

WESTERN AMERICAN SPECTRAL STUDIES: HAUNTING IN FILM,
LITERATURE AND LANDSCAPE

by

Daniel Lee Hanson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

American Studies

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

April 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A project like this accrues many debts of gratitude. I am deeply thankful for my friends, family, and colleagues who were attentive sounding boards and critics (Jenn, Ninia, Rob, Jennifer, Warren, Allen, Aaron, Matt) as well my compatriots in English, History and, especially, the American Studies department.

Regarding research and funding, the staff of Bannack State Park, and particularly John Phillips, greatly facilitated my understanding of Bannack both on the working “ground” level and in regard to historical contexts. The financial support of the Ivan Doig Center has also been crucial. The research funding and fellowship assistance greatly facilitated this project.

Additionally, because my chapters ranged widely, I needed the assistance of professors outside of my committee. Many thanks to Bill Wyckoff, Jennifer Hill, Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, Alex Harmon, Carol Miller, and Janet Ore. To my committee, Bob Rydell, Matt Herman, Robert Bennett and Susan Kollin, I am incredibly grateful for the wise and prudent suggestions regarding my tangential wanderings. And special thanks to my committee chair, Susan Kollin, for guidance during this intense PhD process, as well as for the constant critical feedback on a dissertation which has so often challenged the boundaries of containment.

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ABSTRACT

The American Western narrative has historically not had time for ghosts. In its dominant historical form, the Western prescribed a white, male, civilizing discourse while acting as the “nation-building” narrative for the United States. Especially in the latter context, the genre could not afford to be haunted. Yet, because the Western produced a very narrow race, gender, and ideological spectacle within a West that historically involved a wide range of peoples and experiences, it is, I would argue, an “exceptionally” haunted American narrative. Additionally, because the West has resisted comparisons with colonialism and notions of Empire—while explicitly functioning as a settler colonial discourse—ghosts of neglect continue to plague this influential cultural expression. So, because ghosts indicate something lost, forgotten, or pathologized by a narrated cultural reality, as recent “spectral studies” scholarship has shown, understanding how haunting exists and functions within western cultural forms provides insights into American cultural power structures. Combining postwestern theory, spectral studies discussions, and affect theory, I create a “spectral lens” to understand the functionality of haunting within western film, literature, and landscapes. This study draws attention to both the affective power of cultural expressions and to how haunting expresses hegemonic resistance. Additionally, such a study illuminates the changing power structures of a Western narrative that continues to wrestle with cultural notions of justice and equality while increasingly realizing a destructive settler colonial historical reality of indigenous displacement and eradication. Therefore, through a better “conversation with ghosts,” I aim to not only theoretically break down the rigid structures that fortify race, class, and gender hierarchies, but seek a more nuanced approach to heritage. This is a negotiation of what Wallace Stegner realized as the western American divide between the overly critical “urban intellectual” and the often reactionary “defensiveness of the native son.” In this manner, I also utilize spectrality to directly engage with the American Studies tradition of searching for a “useable” American cultural history.

INTRODUCTION

What then is the American, this American Man?
~Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*

*To understand American literature, and indeed,
America, one must understand the Gothic.*
~Charles Crow, *American Gothic*

Hector St. John de Crevecoeur's famous question hangs in the American Studies classroom like a ghost, an oft-referenced origin point, historically contextualizing the ongoing attempts to accurately define the elusive and phantasmal "America" as the definitive identity of the United States. American Studies continues to dance with this oft-returning specter, this *revenant*, to better understand the effects of a settler colonial state, one which has become an "exceptional" world power, both real and imagined. But a significant part of the ongoing struggle is the fact that powerful historic voices such as Crevecoeur formed a definition of America that wrapped the nation in a type of "exceptionalism" that saw the American democratic experiment as uniquely distinct, often set "above" other nation states, and which, during certain periods, was associated with a divine determinism as apparent in concepts such as "Manifest Destiny." It is no surprise, really, that a freshly conceived nation wrapped itself in "exceptional" trappings—and America's efforts to revise historic European social ideals in a more egalitarian-oriented vision were quite admirable and profound for the time. However, the problem with certain "exceptional" perceptions is that they often generalize and inhibit critical reflection. As Neil Campbell and Allister Kean note, "[c]riticisms of 'American exceptionalism'" focus on the "tendency to reduce questions of national identity to some

essential singularity” in a manner which marginalizes certain groups and how “there has been a tendency to study American society in isolation and from ‘within’” in a way which minimizes “those experiences the United States might have in common with other societies” (3). The brilliance of the “exceptional” creates a blinding light and a powerful noise—a *spectacle*—which, in desperate celebration, often masks oppressive cultural structures, thus creating *specters* which haunt from the shadows.

Crèvecoeur’s 1782 inquiry, from *Letters from an American Farmer*, signifies the Euro-centric, westward-gazing interest regarding the question of “America.” Letter III especially, where this epigraph quote is located, was, as Denis Moore points out, “crucial to the pattern that scholars have recognized as American exceptionalism, the notion that there is something unique—and, supposedly, uniquely privileged—about being from America” (xix). This was followed by similar inquiries, from Francis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* in 1839, to more American-centric voices such as Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier Thesis” presented at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair/Columbian Exposition—just three years after the closing of America’s frontier. Turner famously argued that the “existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development” (1). And not only did Turner signify America’s frontier as its defining and *unique* characteristic to set itself apart from the stagnant and musty Old World, but the Chicago fair itself heralded Columbus’ “discovery” of America and celebrated four-hundred years of consequent, unbridled American progress. Furthermore, the world’s most notable showman of the era, William Cody, aka “Buffalo Bill,” was performing just

outside the fairgrounds. Cody had been touring for over a decade, and by this time his “Wild West” (it was too authentic to be called a “Show,” Cody argued) had developed into a finely tuned performance, a four-part play which precisely illustrated Turner’s victory of “civilization over savagery” in the staged arena, for all the western world to see (Warren xvi). An exceptional spectacle, indeed.

In the early 1900’s, the need to define “America” saw the rise of “American Civilization” courses at U.S. universities. These early classes were not only inspired by the narratives of America’s past eras, but notably indicated American scholars’ resistance towards the traditional Euro-centric focus in the academic humanities. A more concerted push began to define a fresh and regenerative America in separation from its deteriorating, Old-World Empire progenitors—utilizing and building upon the “exceptional” viewpoints of previous historic voices. These various historic factors and voices combined with a post-WWII America desperate to delineate difference from Soviet nationalism and communism and inspired the creation of an “American” focused discipline. It is not a stretch to say the “spectre” of communism inspired the creation of American Studies. The establishment of the *American Quarterly* in 1949 also helped precipitate the eventual chartering of the American Studies Association in 1951, with Carl Bode as the first president. The words of Henry Nash Smith, from his 1957 article, “Can American Studies Develop a Method?” sum up the early goals of the fledgling discipline. Nash was one of the founding fathers of the field, and he significantly contributed to the myth/symbol school with his text *Virgin Land*—a concept, I would add, that continues to have significant relevance because of its descriptive relationship

with settler colonial narrative structures that “empty” contested frontier spaces. But in this article, he frames American Studies as “the study of American culture” while defining “culture” as “the way in which subjective experience is organized” (1). Notably, Crèvecoeur’s question continues to haunt here, almost two hundred years later. I also appreciate Nash’s emphasis on “subjective experience” as he’s pushing for a more phenomenological reality of “American’s being,” and this illustrates an important humanist response to the more abstract and objective, rigidly positivist post-Enlightenment methodologies which often forget the human in the pursuit of “truth.” It is for precisely this reason that Nash advocated for a marriage of “hard” social science methods and the “softer” humanities such as literary criticism; a more encompassing method was required to pursue this elusive “experience” (10). Thus, the early “myth/symbol” school rose to answer this call, and though it had its major shortcomings, Nash’s words mirror Lucy Maddox’s contemporary summary of the discipline as “the interdisciplinary study of American history and culture” (vii).

Yet, the myth/symbol Americanist’s work produced and/or reproduced significant blind spots where lurked the ghosts of historic cultural neglect. Some ghosts were particular, dealing with race, class, and gender issues, while others spawned from aspects of national exceptionalism. But a quick glance at earlier American narratives reveals the pervasive ghosts that these Americanists inherited. Crèvecoeur’s *Letters* was quite obviously haunted by the horrific treatment of slaves in chapter IX, and aspects of cultural declension plagued much of the text. As Christine Holbo has written, the protagonist “James, like America, escaped toward the frontier, but the questions of

whether nature or commerce—either, neither, or both—could serve as a source of community, morality, and identity remain unresolved” (58). Tocqueville cautioned against a naïve, unreflexive vision of democratic progress that might actually lead to the “tyranny of the majority” and the democratic breakdown of too many essential cultural structures in the pursuit of social freedoms. He also argued for an awareness of the paradox of desired freedoms (the more a citizenry experiences freedom, the more it wants) in what has become known as “The Tocqueville Effect” (211). Turner’s “Thesis” was almost as anxious as it was celebratory, evidenced in the prefatory opening quote from Senator Calhoun who noted (in 1817, no less): “We are great, and rapidly—I was about to say fearfully-growing!” (2) The Chicago Exposition’s “White City” was stalked by the mass-murdering “Devil in the White City” (who was able to sell “articulated” human skeletons for profit!) (Larson 150). And Buffalo Bill’s Wild West gained its vitality from the *death* of the heralded frontier lifestyle (in vampiric fashion)—and did so while orchestrating very settler colonial charades such as the “Attack on the Settler’s Cabin” which erased thousands of years of indigenous history within an emotionally charged moment. Some of these are small, realized, ghosts. Some are totally ignored, and others are pathologized/manipulated spectral realities to create an exceptional vision of the country. Haunting takes many different forms in these American narratives, but it is necessary to recognize the presence of these hauntings and to realize that, historically and spectrally speaking, American Studies inherited one hell of an American Shadow.

I make these brief points to introduce my take on American Studies: American Spectral Studies. “American Haunted Studies” would be simpler—as a specific aspect of

spectrality—but it is too limited, implying some fantastically negative cultural aspect lurking around every corner and perhaps reminiscent of the overtly pessimistic tendencies in some postmodern deconstruction. “Spectral,” however, is more accurate when cultural constructs are realized as constructed *simulations* of the material real. As simulations, they participate in a type of spectrality, ghosting between the *actual* and the *interpretation*. And “haunting” is always present to some degree in our existence in time and space (which can never be fully conceived), but it is most noticeably *felt* as an experienced uncanny event tied to consciousness and awareness at both the individual and cultural levels. Here I am privileging haunting within cultural expressions as a means of recognizing that which has been lost, forgotten, and/or pathologized within a cultural reality. Such haunting events illustrate how power is experienced. This approach answers, in my estimation, Smith’s call for a better realization of the American “experience.” But because “haunting” itself is such a nebulous term, existing outside of convenient and comfortable empirical classification, I bring “affect theory” into the discussion.

“Affect theory” helps frame the particular moment or event of haunting in a way that illustrates how “ephemeral” cultural constructs, such as language and stories, have “real” material effects upon human bodies. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth define “affect” here in its barest form: “[a]ffect arises in the midst of *inbetween-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon...Indeed, affect is persistent proof of a body’s never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world’s obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations” (1). This “physical,” material conceptualization of

affect, centered on the human body as an experiential source of knowledge, helps realize that moment or gradual event when the cultural narrative or representation misses *too* much, leaves out or obstructs to the point that the “absent but present” ghost pressures, through various bodies and expressions, for a realization. In this manner, Christina Lee has argued that “haunting is arguably always *affective*” (5). And this illustrates perhaps the most crucial importance of “spectral studies”: haunting provides “evidence” of the affective power of cultural narratives upon the human body.

The specific inclusion of affect theory helps inform my “spectral lens,” but I utilize several other aspects from the wide and varying “spectral studies” discussion. Like much of spectral studies “theory,” my spectral focus here benefits from Freud’s work with the “uncanny,” or the “*unheimlich*,” where the familiar becomes unfamiliar (“*unhomely*”), a concept which Nicholas Royle articulates as “the sense of a secret encounter: it is perhaps inseparable from an apprehension, however fleeting, of something that should have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (2). And this conceptual event notably interlinks with Jacques Derrida’s pivotal statement in *Specters of Marx* that “[h]egemony...organizes the repression and thus the confirmation of haunting. Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony” (46). As noted by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, editors of *The Spectralities Reader*, Derrida is often credited with inspiring the “spectral turn” of the 1990’s because of his reprivileging of the ghost during the reconsideration of Marx in this text (10). Mimicking my own sentiments, cultural critics appreciated the way Derrida privileged the ghost’s affective capacity to ‘embody’ the uncanny moment in a way that assists in the deconstruction of

cultural power structures. While “spectral studies,” I would argue, remains in a nascent form (and the “spectral turn” is, arguably, a gradual event), Derrida’s work is often seen as the catalyst for a clustered, but potent, string of discussions from literary to cultural geographic concerns that have sought a ‘better conversation with ghosts’, as Derrida suggested (xviii). However, it should be noted that Derrida and Freud’s overall approach to both real and figurative ghosts differed. Blanco and Peeren called Freud’s approach “ghost busting,” as he, ultimately saw that the “uncanny” had to be “cleansed of ghosts,” because such a reality too closely associated with a primitive “animistic conception of the universe” (5). Karl Marx was a “ghostbuster” as well, privileging—or over-privileging—materiality as Derrida notes: “Marx is very firm: when one has destroyed a phantomatic body, the real body remains” (Blanco and Peeren, 7). But such ghostbusting throws the baby out with the bathwater—to use another metaphor in a way that crucially emphasizes how metaphor helps us comprehend reality.

I am, personally, not sure *what ghosts are*. However, they function (at least) on a figurative level that both Freud and Marx utilize, despite themselves, to *uncover* some essential reality. Derrida—as *the* deconstructionist—is more settled within the realization of a representational reality which, in itself, is spectral and less bound to a rigid materiality. So, he is able to appreciate the *inbetweenness* and/or “both/and-ness” of the spectral that allows it to function as a portal of sorts. Derrida suggests a better “conversation” in a *relational* manner, rather than either/or material/immaterial reality. As Blanco and Peeren note, Derrida proposes that “the ghost should be lived *with*, as a conceptual metaphor signaling the ultimate disjointedness of ontology, history,

inheritance, materiality, and ideology,” but one which, I would add, specifically draws attention to how power privileges and neglects to manipulate cultural reality (6, 7, original). I bring up the “uncanny” initially to realize the genealogy of the spectral and Freud’s earlier (paradoxical) privileging of an aspect of haunting, but also because I would argue that the term—in gesturing toward the suddenly “unfamiliar”—is yet helpful for creating an *affective awareness* of what Derrida refers to as an “out of joint” moment in ways that specifically help realize oppression in cultural power structures (18). By relinquishing the pursuit of the definitive quantification of the ghost—an absolute definition of its form—its spectral, amorphous character is allowed to paradoxically “frame” some essential aspect of human experience. And this leads to a better understanding of the ghost and the way specters interact with cultural power structures while also, maybe most importantly, forwarding an awareness of the ways in which the human exists as a beautiful and frighteningly complex “affective being” within an impossibly complex reality.

However, while emphasizing how my work incorporates affect theory, the uncanny, and the “haunting of hegemony” to study spectrality, I would also say that there is a good bit of *slippage* here, between haunting, cultural constructs and simulations, language, and the affected/affecting human. I say this not to relinquish critical analysis, but to remain open to certain “open ended” avenues and to appreciate the amorphous aspect of the ghost itself—as an entity which necessarily resists total control. And so, I make a “soft” separation between spectrality and haunting to begin this dissertation, with the haunting uncanny as a particular spectral event. We live in a *physical* reality

spectrally, or maybe in a *spectral* reality *physically*. I'm not sure. But, importantly, there are contestable spaces or boundaries where consciousness and knowledge blur.

Materially, there are "gaps" between self, language, and the "objective" environment.

And temporally, every place is "haunted" by everything that happened there previously—with or without human historical awareness. But, an uncanny, or "out of joint," moment is realized when/where the repressed surfaces, and conscious reality may shift. Cultural expressions, of any sort, that deal with ghosts, or any type of anxiousness regarding "absent presences," reveal a consciousness dealing with the uncanny event and illustrate the precipice of self-knowledge and, potentially, cultural knowledge. Spectrality and haunting are irascible cultural concepts and often slide into each other, but my framing of these foundational concepts within this spectral introduction forwards an understanding of cultural expressions as they interact, critique, and reform social ideologies and paradigms. This framing also clarifies some particular aspects of spectral functionality in a way that sets the foundation for engaging with affective hauntings in various contexts, such as spectro-geography and spectro-textuality, as discussed in the following chapters.

So, in this dissertation, I utilize a "spectral lens" to better understand how haunting interacts with cultural power structures within the American Western literary/film genre, western American history, and place-based national heritage sites. I look at a range of spectral issues with a specific focus on haunting events and structures to understand mainly how haunting expresses episodes of historical cultural oppression, but also how such ghosts might be utilized by hegemonic structures themselves to reassert dominance. While American Studies scholars have attempted (especially in the

post-1970 era) to decenter “America” to gain a better view of the hegemonic narratives concerning the United States, I move *toward* and *inside* America, in a sense, by examining the most intimate of national expressions: The Western narrative.

Furthermore, I utilize *haunting* as a means of ‘going within’ to recognize and highlight the “decentering” elements lurking within western American cultural constructs, disruptive elements which *always* exist within totalizing narrative and reality structures.

My argument is primarily located in postwestern studies with its problematization of binary western/Western boundaries in both regionality and epistemology, influenced by critical regionalism and the postmodern critique of master narratives. I am concerned with the spectral post-West and how episodes of haunting reveal the Western’s capacity to critique its own historical monolithic narratives as expressed within literature, film, and western cultural geography. My spectral lens utilizes Derrida’s ‘haunting belongs to every hegemony’ stance, Freud’s discussions of the “uncanny,” Gothic studies, simulation studies (via Jean Baudrillard and Gerald Vizenor), and leans heavily upon “affect theory” to better articulate not necessarily the spectral *form* (which defies perfect representation and definition), but its varying *function* in certain contexts. I utilize these theories to merge postwestern studies with spectral studies in the formation of a familial American Studies pursuit. This joint dialogue expands the awareness of a spectral West to better “flesh out” the ways haunting expresses what the white, male, civilizing narrative and its foundational “civilization v. savagery” binary has lost, forgotten, and/or pathologized within a settler colonial paradigm. And by “settler colonial” paradigm, I’m referring to what Lorenzo Veracini has articulated as “a specific mode of domination

where a community of exogenous settlers permanently displace to a new locale, eliminate or displace indigenous populations and sovereignties, and constitute an autonomous political body” (1). My goal with this spectral lens is to provide insights into how America’s Western, “internalized,” hegemonically sealed settler colonial narrative is haunted by what it oppresses from “within”—such as varying race, class, and gender experiences—and neglects from “without”—such as a strictly sealed regionalism which privileges an isolationist, “American Adam-like” (to borrow from C.S. Lewis) exceptionalism.

I’d also argue that such a “lens” is not just fitting and necessary for understanding the ghosts of American exceptionalism within American history and the Western narrative, but “uncannily” corresponds with the history, development, and methodological reflexivity of American Studies. Continuing from my introductory framing of American Studies, the discipline is particularly fascinating to me because it almost imploded because of its neglected ghosts. A heightened awareness of racism, sexism, and American exceptionalism came out of the cultural turn of the 1960’s and 70’s, and this cultural awareness critiqued that way American Studies appeared to be producing educated white males critiquing only the work of white males (only privileging “dead white men,” as the saying goes). Additionally, the myth/symbol methodology was not only lacking in clarity and consistent empirical evidence, but tended to homogenize American society into a single, cohesive, and convenient metanarrative that denied the nation’s plurality. Lawrence Buell summarizes: “Since 1970, the myth-symbol approach has been taken to task both for methodical naivete and for its consensualist ideology, its

attempt to contain cultural diversity and conflict within a unitary formation” (14). And, as an example of the sexist nature of the discipline, Nina Baym, in her well known “Melodramas of Best Manhood,” notes how “the theories controlling our reading of American literature have led to the exclusion of women authors from the canon” (214).

While I find some of the early “myths” and “symbols” still relevant in certain important contexts, the lacking scholarship produced/reproduced American cultural gaps and absences. And, as Avery Gordon reminds us: “To write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities is to write ghost stories” (17). Critiques of the early Americanists reveal narratives of “exclusions” and “invisibilities” in ways often similar to the manner in which previous American narratives created significant shadows. *Both* events must be realized as “ghost stories” and therefore necessitate a better understanding of the specter itself in regard to hegemonic repression and cultural expressions and critiques. “To write ghost stories,” Gordon continues, “implies that ghosts are real, that is to say, that they produce material effects”—thus her book’s title: *Ghostly Matters* (with a significant play on “matter”) (17). But what “matters” is not an overreliance upon the material and easily measurable empirical, but a more nuanced navigation of the immaterial and material boundaries: “from a certain standpoint, the dialectics of visibility and invisibility involve a constant negotiation between what can be seen and what is in the shadows” (Gordon 17). This comment again enters into my suggestion of a more *relational* border between the real and the imagined, the empirical and the figurative, to understand both the ghost and the complexity of human experience. And it is essential to understand that “America” is haunted by what it has lost, forgotten, and/or

pathologized—by what has been relegated to the deep, deep “exceptional” shadows—and that its child discipline, “American” Studies, perhaps “cannily” after all, has inherited such ghosts. But maybe that’s OK. Maybe this is an opportunity for a better conversation.

Despite the lashing critiques that assaulted American Studies during America’s cultural turn of the Vietnam Era, the field survived, and, I would argue, grew stronger because of it trials. Indeed, American Studies *is* a type of spectral studies because of the complex and shadowy nature of the term “America” *and* due to the way this *continuous* realization has promoted an atmosphere of self-reflection that requires a more honest discussion with cultural and historical ghosts. This ‘haunting as unrealized subtext’ within American Studies inspires a self-reflexivity which occurred via multiple encounters with “crisis”—Derrida’s “out of joint” encounter. George Lipsitz argues, however, that “[t]o say that the field faces a crisis is not necessarily to say something negative or pessimistic” (311). In his 1990 article, “Listening to Learn and Learning to Listen,” Lipsitz uses a familiar phrase to confront an uncomfortable reality: “A specter is haunting American Studies, the specter of European cultural theory” (311). Of course, Lipsitz taps into a *massive* American specter—especially so for American capitalism—Karl Marx. He, as many others have done (as Derrida notably does), mimics Marx and Engel’s famous quip, “A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism” (63). This shows how ghosts are *significant* and *crucial subtexts* often utilized, or “conjured,” to express that which has been culturally repressed. And Lipsitz taps into spectrality to privilege a haunting that helps realize yet another “crisis” in American Studies. At this

time, it was the influx of European cultural theory: the wave of French feminism, the psychoanalysis of Lacan, and Foucault's post-structuralism. In summary, Lipsitz argues that "American Studies always has been at its best when engaged in dialogue with the complex and conflicted realities of American life" (311). This is a conversation regarding a less-rigid way of being (as a "defined" discipline), a more fluid perception of boundaries (in disciplinary *and* American national perceptions), and, of course, a better relationship with ghosts.

Incorporating a spectral awareness within American cultural studies illuminates the notorious pervasiveness of ghosts within the nation state culture, realizes ghostly expressions as potentially revealing cultural oppression, and also importantly highlights the need to re-examine (or continually examine) America's most celebratory texts—such as the Western—under this adjusted purview, this "spectral lens." In this manner, my study of the American Western narrative, in film, text, history, and place-based heritage, performs a very necessary and revealing American Studies exercise—and does so by scrutinizing that narrative and region which has been so often associated with America's "nation-building" story. However, this is not "purely academic," but also an important quest for a realized *heritage* as I consider myself to be a "Western American." Heritage is a key theme in this dissertation. I consider it in a braided sense, for both myself, as a Western American, and as a scholar who continues to pursue "The American Question." Heritage might, in fact, be the most important question of my dissertation and for the United States. As a *settler colonial nation* which prides itself on equality and fairness, it has to be one of the hardest realities to come to terms with considering the nation's

genocidal relationship with indigenous peoples—what settler colonial scholar Patrick Wolfe has called the “logic of elimination” (27).

Henry Nash Smith’s early call for a focus on American “experience” serves my interests not just because it correlates with phenomenology and affect theory, but it begins to access this difficult concept of heritage. However, I would argue that this term is really an updated, more personalized (read: *affective*) form of what Gene Wise called a “usable past” (171 original). Wise broaches this concept in his oft-cited discussion, “‘Paradigm Dramas’ in American Studies”—although he attributes the idea to Vernon Louis Paddington who he considers to be the “Intellectual Founder of American Studies” (171). A “usable” past is an important concept because it gives cultural critics a historical base to critique and effect political awareness and change, but it is also something to “hold onto” as Americans, or something to “build from” as a nation identifying with a history. And a “usable” past means, whether realized or not, a better conversation with ghosts. As Derrida has argued, we should

learn to live *with* ghosts, in the upkeep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship...To live otherwise and better. Not better, but more justly. But *with them*...And this being-with specters would also be, not only but also, a *politics* of memory of inheritance, and of generations. (xvii original)

To have a healthy conversation with ghosts is to understand inheritance. And this *heritage* is perhaps the most pressing aspect of an American Studies wrestling with the *impossible* heritage of settler colonialism.

These ghosts specific to American Studies allow me to argue that American Studies is really, in effect, an “American Spectral Studies” with an emphasis on issues of

heritage, epistemology, and crisis within the discipline and nation. But it is equally important to realize that “crises” continue to haunt the discipline. In Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease’s *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993), Kaplan notably critiques “three salient absences which contribute to this ongoing pattern of denial across several disciplines: the absence of culture from the history of U.S. imperialism; the absence of empire from the study of American culture; and the absence of the United States from the postcolonial study of imperialism” (11). There were notable exceptions to this negligence and, in a footnote, Kaplan does recognize Robert Rydell’s work with America’s World’s Fairs and Exhibitions which clearly brought the term “Empire” out of America’s shadow, but Kaplan’s point nevertheless rang true, revealing how America and Americanists were still haunted, still not realizing the notorious term “Empire.” Because haunting is such a strong, and *affective/effective* subtext, Kaplan’s use of “absence” fits here. However, she really implies “absent but present.” And in response to the absent but present specter of American Empire, many scholars shifted their focus in the last couple of decades. Ann Laura Stoler specifically utilized Kaplan’s call to arms as a springboard for a more concerted transnational interdisciplinary study, breaking down the “exceptional” U.S. border to better realize issues of colonialism and historic and continuing “Empire” structures within (and beyond) the nation state in an appropriately titled, *Haunted by Empire* (2006). “To be haunted,” declares Stoler, “is to be frequented by and possessed by a force that not always bares a proper name,” and her text attempts to “name” American Empire as it “works through—and rests uncomfortably

in—the fierce clarity of intimacies and in those ambiguous zones of empire that refused or refuted colonial appellations” (1).

The hauntings of Empire, alongside other “exceptional” crises, continue to not only haunt America and American Studies, but plague its subdiscipline, western American studies. But this is not surprising. Heritage, in some respects, *demands* an exceptional aspect—we want something special to positively identify with—and so the American and the Americanist will always wrestle with exceptionalism. However, this brief spectral history of American Studies provides evidence of *usable* spectrality within the discipline in a manner which directly links to discussions concerning western American scholars and my particular interests in a “Western American Spectral Studies.” But before getting into western American studies, I want to reiterate how a *usable past* and *heritage*—and yes, ghosts too—provide avenues of study and expression outside of the nihilism often correlated with postmodern deconstruction.

Jean-François Lyotard described “*postmodern*” in its most basic form as an “incredulity toward metanarratives,” and this is often distilled into a skepticism toward ‘objective truth’ itself (xxiv). Elements of the postmodern have caused consternation among scholars, as noted by Lipsitz earlier (and very thoughtfully illustrated in William Cronon’s well-known 1992 piece, “A Place for Stories”), in a way that has often resulted in claims of pessimism and defeatism directed against postmodernist deconstruction. Because various “post-” disciplines critique the rigid binary truth structures of modernism’s Enlightenment thinking which have stratified cultural hegemonies, the ghost, as a boundary crossing agent, can be the perfect deconstruction device. However,

a healthy conversation with ghosts does not only participate within deconstruction's interrogation of cultural power structures, but can also provide a spectral/material balance that inspires positive action. This is why Derrida mentions "inheritance" while bringing up the concept of "justice" and "politics." Avery Gordon also confronts this issue, remarking, "I used the term *haunting* to describe those singular yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar, when your bearings on the world lose direction when the over-and-done with comes alive, when what's been in your blind spot comes into view" (xvi). Gesturing towards the *uncanny* and the "out of joint," Gordon's definition mimics my own usage of haunting, but she also emphasizes that "[h]aunting...is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done" (xvi). Of course, "something to-be-done" is up to interpretation and may simply be a reaffirmation of the dominant power structure. A quick example is the politician's press secretary who attempts to "get out in front" of any less-than-flattering bit of new news concerning their political candidate by "spinning the narrative" in some capacity. This is important to keep in mind as power structures are in constant movement with their ghosts, controlling their visibility.

"Haunting" is not some deconstructive panacea. However, we can acknowledge haunting in a positive manner that uncovers hegemonic inequalities—"crises of representation," as Lipsitz would argue—in a way that produces change (324). Gordon emphasizes a "forking" between "the future and the past," where "we might locate a profound and durable practice of thinking and being and acting toward eliminating the conditions that produce the nastiness in the first place" (xvii). In essence, while haunting is recognized beyond the mere use of a cultural subtext, Gordon emphasizes the "usable" in a way that

inspires movement, creation, a “something-to-be-done,” and an involvement perhaps *beyond* the never-ending “haunting” aspects of a potentially meaningless deconstruction analysis.

This positive aspect of haunting, this “something-to-be-done,” is important to keep in mind while considering national heritage and the “heartland” genre of America, the Western, and its companion region, the West. The Western has often been cited as America’s “nation-building” genre as it historically illustrated aspects of Turner’s “Frontier Thesis,” espousing aspects of a “Virgin Land” narrative with various types of “American Adams”—to include Smith and R.W.B. Lewis’s early Americanist concepts. However, it usually exhibited an even greater degree of “civilization v. savagery” conflict as it turned towards a more confrontational and racialized war as Theodore Roosevelt preached in *The Winning of the West* and Buffalo Bill illustrated so dramatically in his exceptionally “Wild West.” Not only has the Western been central to America’s dominant story, but early American Studies’ “myths” and “symbols” intimately intersect this narrative. Thus, it is no surprise that calls to critique dominant narratives while “decentering” America have also plagued western American studies. One might even argue that New Western History precipitated Kaplan’s call to realize America as an Empire as such historians, Patricia Limerick perhaps most notably in *Legacy of Conquest* (1987), were insistent on realizing the American frontier as a site of “conquest.” It is also relevant that Limerick’s second book, *Something in the Soil* (2000), revisits and drives home the legacy of conquest in a chapter called “Haunted America.” Again,

haunting is in such great usage—and is often referenced in terms of uncanny, “absent presences” within America—that its affective capacity requires an extensive examination.

Contemporary postwestern literary scholars have been more directly realizing spectrality and haunting in the West in relation to national (and regional) power structures, though this “western American spectral paradigm” is yet in its infancy. Neil Campbell, Susan Kollin, and Stephen Tatum—all of whom are connected with American Studies discussions—have broached the spectral to varying degrees. Kollin specifically brought the Gothic into Western revisionary discussions just prior to the postwestern era, Tatum has touched on various aspects of spectrality from Freud’s uncanny to Baudrillard’s simulations (the latter with Nathaniel Lewis), and Neil Campbell has perhaps done the most work with the ghost, going so far as to equate “post-Westerns” with “ghostwesterns” (27). I will touch on some of these specific conversations later in my chapters, but it is important to understand that a usable spectrality is surfacing within the field and how this interacts with my interpretation of the term “postwestern.”

One notable critique of the New Western Historians came from Stephen Tatum, and this relates to both long-standing American Studies issues of the “popular” and the concept of a “usable” past, or heritage. In “The Problem of the Popular,” Tatum questions the way New Western Historians’ heavy critique created a ‘separation from’ popular Western representations that inadvertently placed them ‘above’ the “popular” and even, perhaps, above the Western commoner. His argument is substantial, but is summarized in this simple concern: “it is...unclear to me how one can stand apart from one’s culture” (164). While Tatum critiques postures of absolute objectivity, positivism,

and perceptions of the “popular” as a totally unreflexive entity, this comment equally reminds me of heritage. Ghosts may very well reveal what has been lost, forgotten, and/or pathologized within the West, but if I critique *too far*, deconstruct *too much*, I not only potentially erase the “usable” aspects, but I have to look in the mirror and face the confused ghosts of my ancestors—in my case, my Anglo ancestors. Such faces remind me of my connection to them, remind me that I am speaking because of them, and that I am, at all times, critiquing aspects of myself. Such specters caution against the lack of context via presentism and deconstructing to the point of disregarding any self-agency or good intent within those being scrutinized. The oppressed ghosts of America absolutely require consideration, but to critique in an “American Adam” fashion which creates yet another “starting over” by vilifying the past (a significant, repeating, and problematic American paradigm) will only lead to more historical and personal hauntings. The “American Adam,” as coined by early Americanist R.W.B. Lewis refers to a male persona Lewis saw as an archetypal figure in early American literature, an “individual emancipated from history...bereft of ancestry...undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling” (5). Not only is this an important figure for understanding how a settler colonial nation creates its myths, but the American Adam offers an impressive *boundary figure* precisely because he has the power to ignore history and materiality. He springs from the earth without the shackles of heritage in an *ahistorical* manner, combined with an *amaterial* spontaneous emergence. While this haunting figure will be referenced throughout my dissertation to illustrate pervasive and problematic aspects of the American paradigm of “starting over,”

a healthy postwestern perspective *rehistoricizes* the American Adam by articulating a western American Studies that ‘critiques in relationship with’ rather than ‘critiques to indelibly separate from’ the Western narrative. This points to the ‘not necessarily temporal’ aspect of *postwestern* theory.

Different authors have chimed in to define “postwestern” theory, but aspects of my particular appreciation for the term follow directly from New Western Historian’s critical Western lens, Tatum’s criticisms of New Western History, and my consequent argument regarding cultural criticism and heritage. I would say that, in its best usage, postwestern theory utilizes postmodernism’s ‘skepticism toward master narratives’ combined with the rigid boundary interrupting techniques of various “post-” theories to interrogate the West, while also remaining mindful of negative American Adam tendencies of naively “starting over” that would merely create another ahistorical/amaterial “virginal” frontier. Neil Campbell specifically notes Virginia Sharff’s 1994 demand for “a *postwestern* history” to “question the stability of our most cherished historical categories of analysis” and allow the scholar to see beyond the “weight of the Western frame” (*Post-Westerns* 3, 4). Campbell calls this postwestern process a “deframing” to shift “beyond...the past” while simultaneously “engaging...with its discursive formations, and its weighty frames” (*Post-Westerns* 4). Susan Kollin, who helped solidify the emergence of a postwestern method in *Postwestern Cultures: Literature, Theory, Space* (2007), emphasizes an encompassing critical regional approach to realize the way the West (and its “Western frame”) is plagued by a “narrowly conceived regionalism” which molded the region as a “predetermined entity with static

borders and boundaries” (xi). And Stephen Tatum, in his article “Postfrontier Horizons,” pinpoints methodological boundary issues when he states that the new Western approach must avoid “the troubling binary structures (for example, myth/reality; dominant/resistant; authentic/false) too often employed by Western critics and historians in search of some authentic, ‘real’ West or regional difference” (465). The boundary concerns voiced by these scholars reveal how the West is haunted by an either/or binary epistemological rigidity, in its creation, its heritage, and its scholastic study. The elusive nature of this promising, mystical, violent, imaginative, confounding region, along with the concerns voiced by western scholars, points to the need for a non-binary, or, to eschew essentialization, what I would call a “binary-aware” approach. Such an approach illuminates the hegemonic “Western frame” and the way this structure privileges, in Campbell’s words, “regionally mythic narratives of the ‘golden land’ of frontier, unquestioned patriarchy, national masculinity, eternal ‘natural’ values, stable notions of home and Anglo-Saxon centrality” (*Rhizomatic West* 68). Such an approach, however, must do so while not separating too far from the Western past during the critique, separating so far as to absolutely villainize in an *erasure* of heritage. Postwestern theory, as I read it, is a critique of the Western while understanding that many of us—regardless of ethnicity—still ride shotgun in the spectral Western stagecoach that has definitively affected, for better or worse, our American reality.

Each individual chapter in this dissertation explores spectral functionality in certain arenas while, hopefully, maintaining a healthy respect for the impossibility of a totalizing definition. It is important to see spectrality along a *spectrum* of interpretation

to more clearly understand the workings of power in cultural constructs and how “haunting” becomes particularly *affective* during certain “out of balance,” or “out of joint,” moments. These chapters hold a wide range of spectral and haunting considerations, creating a spectral awareness while emphasizing the haunting event to illuminate the position of power *and* appreciate the beauty, creativity, and mysteries of cultural expression.

“The Subjugated Howl” is my second chapter of this dissertation, and focuses on environmental anxieties and Anthropocene-alienated bodies—with an emphasize on the affective and “mismatched” human body. Clair Vaye Watkins’ *Gold Fame Citrus* and Cormac McCarthy’s *The Crossing* illustrate “hybrid human/nonhuman” bodies as sites that realize concurrent environmental destruction *and* human alienation. From postwestern texts to postwestern films, the third chapter examines racial and gendered “spectro-geographies” in film while consulting cultural geography discussions to examine the ghosts within *Lone Star* (1996) and *Wind River* (2017). Continuing down various pathways of affect, this section highlights both cinematographic techniques and the problematics of “speaking to power” to understand pervasive western geographic hauntings as viewed through these mediums—a consideration of affective hauntings and the “something-to-be-done” which might even extend ‘off the stage’ or screen. The fourth chapter takes a closer look at indigenous spectrality and haunting through the works of Leslie Marmon Silko’s classic, *Ceremony* and Layli Long Soldier’s very recent *Whereas*. Similar to the previous chapter, I examine a classic alongside a fresh cultural work to help historically contextualize what’s at stake in each respective spectral focus.

This chapter considers spectral studies and indigenous studies' warnings not to "westernize" all hauntings under an assumed Anglo-centric cultural reality and explores "spectro-textuality" in these works to highlight indigenous interactions with cultural representations, realities, and the 'ghost in the word'.

Chapter five is perhaps my most "material" chapter as it examines the state park ghost town of Bannack, MT. This two-part study explores both the concept of "arrested decay" as a "spectralized materialization" (historic structures suspended in decay) alongside the Bannack Ghost Walk, a yearly play which provides a very Gothic interpretation of the lesser-known, and very haunting, stories of Montana's original state capital. This section studies the way such sites use aspects of spectrality as "performance heritage" while also questioning whether such abandoned "celebratory" places should be considered as "dark" heritage. And my coda punctuates this western American spectral examination with a brief look at *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). This consideration of the simulated human in the post-West intersects with Stephen Tatum and Nathaniel Lewis' spectral considerations of western simulations and "problems" in Las Vegas to conclude and punctuate issues of representation, reality, humanity, and alienation within the West.

The spectral discussions in these chapters are not only important to problematize the "Western frame," as scholars call it, but utilize various approaches to "reframe" the American Studies tradition that has so desperately sought to answer the question of "What then is this American?" America has inherited and privileged the reason-oriented, ordered, and empirical epistemology of the Enlightenment, and the more "ephemeral" cultural elements of story and its respective "emotional" components have yet to be fully

appreciated. I remain haunted by the power of story, by indigenous author/critic Thomas King's (Cherokee) statement, "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (2). The way a narrative both reflects and creates cultural realities is still far from properly understood and appreciated in American culture. And ghosts, of course, have been one of the most dismissed and ridiculed aspects of cultural storytelling and human expression. Perhaps for this reason alone, ghosts demand a more serious examination. In many ways, it is not "uncanny" at all that ghosts have been relegated to the "irrational dust bin" considering how their expressive interdimensionality disrupts rigid structures—and that hegemony, at least in façade, demands stratification to enforce privilege. Ghosts are a threat to such power-reliant rigidities. And studying ghosts is not just important theoretically; as I've mentioned, haunting privileges a crucial human experiential element that necessarily helps place us—or realize our displacement—in our so very complex and complicated historical and material American reality as both citizens and scholars.

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THE SUBJUGATED HOWL AND THE APOCALYPTIC ANTHROPOCENE IN
CLAIRE VAYE WATKINS' *GOLD FAME CITRUS* AND CORMAC MCCARTHY'S

THE CROSSING

They encourage a split between the body and the spirit and totally ignore the soul: they encourage us to kill off parts of ourselves. We are taught that the body is an ignorant animal; intelligence dwells only in the head.

~Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera*

The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory—precession of simulacra—that engenders the territory.

~Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*

The land and the human have always entertained a tense relationship in the Anglo-oriented American historical narratives. From John Winthrop's "City upon a Hill" that warded against Puritanical fears of a vast and formidable wilderness, to America's westering settler colonial narrative of "civilization v. savagery" as espoused by Frederick Jackson Turner in his "Frontier Thesis," to the more current anxieties regarding climate change. But America's human/nonhuman relationship is traditionally engaged with a discourse that prescribes a hierarchy: the human over the land and of the separation between the two. The American Western genre—a narrative that has often been considered America's "nation-building" story, has facilitated these tensions in a "Taming of the West" narrative that has often emptied the indigenous from the land to make room for the settler colonizer and extractive economies. Western American studies scholars have increasingly connected with Anthropocene and ecocritical/Ecogothic concerns to consider the nonhuman in a type of "posthumanism" that decenters a myopic

anthropocentric dominance. Additionally, many Western-oriented, or postwestern texts illustrate human protagonists that undergo some anxiety, horror, and/or alienation within a post-frontier, “extracted” landscape, thus expressing the haunting aftereffects of America’s “westerling” mission of land exploitation in a way which demands more attention.

