matoaka. Mojica explains that this figure has “many names. [Her] first name was Matoaka. Some people call [her] Lady Rebecca, but everyone knows the little Indian Princess Pocahontas, who saved the life of Captain John Smith” (27). It is often overlooked that “‘Pocahontas’ was actually her childhood name … [since] in the European humanistic tradition, which fosters and celebrates ‘individualism,’ fluidity of identity is not acknowledged” (Carter 14). The sheer number of variations of the historical figure demonstrates the popularization of the stereotype and the difficulties presented in its deconstruction.

The Indian Princess Pocahontas has become “an American legend, a woman whose actual story has blended with imaginary elements … she is one of our few, true native myths, for with

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8 One needs look no further than Disney’s 1995 Pocahontas for a popular rendition.
our poets she has successfully attained the status of goddess, has been beatified, made holy, and offered as a magical and moving explanation of our national origins” (Young 392). In this depiction of the popular psyche, the Pocahontas character has transcended from history into myth, but not any myth: a myth molded by colonial hands seeking to appropriate an image of belonging and naturalization rewritten to suit colonial needs. Mojica uses this context of the one-dimensional Indian Princess as a template and then builds and adapts it to subvert audience expectations through trickster-like performances. This subversion occurs through contextualizing the stereotype in historical facts often ignored in favor of the mythological creation. By using Matoaka and Lady Rebecca, Mojica disrupts the overly simplistic caricature of the Indian Princess that never exists beyond the fantasized Pocahontas and John Smith narrative. She instead gives voice to a historicized figure that resists the limitations of the Pocahontas story, and overturns the Eurocentric construction that perpetuates colonial and racial hierarchy.

Storybook Pocahontas demonstrates the ridiculous nature of the Indian Princess construction as she performs, step by step, the central motives for Pocahontas to save Captain Whiteman:

1) **NO!** (hands overhead, on knees) He’s so brave his eyes are so blue, his hair is so blond and I like the way he walks.
2) **DON’T!** (arms cradling Captain’s head) Mash his brain out! I don’t want to see his brains all running down the side of this stone.
3) **STOP!** (in the name of love) I think I love him.
4) **Oooh** (swooning, hands at cheeks) He’s so cute. (27-28)

It is obvious that this list makes fun of the popular Pocahontas narrative by focusing on the physical attributes and attraction of the Captain character, rather than the true love motif (buried in point three). Mojica does not leave the reader to infer the stereotype from Storybook Pocahontas alone, including and highlighting the alternate narrative of Matoaka and Lady Rebecca in stark contrast. Lady Rebecca reminds the audience that she “was kidnapped” (30) and discusses her marriage to John Rolfe—narratives which disrupt the romance of the Pocahontas/Smith story. She adopts Christianity and European lifestyle, breaking down the binary of the savage and civilized and reinforcing the white civilizing mission. There is a level of discomfort in her adoption of this culture, indicated by her costume and the stage direction which describes her as “[f]itting neck and wrists into collar and cuffs with much resistance as if being put into stocks and pillory; fanning herself with an ostrich plume fan” (30) making her “a dark and handsome if uncomfortable young lady, incongruously overdressed in English clothes”
The costume she is taking on because of her marriage is one of European civility and clearly is neither natural nor comfortable for her. Without explicitly asking the audience, Mojica questions for whose benefit this performance is? And if this character believes herself to be “Lady Rebecca forever and always...a Christian Englishwoman” (31), is this performance an act of passing or an act of denial? There is a movement from the ridiculous nature of the Indian Princess to an equally ridiculous stereotype of Englishness which, because it is a symbol of seriousness and the ruling hierarchy, is not as immediately humorous. In this manner, through costumes and stereotypes Mojica crosses a cultural border while investigating performances of cultural identity.

Matoaka provides through her account yet another version of the story, exploding stereotypes of Indianness by providing details of “the deer clan” (32) and ways of life that do not center around the presence of the white colony. Costuming is again featured, but rather than being used in a way that perpetuates a stereotype of culture (either Indianness or Englishness) Matoaka describes the deeply personal act of face painting. While the physical clothing of the Indian Princess and Lady Rebecca are signs of a stereotype identity forced upon the individual, the paint Matoaka references is an important self-expression of her identity. Mojica explains that through “embodying that wholeness on stage, we can transform the stories that we tell ourselves and project into the world that which is not broken, that which can be sustained” (Mojica and Knowles 2, original emphasis). Transitioning from Pocahontas to Lady Rebecca to Matoaka, the actress is demonstrating the impact various costuming has upon the body to express or repress identity. The non-chronological sequence moves from a two dimensional white cartoon construction, to a product of colonialism and assimilation, to a self-expressed individual free from colonial oppression. Resisting other pre-established Pocahontas/Smith narratives allows Mojica to poke holes in the stereotypes of the Indian Princess and of Native identity which has (as she demonstrates) been affected by the Western desire to dominate and consume. Not only is there a fragmentation of identity imposed on these characters, it mirrors that of the hybrid people (birthed by mothers like Lady Rebecca and La Malinche) who are symbolically created in this cultural borderlands.

Another clashing of Native American cultures and white colonial oppression is presented in Almanac of the Dead’s Geronimo sequence. The US cavalry continually demand that the

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9 This will be expanded upon in chapter 4 with a discussion of the Métis characters Marie, Margaret, and Madelaine.
native warriors they capture perform in a particular “Indian” manner in order to legitimize and therefore prove their claim to having caught the “real” Geronimo. There is a particular interest in the proper display and performance of the warrior, because without the proper performance the identity of the Native warrior is contestable. “The photographer had perfected his Arizona-desert backdrop and had time enough to commission Apache women to create a huge feathery warbonnet unlike any headpiece the Apaches had ever seen, let alone worn” (Silko 226). Despite the unrealistic nature of the headpiece, it functions as a sign for the larger white community and enables them to recognize Geronimo as the warrior they presume him to be. It would be incorrect to simply argue that because the objects are all fake that they hold no intrinsic meaning, because to the white audience, they are entrenched in significance even though Big Pine is photographed posing with a completely non-functional rifle: “no firing pin and the barrel … jammed with an iron rod” (Silko 226). The illusion of the weapon or the headdress creates a fake series of signs for the white audience, and because so much meaning has been placed on the objects, they can be seen to function as fetishes.