Many scholars of the Anthropocene and the ecocritical continue to leave the human out of the equation in an attempt to focus on the agency of the nonhuman Other—the animal and/or the environment. While the question of “the thing in itself” has been around for as long as western culture has pondered the “objective truth,” I remain dubious as to how one can understand the truth of the “not self” without continually referencing the body through which the human experiences reality *and* without considering the epistemological methods of deciphering this affectivity. I am heavily influenced by affect theory and am in conversation with the border disrupting theories of American Studies (hybrid studies, postnationalism, post colonialism) postwestern theory (thirdspace, critical regionalism, the post-frontier) and spectral studies (the Gothic, Derrida’s “hauntology”), and so I am *less* concerned with the nonhuman “Other in itself” and more focused on the *relationship between* the human and the Other. I argue that the most effective and efficient way to better comprehend the nonhuman Other is, perhaps paradoxically, by realizing the *affective* hybrid nature of the human. Because human experiential boundaries are not at all as solid and impermeable as Enlightenment-oriented modernistic ideologies prescribe, understanding the *hybrid* boundary of the human experiential reality leads to a better awareness of what is “outside” the human. Despite

my humanistic focus on the human body, such a body is already and always *contextualized by the environment*. To argue this point, I look at the way human western bodies are haunted by a lack of connection with the nonhuman world, haunted by culturally prescribed bodies “mapped” as distinct and separate from the nonhuman world. So, my “spectral lens” in this chapter utilizes affect theory and spectral concerns to examine how the protagonists within Claire Vaye Watkins’ *Gold Fame Citrus* and Cormac McCarthy’s *The Crossing* exemplify Western human bodies haunted by some alienation from an essential environment. I look to understand how the characters of Billy Parham and Luz Dunn exist in a post-West haunted by the denial of human/animal, human/Other relationships—a West lacking a *posthuman* awareness because of historical “Taming of the Land” inheritances. Inspired by these characters’ alienation from the nonhuman, I stress that, rather than ‘knowing the other in itself’, humans must work through an affective *relationship* to decenter anthropocentrism and the modernist methodologies of control which drive the settler colonial ideologies that end up harming both the human and the nonhuman.

The Anthropocene and Ecocritical Concerns

American Studies has always been concerned with defining an “American character,” be it in terms of an American “Civilization” as early twentieth-century academics attempted, to mid-century calls for interdisciplinary scrutiny of, in Henry Nash Smith’s words, “American culture,” and “experience,” to more the more critical race, class, and gender oriented concerns of the past fifty years (1). Despite the varying context of these previous American Studies discussions, the primary constant has been

the assumed centrality of *the human being*. Yet, in the last couple of decades, another force has entered the “field-imaginary” (Donald Pease’s well-known phrase) of America. And despite the various cultural Others that have been realized within the hierarchy and definition of American culture, this new Other is perhaps the most foreign. I am speaking about the nonhuman: the environment—in all its seemingly non-sentient aspects—and the nonhuman creatures of the earth. Additionally, as foreign bodies which continue to affect human beings—especially seen in the growing anxieties regarding climate change—nonhuman concerns are illuminating western civilization’s obsession with seeing the human as autonomous, separate—even ahistorical—and, crucially, in total *control* of this earthly, bodily reality. Anthropocentrism, I would argue, has been even further fortified by an American cultural consciousness of extreme *individualism*.

Americanist Lawrence Buell has been a key figure in environmental and ecocritical discussions—though he prefers the term “environmental criticism” to eschew certain extreme romantic conceptions within early “ecocritical” nature writing. While he’d been writing on the environment for over a decade, his 2005 text, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, argued for an increased awareness of the environment in cultural studies. Buell questions “whether planetary life will remain viable for most of the earth’s inhabitants without more changes in the way we live now,” and argues that this is the foremost concern of our current era (vi). To study this penultimate issue, Buell assumes a very American Studies stance and calls for a bridge between university programs in “science” and the “environmental humanities”—but stresses that the “climate of transformed environmental values,

perception and will” is dependent upon “the power of story, image and artistic performance and the resources of aesthetics, ethics, and cultural theory” (vi). Scholars have increasingly taken up this “ecocritical” call in the last fifteen years and this focus illustrates a discernable *shift* in American Studies. In American Studies, the cultural turn of the 1970’s demanded a decentering of the white, male, middle/high class perspective, followed by the decentering of “America” from historically exceptionalist attitudes in the early 90’s to present. Here, Buell goes one large step farther. Such ecocritical and posthuman discussions demand the decentering of the human being.

Perhaps illustrating the benefits of interdisciplinary conversations, “the Anthropocene” has become a key phrase within cultural studies, migrating from “hard science” geographical era typology to infiltrate cultural studies discussions that attempt to recontextualize human presence on this Earth. Rob Nixon, in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, consults various scholars to realize an “Anthropocene Age” which conceptualizes “the massive impact of the human species, from the industrial era onward, on our planet’s life systems, an impact that...is geomorphic, equal in force and in long-term impact to a major geological event” (12). Nixon follows with the question: “What are the consequences” now that we’re realizing “that we have inadvertently, through our unprecedented biophysical species power, inaugurated an Anthropocene Age and are now engaged in (and subject to) the hurling changes of the Great Acceleration?” (12) While Nixon importantly brings an awareness to how this recent “high-speed planetary modification” (the Great Acceleration) exists as an almost invisible (and therefore ghostly, I would add) “slow violence” that affects people of lower

class more severely than other societal subsets, his overall question explains and reiterates the details of the current human/environmental crisis. Control is a key issue here. Perhaps, you might argue, we as a species had *too* much power. This is certainly partially true, but only to a point; we are undoubtedly running into the limits of that perceived control. And the damage to the earth and its nonhuman denizens is causing scholars to revisit the *relationship* between cultural perception of control, boundary, context, and the nonhuman. The specter of the nonhuman haunts the Anthropocene. But so too, I argue, does the hybrid human.

The Anthropocene and ecocritical considerations have been applied specifically to western American studies as well. Sylvan Goldberg historically contextualizes such environmental concerns, referencing American and western studies alongside scholars of the nineteenth century: “the imposing western landscapes affirmed a school of geology called catastrophism, so named for the rapid and violent rate of change through which it envisioned alterations to the earth’s surface” (21). Goldberg explains that the “geologic imagination of the Anthropocene retains this catastrophic sensibility, but sublime awe has given way to the anxieties of climate change” (21). Western literary scholar Susan Kollin speaks about the nature of the human/nonhuman relationship, referencing Buell’s earlier work along with cultural geographer Bill Wyckoff, and remarks that “Western American landscapes have often worked hand in hand with larger national imperatives involving economic and political expansion” (61). And Wyckoff specifically notes that the West “has become synonymous with frontier,” providing the “place” for “Manifest Destiny...a wild land of limitless natural resources, ripe for the taking by an entrepreneurial and

acquisitive frontier population”—most available for those who were “white” and “male” (61). Kollin also discusses how such gendered stratifications are apparent in Western environmental writing. “Some forms of Western environmental writing,” argues Kollin, have “often inherited the erotic language found in American discourses of conquest and discovery” which Rebecca Solnit describes as “virgin, untouched, undiscovered, unspoiled” (Kollin 64).

These gendered land narratives intersect with early Americanist Henry Nash Smith’s “Virgin Land” concept which describes early American perceptions of the frontier as an “empty” place, ripe for the taking. Yet, Kollin also references the “American Adam” here. And this figure, while obviously gendered, also promotes an awareness of some very interesting and relevant epistemological considerations. I would say that the “American Adam” quite “naturally” correlates with a “Virgin Land” and, when properly contextualized, these concepts are very useful images for realizing settler colonial narrative strategies that involve environmental issues. R.W.B. Lewis coined the phrase, “American Adam,” and Kollin notes that Lewis described the western movement as a “fresh initiative” and a “divinely granted second chance for a new American self” (64). She introduces the American Adam alongside the narrative of *material* land vacancy (often gendered, as noted). However, I want to connect this with the notable *temporal* aspect involved with this character Lewis summarizes from early American literature. From his own text, Lewis describes the American Adam as an “individual emancipated from history...bereft of ancestry...undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling” (5).

Lewis' literary analysis, like so many early Americanists, privileged the "high" literature in a way which marginalized many voices, yet the extreme individualism in this character have a particular, wishful, relationship with both time and place that does appear to accurately tap into dominant narrative sentiments. He is both *ahistorical* and *amaterial*. He seemingly sprouts, suddenly, from the ground within a "new Eden." Lewis describes this character as "Adam before the Fall [with] position prior to experience, and in his very newness he was fundamentally innocent...And he was a type of creator, the poet par excellence, creating language itself and naming the elements of the scene about him" (5). I would argue that the figure provides an apt "American Settler Colonial Adam" as he exists without history, in a new land (virginal and vacant), with the "creator" power to name—and is entirely justified via his "innocence."

John Muir's "transcendentalist writings" also significantly contributed to America's historic wilderness conceptualization and he also "American Adam'ed" the land (and himself) with the framing of such spaces as virginal, as a "*terra incognita*" (Kollin 60). Muir's writings differed, however, as he stressed the "aesthetic, spiritual, and recreational virtues of the natural landscape" that contributed to environmental protection and preservation movements, such as the Sierra Club (Kollin 61). Muir's stance is notably less economically consumptive and more romantic, with a focus on the protected "sublime," thus participating in the American frontier vision that was more concerned with escaping modernity than perpetuating it. Kollin traces this ideology to "nineteenth-century white Protestant responses to industrialization, capitalist development, and national development" (61). What is apparent, however, is how the

polarized Anglo-centric views retain the dichotomy of separation; both cases are largely divorcing the human being—or “human culture”—from the land (although the “affective” capacity of the romantic view might demand a more nuanced appreciation). This illustrates not just a polarized view of the land, but of the “human” element as well and taps into historic dualist ideologies.

Notably, Kollin juxtaposes these viewpoints against other, more *relational* ideologies. For example, the indigenous Tlingit point of view, as established through their oral tradition, is built upon “mutual interaction and dependency between humans and nonhuman nature” (60). Yet some contemporary environmental movements, such as “bioregionalism,” illustrate a negotiation of the strict historical western binaries in an attempt to promote a *relational* awareness rather than an either/or anthropocentric narrative. Robert L. Thayer emphasizes how the Cartesian “mind and body” separation is a prime contributor to a “profound sense of homelessness” in contemporary life—in conjunction with “the development of a global economy, the reliance on fossil fuels, the move away from organicism to mechanism and the space and time compression that the digital revolution enabled” (Kollin 63). Thayer works within the context of a “bioregion” awareness which, ideally, promotes a “relocalization” that preaches a “means of living by deep understanding of, respect for, and, ultimately care of a naturally bounded region or territory” (Kollin 63). Unfortunately, as Kollin notes, proponents of bioregionalism, and its sister field of deep ecology, have also often forwarded misanthropic, sexist, and “unacknowledged” racist sentiments (63, 64). This is unfortunate as some bioregional epistemological arguments and the heightened

appreciation for *place* yet provide insights into human alienation, environmental degradation, and overarching cultural assumptions of human dominance and *control*.

In discussing dualism and knowledge production in regard to place, it is worth noting that this environmental realization of the detrimental effects of human v. nature interacts with my understanding of postwestern theory—precisely because postwestern theory breaks down the a priori “frame” of the Western with its settler colonial ideologies and the rigid epistemological categories which inform the narrative. Sylvan Goldberg references Cheryl Glotfelty who remarked that ecocriticism “aligned the field with a more material account of nature,” in a manner which has “led to a proliferation of recent work more interested in ontology than epistemology—a shift that can seem at times to speak at cross purposes with western studies’ postwestern paradigm” (24). But because postwestern theory resists the a priori notions of a hierarchical and rigidly regional West, I would argue that postwestern theory has already questioned un-“grounded,” anti-ontological sentiments in a way which closes the gap between “reality” and knowledge production systems. For instance, despite Neil Campbell’s reliance upon multitude of heavily jargoned theorists, it is precisely his postwestern, ‘rhizomatic’ bridging of the “real and imagined” through non-dualistic mechanisms, such as Edward Soja’s “thirdspace” concept, that the “real” and the culturally “imagined” western realities might be better linked in *relationship* (*Rhizomatic*, 58, 59). Indeed, postwestern theory’s “binary aware” stance lends itself to breaking down the a priori human/environment hierarchy of western civilization. “Postwestern studies,” Kollin argues, “works against a narrowly conceived regionalism, one that restricts western cultures of the past and

present to some predetermined entity with static borders and boundaries,” and is concerned with ‘critically reassessing’ “those very restrictions” (*Postwestern Cultures* xi). Importantly, such calls for a critique of totalizing approaches are immensely influenced by an “ontological cultural reality” of varied race, class, and gender issues combined with more “material” historical and environmental concerns.

This “ontology v. epistemology” discussion is relevant to the “culture v. nature” argument within ecocriticism and relates to both Kollin’s framing of Muir and Buell’s hesitancy in utilizing the term “ecocritical.” In *Nature’s State*, Kollin notes how ecocriticism “often uncritically positions wilderness and nature writing as its primary objects of study and in the process celebrates nature as a restorative and regenerative force” (26). She references American Studies scholar, Donald Pease: “For Pease, because studies of nature are never pure projects or ideologically innocent endeavors, they must always be ‘affiliated with other kinds of emancipatory literary practice’ in order to have a progressive impact in the world” (26). Now, while Pease’s criticism is more focused on “nature writing” rather than what Goldberg iterates as contemporary “new materialism” with a focus on “both scientific and speculative realism,” Pease’s warning remains relevant. As Kollin argues, “I would contend that in making arguments about ‘nature for nature’s sake’ or nature as a given, ecocritics miss the point about what is knowledge. Seeking to know nature from some objective point of view, a position unencumbered by the social, some ecocritics end up striving for an impossibility” (*Nature’s State* 26). Kollin also acknowledges how “many scientists themselves...reject the promise of objectivity,” calling it “the view from nowhere,” or, in Donna Haraway’s

words, “the ‘god trick’” (*Nature’s State* 26). The anti-essentialism discourse of postwestern theory, I would argue, has “naturally,” led me to consider “affective bodies” in a way which digs deeper into the “ontological v. epistemological” boundary to both *reprivilege the body and the ever-contextualizing environment*. But even “affect theory” wrestles with this border.

It is notable that affect theory, via Brian Massumi and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, took an almost anti-cultural/anti-epistemological turn in an attempt to separate the field from negative perceptions of deconstruction regarding nihilism and human-body neglect, a claim that sought to rid itself of “deceptive” cultural epistemologies in the hopes of a body-oriented, preconscious ontological reality. After highlighting and dissecting Massumi and Sedgwick’s arguments, Clare Hemmings stresses the problematic aspects of these claims, arguing that there are plenty of poststructuralist paradigms and authors which privilege “relational over oppositional modes” in ways which have not only *not* written the “body out of theory,” but which maintain a balance between the epistemological and ontological (550). Hemmings continues: “epistemology and ontology are never separated and opposed, and its key proponents range across Marxist feminism, critical race theory, sexual difference theory, as well as poststructuralism” (557, 558). I agree with Hemmings on these points and, again, when she “rejects the contemporary fascination with affect as outside social meaning” (565). Such a call for an “objective” affect theory not only veers back towards the Enlightenment’s obsession with a truth outside of the faulty human, but disallows the *experiential* capacity which I appreciate in affect—even if it slides into the nebulous and unpredictable realm of

feelings and emotions. This, of course, is necessary because of the way I appreciate haunting as a deconstructive method. The body is still here, and our experience of the body remains important. Furthermore, to connect back to the nonhuman, I argue that it is precisely this “epistemological” reprivileging of the affective body that precipitates an awareness of a human hybridity which, in turn, better appreciates the nonhuman.

Interestingly, one aspect of Hemming’s argument focuses on how “new” theoretical stances (epistemologies) often “essentialize” the previous method: “such narratives mitigate against careful critical reading, tend to the dismissive, and celebrate ‘the new’ as untouched by whatever we find ourselves currently transcending” (555). This “new” method, Hemmings contends, often “bears no resemblance to the past, the identifying features of that past are inevitably overstated, and the claims for that new embellished in ways that must at the very least fall short of rigorous” (555). This conundrum sounds familiar. I have been most haunted by the “American Adam,” firstly because the symbol intimately connected with my own western “self-made man” heritage, and secondly, as a figure who has a particular “god trick” of starting over, fresh, and virginal. He embodies, for me, this American (but not just American as it is very settler colonial-ish)—anti-ontological, “wish-centric” view of reality. A healthy use of “posting”—and beyond strict temporal designations—accurately realizes the dangers in essentializing—or vilifying—the past in what becomes yet another “new Eden.” The best use of postwestern theory does not vilify the Western (thus buying into hegemonic totalities), but negotiates the power structure of the narrative. For those of us who’ve lived the narrative, this translates into a better conversation with *heritage*, this affective

material/actual *and* cultural history of our bodies and identity. My use of posthumanism mirrors this use—and factors into the way I am attempting to better realize the nonhuman through the affective human: a humanistic posthumanism.

Additionally, as an anti-ontological figure—divorced from an affective reality *in time and space*—the American Adam is an important representation to keep in mind regarding both knowledge production and posthumanism. As Raymond Malewitz discusses while considering posthumanism, the “Christian framework of dominion that Lynne White, Jr. calls ‘the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen’,” relates specifically to the original “Fall” and the “new” American Adam. It is precisely these, in Kollin’s words, “predetermined” cultural realities that require “posting” to have any chance at a more actual, material history and such an epistemology includes a more ‘being in time and place’ awareness of affectivity. In speaking about “posting,” I am also referencing “posthumanism” in the “post-Anthropocentric” sense which Malewitz articulates as a rejection of “absolute divisions between human subjects and nonhuman objects” in a way that “obscures the biotic continuities between animals and humans”—although I would also include all environmental aspects outside of the human body (544).

The way western American Studies and settler colonial scholars have brought ecocriticism “into” the West helps shift the ‘Western frame’ and destabilizes predetermined “American Adam” anthropocentric discursive structures. As Goldberg also notes, while referencing Kyle Powys Whyte, “US settler colonialism—overlapping with that of the US West—is also a story of resource extraction” (25). Tom Lynch further studies the way settler colonialism interacts with ecocritical concerns in “Nothing

but Land,” comparing and contrasting American and Australian frontier landscapes as interpreted by female writers. Working from notable settler colonial theorists Patrick Wolfe, Lorenzo Veracini, and Edward Cavanagh, Lynch notes, quoting Veracini that “colonialism and settler colonialism produce radically different geographies” (378). Lynch recognizes the two different colonial categories, extractive and settler. In extractive colonialism “an imperial power moves into a society and, through a variety of violent, ideological, bureaucratic, manipulative, coercive, and discursive means, gains control of its economy,” in a way which benefits the “imperial metropole” (376, 377). And settler colonialism, according to Wolfe, is not merely concerned with divorce from the metropole center, but “includes, among other features, ‘a sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the Indigenous population’” to actually, as Lynch notes, “own the land” (377). But, significantly this “logic of elimination”—Wolfe’s famous phrase—also “informs a range of historical practices that might otherwise appear distinct,” and Lynch notes that “such logic was often applied to indigenous flora and fauna as well” (377). This last sentiment links Lynch’s settler colonialism with Anthropocene issues and Veracini’s remark that “settler colonialism usually proceeds by ‘emptying’ the landscape before it is thoroughly reorganized” (377, 378). The American Adam needed a Virgin Land to form the agrarian garden dream.

Yet, notice how Goldberg includes “resource extraction” within “US settler colonialism.” I would argue that the “extractive” element remains a key term even in settler colonialism as some part of the land, even a cleared space, suffers elements of “extraction”—and this leads to a “cruel” cultural reality. Indeed, Goldberg’s reference to

western “catastrophism” engages with such a reality. This helps outline, as Wolf has argued, an “invasion” that “is a structure not an event”—a “structure” which is entirely focused on an anthropocentric hierarchy of control over the land (Lynch 377). *And*, I would argue, such an ignorant understanding of human/nonhuman interconnectivity directly relates to sensations of “unhomely” alienation. “Extraction” posits a one-way interaction, a “control over” rather than an “interaction with” or “relationship” which some of these other environmental ideologies (indigenous Tlingit, perhaps especially) have emphasized. Thus, as we witness “homelessness” in the Western, the “promise” of a new land contains some sort of “cruelty.” In her oft-cited quote, Lauren Berlant argues: “cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing” (1). And Berlant separates this from melancholia, “which is enacted in the subject’s desire to temporize an experience of the loss of an object or scene with which she has identified her ego continuity” (“Cruel Optimism” 94). Because settler colonialism has retained the “extractive,” anthropocentric ideology of colonialism, settlers who continue to “extract” from the environment in a misunderstanding of the symbiotic relationship participate in and are affected by a cruel optimism which later turns into a melancholy because the enlivening aspects of the human/nonhuman relationship have been “extracted.”

But the uncanny event in cruel optimism is when the human is confronted with the ghost of loss; when the home—of a desired land—becomes unwelcoming, and unfriendly. This is also an invasive “structure.” The cruel promise of a virginal land ends up rejecting the human in some manner. *However*, this process—this “structure”—

produces a *felt event*: a haunting. I don't want to take away from the importance in Wolfe's oft-cited "structure" realization to acknowledge the ongoing nature of the colonial reality. Yet, and to connect with my other conversations, I want to stay grounded in the body and acknowledge the affective *event(s)* of settler colonialism—the haunting, continuous *afteraffects*. Again, the link between the cultural epistemological structure and the ontological reality should not be separated.

The Ecogothic links such affective hauntings of colonial modernity and ecocritical concerns. It is initially interesting because it highlights the horrors of Muir. Much of "nature writing" was possessed by the spirit of Muir's transcendental sublime, but the Gothic entertained the shadow of such romance by focusing less on awe and more on dread. Dawn Keetly and Matthew Wynn Sivils note how the Ecogothic rose out of the ecocriticism of the 1990's yet "it orients us...to the more disturbing and unsettling aspects of our interactions with nonhuman ecologies" (1). "Unsettling" is a perfect word to bridge the gothic, the environment and "settler" colonial issues. So important, in fact that Charles Crow argues: "To understand American literature, and indeed, America, one must understand the Gothic" (1). Such fear and anxiety and "dread" have been present since Europeans first broached the "New World," with the 'unknown' quality of various frontiers inspiring much of this anxiety. The Gothic provided a conduit, an "imaginative expression of the fears and forbidden desires of Americans" (1). The brilliant American Adam had a tremendously dense shadow. Crow remarks that "a belief in progress is almost an article of faith," in the United States and quotes a wavering Crèvecoeur: "We are certainly not that class of beings which we vainly think ourselves to be..." (1) Crow

explains how the Gothic resists simple definition and harbors tropes which easily slip (I would say “ghost”) into other genres while also emphasizing how the “American Gothic...is now usually seen as a tradition of oppositional literature, presenting in disturbing, usually frightening ways, a skeptical, ambiguous view of human nature and of history” (2). And Crow’s summary that the Gothic “exposes the repressed, what is hidden, unspoken, deliberately forgotten,” is notably similar to my foundational definition of the ghost as something which expresses that which is lost, forgotten and/or pathologized.

Crow also talks about how “balance, symmetry, mature and rational thought, orderly gardens, law and well-designed institutions” coupled with the “Neoclassical obsession with control,” composed this Enlightenment Era (and its contemporary residue) that the Gothic resists (4). Interestingly, Keetly and Sivils note, while referencing early Ecogothic theorist Simon C. Estok, that “the ecogothic inevitably intersects with ecophobia, not only because ecophobic representation of nature will be infused, like the gothic, with fear and dread but also because ecophobia is born out of the failure of humans to control their lives and their world” (3). The editors conclude that “control, or lack thereof, is central to the gothic” (3). I would argue that there is truth to this “failure”—as all impossible expectations are laced with a cruel promise that haunts—but emphasize less the “failure to control” and more the failed *understanding of control* that arises out of extreme anthropocentrism. This produces an “out of joint” event, to add Derrida’s ghost to Berlant’s cruel optimism, an *experience* which ends up haunting the human being with the sensation of homelessness.

It is this affective capacity of the human body within the Gothic and Ecogothic that Ruth Heholt studies. Utilizing various affect theory scholars, Heholt defines “affect” as “something that moves, that triggers reactions, force or intensities ‘that pass body to body (human, non-human, part-body and otherwise)’, simultaneously engaging the mind and body, reason and emotions...there is no inside or outside” (230). Note how Heholt does not overly dwell on the ‘pre-cognitive’, but includes “reason and emotions” as well, thus escaping either/or essentialization. But, I would argue that there is *both* an inside/outside and not an inside/outside; however, it is more important to highlight the *relational border* here, again. Heholt continues, arguing that “Gothic fiction unlike (so it might be argued) Romantic fiction, the distances between inside and outside, self and place are collapsed” and the “landscape and the dark feelings of those travelling through them are not separate,” thus revealing “an affecting response that deconstructs the distance between landscape or the material world ‘out there’ and the self that feels *with* it” (233, 234 original). However, I would also stress the affective nature of the ghost and haunting. The Gothic is the affective atmosphere which helps contextualize the ghost, but the ghost itself is *the boundary crosser* which presents itself to the human “body”—that loose, but nevertheless nodal arrangement of the human and its capacity to affect and be affected. As an entity which bridges both time—the past and future in the present—and in multiple spaces—the “absent presence”—the ghost haunts so well because it *can* overcome rigid divisions, and it does so by *personalizing* these hauntings via bodily affectivity that softens the boundary of the assumed, often prescribed, body.

In this chapter, I examine the haunted human to decenter the anthropocentric while promoting Buell's argument that a "climate of transformed environmental values, perception and will" is dependent upon "the power of story, image and artistic performance and the resources of aesthetics ethics, and cultural theory." Examining these postwestern stories that exhibit western human bodies haunted by "mismapped" relationships with the land and with nonhumans illustrates how the affected human body reveals an alienation caused by the Anthropocene's myopic anthropocentrism. I emphasize that although human body is the "center" it is never not contextualized by environment and the non-human. As Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth note, "[a]ffect arises in the midst of *inbetween-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (1). The human is decentered as affect softens the rigid body boundary and puts it in an always already *hybrid* state. The bodies of Luz Dunn and Billy Parham are haunted by a lived experience of posthuman hybridity that does not fit with their predetermined, culturally "mapped" anthropocentric bodies.

The Haunted Bodies of a Gold Fame Citrus West

The Western is notorious for its overtly masculine focus, centering the cultural gaze upon the male body. Because the West has been so lacking in female narratives, it is important to highlight the female voice *and* bodily affectivity. Claire Vaye Watkins' *Gold Fame Citrus* provides a wonderful and frustrating postwestern protagonist for these purposes: the ever-fickle Luz Dunn. Luz' character and her story builds off Watkin's earlier short-story compilation in *Battleborn*. Luz is, I would argue, the more realized embodiment of the true inheritor of the *Battleborn* West—especially within the context of

the first story of that collection, “Ghost, Cowboy.” Antonya Nelson, of the New York Times, writes that this introductory story acts as “literary fractal of the book [*Battleborn*] over all,” and, through a clever negotiation of historical and very personal facts (as Watkins navigates her family’s history in the West/Southwest and specifically her father’s role as a second to *the* Charles Manson), Nelson calls it “storytelling and myth-busting, knowing the past and surviving the present” (Nelson). Watkins’ *Battleborn* probes the personal, national—and unmistakably regional—history of the West, from haunting Hollywood Western made-up ghost towns, to the promise of silver “diggings,” to idealized (often horrifically) communal spaces. Nelson summarizes Watkins’ characters as “[v]isionaries, in short, charismatics and opportunists...prepared to impose on an empty space a complete world order” (Nelson).

Though set in California rather than Reno, the “promise” of the West is still fully under scrutiny in Watkins’ newer title, *Gold Fame Citrus*. And this term “myth-busting” importantly relates to this text as the “Western frame” is thoroughly scrutinized via the body of Watkins’ protagonist—so much so that the myths of the West seem deeply etched upon her body, *mapped* in a way that seems both curse and responsibility. Watkins offers Luz Dunn as a hybrid body, struggling with posthumanism in an apocalyptic western landscape. This dynamic is further contextualized as Watkins actively addresses a female body which is often directly conflated with the land—and even more specifically in a character whose female body *symbolically represented the virginal rejuvenating aspect of the land*. The American Eve. And this is done while referencing environmental writers who have ideologically “mapped” the West, such as

John Wesley Powell, and John Muir. Thus, the dual planes of “female” destruction and mismapping interrogate the way historical hegemonic narratives of control yet continue to alienate the human from the land, from the nonhuman, and in gender-specific manners. But Watkins’ complex tale is also brought to life via a vibrant writing style which juxtaposes traditional Anglo-English linearity with a pseudo stream of consciousness expression, overlapping obvious physical events with symbolic internal narratives, and merging character expressions with narrator explanations and sentiments. Multiple meanings are often conveyed simultaneously. This “free indirect discourse” feels like *slippage* (further referenced as “FID”), and the effect it produces conveys a powerful hybrid—and often spectral—experience. As the book’s language slipped into my head, I had more than a few instances where my normal internal narrative took on that FID slippage in that way good writers and/or profound writing might *affect* you. This is another plane of affective transference to keep in mind within the continuous, expansive constellation of affect. Watkins’ method itself initiates a hybrid awareness, a spectral slippage of consciousness, ghosting between *lived* and *culturally inscribed* bodies, and directly assists in the realization of an alienating Anthropocentric West.

The title, *Gold Fame Citrus*, aptly frames the overarching specters that plague Watkins’ text, positioning the California dream as the American dream of the West and western expansion, *par excellence*—and this greedy and destructively near-sighted anthropocentric paradigm has dehydrated the western coast and southwestern region. Gold rushes, Hollywood narratives, and the agrarian dream have culminated into an Anthropocene Apocalypse. The water is gone. A humungous desert dune landmass

arises out of the Mojave Desert—the Amargosa—and threatens to entirely erase the memory of the Gold Fame Citrus dream of a virginal and welcoming western landscape. Within this post-apocalyptic scene—or simply “apocalyptic” as it’s an ongoing event—the Mexican/American ex-child star/model character of Luz Dunn makes her way, attempting, amidst the geographical re-mapping of the West, to understand her own body and being outside or beyond the mapping which haunts her confused and ever-“feckless” character. And the non-human plays a constant role in this story as Luz’s attempts to express herself beyond her “mismapped” identity.

The Mismapping of Luz Dunn

Luz is a fantastically conflicted, “maybe” infuriating character. The “maybes” pile up in Watkins’ text, chaotically spilling out between containers of certainty, linearity, order, and, at times accenting FID slippage. She is a body/being who is plagued with the unease (or dis-ease) of displacement. This dis-ease compels a large portion of Luz’s “feckless” character, a character startled by “quick movements” and who is sometimes so impossibly senseless that she may very well knock over the very last remaining jug of water while stranded within the desert (23, 37). She might even do it on purpose. However, her anxiousness and confusion did not sprout miraculously out of the earth in some immaculate conception of fickleness (the American Eve as the anti-American Adam here); she is not “possessed” by her “hysterical” gender, as Susan Bordo would certainly attest.

This subchapter’s heading mimics the rash of recent horror movies—“The Exorcism of Emily Rose,” “The Haunting of Molly Hartley,” as examples—to draw

attention to the “possessed” form of the female, tapping into the long western tradition of equating the female with the non-rational world. But rather than utilizing the spectral as an entertaining hegemonic fear, as these movies largely do, Luz’s haunting illustrates how she has been “possessed” by cultural incongruities. Luz “may be” anything but rational, but there is a gendered cultural dislocation in process on her body, and these displacing misrepresentations are mapped upon her very first moments of being:

It was this she always landed on: her father pious and a chatterbox, maybe nervous, approached by a statesman’s underling in the hospital waiting room. Saying her name so it rhymed with *fuzz* before her mother, channeling Guadalajara, had a chance to correct him. Random how she became the goddesshead of a land whose rape was in full swing before she was even born. Baby Dunn. (12)

Even “before she was even born,” Luz is mapped with an a priori misrepresentation, a misnaming. Reminiscent of Kollin’s postwestern call to arms to work against a “predetermined” mapping of hierarchy and border rigidity, Watkins’ misnaming of Luz is not at all “random.” It directly connects to the way her identity was mapped into/onto/within “the land whose rape was in full swing before she was even born.”

To explain further, Luz was “adopted” by the Bureau of Conservation at birth. Watkins narrates: “the child has been adopted by the Bureau of Conservation, which embarks today on an heroic undertaking that will expand the California Aqueduct a hundredfold,” in a dream so reminiscent of past western dreams, “so that Baby Dunn and all the children born this day and ever after will inherit a future more secure, more prosperous, and more fertile than our own” (11). So infant Luz is not only saddled with the wrong name, but has her identity appropriated by a government organization. But it’s a convoluted play: she is part rescued human damsel (of reproductive potential) and part

land itself in the guise of the virginal rejuvenating form of water. In this manner, Watkins correlates Luz's body with the body of the West. Or, more specifically, the imagined dream of the 'hopeful, fertile West' which must be secured via machinations of technological and cultural control (largely perpetuated as male), to ironically save aspects of the female gendered "beloved." However, Watkins plays with the culturally gendered coding between female and the land throughout the text in a way which illustrates violence done to Luz/the land and by Luz/by the land: "The prospect of Mother Nature opening her legs and inviting Los Angeles back into her ripeness was, like the disks of water shimmering in the last foothill reservoirs patrolled by the National Guard, evaporating daily" (7). In the case of the Amargosa, the idolized virgin/giving Mother was abused until she had nothing left to give. She'd grown dry and closed off. No, worse—or more fitting—she herself became cruelly consumptive: The Devouring Mother, mimicking the human violence and reversing the "Westering" course of American history with a destructive vengeance that rolled *back*—eastward—to devour it's too-greedy babes. "Civilization retreated; the frontier reasserted itself" (121). Such agency is crucially mirrored in Luz. She is not powerless—despite feeling helplessly mismapped. And because she remains confused and often shuns introspection, such agency often affects destructive manners.

There is a conflation of human and earthly (specifically female) bodies here, one which may very well house a positive rejuvenating capacity, but which ends up being thoroughly abused because of a lack of significant awareness regarding the *actual* hybrid connection and relationship—a relationship ruined by commodification, homogenization,

and, of course, an anthropocentrism founded upon the perception of control. A type of human/nonhuman hybridity *is realized*, but it is hegemonically controlled. The dominant “civilization” narrative (far more flexible than the totality it preaches) utilizes convenient truisms and assumptions to forward its power structure. The body/being of Luz is allowed hybridity with the land to accentuate the cultural need to establish dominance over the land in secured and commodified resources. Through this association, Watkins reveals both mirrored productive/destructive agencies *and* how the cultural devastation of the land mimics that of the female body. Luz’s overt/covert relationship with water is central here. She is both intimately associated with it, yet becomes starved by it. She is ‘embodied’ as a valued reproductive element, yet objectified and commodified to the point of alienation. Once again, an Eden haunts the Western stage—but Watkins more clearly delineates the American Eve, substantializing a historically ghostly absence to create an awareness of how she’s been utilized and affected. *Gold Fame Citrus* illustrates an exploration of this relationship by “experiencing” a character who is ever connected and disconnected from water/the land/the nonhuman.

The cultural mismapping of Luz Dunn is as pervasive as the mismapping of the western landscape, and Watkins transitions Luz from mismapped infant to mismapped and abused adolescent/teen. Along with her misnaming at birth and her appropriation by the Conservation agency—and her consequent familial abandonment—Luz attempted to be an actress, but didn’t have the talent, and then a model, but only achieved mediocrity.

So vibe on, sister. Shake shake.... Don’t go sour simmering on what money will cost you, on UV flashes scorching your eyes to temporary blindness or pay docked for time in the ER or old men pinching your things, your fat

Chicana ass...don't feed the negativity, though you were always too flabby, too short, too hairy, too old, too Mexican....Don't think. Dance. (16)

In this scene, Watkins prods Luz's lack of retrospection, a significant and reoccurring theme that relates to issues of agency and complicity and self-destructiveness while emphasizing the numerous manners in which she has been abused and mismapped by commodification, sexism, and racism within a consumptive capitalism.

The mismapping of Luz's body via cultural commodification is significant within the West's history and recalls Victoria Lamont's work. While some hegemonic similarities do exist between early male and female Western writers in Lamont's estimation, she also recognizes some very definite variations. Chief among these pertains to issues of female agency and commodification. Lamont argues how early twentieth century women western writers "are more interested in drawing analogies between women and cattle as objects of patriarchal exchange," drawing from works like Frances McElrath's *The Rustler*, published 1902 (101, 102). Luz is displaced because of a system which regards humans, and bodies themselves, as means to financial wealth, via labor and commodification—and specifically females as objects: normalized and beautified, used for gain, treated as sexual property—under a Gold Fame Citrus dream. Lamont's argument has additional ramifications because early female-authored "Westerns participate in a shift in Anglo-American feminist discourse as American feminism decoupled from the abolition movement and became racially divided" (103). Significantly, Watkins' writing does some work to 'recouple' the issues of female commodification and race because of Luz's hybrid, American/Mexican nature, addressing the way the non-white body (and race itself) often conflicts with the

prescribed body in a way which haunts and deceives while also accessing racial hybridity to confront other culturally rigid boundaries.

But it is so difficult to wrest oneself out of a commodified, objectified, and mismapped state. As mentioned, Luz constantly wrestles with self-*control* while battling shame and complicity. Susan Bordo importantly notes, while examining the way hegemonic structures inspire hysteria and anorexia in *Unbearable Weight*, that she is not proposing that “dominators are in anything like full control of the situation or that the dominated do not sometimes advance and extend the situation themselves” (143, 144). This is an important, “hybrid” awareness of the power/oppressed binary. As I’ve mentioned (and like the land itself), Luz is not entirely powerless—and the destructive nature of her “feckless” character may be read (perhaps *must be read* in regard to the story’s conclusion) as an attempt at agency. However, because Watkins continually reminds us of Luz’s feckless nature in a manner which points toward her lack of historical analysis, Luz also embodies the Gold Fame Citrus dream of the West: destruction via a lack of self-reflection. In this manner, as a representation or simulacrum, Luz is both the land and the human scourge, or even the land as scourge. Through the “unspeakable” acts of abuse—to use Toni Morrison’s fittingly haunting concept—that are “mapped” upon her body/being as she grows up, the mismapping creates a continuum in which the victim often becomes the abuser through ignorance: Luz “never concentrated on important things, never asked herself difficult questions” (294). For Luz, the crushing circularity of her feckless, spectral identity delineates the struggles of Watkins’ central character. Luz’s story hinges upon her mismapped history,

her complicit moments, and the renegotiating of her boundaries with those ‘foreign’ creatures around her: water, the prairie dog, and little Ig.

Western Mismapping in Motion

The opening scene of *Gold Fame Citrus* perfectly contextualizes Luz’s mismapping with an emphasis on the nonhuman. She and her boyfriend Ray have taken up residence in a starlet’s abandoned mansion during this apocalyptic drought where most everyone has already vacated California. Not unlike Billy Parham’s tale in *The Crossing*, Luz is “framed” by an introductory house that doubles as a culturally containing mapwork that the character attempts to “leave.” And, for Luz, this “framing” and “containment” is further evidenced in clothing. Luz takes up the “project” of trying on the starlet’s legion of clothes: “It was impossible to be original and inspired living as she was, basically another woman’s ghost...Luz languished beneath her. They wore the same size everything” (6). Luz’s life is haunted by misrepresentation; she is plagued by the prescribed white Barbie body, and while it may be the “same size everything,” it *does not* fit her. It is merely a deceptive mirror inhabited by the unhomely doppelganger of a prescribed culture.

Luz’s extensive historical mismapping provides the necessary context for understanding the larger context of Watkins’ carefully constructed opening lines:

Punting the prairie dog into the library was a mistake. Luz Dunn knew that now, but it had been a long time since she’d seen a little live thing, and the beast had startled her. She’d woke near noon having dreamed a grand plan and intending to enact it: she would try on every dress in the house. (3, original)

The prairie dog punting provides a powerful preface: it is as if we have just opened a door...and BLAM!—we witness Luz in all her mismapped glory. We must duck to avoid Luz’s fecklessness. But the poor little creature was not so fast, and thus suffers the brunt of Luz’s destructive reaction. This little (nonhuman) guy haunts the text periodically, but the backgrounding of Luz’s past broadens an awareness of the destructiveness within Luz which has been caused by her own alienation. Luz violently kicks the “little live” creature *away* as something foreign. The word “mistake” resides within the first line of the text, right alongside the action, thus cementing both Luz’s fickle nature and reproducing a Western separation between “human” and “animal” which results in a violence that ends up feeling like self-harm. Luz’s alienation is enacted and reified within the act—as if she’d just punted a part of herself into the library because it was so “unspeakably” foreign and unrecognizable to her culturally constructed self.

The prairie dog is not an isolated event, and his significance grows when Watkins reveals Luz’s own “pathology”: she is searching for outlets of expression, outlets outside of a *constrained self*. Luz “yearned for menagerie,” and “left the windows and doors” of the opulent mansion open—although Ray warned against the sand and the Santa Anas which “would drive her insane” (7). Of course, the spirit/body of the environment itself has often historically assumed a spectral haunting presence which has a particularly strong “grip” upon female bodies and sensibilities within western settings—as portrayed within O.E. Rolvaag’s *Giants in the Earth* (1927), and even more specifically in the form of the wind as in Dorothy Scarborough’s *The Wind* (1925). As I grew up in a house on

top of a plateau where the wind was seldom *not* howling through our perpetually rattling gutters, I would argue that the wind might drive anyone mad. However, the way the wind “threatens” the confines of Luz’s prescribed house/body is reminiscent of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s novella *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), offering the possibility that the “threat” might actually embody the gift of self-expression and freedom from cultural restraint. Gillman’s Gothic short story mimics her own mental breakdown as she endured Silas Weir Mitchell’s “rest” prescription for female hysteria. In Gilman’s story, the female protagonist is driven mad by the wallpaper in the attic nursery which was supposed to help “contain” and heal her. It is not set in the western landscape (although it is somewhat rural, and the house is surrounded by a beautiful, if contained, landscape), but, via a Gothic medium, precisely narrates the *experience* of a pathology arising from western cultural prescriptions of female containment and bodily mismatching.

Susan Bordo comments on *The Yellow Wallpaper*, assuming a stance that pathology is not symptom of a gender deficiency, but indicative of a cultural malady: “I take the psychopathologies that develop within a culture, far from being anomalies or aberrations, to be characteristic expressions of that culture; to be, indeed, the crystallization of much that is wrong with it” (141). Of course, as the “rest” cure was prescribed to women, the “West” cure was advised to men. And Gillman wrote this story, as Barbara Will notes, in a reaction to herself being prescribed the “rest” cure. Will summarizes the prescribed state of suffocating containment as “a regression to infantile dependency under the policing gaze of male doctors and newly professionalized females, nurses, and a transfer of mental energy into madness” (294). Will also

importantly tracks the “rest v. West” cure in the gendered terms of the Western genre as it tied into American frontier expansion via Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier Thesis” and Teddy Roosevelt’s “rough riding” “strenuousness” within the “taming” of the West. And, while the “West” cure does invoke some manner of positive hybrid body awareness for men (in riding horses, for example: the cowboy centaur), like the Western itself, this “Westness” often emphasized a “control over” rather than a “communion with.” In this male/masculine sense, there *are* realizations of posthuman hybridity, but they more often fall into social hegemonies of gendered control that ultimately alienates. And while Gillman wrote about female/feminine containment a century ago, when Luz notes that her modeling job made her feel like “she was professional wallpaper,” it is apparent that issues of female “decoration” and “containment” yet haunt female bodies to the point of madness (167).

Luz’s feeling of entrapment is reiterated throughout the text and directs the critical focus to issues of boundary, hybridity and the nonhuman. The “Other,” in storytelling, often adds a vibrant tension to the story because such entities make us confront assumptions that deal with *exactly why/how the Other exists*—and more directly in haunting and/or Gothic tales which ‘merge’ boundaries, as Heholt suggests. Such confrontations, often uncanny, afford opportunity for reflection. The nonhuman Other presents an alternative reading to the “insane” and “hysterical” reading. As Bordo indicates, some essential voice, some expression of a body/being neglected may be attempting communication or expression. Luz herself ponders: “Maybe true, for here was this varmint scurrying in her head. Here, finally, was a brave creature come down to

commune in the house that wasn't theirs—it didn't belong to anyone!—and what had she done? Booted the little fellow in the gut and locked him away" (7). Luz opens the window to escape her starlet simulacrum self to let in what was "outside," what was Other. She passionately laments the starlet's structural fabrication, which really "didn't belong to anyone!" It was a mere construct, a hegemonic facade; it wasn't real, and Luz's bodily experience didn't fit her prescribed body. The varmint, the "little live thing," offered a conduit of "live" expression *outside* of Luz's walled, spiritless body. This "commune" offered Luz a chance to understand herself outside of the cultural body, beyond the "human" construction of western civilization. And somehow, rather than herding it out of the room, or snatching it in the shoebox Luz initially gives him, Ray kills the "brave" little messenger and Luz descends into a depression where she weeps for "all her selves in reverse," as if mourning the shades of her mismapped self (10). However, it is not long before Luz has another opportunity to redeem herself, to consider a body beyond herself and to potentially reconcile her haunted, mismapped boundaries.

Ig

Just after the prairie dog punting, Ray and Luz decide to go to a raindance party, perhaps to commune with "Mojavs" and either shake-off or revel in their alienation with these revenants of the Gold, Fame, and Citrus dream. While lounging up above an encampment of ruffians who were sprawled out haphazardly in the dry cradle of a waterless canal, Luz finds herself confronted by another interesting "live" creature.

...she looked down at the bonfire and then beyond it, where someone had set off a bottle rocket. She saw the little puff of smoke and heard the snap. Just then—at exactly the instant the snap reached her, so that the moment

was ever-seared into her memory as a tiny explosion—something slammed into her knees. She looked down to see a shivering, towheaded child wrapped around her knees. (30)

Luz encounters another significant being outside of herself. This little girl, “maybe around two years old,” embodies an “explosion” of Otherness exemplified with the statement, “Luz could not remember the last time she’d seen a little person” (30). “Little person” affects Luz similarly to “live thing” (prairie dog/gopher) in a doubling of uncanny encounters with Otherness. This doubling specifically points to human/non-human hybridity because the little girl is and is not a “normal” child.

The initial communication between Luz and the child introduces the little person’s Otherness: “‘Are you lost?’ asked Luz. ‘Where’s your mommy?’ The girl’s forehead bulged subtly above the brow and she pressed it into Luz’s crotch. Luz, embarrassed, tried to pry the girl from her legs. But the child clutched tighter and let loose a high, sorrowful moan. Luz went weak with pity” (31). The child’s features betray a hint of non-normality and she has a special sort of hybridity: “her skin was translucent, larval,” her “eyes like gray-blue nickels, sunk into skeletal sockets” (30). In many ways, the little creature betrays a *spectral* existence as her thin skin denotes only the slightest separation between interior and exterior; the “skeletal sockets,” too, denote a haunting—because of dehydration, yes, but crucially because she embodies a non-human hybridity. She is mapped and not-mapped, communicating in a manner which is both human and not human, both childlike and far, far too wise for most mismapped adults. The child occasionally communicates quite clearly—as in her initial plea to keep her “unspeakable” origin story secret. “Don’t tell *anyone*,” she says (32). But when she “lets loose a high, sorrowful moan,” Luz experiences an expression unblemished by mapped

language. Is it human? Animal? A Spectral wail? Luz quickly learns that this child's means of expression and communication are not "normal." She's a "feeling being" with a "sensuous intensity" (137). This is, perhaps, a child of *affect*. Of course, no one is free from affect, but she's portrayed as being both culturally victimized *and* as a representative of a 'pre-linguistic' affective purity. She uses her hand to feel Luz's face, to get "some information from the sensation," an action which, consequently, left Luz "uncannily at ease," as if freed from the constraints of a mismatching language (31). Additionally, the child is 'self-named' through her less structured/controlled means of communication. After Ray asks the child what her name is and she "made a sound like *Ig*." Ray asked "Ig?" and "the girl chugged amusedly, 'Ig, Ig, Ig'" (40). This encounter crucially signifies the Otherness of Ig as a creature existing beyond the western "civilized" language reality of predetermined abstractions. It is an "explosion" of sorts, which initiates a body of Luz long dormant, an expressive body of feeling and intuition, so present within the *experiential* experience which left Luz "uncannily at ease."

Luz's communion with Ig does not last long, however, as one of the members of the gang comes up the hill and retrieves the little girl. Luz does not have a good *feeling* about the baby going back to the group, but Luz's "feckless" history haunts her, creating the specter of doubt—embodied in Ray's repeated, dismissive comments (re-embodiment of a masculine oriented, rational, controlling culture). "I have a feeling. I don't want to ignore it," says Luz. Ray responds: "What do you want to do?" Ray's question was "kindly," but Luz knew that "he was handling her" (36). But this moment with Ig offers a "turn" for Luz, and Watkins amplifies Luz's *feeling* sentiment when she writes that Luz

senses that something “*unspeakable* had happened to the child” (35 my emphasis).

Indeed, the “unspeakable” is unveiled when, after Ig is retrieved by the “Nut,” Luz and Ray witnessed one of the “Mojavs” as he “pumped the baby’s face into his groin twice, three times,” with one “free hand [hoisted] into the air, a bull rider’s pose” (41). The juxtaposition of the cowboy pose with the molestation of a young female is grotesque—but bears relation to the sexual commodification of Western female bodies Luz has experienced. “Jesus,” says Ray, and Luz’s feeling—her affectively aware, feeling body (like Ig’s “feeling being”)—is vindicated.

But Luz’s complicity ever walks with her: she is “sickened,” “but also because...she felt she had somehow asked for it, willed it into being” (41). This self-doubt haunts Luz throughout the story, and this sense of complicity perhaps overshadows her important personal, re-mapping transition into a more “feeling” body—one more attuned to affectivity—not totally dismissive of language and reason, but better aware of how her hybrid, human/nonhuman body presents a more fitting portrait of herself. Watkins presses the reader with Luz’s continual ambivalence, reminding us of Luz’s guilt almost every step the way—as if the author will not let Luz forget her role in the West and “Westness.” Language itself is powerfully important—right language—as illustrated in one of the only other phrases Ig expresses clearly: “tell everyone,” she says regarding her secret—and not long after she clearly said, “don’t tell *anyone*” (34). It is as if her “unspeakable” past must not be spoken...but absolutely had to be expressed. This is, fittingly, the paradox of violence, haunting, and the haunted body. But here, *everyone* is complicit. Regardless of this ambivalence—or *because of it*—the “unspeakability” of

this scene cannot be lost, forgotten and/or pathologized. Paradoxically, and “maybe” because of the awareness of her complicity, Luz is further empowered, filled with unquestionable meaning: “for the first time in her life, she was absolutely essential” (38). It is as if Luz is attempting to come to terms with this ‘body of knowledge’, through “body-knowledge-Ig,” but such a reconciliation cannot take place without recognizing the neglect *of that same body*. By realizing a more genuine “self”—via the encounter with “affective Ig”—Luz connects with a less haunted version of herself that is more secure with her ‘self-in-environment’. The haunted Luz has been (momentarily) replaced, or re-located via an affective awareness of self and environment outside of the mismapping of western culture.

The Commune, The New Old West

Ray and Luz end up kidnapping Ig. They attempt to escape California and head back *east* over the Amargosa. In this way, Ig not only initiates Luz into a realization of mismapped bodies and offers a possible reunion with her own lost and misrepresented self, but initiates a geographical change in which they attempt to escape their westering Gold Fame Citrus existence. The body of little, pure, odd, often pain-in-the-ass, Ig inspires this transition; she does not fit with the desolate landscape and its desperate humanity. Thus, a reversal of the westerly trek occurs, a trek which ends up leaving them nearly dead, and in the hands of a small frontier commune with closeted skeletons as dire and deadly as any Wild West frontier town.

While this section deserves its own extended commentary, it suffices to say that rather than finding a new rejuvenating “West,” Luz once again finds herself

misrepresented in a culture which is yet ruled by a hegemonic “cruel promise” delusion which merely perpetuates a mismapping of bodies—and especially female bodies. After a lengthy stay with the commune group and their “water diviner” leader, Levi (a play on levy and levee? And definitely considering Charles Manson himself), she realizes that this was merely, “a madman’s colony, an outpost in the *cruel tradition* of outposts, peopled by prostitutes and loners and rejects and criminals and liars, their sheriff a con and a thief and surely worse” (312 my emphasis). But Levi and his group will not let them take Ig. In fact, Levi offers to outfit them if they choose to leave her. He now sees Ig as the next Baby Dunn, representative of his envisioned New West—another female body to represent a virginal land. Luz and Ray don’t appear to have many options (and Ray has just been beaten to a pulp by commune thugs), but Watkins doesn’t really detail this process. Their leaving is somewhat dreamlike, shrouded in a foggy ambivalence, as if the narrative doesn’t know how to conclude. As if Watkins will not let feckless Luz off the hook. When Ray and Luz do manage to leave, Ig’s reaction is fairly “indifferent” at first, yet she does then extend one “spindly arm” to Luz while being held by a Dallas (the surrogate mother to Ig during Luz’s convalescence) (337). “*Take it,*” said Ray “in his mind” (337 original). But Luz did not. It is as if this fresh iteration of Western, Gold Fame Citrus reality has dulled Luz’s connection with Ig, and she does not respond to the body that once held the hope of realizing her true hybrid nature which more intuitively understood her “place” in this world. Dallas turns away and Ig “moaned and clucked a little”—a shadow of the moan which she expressed upon first meeting Luz, yet continuing to express herself outside of typically used language (337). It is the waning

wail of a posthuman expression now subjugated. This seems like an opportunity to take Ig with them, and perhaps they could have forced the issue. But Ray is barely functioning, and Watkins continually inserts episodes of guilt and shame regarding Ray and Luz's feelings towards Ig—once again emphasizing the inability to “read” boundaries between bodies. So, the two leave with heavy hearts, conflicted by a deep sadness which wars with the great relief of not having to look after Ig.

Shortly afterward, rather abruptly, while driving away from the frontier enclave, Luz and Ray are engulfed in a rare thunderstorm. They are swept up in a sudden flash flood which “came upon them like an animal” (338). Luz put her hand upon the door handle. “Coolly, and with a hard grace,” she says, “I have to go, baby,” and simply opens the door and steps out into the flood (339). Ray later remarks that “she wouldn’t allow him” to help her. Maybe selfish, yet again. But maybe Luz was tired of being “handled”—perhaps she had finally grown too tired of her mismapping, of trying to live under the burden of her “people,” the “speculators and opportunists, carnival barkers and realtors, imagineers, cowards and dreamers and girls. Mojavs. Eyes peeled for the flash of ore, the flash of camera, the wet flesh of fruit. Gold, fame, citrus” (338). Watkins reaffirms Luz’s connection to her “people” in this conclusion, reaffirming her destructive separation from the land in the Gold Fame Citrus dream of superficiality and commodified profit. But like the land which had been equally abused and mismapped, Luz could no longer embody the Gold Fame Citrus dream...and, equally, I would argue, still could not properly identify bodies. “It’s water, Ray. Is it water?” (338). She cannot recognize it for what it is: something both enlivening *and* deadly—not the perhaps purely

‘restorative’ vision of Muir’s wilderness. And even though she spoke “coolly, and with a hard grace,” once in the water she says, “I’d be okay...if I could just get my feet under me,” before slipping under forever (339). Ambivalent, and “maybe” feckless, to the end, Luz seems to never truly know herself or her boundaries, cannot comprehend how to nurture Ig without consuming her selfishly, and never truly comes to terms with her relationship with water, the land, or the actual feet of her body. It is no small irony that Luz does not only know how to swim, but ends up being consumed by water in an act of self-destruction.

In ways both different and hauntingly similar, ironies and paradoxes will continue to haunt this chapter as the unrealized hybrid body of Luz Dunn shifts into the Mexican/American border traversals of Billy Parham. What is most compelling in these two novels is how coming to terms with the mythologized West requires a navigation of the mismapping of human bodies. Yet, the way each story ends with a significant destruction of the self is most disturbing. This leads me to believe that the “something-to-be-done” of haunting, as Avery Gordon has suggested, yet remains nebulous within significant Western expressions. Each author, in these particular stories is most concerned with expressing a type of human/non- alienation rather than offering solutions to this Western dilemma.

Wolf Howls and Billy Parham—Haunted Hybrid

Cormac McCarthy’s *The Crossing* most obviously wrangles with the U.S./Mexico border, but this is merely the most apparent boundary disruption in a text which is entirely concerned with the experience of the alienated western male. *The Crossing*

frames this dilemma largely in terms of the relationship between the human and non-human, revealing that alienation is the aftereffect of the civilization v. savagery conflict as prescribed by western American culture. There is perhaps no more obvious conduit into perceived human/non-human relationships than the human/animal relationship; animals represent the ‘living Other’ that is nearly everything “natural” that has been Othered as “savage” within the anthropocentrism of Anglo “civilized” culture. This is an ideological “mapping” upon both human and nonhuman bodies. The human is elevated above all other (Other) earthly subjects—above both the “wild-ness” of the earth and, in parallel, the demands/limitations/emotion/sexuality/mortality of the physical body. Appreciating the body, therefore, also acts as a first step in minding the head/heart dichotomy which allows for a consideration of a priori constructs, such as the West, which divorce the human from the experience of the environment, of the nonhuman.

Young Billy Parham experiences this non-human alienation in *The Crossing* as a character initially assumed to be the prototypical white western male, but who is revealed as a feeling and affecting/affected creature of complex hybridity. Like the inherited blood of his Mexican grandmother and his use of Spanish—interspersed throughout McCarthy’s text and reminiscent of Gloria Anzaldua’s *mestiza* works—Billy’s hybridity is one of the few certainties in a narrative which dismantles western/Western certainty. Of course, the discussion regarding experiential knowledge and the experience of hybridity further conjures Anzaldua’s concerns. Her “mestiza consciousness” embraces the *experience* of hybridity, *lived* through her subaltern existence, and the ‘will to hybrid awareness’ initiates a “break down” of a strictly rendered “subject-object duality” (102).

While utilizing creative means of expression and a “felt” phenomenological or experiential approach which intersects affect theory concerns, Anzaldua’s epigraph quote crucially frames this binary inside of the civilization vs. savagery contest—the binary that is always already a part of the Western settler colonial frontier. The noted division between head and heart, intellect and animal, respectively, creates a separation in the human self which denies the totality of a hybrid identity—denies a “posthuman” reality. The violence and trauma of the “unspeakable” exists here too. This concept is, in the case of Billy Parham and the Western, especially pertinent since he has inherited the persona of the expressively restrained Western hero. He lacks language. As Lee Clark Mitchell notes, the Western hero is a “supremely laconic figure...And the hero’s imperturbability in the face of the violence that erupts (often on his own body) is established by the quiet stoicism with which he endures glowing descriptions *of that body*” (Mitchell 34). Note how “his own body” has to speak for him. Of course, the male body *has* to be ‘illuminated’ to better render the damage done to it, *and*, somewhat masochistically, to illustrate an unflustered, masculine façade in the event of wounding. Importantly, the affective body here maintains a presence—even if it’s often overlooked or misinterpreted. But his also feels like an unperturbable American Adam, empowered to “name,” but lacking in language to express his own self. It is, therefore, no surprise that a story about a hybrid being who lacks expression is initiated through the ghost of a wolf howl.

The Crossing

In the opening pages of Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*, without explicit explanation, fresh, teenage Billy Parham wakes on a cold winter night and sneaks out to watch a wolf pack frolic in the snow and hunt antelope. Like so much of McCarthy's work, and especially pertinent to non-expressive Western male figures, details of the "how" run riot over the "why." While this may point to a lack of introspection at certain times and/or simply an assumption of certainty on the part of the character, this also, perhaps uncannily, leads to many spectral scenes in which boundaries are left up to the imagination of the reader. After dressing for winter's midnight chill, Billy leaves the comfort and security of his 'house body' (and the body of his prescribed culture, thus mimicking the "contained" starting point of Luz Dunn as another "mapped" Western figure) to follow the silent summons of the wild creatures.

They were running on the plain harrying the antelope and the antelope moved like phantoms in the snow and circled and wheeled and the dry powder blue about them in the cold moonlight and their breath smoked palely in the cold as if they burned with some inner fire and the wolves twisted and turned and leapt in a silence such that they seemed of another world entire. (4)

The conjoined sentence structure compliments the borderless, ephemeral prose to accentuate McCarthy's ambiguous introduction of human/animal boundaries, further emphasizing a dreamlike, 'phantasmal' reality which transmits Billy's lived experience to the reader.

This early scene illustrates aspects of McCarthy's Southern Gothic literary heritage. In some sense, the "unanswerable," as Stephen Frye offers, exhibits "a category of romance" associated with "Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, and later Faulkner," and which

resembles “the high gothic romance in the ambiguous mode” (12). In relation to authors such as Faulkner, Frye describes the “southern gothic” as including “decaying edifices, bleak settings, psychologically tortured protagonists...within recognizably southern settings” and quotes Tennessee Williams who “once described the southern gothic as ‘an intuition, of an underlying dreadfulness in modern experience’” (13). I would argue that anxiety regarding “an underlying dreadfulness in modern experience” *precisely* describes McCarthy’s atmospheric *Western* setting in *The Crossing*. And this also relates to the way such stories and novels “explore densely psychological, metaphysical, and religious issues, always with an emphasis on a darkness that implies not pessimism but radical skepticism” regarding the “human intellect,” intimating that there are “realms beyond which the human mind cannot travel” (12).

These comments forward an understanding of McCarthy’s journey from Southern Gothic writer to, I would argue, Western Gothic writer. Notably, McCarthy’s transition from Southern Gothic—with its more obvious material ruins and history of slavery—find purchase in the American West precisely because the “frontier” has historically existed *as the border with the unknown*. The frontier is the “unanswerable” space. While many contemporary critics would have us relegate the term “frontier” to the dustbin of a ‘misguided past’, that should not happen. The “frontier” yet remains not just useful, but essential in regard to the boundaries of knowledge and how that impacts a realization of human boundaries. The Western Gothic here mirrors Crows comments regarding how the “American Gothic” in general is not necessarily tied to older notions of the genre, yet perfectly suited to expressing “the repressed, what is hidden, unspoken, deliberately

forgotten.” Thus, the West, with its frontier heritage—both good and negative—helps “locate” McCarthy’s ongoing concerns about the “unanswerable.” I would agree with Frye’s generalization that McCarthy’s Gothic explores the “realms beyond which the human mind cannot travel,” but stress that there is an affective capacity in this particular text that helps realize American views of control and knowledge and certainty through the beauty of the “incomprehensible” relationship with nature which has always existed as an important American frontier narrative—even as a forgotten subtext to Turnerian themes of dominance. While I remain wary of overly romantic simulations of nature’s “awe,” there is yet something essential missing in Billy’s life, a lacuna which draws him to this initial wolf-experience.

Billy’s opening experience begins to frame an essential, “unanswerable,” and utterly mysterious connection with what’s been prescribed as the nonhuman. And it is as real as his feeling of communion, reified when the seven wolves pass nearby.

He could see their almond eyes in the moonlight. He could hear their breath. He could feel the presence of their knowing that was electric in the air...They were looking at him. He did not breath. They did not breathe. They stood. Then they turned and quietly trotted on. (5)

The sacredness of this experience resonates within its “inexpressibility,” an otherworldly experience of “phantoms,” yet it was only through such spectral affectivity (and Gothic-like merging, though it also, I would argue, connects with Romantic awe) that Billy could experience himself beyond what had been described to him, prescribed upon him—what had been mapped upon his self by culture. And again: a spectral moment and spectral prose help “affect” the reader with this experience. Billy’s identification with the wolves occurs through mirrored breath: “He did not breath. They did not breath.” A momentary

lack of difference. The experience is Billy's knowledge and language, linked to "the presence of their knowing." But it is "unspeakable"; his inherited, "civilization v. savagery" language reality cannot account for it. Because of this lack of language and due to the laconic nature of the action-oriented Western man, even though his brother "Boyd was awake" when he returned to the house, "he didn't tell him where he'd been nor what he'd seen. He never told anybody" (5).

Billy's relationship with a self outside of his obvious confines of house and prescribed body is made explicitly apparent in McCarthy's plot-setting scene. But the importance of the human/animal communion within this scene coalesces when Billy is immediately placed at odds with the wolf experience—with the idea of the wolf as an unknowable (in the western sense), yet essential part of himself. Because livestock in the area have been killed by a wolf, a bounty is put up and Billy finds himself laying wolf traps with his father. This eventually leads to Billy's face to face confrontation with a trapped and pregnant she-wolf. And seeing this trapped creature sets his heart "slamming inside his chest like something that wanted out" (52). McCarthy reaffirms the doubling of Billy and the she-wolf through the "something that wanted out" comment—the sentiment no doubt applies as much to the trapped wolf as it does to Billy.

This encounter initiates the crux of McCarthy's tale as his central character finds himself in the jaws of a damning cultural paradox. Though the wolf appeared well enough alive and vigorous (baring her teeth, but issuing no growl), "white bone showed in the bloody wound between the jaws of the trap" (52). This hint of bone foreshadows the spectral qualities of the encounter, both in terms of haunting internal divisions and

with the approach of death itself. Emphasizing the crossroads of choice and identification, Billy takes some time trying to remember what his father has instructed him to do in this situation, trying to figure out what is culturally prescribed and what is the *right* course of action. Like Luz and her encounter with little, mysterious Ig, Billy has a choice to make now that he's encountered the meaningful Other. And, naturally, as has been established by countless Western cowboys and sheriffs, *right action* is required. As Mitchell notes, the Western hero must be the "embodiment of honor, champion of justice in an unjust world" (3). But right action to what? Where does right action reside when the "savage" land and "wild" Other turn out to be an integral part of the essential self? What can the male hero do when the western cultural wave that "inevitably" demanded extraction and domesticity in the name of civilization is realized as the "unjust"? This conundrum, of course, taps into the ever-ambivalent nature of the western, recognizing the undercurrent sentiment of "escape from" rather than "reiteration of" a westering cultural hegemony. Billy turned away from the wolf and started down the road. But then he "stopped again and turned and looked back...The world was waiting. Then he rode back to the wolf" (53).

Billy's decision is silent, unspoken. And from this point, McCarthy sets Billy on a cursed course of contradictions by providing an obtusely detailed account of his transport of the wolf down south into the imagined Mexican mountain wilderness. The extreme technical detail regarding the mechanics and logistics of Billy's handling of the wolf with ropes and rigging is intense—and excessive. It operates as an inverted Gothic excessiveness, focused not on overt, uncontrolled emotional expression, but on carefully

manipulated physical details. As if the details might fill and/or explain the trap that Billy himself has falling into: the trap between what feels right through his individual experience and what has been mapped upon him. But there is yet a sense of horror here. It is as if Billy himself is being intricately lassoed.

Naturally, some of these descriptions are utilized for tension and to correctly frame the danger Billy places himself in time and time again. And, of course, McCarthy's Western protagonists are often fantastic Western "technicians," trained in self-sufficiency—both because of and to contend with the western wilds. Yet, the trek itself causes Billy to "tame" the wolf—well, at least to some degree—thus potentially defeating his purpose. This predicament was foreshadowed earlier by the old man, Don Arnulfo: "You want to catch this wolf...But where *is* the wolf? You catch the snowflake but when you look in your hand you don't have it no more...If you want to see it you have to see it on its own ground" (46). But is this a lesson about a human's formative years (as McCarthy's youth are often weighed against aged counselors), masculine domination, or nonhuman Othering? All aspects are at play here, but I would argue that certain gender coded elements of control highlight the human/animal divide. Wallis Sandborn argues that "[a]lthough noble, Parham's mission to return the captured she-wolf to Mexico is abjectly flawed," he argues that this trek is "nothing more than a man violently controlling wild animal through the guise of pseudo-nobility" (143). Yet such an argument grossly ignores Billy's complex, affective relationship with the wolf as I've laid out. Reminiscent of Bordo's warning against judging "hysterical" and other 'pathologies' as being 'nothing more' than female, so too does Billy's cultural context

require further examination. Rather than being “nothing more” than a mere reiteration of Western masculine violence, McCarthy “places” Billy within an impossible situation which critiques human/nonhuman western history. What can he do to affirm the origin of his experiential identity with the wolf? Billy does not set out to dominant the wolf. Rather, his lived, affective experience of some sort of communion with and respect for the wolf puts him in an impossible, unspeakable, situation. This paradox is part and parcel of a Western story which prescribes an anthropocentric reality. Driven by a lived truth, a feeling of connection with this creature (a joined body) and by his duty to heroic rightness, Billy is compelled to free her in the Mexican wilderness.

Along their southern trek, McCarthy utilizes evocative scenes and language to both describe the wolf and to speak through her, although the certainty of meaning is elusive because it borders on the “unspeakable.”

When the flames came up her eyes burned out there like gate lamps to another world. A world burning on the shore of an unknowable void. A world construed out of blood and blood’s alkahest and blood in its core and in its integument because it was that nothing save blood had power to resonate against that void which threatened hourly to devour it. (73, 74)

Often utilizing his own style of free indirect discourse to cross culturally prescribed boundaries, McCarthy joins bodies in a way which directs Billy’s experience to value the rejuvenating, shared lifeforce while appreciating its ultimate ‘unknowability’. This poetic sentiment expresses the *crucial appreciation of life despite the incomprehensible nature of life*. Malewitz remarks that “the narrator’s descriptions of the wolf make it increasingly clear that the kinship that Billy feels obscures the clear differences in agency between the boy and the animal” (549). Billy experiences a disruption from the previously mapped Western narrative, intimated by his father and western culture.

Billy does eventually succeed in taking the she-wolf across the border to Mexico; however, his journey is bluntly (re)confronted by the initial paradox. Mexico does not represent the “Virgin Land,” and not only is it already populated, but the civilization v. savagery of colonial culture has permeated the region in both historical and present contexts. It is not long before Billy runs into some local law enforcement who appropriate the wolf. They say she is “contraband” (99). Billy explains that she is “not contraband but was property entrusted into his care and that he must have it back” (99). Billy uses the term “property” here in the hopes of communicating with the Mexican officials (to speak to power), but the word “entrusted” emphasizes his sense of responsibility; it is his role, his purpose and reveals a divergence from “possession.” This relates to the “taming” question. Dianne Luce argues that the quest shows how he was “gradually forging a relationship with the wild creature (not taming her)” —though I’d say that the two slippery aspects are uncomfortably, necessarily, braided on this trek because of the particularly destructive nature of this Western paradox (181). The intensity of his assumed ‘responsibility’ within this “relationship” rises closer to the surface with the confrontation with cultural authorities, and he is forced to search for words to explain his predicament, his actions, and his assumed role. The emotion of desperation builds during these pages, bleeding out between the inexpressible lived experience and the colonial anthropocentric reality.

One time, however, when Billy visits the caged wolf while she is put on paid display during the opening of a country fair, McCarthy relinquishes a small window of expression. Inside the tent,

He stood the rifle against the cart and called to her. She rose instantly and stood looking at him with her ears erect...He talked to her a long time and as the boy tending the wolf could not understand what it was he said he said what was in his heart. He made her promises that he swore to keep in the making. That he would take her to the mountains where she would find others of her kind. She watched him with her yellow eyes and in them was no despair but only that same reckless deep of loneliness that cored the world to its heart. (105)

Revealing both the growing sense of attachment and the realization of that attachment, Billy's language is once again corralled in certain manners. He does release his "heart," but conditionally. It is only because the Mexican boy "could not understand" him that he expressed his "promises" to "her." Yet the uncomprehending guard acts as a mute witness in a way that amplifies this scene of promise. This shrouded, intimate, affective communication fills the gap in Billy's language while simultaneously providing a sacred space for the human/animal connection. And it is essential to note that Billy's relationship with the wolf has grown into a language of connection, a language located in the 'wild' body, in the "heart," thus linking the outside nonhuman Other with the often Othered human body.

The caravan of authorities—with wolf in tow and Billy behind—eventually enters the compound of an expansive hacienda, the central grounds for the local fair. Billy finds himself confronted with a scene which all too well represents western culture's disregard for the wilderness body. The pregnant she-wolf is placed into a dogfighting arena, forced to fight multiple hounds at once. And repeatedly. Billy once again attempts to reason with the authorities, but fails. He also tries to ride away (repeating his initial meeting with the wolf), but turns back, yet again, to face a miserable, complexly tangled fate. He reenters the arena, this time with his rifle. "The wolf's head lay in the dirt and

her tongue lolled in the dirt and her fur was matted with dirt and blood and the yellow eyes looked at nothing at all” (122). Billy

stepped over the parapet and walked toward the wolf and levered a shell into the chamber of the rifle and halted ten feet from her and raised the rifle to his shoulder and took aim at the bloodied head and fired. (122)

And with the “echo of the shot in the closed space of the barn,” Billy cruelly experiences his own participation in a cyclical Western violence. A damnable moment. The wolf is dead—by his own hand, and Anzaldua’s prophecy rings true: “they encourage us to kill off parts of ourselves” (122).

Revenant Wandering

But Billy did not relinquish his responsibility. He had his word to keep. He traded his implement of violence, his rifle—his “Western Man’s Tool,” in a bartering of roles—to the man who was promised the wolf’s skin, and took her body up into the mountains as he’d promised with his heart words. His passage out of town was followed by the fireworks of the fair. A baleful celebration of Billy’s “rite of Western male passage.” And Billy goes into the wilderness, carrying the spectral remnants of the dream of himself as ‘something else’ in the form of the dead she-wolf’s body, a body which once again mirrors his own. “He could feel the blood of the wolf against his thigh where it had soaked through the sheeting and through his breeches and he put his hand to his leg and tasted the blood which tasted no different than his own” (125). But this time, it is truly a Gothic merging of boundaries—yet not in dread, but in mourning for the loss of the object of awe. When the fireworks have died out and he is far from the town, he stops for the night. Having set the she-wolf down beside the fire, “he squatted over the

wolf and touched her fur” (127). And McCarthy unleashes a powerfully poetic statement, signifying the “unspeakable” loss within this human/nonhuman event. Billy, with one “hand upon her bloodied forehead,” closed her lifeless eyes and in turn, closed his own eyes to imagine

her running in the mountains, running in the starlight where the grass was wet and the sun’s coming as yet had not undone the rich matrix of creatures passed in the night before her. Deer and hare and dove and groundvole all richly empaneled on the air for her delight, all nations of the possible world ordained by God of which she was one among and not separate from. (127)

McCarthy paints a scene of the invisible life of creation before the “sun’s coming” which has so often been adopted by the obvious human, neglecting, extracting, or making invisible the “rich matrix” of varied life which exists within creation as “not separate,” but as part of a plethora of “nations.” The human is not mentioned to emphasize the “rich matrix” of life which exists beyond anthropocentric bounds. Yet, McCarthy does bring it back to Billy, as the search for identity, located within the affective body, demands it. Billy formed this connection physically, bridging the “separate” illusion:

He took up her stiff head out of the leaves and held it or he reached to hold what cannot be held, what already ran among the mountains at once terrible and of a great beauty, like flowers that feed on flesh...But which cannot be held never be held and is no flower but is swift and a huntress and the wind is in terror of it and the world cannot lose it. (127)

The position of the human is gradually positioned here as a component of the creation matrix, but absolutely not its master. McCarthy assigns a feminine aspect to this ‘wild beauty’, emphasizing the impossibility of control and its continuance with or without human regard, or human (masculine oriented) control. Yet Billy mourns not for his lack of control over this unfathomable reality, but because of his severance from it.

Thus, the first chapter is concluded. But because Billy has just participated within the human severance of this connection, McCarthy introduces his new chapter by signifying the temporal/corporeal transition of Billy's trek: "Doomed enterprises divide lives forever into the then and now" (129). The "then and now" demarcates Billy's passage, his *crossing*, into a spectral existence. Perhaps this "turn" reifies him as the "cruel revenant," living the realized history of the "cruel promise." He is now *undead*. He walks with a shadow of his self. This "turn" coincides with the burial of the she-wolf whom he places "in a high pass under a cairn of scree. The little wolves in her belly felt the cold draw all about them and they cried out mutely in the dark and he buried them all and piled the rocks over them" (129). McCarthy notes that Billy thought that he could "become the child he never was," but, like the death of the wolf cubs, that child had also died (129). And just like those buried pups, the only form of expression left to him was a "muted," spectral cry. He had lost some essential, rejuvenating, voice.

But because Billy's body was not yet fully dead, or was yet missing some total realization and expression, he was forced to continue on, though he took on the aspect of the undead, the pale man on the pale horse: "they grew thin and gaunted man and horse" (129). As revenant, Billy spends long seasons wondering for a body that was lost. Two more significant U.S./Mexico border crossings occur—each with its own mini-theme that hauntingly echoes the first—but the story culminates in the final crossing which explicitly reaffirms the destruction of the human/nonhuman relationship. Narrating yet more shades of uncanny spectral realities, Billy brings the bones of his deceased brother Boyd back up from Mexico and, a little time after Boyd's burial, Billy wanders into a

southwestern American ghost town. Here are our American Western Gothic ruins. And entering a dilapidated building with his father's horse Niño, he spies a hay pile which "held a depression where something was sleeping" (423). Before they settle down, a misshapen wreck of a dog enters the building.

It was an old dog gone gray about the muzzle and it was horribly crippled in its hindquarters and its head was askew someway on its body and it moved grotesquely. And arthritic an illjoined thing that crabbed sideways and sniffed at the floor to pick up the man's scent...and tried to sort him from the shadows with its milky half blind eyes. (423)

This Gothically 'grotesque' creature, pitifully wretched—and so uncannily familiar—was "so scarred and broken that it might have been patched up out of parts of dogs by demented vivisectionists" (423). Billy chases the malformed creature away, almost violently and with a subdued rage, finally driving it down the road with stones and curses. "As it went it raised its mouth sideways and howled again with a terrible sound. Something not of this earth. As if some awful composite of grief had broke through from the preterite world" (424). Billy woke later and walked out to the road, into a day which turned into "an alien dusk and now an alien dark" (424). Billy "called and called" for the misshapen creature until, eventually, he "sat down in the road" and "took his hat off and placed it on the tarmac before him and he bowed his face in his hands and he wept" (425).

The emotionally charged finale concludes: the "sun did rise, once again, for all and without distinction" (425). The human is not the center of the world; the non-human continues, with or without the anthropocentric reality. Nevertheless, Billy's ritualized western disconnection from the earth and its animals is unmistakable. McCarthy invites the reader to experience the western male identity as a misshapen figure, cobbled together

by “demented vivisectionists” who privilege boundary rigidity and segregated parts over ‘hybridity for posthuman relationship awareness’. Such bodies and beings are the result of an “unspeakable” Othering caused by an extractive settler colonial system stratified through rigid boundary perceptions, and is made American male through a “civilization v. savagery” division which continually seeks to elevate the human above the wild-ness of nature. Billy Parham dreams and identifies with the “unknowable” wilderness nature—but knowable through the body and necessarily essential—but finds himself yoked, tethered, and tied by a culture which demands the eradication of that nature. Choosing right action to be true to his hybrid “wolf” identity, he is eventually forced to destroy this dream—lest it be destroyed by the colonial system of domination itself. Such a damning paradoxical ritual leads him into a perpetual purgatory where he wears his skin like a forlorn cloak of crudely stitched boundaries. As Anzaldúa has stated, the “dichotomy” of rigid boundaries creates an objectification which results is “the root of all violence” (59).

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Both Luz and Billy encounter the “posthuman” ghost of themselves in these beautifully articulated Western ruminations which I hope were not “vivisected” too badly in the critique. Haunted by selves existing outside of prescribed realities, each figure notably encounters nonhuman Others in ways which significantly challenge their often very gendered boundaries. In speaking about little Ig, Luz remarks to Ray that she’s “like us...she’s an orphan” (84). Though differently nuanced, these two stories detail how each character realizes their alienated, orphan states, lacking knowledge of a self

which understands their human/nonhuman hybridity as well as the language to express and/or explore this reality. Furthermore, each character finds themselves participating within the destruction of both self and the Other. Billy's Western rite of passage is, for me, particularly poignant as a ritual of participation within this destructive paradigm. Because Billy is the misshapen mutt, his "horrible" and "preterite" howls—some "awful composite of grief"—compose the subjugated howl of his "muted" wolf-self. Because he cannot speak—has no proper language—this sound becomes spectral, emitted from the animal Other—paradoxically reaffirming the inexorable relationship. This "unspeakable" experience within western culture isolates and alienates, turning Billy into a "heurfano"—an orphan (134). Turning Billy into the revenant of the American Adam, wedded to the, now truly spectral, American Eve, Luz Dunn.

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## SPECTRO-GEOGRAPHIES OF THE CINEMATIC POST-WEST IN JOHN SAYLES'

*LONE STAR* (1996) AND TAYLER SHERIDAN'S *WIND RIVER* (2017)

*Democratic nations care but little for what has been, but they are haunted by visions of what will be...American people view [their] own march across these wilds, draining swamps, turning the course of rivers, peopling solitudes, and subduing nature. This magnificent image of themselves does not meet the gaze of Americans at intervals only; it may be said to haunt every one of them in his least as well as his most important actions and to be always flitting before his mind.*

~Alexis de Tocqueville *Democracy in America*

*Haunted places are the only one's people can live in.*

~Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*

The American West is a region so significant to American culture that it has its own genre named after it. Indeed, the Hollywood Western films of early to mid-twentieth century provided the visual medium that immortalized western landscapes. Places such as the Rio Grande River and, especially, Utah's Monument Valley provide the material backdrop for the narrative so important to America's westward progress, the Manifest Destiny of nation-building articulated and forwarded by the predominant late nineteenth-century voices of Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt. In this manner, the western landscape became permanently bound in the imagination and myth of America's nation-state identity. However, and as I've discussed so far in this dissertation, this nation-building narrative has come under great scrutiny in the past half century. From American Studies to western history and literary studies and cultural geography, what the narrative *left out* has increasingly surfaced, rising out of the monolithic story of the West, emerging out of the landscape in the form of the exposed skeleton of a murdered sheriff rising from the west Texas scrub, or howling with the

frigid Rocky Mountain wind, riding the wings of a poem spoken by a disembodied indigenous women.

In this chapter, I examine two films, *Lone Star* (1996), written and directed by John Sayles, and Taylor Sheridan's recent *Wind River* (2017), to understand how these cinematic vehicles explore the West as a haunted *place*. Consistent with the rest of this dissertation, I privilege haunting as an affective expression of hegemonic oppression, and this study explores how "place," "space," and cultural geography "houses" hauntings which, even in "absent spaces," potentially expresses what has been lost, forgotten and/or pathologized by the dominant narrative. My spectral lens continues to link American Studies and postwestern literary scholarship, but this chapter more heavily consults cultural geography discussions and Native American studies. Cultural geography is important to my dissertation not just because it provides another way of seeing the West, but because some cultural geographic circles have taken the spectral turn quite seriously—thus coining the phrase "spectro-geography." However, to better understand the terribly *unsettled* space of the Indian Reservation, and not just because cinematic critical scholarship on the subject is sparse, I also access Native American studies and voices to better contextualize this complex and contestable western space as it is represented in film *and* as it confronts one of the most hauntingly pervasive issues of Native reality: missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW). The importance of this study is three-fold. I continue to draw attention to the spectral layers of the human experience in time and space while emphasizing haunting as an affective expression that provides insights into hegemonic processes; the foundational narrative of U.S. identity is

increasingly problematized as an oppressive racial and gendered discourse; and “place” is further illuminated as both a visible and invisible landscape—as highlighted within Western cinema—acting as a repository for both normative *and* resistant cultural narratives.