The spirit of the warrior (or what the white community has decided to designate as the spirit of Geronimo) dominates and replaces the physical attributes of the individual, causing the cavalry to pursue an illusion of their own fabrication. Adam Sol argues that “[t]he integrity of one’s self is less important than the identity of the name, which is determined by the situation” (43). Geronimo is an identity larger than any of its human components who embody it at any given point. “Beneath the Geronimo image, which might be a projected ‘Apache face white people identified with Geronimo’ (228) or a spirit protector, ‘an ancestor, the soul of one long dead who knew the plight of the ‘Geronimos’” (232), there remain a number of separate identities, like the voices weaving the tale” (Moore 166). For the Apache, it appears that it does not matter that it is multiple individuals who make up Geronimo. Sol argues that “for native people the name ‘Geronimo’ has expanded to refer to any of the men who fulfill [that] role” (43). This argument can be extended to the white audience, whose perception of Geronimo is dependent on material signs, allowing it to be performed by multiple individuals. It is the fault

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10 At the Heard Museum of American Art and History, a staff member explained to me that when the imprisoned Geronimo was forced to tour the country, he would dramatically rip the buttons off of his shirts and sell them to thrilled onlookers. After returning to the train, he would spend the journey between cities sewing more buttons back on in order to repeat the process. It seems to me that what was enticing for the purchasers was that they were buying something deeply personal (clothing) and seemingly impromptu, a material sign somehow more authentic and unique that the autographs that were also readily available.
of the white community’s inability to recognize their limiting dependence on individualism that Old Pancakes is able to act as scapegoat for the other Geronimos, despite there being “little resemblance between Old Pancakes and the image of the Apache that appeared in the photograph” (Silko 232). The created and maintained illusion of Geronimo becomes a culmination of props and performance, for “the whites wanted to pay [Old Pancakes] to ride spotted ponies in Wild West shows and wave an unloaded rifle over his head as the character the white journalists called Geronimo” (Silko 235). The particular warrior is almost irrelevant in Silko’s rendition as Old Pancakes effectively becomes the Geronimo stereotype the whites so desperately crave precisely by using fetishized props.

Using costumes and fetishes to subvert stereotypes that are generated due to cross cultural misunderstandings and racism provide plenty of material for literary analysis. Wideload most directly confronts stereotypes and their connections to visual markers in Fronteras Americanas, beginning when after “[g]unshots … the performer appears wearing a bandito outfit. He has shifted into his other persona, WIDELOAD” (original emphasis, 22). The bandito outfit, as well as the gun shots, his accent, and the stereotypes he references in his speech, all force the audience to frame his character within known racist Mexican stereotypes. Wideload calls the audience out on their stereotypical assumptions of his character, first by “remov[ing the] bandito outfit” and then explaining that it “Ees an old Hallowe’en costume. Scary, huh?” (original emphasis, 23). Suspension of disbelief dictates that costumes on stage are to be taken as representations of the character’s identity, and by playing with this norm by including a costume that is also a metacostume, Wideload can surprise the audience with their own initial reactions. Identifying the outfit specifically as a “costume,” Wideload is making the performative aspect of his identity explicit, worn to perpetuate and then subvert the stereotype, “challeng[ing] a perversively ‘gringo’ audience to examine its responses to his ‘comic’ routine” (Nothof 8).

If his costume is a construction aimed at playing with and dismantling stereotypes, then Wideload’s accent is equally intentional. This is not to completely equate accents with costumes, but there is certainly a connection to be made with the way Wideload employs stereotypical accents in a manner similar to taking on and off a costume. The most stunning observation Wideload makes regarding the use of stereotypes is his interrogation of advertising:

Who remembers de ad dat McDonald’s had for deir fajitas not too long ago, featuring a guy called Pedro or Juan, and he says dat he’s up here to get some McFajitas because [reciting with supreme nasality] “Dese are de most gueno fajitas I eber ate.” What de
fuck ees dat? Can you imagine an ad dat went like: “Hey Sambo, what are you doing here?” “Well, Mistah, I come up here to get some o’ yo’ pow’ful good McGrits. Mmmmm-mmm. Wif a watahmelon slice fo’ deesert. Yasssee.” I mean, we would be offended. (76)

By contrasting the Mexican stereotype with blatantly inappropriate racism Wideload equates the two and forces the audience to question their own racist and harmful cultural stereotyping.

Resisting these naturalized forms of racism is necessary but uncomfortable for an audience that is being implicated as a part of it. After all, “[t]heatre is an accommodating medium for the construction of such parodic ‘characters,’ since it facilitates an objectification of perceptions and attitudes with which to confront an audience” (Nothof 8). That Wideload is conscious of how he is generating this confrontation allows him to control the sequence of events, and to overturn audience attitudes by accusing them directly. Wideload is also very direct in his discussion, leaving no room for error in audience interpretation, such as when he goes into detail regarding “that nasty ‘S’ word: Estereotype” and explains:

dat I am by no means an estereotype. At least I am no more of an estereotype dan dat other person in de show: dat neurotic Argentinian. And I know dere’s a lot of confusion on dis subject so let me offer a few pointers. If I was a real estereotype, I wouldn’t be aware of it. I wouldn’t be talking to you about being an estereotyping. If I was a real estereotype, you would be laughing at me, not with me. And if I was a real estereotype, you wouldn’t take me seriously and you do take me seriously. Don’t you? I’m the real thing. Don’t be fooled by imitations. (56)

Several different components are at work in this segment, proving that it is not only obvious stereotypical representations which are stereotypes, but that Verdecchia’s character could be considered one as well. Additionally, the notion that the audience has been taking Wideload’s character seriously is complicated as a means of proving that he is not a stereotype, because as he later admits, he uses humor as a way of getting the audience to like him. Finally, there is an interesting shift in Wideload’s accent as represented by phonetic spellings from the first few sentences which include spellings like “dan” and “de” instead of “than” and “the” as well as others, to the only accented word being “estereotype.” As I’ll discuss further in the next chapter, the linguistic differences between Verdecchia and Wideload become increasingly imperceptible, and the stereotypes and established identities begin to deconstruct. The accent itself is perhaps yet another stereotypical construction meant to confront the audience. Keeping the word “estereotype” accented continues to reference stereotypes and enact the character divide, even as the other language differences begin to fall away.

Physical alterations in costuming immediately make apparent shifts in identity, whether
they be demonstrated on stage or described in text. Clothing is ideologically inscribed, allowing viewers to recognize various institutions or stereotypes whether or not they personally agree with them. Uniforms or costumes can be used to manipulate the viewer for whatever purpose the performer is trying to convey or, alternatively, conceal. It is evident that both uniforms and costuming affect personal identity as well as public identity. Clothing, along with particular props, are endowed with spiritual, personal and communal significance, which at times turns them into fetishes. The dependence on these fetishes that is created in turn appears to fragment the individual’s sense of identity, causing him or her to depend on them even more. This dependence can also be seen on a wider scale as symptomatic of a fragmented culture, whether that be ideologically, physically or socially.
Chapter 4
The Bordered Body

The body is the basis of all performance; all identity manifests in the body through recognizable depictions of race, nationality, gender, and spirituality, and thus serves as an elaborate (though not always conscious) performance within ideological contexts. The material body performs certain roles through its presence and absence, how it moves, how it sounds, what it looks like, what it wears, how it lives and how it dies. In Theatre & the Body, Collette Conroy references Judith Butler’s theories on performativity as “posit[ing] the idea that bodies and their actions appear within a regulative frame[,] … rarely encountered as objects in themselves and always form a part of politicised discursive structures” (61). Drawing on this concept, the performative body can be seen to participate in the ideological systems that interpellate it, in both creative and reactionary ways. Positioning itself within a larger communal, ideological and political context, the material body is interpreted through its performance.