### The Haunted West and The Spectral Turn

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, notions of a haunted West have only recently been seriously considered by scholars, and then only in small, clustered manners. In the new field of postwestern studies, Stephen Tatum has discussed aspects of uncanniness and aesthetic beauty in “Spectral Beauty and Forensic Aesthetics in the West,” and Neil Campbell speaks at great length about a haunted West in *Post-Westerns*, often referencing Derrida’s “[h]aunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony” argument, while even going so far as to say that post-Westerns are actually “ghost westerns” (16, 27). Tatum and Campbell stand out because they explore the *functionality* of haunting and spectrality within the Western—rather than merely utilizing haunting as metaphor or superficial representation. Within the field of western geography, the spectral largely remains an “absent presence,” but Dydia DeLyser has drawn attention to how Western ghost towns reproduce a mythical American west in her article “Authenticity on the Ground.” DeLyser’s piece offers an important qualitative study of how “the notion of authenticity is triggered by landscape,” and how this notion interacts with “narratives about the past that the concept of authenticity enables,” in the ghost town of Bodie, California (603). While haunting operates on several important levels in this ghost town landscape, from overt commercial attraction to yet neglected

historical materiality, DeLyser utilizes haunting largely representationally rather than exploring its functionally.

Of course, and in reference to de Tocqueville's epigraph and long-standing American Studies discussions, the notion of a "haunted" American landscape has long existed within the concept of "America" *and* its geographical reality—even if not fully realized, or rather, *especially* as an unrealized absent presence. Haunting can be considered an essential *subtext* of the American landscape. Indeed, as Tocqueville remarks on the frightening optimism of the early democracy, "haunted by visions of what will be," the daunting specter here is not just the consuming need to imagine a new reality in a "march" which included the "subduing" of the landscape, but the ghosts of oppression and negligence which arose within such a myopic historical vision. I read Tocqueville's concerns in terms of the settler colonial event, or ideology, that appropriately contains ghostly "absent presences" that *unsettle* the landscape precisely because of the lack of introspection during such an idealistic and desperate march. Such is part of an "exceptional" American national conception. When Michel de Certeau, much more recently, said that "[h]aunted places are the only one's people can live in," he gestures towards the way "place" itself harbors a past, or rather an *affective* past (108). This point both decenters the anthropocentric perception so crucial to western thought, but also, as Christina Lee notes, recognizes a "phantasmal quality to place that exceeds cognition and the sense, and challenges the quotidian understanding of time as linear" (2). So, there are potentially two types of hauntings here. One is simply the unfathomable nature of a 'place within time', and the other deals with specific historical

narrative omissions, which results in the material history of a place becoming “haunted.” And here, I’m referencing Derrida’s ‘haunting belongs to every hegemony’ stance and Avery Gordon’s argument: “To write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities is to write ghost stories” (17). But Lee’s discussion is also important because it brings the haunting nature of “place” into Derrida’s discussion which is more focused on haunting “time,” and I want to draw out “place” in this chapter. Because “place” helps locate national stories and a sense of identity, it is essential to understand how places are “haunted” by everything that happened there previously *and*, even more specifically, by what dominant narratives have *left out* of the primary stories.

Tocqueville’s concerns historicize American settler colonial hauntings while Certeau creates an awareness that location, geography, and place carries with it, in a palimpsest sense, its own history. Especially with Tocqueville’s term “march,” and how this interacts with a linear Turnerian westward progression, both *time and place* haunt the American cultural landscape. Because the Western landscape is so central to American identity, paying attention to how haunting is expressed (and/or denied) in cultural texts becomes a very important project. Also, privileging hauntings’ ability to uncover what has been historically ignored or repressed allows for a necessary revaluation of haunting that forwards postwestern and American Studies concerns with coming to terms with a history that so determinedly “marched” forward that it neglected many stories, stories which have been surfacing within the cultural geography of Western literature and film for some time. Haunting “unsettles” the secure narrative of America’s settler colonial

story and these ghostly traces need to be studied to understand exactly *how* and *where* this is occurring within Western representations.

Understanding the affective function of haunting within Western places is notably absent within the field of cultural geography—even though there has been significant, if clustered, discussions regarding “spectro-geographies” in non-U.S. based geographical discussions. This is perhaps similar to the historical, “exceptional” resistance that both Americanists and western scholars have navigated when critiquing American identity. My project, therefore, connects the very useful place-based discussions of cultural geography with the more literary and cinematic framed discussions of postwestern scholars who have begun to consider haunting to better realize the relationship between the Western narrative and the haunted western landscape. That said, the discussions involving haunting that have occurred in geography often reference the “spectral turn” in some manner, this cultural turn which I’ve referenced previously in this dissertation and which is pivotal to my work. In *The Spectralities Reader*, editors Maria del Blanco and Esther Peeren note that the relatively recent “spectral turn” is often associated with Jacques Derrida’s 1994 *Specters of Marx* (2). Central to this subtle but important cultural turn is Derrida’s statement, as I’ve previously referenced, that “haunting is a part of every hegemony”; hegemonic structures are necessarily (or always already) haunting/haunted because they “structure the oppression” within these ideologies (Derrida, 46). This realization crucially draws the critical gaze toward the *functionality* of haunting as an expression which potentially disrupts the *spectacle* of hegemonic narratives.

The *Cultural Geographies* journal had a special 2008 edition devoted to “spectro-geographies” where Derrida’s considerations (alongside other relevant “spectral” voices) were placed more firmly ‘in the ground’. In the introductory article “Editorial: spectro-geographies,” written by Jo Francis Maddern and Peter Adey, the authors draw attention to the “spectro-geographical” readings emerging in the wake of the spectral turn and Derrida’s work. The authors stress the “vocabulary of spectrality” while emphasizing “a broader engagement with spectrality within geography and the arts, humanities and social sciences” to ultimately offer a “particularly powerful and emancipatory way of dealing with a number of problematics central to contemporary geographical thought” (291).

Notably, the first “problematic” Maddern and Adey confronted is the way “spectrality” and “haunting” have been largely derogated since the Enlightenment. Aware of this subverted position of the spectral within the historical context of modernist Anglo knowledge systems, Maddern and Avey explain:

Despite the taunts of those who would prefer geography to be concerned with the ‘rational’, the ‘ordered and the ‘sane’, a reading of geography’s outputs over the last few years suggest that there are a set of social theories that are now becoming increasingly important to understanding a whole host of spatial and social relationships: a concern with the most *spectral* aspects of space. (291 original)

Maddern and Avey’s retort realizes the changing of the guard between overarching modernist and postmodernist views in a way which opens the door for an appreciation of spectral functionality. However, and to further connect issues of spectrality with historical geographical discussions, I would argue that this tension between the “rational” and the “spectral” is merely one contemporary iteration of the historical tension between physical and cultural/historical geography. As noted by Alan Baker in his seminal 2003

text, *Geography and History*, “[h]istorical studies of landscapes must be grounded in the analysis of material structures,” with “tangible, visible expressions...But material structures are created and creatively destroyed within an ideological context” (141). Notably, with reference to my previous chapter, the ontological v. epistemological dichotomy haunts here as well. But, importantly, Baker’s synopsis critiques the “either/or” dichotomous arguments of physical v. cultural geography, concluding that “[h]istorical specificity can thus be envisaged as underpinning the individuality of a landscape, which is a resultant of both environmental and social struggles in particular periods at particular places” (141). Furthermore, postmodernism and deconstruction have brought to light the power of hegemonic narratives to *make the visible invisible*. It is therefore important to realize how haunting works within the cultural geographical context.

The *spectacle* created by dominant cultural narratives myopically privileges and derogates, as has been amply proven by studies in race, class, and gender. Spectrality and haunting are important terms which offer an awareness of the “less visible” and transitional spaces that exist outside of convenient, historical dichotomies. A “spectral lens”—with spectro-geography in mind—is thus crucial to landscape study because it carries an awareness of how dominant cultural narratives highlight and elide material landscapes. To focus heavily on visibility for a moment with reference to the “Latin *spectrum*...to look, see” (OED), a spectral lens realizes the relationship between hegemonic *spectacle*, the *specters* which haunt such ideologies, and the consumption/interaction with the *spectator*.

Maddern and Avey explain that Derrida's work serves specifically as inspiration for the term "spectro-geographies" and discuss how the term act as "a deliberate referral to Derrida's spectro-politics" (291). Derrida's use of the phrase "out of joint" to delineate a temporal displacement is also important, and the authors add that "[i]f spectrality has a temporal politics, then it also has a spatial politics, one which we would argue is complex, uneven and multifaceted." (292). And although a host of geographical discussions have begun to realize a "spectralized amnesiac modernity with its delusional totalizing systems...the spectre is used...without full examination of its theoretical consequences" (292). This statement points to haunting as the unrealized *subtext* that actually has *textual* authority because of its *contextual* relationship with ideological power structures. I utilize this affective functionality of haunting as a tool to reveal landscapes lost, neglected and pathologized by the Western narrative's "totalizing systems." Haunting *affectively unsettles* the "settled" power structure of the Western's white, male, civilizing narrative.

### Western Ideological Landscapes

The Western film and literary genre is important because of its intimate connection with American identity and the way it has both reiterated and challenged cultural power structures. In *Western Places American Myths*, geographer Gary Hausladen speaks of the "significance" of the West: "The power and importance of the American West, ambiguous or not, cannot be overstated. Not just a real geographical region, the West is a mythic concept that repeatedly transcends simple historical-geographical description" (1). This comment is reminiscent of Alan Baker's comments

regarding the complexity of “landscape” and the importance of considering the *ideological* implications of landscape. Furthermore, despite the fact that Baker repeatedly stresses the “visible” aspects of landscape within geographical terminology, the hegemonic power of ideology—and especially nationalistic ideologies tied to place—leads Baker to emphasize the “duality of the ‘apparent’ and the ‘hidden’ landscapes” (139, 141, 151). It is this duality that also inspired notable western film and literary scholar Lee Clark Mitchell to declare that Westerns are plagued by “a history far from apparent on their narrative surfaces” (8).

Backgrounding the complex ideology of the West, Hausladen recognizes the heavy influence of historian Frederick Jackson Turner and his (in)famous 1893 paper “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” The primary criticisms of Turner, Hausladen notes, speaks of the marginalization of “Native Americans, Hispanic—later Mexican—settlers women and children, Asians, blacks,” and the lack of critical awareness regarding “lands speculators, cities, and corporations” (5). The stereotypical Western harbored these Turnerian ideals as it “was concerned with settlement and utopianism, with empire and territorial expansion,” while it “attempted to reassert and institutionalize male-dominated, white Anglo-Saxon society as the bedrock of American national identity” (296). Thus, it is notable that scholarship since the cultural turn of the 1960’s and 70’s has increasingly privileged voices and arguments that “depart from the more traditional white Euro-American male interpretations of Western expansion” (14). Indeed, such racialized and gendered voices haunt the monolithic white, male civilizing narrative—and the fact that they haunt cannot be overlooked.

However, such hauntings also need a *place* to haunt and this draws deeper attention to geography, setting, and landscape.

The well-known geographer Leo Zonn mused: “We loved to go to the movies when I was a child,” a sentiment which points to the power of cinema as a cultural device and especially highlights the influential ideological power of the Western as a historical cinematic force (63). His piece, “Placing the Man in the West: Masculinities of ‘The Last Picture Show’,” co-written with Grayson Holmes and Altha J. Cravey, emphasizes how “[c]inematic geography provides a unique opportunity to study the nature of American society because of its immediate concern with narrative of places” (278).

*Place* is central to this study that critically assess a “cinematic narrative [that] mourns the loss of the iconic Westerner as well as the passing of his home place, the Old West” (278). This article by Zonn, Grayson, and Holmes introduces the tradition of film studies in geography while also drawing attention to the changing Western cinematic landscape. Really, this work is a type of spectral studies as the scholarship examines how the Western “mourns” for a past narrative that “placed” the heroic (white) male in the Western landscape. The authors do not recognize the functionality of haunting, but nevertheless privilege the haunted/haunting expressions and *places* within Western films while simultaneously drawing attention to the gendered ghosts which haunt a shifting Western landscape.

Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, editors of the *Spectralities Reader*, reiterate the power of place in regard to haunting. They note that “[h]aunting has been classically conceived as attached to a *where*, from the proverbial haunted house to the

ghost town” (395 original). This “*where*” acts as the material conduit for the *when*. In this way, referencing place within geography “grounds” this ephemeral and elusive concept. As the editor’s note, “[t]he return to—or even first arrival at—a specific place can, willingly or unwillingly, result in a recollection of or encounter with past experiences and perceptions, making the concept of location immensely powerful as well as layered” (395). Yet, how do we recognize haunting at places? Blanco and Peeren’s statement points the way to an *affective* awareness. During the “first arrival”—or indeed any arrival—one might not merely encounter the ghost tied to that place, but the hauntings which *one brings to a place*. In other words, the “place” triggers interior hauntings via place-based association. Understanding “affect” here is important as it interrupts strict boundaries between bodies in a way that reminds that the place and the human encountering the place are in constant, affectual *relationship*.

In terms of the American West, the power of the landscape is not merely the landscape itself, but how that landscape has been conceived in the Western narrative. Neil Campbell merges some of his previous thoughts concerning a haunted post-West with affect theory as he pursues the affectivity of the West-as-region. He interrupts strict regional boundaries by redefining region as “a layered or entangled sense of time and space, of memory and event, history and story, affect and emotion from which assembles a critical regional presence/present, always already inflected by the past, haunted by memoires, myths, and everyday realities” (*Critical Affective Regionality* 10). He then clarifies with reference to notable affect scholar Michael Taussig, referencing Taussig’s “placeness” as an entity “alive *within-region* while creating worlds as it interacts with

multiple other forces...which includes its readers and their various extensive worlds” (*Critical Affective Regionality* 21, original emphasis). What these comments underscore is that while a person might meet a “place” and be affected by it, and in turn affect the space, the ideological conceptions of that place are always already affecting the interaction as well. This is important as the “idea” of a powerfully conceived place—as in “the West”—carries with it affectivity that shapes the experience of that physical space. Therefore, when the “conceived space” does not match with the “experienced space,” haunting expresses itself in the uncanny event. So, understanding “affect” as the study of bodies and ideas and forces in constant interaction provides a helpful avenue of dissecting how exactly “haunting happens” and how it is both expressed in cultural texts and how it interacts with place.

Yet, the affective relationship between place and haunting has not been sufficiently utilized in western/Western geographic readings. My work expands the postwestern and geographic cinematic traditions of examining place within the Western genre by utilizing a “spectral lens” to increase an awareness of the “spectro-geographies” within these cultural landscapes. Although the film *Lone Star* has received many accolades and has received numerous critiques over the past twenty years, it is worth revisiting because of the way Sayles connects moments of time via seamless editing within specific, plot-important western *places* to elicit the *experience* of place, memory and haunting within the town of Frontera. And the film *Wind River*, even if it problematically maintains a white, male hero, nevertheless brings awareness to the ‘not-

yet-closed' frontier borderland between Native reservations and corporate "man-camps" and the historical and very present issue of missing and murdered indigenous women.

*Lone Star*

Imagine a story about a town in the American West, set within the vast and arid expanses of west Texas on the border of the Rio Grande, replete with bars, six-shooter sheriffs and wide-open blue skies. This landscape is just around the corner from John Ford's famous Western Monument Valley landscapes. Now, corrupt that sheriff through racial bigotry and thug-like greed, and then have him murdered by his successor who becomes immortalized as a can't-do-wrong hero—a larger-than-life figure whose image haunts his much less charismatic son who later takes on the role of local sheriff. This isn't your typical John Wayne film about the heroic West as the bedrock creation story of America.

So, appropriately, John Sayles' film (writer/director) opens with the discovery of a body—a skeleton emerging from out of an old military shooting range. The scoured skull is found by two army officers on their morning off; one is studying fauna, the other has a metal detector and is collecting rusty cartridge shells. Current sheriff Sam Deeds (Chris Cooper)—son of the famous, faultless sheriff Buddy Deeds (Mathew McConaughey) comes to investigate. The Sheriff's star found near the body, along with the mason ring, provide the essential clues to this plot-setting scene, directing Sam's mind towards the mysterious disappearance of the brutal Sheriff Wade (Kris Kristofferson) years before—right before Sam's father, Buddy, became sheriff. These exposed bones and the understated, but harrowed face of Sam informs the audience know

that this isn't a Western narrative that looks with myopic eyes towards a never-setting, west-riding sun; it is a story that explores the spectral landscapes of that which has been lost, forgotten and pathologized by the Western narrative. The officer studying the fauna heckles his friend: "You live in a place, you should know something about it." The West, as the setting for a hopeful nation-building narrative, often "boosted" through national and local government agencies, as well as from individual land speculators, has not been a narrative that had time for ghosts. In *Lone Star*, however, the buried dead are rising to the surface of this previously imagined Eden, or "virgin land," determined to have their stories (re)told, unsettling the settled Western narrative. Racism, greed, and genealogical inheritance are the central specters here. *Lone Star* is a movie determined to "know something about" the place and history of this West beyond the mythic white, male, civilizing narrative.

To initiate a confrontation with the Western specters that rise out of the palimpsest materialism and emotional histories of the region, *Lone Star* is set on the U.S./Mexico border, within the border town of Frontera (filmed in Del Rio, Laredo, and Eagle Pass, Texas). Sayles addresses the complex *relationship* between material and emotional, physical and cultural/ideological geographies to realize the unsettled nature of the Western landscape. This unsettled or "disjointedness" plagues Frontera because the *experienced* landscape does not fit with the normalized hegemonic white racial narrative. Sayles achieves this realization of haunting through two primary "place" vehicles in this film. The first is the town of Frontera, with a place name which creates both contemporary and historical border/boundary relevance—yet crucially *shifts* the

American/English “frontier” to the Latinized version, thus decentralizing the U.S. equivalent and signaling an introduction into interrupted normative Western liminal landscape readings. Secondly, Sayles uses camera techniques to seamlessly link present scenes to past, and vice versa; it is as if you’ve stayed in the same space, but merely walked between conversations, or simply turned your head. These are not exactly “bridging shots,” which are achieved through an exterior device, such as the flipping pages of a calendar, or an imposed map to represent physical and temporal shifts. These scenes merely involve a panning camera (perhaps with a zoom out or in and a small tilt) that “bridges” the present with a flashback or flashforward into another conversation and/or event which seems to be simultaneously happening at that place. The *lack* of concrete visual cues (as utilized in the “bridging shot” technique) is important: memory’s attachment to place does not abide by strict borders. This technique epitomizes the way memory washes over the continuous *experience of place* in a spectral manner—an experience which may in fact be *uncanny* when the familiar becomes the unfamiliar, when the *experience* interrupts the normative narrative. This seamless editing technique realizes a past haunting the present and points to how *place* within this film—specifically, the “Western” places of the Rio Grande, a racially segregated bar, and an abandoned drive-in theatre—are historically and culturally “possessed” by past events. All cultural places are imbued with cultural and ideological history; however haunting is the *affectual reality* of an unsettled cultural history—a *still present* and influential past affecting the present, but not fully understood or recognized as it houses something “out of joint,” some “injustice,” to reference Derrida (25-27). And “still present” equally

designates something “stilled”—an event caught in a *stasis* as it remains emotionally and/or ideologically unresolved. *It cannot move forward.* I focus on three scenes which utilize place and Sayles seamless editing technique to confront events “frozen” because of their out of joint nature, events which house injustices regarding race, economics, and genealogy.

While not the first seamless editing scene, this mid-movie episode crucially brings the landscape of the Rio Grande river as a charged nation state and racial boundary into conversation with the personal trials of Sheriff Sam Deeds and the schoolteacher Pilar Cruz. In this scene, present day Sam and Pilar (played by Elizabeth Pena) are walking alongside the murky and meandering Rio Grande on a hot and sunny summer day. This is the first time they’ve seen each other in years. Sam’s status as a lawman interacts with the stereotypical male role of bringing order and justice to the West. Pilar’s role of a schoolteacher perhaps falls into the role of female “domestication,” but there is an important twist. One of the early scenes reveals the school, and Pilar in particular, lobbying parents for a more *comprehensive* Texas history that includes non-whites and Mexican history. This “secondary” education in *Lone Star* also wrestles with the “real v. narrated” history of the West and significantly foreshadows the way these issues play out in the film. But this Rio Grande scene is important because it is the first time Sam and Pilar have sincerely spoken to one another since Sam returned to Frontera a couple of years prior. As Sam speaks—with white cowboy hat in hand—it is obvious that he is trying to reconcile a disjointed past and present. He muses about his hollow present, the fact that he is merely a shadow of his father. “Hell, I’m just a jailer” he says, “running a

sixty-room hotel with bars on the windows.” There is a notable intimacy to their communication...but some unsettling and unanswered element is also present. As they get closer to the river, Sam says “You remember this?” gesturing with cowboy hat in hand toward the rocky riverbank. Sam’s gesture immediately affects Pilar; after glancing toward the riverbank, her eyes dart quickly down and then away. “I gotta head back,” she responds, “It looks real bad when a teacher’s late for class.” The camera then pans (and tilts) down to the riverbank, into the scene of a young Pilar and Sam, discussing sex, sin, and their intimate relationship, a discussion laced with the tension of racial taboo, gesturing toward the film’s overarching narrative of white American cultural fears of miscegenation. The camera then pans back to present-day Sam, thoughtfully sitting in the same spot where his younger self experienced that earlier conversation. He remains haunted.

Cultural geographer Richard Schein states, in *Landscape and Race in the United States*, that “all American landscapes are racialized” (4). Schein calls for a greater awareness of how these geographies are racialized and how “whiteness...is largely (and historically) invisible—at least to the hegemonic readings of race and landscape that presume white to be normal and everything else to be racialized” (4). Pilar’s attempt to convince Frontera’s public of a past and present non-white and/or Mexican historical influence is precisely an effort to interrupt a ‘white normativity’ that strictly delineates, via the Rio Grande, Texas as “white” and Mexico as the racialized Other. Boundaries are important in racialized landscapes because they offer zones, limits, categories, containment or protection. As Western scholar Richard Slotkin argues in his seminal

*Gunfighter Nation*, “the geography of the Frontier represented in Western movies is that of a world divided by significant and signifying borders usually marked by some strong visual sign...like the Rio Grande...[which] come to symbolize a range of fundamental ideological differences” (351). As I argue throughout this dissertation, hegemonic structures are threatened by ghosts as ghosts break down rigid boundaries which are necessarily used to create cultural *difference*. Material borders often function similarly as shown here in *Lone Star*. In Sayles’ narrative, the Rio Grande is central to maintaining a mythical “normative” white West, separated from the Other race/state of Mexico. It was this Western ideology that Charlie Wade brutally enforced, profiting through the terrorizing/subjugating of the non-white. Sam and Pilar find themselves at odds with this West because they’ve experienced a *fluid connection* where a *divisive border* is ideologically prescribed. The personal plight of Sam and Pilar is mirrored in the border history of this famous land/waterscape as their connection reveals a parallel between arbitrary racial hierarchies and nation-state borders. In *Lone Star*, both nation state and racial borders are repeatedly interrupted by ephemeral, yet very *affective*, hauntings.

The second pivotal, “bridging scene” deals with the revelation of Charlie Wade’s murder at “Big O’s Roadhouse.” North of the Rio Grande, Westerns typically coded the saloon as a white racial space. Otis, “Big O,” is African American (with Native heritage), and his place acts as a demarcated place for blacks to gather. So here, Sayles’ attempts to normalize a non-white cultural geography. The interrupting function of this place within a typically “white” landscape is significant in regard to Wade’s murder. It is fairly obvious from the get-go that the skeleton rising out of the Texas dust is that of

Charlie Wade. Wade's skeleton is pivotal in this story as a materialized haunting that rises out of the mythical Western landscape in hegemonic disillusion. And this is a complexly layered haunting. For Sam, this haunting is not just the specter of Wade, which crucially conjures the bigoted violence of the West (Wade used his power to violently oppress non-whites), but also summons the oppressive persona of Sam's father, Buddy. Buddy is, in Sam's mind, the prime suspect in Wade's murder because the day before Wade went missing, Buddy confronted Wade about his corruption, and this resulted in a heated verbal confrontation between the two. Additionally, because Sam has been thoroughly suffocated by the image of a can't-do-wrong, "when he died, they broke the goddam mold" father of Buddy Deeds, Sam is obsessed with finding out if (maybe proving) Buddy killed Charlie Wade. And, towards the end of the film, his investigation eventually leads him to Otis' bar on the outskirts of town, the local gathering spot for African Americans.

Otis' bar is important because it functions as a *place* of both segregation and community and serves as a location for parallel subplots that also deal with race and heritage. At one-point Otis says, "If they're black, there's not but one place in this town they feel welcome." His comment makes visible, to reference Schein, the "whiteness" of the exterior Western landscape while, simultaneously, interrupts the *absence* of blacks within Western bars and saloons in the mythic narrative. And Sayles' use of this Western space in this manner is important. While the Western landscape is indeed normative, or ideologically normalizing, it can equally be utilized as a tool to interrupt the monolithic gaze to great effect, as illustrated here. It is also notable that the past violence that haunts

the place was performed as a resistance to white racial and economic forces attempting to maintain a “normalized” white racial landscape. So, there are multiple levels of haunting involved here.

In this final bar scene, Sam enters the building and finds Otis (Ron Canada) and mayor Hollis Pogue (Clifton James) talking in hushed tones at the empty bar. The mayor has featured periodically throughout the film and is important because he had previously been a deputy to first Wade and then to Buddy Deeds. Sam confronts Otis and Hollis, demanding to finally know what really happened to Wade. The camera pans from the main bar into a side-room, taking the viewer—“ghosting” the viewer—back in time to the Wade reign. Wade walks into the back room to find a young Otis hosting a card game. Wade, the “bribe or bullet” type of sheriff, as he’d been known, had *not* been let in on the game. This phrase indicates economic motivations, but the language used by Wade throughout the movie’s flashbacks has abundantly illustrated pervasive racial prejudices, and the primary violence perpetuated under the Wade reign has been towards non-whites—as (almost) exemplified in this scene. Just as Wade prepares to shoot Otis, he is first shot by young deputy Hollis. Buddy (Matthew McConaughey) watches on, eyes wide. So—despite the decent amount of dirt Sam actually did dig up on his father during the murder investigation—Sam finally knows that Buddy Deeds is not the killer. As Hollis had been witness to Wade’s thuggery for some time, it was clear that he could no longer act as a silent accomplice. The camera’s eye shifts back into present. Otis and Hollis express their concerns now that Sam knows the truth, but Sam shrugs it off, saying: “Don’t think the Rangers are likely to find out any more than they already have.”

Sam leaves the bar, wrapped within an aura of calm, satisfied to finally know the truth and apparently satisfied with the “vigilante” justice Wade received. But the subtext is that the (Western spirit of) vigilante justice was done in the name of defending a *non-normative* Western geography. This not only illustrates a non-normative African American West, but exemplifies the way in which certain Western tropes (vigilante Justice) continue to adapt themselves to political landscapes.

However, and to reiterate, not only is the Western genre pliable, as Slotkin mentions repeatedly throughout *Gunfighter Nation*, but landscape is essential to providing a substantiated “place” for both dominant *and* resistant narratives (4, 8, 311, 351). Yet, this is no surprise. Because place so often “houses” haunting, utilizing specific landscapes to illustrate normative resistance is not just fitting, but essential. In this episode, Otis’ place acts as both a solace from the “whiteness” of the Western landscape and as visual landscape interruption/correction to the stereotypically absent African American presence in Western bars. In the latter case, it offers a “re-substantialization” of the African American from a “spectralized” marginalization. Wade’s intent was to “spectralize” the African American Otis either by subjugating him or by killing him. Wade’s emerging bones participate in a haunting that leads to the realization of a violence done as a resistance to the dominant racial narrative, but Sayles’ utilizes the bar as a way of negotiating a *shifting* Western landscape that is in conversation with its ghosts.

In *Lone Star*’s final scene, Sam and Pilar sit together on the hood of Sam’s car in the grounds of the now abandoned and desolate drive-in theatre. The deserted drive-in

*place* is significant for several reasons. For starters, it is set within the arid expanse of the west Texas plains, thus creating an awareness of how rural and suburban areas provided the setting for a convergence of auto and entertainment leisure that, as Don and Susan Sanders have discussed, boomed in the post-WWII economy (11, 12). People could see “Westerns” within the West; could see bad 70’s action flicks or be entertained by the emerging sci-fi genre to explore the new frontiers of space; could use the “spectacle” of the theatre to mask (sometimes poorly) the sexual intimacies vehicular privacy allowed. Mary Morley Cohen, in “Forgotten Audience in the Passion Pits,” argues for a greater awareness of the drive-in phenomena (there is still little scholarship on this landscape) and speaks about how the convenience of mall theaters, home movies and cable movies caused a great decline in the drive-in movie market. What is also interesting is that Cohen argues that the drive-in “helped to challenge and expand the industry’s conception of the movie-going public by moving away from the fiction of a homogeneous, easily defined urban audience” (471). She notes how drive-ins were some of the first “theatres in the South to desegregate, and in some areas they were the only non-segregated public spaces” (471). Considering Cohen’s last point, Sam and Pilar utilize the “private” aspect of this “public” space to challenge racial divisions. The drive-in operated as landscape space which interrupted a racialized landscape. However, it was in this exact place where Buddy found them out and, with the help of Hollis, drug them apart as they kicked and screamed. This was the traumatic disjuncture which sent the young lovers on diverging life paths. So, the current *mise-en-scène* of the now delapidated theatre (read: ghostly or spectralized) “placed” within the western landscape

underscores the fact that Sam and Pilar found a place to connect and cross certain social boundaries—but were interrupted by the authorities of normativity, thus mirroring events at Big O's.

Of course, although race is the primary normative text of the movie, there were other ideological issues at play with Sam and Pilar. Since the previous Rio Grande scene, their love has dramatically rekindled. And the film has led the viewer to believe that the aura of taboo was assumed to be racial mixing. But what Sam has also discovered through his investigation, is that his father Buddy had an affair. And what he realizes at the end of the film, is that the affair was with Pilar's mother. Pilar is his sister. As he tells her this discovery, it is not so much that Pilar is shocked by shame, but rather upset and angry—angry because they'd felt so strongly for each other for so long and that each had to fight and endure real and perceived racial bigotry to arrive at the moment where they could be together. And now, neither one is willing to relinquish what they fought for. They mark the moment with words of commitment. "We start from scratch," says Pilar, and then adds dramatically: "Forget the Alamo." The camera then pans back to the dilapidated outdoor drive-in screen, a blank screen of stitched white panels with a hole near the upper left corner—an imperfect *Tabula rasa* from which Sam and Pilar determinedly begin again. The imperfections denote a haunted history realized through a successful discussion with the ghosts of the past. Having acknowledged those hauntings, they now may, knowingly, choose to live free from historical boundary violence, racial taboo, and even genealogical conflicts. They do not really "forget" the past, but decide which aspects of the past need to change going forward.

*Lone Star* is an excellent film to study place, haunting and the West. By utilizing mythical Western settings—the arid plains, the Rio Grande, the bar, the abandoned, tumbleweed drive-in—and through Sayles’ seamless editing techniques, the viewer may connect with the entirely relatable way in which these places hold both normative and non-normative “Western” experiences. *Lone Star* reveals how the material history of the past is buried in particular Western landscapes (as with the bones of Sheriff Wade), and how this materiality produces a trail in the tradition of both Westerns and crime stories. But while the material aspects of the pursuit for truth are reinforced, such materiality is often inspired by—and constantly challenged and affected by—what is buried in the emotional/cultural landscape: that which is trying to surface, the haunting. What *Lone Star* offers, in total, is an appreciation for haunting as an affective expression which accesses both the visible and invisible cultural landscapes—both the material and immaterial—in a manner which provides insights into cultural oppressions. *Lone Star* is especially keen to acknowledge how the non-normative racial experiences of the residents of Frontera haunt the normative Western narrative. A “spectral lens,” with an attuned spectral-geographic focus, offers an acute method to understand the complex relationship between physical and cultural landscapes, normative and resistant spaces, while remaining receptive to the emotional and creative expression of haunting as it interacts with these cultural realities.

America's "Dark Obverse"

*We know of scarcely any record of destructive exploitation in all the span of human history until we enter the period of modern history, when transatlantic expansion of European commerce, peoples, and governments takes place. Then begins what may well be the tragic rather than the great age of man. We have glorified this period in terms of a romantic view of colonization and of the frontier. There is a dark obverse to the picture, which we have regarded scarcely at all.*

~ Carl Sauer, "Theme of Plant and Animal Destruction in History." 1938

Native American reservations exist as some of the most haunted historical geographies within the West. From outright war and genocide, to often underhanded treaties, broken treaties, boarding schools, and legislated allotment, the extent to which the United States attempted to eradicate an indigenous culture while waving the banner of religious freedom and economic promise "for all" has created a shadow of epic proportions. This is the most difficult legacy of American heritage, haunted by a Western narrative that has so often forwarded a settler colonial ideology which has, in various manners, displaced natives through what Patrick Wolf has called "the logic of elimination" (27). Yet, as numerous scholars have argued, indigenous peoples live on, adapt, survive, and often thrive. David Treuer's (Ojibwe) recent *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee* breathes indigenous "life" back into the dominant historical narrative of the "dead Indian." Treuer writes to create an awareness "beyond the blinders that the 'dead Indian' narrative has imposed," one which includes the "fierce conviction that our cultures are not dead, and our civilizations have not been destroyed...our present tense is evolving a rapidly and creatively as everyone else's" (17). And Treuer quotes Karl Marx to "haunt back": "The traditions of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the

brains of the living” (17) This is an important reference to a fluid connection with the past—rather than an American Adam-like “starting over”—but also realizes, via Marx, that “[m]en make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstance, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past” (17). This is crucial, not just to realize Treuer’s argument that “Indian’s are not little ghosts in living color, stippling the landscape of the past,” but to understand how the past haunts via *established power structures*. What this means is that those Natives continuing to live must negotiate power structures, must “speak to power,” in a way that the current, *inherited*, structures understand. For Treuer, it was becoming an academic and writing a book and using a real, but unrealized, indigenous history to *haunt back*. When critiquing the affective aspects of expressions haunting and/or resisting power, it is essential to understand the nuances involved: “speaking to power” isn’t pretty, and it isn’t successful without compromise. This is relevant as I trace the affective haunting within *Wind River*, a movie that gets a point across, albeit problematically.

Despite the fact that scholars such as Treuer—and notably Gerald Vizenor with his term “survivance” and his thorough critique of the “indian” simulation—have “revived” the heartbeat of indigenous peoples by illustrating Native survival and resistance, many *spaces* of deprivation remain, particularly structured *places*, gridded geographies which house the “dark obverse,” to use cultural geographer Carl Sauer’s insightful term, of the mythic optimism which the American West has represented. And there are specters here which require acknowledgement. As geographer William

Wyckoff notes, the reservation space itself is especially problematic: “more than 35 percent of Native Americans live on reservations,” and “[o]verall, reservation residents survive on household incomes that are 30 percent below the American average” (171, 172). Wyckoff’s statistics reveal portions of the difficult reality that Treuer attempts to navigate: the balancing act of realizing trauma while enacting survival. This negotiation will be kept in mind throughout this chapter, but it is essential to note how these “reservations” spaces have “preserved” an especially deceptive blind spot in terms of America’s racialized history, and, as *Wind River* reveals, a very gendered one as well. Not just in the West, but specifically in the West, the florid regalia of America’s exceptional pageantry hangs upon the bones of the dead Indian, a scarecrow pose, with tattered strands flapping too easily—yet ignored—with every whisper of a haunted breeze that mourns for the lost and murdered indigenous woman.

In Taylor Sheridan’s *Wind River*, there are multiple ghosts to consider, from ghastly reservation poverty (though not always, as the movie stresses) which uncannily imbalances the mythic notion of an expansive West full of celebration and promise, to the haunting simulations of cowboy manliness and violence, to the most pressing ghosts of missing, abused, and/or murdered indigenous women. Furthermore, “place” is once again highlighted in the Western cinema in the shape of an unforgiving Wyoming mountain wilderness—but in a highly contestable manner that exemplifies and interacts with these key issues. And this is beneficial for a number of fields—mainly because so little critical theory exists on the reservation space and even less on how this space is portrayed in Western cinema *and*, in even more specific regards, to missing and

murdered indigenous women (MMIW) issues. So, this section of the chapter continues to analyze space and ghosts, but pulls from a variety of sources while accessing more indigenous-oriented voices and considerations to understand the full *affective* reach of this most occluded, “obverse” spectro-geography of American exceptionalism: the Indian Reservation.

In “space” and “place” oriented American Studies discussions, one fairly recent American Studies text, *American Studies: An Anthology* (2009), edited by Janice R. Radway, et. al, does confront “Indian” simulations through a piece by Phillip Deloria, and has a section specifically devoted to “Site, Space, and Land,” but it lacks an article that confronts this most contestable of American spaces. This is a problem. Yet, interestingly, Amy Kaplan’s piece, “Where is Guantánamo?” taken from an American Quarterly edition on “Legal Borderlands” (which also, surprisingly, lacks a piece specifically directed at Native American reservations), holds some uncannily similar aspects to reservation spatiality. Kaplan calls Guantánamo a “lawless zone” with an “exceptional status...a legal black hole, a legal limbo, a prison beyond the law” and argues that it is the “road to Abu Ghraib,” (445). This article intersects with Michelle Brown’s study of Abu Ghraib in which she remarks, “[t]he spectacle of abuse at Abu Ghraib makes plain the consequences of putting prisoners and custodians in this space ‘between two deaths,’ a legal borderland filled with spectral violence, a space packed with people and yet profoundly empty of its humanity” (993). The key concept here is that these places show evidence that America’s legal borderlands produce violence against certain Others. Kaplan argues, referencing the historical nature of America’s

1901 Insular Cases (that dealt with territories acquired via the Spanish-American War), that such spaces exist “like a disembodied shade, in an intermediate state of ambiguous existence for an indefinite period” (452). Kaplan calls such spaces of nebulous definition which result in dehumanizing actions “[h]aunted by the ghost of empire” (454). But the “where” of such nebulous legal borderland sites that allows for or ignores bodily harm to a cultural Other is even closer to the heart of “America.” “Like a disembodied shade,” many Indian Reservation spaces (mostly in the West) create blind spots that not only oppress in a way which continues a historically oppressive status quo regarding the “Indian Problem,” but creates a *visual absence* where sexual and economic predators thrive.

Mary L. Dudziak and Let Vopp, the guest editors of the “Legal Borders” edition previously mentioned, also discuss how law creates borderland cultural geography. “In borderland spaces, we can see what law *does* in American history and American culture” (595 original). With a heavy nod to borderlands scholar Gloria Anzaldua (and therefore an important realization of indigenous methodologies), “[B]orderlands” are referred to as “contact zones between distinct physical spaces; they can be interstitial zones of hybridization” (596). The editors further explain that borderlands

can constitute spaces that challenge paradigms and that therefore reveal the criteria that determine what fits in the paradigms. Borderlands can also function not as literal physical spaces but as contact zones between ideas, as spaces of ideological ambiguity that can open up new possibilities of both repression and liberation. (595, 596)

However, places such as Guantánamo, the editors note, fall into the negative ambiguous space, “the edge of the law,” which, importantly, holds an *affective quality* (596).

“America is felt to be ‘out of place’” at such sites of “ideological spaces or gaps” which,

“in spite of American ideals of democracy and rights, violations of the law are routinized, such as the space of the prison” (596). Such haunting places (read: “out of joint”) interrupt the ideal that “America is the story of the rule of law” (596). But, again, such spectral “out of joint” spaces exist much closer to the western “home” space within America’s national narrative. And perhaps no *body* feels such unjust interruptions as deeply as the marginalized indigenous body—and perhaps the indigenous female body most of all.

In the *Rhizomatic West*, Neil Campbell discusses the narrative and geographical *spaces* of the West in tandem, and speaks about the reservation space while referencing Gerald Vizenor’s commentary on “Indian” simulations within historical narratives. Vizenor talks about how the reservation “enclave” creates both a “home” and “a negotiated space set aside...by oppressive colonial governments to isolate them, to extricate them from their cultural habits, and to save them from the vices of the outside world” (235). To this, Campbell notes how the reservation space is constructed by “prison-like conditions of a landscape of control and surveillance” (235). Campbell and Vizenor bring up important terms which interrogate the “simulation” of legal boundaries: prison, surveillance, and “landscapes of control.” Such terms link with previous discussions regarding the legal borderland and transnational issues, but place the “where” and the “when” within the heart of America’s promise land, the American West. And, as *Wind River* reveals, the *space* of the reservation as a segregated, bounded entity offers a *peculiar* separation and *surveillance*. These spaces operate as spaces of *selective surveillance*, blind spots within American western mythic history which are yet patrolled

visibly by both the capitalist and the sexual predator. Certainly, as Treuer notes, some tribes have found ways to profit from their relationship with capitalism, but the historical reality is rife with heinous conflict. And, as Sarah Deer argues in *The Beginning and End of Rape*, “Native women experience the highest per capita rate of rape in the nation” (1). This statistic—merged with countless indigenous stories of generational violence— forwards the awareness that (a continuous) capitalistic colonialism cannot be separated from racialized sexual violence.

Interestingly, Deer opens her discussion with an argument against the usage of the term “epidemic.” She says, that “the word suggests that the problem is biological, that the problem originated independent of long-standing oppression” and that it suggests “a short-term, isolated problem” in a way that “deflects responsibility” as it “fails to acknowledge the agency of perpetrators and those who allow the problem to continue” (2) Deer further contextualizes this issue, arguing that the term “utterly fails to account for the crisis’s roots in history and law,” and threatens to “depoliticize rape” and “violence in Indian country” (2) While overlapping with MMIW issues, Deer, I would argue, answers the “Where is this Guantánamo?” by firstly realizing a “Native American Guantánamo” and placing it not just in the reservation, but physically and temporally upon the indigenous female body.

My focus is more on boundaries, spaces, and how these spaces house ghosts, but it is necessary to realize how *law* creates the *simulation* of order (or disorder as some of these ambiguous rulings show) as a cultural geography which is anything but consistent—to the point that it creates a spectacle of security and comfort in a way that

definitively produces a spectral *borderland*, a shadowed site, a “disembodied shade,” where economic and sexual predators roam. To reiterate the visibility angle in a way that relates to the dominance of vision in cinema: *specters* haunt the Western *spectacle* of law and ideological narratives as it is expressed within the western landscape, and it is important to understand how the *spectator* consumes and interacts with—or is affected by/affects—this power dynamic in ways that restrict or encourage change.

### Wind River

For a quick overview, *Wind River*, “inspired by actual events,” focuses mainly on Corey Lambert (Jeremy Renner) who is a white game warden on the Wind River Reservation (Eastern Shoshone/Northern Arapaho) in Wyoming. While hunting a mountain lion that’s killed livestock, he finds a female body in the snow. FBI agent Jane Banner (Elizabeth Olsen) is called in and they determine that the girl hadn’t been “murdered” per se, but had been raped and was attempting to elude the perpetrators. During this story, Jane experiences the problems of jurisdiction and cultural dilapidation on the “rez,” while Corey has to live through his daughter’s death all over again as she died in a similar manner (mysteriously, in the snow) to the girl who was found. The culprits come from the security team at an oil drilling rig nearby—the “man camp”—leased via the Bureau of Indian Affairs (thus making it private property and throwing more jurisdictional issues into the fray). In the end, after a bloody shoot out, Corey makes the white rapist run through the frigid high-mountain air until his lungs burst in a type of very Western vigilante justice.

Ghosts and narrative simulations form a complex interaction in this movie which was given an 88% rating by Rotten Tomatoes and showed a 7.7 rating via IMBd. While it features Anglo-A-lister's Jeremy Renner (*Hurt Locker*, *Avengers*, *Bourne Legacy*) and Elizabeth Olsen (*Avengers*, *Captain America*), it also includes an impressive host of Native actors. As Vincent Schilling (Akwesasne Mohawk) from "Indian Country Today" remarks, it is "a list of all-star Native actors, including Gil Birmingham, Graham Green, Tantoo Cardinal and Martin Senmeier, among others" (Schilling, "Movie Review"). I'll speak more about the casting choices, but I want to highlight the central figures and certain scenes to draw out the racial issues, representational problems, and the haunted cultural geography that permeates this film.

*Wind River* opens with a midnight mountain valley scene, illuminated by a cold full moon. A disembodied female voice reads a haunting poem: "There is a meadow in my perfect world..." The voice continues and the wind-rustling darkness is accompanied by hurried, snow-crunching footfalls, and then muffled shrieks. The camera falls upon a young Native woman (Kelsey Asbille—Eastern Band Cherokee) running frantically through this high-mountain meadow. But this is no "perfect world." She's dressed in a powder blue jacket and light-colored sweats with no gloves and no shoes. She falls into the snow and trembles with fear, sobs with anguish, limbs shaking uncontrollably in the frigid winter air. But then, through force of will, she rises and begins to run again, into the depths of an oppressive and hopeless night. The scene cuts into bright daylight, and we see herd of anxious sheep. Coyotes are nearby. A gunshot rings out, and one coyote is blown back and down. Several shots follow, and the camera

cuts to a man in winter camouflage and a rifle. Film Critic Jeff Firmin dubs this figure the “man with a gun,” thus solidifying this figure’s participation in the Western’s white, male cowboy role (85). Corey Lambert is the regional ranger, a white man who has married an Arapaho woman and started a family in the area. As the movie moves on, we learn that Cory and his wife Wilma, played by Julia Jones (Choctaw, Chickasaw), have two children, a boy and girl, but have divorced or separated. The affective atmosphere of this separation seems to hinge upon the disappearance and death of their teenage daughter, Emily, not terribly long ago. Emily, we find out later, was best friends with Natalie, the young woman Cory will find dead in the snow in the following days. The juxtaposition of ghostly indigenous female opening scene, transitioning into Lambert’s introduction, then joined to Corey’s discovery of Natalie Hanson’s body, establishes the primary hauntingly *affective relationship* of the film (of the three or four most notable), while, of course, placing it within a notable western setting. And Corey is faced with re-experiencing his daughter’s death as she died in a similar manner: lost, in the cold, as if swallowed up by the harsh landscape—but put in that situation because of a nebulous spectro-geographic border where racial and gendered injustices thrive. And we find out later that the opening poem was written by Emily, his daughter. So, his daughter speaks for both young women, and the death of his daughter fails to let him go. He is faced with the repetition of trauma; it is uncanny (although not uncommon to reservation life) and he is haunted.

But does this trauma emphasize MMIW issues? Or does it merely reaffirm a white, male Western focus? Firmin writes, “[t]here is no higher currency in

contemporary American cinema than trauma, and Sheridan's idea seems to be that by giving the man with the gun a traumatic connection to Native Americans the film can recast the white man from outsider to insider" (85). "Outsider/insider" are very physical, boundary oriented terms that carry cultural meaning (signifying stratified power structures) and Corey's "placement" throughout the film helps reinforce his interaction with the ghosts of Native abuse: from outside to inside the borders of the reservation, from meth-houses to nicely furnished living rooms, to hunting in the wilderness and the discovery of Natalie's body. But Firmin argues that despite revealing a 'cowboy in trauma', the story remains "a story about how what Native Americans really need is a strong white man to protect them and avenge their women" (85). Rather than "subverting or complicating the trope" of the "white-savior narrative," he says, "it reinforces it" (85). But Renner's character isn't the only focus here and the affective nature of Natalie Hanson and Emily Lambert's deaths "possesses" the white FBI Agent Jane Banner as well.

Cory discovers the body of Natalie Hanson at his in-law's ranch. And the representation of this well-ordered working ranch helps establish a positive association between the Native American and the typical hard-working mid-west/western work-ethic setting. But because it may be a murder, the FBI is called in. Winter is in full force when Jane Banner arrives, and not only does Corey have to go out to the main road to lead her to the right house, but as she steps out, it is apparent from her clothing that she is more than just a little out of her element. Indeed, she is not prepared for either the "elemental" or the cultural geographic reality of the reservation. However, she is the

same size as Emily, Cory's deceased daughter. The grandparents had some of Emily's snow gear, so the inadequately dressed Jane must wear Emily's clothes. While the elemental geography of the place *affects* her, Jane *affects* the guise of Corey's deceased daughter in a symbolic and uncanny manner. She is an ignorant white women "outsider" who slips into the Native skin. She is *placed* in Emily's clothes. As if aware of the potential appropriation, Corey's mother in law, played by Tantoo Cardinal (Cree/Metis), says "[y]ou bring them back the minute you're done. They ain't a gift," with deadly seriousness. Yet this "going native" for Jane is anything but an act of "exotic" or escapist-oriented cultural appropriation. Though merely uncomfortably awkward and embarrassing at first, this "displacing" of Jane initiates a flight into a spectral underworld. In a scene that brilliantly straddles the line between historical tropes of captivity narratives and issues of cultural appropriation, donning the missing girl's clothes signals Jane's hellish entrapment in the nightmare of MMIW within the spectral borderlands of the reservation.

Once the investigation gets underway, Jane is faced with a helplessness that feels so "sudden" that "epidemic" might be the more appropriate word. I say this not to argue with Deer's sound reasoning, but to draw out how the ghosts of MMIW have been hidden and how "epidemic" caters more to an "unfamiliar" cultural viewpoint in a way that may *shock* an ignorant audience. This is an argument about not just how haunting functions, but the best way to utilize haunting. Deer is drawing attention to the "structure," and this is important, but understanding the affective experience of the "event" from different, affective points of view is also important. The uncanny is often "sudden" as the ghost

breaks through the veil of familiarity to speak its haunting piece. And, because this ghost destroys certainty within the realm of the comfortable western landscape, the “out of control” nature of “epidemic” as well as its “affective” proximity (it suddenly “clothes” Jane), provides additional shock value for the ignorant. Although less overall critical than Firmin, the *Washington Post*’s Ann Hornaday’s remarks that despite Renner’s “deeply empathic protagonist, the film still bears a slight but inescapable whiff of cultural tourism.” While Jane’s entrance into the reality of MMIW perhaps has some semblance of cultural tourism as a foreign racial and judicial body, it yet must be kept in mind that not only does she wear Natalie’s clothes as an initiation into the MMIW body, but her own body boundaries are pierced later on, via gunshot. She very well *might not get away* and escape back into her privilege. In this way, Jane’s blonde, white body goes through a seriously traumatic process of transformation—one which might very well reach a larger, predominantly white audience.

The third haunting intersection is also potentially problematic and deals with Martin Hanson, Gil Birmingham’s character. In an interview, Birmingham notes that “[w]e are very proud to be able to tell a story that sheds light on a very sad epidemic and challenging condition that people rarely hear about” (Schilling, “Wind River Feature”). Both “epidemic” and “condition” are terms which I’m sure would make Deer wince, but Birmingham stresses that he appreciates how the film disrupts certain economic stereotypes. The Hanson’s house, for example, appears middle class. And Birmingham talks about his character as being “a good father trying to make the best of the conditions and opportunities that he can. I particularly like the idea—and Taylor and I talked about

this—of my character being not part of poverty porn.” So, it is evident that some stereotypical shock value is eschewed in Sheridan’s film, while other “jolts” remain. This is evident with Martin’s own trauma of loss. Birmingham mentions that Martin has to watch his children “swallowed up by the conditions and disillusionment and a fractured relationship between native tribes and the government. This stems from the origins of trying to colonize us from the beginning” (Schilling, “Wind River Feature”). Birmingham importantly, I think, recognizes how breaking certain economic stereotypes acts as a type of de-colonization, while also realizing that his character must navigate some of the real material and emotional hardships of reservation life: realizing trauma, enacting survivance.

But while many have praised Birmingham’s acting in this film, the final mourning scene has also been heavily criticized. In this final scene of the movie, Corey returns to the Hanson’s house to tell Martin, in so many words, the rapist got his just deserts. Martin has blue paint on his face and when Corey asks, “What’s with the paint?” Martin replies, “It’s my death face.” Corey asks, “Is that right? And how would you know what that is?” Martin responds, “I don’t. Just made it up,” before explaining, “‘Cause there’s no one left to teach me.” As Martin decides just to sit for a bit longer so he can “miss her,” he asks Corey, “Got time to sit with me?” and Corey responds, “Oh, I ain’t going nowhere.” It is this final scene that Firmin uses as an example to argue that although *Wind River* attempts to produce a counter-narrative to “a problematic history” that might “use a different approach—a non-white lead character, for example, or a powerful woman character—it tries to convince us that the trope of the dominant white man is

actually about brotherhood rather than entrenched power” (85). And Hornaday argues that “it’s clear that ‘Wind River’ will conclude, not with twisty complexity, but with blunt, overstated simplicity,” and alludes to this final scene when remarking that “[i]n one scene Cory gives literal meaning to the term ‘white savior’” (Hornaday).

Furthermore, this scene threatens to perpetuate the “dead Indian” narrative that David Treuer battles against throughout *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee* in the way that Native cultural spirituality appears lost.

However, Treuer also wrote counter-narrative fiction as well. “In that too, I was oppositional,” Treuer remarks, “I abhorred the publishing industry’s pressure to make multicultural fiction engage in cultural show-and-tell. As a result, I wrote novels where the characters never, ever talked about their spirituality or culture... nary a feather was to be found” (14). This last statement perhaps coincides with some of Sheridan’s attempts to burst cinematic Native stereotypes that have historically exploited indigenous spirituality. Perhaps it was more important so show Martin, situated within this modern Native community, as just another human undergoing one of the traumatic experiences possible—the loss of his child—in a non-exoticized manner. In an interview, Sheridan remarks:

I also wanted to see that Native stereotypes I could shatter. I love that fact that at the end of this film I had one character who is a completely stereotypical cowboy, sitting next to Gil’s character which is Hollywood’s perception of a grieving Indian. And I wanted to just let these two men be fathers suffering the loss and be friends. (Schilling, “An Interview”)

And Birmingham appreciates this attempt as he remarks that the “story may not be told by us in particular, the writer is a cowboy guy, but he is a cowboy guy who can shock you in terms of his knowledge because he has spent so many years with Native people on

reservations. (Schilling, “Wind River Feature”). So, while there are some important representational elements on the table in regard to historical portrayals of Native Americans within the landscape of the Western, these pro-*Wind River* voices may relate to my previous argument regarding the different ways, and necessities, of speaking to power. Birmingham emphasizes a particular “shock,” which I’ve played off of, but these complimentary critiques seem to be *shifting* the argument from demanding “the perfect” outcome of total indigenous sovereignty and representation to appreciating the “reality”—or nearness to the real—exhibited by *Wind River* in a way which brings up previously invisible and/or misrepresented issues.

I see Cory, Jane, and Martin as the primary figures that “affectually” produce an awareness of western geography, western genre narratives, and spectral indigenous issues, but the fact that this entire plot involves a vigilante violence also concerns me. Although I may have initially cheered the fitting nature of the conclusion’s vigilante justice, such violence acts as a potentially troublesome plot device that functions in relation to an “authentic” western cultural landscape. Firmin comments that the film’s gritty “realism” is aided by the exemplary way it depicts “working-class western people...and the actualities of mountain geography” (86). He also cites the well-known Americanist/Western scholar Richard Slotkin, via his *Gunfighter Nation*, to delineate the “mythographic ambition” of the film which enables a “spinning” of the “myth of America itself” in a way that is presented as “not just movies but as realist assertions about *the way the world really is*” (Original, 84). And Firmin makes this point to reinforce the way in which such films seek the “authentic” (such a key historical Western

word) and “real” to “insist that they are not ideological ventures, but transmutations of the real meaning of American life” (84). Indeed, it is interesting—and necessary—to note how the West’s perceived cultural geographic imaginary propels the force of realism/authenticity within the film—as does its frontier justice. Firmin might as well have quoted Slotkin’s *Regeneration Through Violence* as the frontier justice enabled by Cory (basically, an eye-for-an-eye-torture), precisely regenerates the “authentic” mythographic white, Western male hero of old. However, to counter, frontier justice, in its idealized form, existed precisely as in “inherent” justice where law failed to define or penetrate—on a borderland. And I wonder if such vigilante vengeance—even if performed by a white guy—might nonetheless tap into America’s “mythographic Western ire of righteousness” to help raise awareness of the injustices done to indigenous women’s bodies. So, maybe to create an impact, the film needed certain “real” Western elements—such as landscape, violence, and the white, male hero. In other words, perhaps one needs to use the language, or certain particular aspects, of power to better “speak to power.” A compromise.

Importantly, while these humans act as the primary affective conduits for experiencing the trauma of MMIW, the land itself is an essential haunted subtext and the cultural geography of the “man camp” comes into play as it is another way in which U.S. economic structures relate to Native female violence and oppression. This “man camp” phenomena has its roots in frontier mining camps but has recently (since 2000) been most visible in the West at the Bakkan Oil Fields in North Dakota. As Sarah Deer explains, such sites are composed of “large numbers of non-Native men relocating to temporary

living quarters near reservations” (78). And not only are “[d]escriptions of these camps...eerily similar to the frontier dynamic as chronicled in the history of the discovery of gold and oil,” but such men themselves betray a cultural separation that is strangely desperate (78). Not only do many workers often come “from desperate conditions,” but they are “paid an excessive amount of money” and this ‘empowered powerlessness’ is underscored by the fact that they understand that they live “in a remote environment where law enforcement is already stretched beyond its limits and the temptation for criminal behavior is strong” (78). This is not a good cultural recipe. The “man camp” phenomena have “likely” been a key factor in “a significant increase in crime committed against Native people in North Dakota since 2008” (78).

*Wind River* explores the nebulous border between the reservation and the “man camp.” Because the body of Natalie’s boyfriend Matt Rayburn (Jon Bernthal) was also found in the snow, and he worked as a security guard at the drilling site, Jane and Ben prepare to drive to the site with a few BIA agents. Jane is important here because she’s the only one who has jurisdiction. However, it’s also poignant that they’re going not just to examine the boyfriend’s trailer, but because the perimeter of the drill station has cameras. So, connecting to earlier discussions regarding how such spectral geographies are surveilled, they are trying to tap into some of this “borderland surveillance” to determine a crime. During their preparation, Ben articulates the wilderness of the area and the way mountain geography interrupts convenient transportation. He says, “See you gotta drive 50 miles to go 5. Welcome to Wyoming.” The difficult topography here mimics the unclear law enforcement boundaries and the difficulty in visibility which is

viscerally illustrated when Jane and company arrive on sight. The initial tension, which almost results in a gunfight, is temporarily settled when Jane announces her FBI jurisdiction. However, it is clear that the security guards are hiding something. And when Jane knocks on the door to the boyfriend's trailer, she is blown backward by a shotgun blast. This initiates a violent and brutal gunfight. While this scene is perhaps more sudden in its initiation, to "shock" an audience now taught with the film's rising tension and musical score, it nevertheless follows the tradition of Western gunfight battles. Except the *placement* of this battle is at one of these nebulous borderland sites where the machine of capitalism encroaches on the Native "body" while also maintaining an acute *surveillance* at this site to patrol its own interests.

In regard to "surveillance," the fact that the surveillance is actually controlled here by the corporation, is mostly designed to police Indians, and then is *denied* in an act of justice-related obfuscation, reveals how the reservation and its borderland functions as paradoxical American cultural "blind spot." These sites of *selective surveillance* are attuned to the needs of whichever hegemony is most dominant—and this is exacerbated by legal borderlands which create weak points in our justice system. *Wind River* fantastically "unveils" or "surveils" this visual selectivity, while crucially connecting the loss of Native geography with the loss of the Native female body. Thus the "endemic" issues Deer has so emphatically argued for are realized, "placed," within the "Western" genre setting, but actualized in a more dramatic fashion.

Despite negative critiques regarding the reinforcement of Western stereotypes, many people—many Native peoples—have appreciated the movie. Schilling, from

*Indian Country Today*, staunchly argues, “[t]his movie is not about ‘White Saviorism.’ Taylor Sheridan has created a profound and gripping reality about the complexities of relationships between different peoples” (Schilling, “Movie Review”). Interestingly, Schilling also mentions the “realism” of the movie as he adds, “I believe this to be the most realistic and respectful portrayal on film of the relationships between Native people and others outside ‘the rez’” (Schilling, “Movie Review”). Danna Jackson had something similar to say when she guest lectured at Montana State University to speak about MMIW issues last year. Jackson is a Kootenai descendent, has previously been a prosecutor in Indian Country, and currently works for the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation as chief legal counsel. She remarked that she “loved” the movie while also emphasizing the accurate depiction of Olsen’s FBI Jane character. In another article for “Indian Country Today,” Schilling interviews Sheridan who argues that the film has “authenticity and the ability to showcase the world as I have seen it with my education and life experiences of the rez” (Schilling, “An Interview”). Sheridan emphasizes the lessons he’d learned included the countless stories of violence done to Native people, and remarks that these inspired his desire to craft the movie.

Judging the overall affective power of the film may also require going beyond the frame of the screen. Maillard continues to put *Wind River* in a positive light as he sheds light on Schilling’s term “respectful” and discusses how *Wind River* interacted with the Shoshone and Arapaho communities. In regards to representation in the cinematic “system” of ‘representation and consumption’ (read: simulation, spectacle, and the spectator), for *Wind River*, “that system involved an intertribal collaboration” and

included “[l]eaders from the Wind River nations—the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho” who “read the script and visited the set.” When I spoke with Daryl Ross Begay (Navajo), the Native Advisor/Tribal Liaison for the production, he mentioned that tribal and reservation representation was indeed one of the foremost concerns of the elders as reservation life had so often been cinematically portrayed in utterly dilapidated and/or destroyed states (“Begay”). This is, perhaps, why “poverty porn” was such a notable concern in the filming. Cinematic portrayals of cultural geography are important, and by using an “authentic” western geography of the Wyoming mountains, the film speaks to the power of the Western by juxtaposing Natives in middle-class houses and working ranch settlements to disperse the historic ghosts of misrepresentation.

Schilling also broaches the question of casting while interviewing Sheridan. Sheridan remarks: “People keep asking me, ‘When am I going to see a Native American where the star is a Native American, when is that going to happen?’” (Schilling, “An Interview”) Sheridan then speaks about timing and talent and about how Martin Sensmeier is in a good position to breakthrough this barrier. But Schilling lets Sheridan off the hook, and the interview goes elsewhere. What about Gil Birmingham himself as the lead? Wes Studi is certainly another actor of renown—Adam Beach too, just off the top of my head. I wonder what sort of pressure Sheridan was under in making the choices he did. But the star-power of Olsen and Renner is undeniable—especially within the billion-dollar global success of the Marvel cinematic world. Renner also has two Academy Award nominations to his name. This film was included in an introductory freshman seminar class I taught last semester, and a good number of students had already

seen it. When I asked one young white male why he'd watched it he said, "Hawkeye and the Scarlet Witch were in it!" These two characters are Renner and Olsen's Marvel alter-egos, respectively. This is one example of how simply "getting butts in the seats" creates *an opportunity* to shift social awareness and it part and parcel of "speaking to power."

### The Verdict, or, Better Yet: The Affective Verdict

Native Americans need more sovereignty in cultural expressions to confront these western American spectro-geographies. However...

The critical analysis of how ghosts function affectively within the cinematic geography of *Wind River* requires a little more "outside the screen" input. The February 2019 edition of *Restoration Magazine*, from the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC), focused on putting pressure on Congress to address the "crisis" of "missing and murdered Native women and girls" specifically in regard to passing "the SURVIVE Act and the Savannah's Act" (2). *Wind River* was especially pertinent in this process. Lucy Simpson and Cherrah Giles note that the film was "raising national awareness of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) while also touching on the jurisdictional complexities present on Indian reservations when seeking justice for Native victims of violence" (2). Additionally noted in this *Restoration* edition, Sheridan submitted a written testimony "in support of S. 1942 Savanna's Act," where he detailed the story of a story of a girl he calls "Natalie" that he heard about on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and how his researchers for *Wind River* could find "no reliable statistics on missing and murdered Indigenous women" (28, 29). Thus, the closing text in the movie that said, "[w]hile missing persons statistics are compiled for every other

demographic, none exists for Native American women. No one knows how many are missing” (29). He also argues that while “*Savannah’s Act* addresses the data collection issue and serves to establish reporting protocols, there is a lack of jurisdictional clarity and cooperation between law enforcement agencies in Indian Country” (29). And, drawing upon “conversations with the Crow and Standing Rock tribal leadership,” Sheridan ultimately emphasizes that “[t]ribes must be able to exercise their sovereign authority to protect their people” (29). *Savannah’s Act*, named in honor of Savannah LaFontaine-Greywind, murdered in Fargo, ND, in 2017, has yet to become legislation, but has recently been resubmitted as a bill that deals with gathering and organizing statistics on this subject. *Wind River* absolutely helped promote awareness of these “endemic” MMIW issues.

Yet, the editor’s also note, “the NIWRC is tremendously grateful that Taylor Sheridan, writer and director of the feature film *Wind River*, and Acacia Filmed Entertainment (an entity of the Tunic-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana) have directed future distribution royalties of the film to the NIWRC” (2). This is particularly interesting because the Weinstein Company was the previous distributor of the film. All ties to the Weinstein Company were cut when allegations of rape and sexual harassment “against the former film studio executive Harvey Weinstein” (2). Weinstein’s involvement is demoralizing, but also important. It serves as a reminder regarding the “less-than-perfect” ways in which cultural ghosts must navigate the paths of power. However, as of last week, the NIWRC has not seen any money. Elena Saavedra Buckley, from *High Country News*, reports that, “[c]omplications from Harvey Weinstein’s’ crimes

prevented” this opportunity and specifically dealt with the fact that the Weinstein Co. went bankrupt, thereby “forfeiting its obligation to the royalty agreement. Another group purchased the assets and it’s unclear if the center will ever see any of those royalties” (Buckley). While the snafu with Weinstein’s bankruptcy is beyond disappointing—and illustrates the legislative borderland loopholes which continue to haunt native peoples—understanding methods of speaking to power remains important. Additionally, there is a lesson about “affect” here and how it navigates cultural geographies and narrative power structures.

While *Lone Star* was able to substantially mend the “cinematic tapestry” (I’m thinking about the drive-in movie screen), via a productive conversation with the ghost of the regional past, in *Wind River* the affective layers need to be differently assessed. As noted with the increased awareness of MMIW issue, the ghosts in the screen have jumped the frame to become affective waves of political change. And although it perhaps fails to directly counter the powerful Western imaginary of the violent white, male protector “within the frame of the screen,” the affective ramifications in terms of producing cultural awareness is *startling*. When contemplating how haunting affects via geography and cultural representations, it is easy to dismiss haunting’s pliability and hybridity—and the way an affected body, say Jane Banner’s, might sufficiently convey a haunting via sympathy and/or empathy. Or how Martin Hanson’s mourning for his lost child so similar to Cory’s own (cowboy) loss, does not merely make Cory more indigenous—it also makes Martin more “human.” I am referencing Birmingham’s own term here, but it helps to reinforce the fact that affect is never a one-way streak. While the white cowboy

may be playing some of the Other here, the Indian Other has also becoming more relatable; he is “normalized.” Cory’s deep-felt loss helps educate an audience that more closely identifies with the white cowboy, and then relates this trauma to Martin’s. This is another way in which *Wind River* might just keep enough *familiar* about the “Western,” and form the right bridges with these characters and geographic setting, to set the audience up for the “shock” of Native displacement within the nebulous and often oppressive reservation space.

Yet, the continuous “off the screen” affectivity applies to critiques, to my critique, as well. As Princella RedCorn, Communications Officer for the NIWRC, writes in that February 2019 edition of *Restoration*, the film is a “great educational tool” in terms of garnering interest in MMIW issues, “but needs more context and open dialogue, post-viewing, to fully understand the issues that were raised in the film as well as learn about what positive solutions are happening” (32). This affective ‘activation’ can be seen precisely in RedCorn’s motivation, in the *Restoration* magazine, in the NIWRC organization, and by turning such haunting historical traumas into a realization of “the health and healing power of Native women’s voices, the tireless, all-inclusive, and solution-driven work” (33). But the responsibility of this “post-film,” “beyond the screen” activation is the responsibility of many other people as well. As academic scholars call for a better conversation with ghost, and American Studies continues to wrestle with settler colonial ideology, the affective reality is that, even as critics, we have the ability to continue the spectral’s affective work, molding and shaping its reception. And so, while some aspects of the power structure of the film remain problematic, I have

emphasized not just the way that haunting's affectivity traverses power structures in complicated manners, but have attempted to *forward* an awareness of MMIW issues.

I was writing the conclusion to this chapter when the body of 16-year-old Selena Faye Not Afraid was found, here in Montana, outside of Billings, MT, near a rest stop. She'd gone missing a few weeks earlier. Official early reports list "hypothermia" as the cause of death. Yet the "how" and "why" questions surround and haunt this inadequate and dubious answer that now haunts me all the more because I wonder if she, like Emily and Natalie, found only a cold and desolate embrace where her "perfect world" should have been.

I have offered some insights into haunting's affective potential and narrative power structures while *reiterating* the haunting spectro-geography in these racial and legislative borderlands, these material and abstract spaces which, as continues to be evident, produce a Western counter-narrative all on their own—when we pay attention to the ghosts of the marginalized. This "dark obverse" reveals not a celebratory West of equality and promise but seems more akin to Michelle Brown's Abu Ghraib's imprisoning "borderland filled with spectral violence, a space...profoundly empty of its humanity." It is a haunted western landscape that demands a keen cultural eye, and a much, much more honest national reflection.

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GHOSTLY BODIES, SPECTRAL TEXTS: HOW LAYLI LONG SOLDIER'S  
 WHEREAS AND LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *CEREMONY* UNTANGLE  
 OPPRESSIVE NARRATIVES

*...the flesh and the word play an integral part in  
 articulating the experience of marginalized people.*  
 ~Patricia J. Holland, *Raising the Dead*

*The postindian must waver over the aesthetic ruins of  
 indian simulations.*  
 ~Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*

Because this dissertation focuses on haunting as a device to “post-” the West, and equally because the “Indian” has been the most spectralized entity within the Western, it is necessary to examine how indigenous-minded authors speak back to the racialized power structure of the traditional Western narrative and how aspects of spectrality may be involved. Native American voices, historically marginalized by a Turnerian West and the white, male, civilizing narrative that became the Western, potentially offer a crucially *shifted* “Western” commentary firstly because of their Othered, subaltern status. American Studies and chicana/o border theorist Jose David Saldivar has argued while discussing “subaltern studies and the coloniality of power,” in his text *Trans-Americanity*, that “minoritized authors and artists in the United States...are creating a subaltern knowledge that challenges, from below, the supposed homogeneity and presumed boundedness of the U.S. public sphere” (xviii, xiii). Saldivar builds off Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the “minor”—a “minor literature...so termed by its ‘opposition to those which define canonical writing’”—to study the “epistemological” component within subaltern “expressions” (3). Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* serves as the

inspiration for Saldivar's argument as it so dramatically and deftly expresses the "unspeakable" violence, terror, severing of limbs, and death in the making of global capitalism and coloniality" (119). With reference to the "unspeakable," Saldivar says, "Morrison's task is to formulate the very possibility of a grammar of the subaltern by which the 'unspeakable' individual and collective trauma of her vision might be meaningfully communicated." (xix). This expression, then, in Satya Mohanty's words, via Saldivar, is "not only affective but also epistemic" (5).

However, because *Beloved* is one of America's *penultimate ghost stories*, and because Morrison accesses the "unspeakable" through spectral tropes, is the ghost not, then, one of (often *the*) *expression* of the subaltern? To reference Mohanty, the 'affectivity' of haunting is "epistemic" in itself, as well as inspirational and experiential. It teaches that something is, as Jacques Derrida would say, "out of joint" (1). Saldivar's contextualization of the subaltern textual body helps form what is at stake in my chapter while also creating a necessary bridge between American Studies, Western literary studies and Native American Studies. Two issues come out of this contextualization: understanding the spectral functionality in subaltern expressions (within the "West") and then realizing how Native American writers themselves deal with textuality and the ability of the ghost to speak to power.

Within Western literary discussions, the prolific Neil Campbell is one of the few scholars who merges the spectral with Western scholarship—and the only one who considers Native American voices while doing so, albeit briefly. Campbell, in *Post-Westerns*—and following the path of many "spectral" scholars—accesses Jacques

Derrida's pivotal statement from *Specters of Marx*: "Hegemony still organizes the repression and thus the confirmation of a haunting. Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony" (16). Campbell's use of Derrida here reiterates the way Derrida's focus on 'haunted hegemonies' has helped shape my spectral lens, as laid out in previous chapters, while also resonating with Saldivar's concerns regarding the colonial subaltern. As mentioned previously in this dissertation, Campbell also goes so far as to call post-Western's "ghostwesterns" to emphasize the inherently haunted nature of the hierarchical Western (27). However, the most "spectralized" aspect of the West—the Native American—is only briefly considered—and then through the lens of a white British filmmaker, Kent Mackenzie, in *The Exiles* (1961). Campbell's chapter is important for its conceptualization of haunting as an expression which provides "epistemic" knowledge, and its realization of the "urban West". It even offers an interesting argument for valuing the "outsider's" point of view regarding cultural issues. However, the discussion regarding the trials of those Natives "urbanized" via the 1952 Indian Urban Relocation Act, while important, is diluted by a chapter opening which begins with the line: "There is a problem of the urban in the West," and then proceeds to juxtapose Native "exile and dislocation" against that of a white boxer in John Huston's *Fat City* (1972) (165). Within discussions of the haunted West/Western, the spectralized "Indian" requires a more thorough study, one which appreciates the traumatized body as a *spectralized body*, considers how indigenous authors themselves interact with cultural dislocation, and which realizes the potential for varying cultural perceptions regarding spectral functionality. This last point references the fact that not only do indigenous

voices offer yet another subaltern perspective on haunting cultural oppressions but that they also may very well carry a cultural/tribal-specific approach to such hauntings.

In this chapter, I focus a spectral lens on two Native American texts that are entirely concerned with textual, narrative, and bodily hauntings: Layli Long Soldier's recently published poetry text, *Whereas* (2017) and Leslie Marmon Silko's classic *Ceremony* (1977). Because these authors so thoroughly engage with textuality, hegemonic narratives, and the way these constructs interact with very *human bodies*, affect theory and Gerald Vizenor's "postindian" arguments help focus the "spectral lens" in this chapter. I draw attention to how Long Solider and Silko's texts are inspired by haunted, or "spectralized," Native human bodies and then utilize English textual bodies while accessing indigenous viewpoints to recognize and speak back to the "hegemonic spirit" of the America's western/Western culture. This is far from an exhaustive exercise, but attempts to show how haunting expresses the subaltern's "unspeakable" experience and how these particular hegemonic critiques interact with *both* Anglo-oriented and indigenous methodologies. These authors utilize a type of "spectro-textual" "epistemic" awareness, to reference Saldivar and Mohanty, to call out and speak to the power-behind-the-text—negotiating the way the textual body materializes such powerful hegemonic intent—and then utilizing text to recreate, or re-*member*, a Native American identity.

### The Spectralized "Indian"

Over the last couple decades, a number of scholars have discussed, to varying extents, the way Native Americans have become "ghosts" within American narratives.

Renee Bergland, in *The National Uncanny*, references Derrida and a host of other authors

to argue that American literature is dependent upon “spectralizing” Natives: “Native American ghosts haunt American literature because the American nation is compelled to return again and again to an encounter that makes it both sorry and happy, a defiled grave upon which it must continually rebuild the American subject” (22). Bergland’s work importantly highlights the “spectral” aspect of Native American Othering as an essential element the way the United States formed an “American” identity. Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) argues for a similar awareness via different approaches and references Judith Butler who states that “[t]he derealization of the ‘Other’ means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral” (xviii). Haunted by such a spectralization, Byrd forwards “*The Transit of Empire*,” the title of her text, which “might best be understood as a series of preliminary reflections on how ideas of Indians and Indianness have served as the ontological ground through which U.S. settler colonialism enacts itself as settler imperialism” (xix). Byrd also makes a point of not merely acting out subaltern resistance, but pursuing such resistance via indigenous methodologies. This Indian Other within America’s dominant narrative consciousness is a “spectralization” that separates from the reality of material history, and Byrd and Bergland’s comments place this idea of the “spectral” and the concept of haunting in conversation with America’s historical power structures. This Othering which takes place within these hegemonic racial simulations ‘places’ the indigenous in a location which is only relevant (and beneficial) to the colonizer. As mentioned several times in this dissertation, narrative tropes, such as “Virgin Land” and the “Dead Indian/Vanishing Indian,” form a cultural reality through storytelling that supports the settler colonial paradigm that Lorenzo

Veracini describes as “a specific mode of domination where a community of exogenous settlers permanently displace to a new locale, eliminate or displace indigenous populations and sovereignties, and constitute an autonomous political body” (1). While Western studies discussions have entertained the deconstruction of the Western to understand its Others, understanding how indigenous authors realize their spectralized states and then converse with their own ghostliness—and often through “spectral tropes”—has not been adequately addressed.

Although he doesn’t utilize “haunting” specifically, Gerald Vizenor (Ojibwe) intimately intersects spectral scholarship as he critiques the historical-textual simulation of the “Indian” in the Western genre: “Western movies are the muse of simulations, and the absence of humor and real tribal cultures” (*Manifest Manners* 6). Vizenor’s work importantly links western studies with Native American studies and cultural simulation theory (which, I would argue is absolutely a “spectral theory”) to perform, in essence, a spectro-textual exorcism of the haunted indigenous body that leads to an inspirited, “postindian” reality. In *Fugitive Poses*, “The *Indian*,” Vizenor says, “is a simulation and loan word of dominance; the *indian* is an ironic case” (14, original). He explains further: “The Indian with an initial capital is a commemoration of an absence...(t)he *indian* is a simulation, the absence of natives; the *indian* transposes the real, and the simulation of the real has no referent, memoires, or native stories (*Fugitive Poses* 15, original). Vizenor’s use of “simulation” plays with Jean Baudrillard’s work with simulations, simulacra, and surveillance which, in turn, intersects spectral aspects of textual representations via the *spectrum* of visibility and invisibility, absence and presence.

Vizenor thus contributes to discussions regarding the affectivities of *haunting*: he is haunted by words without Native *presence* and indigenous bodies without correctly intended *words*. And, importantly, he acknowledges textual absences and presences in a way that recognizes a cross-cultural spectro-textuality.

Cultural texts cannot *not* have meaning; they are formed and interact with hegemonic structures. While this may seem redundant and obvious to the cultural scholar, the point needs to be reinforced and continuously explored to understand “spectro-textuality”: the intent *behind* the text and how that affectively reproduces and creates power via language and story. I’m reminded of Amy Kaplan’s three-part clarion call to American Studies scholars, as highlighted in this dissertation’s introduction. Each aspect of Kaplan’s critique relates to this chapter, but Vizenor’s work, emphasized through Bergland and Byrd’s comments, confronts “the absence of culture from the history of U.S. imperialism” by drawing attention to how the western cultural power structure has utilized cultural texts to oppress native bodies (11). Words do not simply float about in the ether in some disconnected state from the culture and bodies that produce them. Indeed, and more specifically, an American culture which exists within a settler colonial history—whose foundational national narrative elides the horrors of that colonial masquerade—through such narrative tropes as “Virgin Land,” and the “American Adam,” will remain haunted by such a past until such horrors are realized. Meanwhile, such horrors, these specters of the “coloniality of power,” as Saldivar would argue, continue to mark indigenous bodies.

Vizenor's confrontation with America's haunted/haunting cultural expressions is best known through his term "survivance." And "survivance" can sometimes be limited by the assumption of mere "survival" and "resistance", but Vizenor intends a much more expansive expression. I say "mere" because such terms maintain their definition via the dominant hegemonic structure. Vizenor inspires the term to exist beyond a delimiting victimhood and to instead refer to a substantialized, motivated body. Survivance is "more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence" (*Fugitive Poses* 15). But the term "active presence" recognizes not just a "body," but a motivated body, an inspired body, a "spirit-body" inspired by will and intent. And such spirit-bodies are affected by word bodies which, just as well, are *possessed* with intent. This is a discussion of spectro-textuality which further relates to Vizenor's use of the terms "sovenance" and "transmotion" to 'flesh-out' an indigenous-specific ontological/epistemic awareness. "Sovenance" is defined as "that sense of presence in remembrance, that trace of creation and natural reason in native stories...sovenance is a native presence in these essays, not the romance of an aesthetic absence or victimry" (Fug 15).

Still haunted by epistemological stasis and the rigidity of western moral individualism, Vizenor then immediately follows with the idea of *transmotion* to include a more encompassing indigenous world view:

As creation stories, totemic visions, reincarnation, and sovenance; transition, that sense of native motion and an active presence, is *sui generis* sovereignty. Native transmotion is survivance, a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty. Native stories of survivance are the creases of transmotion and sovereignty. (15)

There is a textual/linguistic power here that relates to physical presence and spirit-to-embodied identity, especially in the phrase “active presence.” Vizenor creates/reappropriates these terms to reform a body—to “re-member” the native body. As Lisa Tatonetti notes, “‘*sui generis*’ defines Native sovereignty as unique, singular, preexisting,” but “transmotion” is integral to understanding the continuum of a sovereign existence via ‘text’, via tales in which “tribal story is creation, imagination is action, and the epic poem a tribal song of survivance” (233). I include Vizenor’s “transmotion” to accent a “trans-” awareness that complicates rigid conceptions of boundary in a multitude of manners. This complication allows for greater “textual” conceptualization, as Tatonetti emphasizes, gesturing towards “texts” outside of merely the written, and pointing towards “creation” and “action” in cultural expressions. My term “spectro-textual” does often sit within the written, but is utilized to spark an awareness of how all cultural texts are “embodied”—and the form (be it written, spoken, etc.) always dances with the *intent*.

Keeping Vizenor’s textual simulations in mind, I want to briefly access the current ‘spectral indigenous’ discussion because such discussions are concerned with problematic aspects of uncritical cross-cultural analysis. Spectral Studies scholars Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, editors of *The Spectralities Reader*, caution: “Certain accounts of spectrality may indeed be faulted for ignoring historical, cultural, and geographical specificities...ghosts and haunting do not function the same, or elicit the same affective responses, in all contexts” (35). In *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence*, Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush echo Blanco and Peeren’s concerns, noting that while

recent academic attention to haunting and haunted Native texts realize how ghosts “disrupt dominant and often historical narratives” (11) because of their transcendent, in-between temporal and physical natures, this often results in

analyses of colonialism [that] emphasize only the symbolic or discursive aspects of settler societies—for example, tales of Indian ghosts—while spending relatively little time exploring the physical landscapes those discourses inhabit, or the surviving Indigenous bodies and minds that often continue to, in turn, inhabit those landscapes. (x)

Like Boyd and Thrush, I attempt to realize haunting *via the indigenous body*. Yet, I am attempting to emphasize the inescapable *relationship between the cultural text and the body*. Indeed, Long Solider and Silko, are immensely concerned with this relationship but also must utilize methods of “speaking to power” which are cross-cultural (such as the English language, for starters). Boyd and Thrush also argue that as indigenous authors tell “ghost stories to the colonizer,” they replace “settler guilt with Indigenous mourning and imagined spectral ancestries with actual genealogies embedded in the land” (xx). Yet, spectral functionality may overlap between cultures. This is another, nebulous, cross-cultural border. However, the subaltern might use this knowledge and tell a ghost story to effectively/affectively, to borrow from Theresa Goddu and her work with the Gothic’s functionality, “haunt back” (131). Speaking to power always requires some usage of “power’s tools,” and so it is important to realize how indigenous author’s not only utilize the general form of English to speak back to power, but access familiar types of haunting as well. For example, using the ghost to “haunt back” is a primary feature of Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer* which capitalizes not just upon indigenous “genealogies,” but upon an Anglo-centric discomfort and exhilaration with the uncanniness of ghosts to also make a political statement.