The simultaneous and multiple subject positions we occupy mandate complex navigations of identities, which are at once conflicting and complementary, dominant and marginal. These identities are never static, and are always in motion. Our material bodies both occupy and resist the identities we claim and strategically mark. For example, a Chicana whose appearance allows her entrance into white spaces embodies the tension between her material body and her consciousness that resists whiteness. Negotiating identities in motion entails shifting and crossing borders at the intersections of culture and community, as well as geographic and racial locations. (Malhotra and Pérez 47)

Whether it contradicts or conforms to societal (or personal) expectations, the body is political in that it is always in dialogue with larger racial, national, and gendered contexts. The tensions between mental and spiritual self-claimed identities and that of socially designated identities of race/nationality/gender are ever present and, as Malhotra and Pérez claim, always shifting. In the example of the Chicana, there is a liminal space between how the body is perceived and how the individual’s consciousness asserts itself. “Body image is dynamic and based on a relationship with the world” (Conroy 55), sometimes at odds with the identity the individual feels defines him or her best. Because there is a performative aspect to the body and how the individual chooses to interact with the world, there is room for subverting the regulatory ideologies that seek to restrict him or her. It is this versatility and scrutiny that makes the body nepantla; it is its own border zone where cultures, histories, politics, and identities collide. Despite these collisions and fragmentations, the individual retains the ability to search for alternative versions of wholeness.
and self-definition that are possible in the borderlands, if wholeness can be considered a sum of parts rather than the removal of differences or anomalies. These adaptive and fluid alternatives can be, and often are, more effective than traditional definitions of wholeness that are singular or restrictive.

The definition of “body” is a major issue to be addressed since certain cultural interpretations offer more possibilities than others. In many Western interpretations there is a tendency to rely on colonial Manichean allegories, dividing the analytical mind from the animalistic needs of the body. Divisive theories of hierarchical dualism tend to fall short when applied with concepts of performativity as there is a reciprocal process between the individual’s internal consciousness, the mode of performance he or she enacts, and the reception this performance receives. From a more holistic viewpoint, the physical self cannot be considered to be hierarchically lower than or separated from the mind, but rather each is integral to an understanding of the other. In this chapter, I will focus primarily on the way the material body performs according to ideological structures, but it must be acknowledged that any gesture the body enacts is a part of a larger sense of identity that includes the individual’s consciousness. This bridges a gap which is “theoretically liminal, a place where we explore and ponder the connections between the private thought and the public action” (Conroy 52). The interplay between the body and consciousness is sometimes in tandem, other times at odds, but always functioning within set sign systems to a viewing audience. The audience already automatically inscribes meaning onto the body depending on race, gender, politics, etc. because of established social codes, which offers the opportunity for the individual to use this knowledge in his or her performance, contradicting or supporting the audience’s expectations. The body is forced into performance by the individual’s consciousness as he or she determines how to perform, as well as by the overarching ideological structure of which the individual is a part.

It is also possible to reconsider what is defined as “body” entirely, as, in several of the texts I examine, land and body are linked—a connection that offers opportunities to examine the relationships between the human body and the earth, the individual’s soul and the spirit world, the micro and the macro. I argue that the internalization of borders seeks to display itself through the individual’s body, much like how the physical border impacts the landscape around it. The internalized border is how the mind or consciousness struggles with the ideologically imposed restrictions that require performance, and that performance then seeks to express itself through
the body. I build this upon theoretical allusions to the border as a scar or a wound (made by Gloria Anzaldúa and Luis Alberto Urrea, to name a few) generating a rhetoric that equates and interchanges land with body. Within the context of community, politics, and various other audiences, the individual becomes a physical embodiment of the border, and the individual’s performance of identity is demonstrative of his or her internalized borders.

In order to make the performance of identity tangible to a viewing or reading audience, there must be contrast between the multiple subjectivities or identities being negotiated. Monique Mojica’s *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* and Guillermo Verdecchia’s *Fronteras Americanas* require each actor to play multiple characters in a variety of modes, constantly creating and performing identity rather than revealing an absolute truth about the self. The use of transient characters, combined with frequent episodes of metatheatricality, allows for the creation of multiple identities. These identities are then substituted for one another during the course of the play for dramatic effect and to further the negotiation of identity. As has already been discussed, these different characters are performed through changes in costuming and character names. What is more subtle and complex, however, is the manipulation of the actor’s body and gestures to suit all of these roles.

Although not always explicitly written in the script, each transformation in *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* forces the actor to physically embody the “entrance” of a new character. There are a total of 23 characters in the drama, originally played by Mojica (15) and Alejandra Nuñez (8), and 13 scene transformations. Each transformation requires a gestus to introduce the new character, relying on accents, attitude, voice, props, and staging to demonstrate “the multi-representational nature of these objects before us” (Carter 17, original emphasis). The body, as a stage for multiple characters, can be seen as similarly multi-representational. In the Métis women sequence, the character Marie transforms into Margaret by “putting on [a] calico apron-dress” and then performing as though “she is stunned, numb, rum-dumb” (original emphasis, 44). Shortly after, Margaret transforms into Madelaine by adopting a “haughty stance” and adding a “tartan shawl” to her ensemble (original emphasis, 46). The shift in costume and change in character are directly linked, informing and building upon each other. The physical body performing is the same (Mojica’s characters are all performed through Mojica’s body, likewise with Nuñez) so the actor becomes a stage for the different identities, necessarily altering in attitude and gesture to represent a new character or identity—in this case, changing from
drunk to self-righteous. “Mojica invests her being with images … and becomes the vessel through which these images right themselves [and] voice their truths” (Carter 22, original emphasis). Carter’s theory allows for Mojica to resist notions that personal identity and body are intrinsically linked with an individualistic truth, and instead perform the “truth” for each character she takes on.

In theatre, the audience is encouraged through the suspension of disbelief, to allow for this juggling of identities within the single body. The most direct method of introducing a new character being performed through the same actor’s body is to name it directly. This allows for the audience to follow along with the actor’s performance and to later associate certain voices, gestures or subjects with reappearing characters, or alternately, notice their disappearances. The names of characters also allow for multi-layered interpretations of characters, fleshing them out from two-dimensional stereotypes. The Host introduces himself as “George Pepe Flaco Columbus Cartier da Gama Smith, but you can call me Bob” (18) which Huhndorf accurately describes as “a concatenation of the names of explorers and other colonial figures” (191). Many of the characters in the drama stand in for larger populations, including the Man who is all at once “[t]he husband, the lover, the friend, the ‘brother’ in the struggle” and Marie/Margaret/Madelaine who are faces of the Métis women that were “systemically discarded” (Mojica 15-6). In all of these cases, names allow for multiple identities even within a single character (reminiscent of the Geronimo sequence in Silko’s Almanac of the Dead as discussed in chapter 3). Malinche, Storybook Pocahontas/Lady Rebecca/Matoaka, the Deity, and Marie/Margaret/Madelaine (all originally played by Mojica) are all introduced, by themselves or the other performer through dialogue. Using this method of transformation each character’s performance acts as independently as well as being symptomatic of a larger colonial aftermath.