But, while my initial aim is to create an awareness of these spectral issues within Native western/postwestern discussions, a further understanding of *exactly how and when* the native ghost story is utilizing “North American narrative tropes” or indigenous-minded belief systems requires careful consideration. And this, of course, may vary between tribal cultures. And this varies between individuals. And this is made more difficult because many indigenous authors are saturated with American culture. And I will most likely fail at times because the American reality and English language are so thoroughly colonized. These “ands” tediously add up. But they emphasize the complexity of cultural boundary relationships—to the point that they perhaps even shift this “either/or” question towards a pursuit that does not demand unmitigated certainty between Anglo and indigenous oriented structures. Again, this motion privileges “function” over a strictly limited “form” in a nod towards both poststructural boundary discourse *and* to a posteriori realization of the material and historical complexity of colliding cultures. It also is essential to appreciate the many nuances of function when studying the messy nature of speaking to power. But because the following two volumes exhibit a range of spectral affectivities between texts and indigenous bodies which access both Anglo and Native-oriented traditions to “haunt back,” they offer a fitting survey for exploring these questions regarding the haunted indigenous West.

### Affective Survivance

Now  
 Make room in the mouth  
 For grassesgrassesgrasses. (5)

It is never “just” about the text. Neither is it just about the human body with Long Soldier and Silko. Human bodies and language are always braided. I need to discuss some theory a bit more before getting into Long Soldier and Silko’s pieces, but Layli Long Soldier’s opening lines help set the tone by capitalizing on the intimate affective relationship between text, language, and physical bodies, accessing the specters of historical trauma while simultaneously transferring that specter to the reader. It leaves me in suspension: Whose mouth? The subaltern Native American mouth? The settler colonial Anglo-American? Every reader’s? Mine, regardless? This spectro-textual projection signals the shifting textual-narrative political terrain which follows. These opening words *affect* the reader via the shared knowledge of language coupled with bodies, mouth, and grass, alongside an onomatopoeic gesture: “grassesgrassesgrasses” conjures—for me with my western South Dakota plains heritage—the wind rustling through the tall prairie grass. Because she (and Silko) rely so heavily upon human bodies to convey issue of haunting, understanding the *affective* relationship between text and bodies furthers the discussion on cultural specters and broaches ‘what’s at stake’ in spectro-textuality.

I want to let these haunting opening lines sit for a few moments while I introduce “affect theory” to the discussion to help realize the interaction between word bodies and human bodies. Within affect theory, “affect” refers to the way bodies (from physical to cultural) receive and transmit forces from other bodies and how this interaction is expressed. For me, this is a boundary discussion. And I favor affect to more accurately understand haunting and textual functionality, as well as affect’s ability to highlight

*human experience*. Affect demands an experiential or phenomenological awareness to explore that which exists outside of the often-narrow parameters of modernistic cultural knowledge systems and ways of seeing reality. As I've outlined previously in this dissertation, affect caters to a more "grounded" epistemology which accesses the experiential body. Joy Sather-Wagstaff argues that affect "is our ever-changing capacity or potential for a range of sensory responses through interactions with others as well as landscapes, the built environment or other material cultural and the intangibles of memory work" (18). She goes on to say that "[a]ffect is that which is experienced through the body and in non-conscious (as a capacity for being in the world) yet is not ever fully separable...from the cognitive" (18). This may translate affect into feelings or emotion, these elements of "body language"; however, there are debates over whether affect is an emotion or whether it is separate, often argued as prior, and existing purely as a "force" (of sorts) rather than emotional interpretive response to force. For now, I privilege feeling and emotion as having the *potential* to recognize affect and to proliferate affect—particularly hauntings. I'm focused on the relationship, the "responses through interactions."

Ben Highmore also remarks on affect's potential to realize a more 'grounded' bodily awareness as he comments on "the ultra-abstractions of advanced textualism," a method "criticized precisely for its bloodlessness...*The* body, it seemed, was all too often to be found in the body of the text" (119). Highmore reconnects *text with the body* while emphasizing the "sticky entanglements" between "substances and feelings," between "matter and affect," arguing that these events don't need to necessarily be "untangled (the

scholarly and bureaucratic business of sorting categories and filing phenomena),” but appreciated as a “critically entangled contact with affective experience” (119). I will leave this space partially “entangled,” but point to the fact that while Highmore correctly confronts the way that western knowledge structures haunt its inheritors with the need to over-differentiate and ‘categorize’ and ‘file’ in a way which has separated humans from bodies and bodies from text, the ghosts of cultural displacement and textual simulacrum yet remain. These *do* require a *type* of sorting precisely because such bodies *feel displaced*; a type of recognition and ordering is needed to understand the affective intentionality of text to body and vice versa. Such a process highlights the relationship between cultural texts and human bodies in a way which demands a more relational awareness. This, in turn, privileges the body to realize its role as the *affective* human ‘epicenter’ which informs and participates and, potentially, interrupts hegemonic structures.

The 2007 first print of Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler’s *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* did not include “affect” as a keyword. Notably, and indicative of the recent “affective turn,” their 2014 second addition did, thus revealing affect’s influence upon American Studies discussions. Ann Cvetkovich notes how affect has intersected with postmodern scholars’ (such as Michael Foucault) arguments regarding social subjectivity and categories of cultural power structures to critique “binary oppositions between reason and emotion and the reversal of hierarchies that subordinate emotion to reason as part of a mind/body split often associated with...René Descartes” (13). Cvetkovich also notes that, “[i]n the field of American studies,” discussions

regarding “sentimentality, sensationalism, sympathy, melodrama, and the gothic” have “shown how cultural genres, especially fiction produce social effect through mobilizing feeling (14). Such American Studies discussions have also entered into “trauma and cultural memory” in regard to “slavery, genocide, and colonialism,” utilizing both psychoanalytic categories (mourning, melancholy, etc.) and diverging from such categories “of affect and trauma in favor of vernacular vocabularies of affect in indigenous, diasporic, and queer cultures” (15). Affect’s potential to break down historical either/or epistemologies, to realize the power of fiction, and to beneficially intersect with indigenous cultures which privilege bodily and linguistic affectivity highlights why I’m using it in a discussion that better realizes the affective interaction between human bodies and textual bodies. Additionally, in the recently published *Affective Societies* (2019), edited by Jan Slaby and Christian von Scheve, Anne Fleig notes that there yet remains a “dearth of research on the relations between and within affect and language (180). Affect theory fits well within American Studies interdisciplinary methodology, but also furthers studies on how power in narratives translates onto/from material bodies. Furthermore, “haunting” provides a fantastic conduit for such a study because of haunting’s nebulous, yet *affective*, power. But to help clarify the relationship between textual and bodily affectivity, it is necessary to discuss “intent.”

Many “post-” theorists and scholars of marginalization—Vizenor, for example—manipulate or create new “text” to properly conceive the affective relationship between text and bodies and how social power structures attempt to *control* this braided

relationship through *intent*. Here, the “intentionality” of phenomenology comes into play. As David Woodruff Smith notes, Edmund Husserl’s use of intentionality dealt with the “directedness of experience toward things in the world, the property of consciousness that is a consciousness of or about something” (Smith, “Phenomenology”). While text is no doubt dependent upon the receptive/affective potential of its recipient, it also has a “consciousness” of sorts that is imbued with “intent.” Text is “possessed,” if you will. A spectral-textual discussion deals with the fitting of inten(t)ed essence into textual/linguistic bodies, the fitting of text and textual essence into human bodies, and the affectivity between the two. While I don’t know of a way to precisely “measure” the way text affects the human body, Silko and Long Soldier do provide “evidence.” The power of the “text” is revealed in the way these authors illustrate how indigenous bodies have been harmed by cultural narratives and then, in turn, utilize “re-intented,” *realigned* text to create an awareness of such displacements and even to heal these bodies. Examining these texts under a spectral lens attuned to the affective relationship between cultural texts and bodies forwards intersecting American studies discussions regarding historical narratives and marginalized bodies in ways which seriously challenge modernistic dualities while emphasizing how such indigenous authors express and ‘live through’ historical trauma via a communication and intentional utilization of spectro-textuality.

### Whereas

Layli Long Soldier’s *Whereas* provides a haunting, often hauntingly beautiful, use of spectro-textuality to realize and correct narrative hauntings in America’s settle colonial history. The affective and haunting relationships used within her work, from bodies-to-

texts and texts-to-bodies, instigate a reflexive awareness of cultural power structures within language and emphasize how Long Soldier accesses both an Oglala Lakota spectro-textual awareness and the spectro-textualities often naturally inherent in Anglo poetics to begin “untangling” (referencing Highmore—and anticipating Silko) the hauntings of a colonial textuality. Long Soldier “haunts back” via a type of spectro-textual affectivity to express *and* navigate the traumatic and “tangled” issue of textual and bodily colonialization. As Krista Tippet has noted, Long Soldier’s “award-winning first book of poetry, *Whereas*, is a response to the U.S. government’s official apology to Native peoples in 2009, which was done so quietly, with no ceremony, that it was practically a secret” (Tippet, “Layli Long Soldier”). Secrets, I would say, make for strange apologies. As Sarah Dowling has noted, “while purporting to apologize...the apology instead works to rationalize and justify US settler colonialism” (164). Its lack of overt delivery enters into the realm of *intent* and contributes to the continuance of indigenous erasure. Text and intentions interact here on a misaligned plane to create a *haunting*. This haunting misalignment of text and material history inspires Long Soldier to direct her response “to the Apology’s delivery, as well as the language, crafting, and arrangement of the written document” (57). *Whereas* offers a two-part play: Part I THESE BEING THE CONCERNS and Part II WHEREAS—with this second section further broken down into (1) Whereas Statements, (2) Resolutions, and (3) Disclaimer. Long Soldier’s goal is to call out and correct the intention behind the structure, “language”, and “delivery” of the “Apology”. The following sections study Long

Soldier's from diverging points of view to better clarify the inescapable interactivity of human bodies and textual bodies.

### The Affective Body

The haunted human body inspires Long Soldier's text. "Let them eat grass," as Long Soldier recounts in "38," is the phrase spoken by the "trader named Andrew Myrick... famous for his refusal to provide credit to Dakota a people by saying, 'If they are hungry, let them eat grass.'" (53). This was just prior to the 1862 Sioux Uprising. It was this same Myrick, Long Soldier remarks, who was "one of the first to be executed by the Dakota" during the Sioux Uprising and "When Myrick's body was found, / his mouth was stuffed with grass" (6). Grass, mouth, and text intersect. But the real haunting bodies are the starving Lakota referenced earlier in the poem:

Without money, store credit, or rights to hunt beyond their ten-mile tract of land, Dakota people began to starve.

The Dakota people were starving.

The Dakota people starved. (51)

The anaphoric textual play reverberates in the senses, affecting the body and mind through the ghostly echoes—the repetition—of the "starved." But, more to my point here, in Long Soldier's view, these starving bodies had an affectivity: they relayed/expressed the effects of cultural oppression and then inspired, or effected, a revolt, they inspired the "Uprising" (the "rising up" of depressed or fallen bodies). The affected/affective human body is an important device because it is the foundation of human experience. And this affective potential therefore presents a conduit for

individual and cultural hauntings. Attention to the affectual human body is also important because bodily awareness, or bodily text within English language text, is always already present, but has been terribly neglected within the Anglo modernistic, post-Enlightenment epistemology which has carried over into contemporary scholarship, as noted by Highmore earlier. However, some expressive traditions, poetry especially, have maintained an affective body awareness, and Long Soldier takes advantage of this Anglo-centric expression to politicize historical and narrative cultural negligence.

Again, in “Dilate,” (35) Long Soldier privileges the body to create an “epistemic” awareness of bodies while expressing her repeating consideration of motherhood and the motherbody. “Dilate” is about bodies at birth and first memories and plays on both the dilating of cervix and of a newborn whose “pupils dilate/as black vernal suns slip...into equinox” (35). In the second section of the poem, Long Solider molds the aesthetic textual body to accent the motherbody.

*All is experienced*

*throu*

*g*

*h*

*the*

*body*

Somebody told me. (35)

As the pregnant body belly is outlined on the page, she interrupts strict and divisive aesthetic abstractions (especially apparent within legal language) to reconnect the written

expression with the origin in the body, to more closely resemble the “embodied” experience. Again, it is the body which comes first in Long Soldier’s estimation and she utilizes the “delivery”—the shape on the page—to reconnect a disjointed legalspeak to that affective body which is most important.

### Textobody

The haunted textual body inspires Long Soldier’s text. And perhaps most obviously in aesthetic form and semiotic intentionality. As Anne Fleig has recently noted (emphasizing Highmore’s concerns), “[w]riting in the making is difficult to analyze, and literary critics tend to deal with a written text without interrogating its bodily dimensions” (179). Although Fleig does note the more recent attention to the text/body relationship within feminist and queer scholarship, I would add that Long Soldier perpetuates a Native American tradition that has interrogated text-to-body affectivity that is not only indigenous specific (as will be more apparent within Silko), but that has participated in western forms since at least William Apes’ (Pequot) *The Son of the Forest* (1831) which thoroughly considered the term “Indian.” Here, Long Soldier’s most obvious aesthetic critique assumes an intentionally mimetic stance to draw out the misalignments of intentionality within the 2009 Congressional Apology. She takes aim at this nearly “secret” “Apology” and assimilates—sometimes personalizing, sometimes indigenizing—the textual body in a way which realizes the neglect *within* the text—its hollowness—to then re-imbue, to inspire the essence missing in the Apology. This is a spectro-textual dance. Long Solider recounts: “On Saturday, December 19, 2009, US President Barack Obama signed the Congressional Resolution of Apology to

Native Americans” (57). She notes that “[n]o tribal leaders or official representatives were invited to witness and receive the Apology on behalf of tribal nations,” and that the president “never read the Apology aloud” (57). Although Senator Sam Brownback read the Apology “five months later,” only “five tribal leaders” were present—out of “[m]ore than 560 federally recognized tribes in the US” (57). Words connect bodies; bodies need to be present to witness (to be affected by) the apology. Also, interestingly, and hauntingly (historically) fitting, the “Apology was then folded into a larger, unrelated piece of legislation called the 2010 Defense Appropriations Act” (57). The shape and form of the text matters and the “secret” *burial* within a Defense Bill could not be more “related”—considering the oppression of a peoples due to America’s capitalist military industrial complex which began with the “taming” of the indigenous West. Such a burial reveals a continuous *spectralization* of indigenous bodies *via textuality*.

Long Solider then realizes (“makes real”) her intent to confront the haunting/haunted nature of this text: “My response is directed to the Apology’s delivery as well as the language, crafting, and arrangement of the written document” (57). And to ward against the lack of presence within this text—the overwhelming simulation of apology, but absence of presence—Long Solider solidifies herself:

I am a citizen of the United States and an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, meaning I am a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation—and in this dual citizenship, I must work, I must eat, I must art, I must mother, I must friend, I must listen, I must observe, constantly I must live. (57)

Notably, text, body, and survivance interact in this negotiation of “dual-citizenship,” in this attempt to resubstantialize self and culture from language and law that threatens to spectralize. And although text obviously “affects first”—as Long Soldier is haunted by

the hollowness of a text that is supposedly structure for truth—Long Solider again utilizes the phenomenological aspect—work, eat, art, mother, listen, etc.—to draw out and contend with the way textual bodies have affected human bodies.

The aesthetic shape, the “delivery,” is also emphasized in poems such as “Dilate,” previously mentioned (and illustrated), and in “Three.” “Three” is a poem which takes the shape of a square. “This is how you see me the space in which to place me,” forms the top line of the square (8). These ideas of seeing, placing, you, and me fill the statements on the other three sides—but in different orders and various spacing—to create an awareness of textual placement, containment, and form regarding cultural assumptions. As Crystal Alberts notes, “deceptively simple, the work invokes the boundaries of a reservation,” which “implies the destruction of Indigenous cultures through the emptiness *between* the lines” (118). Additionally, in Resolution (5), “*I express commitment to reveal in a text the shape of its pounding,*” Long Solider stuffs the outline of a hammer with appropriated resolution text (93, original). This text follows one of the statements in the apology that focused on “regretfortheramificationsofformerwrongs,” and spoke about “abrighterfuture” of reconciliation for “allpeopleofthisland” (93). I interpret the hammer as both destroying the shell of hollowness within an apology that has no substance and reminding the reader of the *intent* behind the word, the phrase, the text: text is ‘shaped’ by “its pounding.” And Long Solider ‘re-shapes’ the text via aesthetic form to both critique and rebuild the Apology.

In the semiotic sense, regarding the meaning or intention within words, Long Soldier obviously interrogates the term “whereas”, but some of her most powerful commentary arrives with the consideration of Lakota words and *Lakota absence*. And this particular aspect of indigenous language reclamation interacts with Sarah Dowling’s argument’s regarding how “settler monolingualism” operates as a means of “managing difference” which “subordinates other languages, making them minor, particular, foreign, heritage, or cultural” (4). Dowling’s use of “translingual” has some relevance here, defined as term “to move away from the monolingual/multilingual binary and to recognize a range of competencies across, as well as within, languages” (5). But even closer to Long Soldier’s performance, “[t]ranslingual practice does not simply flout established norms and dominant institutions,” notes Dowling, but “typically describes critical, oppositional, and survival practices” (5). Poetics in particular are important to Dowling because of “its history of being written across and between languages. Poetry’s capacity for extreme forms of juxtaposition and parataxis means that the sharp contestations between the monolingual paradigm and the linguistic gestures that transgress it are conveyed with a particular vividness in poetry” (5).

Interestingly, Long Soldier utilizes poetry—and sometime the translingual—as a ‘transcultural’ tool that realizes the monolingual (and sometimes “multilingual,” in Dowling’s estimation) damage of America’s settler colonialism. Here, text (I’m stretching “text” more here, conflating a bit with generalized linguistic textuality) haunts Long Solider because of an absent or fragmented cultural language. Referencing “Dilate” again:

Whereas her birth signaled the responsibility as mother to teach what it is to be Lakota.” And the body reacts: “Signaled panic, blood rush my embarrassment.” And, again, language: “What did I know of our language but pieces?” (75)

Long Soldier’s reorganization of the congressional “Whereas...” statements takes the authoritative, repetitive textuality of pseudo-apology legislation and replaces the empty intent of this hollow apology with the ‘haunting essence’ of the displaced colonized body/culture/language. This anaphoric, mimetic use of “Whereas” is another example of “haunting back,” but it is here paired with poetry to specifically address historical trauma in the shape of the absent cultural language.

This mourning for a lacking cultural language is powerfully reproduced in Long Soldier’s “Wahpanica”—for me, one of her most striking poems. In this interesting “translingual” event, the Lakota word “wahpanica” is utilized as perhaps the most applicable term, ironically, for cultural linguistic alienation.

A sweeping chill my stained mouth just oil at the surface comma because I feel wahpanica I feel alone. But this is a spill-over translation for how I cannot speak my mind, comma the meta-phrasal ache of being *language poor*. (44, original)

“*Language poor*.” A stunningly haunted phrase. As Long Soldier laments, “wahpanica” relates to a deep cultural confusion and what it means to be “*poor*”—but in an extreme sense: “*to be destitute to have nothing of one’s own*” (44, original). And not just in missing a cultural heritage, but an alienation from human experience itself, which is why Long Solider taps into the phenomenological—“my stained mouth”—in this attempt at expressing a soul-crushing alienation.

Additionally, in “Ĥe Sápa” Long Solider utilizes Lakota “text” (terminology) to crucially reestablish a Lakota relationship with the Black Hills of South Dakota. She

says, “Remember. Ħe Sápa is not a black hill, not Pahá Sapá, by any name you call it” (6). While the human body provides the most significant “epistemic” affectual device in *Whereas*, this poem is, significantly, Long Soldier’s opening poem, and expresses a connection to a place-based identity, to what Sharon Holm has termed a “geosacred” or “geomythic” world view (243). Even as I emphasize the human body in Long Soldier’s work, it is important to realize the central importance of the land in the Lakota tradition. The fact that this poem is Long Soldier’s opening piece reiterates this reality.

Additionally, I am again drawn to “38” as a powerfully haunting text, and this prose poem is one of her strongest, acting as a spectro-textual exclamation mark that conjures a historical haunting to preface her “Whereas” statements. “38” begins: “Here, the sentence will be respected” (49). This signals a direct awareness of textual structure alongside poignant intent. Long Solider mocks the distrust of poetry while simultaneously challenges (even as she capitalizes on) the concrete certainty of textual legal-speak. This ‘poem’ includes such phrases as “I do not consider this a ‘creative piece’,” and “historical events will not be dramatized for an ‘interesting’ read...I feel most responsible to the orderly sentence” (49). Perhaps laughably serious (in a trickster sense), Long Soldier assumes the more rigid and orderly structure to get a point across, affecting an Anglo simulation, to shrug off “imagination” or “fiction” (her words) within this undeniable textual structure (49). She appropriates this textual style to effect a deadly serious change within the reader:

When settlers and traders were killed during the Sioux Uprising, one of the first to be executed by the Dakota was Andrew Myrick.

When Myrick’s body was found,

his mouth was stuffed with  
grass.

I am inclined to call this act by the Dakota warriors a poem.

There's irony in their poem.

There was no text.

*"Real" poems do not "really" require words.*

I have italicized the previous sentence to indicate inner dialogue, a revealing moment.

But, on second thought, the words "let them eat grass" click the gears of the poem into place. (53, original)

I have tried to leave the formatting in this segment close to the original, but what's at stake here is, again, the necessity of text. Long Solider is haunted by the need to tell the story and how the text, language, is necessary to "click" the intentionality of the moment "into place." Of course, the *text* is hauntingly crucial here because the "38" were the 38 Lakota "hanged" during the same week that President Lincoln performed a definitively spectro-textual act in the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation (49).

### The Braided Reality

However, even as I switch stances to argue that the 'text comes first' to accent textual affectivity, I cannot escape the affective/affecting hauntings of the body—from grass in the mouth to starved bodies to the final lines of "38":

And let the body swing.

From the platform.

Out

to the grasses. (53)

Subtly, the affective body is interwoven with the textual intent of an event relayed “as straightforward and plainly stated fact” to draw attention to the interaction of the textual and physical body, illuminating the negligence of certain textual bodies and *the impossibility of disregarding the affective nature of both text and physical body* (51).

I am forced argue this is a “both/and,” instance, rather than a first/second, “either/or” reality. Dowling argues that Long Soldier’s “poetic analysis of the apology” differs from “theorist’s and activists’ better-known critiques” in her “attentiveness to language—to structures of address, to form and rhetoric, and to English, the language in which the apologies were delivered” (152). While I agree with Dowling’s statement, Long Soldier would not succeed without the body’s affectivity within her text.

Anne Fleig, referencing “the Spinozan/Deleuzian branch of affect theory,” calls this a “dual” action, “formative of and transformative for the writer,” and operating as the “dynamic relationship between bodies, including the interweaving of bodily memories, words, and worlds” (179). Furthermore, Fleig explains that “[b]ecause of the bodily dimension of both speaking and writing, and their dialogic relationship in what literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1981b) calls a ‘speech situation,’ this process of transformation is reciprocal” (180). As Bakhtin argued, “language is a social phenomenon that has no ‘author.’ Rather, it unfolds in a dialogic manner between the writer’s body and the written text” (180). Long Soldier reinforces this point in one of the penultimate statements of her text, at the beginning of her “Whereas” statements:

WHEREAS when offered an apology I watch each movement the shoulders  
high or folding, tilt of the head both eyes down or straight through  
me, I listen for cracks in knuckles or in the word choice, what is it

that I want? To feel and mind you I feel from the senses—I read

each muscle, I ask the strength of the gesture to move like a poem. (57,  
original)

Long Soldier calls out the absence which haunts the textual apology. She asks: where is the intent that I know by watching the (con)text of the body? And perhaps she even feels the absence of presence within the *written* text on the page when she later remarks, “Pages are cavernous places, white at entrance, black in absorption. / Echo.” (61).

Nevertheless, Long Soldier returns to the affective power of textuality: “If I’m transformed by language, I am often / crouched in footnote or blazing in title. / Where in the body do I begin;”—and the bodily connection (57). The misaligned intentionality between text(s) and bodies haunts Long Soldier and inspires this re-textualization.

It is fun discussion: thinking about whether text or body ‘comes first’. Do we not need a body from which to express ourselves? Yet how can we self-reflect without the mirror that is language, the expressive form that composites our reality and locates our identity within that reality? Of course, and in accordance with current affect theory, this is not an either/or event—or a stop/start motion with solid impermeable bodies between boundaries—or, equally important, a hierarchy of power with absolute control and total submission. My ‘either/or’ exercise with Long Soldier’s affective bodies and affective language hopefully breaks down some of the body/text interaction while accenting the intimate, *inescapable relationship* of text and body. The absence—or misalignment—of one or/with the other creates a haunting. Perhaps the body does come first, but it is obvious that Long Soldier recognizes how text (language) is necessary to “click the gears” of bodily experience “into place.” An adjusted spectral lens—attuned to the

specters behind, within, and beyond the text—helps delineate what’s at stake here. The term “spectro-textuality” calls to mind the ‘text behind/between the text’—the subtext, yes, but also the context of intention and how the intention of the text affects indigenous bodies. Long Soldier’s “text” is both haunted and haunting; she confronts the ghosts of historical neglect and cultural displacement while also utilizing such specters to “haunt back,” to speak back to power, to enact her survivance.

But the multiple uses of the spectral here also illuminates how Long Soldier’s textual production is both mirroring and specifically “re-mirroring” in a way which not only deconstructs, but reconstructs. This is essential to a survival beyond mere resistance, to a survivance. She utilizes English textual forms (and occasionally Lakota) to realize displacements and to *re-place*, and ultimately: to *recreate*. This can also be called a “re-membling”—as opposed to dismembering a body. My point in drawing attention to the haunting within Long Soldier’s text is that, while she relates to her ancestral past and heritage, she also ‘actively presents/ce’ by moving forward. Spectro-textual, in this sense, refers not merely to the past, but the potential, the “becoming” nature of expressive forms. This relates to Gerald Vizenor’s comment that “my poetic images create a sense of survivance not victimry, a signature of natural reason” (*Native Liberty* 6). While Vizenor is here emphasizing indigenous world views and epistemology—“natural reason”—there is an intersection with western (and eastern, as Vizenor utilizes Haiku) poetry. But the English word “poetry” stems partially from the Greek “poiesis”: “The process of making; production, creation...” (OED). This is, of course, at odds with the more traditional (western) Aristotelian perception of poetry as

mimesis, but this potential importantly reiterates the “dual” affectivity of writing as discussed by Fleig (and Bakhtin). Long Soldier’s own comments regarding poetry reflect on the organic, exploratory, and non-constraining aspects of this process:

Poetry allows an openness, a flexibility...It allows me, and it allows the reader to travel in a way that is not a straight line, you know: beginning to end. Sometimes we can...circle around. I find this sort of circular path that’s very beautiful to me. (“Layli Long Soldier”)

Long Solider accesses the potential within word-crafting and how this process of creation and meaning making has the potential to create via a less rigid, circular system. This capacity allows her the flexibility to challenge simulated boundaries and to re-align textual and bodily hauntings. But is Long Solider utilizing Lakota version of haunting or Anglo-oriented perceptions?

I think this question is as difficult as separating exactly when Long Solider accesses western expressive traditions v. indigenous methodologies. Long Solider clearly attempts to realize a Lakota cultural body/ontology (most apparent in “Dilate” and “Wahpanica”), while occasionally *veers* or *slides* more fully into a Lakota world view in poems like “Ĥe Sápa.” In my opinion, Long Soldier’s work does not allow for a clear distinction between cultural uses of text and specters. Or, rather, a strict separation of spectral usage is less important than how she accesses spectro-textuality, with reference to Saldivar’s question, as an “affective” and “epistemic” subaltern expression—which yet holds subaltern specific (Lakota) cultural ideals. The oppressed must deal with haunting because they have felt the effects of spectralization; haunting must consider bodies because the human body is the repository of haunting—of displacement. And the haunted human bodies and textual bodies are most important to Long Solider. *Whereas*

is cognizant/performs cognizance of spectro-textuality, of the relationship between “physical” and “textual” bodies—through poiesis, a realized Anglo tradition, and through a privileging of indigenous (and Lakota specific) storytelling methodology—to confront and recreate the American textual tradition while simultaneously realizing haunting and realigning the Lakota body. This recreation re-aligns historical and legislative texts with the bodily realities of settler colonial hegemony. However, to better realize the subaltern’s process of recreating and “re-membering” out of the sphere of haunting—and through more obviously indigenous-specific practices—I now turn to Leslie Marmon Silko’s classic *Ceremony*.

### *Ceremony and the Sickness of Separation*

I find myself rereading Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* every several years. Every reading has affected me strongly—and in different ways. I’m attracted to *Ceremony* firstly because of the richness of its story, but also due to the brilliant and multifaceted colonial critique Silko offers within the text. During the process of thinking about spectrality and the West/post-West, I realized that there was no way that I *could not* include Silko’s piece in my discussions—even if the text may be worn thin by forty years of intense critique. Her protagonist Tayo is so definitively *afflicted by spectralization* that it demands scrutiny under a spectral lens, with these recent “spectral” concerns, and within the changing landscapes of Western, American, and Native American studies. As a piece that is claimed by both the Native American *and* American academy, and which takes place in the regional West, it should naturally be a concern to postwestern scholars, but the way that Silko portrays cultural harms and healing, while interacting with

definitive aspects of the Western narrative, means that the story provides an essential commentary on (W)estern (both western *and* Western genre) settler colonialism from an indigenous point of view. And, more specific to this chapter's thesis, the often haunting and "tangled" relationship between textual and physical bodies is absolutely central to Silko's *ceremony*, a process which 'storytells' to realize Tayo's transition into "disentanglement."

While I want to remain cognizant of the spectro-textual slant that accesses the intent in textuality juxtaposed against bodily (indigenous) experience and how bodies affect Silko's text, I will also be emphasizing how Silko utilizes an indigenous, or Laguna Pueblo, "transphysical" awareness as an essential aspect in Tayo's "transpersonal" healing. This discussion will hopefully provide more insights into what is at stake with haunting, text, and the spectro-textual relationship because, from the outset of *Ceremony*, Silko weaves a tale of spectro-textual layering that has everything to do with her protagonist's disease and his consequent path to healing. "Spectro-linguistic" might be a better fit here as Silko privileges the oral tradition, but I appreciate the "form" aspect of "textual" as I continue to explore the "intent v. cultural form" relationship—and how forms (read: word bodies, narrative bodies, human bodies) are haunted by mis-aligned intents. Robert M. Nelson recognizes this sometimes difficult boundary between oral and textual traditions: "*Ceremony* is a novel, created to function as a print text, albeit perhaps a print text 'about,' *inter alia*, oral performance; if so, the text is theoretically a product of, and thus a reflection of, both Native American oral and Western written literary and cultural traditions" (3). Maintaining "text" in my terminology helps 'ground' this

exploration of *expression* within “forms” while also, hopefully, keeping in mind the fact that Silko’s story affects a ‘ceremony’ via written text, and does so via a cross-cultural approach.

Despite the decades of critique and discourse, a quick search of *Ceremony* in humanities databases reveals its continued vibrancy as important cultural text that is being accessed for any number of “eco-” and Anthropocene considerations, weighed against continuous debates regarding native sovereignty, and even utilized within trans-national and “world literature” arguments. As noted by Allan R. Chavkin, Silko’s *Ceremony* originally helped push the burgeoning Native American Renaissance (as coined by Kenneth Lincoln) of the 1970’s into American literary consciousness. *Ceremony* “received the greatest critical acclaim” of the indigenous-minded texts of this era and was not only quickly canonized but remains “one of the most frequently taught contemporary novels in higher education” (3, 4). Chavkin notes that early reviews highlighted the text cross-cultural synergy, its “unique blending of the European narrative tradition with American Indian storytelling” with “cross-cultural” sensibilities (3). However, while the text may have utilized both Anglo and Native narrative techniques, Silko’s interruption of Anglo modernism’s binary epistemological structure draws from Laguna Pueblo epistemology/ontology and continues to be a source of appreciation by scholars “post-ing” western culture’s manner of ordering the world.

In his chapter “The Native American Renaissance,” in Steven Frye’s recently published anthology, *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American West*, Nicholas Monk features Silko’s *Ceremony*. Monk argues that *Ceremony* “is illustrative

and exemplary of a new kind of literary response in Native American Writers of the West” that “sets out a subtle agenda for resistance and change that is rooted firmly and wholly in the native cultural practices of the American West and, most importantly, in the land” (137). I’d argue that it is a little late to be speaking about anything “new” regarding the indigenous response—considering the age of Silko’s text, keeping in mind other important texts such as D’arcy McNickle’s (Cree Metis/Salish Kootenai) *The Surrounded* (1936), or Apes’ writings from a century earlier. However, Native American expressions *do* need to be further included within a slow-moving Western (and American Studies) scholarship—a scholarship often lassoed by its own ties to the exceptionalist ideology within America’s most intimate nation-building narrative.

Monk’s use of *Ceremony* exemplifies the text’s evergreen vitality within ongoing academic and cultural discussions. Monk emphasizes how the text’s “resistance” and call for “change” counters Western, “or Eurocentric, capitalist modernity” with its exploitation of the West’s mineral resources and how *Ceremony* “is rooted firmly and wholly in the native cultural practices of the American West and, most importantly, in the land” (137). Equally, “West” and “Western” also double as the ‘Western genre’, and Monk references western scholar Richard Slotkin to reiterate how “the modern and the ‘pre-modern’...confront each other on this ground in a variety of ways—indeed, the myths needed to sustain an ever-westward movement require such a confrontation” (138). This Western duel, Monk argues, involves not only an indigenous ‘re-appreciation’ of the western landscape, but also pertains to a type of storytelling that counters Aristotelian mimesis and Cartesian dualities. Similar to my work, Monk utilizes phenomenology as a

method to realize the way indigenous authors interrupt the subject/object divide, thus building a “bridge” between western binaries (very reminiscent of Gloria Anzaldua’s indigenous, feminist, poetic work and theory), “between idealism” and “empiricism” (146). Monk delineates an experiential, performative aspect of Silko’s text which makes “the audience . . . part of a process that engages an entire listening/reading community” while, simultaneously, the novel “*performs* the ceremony of the title” (148, original). “In this moment,” explains Monk, “literature is translated from a condition that could be characterized as passive (for the reader) and merely didactic (for the writer) to a condition approaching activism” (148).

I appreciate Monk’s argument here, and aspects of this ‘textual performance’ align with my argument regarding an “active presence” (Vizenor’s phrase) within Silko’s linguistic textuality, as well as intersecting aspects of the “dual” affectivities of text as previously discussed. His argument adds nuance to body/text affectivity discussions by putting a finer edge on exactly how cultural texts may be performed (read: *intended*) in a way which interrupts western civilization’s ideology of separation. However, while Monk highlights the centrality of “the land” in *Ceremony*’s ceremonial eco-consciousness, because these stories yet centralize the haunted human body as the primary refractor of an “out of joint” state, the indigenous body must *firstly* be correctly appreciated. The affective potential of the human body forwards the connectivity of such stories—even in geosacred cultures, though the *relationship* with the land is omnipresent. Long Soldier and Silko show that an ‘indigenous-minded’ awareness of bodily affectivity is central to creating “resistance” and “change.” “Where in the body do I begin;” notes

Long Soldier—notably, with no question mark. Like Long Solider, Silko is haunted by misaligned text and haunted bodies. Understanding the affective interaction of text and body creates an awareness of Tayo’s *transpersonal* journey (*Ceremony*’s protagonist)—a realized survivance beyond the Western’s white, male, civilizing mission—in a manner which takes the concept of “spectral” beyond merely a deconstructive “haunting” and into the potentiality of “healing.” But Silko achieves this not merely through the realized haunted subaltern text/body, but with an integration of Laguna Pueblo belief systems. Bodily affectivity is an essential component to *Ceremony*’s effectiveness because it is central to conveying an “epistemological” point, to again reference Saldivar’s earlier concerns regarding subaltern expressions. And I emphasize how Silko’s spectral-textual realization—which derives predominantly from a Laguna Pueblo epistemology/ontology—helps realize the spectral as not merely *haunting* both the word body and the human body, but, in a more positive sense, can, through proper intent, *align* the text body and human body to create a balance between intent and braided bodies.

### Tangled Bodies, Tangled Texts

In Silko’s *Ceremony*, Tayo is introduced as a mixed-blood, white/Laguna Pueblo WWII veteran who has returned home to the southwest, but remains haunted by a horrific, unclearly delineated reality. Something is not right with Tayo, and his “out of joint” nature represents not only his own trials as a spectralized body, but serves as a metaphor for colonial and settler colonial structure as a whole, or, as Saldivar would say, the “coloniality of power.” And as Silko’s story unfolds, she outlines the particularly damaging aspects of this (W)estern coloniality. “Tayo didn’t sleep well that night,”

comments the narrator, signaling the protagonist's difficulties in discerning consciousness from unconsciousness, the border between sleep, dreams, and the waking world (5). "Memories were *tangled* with the present, *tangled* up like colored threads," continues Silko, hounding metaphysical borders via a very 'tangible' metaphor (6, my emphasis). The word "tangle" is repeated in different forms during this introduction, like the anaphoric play of poetic repetition, to drive—or "hammer" (remembering Long Soldier's repetition *and* aesthetics)—home Tayo's state of bodily/spiritual alienation.

Tayo was caught in-between worlds of consciousness and temporal periods, displaced by the violence of war, plagued by the guilt regarding the death of his cousin Rocky during the war, and, more broadly, being entirely haunted by the material and narrated settler colonial displacement that left him spectralized, displaced from himself and Pueblo Laguna culture. While I'm emphasizing the entanglements of the human/textual, the material/spiritual, and the individual/communal elements, it is also important to understand how Laguna culture, as Nelson notes, was discombobulated when Laguna origin stories—which *locate* the individual within these dualities—"became separated from the original cultural contexts and purposes when they got rounded up during the frantic turn-of-the-century period of 'salvage ethnography and corralled in foreign, inaccessible places'" (4). Drawing from anthropology and the social sciences, Nelson argues that Silko represents some of these stories and "materials" in an act of "repatriation," "like Skeleton-Fixer in the old stories, Silko gathers those bones collected by the ethnographers and puts them back to their original use" (4). This very spectral analogy/story is further appropriate within my "spectro-textual" discussion of

“entanglements” because it allows a re-creation, a “re-membering,” as I’ve offered, “to serve as backbone for a Laguna story about Laguna life in Laguna country” (4).

Ethnography—as a western “epistemological text”—alienated the Laguna body. Silko takes those specters and places them within Tayo—in an entangled manner—to first realize and express this “out of joint” haunting, and then to begin a textual reclamation project that realigns the text with the indigenous body.

Tayo’s “disease” is expressed in visceral bodily aspects. However, because of the displacement, Silko is forced to equally utilize ephemeral terminology:

for a long time he had been white smoke. He did not realize that until he left the hospital, because white smoke had no consciousness of itself. It faded into the white world of their bed sheets and walls; it was sucked away by the words of doctors who tried to talk to the invisible scattered smoke. (13)

Silko’s portrayal of Tayo is spectral. And it is conveyed through a body-awareness, but is linked to “consciousness”—as if consciousness is to the body what, as I’ve argued, intent is to text. And the hospital location is pivotal: it is to the body what the storyteller is to the text as it deals with aligned and misaligned bodies. And while western doctors recognize that ‘something’ is wrong with Tayo—because of his overt bodily sickness—their “medicine” does not work. It is as if they are working through an incorrect lens or world view: “They saw his outline but they did not realize it was hollow inside” (13). Silko is critiquing western metaphysics (or lack thereof) and the privileging of a strict materialism and moral individualism over a realized material/spiritual and personal/communal relationality. This is equally an epistemological (boundary) problem and pertains to an indigenous response to “the Cartesian separation of mind from body and body from environment,” as Monk delineates (137). In this way, when Tayo

received “their medicine,” it “drained memory out of his thin arms and replaced it with a twilight cloud behind his eyes” (14). This is not the right medicine because the alignment of the body depends upon consciousness.

Tayo’s recollection of the Bataan Death March in these opening pages helps frame the trauma that has led to his disease while also emphasizing the spectro-textual relationship between storytelling and physical bodies. During this “Death” March, the rain in the Pacific Islands is incessant, “choking their lungs as they marched” (10). Tayo, an unnamed “corporal,” and a badly injured Rocky have been captured by the Japanese and Tayo and the corporal carry Rocky’s body on a blanket, struggling through the monsoon-like conditions. Tayo’s anger toward the rain finally reaches a breaking point when he becomes aware of a “flash food...he could smell the foaming flood water stagnant and ripe with the rotting debris it carried past each village, sucking up their sewage, their waste, the dead animals” (11). Although Tayo tried to “hold it back,” the corporal falls to the ground. The blanket-as-stretcher carrying Rocky slips from his hands, and Tayo unleashes his curse upon the rain: “Goddamn, goddamn!” (11) At this point, Silko interjects textually, perhaps abruptly interrupting the linearity of the tale (although her narrative transitions have already affected dream-like slippages), with the Laguna story of Iktoa’o’ya (Reed Woman) and Corn Woman. Corn Woman scolds the seemingly lazy Reed Woman (affiliated with, bringer of rain) and, consequently, the lands dry up. This signals Silko’s use of traditional stories to help form part of the “backbone,” as Nelson has argued, of the story (4, 21, 22).

However, despite the linear, material interruption on the pages, the quiet synchronicity linking Tayo's perceived misdeed and the historical tribal tale alleviates the "abruptness" of the narrative interjection; it feels somehow appropriate, surfacing between the lines of Tayo's story like a warm and intimate, voyeuristic spirit, present to the reader, but juxtaposed upon an unaware Tayo. In this spectro-textual play, Silko imbues Tayo's story with a sense/spirit of the larger Laguna story, a story which relates to Tayo's own actions, but which exists outside of his "conscious" awareness for the time being. Tayo is living this Laguna story—though it has gone before and will come after—but the greatest significance is his severed connection to the story, resulting in the haunting entanglement of voices and languages and realities which compose his spiritual disease.

I say "spiritual disease" but, again, it is easy to become confused using the either/or distinctions inherent within English language and the modernist Anglo tradition. Such rigid borders are thoroughly interrupted during the telling of Tayo's war experience—as illustrated in the repeated episodes of *vomiting* where Tayo's body attempts to release the psycho/emotional/spiritual illness from his "physical" being. The first episode occurs during the war when Tayo stood "stiff with nausea," sick and paralyzed as the U.S. soldiers shot Japanese POWs. Uncle Josiah's face kept appearing on these Japanese bodies (another spatial-temporal interruption) and Tayo was unable to shoot. "Vomiting" is important here, not only in the body as the site of historical trauma, but in a metaphorical association with the flooding which occurs in the opening pages. The threatening "flood" which assails Tayo and the corporal as they carry Rocky

is peculiar as it does not “actually” envelop and wash them away. It is more of a figurative/spectral flood of revenant animal bodies, doubling as the “flood” mentioned during the initial introduction of a haunted, sleep troubled Tayo with his “dreams of a black night and loud voices rolling him over and over again like debris caught in a flood” (5). This real *and* imagined flooding represents the power of metaphor (in both Anglo and Native traditions, but more respected in an epistemological sense in the latter), but realizes a powerful tide of guilt and cultural confusion: it is “stagnant and ripe with the rotting debris” of Tayo’s personal and cultural “village”: Tayo’s individual and cultural guilt. Metaphor is important because it accesses the *experience* of conscious (and unconscious) association in a way which helps realize Tayo’s spectral displacement; metaphor allows a traversal of time and place to realize corresponding floods (much like spectral metaphorical functionality itself). And, crucially, here, human body and earth-body associate to emphasize the traumatic event.

Additionally, a more in-depth spectro-textual reading highlights the *materiality* of the *corporal* and reveals a “transpiritual” movement from storytelling intent to materiality. The corporal here doubles as the *corporeal*, the physical. While trying to motivate the failing corporal, Tayo tells him “that it wasn’t much farther now,” thus assuming the power of the storyteller as “he made a story for all of them...The words poured out of his mouth as if they had substance, pebbles and stone extending to hold the corporal up” (10). Tayo utilizes *story* as a motivating *spirit* here, enlivening the physical bodies by *becoming physical*, becoming a “backbone” of sorts. In this transpiritual (moving from spirit to form) moment, potentiality is corralled and formed via

storytelling, making a spirit-to-material transformation. The spoken word affects the body to effect change and this is a microcosm snapshot of the overarching spectro-textualism that Silko performs.

This essential glimpse of Tayo as *the* storyteller mimics *Ceremony*'s very first words which opens with a poem/prayer/story and hints at his final transformation.

"Ts'ts'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman, / is sitting in her room / and whatever she thinks about / appears" (1). This opening sets up a story about stories, about the *Ceremony* of stories becoming reality, and about how such stories are braided with the human body. Silko realizes story's affective potential in a way which again references Vizenor's comments regarding the "creation" aspect of writing, of storytelling (although he would privilege oral storytelling). "They aren't just for entertainment," the story continues, "They are all we have to fight off illness and death" (2). Silko realizes this spectro-scape of text, intent, creation, and death as analogous with the cultural text itself; the story cannot be separated from this tale set within Laguna Pueblo storytelling cultural reality. But, again, this spectro-textuality is relayed through the body:

He rubbed his belly.  
I keep them here  
[he said]  
Here, put your hand on it  
See, it is moving.  
There is life here  
For the people. (3)

It is no wonder then that the "stomach"—and stomach illness—dominates Silko's narrative. Following his discussion of the "backbone" aspect Laguna Pueblo/Keresan tradition, Nelson remarks that "the idea that there is an anatomical relationship between

stories and their tellers is not just metaphor” (22). Although I wouldn’t so easily dismiss “metaphor” in a material/immaterial binary relegation, Nelson’s point reiterates the intimate connection between text and body in Laguna tradition. In this way, Tayo’s sickness performs an “epistemic” textual movement; his bodily discomfort portrays a separation from the enlivening power of Laguna stories which hold a spectro-textual capacity to motivate and ‘re-place’ or reposition (as opposed to displace) the flesh when properly realized. What is happening here, in terms of intent, is that Silko is illustrating how culturally specific stories “locate” the individual.

The importance of stories in Native American culture in general has been often discussed, but Thomas King and William Bevis are necessary to consider here. In *The Truth About Stories*, King actually borrows Silko’s phrase “all we have” from *Ceremony*, transforming it into “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (2). King references multiple Native American authors and scholars, from Silko, to Jeannette Armstrong, to Gerald Vizenor who poignantly remarked, “you can’t understand the world without telling a story...there isn’t any center to the world but a story” (32). Again, a physical term “center” (like “stone and pebbles”) is created out of the spectral story (the “transpiritual” event). However, most important to a sense of personal place and identity, is that the real “center” to this method of storytelling is what William Bevis has called the “transpersonal” individual identity. “Most Native American novels are not ‘eccentric,’ centrifugal, diverging, expanding,” such as Western novels, says Bevis, “but ‘incentric,’ centripetal, converging, contracting. The hero comes home” (582). I would argue that Bevis’ view of the Western lacks the understanding of how the Anglo Western is actually

looking for a home—and I’m also aware that Bevis’ oft-quoted statement has been thoroughly critiqued and divided into many nuanced positions. However, this idea of a “homing” plot nonetheless is essential to understanding what is at stake in *Ceremony* because of the transpersonal concept. The “transpersonal” acts as a reminder that while the body is the central affective component within the human, it is, paradoxically, always contextualized in certain manners. The transpersonal here specifically creates an awareness of the community context. Bevis explains that Native texts create a narrative which is “transpersonal and includes a society, a past and a place,” and “[t]o be separated from that transpersonal time and space is to lose identity” (585).

Within Silko’s *Ceremony*, this “homing” narrative has everything to do with Tayo’s sickness of alienation. However, Tayo’s reconnection to a “transpersonal” Laguna Pueblo identity is accomplished through a *transphysical* awareness and experience that is negotiated via a spectro-textuality. I say this to draw attention to a cultural epistemology that privileges a material/spectral relationality over the Anglo modernist tradition of material privileging via binary border rigidity. This is essential to realize as it affects the epistemology/ontology of the culture and places the human body in a state of interactivity/”interaffectivity” that is dependent upon a textuality conceived consciousness. In this manner, not only is the individual understood as connected to the community (via ‘spectral strands’), but the culture more readily understands “spectral”/conscious displacement in the body. Additionally, while Silko accesses types of haunting on a universal level (focusing on the absent but present, aka, the “out of

joint”, aka, the zombie-like ‘living dead’), there is also a culturally specific shift that realizes the spectral beyond mere “haunting” in *Ceremony*’s conclusion.

However, stories are not merely purely intended strings of words that always reconnect the human within communal and landscape contexts. Stories might also deceive. King also warns: “Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous” (9). Such a comment exhibits an awareness of the *intent* with text and langue, thus pointing to an indigenous awareness of the potential harm within the narrative and partially aligning with the postmodern critique of the hegemonic narrative which privileges and neglects. Although the opening story/poem of *Ceremony* talks about how the destroyers want to “destroy the stories,” later in the text it becomes quite apparent the destroyers also work *through stories*. Old Betonie, the mixed-blooded medicine man who initiates Tayo’s healing ceremony, tells one of the most important stories of Silko’s text. This is another story about stories. Betonie tells the story of the “witches” and how they once had a contest, a competition of “trickery” (122). The witch who won the contest simply told a story. The other witches laughed at first, but he responded, “*Okay / go ahead / laugh if you want to / but as I tell the story it will begin to happen*” (124, 125, all original). And the clever witch told a story of a white people who, through fear and machinery, “*grow away from the earth / then they grow away from the sun*”; these people “*see no life*,” and so “*destroy what they fear*” (125). This results in the destruction of the land, the animals, and creates “*diseases...Entire tribes will die out / covered with festered sores / shitting blood / vomiting blood. / Corpses for our work*” (126).

The last line emphasizes a veritable ‘zombification’ of misaligned human bodies that destroy through their own alienation, thereby proliferating the destroyers’ story. This story horrified the other witches because they understood the power of the story—or narrative. Unlike the stories of Thought Woman and Corn Woman, this particular story of witchery within *Ceremony* is not a traditional Pueblo Laguna text (Nelson 121). Nelson argues that Silko “may have had to create this story in order to get the rest of her novel to move in a way not anticipated in either Keres or Navajo oral or ethnographic tradition” and notes that this witch’s tale of the destroyers is set as the antagonist narrative against Ts’its’tsi’nako’s tale of creationary storytelling (21). Yet, I would argue that Silko is merely connecting the theoretical spectral-textual dots. Because stories compose the “backbone” of a spirit/body human being, when that structure is corrupted, so too is the human body. In this manner, Silko deftly articulates the Laguna reverence for storytelling power in a way that highlights the spectro-textual affectivity. Notably, she storytells in a postmodern manner to describe a specific hegemonic affectivity. But again, this is through the “body.” Stories, since they are “all we have,” actually form the body—so reminiscent of Momaday’s “The Man Made of Words”—and when they are poorly formed, or “mis-intended,” they dissemble some inherent aspect of human identity that connects with identity and expression.

But because Silko works within a cultural ontology that is braided with an epistemology of physical/spectral relationality, the specters of haunting within the story of the destroyers can be recognized and therefore transformed into something else via *ceremony*. This ceremony, unsurprisingly, culminates through Tayo’s interaction with

Ts'eh, the manifested female spirit-being. Through his initial ceremony with Old Betonie, Tayo takes part in the Scalp Ceremony and then heads to the mountain (Mount Taylor), initially to find Uncle Josiah's missing spotted cattle. However, even though Tayo had not really expected "to find anything more than the winter constellation in the north sky overhead," he was "suddenly" affected by Betonie's "vision...a story he could feel happening—from the stars and the woman, the mountain and the cattle would come" (173). Tayo meets a mysterious woman who feeds and shelters him. She does not reveal her name at this initial encounter, but latter calls herself "Ts'eh", a "Montaño." As Kenneth Lincoln notes, "[t]he Keres see Yellow Woman, possibly Ts'eh's matrix, as goddess off the game, giver of women's dress, baskets and place-names...a mountain spirit with yellow face" (54). While discussing the 'actual materiality' of this entity, Lincoln argues, "[i]nstead of proving or disproving Ts'eh," it is more important to realize Tayo as a "witness [to] her presence" (55). Ts'eh's transitional, spirit-being essence is appropriated textualized within *Ceremony* because of the way she enters and exits the story so subtly, appearing and disappearing without overt fanfare, but with significant ramifications.

The most crucial aspect regarding Ts'eh is, as Lincoln iterates, Tayo's experience. And during his first meeting with this being, after being fed, and with very little 'ceremony', they have sex—upon her initiation—but in a manner which ends up very much feeling like a ceremony. When Tayo arose the next morning, he went out on the porch before the sunrise and "breathed deeply, and each breath had a distinct smell of snow from the north, of ponderosa pine on the rimrock above...Being alive was all right

then: he had not breathed like that for a long time” (168). Paradoxically, a physical union with a spirit-being helped realign Tayo’s “breath” within the material body; it made things “all right” for a time. But while paradox is an ungainly cul de sac of opposing truths wrestling for supremacy in Anglo epistemology, in an epistemology of material/spiritual relationality, the tension of coexisting realities can be appreciated as an undeniable totality that requires constant navigation—not absolute control. Because there is indeed a tension between these forces—which is often “tangled”—a story, a ceremony, a union, is required to balance this relationship, to locate the individual in this complex matrix of affectivity. And to aid in the balancing, Tayo also learns Laguna ways of traditional subsistence while with Ts’eh. “He went with her to learn about the roots and plants she had gathered,” as he continued to look after Josiah’s spotted cattle who had begun to thrive (208). And Silko makes sure to put this into spectro-textual perspective with anatomical referents: Tayo “could see Josiah’s vision emerging, he could see the story taking form in bone and muscle” (210). His time spent with Ts’eh culminated in a *shift* that was healing Tayo; the ailment of narrative and material colonialization was “replaced” by “the rhythm that had been interrupted so long ago” a rhythm felt in the body: “now the old memories were less than the constriction of a single throat muscle” (211).

But Tayo’s story is not yet finished. He had yet to re-incorporate into the world where the destroyers were still very much present, yet to reintegrate with the Laguna people. Ceremonies don’t happen every day—even in a more relational material/spiritual cultural reality; the human is yet a physical “being” and such transcendental moments

require realization and interpretation. Tayo's harsh reemergence into the more ostensible physical reality culminates in his witnessing of Elmo's torture of Harley—and Tayo's decision not to attack. However, he nearly gave in to the destructive urge: "It had been a close call. The witchery had almost ended the story according to plan; Tayo had almost jammed the screwdriver into Emo's skull" (235). Tayo eventually made it back home, though dreaming now "with his eyes open," seeing the stories weave together; "[t]he transition was completed," and he returned to "old man Ku'oosh," the medicine man who originally sent him to see Old Betonie (236). Tayo told Ku'oosh and the other elders his story about Ts'eh during a sweat ceremony. Now, 'Tayo-as-storyteller' allows him to reintegrate with the people; he now consciously participates in the cultural telling which once "interrupted" (haunted) the pages of his own narrative. His story is the story of the transpersonal and the transphysical which negotiates the haunting of a realized and healed "post-West"—or, indigenized West. And Silko ends her story with a return to the interwoven "backbone" Story about witchery having "returned to its belly" (242). "It is dead for now," the Story repeats, and then ends:

Sunrise,  
Accept this offering,  
Sunrise.

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Strange words, you might argue, for a discussion about specters and haunting. But these final words are most fitting for a discussion of spectral word bodies and human bodies. The intent and effect of these words and bodies provides insights into a more holistic use of "spectral"—beyond mere hauntings. These last lines emphasize the way

words come out of the body, or “belly,” and how they are imbued/inspired with intent. And because Silko speaks about how empty or misaligned words, empty of connected consciousness, in turn empty humans—creating “corpses”—she makes clear the relationship between haunted words and haunted bodies. This is a spectro-textual dance that understands the relationship between words and meaning, between the sign and the signifier, between the form and the more than representational.

From this analysis then, it is clear that *Ceremony* and *Whereas* illustrate the *potential* in this recent hot-topic word of “spectral” as something which not only haunts, but heals. Haunting is not merely, as Boyd and Thrush noted earlier, a discursive deconstructor, but an indicator of very material, bodily ‘out of jointness’. But the ‘discursive’ text/narrative and the material body are never *not* connected—and these authors utilize both Anglo and indigenous methods to realize the way text bodies and word bodies connect—with Silko more obviously utilizing a Laguna-specific belief system which appreciates a material/spectral *relationship*, highlighted by her overarching theme of “ceremony.”

And this point intersects with Saldivar’s query: What is the form and epistemological element of subaltern resistance? Both Silko and Long Solider utilize Anglo textual avenues and merge with Native views to resist and live beyond a Western hegemonic narrative that supports the “coloniality of power.” Yet, both stories are inspired by *haunted bodies*, haunted human bodies and haunted texts—and the affective “spectro-textual” relationship between the two. So, “haunting” as an inherent capacity of text and body interaction must be considered when appreciating expressions and

narratives which speak back to power. And because narrative affects bodies in very real, material ways, such counter narratives often “haunt back” through an effective/affective use of damaged bodies, using these bodies as “text” in themselves and then using language to further interpret, survive, and grow out of such trauma in a type of survivance. This spectro-textual play offers a corrective to the Anglo-centric “field-imaginary” of spectral studies, the phrase Americanist Donald Pease utilizes to reference a “field’s fundamental syntax—its tacit assumptions, convictions primal words, and the charged relations binding them together” (1). Comprehending the full potential of the specter expands its functionality not just in spectral studies, but also within these intersecting fields of American studies, Western studies and Native American studies. It is necessary to understand the function of haunting and how it creatively reveals what can’t be revealed, the “unspeakable” which, if respected, not only takes us through the journey of bodily oppression, through the “violence, torture, the severing of limbs,” through “vomiting,” and mouths stuffed with “grassesgrassesgrasses,” but may also reveal the spectral/spiritual capacity within narratives to enact recovery and survivance, realigning intent and consciousness, the spectral connection between the text and body.

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“THERE’S GHOSTS IN THEM THAR HILLS!”: THE HAUNTING MATERIAL AND
NARRATIVE HERITAGE OF THE GHOST TOWN OF BANNACK, MONTANA

Like outlaws and cowboys and wagon trains, ghost towns can seem too quaint and picturesque to be the subject of serious thought and inquiry. They seem, instead, a more appropriate target or the passions of amateurish, unsophisticated historians. This dismissal of ghost towns of some consequence because conventional approaches—popular or academic—to western American history have not taken failure seriously.

~Patricia Limerick, “Learning from the Landscape of Failure”

The American West has traditionally been narrated as a hopeful place, full of frontier economic promise, and the expansive swath of western ghost town literature which has proliferated over the past eighty years has uncritically celebrated the ruins of the region. However, the ruins and absences of these lost towns also tells a tale of abandonment and failure. This dichotomy illuminates long-standing issues within the West and the Western narrative. One of the region’s most notable voices, Wallace Stegner, “the dean of Western Writers” as he’s often known, is renowned not just for his creative prose, but for his critique of just such a mythologized West. In both fiction and non-fiction, Stegner constantly reimagines the West as a frontier region constructed not by individuals, but of community and cooperation, a Western landscape not always welcoming and Eden-esque, but often harsh, brutal and demanding—and in instances where landscape beauty is privileged, Stegner is exceedingly critical of consumptive and destructive environmental policies. However, Stegner also cautions against polemic critiques, arguing that questions regarding the West “ought to be answered without the scorn of a city intellectual or the angry defensiveness of a native son.” This second dichotomy illuminates the trials of the native-born Anglo-western scholar, attempting to

somehow value one's forebearers' efforts, sacrifices, and dreams alongside a critical awareness of settler colonialism and consumptive western capitalism. These two Stegnerian dichotomies exemplify a *haunted Western cultural landscape*. And perhaps nowhere are the dueling specters of nostalgic identity and material loss more present than in the phenomenon of the western ghost town.

The ghost town of Bannack, Montana is a particularly interesting and important consideration within the discussion of spectral functionality and western heritage because it is a state park which both utilizes ghosts in its yearly October "Ghost Walks," and because, as of its 2001 management plan, the park has made a significant effort to maintain the façade of "arrested decay" in its built structures and overall atmosphere. Bannack, then, becomes an excellent place to study the "material" and "narrative" specters of western heritage. As places of tension between "mythic" and "actual" Wests, such sites illuminate Stegner's very relevant concerns regarding the urban "intellectual" and "native son." In this chapter, I continue to privilege a "spectral lens" as a means of assessing and addressing issues of haunting, cultural expressions, and power structures. Here, the spectral lens realizes the hauntings of simulation, working off Jean Baudrillard's arguments, while also privileging "affect" theory to maintain an awareness of how such simulations translate into bodily experience and material history that also considers key heritage issues. This method is contextualized by an interdisciplinary braid of American studies issues that includes western American studies, cultural geography, and heritage studies. My goal is to understand how Bannack utilizes haunting commercially, as an attraction and historical teaching tool, how these sights perform a

type of “spectral stasis” within their preservation missions, and how they may yet remain haunted by what is left out of interpretive narratives. This study is broken up into three sections. I begin with an extensive contextualization of how western ghost towns have been perceived both publicly and historically and link these observations and discussions with more contemporary concerns. The study then focuses specifically on Bannack, with two primary “spectral” concerns: its “ghost walk tours” and the implementation of “arrested decay” within its most recent development and management plan. Examining Bannack in this manner not only allows for an acute examination of “material” hauntings within the West as they interact with “on-site” historical hauntings, but also provides some necessary insights into this complex concept of “heritage.” As American Studies continues to wrestle with its heritage, and as the West has been so obsessed with the “authentic,” such a study provides necessary insights into issues of “celebratory” and “dark” heritage and how this affecting ghost town atmosphere continues to reflect and produce western American heritage.

Ghost Towns: A Western Absence

Diverging perceptions of America’s ghost town heritage struck me as soon as I begin talking about including ghost towns in my overall “spectral West” project. “My next chapter’s on ghost towns,” I said, introducing my topic to fellow academics. They responded: “Ah, you’re studying dark tourism.” At least two of my initial conversations followed this course, using this precise terminology. Considering the often-celebratory nature of these places—and the past seventy years of largely celebratory ghost town literature—these comments illuminate Stegner’s tense western dichotomy. They are also

interesting because significant studies of heritage functionality at western ghost town sites are sparse. The first ghost to recognize here, in terms of American Western studies, is the haunting divide regarding heritage and authenticity within the West.

One reason “heritage” functions as an important keyword for American studies, Western literary studies, and western history is that it confronts the “problem of the popular” in American western studies. The abundance of “hobby” literature on America’s western ghost towns, greatly inspired by the mid-twentieth century work of Murielle Sibell Wolle with works such as *Stampede to Timberline* (1949) (reprinted 14 times!) and *The Bonanza Trail* (1953), reveals the strong nostalgic relationship Americans (and even non-Americans) have with the West. Consistent with how the West has historically resisted critical scrutiny in literary and historical discussions, I’d argue that the dearth of serious academic consideration of heritage at western ghost towns is partially a reaction to the glut of non-academic “popular” western ghost town texts that draw heavily upon American’s attachment to a western heritage. This is one focus of Patricia Limerick’s 1992 article, “Haunted by Rhyolite: Learning from the Landscape of Failure,” with photography provided by Mark Klett. Notably, this piece, in a very specific New Western History vein, critiques the hobbyist literature on western ghost towns and demands serious academic consideration of these ‘failed’ sites. Limerick’s arguments are punctuated by Klett’s black and white photos (for additional “decayed” effect) of Rhyolite, Nevada’s ruinous stone, bottle, cinder block, and concrete structures—absent of people—set against a truly desert(ed) landscape on the outskirts of Death Valley. Limerick points out the “enormous amounts of energy and money that

went into the enterprise of creating towns that withered,” to conclude that “these towns must have some lesson to teach” (22). Some of the “concrete reasons” for these “failures” include environmental factors such as the “West’s aridity and semi-aridity,” the vast “uninhabitable spaces between settlements,” which tied into issues regarding road and railroad accessibility, the “extractive industries” which tethered towns to “the ups and downs of boom-and-bust-economies” (which might apply not just to mineral extractive industries, but “logging,” “oil,” and , “farming”) and lastly, a lack of proper town planning (21, 22).

Playing off perceptions of America’s North East and Southern regions, Limerick establishes the importance of these ruins as indicative of a western counternarrative. Limerick considers how the “West has more than its share of ghost town guidebooks and ghost town maps and ghost town tours,” and poignantly calls this not just a “cult of ruins,” but “a singularly unreflecting cult” (22). “There are, of course, failed towns everywhere,” notes Limerick, “but the West has made abandoned townsite into part of its capital” (22). And this “capital” is tied to a regional specificity: “By the mid twentieth century, ghost towns had become one among many tourist attractions in the West. By contrast, if you approached a tourist information booth in Boston and asked for a guide to Massachusetts ghost towns, you would, at best, be give directions to the Salem Witch Museum” (22). Limerick also leverages against the region of the South to promote the value in studying a historic and “failed” West, referencing southern historian C. Vann Woodward who “identified familiarity with failure as the distinctive quality of southern history” (36). Limerick applies this usage of “failure,” materialized in the ruins of the

ghost town of Rhyolite, to argue that “[w]hile the two kinds of regional failure are very different, ghost towns give the west its most visible credentials in failure” (36). She then references Leo Marx’s early American Studies work—but suggests a corrective, arguing that Rhyolite’s Death Valley visage and the towns consequent failure here is more akin to “a book called *The Abandoned Machine in the Desert*” (34). “In fact,” Limerick explains, this title “would serve as a useful corrective to our usual model of progress, growth, and development as the fated course of the American West in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (34). Such an argument judges the ghost town site as less a site of positive American western heritage, but as, first and foremost, a site which contradicts the mythic western tale of boundless progress and optimism. Limerick’s valuation of the West’s ruins—in comparison to perceptions of the South’s ruins and history—offers an interesting and poignant historical ‘turn’ that coincides with (or helps promote) a “post-ing” of the West in literary terms as well. While the South has predominantly held the status as America’s haunting “gothic” region, Limerick’s realization of ruins also opens the door for the Western Gothic—and thus the “haunting” in her title. Haunting and ruins, then become “useable” components of western American history.

But not only does the West have a “disproportionate share of the country’s ruins,” according to Limerick, but the wealth of attention given to these ruins has, for her, illustrated yet another type of “failure” within the teeming wealth of hobbyist literature. Any sort of critical value in these pieces is dismissed: “The only remotely conceptual issue that comes up in the guidebooks is the question of comparative deadness” (22). But this critical failure also extends to the academy which, except for a couple of rare

cases, has been too “[f]ixated on expansion” to “take failure seriously” (22, 23). And Limerick reserves significant criticism for Muriel Sibell Wolle, who was both an academic and a ghost town enthusiast. Limerick notes that Wolle “may well have been the most indefatigable,” ghost town hunter, “both in her curiosity and in her unrelenting willingness to look away from the serious meanings of failure” (23). And although such renowned historians such as Michael Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang have gestured towards Wolle as a source for some of the “best accounts of the gold rushes,” (412) and Wolle’s work has filled a gap in western history—as illustrated by the numerous citations of her work in western historic preservation documents—Limerick cites Wolle’s work as part of the “‘image problem’ that has plagued western American history” (22). And this problem is an issue with the “popular” which, “[l]ike outlaws and cowboys and wagon trains, ghost towns can seem too quaint and picturesque to be the subject of serious thought and inquiry” (22).

But aspects of the “abandoned machine” actually haunt Wolle’s work in their transitionally, yet frozen, ambivalence. The abandoned sites—which Wolle helped establish in cultural memory—set the pictorial standard for imagining western heritage that Limerick and Klett themselves capitalize on with Klett’s photographs of a stark and desolate Rhyolite. These images emphasize the most visceral aspect of the western ghost town: ruins. Images of ruins have accompanied ghost town literature every step of the way, made significant by Wolle’s own artfully sketched renditions which aided her goal to ‘preserve’ the West’s past. However, Wolle’s ‘preservation’ may have had a particularly “ghostly” angle. Jon T. Coleman, in “The Prim Reaper: Muriel Sibell Wolle

and the Making of Western Ghost Towns,” calls Wolle the “prim reaper,” noting her ability “to see death in Western places” and remarks that “[w]ith a few strokes of a black crayon, she could turn the liveliest communities into ‘skeletal shells’” (12). The issue here is that while although Wolle argued for this form of “emotional realism” which might ‘enhance’ the “authenticity of the object they depicted” and help ‘preserve’ the West, the locals whose place Wolle interpreted did not always appreciate this, what Coleman calls, “morbid vision” (12). Coleman polemically interprets Wolle’s work as “a neutron bomb, erasing people while preserving their buildings,” eliding both many existing residents of such places and denying the fact that “truly abandoned towns proved nearly impossible to find” (13). Furthermore, locals, the very same who often helped Wolle, had a number of complaints with her work, arguing that “Wolle illustrated ‘only the old and dilapidated buildings’” and “made walls lean crazily,” to, in one complaint, making a sidewalk “appear ‘all wavy and ghostly looking’” (13). As will be shown with Bannack’s considerations of “arrested decay,” it is essential to realize that the “ruin” aspect is truly part of how the West is being conceived by public desires. In this way, and using Donald Peace’s term, Wolle helped create the “field-imaginary” of western ghost town heritage. Considering her influence, perhaps Muriel Sibell Wolle should be realized “the mother of Western decay.”

But what kind of West is being immortalized here? What, exactly, is Wolle “reaping”? Wolle argues for an “authentic” West, but these sites are not in original, untarnished condition. They are *decayed*. Significantly, Wolle’s sketches (ironically, the *recreation* of decay, thus providing the blueprint for western preservationists

“arrested decay”) lock these built environments within a spectral stasis and this deserves as much attention as do the narratives of haunting which are interpreting ghost town sites. Indeed, the ruin provides important material evidence of the haunting fault lines within America’s nation-building narrative. And, it must be noted that Wolle’s “morbid” vision offers an ambivalence not fully negotiated within Limerick’s critique of an “expansive” and celebratory ghost town West. If the unreflexive “field-imaginary” of the ghost town hunter could only agree on the comparable “deadness” of such spaces, then “deadness” itself becomes a critical keyword of western heritage. In this manner, “deadness” must not be dismissed as some superficially “popular” sentiment, but realized as filling some desire or “lack” within American consciousness.

Of course, Limerick’s critique during this time followed the New Western History model of heavily critiquing America’s overall unreflexive Western narrative and historical structures. However, the New Western History movement itself was critiqued for its dismissal of the “popular,” as evident in Stephen Tatum’s 1997 article, “The Problem of the Popular in the New Western History.” Tatum agrees with the way Limerick recognizes how the “multicultural West has often been ignored or repressed by popular representations,” but argues that “‘the popular’ has itself been as frozen by New Western historians as some so-called popular imagination has frozen racial conflict in the West between whites and Indians” (164). Such theorizing, Tatum further argues, while referencing Giles Gunn, “recapitulates the hotly-contested debate in American Studies scholarship over whether ‘cultural texts are unable [or able] to engage in processes of reflection on the values that generate them without at the same time being subsumed by

those values” (164). Tatum contends that such ‘objectivity’ is not possible: “Suffice it to say that in certain instances what New Western historians assume to be the case—that critical distance and reflection is possible; that myth and symbol are divorced from reality—is in fact under debate not a done deal” (164).

Interestingly, perhaps twenty years after the “death” of the Myth and Symbol school of American Studies, Tatum calls attention to the cultural power of such representational terminology. Keeping in mind the usual caveats regarding homogenizing cultural tendencies within such “myth and symbol” paradigms, I appreciate the re-valuation of such terms to reestablish dialogue between the “imagined” and the “real”—a dichotomy which postwestern scholar Neil Campbell constantly attempts to mend—while also realizing how cultural constructs never *merely mimic*, but continually shift and move and influence, affecting and being affected. Furthermore, Tatum’s critique of epistemological separation is edged to cut through academic hierarchy—which is poignant because New Western Historians were attempting to become “public intellectuals” (187). Tatum also insightfully remarks that “it is also unclear to me how one can stand apart from one’s culture”—a comment which not only critiques a positivistic approach, but which juxtaposes epistemology with heritage within the West’s “problem of the popular” (164).

As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, finding a methodology to accurately understand the American “experience” was at the root of early American Studies concerns. Henry Nash Smith’s well-known piece, “Can ‘American Studies’ Develop a Method” argues for the disciplines’ foundational interdisciplinarity to

ultimately arrive at a satisfactory understanding of “the way in which subjective experience is organized” within American culture (1). Smith laments an “objective” social science methodology which seems to place the “scientific observer...outside the field of his observations” in a way which ‘reduces’ the “scope of consciousness” while literary studies over-privileges “works of art which exist on a plane remote from the Waste Land of our actual experience” (9, 10). Such a discussion has inspired many discussions regarding a “useable” American history or identity, from Warren K. Susman’s “History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past” (1964), to Gene Wise’s “ ‘Paradigm Dramas’ in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement” (1979) and extending into a number of contemporary—often more nuanced—considerations of what is “usable.” As will be shown, the western ghost town offers an excellent “on the ground” analysis of these epistemological and “analytical v. heritage” identity issues.

Evolving Discussions

While some aspects of New Western History might be faulted for poorly problematizing the popular, the movement to re-value and critically assess western history has had substantial impacts on the academy. Indeed, too often was the dominant western narrative creating ghosts out of people and ideas through privileging and neglect. And these “failures” were (are) more and more affecting scholars, as indicative in pieces like Coleman’s previously discussed article, and in geographer William Wyckoff’s, 2002 piece, “Life on the Margin: the evolution of the Waning West.” Wyckoff considers “the West that the early-twenty-first century has largely forgotten about, a “Waning West”

that has *lost* population for decades, where closed schools, retiring doctors, and For Sale signs are the all-too-common realities of everyday life” (31). And Eric L. Clements provides an in-depth case study of the “busttown” in *After the Boom in Tombstone and Jerome Arizona*, a work inspired by the *absence* of significant studies of such sites of “bust”: “Bust is the gunfight that everyone forgets” (1). While negotiating the lack of material resources for studying such sites Clements also realizes how these community’s founders and speculators had a stake in boosting the community. This was especially the case for newspapers as “editors had no qualms about ignoring negative facts that got in the way of a positive story” (2). Wyckoff reiterates this point: “Fevered promotions of western farmlands frequently yielded nothing but withered crops and unpaid mortgages, and the ghost town often lurked but one step beyond the mining rush” (33). So, when Clements says, “one has to blast through solid boosterism to get at the truth beneath,” two things are apparent. The power structure which manipulated western narratives must be thoroughly critiqued in a way which leads to the question: *Cui bono?* Who benefits? And, it is also abundantly clear that a large mass of people *had a desire to believe* a certain story. While also gesturing towards issues of the “popular” and Tatum’s concerns, As Dydia Delyser intimates, this desire to should be respected in tandem with the study of western boosterism.

Dydia Delyser’s work on the ghost town of Bodie, California offers some important insights into western boosterism while also being relevant because it shifts my discussion from the “failed,” or “waning” historiographies of “busttowns” to aspects of ghost town *heritage*. One of Bodie’s foundational “heritage” slogans is embroiled in a

curious sort of boosterism. “As legend has it,” says Delyser, “[i]n the late 1870’s, a young girl living in the California town of Truckee was told by her parents that the family would be moving to Bodie” (273). This was anything but good news as Bodie had a horrific reputation as a boomtown, a site known as the “sea of sin.” Reportedly, “the little girl ended her evening prayer with a farewell: ‘Goodbye, God , we’re going to Bodie’” (273). While her lamentations “spread throughout the West” via news reports, “Bodie’s newspapers disputed the report as misquoted. What she actually wrote, they claimed, was, ‘Good, by God, we’re going to Bodie!’” (273) What is most interesting here, however, as Delyser remarks, is that the famous ‘adjusted’ quote actually materialized “between 1895 and 1900, long after Bodie’s boisterous boom had quieted and nearly twenty years after the original story about the little girl had appeared,” and was the product of “Lying Jim” Townsend (275). “Lying Jim,” if it wasn’t already apparent, was a journalist “[n]otorious for his hyperbolic journalism” (275). This historical reality that Delyser uncovers critically shifts aspects of boosterism into the realm of a “boostered” nostalgia. Yet, Delyser’s point is that this celebratory phrase has nonetheless become part of Bodie’s heritage, part of its “social memory,” mimicking the manner in which “[w]estern ghost towns have come to evoke images of America’s mythic West” (273). And while Delyser remarks that “ghost town of Bodie—*like so many other ghost towns*—is now understood, in significant part, through mythic tales like this one that are at best only loosely grounded in fact,” she does not dismiss this “mythic” aspect (275 original). This mythologization of ruined sites also relates to the creation of the term “ghost town.” Newspaper articles in the mid to late 1800’s showed

an acute awareness of these failed western sites—and this phenomenon was also notably expressed in Mark Twain’s *Roughing It*—but the term “ghost town” didn’t come into common use until much later. And when “ghost town” was being used, during the 1920’s, Delyser notes that the towns themselves were being described based not on their failure, but rather primarily on their ability to hearken a heroic past, based on their perceived links with the mythic West” (279).

In conclusion, Delyser argues that in “the study of social memory, as opposed to the study of history, notions of truth and falsity take on new roles because it is the social meaning of memories, and the history (and historical geography) for their emergence, that becomes most important as we seek to shed light on our contemporary culture” (288). I appreciate Delyser’s use of “social memory” in a convergence of typical “Western” dichotomies—here “truth and falsity”—but I prefer the term “heritage” as perhaps a warmer, more accessible device that personalizes the often dichotomous relationship between true/false, critical/unreflexive, while adding “presence and absence” through an awareness of *affect*. As Sophie Yarker has remarked, “affective heritage” deals with “understanding the probing and working out of the tensions between absence and presence “ within built environments that deal with “nostalgia” and “people’s relationship with the built environment...as a plea for a place that can support the image of self and memories bound up in a person’s biography” (250). For my interests, it’s especially important to see that the “ghost” was used in Bodie’s heritage in a nostalgic, “celebratory” fashion—as is the concept of the ruin. But to understand the “affective”

angle of haunting at such sites, a brief examination of contemporary heritage discussions is required.

Relevant Heritage Discussions

Current heritage studies discussions link nicely with these issues of the West, the “popular,” the “mythic,” and, of course, ghost towns. Heritage studies also parallels America Studies as it considers intersecting methodologies to understand place-based identity—but does so in a way which also specifically caters to my interests in affective hauntings. As Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton, and Steve Watson note, the editors of *Heritage, Affect, and Emotion*, this new landscape of heritage studies “challenges the format, engagements and paradigms through which we articulate heritage at sites, in scholarship and in practice” (1). This new paradigm has a very experiential, phenomenological feel which “attends to the value, power and politics of affect and emotion, and shapes heritage landscapes as experience, as curated and as foundational to our relationship with the past” (1). The editors focus on this affective experiential aspect to further examine “heritage,” as introduced by Stuart Hall, who remarked that “heritage” is “one of the ways in which a nation slowly construct for itself a sort of collective social memory” (1). But editors stress heritage as a “social memory” that is “thought through the nodal points of the body and its being and doing in a world that is both felt and responsive” (1). Affect and emotion are therefore privileged, “not as fashionable ‘add-ons’ to the project of heritage, but instead are positioned as a way of engaging with materials...variously occluded, marginalized, or indeed, core to the projects of conservation, preservation, and self-determination for all societies” (2). Considering

Henry Nash Smith's early call for an approach to better understand the "experience" of being an American, these "affective" heritage considerations are right on que—not to mention how well this definition of "heritage" issues a revised call for Susman's "usable" past. And these more *affective* oriented usable past/social memory/heritage calls might also then provides insights into exactly how heritage is formed, "encountered," "engaged with," and "valued" while also further delineating "whose heritage?" (2). Alongside these key considerations of "affective" possibilities, I would also draw attention to how the keywords of "occluded" and "marginalized" signal haunting and the "absent presence"—which are integral aspects of cultural power structures. Tracing haunting's functionality therefore may provide a specific "affective" avenue of studying heritage at such sites that specifically unveils what has been historically neglected.

Christina Lee brings haunting more closely into the discussion of place-based identity. In *Spectral Spaces and Hauntings: The Affect of Absence*, she considers Michael de Certeau's thoughts on connections between "place and memory," emphasizing Certeau's inclusion of haunting when he said that "[t]here is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence...Haunted places are the only ones people can live in" (2). This quote harkens to the fact that places are wrapped 'in time', and that every encounter with a place must therefore encounter the "previous" aspects of such a place. This idea inspires Lee to explore "how the 'appearance' of absence, emptiness and the imperceptible can indicate an overwhelming presence of something that once was, and still is, (t)here" and how the "past has a palatable presence and impact upon the present in a range of spectral spaces" (3). Put another way, Lee is

confronting the ‘simulation’ of ‘present-moment presence’; she draws attention to our overattachment with the obviously visible *now* to draw attention to the traces (or notable absences) of the past which yet inform (affect) the encounter of place. In this way, Lee “emphasizes the spatial dimension and politics of haunting” to create an additional awareness outside of the “over-determination of temporality in studies of spectrality, for instance in memory and trauma studies and in the works of Jacques Derrida” (4). Derrida does often utilize the phrase “out of joint” to denote the temporal uncanniness of haunting, its affective effect, referencing Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, “The time is out of joint” (xxi). Yet, interestingly, the phrase perfectly introduces the ‘body-centric’ nature of affectivity as I’ve often discussed in this dissertation. The phrase’s “effective affectivity” is based within beings that have jointed bodies and exist within a material reality—and therefore understand the great discomfort in having those joints ‘unjoined’, out of place, or *dislocated*. The body, as “nodal point” of affections, creates a relatable terminology on its own, and so offers insights into what is thought to be whole, but uncannily not. In this way, “haunting” becomes an important expression when considering the temporal/physical affectivity of heritage sites, capable of noticing what is out of joint in time and/or body, what is “displaced” or “dislocated” because of cultural power structures that forget, neglect and/or pathologize in simulation. Lee is quite aware of the impossibility of separating “the spatial and temporal,” but emphasizes how a “closer study of haunting as a complex relation between your own materiality, the environment and the perceived absent presences that engage us physically, cognitively, emotionally and affectively” allows us “take seriously those things that affect us that

cannot be detected with our usual modalities or explained away with clear logic” (4). I would argue that I’m using very clear logic to privilege the affectivity of haunting, I’m simply shifting out of a strict positivism, but Lee’s primary point of understanding the nature of the haunted *space* is key in place-based heritage studies.

Avery Gordon, and not long after Derrida’s *Specters*, was quick to pick up on the material ramifications of haunting while also positing a “logical” deviation from strict positivism. In *Ghostly Matters*, Gordon outlines haunting’s functionality in cultural narratives: “to write ghost stories implies that ghosts are real, that is to say, that they produce material effects” (12). And, like my own concerns (and following Derrida’s argument that hegemony is always already haunted/haunting), Gordon is chiefly concerned with social power structures, noting that “haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with” (xvi). But Gordon’s concerns also pertain to epistemology as she wrestles with the question of how to study this phenomenon of power—especially since our inherited knowledge systems have often worked, hand-in-hand, to reinforce such systems. Gordon notes that “scholars and intellectuals knew a great deal about the world capitalist system and repressive states and yet insisted on distinctions—between subject and object of knowledge, between fact and fiction, between presence and absence...” (xvii). These modernistic epistemological divisions continue to produce a dichotomous reality. Such divisions in themselves were “modalities of the exercise of unwanted power” (xvii). This discussion of power and knowledge falls into Foucault’s concerns who demanded an awareness and privileging of

“ ‘disqualified,’ marginalized, fugitive knowledge from below and outside the institutions of official knowledge production” (xviii). This call leads Gordon to privilege expressions of haunting and ask: “Could it be that analyzing hauntings might lead to a more complex understanding of the generative structures and moving parts of historically embedded social formations in a way that avoids the twin pitfalls of subjectivism and positivism?” (19). Gordon attends to the ghost as a trace which cannot *not* exist within cultural narratives and materiality and does so in a way which privileges subjugated voices *and* knowledge structures to potentially bridge some of the epistemological divides which Henry Nash Smith was concerned with fifty years prior. Additionally, I would add that bringing “affect” into this discussion on haunting is essential as the affectivity of haunting reminds us (hounds us, haunts us) with the feeling that our modernistic, often either/or, knowledge systems have failed us; they have yet, to reiterate Nash, failed to adequately express the “subjective experience” while undertaking quests for knowledge. We thus remain “out of joint.”