Mojica critically examines the intertwined dimensions of patriarchy and colonialism in relation to women’s rights. Her drama explores “the dangers of public space, which, for Indigenous women, is always sexualized, laden with histories of violence and displays of commodified Native bodies” while at the same time “rewrit[ing] these narratives to show patriarchy and colonialism as inseparable and to reclaim women’s activism” (Huhndorf 189-…

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11 It should be noted that the transitions between Storybook Pocahontas/Lady Rebecca/Matoaka and Marie/Margaret/Madelaine are slightly less divisive as they are separate characters that belong to one theme or entity. Their collective representations of the Pocahontas narrative or the Metis, are more indicative of the identity constructions in place than the individual figures should they be isolated.
190). To do this, the Métis characters contest their names, explaining that their identities have been constructed by a wider colonial discourse of which the audience is a part. Marie claims that “Marie” was given to her by “the Frenchman who is [her] husband” even though her real “name is Atchagoos Isquee’oo” (43). The native women, who were married, used, raped, abused, and then “turned off” (a crude term used synonymously with discarded or abandoned) in favor of white wives hold a contested place in history where their situations and identities are under scrutiny. Dominant discourse tends to “confirm European superiority, [as these] women renounced their own people, abetted the invaders, adopted their cultures and, through sexual relationship with colonial figures, founded a new race” (Huhndorf 191). The violent reality did not offer many alternatives, meaning that although “turning off is no longer practiced, it is an essential fiber in the fabric of [their] contemporary lives” (Mojica 47). The body (as raped, as subjugated, as abused), identity (as socially defined by mixed race), and patriarchal dominance (colonialism) all work together in Mojica’s investigation of the Métis women.

Multiple languages can be used as a performative tool to demonstrate subjectivities, particularly when interpellating minorities. “When Madelaine got angry, she would speak Cree, her mother’s language” (Mojica 47), offering a few different interpretations. In a colonial reading, Madelaine’s use of Cree could be a hysteric response demonstrating a reversion to an earlier identity—a regression instigated by being turned off. Because of the nature of the drama, this method of interpretation is unhelpful as it does not allow for the character’s own agency and only serves to reposition her in a colonial binary. Madelaine is justified in her anger having been married for fifteen years and then “null and void in two days” (46) and she is certainly not a character that suffers personal injustice silently, having already tried to poison the “new Mrs. Johnston” (46). The “new Mrs. Johnston” displaces Madelaine through marriage, literally stealing her position, name, and identity in one colonial act. Given this information, Madelaine is not “reverting” to Cree, but consciously rejecting the colonial culture she has been abused by. Her use of Cree reclaims an identity previously denied to her by the colonists. Speaking Cree is an act of empowerment for herself and other Cree speakers, interpellating those in the audience who can understand and thereby subverting English dominance. Using Cree in the performance both gestures to the historical context and reverses the power dynamics through language. Helen Gilbert theorizes that “because these languages are performed rather than inscribed, they proclaim radical alterity in a context where non-Aboriginal audience members can neither ‘look
up’ the meaning or quite imagine how such words might be scripted” (Gilbert 118). The English speaking audience is therefore placed at a disadvantage, excluded from the Cree conversation with no apologies or translations available. They are forced to either attempt to understand, based on what information is presented through gesture and tone, or remain completely ignorant.

The strategies that Mojica employs to introduce shifts in characters and identity are linguistically complicated in Fronteras Americanas. A major performative difference between the characters Verdecchia and Wideload are their accents and use of language. Wideload speaks with an exaggerated Spanish accent (written phonetically into the script) and at other times breaks into Spanish completely. In fact, when Wideload first appears on stage, he only shifts into English after explaining, “lo siguiente es para los gringos” (22). Speaking Spanish immediately differentiates Wideload from Verdecchia linguistically, and momentarily breaks the gringo audience’s ability to understand. The gringo audience is led to depend on the English speaking Verdecchia, setting up Wideload as an oppositional exotic Latin “Other” due to a linguistic barrier. A Spanish speaking audience is hailed and made part of an inside joke which Wideload plays on the gringos. Wideload is “both a lit match and a safety curtain for the more volatile range of ‘Verdecchia,’” (Kareda 10) and the alternating languages help to solidify this paradox in how the different audience members interpret the performance. Rachel Adams writes in Continental Divides that “issuing from the mouth of the same actor, the voices of Wideload and Verdecchia attest to the diversity and complexity of Latino/a experiences in Canada [and a]s the play continues, the differences between their characters become less pronounced until they deliver the final speech in one voice” (231). Beginning in a separatist mode, the divisions of voice, language, and identity of the two characters eventually break down and combine into what Anzaldúa would describe as a third space. The combination of Spanish and English indirectly hails a specific audience that moves between the languages with as much ease as the actor does (or, forcibly alienates them in the process). Spanglish is a term often used to describe this particular combination, however it could be more expansive to consider it as Chicano (or at least a reference to Chicanismo) and, therefore, an independently recognized language usually situated on the Mexico/US border. Having the production set in Canada complicates the use of Southern Chicanismo, yet by featuring similarities it suggests a useful comparison. Through the use of particular languages (or combinations of languages,) Verdecchia broadens and complicates our understandings of where borders can be situated and, in turn, deconstructed: the border is
everywhere, as is proven by linguistic hybrids.

In the original production, characters Verdecchia and Wideload were played by playwright Guillermo Verdecchia. Both characters are constructions played upon a single actor’s body (just as seen with Mojica) where “the effectiveness of these voices, which articulate the rhetoric of a paradigmatic trickster figure, clearly relies on performative contexts and the vocal virtuosity of the actor to convey diverse subjectivities” (Gilbert 121). By dissolving the contrasts between characters at the end of the play, Verdecchia physically demonstrates his arrival in a borderlands identity, enacting a coming together of two distinct stereotypes in one body. This is a part of the trickster shift *Fronteras Americanas* creates, allowing the audience to initially be distracted by Wideload, consider him to be a stereotypical and fictional construction before realizing that he is just as “real” as Verdecchia (or alternatively, that they are both equally constructed). After this deconstruction, it is evident that both Wideload and Verdecchia serve to ground and undo each other as characters, and the audience can follow this transitioning because they speak through the same body.

Moving away from theatre, it is still possible to analyze performance in written text. Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* features several characters that perform various identities, shifting between them in a manner akin to the character shifts in *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* and *Fronteras Americanas*. While many of the characters change identities through naming, costume, and profession, only a few do this specifically for a dramatic performance. Wilson Weasel Tail uses multiple personas in a presentation encouraging the indigenous reclaiming of the land at the healer’s convention. His objective to reclaim stolen land is entangled with healing, as it is presented at the convention and connects the illness of white people to their misuse and theft of indigenous land. Lecha describes Weasel Tail, a lawyer, as performing the role of healer:

This time Wilson Weasel Tail had billed himself as “a Lakota healer and visionary. … as far as Lecha knew, Weasel Tail had no training of any kind in healing, Lakota or otherwise. Weasel Tail had sworn to take back stolen tribal land; he was a political animal, not a healer. Lecha wondered what new angle, what new scheme, Wilson Weasel Tail had up his sleeve. (Silko 716)

Wilson Weasel Tail reinvents himself in a trickster-like fashion to achieve his objective of claiming back traditional land, drawing attention to identity construction and relationships to the land. He changes his costume and his profession to make himself more appealing to the convention audience, “abandon[ing] his polyester leisure suits for army camouflage fatigues” (721). Apart from Lecha’s memory of the old Weasel Tail, there is no indication that the other
onlookers question his new persona. His performance is convincing, and has the audience “eating out of his hand” (Silko 725). Through manipulating his appearance, he is able to gain support for his agenda to reclaim the land from colonial usurpers. In the earlier television show sequence, the absence of a live, supportive audience led to Weasel Tail being dismissed and carried off stage by security. Once transformed into a healer and visionary at the convention, he has the perfect platform from which to deliver his call to arms, and the perfect live audience to receive and react to his message. Adam Sol discusses the shifts in identity in Almanac of the Dead explaining that Silko’s work “gleans from Native American tradition a more fluid understanding of personal identity, one that retains power for the individual and allows for change and shifting” (41). Wilson Weasel Tail’s various performances and identities are not in opposition, but shift according to how he can most effectively reach his intended audience to provoke change. As Lecha observes, Weasel Tail’s more fluid understanding of identity works to his advantage in manipulating the healing convention audience members, particularly when he bills himself as Lakota. Even though it is clear he has no training, his adoption of the headline “Lakota healer and visionary” (716) naturalizes his performed identity in relation to the land through race, as the advertising attempts to evoke an intrinsic knowledge based on authentic Indianess. Lecha claims that he is still a lawyer at heart because of his warning delivered to the US government: “give back what you have stolen or else as a people you will continue your self-destruction,” (725) but by correlating healing (of indigenous and white people) with the return of the land, Weasel Tail is able to act as both lawyer and healer simultaneously.

The politics of race and nationality are part and parcel of how the body is performed socially, the individual adapting his or her body according to the social pressures placed upon him or her. Anzaldúa discusses how the mestiza has multiple identities that develop out of nepantla, offering that a fluid understanding of identity is the most resilient. She writes in her chapter “La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness” the following:

The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic move—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence

12 The bridging of the two personas is reminiscent of Adams’ argument regarding Wildeload and Verdeccchia in Fronteras Americanas as previously discussed.
The mestiza must perform various identities depending on her social context and public expectations. Her identity is partially created by what she sees herself to be and how others label her. It is demonstrated in this manner that “a person’s identity is not a constant thing but a situational construct” (Sol 41-42). The body, however, of the mestiza is what positions her into this role of performance. Because she is racially Othered, she is minoritized accordingly by dominant racial groups, becoming the “Indian in Mexican culture” and the Mexican in Anglo culture. The racialized body, as Ian F. Haney López explains, “still rides upon ancestry and appearance… [t]he characteristics of our hair, complexion, and facial features still influence whether we are figuratively free or enslaved” (965). Given that the individual actor (in this example, la mestiza,) is forced into performing different cultural roles depending on how her body is interpreted by those around her, there is no truth of identity being revealed. Referring back to Wilson Weasel Tail, both he and Anzaldúa’s new mestiza adapt their identities and performance according to their audience. Their bodies are already under scrutiny as the audience imposes their expectations and judgments upon them, but by manipulating their performances (and thus the audience’s perceptions) more opportunities arise for them (Anzaldúa 101). What is performed depends on the audience’s preexisting expectations since performance is dependent on the repetition of (at least initially) recognizable behaviors.

The Verdecchia character struggles to come to terms with the position he inhabits in a cultural borderlands because it is apparent that he has issues with performing his Argentinean-Canadian identity correctly. He anxiously considers himself inauthentic, claiming: “I am something of an impostor. A fake. What I mean is: I sometimes confuse my tenses in Spanish. I couldn’t dance a tango to save my life” (51). In this quote, Verdecchia is arguing that he cannot perform his Latino identity in a way that allows him to be perceived as authentic because his internal consciousness does not adhere to the expectations placed upon him. Without this claim to authenticity, he goes through an identity crisis that causes him to question who he is if he cannot even perform himself accurately. “Guillermo Verdecchia’s struggle towards his self shapes the dramatic movement of Fronteras Americanas: it is the border within himself that must be crossed… []ike all true artists, he embraces the paradox” (Kareda 11). Accepting the paradox that is his identity is also the method through which Anzaldúa envisions the new mestiza consciousness, a coming together of disparate parts. Anzaldúa claims that in terms of nationality,
“a mestiza [has] no country, [her] homeland cast [her] out; yet all countries are [hers]” (102) just as Verdecchia insists that “all sides of the border have claimed and rejected [him]” (51). This shared experience causes them to exist on a border where they are not accepted by either side. Although this is initially a traumatic experience, they both see themselves as embodying the possibility of living on the border. Verdecchia explains, “I am learning to live on the border. I have called off the Border Patrol. I am a hyphenated person but I am not falling apart, I am putting together. I am building a house on the border” (78). This is reminiscent of Anzaldúa’s discussion of nepantleros/as who see “links; where others saw abysses, they [see] bridges spanning those abysses” (4). The hyphen in Argentinian-Canadian (or vice versa) presents itself as a bridge and “although graphically a “minus” sign, does not represent a subtraction for him, but addition; he feels it as a “plus” sign which indicates the mixture of two cultures” (Durán 142). The hyphen Verdecchia references metaphorically becomes one of these bridges, spanning the implied distance (or border) between nationalities on the page.

The policing of bodies at the Mexico/US border (according to race and nationality) ignores the details and internal consciousness that make up the individual’s personal identity. Problematically, it is the rigid border politics that define and enforce the populations in contact with it. In Charles Bowden’s article “We Bring Fear,” he examines the case of reporter Emilio Gutiérrez Soto who flees the Mexican Army threatening his life, expecting “asylum from the government of the United States” (4). Instead of receiving asylum, he and his son are immediately imprisoned. If he had arrived illegally he would have been deported but, “[s]ince he entered legally and asked for asylum at the port of entry he is kept in prison because the Department of Homeland Security declares that Emilio has failed to prove that he ‘would not pose a danger to the community’” (Bowden 4). He is criminalized because of his nationality which is, sadly, not unusual treatment at the border. Hilary Cunningham writes that many “Central American refugees fleeing violent civil wars in their own nations” were being denied asylum and instead “deported peremptorily by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) back to El Salvador” (187). In these cases when asylum is denied, the US institutionalizes control over the bodies of refugees, effectively transforming them from refugees into illegal aliens; regardless of individual consciousness or particular situations, the refugees are equated with illegal immigrants. Their deportation is justified through the establishment of undocumented workers as potential threats, regardless of their actual statuses and the legality of
the deportation itself.

Bowden’s journalism focuses on this space and details how the border spills over onto the people and the landscape surrounding it. In the US, the border extends beyond the line that marks the beginning of Mexican territory, creeping farther into the US through the use of border patrol stations. These stations are set up specifically to catch undocumented immigrants who have managed to get past the Mexican and US authorities without being turned away. Much to my own surprise, there are stations located in the northern half of New Mexico and roving patrol vehicles hours from the southern border. Cunningham looks at the endeavors of Sanctuary activists that focus on moving refugees illegally across the border in order to protect them from their governments. The US legal system fails to protect refugees from the country they are fleeing and the threat of deportation upon their arrival in the US, prompting Sanctuary activists to develop illegal methods centered on tricking the border patrol. According to Cunningham’s study, they dress the refugees to “make them look Mexican...[so] that if picked up and perceived as Mexican, Central Americans would simply be deported to Mexico” (188) with the future possibility of another border crossing. Once caught by border patrol this is an elaborate scheme of “passing,” however, the trickiest part of the border run is avoiding being caught all together.

Border patrol stations (sometimes permanent fixtures, other times simply a car parked in the meridian of a highway) “check the ‘profiles’ of cars passing by” (188) visually, sometimes relying on video cameras and lights. Cunningham explains that specific directions are given to smugglers, suggesting to “use a local car...with clear windows. Move no more than three refugees at a time, always during daylight, accompanied by several passengers who are readily recognizable as Anglos. Blonde is better than brunette; female is better than male, old is better than young” (188). Knowing the border patrol will read the vehicle according to racial and gender profiling offers refugees and smugglers enough information to strategize successfully to sneak past border stations. Traveling through New Mexico in 2012, I passed multiple stations and was met with varied reactions. Most times, we were waved through without question, and at others, pulled over in order to present our Canadian papers to six or seven armed guards and scenting dogs13. The hostility directed towards commuters in the interior of the state creates a

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13 And, memorably, once to display the contents of my mother’s aluminum suitcase which (I am told) happens to look like both a radioactive materials container and a bomb. It was also detained by security at the Tempe airport for its suspicious appearance.
rippling series of borders travelling up from the national boundary. The stations do not simply extend the border to include major highways or cities, but create an imbalance of power through the surveillance by the Border Patrol. The border, and its police, could be anywhere.

The migrant is placed in a dangerous position because of systemic profiling at the border. With the odds of obtaining asylum so low, and the struggle to find adequate decoys for smuggling undocumented peoples, desperation increases crossings through more dangerous terrain to avoid border check points altogether. “[T]he increased surveillance of the border in key areas [has] generated new patterns of illegal migration—namely, the new border strategy has forced migrants to cross farther out into the desert” and “as a result, local ranchers are not only encountering more illegal migrants on their properties but also sadly, their bodies” (Cunningham 192). For many, this is not just a political game that the government plays in order to manage homeland security, but a death sentence. In addition, the over emphasis on the “illegal” immigrant distracts from the very real threats of cartels being managed by non-suspicious individuals. The racial profiling that assumes Anglos and women are less of a societal threat defeats its purpose as a safety mechanism. Bowden alludes to this racial profiling when he discusses Emilio’s attorney Carlos Spector as having “become a Mexican, body and soul” (5) through his involvement in Emilio’s case. Spector claims he is followed and threatened because he is representing a reporter that has spoken out against the Mexican Army, and as such he “has joined his client and they live in a place beyond courts and laws and the illusions of the United States of America” (5). His involvement has cost him his own security and, in Bowden’s allusion to race, his new-found “Mexicanness” is what puts him at risk. His own body, now racialized and at risk through association, has become an extension of the border.

In Silko’s *Ceremony*, it is the various community members who emphasize racial and social divisions. Tayo is a mestizo character trying to reconcile his heritage and his mother’s relationships with white men, with his identity. The entire Laguna community is struggling to accept this because “what happened to [his mother] didn’t happen to her alone, it happened to all of them” (Silko 69). Tayo is kept at arm’s length by his aunt and other community members and resented by characters like Emo because of his mixed-race blood. In this situation, the issue of race is “an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions” (López 966). The larger social context creates the racist tendencies that spill over onto specific family dynamics. Because
there is a culture of racism being created through the dominant white invader culture, Tayo’s very existence represents the outcome of the dominant culture’s subjugation of the indigenous body. It is reinforced by community members who do not accept Tayo, primarily because his white heritage is a reminder of their failure. Whether or not this is actually a failure depends on interpretation as the true failure could actually be their inability to move past this restrictive purist mentality.

Tayo’s identity changes dramatically depending on who he associates with. With Emo, Tayo’s partial whiteness places him into a binary even though the subtleties of his personality and beliefs complicate this position. With the Texans, Tayo is labeled as Indian, therefore destabilizing the previous binary. He is at odds with those around him as they try to define him according to restricted and limiting qualifiers. Tayo’s family and community members see his whiteness as eclipsing his blood relation to them, even though he has more connections to the old time ways than his full-blood “brother” Rocky. Because of the social position of his body he is not as legitimized in the same way, regardless of his consciousness. Even though Rocky begins “to believe in the word ‘someday’ the way white people do” (Silko 72) and values Western science over the beliefs of his community, it is Tayo who is perpetually seen as the outsider.

Through the process of the healing ceremony, undertaken by Tayo in order to prevent the Destroyers from succeeding in their devastation of this world, he strengthens his relationship with the land and comes to the realization that the divisions imposed upon him are nothing compared to the world’s interconnections. In this manner, Tayo becomes a figure of hope and connection rather than that of an outsider.

Tayo’s connection with his family and the land is deeply embedded within his own body. His bouts of nausea (as analyzed in relation to violence in chapter 1) are at times a reaction to the destruction of the landscape around him. This is demonstrated when he looks out over the parade grounds of Gallup, where “the glare of the sun on tin cans and broken glass, blinding reflections off the mirrors and chrome of the wrecked cars in the dump below [cause …] the old nausea rising up in his stomach” (Silko 117). Fragmentation imagery of the broken glass, harsh reflections and dismembered vehicles externally mirror Tayo’s sense of identity; the wounded, littered landscape is his own internal fragmentation, harkening back to his childhood in the dump with (before his mother abandons him). The image of the dump (as presented by Silko and other writers, such as Urrea) is a blemish or scar on the landscape—comparable to the wound motif.
that Anzaldúa evokes for the border. Tayo’s experience at the Gallup parade grounds occurs
directly before he undertakes Betonie’s offer of the healing ceremony, drawing a correlation
between his need to heal his body (which has internalized and reflects the destruction he sees)
and the need to heal the land.

The arbitrary borders instated by colonial powers disrupted preexisting indigenous
territories, thus reshaping geographically dependent identity. Because the land was divided in
this manner, identity developed to reflect the often violent reality in which people were forced to
live. Consider, for example, the long lasting ramifications of stolen land as posited by Wilson
Weasel Tail, where identity, health, and belonging are lost to those who “did not die fighting the
destroyers of the earth…whimpering while the invaders committed outrage against the forests
and the mountains” (Silko 723). The loss of land through colonial invasion and the development
of borders forces identity upon the people, harshly displacing and redefining their relationship to
the land. Although it is possible to examine at length the stolen land and its creation of identity
(particularly as it is a central theme in Almanac of the Dead and Ceremony) I will limit my
discussion in order to focus on the border. It is important to keep in mind however that this
connection exists and affects the identity politics at hand, and is the genesis for the imposition of
colonial borders. To situate this identity development historically, the Treaty of Guadalupe
Hidalgo in 1848 exemplifies the shift in identity on the Mexico/US border due to the political
change in border lines. Mae M. Ngai explains in Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the
Making of Modern America that

[i]n addition to giving Mexico’s northern half to the United States, the treaty stipulated
that all inhabitants in the ceded territory who did not announce their intention to remain
Mexican citizens or leave the territory in one year would automatically become citizens
of the United States … American citizenship in this instance was not consensual, either in
terms of traditional liberal ideology or by individual assent. Rather, it indicated
Mexicans’ new status as a conquered population. (50-51)

The political treatment and the division of the land automatically altered the identity of the
population. Forcing the new region’s population to become American citizens by default
removed their voice from the equation and, as Ngai succinctly puts, established them as
conquered by the dominant ideology. Even before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, barbed wire,
private property and state lines interfered with indigenous populations’ migratory routes,
dividing family connections and hunting grounds for political purposes. These scars on the
landscape not only divided peoples from one another by imposed immigration laws, but also
sought to divide the people from the land. Mining, logging, rerouting of water and other forms of control over natural resources similarly denied the people’s claim to the land, the damage seen on the landscape mirroring the violence conducted upon their ways of life.

Violence created by the border politics can be seen through the violence that is enacted on the body in this space. In Bowden’s *Juárez: The Laboratory of Our Future*, graphic attention is paid to the dead (and often mutilated) bodies of murdered women. Vivid and disturbing photographs shock the reader on many pages, presenting the border with horrific realism. The bodies of undocumented immigrants, homicide victims, and gang related (often cartel) violence are found in the borderlands on a regular basis. In the chapter “Blue” of *Blue Desert*, Bowden confronts the reader and himself with the statistics of death in the region of desert which he crosses, each landmark reminding him of a body found. Even as he describes the beauty of the desert, each landmark along the way acts as a signpost for the dead. Although these accounts are sobering, Bowden’s trek is in fact a remapping of this seemingly barren landscape and a walkabout of survival.

Walkabout is a British colonial term originally used to describe the “traditional periodic travelling on foot by [Australian] Aborigines, either individually or in groups, over their traditional land” (Doyle). The act of walkabout is undertaken for spiritual significance rather than mere transportation, with the belief that something will be learned through the act of walking over the land. It is connected with the notion of dreamtime, a spiritual state for Aborigines that is both present day and creation.

[The ancestors] walked, they created pathways or river beds; where they plunged digging sticks into the ground, trees grew; where they died, their bodies were transformed into hills; and where they bled, lakes were formed… Their every action had a consequence in the form of the landscape. (Morphy)

Communing with the landscape is integral to connect with the ancestors in dreamtime, because their bodies have through the process of creation become the landscape. Walking over the landscape on traditional routes is undertaken with the knowledge of the stories of the land and the ancestors. These routes, known as songlines, allow those who know the stories (suitable for the particular occasion) to learn the way, reconnecting with the landscape and ancestor spirits at the same time. Bowden is enacting his own walkabout, following the song lines that he has learned through his research of the area. Repeating the stories of attempted crossings, landmarks and found corpses, allows him to safely traverse the border while searching for personal
understanding. Through the writing of “Blue,” his own story becomes part of the landscape, and he is able to insert his narrative of survival and healing into the company of so many failed crossings. Each unsuccessful crossing is only a failure as an independent act; as a part of a larger context, the crossings act as warnings for the living, offering them the protection of the dead if they repeat and remember their stories.

Bowden also extends this narrative of survival to his personal life and marriage, particularly as he obsesses over his wife’s mastectomy being performed at the same time as his trek. The juxtaposition of the beautiful blue desert landscape with the description of “the scalpel incising the soft white flesh topped by the faint pink nipple” (174) draws parallels between the land itself and the woman’s body. Bowden’s trek across the blue desert and the narrative of his wife’s breast cancer are both acts of survival, connecting the woman’s body with spreading cancer to the landscape littered with deaths.

I think—no, I do not think, I know with certainty—that I will make it and she will make it and that we are both looking at the moon and I will pull her through the dark cave of anaesthesia and the knife and the pain and the huge bandage wrapped across where her breast once spread as a generous mound. My will becomes like iron and I know. I am a tiny dab of flesh dragging across a huge valley in the moonlight but I am larger than the mountains, stronger than hard metals, because I know. I know. (167)

The walkabout as a spiritual undertaking is done “to renew the spiritual strength and identity of someone recovering from injury” (Morphy). It is through the act of walking that Bowden comes to the realization that he is walking to carry out the body research of border crossing, and in order to gain hope for himself and for the recovery of his wife. Once he has entered into the dream-like world of the blue desert, he experiences a moment of self-realization and understanding. The repetition of “I know” situates his belief that his wife will recover into his spiritual experience of the desert. Bowden’s physical body becomes eclipsed by the landscape as he becomes a “dab of flesh dragging across a huge valley” and “larger than the mountains”. The landscape is still equated with his wife’s body, making his walkabout both a communing with the land and a spiritual reconnection (however one sided it may be) with her.

Learning the landscape through stories or songs of ancestors, spirits, or the movements of people is not specific to the Australian Aborigines alone, but can be seen in the Americas where many indigenous peoples hold similar spiritual connections with the land. Denis Fay Brown’s “The Cah: Place and Identity of Chemax Maya” studies the relationship between geographical location and communal identity formation, explaining that “places are usually physical or
material entities, like a birthplace, and at the same time they are depositories of memory, expectation, and affection” (216). Place, as Brown suggests, is not simply a location that is important because of individual significance but because it allows the individual to situate him or herself within a larger context, whether that is communal or spiritual. The land is vital to the individual’s ability to feel like he or she belongs, developing a shared history with the community through geographic location. In *Ceremony*, one of Tayo’s reasons for internal uncertainty and sometimes nausea is the loss of the land. Through the loss of land, the collective identity of the people is lost as well, even though the white thieves “only fool themselves when they think [the land] is theirs” (128). The confusion and anger over identity is still present, but the connection with the land always offers possibilities of healing.

In Silko’s works, land is central to characters’ identities. Locating the relationship to stolen land as the central reason behind the mental anguish of white people, the indigenous reclaiming of land is depicted as a form of healing and identity reformation. She cleverly discusses connections between identity and the land in a multitude of ways, notably through linking the woman’s body, the spirit world and the land in *Ceremony*. “Shifting Patterns, Changing Stories: Leslie Marmon Silko’s Yellow Women” by Elizabeth Hoffman Nelson and Malcolm A. Nelson analyzes the development of the Yellow Woman figure, her connection to the land, and the role of ka’tsina spirits. In these stories, the Yellow Woman is abducted by/willingly follows a ka’tsina spirit (spirit beings associated with rain and mountains). Through the story, the Yellow Woman develops “a growing awareness of the land around her (and her place in it) and a further understanding of stories” (Nelson and Nelson 124). The identity of the Yellow Woman figure is dependent on this sequence of events as she comes to a greater understanding of the world in her encounter with the ka’tsina being and the environment. Tayo’s encounters with Ts’eh (or Tse-pi’na) Montaño are reminiscent of the Yellow Woman narrative as he loves and learns from her connections with the landscape. Their relationship reverses the gendered roles of the traditional Yellow Woman story, positioning Tayo as the Yellow Woman and Ts’eh as the otherwise traditionally male ka’tsina.

Ts’eh’s relationship with the natural landscape is made obvious as her name identifies her with mountains and mountain spirits. Tse-pi’na is another name for Mount Taylor, and Montaño is an adaptation of the Spanish term, montaña, for mountain (a possible masculinizing of the word demonstrating the fluid gender dynamics at play). She is woman and mountain, spirit and
flesh, a powerful figure with the capability of becoming dangerous and healing. Her role as ka’tsina is confirmed through her ethereal qualities, often disappearing at a moment’s notice, coming to Tayo in dreams, and predicting the Destroyers’ future plans. Tayo realizes that “like Old Betonie, she could see reflections in sandrock pools of rainwater, images shifting in the flames of the juniper fire; she heard voices, low and distant in the night” (232). Although her physical body appears to be that of a human, Ts’eh is more than just that. Tayo’s relationship is therefore not to her alone, but to the land she embodies and represents. Betonie’s statement that “[i]t is the people who belong to the mountain” (128) is in direct reference to Mount Taylor and by giving himself to Ts’eh, Tayo is enacting the relationship between the people and the mountain. “Ts’eh ‘takes’ Tayo and enables him to discover a new/renewed self through oneness with her, with Mother Earth, and with the stories” (Nelson and Nelson 128). Tayo’s description indicates that not only is he making love to the body of a woman but that there is a kind of communing with the earth occurring simultaneously: “he eased himself deeper within her and felt the warmth close around him like river sand, softly giving way under foot, then closing firmly around the ankle in cloudy warm water” (180-1). Ts’eh is woman, ka’tsina, and mountain at the same time, allowing Tayo to heal his body, his spiritual uncertainty, and his relationship to the earth.

The body and the land can both be fragmented by borders. In the texts examined there is a correlation between reconciling geopolitical borders with overcoming internal borders, encouraging healing on individual and communal levels. The body therefore stands in to perform the borderlands experience because of the myriad of identities and stereotypes it must negotiate. The multiplicity of identities in the body can be seen as a reaction to trauma, violence, and the nepantla of the borderlands, but in their reconciliation there is ultimately hope—a possibility of something new emerging from the wound as referenced by Anzaldúa. Carter explains that Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots, “may begin in a place of dislocation and brokenness, but it begins with a clear vision to effect healing” (13). This same movement from fragmentation to wholeness can also be seen in Fronteras Americanas, La Frontera/Borderlands, Ceremony, and although it is perhaps less visible, it is still present in Almanac of the Dead and Blue Desert. Mojica says that “[b]y embodying that wholeness on stage, we can transform the stories that we tell ourselves and project into the world that which is not broken, that which can be sustained, not only for Aboriginal people but for all the inhabitants of this small, green planet” (Mojica and
Knowles 2, original emphasis). The audience is part of this transformation, just as they are integral to the individual’s performance of various identities through his or her body. The individual’s body, within this communal and public context, is an embodiment of the border with his or her performance reflecting internalized borders. In the rift between humans and the earth, there is room in the bordered body for healing.
Conclusions

The border is physical and spiritual; it is the confluence of the real world and the spirit world, where the border crossers are simultaneously undocumented migrants and coyote tricksters seeking the aid of witches, smugglers, and shamans in order to survive. It can be a site of violence and oppression—a location where trauma fragments the individual’s sense of identity, placing the border crosser in the role of nepantlero/a. The border crosser often negotiates his or her journey using costumes and uniforms as disguises intended to protect or subvert the larger ideological narrative at work. The individual internalizes the border through his or her body allowing identity construction and performance to develop in relation to gender, race and nationality. The border crosser’s body is politically charged according to its relationship to the land and often, through its own representation, acts as a reflection of the land.

Communal and individual identity depends on the physical (interpersonal or geopolitical) context it forms in. “Our identities are always in dialogue with others’ identities, and often our locations determine the bridgework we undertake” (Malhotra and Pérez 48). In this manner, the border and the borderlands are dynamic, fluid, and ever shifting locations where the elements of the border become expressed through the individual’s body. As I have illustrated in the previous chapters, the border seeks to perform itself through the body. The performance can be based on a violent act, a liminal gap between worlds, a set of socially constructed signs or stereotypes, or the correlation between humans and the land. Since the original concept of the border is a physical boundary that disrupts the natural landscape, it likewise seeks to disrupt the individual’s sense of identity by imposing socially constructed boundaries.

Rachel Adams insists that the border “...can no longer be understood to refer exclusively to the particular corridor dividing the United States from Mexico, since the entire continent has become a contact zone where Anglo and Latin America meet up, clash, and interpenetrate” (227). The frontier in this case shifts from a physically delineated space (say the Mexico/US divide) to a semipermeable and nebulous entity that has smuggled its way across the border. Using a broad lens helps gain the critical awareness of how the border informs communities away from the geopolitical border itself. Ideological clashes, historical aftermaths, and the subverting of signs all exemplify border relations that exist away from the border, but root themselves in the same global conflict. Violence is an element of the border; political tension,
violent histories, and recurring power dynamics are attributes of borders, still, healing is possible.

Varying my examination of border identity formation from drama to fiction to creative non-fiction allowed me the opportunity to develop a solid research base to pursue the thematic similarities seen in all six texts. It also expanded the scope of my research from the physically localized border to include border clashes occurring elsewhere. Mojica and Verdecchia exemplify this notion through Canadian productions which are just as applicable to border studies as works by Silko and Bowden. A cross-cultural examination offers more possibilities to the critics/scholars working on this subject, and a cross-genre study allows for a more expansive understanding of differences in performative modes.

There is always the opportunity for expansion, and in the process of writing I found myself gathering far more notes than could ever fit into this thesis. To build upon this research, I would like to conduct an in depth inquiry of the performance politics of the border, biopolitics, and the opportunities existing for individual and collective reconciliation, if it is possible. The practical implications of my research are also important to question, and it occurs to me that even if the textual and dramatic samples do not lend themselves clearly to political clashes, the identity formation I analyze is crucial when considering intercultural dialogues, healing and pedagogy. Interrogating my own interpretations is certainly an avenue worth pursuing farther and, as in Helen Hoy’s *How Should I Read These?*, it will remain an ongoing process with which I must be critically engaged in order to refrain from navel gazing. I must place myself within the political context at hand and further hone my academic skills in order to be effective, self-reflective and open to learning. Situating this thesis in a larger context is beneficial not only for my own academic and personal interests but allows for engagement within a larger healing process.

As Silko points out in *Ceremony*, Tayo’s illness (an extension of and reaction to the illusion of boundaries) “was only a part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything” (126). The expression of the border being performed through the individual’s body is evidence of a systemic problem; wholeness (or at least a homogenous representation of it) is an illusion. The “cure” Silko proposes for Tayo echoes Anzaldúa’s suggestion that what is needed to heal the border wound is an expansive bridging, between individuals, cultures, ideologies, and worlds. Understanding the ways that
borders inform, manipulate, and create notions of identity offers insight as to how traumatic histories (personal or communal) can begin to seek reconciliation through bridging. The border is a wound that through bleeding provides the material necessary to build anew: “una herida abierta … the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture” (Anzaldúa 25). It is a scar on the landscape, a body in need of healing, an internal trauma in want of reconciliation, and a spirit that lives on the margins demanding attention, all with infinitely creative and destructive potential.
Works Cited

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