However, blindly privileging the ghost as a deconstructive element is a problem—and this issue is rarely adequately confronted. While Gordon crucially asks whether the epistemology of “ghostliness” can help solve contemporary knowledge issues, and therefore dichotomous heritage issues, this suggestion becomes problematic when heritage discussions *openly utilize the ghost* to construct a social reality—as western ghost towns do. Gordon utilizes haunting in its deconstructive capacity: “Ghosts are characteristically attached to the events, things, and places that produce them in the first place; by nature, they are haunting reminders of lingering trouble” (xix). What is not

sufficiently negotiated in many spectral studies discussions is how the ghost may not act as a “cultural deconstructor,” but utilized as a cultural “distractor”—more so within a culture which does not take the ghost seriously. Power is shifty and clever, gladly “spinning,” to use a political term (i.e. “spinning the narrative”), any potential threat into its own benefit. In this manner, the “absent presence” *shifts*, threatening to become a “present absence.” What I mean is that the ghost which haunts the spectacle of simulation—haunting via that which has been subjugated—is *utilized by the hegemony* in a way that incorporates the ghost in a beneficial way into the spectacle. IN this way, power acknowledges a type of haunting resistance but “spins the narrative” by “pathologizing” the complaint/resistance in a way that reasserts hegemonic dominance. This duplicitous functionality of the ghost must be considered because America’s western “ghost towns” are *celebrated*. These are not “dark” heritage sites, so obviously the ghost isn’t being privileged here as a deconstructive agent that provides insights into an oppressive cultural narrative. When ghosts are perceived as merely superficial entertainment, their power to historically and materially resist is undercut; the ‘uncanniness’ of the encounter is diluted, contained, corralled. Ghost towns and “ghost tourism” *capitalize* on ghosts in such manners and therefore “haunting” in these conditions must be carefully examined.

Spectral Tourism

Some current heritage discussions deal with the concepts of “difficult heritage,” “dark tourism,” and “ghost tourism” in ways that will help better contextualize what’s at stake in how western culture deals with haunting at heritage sites. Regarding the former

two aspects, there has been a rising interest in studying non-celebratory sites of heritage. Or, because such sites have become sites of cultural unrest, they themselves have demanded (via their affectivity) a deeper discussion. “‘Negative’ or ‘difficult’ heritage,” as Joy Sather-Wagstaff points out, references “the tangible and intangible results of war, genocide, terrorism, poverty, criminal and other human-made atrocities as represented in memorial museums and landscapes as heritage sites” (13). As Steven Cooke and Donna-Lee Feize discuss, a “dark or dissonant heritage” involves historical “places of pain and shame” and foregrounds “the politics of the past in the present and the way that difficult histories are represented, understood, and performed at such sites” (76).

But while such “negative” or “dark” objects may yet “positively” inform a historical memory to create a more complete connection with the past, as Sather-Wagstaff has argued, Tiya Miles tackles the other end of the heritage spectrum, and the possibility that dark—and specifically “ghostly”—presentations actually elide, or “depoliticize” sites of trauma, *distracting* from cultural oppression. Miles, in *Tales from the Haunted South*, critiques “dark tourism” in America’s deep south. Citing various scholars, Miles relays the discussion of a 2013 National Park Service conference, organized by Jill Titus, that was about “The future of Civil War History,” but also considered, “why visitors to nationally significant historic sites are drawn to paranormal programs and what ghost tours provide that public historians and guides at traditional historic sites do not” (9). Miles discusses various opinions on dark tourism as issued by the “ghost-tour panel,” which included “academic historians, tour guides, teachers, and Civil War history buffs” (9). Richard Sharpley noted that “Ghost tourism” was seen as a

burgeoning phenomenon of the last twelve years, a “playful, frivolous” subset of “dark tourism,” though this differed greatly from Titus’ own declaration that “ghost tours focus on escapism and voyeurism, thereby masking the state-sponsored violence of war” (9, 10). Other views focused on how such tours were merely a ‘fun game’ which ‘played with ideas of truth’ to a more earnest exploration where vacationing “Americans can visit old places and be in the midst of ghosts that stand in for our own ancestors” (11). Yet, even this latter points underscores the negative aspects of contemporary America’s familial dispersions, resulting in “this experience of being connected to place through notions of ghost while on vacation,” which, in David Glassberg’s view, is a diluted sense of ‘place’, “a simplified and depoliticized version of the identification with place that used to occur when folks stayed closer to home” (11).

Yet, geographer Glenn Gentry, who has extensively studied the “tourist experience,” argued that while people who took these tours did so “for a range of reasons,” he felt the ghost tours “allows access to dissonant knowledge, dirty laundry, backstage” (10). Gentry noted that there were educational values to such tours, despite their obvious money-making abilities, as he remarked that “it was only on ghost tours that [he] heard about black slaves and the use of carriage houses as slave quarters” (10,11). But Miles also notes Glassberg’s poignant questions regarding sites of significant trauma and historical oppression: “What are the boundaries of what is acceptable? Can we imagine a ghost tour of the Twin Towers? Or of a native American massacre site?” (11). What is implicitly apparent, as Miles surmises, is that “certain experiences and events of the past were off-limits, at least for now, to the ‘frivolous’

enterprise of the ghost tour” (11). It is also necessary to note here that without further critical research, Gentry’s access to “dissonant knowledge,” such as that regarding black slaves, could only come about through additional research—the atmosphere of the ‘ghost tour’ itself would *not* have produced a “serious” educational experience.

The intersection between darker history periods and ghostly representations within the tourist industry are often, therefore diluted—or “depoliticized”—through ghastly reproductions. Glassberg uses the term “depoliticized” in regard to tourist place identification, but the term serves as an essential conclusion for Miles’ argument regarding the function of “haunting” at these southern sites. Miles keys on the way “African American lives, and black slavery in particular, seemed to be fair game for the dark-tourism industry, so much so that deceased black slaves are main characters of the southern ghost tour” (11). There is a distancing aspect here which ties into commodification and cultural Othering. In her summation of the dark-tourism industry in the South, Miles critiques this “racialized dimension” of African-American bodies and beings of the past, stating “I find it a matter of serious concern that ghost tourism has gained a firm foothold within the boundaries of the former Old South, where the bodies of black slaves have once again become fodder for an innovation capitalist industry” (118). Miles’ call for an awareness of continued bodily slavery under the banner of “capitalist industry” is significant to heritage sites throughout the States. It acts as a caution against types of commercialization which merely reinscribes cultural hierarchies. These instances illustrate how haunting might be used to depoliticize history in a way that makes it more palatable and consumable to the disassociated tourist. Academic

discussions regarding “dark” or “difficult” heritage are still in their infancy and discussions regarding “ghost tourism” even more so. Of course, this is even more true regarding “haunted” western sites as the West yet remains a resistant cultural entity. Yet such considerations of ghostly productions and historic site interpretation are entirely important for understanding the affectivity of western sites which materialize the heritage of America’s heartland region. Such discussions provide an opportunity to study the extent to which “America” is considering its own past. To what extent are issues such as colonialism, imperialism, and exceptionalism considered as such sites? How do these sites express a mythic *need*? And, perhaps most specifically, how does haunting affect the politics of these western ghost sites?

Montana/Bannack History

The boom and bust economy of the 1800’s punctuated America’s Frontier expansion, causing great swells and dispersions of population in a way that unmistakably marked a people under the “spell” of material promise. The well-known late nineteenth century historian Michael A. Leeson, in his hefty, tome-like, *The History of Montana. 1739-1885* (1885) text used the term “will-o-the-wisp”—or ignis fatuus: “fools fire”—to describe the lure of gold promise, which lighted the way to often foolhardy promises and illusionary dreams (692). This folk-tale image accurately depicts a cultural truth and appropriately ties the ephemeral to the material with *spectral* terminology, or the way the material becomes an ephemeral promise (or vice versa), something *more than* within a cultural valuation. And such volatile movement denotes a culture desperate for material wealth and a people not afraid to cut communal ties and regional heritage to start over, to

maybe even become a placer “boomer”: destined to chase every new, promising strike. Of course, those with larger capital might simply send out tendrils of influence to gain access and power to such areas. Indeed, the boomtowns followed this course often as the individual “placers” washed through, or shifted into employees for the capitalists who had the means to bring in more water, dig deeper, crush quartz, build mighty and monstrous dredges, and experiment with different alchemical processes. This “ignis fatuus” promise produced a desperation that privileged the shiny material over almost all else, creating a blinding race for acquisition and accumulation. Cultural and environmental destruction followed in the path of this elusive and blinding wisp. Elliot West remarks that “gold or silver discovery transformed its particular part of the West more than any other sort of event,” severely interrupting any semblance of a conveniently “civilized” and orderly Turnerian ‘line of westward progress’ (78). West chooses the metaphor of an “artillery shell” which was “lobbed far ahead of the army of an expanding society,” accenting the destructive capability of this American frontier event (78).

Following the ebbs and flows of western mineral discovery, gold was found near present-day Bannack on Grasshopper Creek in 1862. Crucially, not just one or two, but many factors contributed to this event and the eventual founding of Bannack. The lull in other western camps created absence, a dark lacuna which only fools fire could illuminate, revealing a narrow and often treacherous path into the next “bonanza.” Leeson often framed these movements a “stampede,” as if such surges were more of an uncontrolled animal nature, rather than a civilized western progression. Rumors of Montana gold strikes solidified in 1858 with the first documented find in the Gold Creek

area (Malone, et al. 64). This coincided with the ebb in Nevada, California, and Colorado strikers. These ebbs, combined with the advances in road networks (such as the Mullan Road, connecting ports on Missouri and Columbia waterway), and steamboats progressing up the Missouri to Fort Benton, made that bright light of promise a real possibility (65). In the summer of 1862, John White, with a group of “Pike’s Peakers,” found gold in a tributary of the Beaverhead/Upper Jefferson in the Bitterroot Mountains (Graves 12, Malone, et al. 65). Grasshopper Creek (or “Grasshopper Diggins”) is located a couple of miles to the east of present-day Bannack. This substantial placer find touched off an explosion. The town of Bannack sprouted nearby, named after the Bannock American Indian tribe, and before winter set in, upwards of 500 people were setting up tents, lean-twos, and even some roughly fashioned cabins. This stampede resulted in Bannack being declared the first territorial capital of Montana in 1864—though it quickly lost this status in the following year to the exploding Virginia City. As intimated by historian Lee Graves, while many “braved” the hardships of Bannack’s isolation and extreme temperatures, “only a few got rich; most did not” (7). And in Mary Jane Wadam’s ruminations, the first white woman in Bannack, “[m]ost of the people of Bannack were in the graveyard” (Judge 22). Western boom towns were haunted by both the narratives which cloaked them in a *phantasmal shimmer of promise* and by those *ghosts which haunted* the cold emptiness of material and physical loss often found behind that shimmer.

Bannack’s peak population peaked in 1863, somewhere around 3,000-5,000 (Graves 13, Wolle *Pay Dirt* 53). Muriel Sibel Wolle claims that this year saw the first

sermon preached in April by a traveling African American preacher (*Pay Dirt* 53). Of course, the year also saw the election of the infamous Henry Plummer as sheriff. Plummer's outlaw gang was known as the "Innocents," which came from the identifying passcode "I am innocent"—revealing a cheeky awareness of how to spin boom-town narratives (Malone et al. 79). Masonic and Bannack historian F. Lee Graves, son of Fielding H. Graves, who notably had the first Bannack dredge named after him, is quick to point out how those of the less-virtuous variety also followed the Boom-bust cycle, occupying the shadow of the ignis fatuus, and preying upon those who were lured by the initial promise of mineral wealth. Graves notes that road agents "were quick to move into a virgin gold camp where their true natures were not known" (Graves 15). Importantly, the national mythos of "starting over" or "anew"—in "American Adam" fashion—takes on an entirely different tone in the road agent story as played out in the tale of Henry Plummer and his Innocents. It also points to a much darker side to frontier history. And this creates the question of whether such souls were simple "bad eggs" who, independent of any outside influences, were either innately "evil" (as some have said about Plummer), simply made poor moral decisions, or if the cultural climate of rapid change, rash highs and lows, and disconnect from place and identity greatly facilitated such behaviors. As one report noted, "each man brought with him beliefs and ethical values that largely dictated his actions and relations with his fellow man," but to ignore the tumultuous *process* of these sites—orchestrated by capitalist industry and fortified by settler colonial ideology—is to remain dangerously ignorant of the cultural forces which created America's boom/bust town event (Graves 15). Indeed, such sites

remain haunted *precisely because* western history has not come to terms with these tumultuous and often quite destructive cultural aspects.

The American West, of course, had many moments of narrative “spin,” from outlaws to boosters to speculators who sold millions of acres of “virginal” farmland in desolate, arid territories to desperate souls in search of the pastoral dream. The gold-boom town was no different. In fact, it fantastically illustrates the capitalistic layering created from, and which affected, the frontier event. While such sites held a fantastic wisp of mineral promise—a promise which points to centuries of European economic inequalities—moving within the shadow of the wisp were those who profited off the miners by not just stealing from them, as road agents would, but selling goods and provided services to those desperate diggers. This was known as “mining the miners.” Thus, with the strike in nearby Alder Gulch in 1863 and Last Chance Gulch in 1864, even though gold was still available in Bannack, the wave of promise cascaded and caused Bannack’s population to drop drastically. Of course, Bannack’s remote location and the lack of an agricultural (or other suitable industry) base didn’t help the town’s stability. Through a few ups and downs—one substantial “up” being the massive and monstrous electric dredges which appeared briefly during the turn of the century—claims around Bannack continued to be worked all the way up to 1942. But, in that year, the Gold Limitation Order shut down all non-essential mining activities, and this largely marked the end of the “living” in Bannack. In 1951, Bannack was acquired via a conglomeration of Dillion organizations—chiefly motivated by Daughter of the American Revolution (DAR)—and then was donated to the state in 1954.

Bannack's contemporary form largely took shape through late 1990's interests to preserve Bannack's buildings and atmosphere. This resulted, after several drafts and much input, in the 2001 Executive Plan. This "Bannack State Park Executive Summary & Management Plan" set the park's ten-year course for the new millennia, beginning with the "Bannack State Park Mission" statement. This statement outlines Bannack State Park's goal to preserve and protect its historic integrity, fabric, resources, landscape and atmosphere, from Bannack's beginnings as an "isolated frontier mining boom town through its evolution as a slowly dying, abandoned community" (ii). Examining earlier drafts and comments on these plans illustrates how heritage sites develop, how a wide variety of voices are involved within the preservation and interpretive process—from local to state, from celebratory to critical—and how these discussions often form a dialectic between the nostalgic wisp of heritage and the more material concerns of historic preservation and state park management. I use this plan as a basis to understand Bannack's *preservation* and *interpretation*, moving first through material concerns that highlight the issue of *decay* and then onto interpretive practices which lead into presentations of *haunting* within Bannack's Ghost Walks.

The Practical Preservation of Ruin

The 2001 Bannack State Park Executive Management Plan from the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks was established to achieve a more cohesive, longer-term (10-year) documentation for Bannack's preservation, interpretation, management, and operation. This plan details the Bannack State Park Mission statement, but is inspired by a concept called the "Bannack Experience." This exists as another type of "wisp" of

sorts, a guiding “spirit” and/or concept to be relayed “through education, preservation and interpretation...to spark current and future visitors’ imaginations and enrich their opportunity to understand the history made in Bannack and the lives of the people who lived and worked there” (“Summary” ii). But before looking at the “Bannack Experience,” it is important to note that the overarching Mission statement includes the roughly defined historical scope from “isolated frontier mining boom town through its evolution as a slowly dying, abandoned community.” Interestingly, this community operates up to mid-twentieth century—notably outside the more specific 1850-1899 designation articulated within the 1963 Historic Structures Report. This more expansive and inclusive historical time-frame leaves room to more fully explore not just the boom cycles, but the bust as well. This is notable because of the way the project was able to renew and expand the historic scope (because of the movement of the 50-year rule for historic sites) and due to the evolution of more expansive interpretations of historical eras, events, and timeframes.

When visiting Bannack, the primary Park Ranger I spoke with, John Phillips, when shouting greetings to visitors, would not only encourage people to enter the buildings that were not locked, but also emphasized that the site had actually been lived-in until the 1970’s. “Lots o’ linoleum and wallpaper,” he’d add for material context—to help move the visitor’s expectation (influencing their “Bannack experience”) into a more comprehensive awareness of Bannack’s *transitional* heritage. Furthermore, and within the academic discussions of “busttowns,” this document importantly contributes to understanding these “busttown” or “failed” sites interaction with *heritage*. The document

also crucially details how a public park site of ghost town preservation takes place while emphasizing an interdisciplinary sharing of information between history, cultural geography, and professional preservation, along with private and public heritage concerns. The discussion of Bannack's future crucially illustrates a "real time," "on the ground" navigation of the "critical v. nostalgic" dichotomy that has plagued the mythic West.

The "Bannack Experience" is essential to this plan as it outlines *what heritage looks and feels like*. This "Bannack Experience" very much attempts to draw the reader into a certain place and time via *affective* terminology that emphasizes specific types of both materiality and absence alongside a continuous separation from the present.

Experience the past. Walk the quiet, dusty, deserted street past building weathered and worn by the ravages of tie. Rusty tine cans, an old bottle, square nails. Imagine the past. And old bedstead, a broken chair...pieces of the past fill in the spaces and spark the imagination, free from modern day intrusions and commercialization. Touch the past... (iii)

"Touch" is followed by "sit in school desks," and "step inside the Courthouse," intimating the affective bodily experience of the site. More keywords and sentiments follow, such as "weathered...worn...ravages of time" to, again, light fire to the "imagination, free from the modern-day intrusions and commercialization." Providing an avenue into 'premodern' technologies and commercialization seems to be a significant draw of western sites. This is done through certain aspects of materiality: "square nails," "hand-hewn logs"; however, *absent materiality* is also emphasized to create the image of *ruination and abandonment*: "bits and pieces," "a broken chair," "an old door, one hinge missing," "cracks in the missing chinking." Naturally, history is demarcated with important landmarks such as "first major gold rush, first territorial capital," and "Henry

Plummer.” And this notably includes some of the historically neglected: “Chinese immigrants, women and children.” “Interpret the past” it calls out, emphasizing the “boom and bust” cycle within various dichotomies, “birth and death, disease and prosperity,” and then for dramatic affect: “...good and evil”—no doubt in reference to Plummer’s gang and the rise of the Vigilantes. These dichotomies accent a tension, and the statement rises to a climax with more affective emphasis, “Relive the past...Touch History,” before signing off with a preservation goal of permanence: “preserve and protected, for now and forever.” The layer of protection which wraps this statement in a secure closure does not signal entry into a site of dark or difficult heritage with recognized trauma. It instead gestures towards the preservation of an essential idea of identity which feels as if its threatening to slip away, forgotten, and unnoticed. It is as if such heritage itself is a “ghost” and may at any time fade from memory if it is not maintained in a material reality. However, this materiality is trapped between presence and absence: it is *decayed*. It is as if the preserved decay functions as a conduit to re-experience the past, as a paradoxical portal to join two different times.

As mentioned, local, grass-root organizations were the primary original preservation participants and these types of organizations have continued to have a tremendous influence on Bannack heritage. The Bannack Park visitor will encounter minimal signage on the approach to the park, but, after parking, will immediately find a large boulder with a bronze-relief tablet from 1925. This Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) sign denotes early important historic dates for Bannack, from its establishment as a gold camp in 1862 to its run as county seat, 1864-1881. The sign

concludes: “In grateful memory of the early pioneers who founded our commonwealth.” The DAR was also integral to the survival of Bannack and the transition into Park status, but the most involved contemporary organization is the Bannack Association, formed as The Bannack Historical and Museum Association in 1990. “Bannack embodies the spirit of the Old West,” states the website which delineates the organization’s goal to “assist with the preservation efforts of Bannack, Montana’s First Territorial Capital, and promoting its historical and cultural assets” which are constantly under threat from “weather and vandalism” (<http://bannack.org/bannack-association>). Not only is it important to recognize these public organizations being integral to such sites of public heritage, but many such voices contributed their input during the drafting process of the Executive Plan. The plan, let by Cossit Consulting, was composed of input from professional organizations such as the FW&P, the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO), and the State Historical Society, and included “private citizens from a wide range of backgrounds and interest levels,” while also including “public comments gathered during the scoping phase” (ii).

As indicated in the Management Plan, after Bannack became a state park in 1954 and subsequently a historic district in 1961, early preservation efforts in the 1960’s and 1970’s had to undue many architectural additions and remodeling aspects such as siding and doors, electrical outlets and plumbing, while emptying the buildings of furnishings. As noted in the opening pages of the document, the public scoping showed that “the Bannack most people envisioned in the future was exactly (or almost exactly) what Bannack is today” (ii). This statement came out of the late 90’s when some restoration

had taken place, but solidified the “arrested decay” affect as the primary *desire* for Bannack’s material heritage.

Outside of the Executive Summary, the more extensive 2000 final draft (which was largely unchanged in its later final form) contains discussions between the public and preservation professionals. “‘Arrested decay’ is not a workable concept,” the critique states, “no one can ‘arrest’ decay” (10). The critique also noted that the concept was out of touch with current preservation thinking and further argued that such a concept could not be reliably applied to all structures in an equal manner. “Arrested decay” is a misleading “strategy,” and “is no longer a suggested management approach” that is to be replaced by the case-by-case determination of “exactly what each building needs for long-term protection and public safety,” all of which “will be part of the Historic Structures Report for each building (“Decision” 6). *However*, the document also notes that “preservation indicates buildings will be preserved so that “they appear to be in a ‘state of disrepair’” (“Decision” 6). What is initially interesting about this critique of “arrested decay” is that “arrested decay” would most closely express the vision desired via public polling, yet practical and preservation-oriented minds found the strict implementation of this ideology not just problematic, but impossible. Organic and management concerns conflict with cultural heritage ideology. This incongruency notably signals the hiccup between public, or nostalgic, desire and material possibility.

These “practical” preservation arguments confront ideas of heritage in the overlaying “Bannack experience” statement in two specific ways. Despite the yearning to have Bannack “preserved and protected, for now and forever,” practical realizations of

preservation, such as the natural decline of materiality and the site wear and tear due to increasing visitor flows (roughly 30,000 per year), demand that “heritage” be put into feasible, “usable,” contexts. Such contexts confront the idea that an “authentic” past can be preserved while also challenging the idea of a space “free from modern day intrusions and commercialization.” The irony is that modern technology *enables*—in preservation techniques, in a fire-suppression system—the façade of spectral immortality in the “arrested decay” of the buildings. And while commercialization is often seen as anathema to such sites—Virginia City was often cited as “how not to” pursue the ghost town experience—with such limited funding, managers and supporting volunteer organizations must walk a fine line between heritage preservation and commercial attraction. It could be argued, then, that there are two types of “authenticity” present at Bannack, an authentic organic materiality and the authentic “experience” of the ghost town.

“Authenticity” has curiously been an issue with the “West” for as long as the region has existed as an unknown outside of Euro-centric concerns, from the “West” as an oceanic abyss prior to colonial expansion, to a young settler colonial America exploring a vast and mysterious western frontier. As William Handley and Nathaniel Lewis note, “there is no other region in American that is as haunted by the elusive appeal, legitimating power, and nostalgic pull of authenticity, whether in regard to ethnicity, cultural artifacts, or settings” (1). Issues regarding the “real,” the “true,” and the “authentic” were so prevalent that perhaps the most influential promoter of the West, William “Buffalo Bill” Cody, insisted that his show was not a “show” but simply Buffalo

Bill's "Wild West." The question of "what is the West" has also, naturally, extended into ghost town heritage, as Dydia Delyser discusses in "Authenticity on the Ground."

Delyser notes how early considerations for the management of the ghost town of Bodie, CA considered "a policy that would later be known as 'arrested decay'," citing a 1955 document that called for the town to "retain all exterior appearance and charm of the *authentic ghost town*,...[the] curved walls, sagging roofs, broken windows, etc." (602, original emphasis). Bodie's "Master Plan" illustrated a *premodern desire* not unlike some of Bannack's: "The visitors to this park will see an example of an early day mining town in a remote area and apart from the usual oppressive elements of our civilized world" (602). I'm curious how this desire to escape "civilization" is bound up with a mining heritage which was yet so inexorably economically bound to the whims of early capitalism. I sense that this is another example of the "West that was Won" v. the "West that was Lost," and while some aspects of western heritage are celebratory to hold onto a past, I read part of the "celebration" as actually a mourning for a lost opportunity to *escape* the jaws of a capitalistic, technological, and alienating modernity. These preservation sentiments reveal an ambivalent western heritage rather than a necessarily celebratory West—even if clothed in the trappings of celebration. The 'triumph of taming' was not the uncontested goal of western expansion, but more indicative of a "boostered," nation-building spin. Yet, a nostalgic heritage often conflates the two.

This ambivalence also needs to be recognized in regard to the type of tourism which Bannack offers. Jon T. Coleman recognizes that "ghost towns" operate as "sites where tourist can commune directly with their Western fantasies" in a way which "casts

new light on the relationship between Western tourism and popular culture” (11).

Importantly, Coleman brings our old western friend, the “popular,” into the discussion—and in a way which connects “authentic” to the “popular.” Coleman also addresses an important point regarding western boundary breakdown when he talks about how the “appeal of ghost towns lies in the way they break down the boundaries of the typical tourist attraction” (11). While considering Dean MacCannell’s breakdown of “Staged Authenticity” in tourism Coleman notes that “[t]ourist sites can be divided into ‘front’ and ‘back’ regions. Back regions are the hidden spaces of an attraction that conceal the props and activities which might diminish or discredit the front or ‘contrived regions’ intended for tourists” (11). He then argues that “[e]mpty, abandoned, and forgotten, ghost towns erase the line between front and back regions and grant their visitors certain freedoms,” and even more specifically in ghost town journeys (especially as Muriel Sibell Wolle advocated) where “nobody tells ghost town enthusiasts where to go, what to touch or how to think” (11). Such a sentiment is curiously reminiscent of America’s famous (Western) individualism and again caters to a desire for a “lost frontier.”

Vandalism and visitor flows have caused Bannack’s management to regulate visitor traffic; however, the site severely limits overt signage and more obvious markers of management to adhere to this perception of “backness” in pursuit of the ghost town experience. So, Bannack exemplifies not just a simulation, but specifically a “simulation of non-simulation” because such ghost town “experiences” are so averse to the inauthentic.

While Coleman critiques some of the paradoxes of the “Wolfe style” of ghost town hunting and how that related to the formation of ghost town societies, confronting the fact that some ghost towns are becoming “presentations”—which perhaps make such sites more “front” than “back”—is not sufficiently studied. This awareness conjures Jean Baudrillard’s work on ‘simulation and simulacra’ and ‘exchange-value’ v. ‘sign-value’ in capitalist economics while also helping us realize how such sites *carry* this very Western tradition—and I’m again thinking of Buffalo Bill—of being ‘haunted by simulation.’ In Baudrillard’s early work, As Douglas Kellner notes, Baudrillard “argued that fashion, sports, the media, and other modes of signification produced systems of meaning articulated by specific rules, codes, and logics” (Kellner). In this way, sign-value is highly emphasized in an “era of capitalist development” where “economic concentration, new production techniques, and the development of new technologies, accelerated capacity for mass production and capitalist corporations focused increased attention on managing consumption and creating needs for new prestigious goods” (Kellner). The simulation of “backness” runs throughout the ghost town mission in multiple manners, but the most significant is the simulation of *ruined abandonment*. Here, the ruin adds an interesting twist to Baudrillard’s capitalistic, consumption-based narratives. Contextualized with the mission statements of Bannack and Bodie, it signifies the desire of ghost town preservation to create a ‘visitation’ with an imagined past *away from* the pressures/demands of technology and commercialization. It is if such a desire is more than aware of Baudrillard’s warnings of simulation, yet creates another simulation to access an escape from simulation. Of course, in doing so, such heritage sites create not

a (post-)modern phenomenon, but relive the frontier in which so many participated: a promise of starting over, getting away, striking it rich to get away/above/beyond societal judgements and constraints. This is the “simulation of non-simulation.” However, just like so many of those early pioneers, their participation in this “escape” continues to be defined by many of those same restrictive social paradigms, economics especially.

What is firstly apparent to me, is that if Bannack allows for an “escape” of sorts from modernity’s technology and commercialization, which, according to Baudrillard, has made reality ‘less-real’, perhaps I might judge them less harshly for so passionately embracing a “mythic” past. Additionally, considering the heated western discussions regarding the calls to relegate the term “frontier” to the dustbins of a misguided western history, perhaps this example of a mythical escape from the pressures of modernization exemplifies the continued need *for* such “frontiers” of possibility. While this argument ignores some of the inherent power imbalances (race, class, gender, etc.) within the story of the western mission, it nonetheless must be kept in mind to understand the ambivalences and complexity within the nostalgic West while realizing the continued relevance of a *haunted* “Machine in the Garden.”

Historical preservation issues—such as how to create an “authentic” site—have led to alternative theories on preservation and heritage, which include such texts as Caitlin DeSilvey’s *Curated Decay* (2017). DeSilvey’s subtitle is “Heritage Beyond Saving,” and much of this piece considers alternative “preservation” models such as ruin appreciation, fauna-specific appreciation (rather than tearing out undistinguished “weeds” that sprout in the ruins of industrial abandonment), and ideologies regarding “passive

preservation.” In other words, DeSilvey is calling for an appreciation of a shifted, non-(or less-)simulated/managed heritage. DeSilvey, a cultural geographer who has done preservation work on both side of the Atlantic (and even some in Montana, outside of Missoula), notes that “‘arrest decay’ is the standard preservation treatment of abandoned settlements in the American West” (210). She references Delyser’s work with Bodie and Delyser’s use of the term “arrested decay” as coined within California’s historic preservation practices. However, DeSilvey interestingly supports this term through Montana’s early mid-twentieth century preservationist Charles Bovey. Bovey was a “pioneer” of western preservation, specifically concerned with Virginia City, and championed what he referred to as a “suspended site of deterioration” (210). So, it is interesting to witness how the more contemporary intersectional discussion of Bannack preservation interrupts an overly strict reading of this ‘western’ preservation strategy—even if the simulation remains largely the same.

DeSilvey also brings up fauna issues which intersect with Bannack’s envisioned heritage and preservation concerns. She notes that discussions regarding “ruins and ruination” have considered “the way plants generate particular aesthetic effects as they take hold in disused structures, softening the hard lines of architecture and contributing to its ‘pleasing decay’” (100). But foliage also factors into the aesthetic simulation of western heritage. The Bannack proposed plan called for the removal of sagebrush for fire prevention. This was met by complaints that removal “will take away from the ghost town ‘feeling’,” disrupting the “true ghost town” atmosphere and eventually resulted in a compromise (“Decision” 7). This issue also had further ramifications during a later 2003

plan that dealt with the preservation of Bannack's three graveyards: Old Cemetery, New Cemetery, and the Marysville Cemetery. This plan was authored by Michael Trinkly and administered by Debi Hacker, both of the Chicora Foundation. The plan addresses the abundant sagebrush clumps populating the cemetery sites and remarks that "[i]t has been argued that the sagebrush creates a sense of 'abandonment,'" ("Assessment" 16). Yet, this plant was not likely to have been present around the 'authentic' human sites because "[h]istorically...it was quickly used by the townspeople for kindling and disappeared from the landscape," and it most likely would "not have been allowed to gain a foothold in the cemetery since it cause significant problems in pedestrian access" (17). While DeSilvey argues that in most preservation cases fauna is seen in an "aggregate identity," lacking "specificity" in that "the plants being managed (or, most often, removed) are rarely distinguished from one another, unless it is to demonize particular species as invader," Bannack produces a very plant-specific counternarrative (101). Sagebrush here is enacting a type of 'organic reclamation' that has also saturated the vision of western ruin nostalgia and is actually *required* to simulate such sites.

But sagebrush causes some interesting issues for a cemetery at the ghost town site. While also noting sagebrush's highly flammable nature and the way this tough and clumpy vegetation was funneling foot traffic into erosive trails, Trinkly emphasizes a significant difference in preservation approach and heritage focus. "It is critical that caregivers understand that the cemetery is a sacred site containing the remains of individuals buried by friends, family, and society" (17). The plan suggests that the site "will be minimally maintained in a manner that respects this sacred nature," while also

expressly emphasizing that “the ‘abandonment’ of a cemetery is inappropriate” (17). This statement responds to the 2001 Plan’s verbiage which sought to retain “the ‘atmosphere of abandonment’” in the graveyard, mimicking the rest of the ghost town (2000, x). Additionally, the phrase “sacred site” is utilized in the suggested signage for each of the cemeteries. This is both interesting and somewhat disturbing: as if the sacredness of a tombstone needs to be reiterated within America’s western tourism/heritage culture. Such sites have been plagued by vandalism and theft. This points to a poor relationship with the deceased and adds yet another important perspective to understanding how American’s deal with aspects of heritage *and* spectrality. If western culture took ghosts more seriously, would such sites require “sacred sited” signage? Why do we need a signed boundary between consumptive, consumable ‘ghosts of simulation’ and the actual memorialized specters? It is if such signage acts to break the tourist out of the “this is a simulation” trance.

These aspects of simulation and ghostliness and sacredness relate to issues of theft and vandalism in heritage sites. Warding against vandalism and theft is a substantial issue in both the cemetery report and in the larger Bannack Plan and begs the question of how other types of heritage sites deal with these issues. Marita Sturken’s article, “The Wall and the Screen Memory: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” in a recent American Studies anthology, offers a strikingly different site interaction. She discusses how people *contribute artifacts* to this site of intense memorial—and often anonymously. She notes that “of the approximately 40,000 objects left at the wall, the vast majority have been left anonymously” (547). From letters speaking to the dead to a Harley Davidson

motorcycle, Sturken argues that “leaving artifacts at a the memorial is an act of catharsis, a release of long-held objects to memory” which often seems to take the form of “redemption, guilt loss, and anger,” but overall seem to indicate a tone which is “asking forgiveness for the suffering, the loss, for having lived” (547). Interestingly, the Park Service, originally put such items in the “lost and found”—as if they were *misplaced*—but later, having realized the *intentionality* of these objects and their placement, saved them and turned them into “artistic artifacts,” these “icons possessing a substructure of underpinning emotion” (547). I don’t know what the rate of vandalism is at such memorial sites, but the fact that Bannack must deal with the *inverse* of this phenomena is cause for contrasting critiques. Of course, a war memorial—and especially as one as hotly contested as Viet Nam—is bound to have a limitless amount of “things left unsaid” that would demand a communion with those who’ve gone, those who no longer have affective bodies. The “place” of such sites therefor acts as a surrogate body to be affected by what had yet to be said. Yet, in consideration of the theft and vandalism at ghost town sites, Bannack, then, as a “body” to be affected by visitors who *interact* with the place, is still substantially perceived as a site to ‘take from’—at least by a good number of people. Coleman remarks that during the formation of Colorado’s ghost town society that the by-laws had to include “4. NO souvenir collecting!” (16). If ghost towns were actually respected sites, would visitors not be more inclined to give to them rather than take? The fears of “commercialization” at Bannack are indeed well-founded, but this “consumptive” aspect is also evident in the desire of people to take from such sites at their leisure and whim. While this last comment negatively judges America’s

consumptive culture, I would also add a more sympathetic view: Americans lack a usable history. Avery Gordon has denoted haunting in an affectively motivational sense: haunting means there is “something-to-be-done” (xvii). I’m realizing haunting perhaps a bit differently than Gordon intended, yet I also interpret both the theft of heritage items and the signing of one’s name and/or destruction as ways of “identifying with a site”—as a means of *filling an absence*. As both a young nation state and as a complex—and often very dark—settler colonial nation, the *lack* of a useable heritage creates haunting gaps and absences that often promotes such disparate/desperate behaviors.

The closing comments of Bannack’s drafted preservation plan stress that “the preservation approach to Bannack will be multi-dimensional” (16). While “multi-dimensionality” interrupts the *static* understanding of arrested decay, it also gestures towards the complexity of such site in terms of spectrality, ruins, and simulation. And did they mean this to include the inclusion of Ghost Tours, I wonder? How do stories of hauntings affect the Bannack Experience?

Spectral Interpretations

“Multi-dimensional” is an important phrase in regard to considerations of “haunting.” Perhaps initially, this concept recognizes the intersecting “planes” which create a complex matrix in the attempt to segregate time and the problems inherent with maintaining the “spirit” of a material place when its intended purpose has changed. These are different sorts of “hauntings,” but the term nevertheless serves a purpose because preservation sites such as Bannack are forced to deal with uncanniness and paradox daily. In a material sense, rather than buildings existing “in-time” with their

intended practical implications: shelter, warmth, and building-specific functions—each structure is forced to become a simulacrum of itself, but in *decay*. These buildings are therefor, to reference Derrida, purposefully, intentionally “out of joint.” It is if there are two different “authentic” Wests here (although the cemetery demands further consideration): the authentic objective material West, following a ‘natural’ process of creation to decay, and then the “authentic” ‘preserved’ Western moment of “abandoned and decayed, but not disappeared” western heritage.

Of course, “preservation” and “interpretation” are entwined concepts—especially at heritage sites. “Arrested decay” is an interpretation of what American Western heritage “should” look and feel like, indicative of an “authentic” or “true ghost town.” The addition of the “Ghost Walk” (“Bannack Days” as well, though they are not my concern here) also interprets the “Bannack Experience.” So, it is interesting to note that the Executive Plan expressed the desire for *open* or limited interpretations—and almost always chose less-invasive or less-technological interpretative aspects, such as pamphlets over videos or large signage. And activity and special event criteria specifically demands that “[a]ny special event that is held in Bannack be historically oriented, short-term and not detract from the ‘Bannack Experience’” (Appendix K). The only event referenced, however was “Bannack Days.” The “haunted house” tours of the Meade Hotel (which began in the 90’s), are absent.

The “Bannack Ghost Walk” occurs during the last weekend in October (naturally) and offers only four shows (two on Friday night, two on Saturday night), yet has become Bannack’s largest fund-raising event (outside of the year-round gift store) (“Phillips”).

Bannack's ghostly entertainments began in the early 1990's, starting with late-night tours of the Meade Hotel. Visitors rushed to hear stories of young Dorothy Dunn, who drowned in a dredge pond in 1916. Dorothy is Bannack's most famous "absent but present" resident attraction and, reportedly, can often be seen in upper floor of the building, the water still dripping off her sky-blue dress—no doubt wailing against the eroding bank, the "Angle of Repose" (to reference Stegner) which inhibited her escape from the dredged pond. Angie Hurley, Bannack Manager in the early 2000's, interned at the Park in the early nineties. In an interview with the Dillon Tribune, she recalled that they had planned for fifty or so people, but when people started arriving, "the headlights...they just stretched forever"; over a thousand people came to the haunted house in each of the first two years it opened ("Bannack").

Interestingly, the spectral had very real, material effects. The wear upon Bannack's most notable building, the Hotel Meade (originally the courthouse), was causing serious concern. Indeed, the need for greater mediation and dispersal of visitors throughout the Park was one of the foremost concerns of the 2001 plan. Except in this case, it was more specifically the *draw of ghosts* that precipitated this management shift—indicative of yet another layer of infatuation with the American West: the spectral interpretive experience. Paul Stewart was an employee of the Dillon Tribune and was also connected with the Bannack Association that managed the event. Stewart not only had a voice in the conceptual change, but agreed to write new, more expansive scripts. Yet, as the Tribune article notes, this was more than fitting as Stewart was not merely just

a recent transplant from “Old-World” Scotland with its legions of gothic specters, but was an actor who had guided ghost tours in the castles of Scotland.

As a haunting admixture of truth and fiction, the “Ghost Walk” stories range from historically accurate, Bannack specific accounts, like Dorothy Dunn’s drowning, to more generalized western frontier legends such as “The Demented School Teacher.” Hurley called it “a historical/hysterical show...a fun, educational way to learn about the history of Bannack...yet [it] tells some pretty grizzly stories of some of the darker sides of the old mining town” (“Bannack”) Current chief interpretive officer John Phillips, and fifteen-year veteran Ghost Tour participant, stated that Bannack still holds to the “hysterical/historical” view regarding the Ghost Walks. The “hysterical/historical” designation is an interesting dichotomy, but I question whether such tales can be both hysterical and historical because of western civilization’s dismissal of the spectral.

The opening narration of the Bannack Ghost Tour welcomes the spectators to the spectacle of the evening while reaffirming Bannack as Montana Territory’s first capital and “the town that forever sealed in the minds and heart of men what the Wild West was truly all about” (“Bannack Ghost Walk”). “Sealed” is an interesting term as *entrapment* appears to be a primary concern of the evening’s specters. Right away, the overt celebratory nature of Bannack is questioned—at least, for effect. “A few called it Heaven. Some called it Purgatory,” notes the orator, while others, especially the “lost souls and spirits,” (the narration rises dramatically), “have another word for it...Hell.” These souls are “doomed forever to repeat in endless eternity that which they experience in their short lives here in Bannack.” While the script conflates “purgatory” with the fires

of “hell,” the purgatorial elements of entrapment and repetition remain central...to the point that I’m reminded of the ‘stasis of preserved ruins’. If these “arrested decay” walls could speak, they might very well emphasize the same “trapped” existence. Ruins in stasis and ghosts in limbo (for your Bannack pleasure) have something in common.

In an act which is repeated throughout the night, the orator calls out the audience’s voyeurism: “You have elected to spend this night in the company of the spirits of Bannack...to witness their suffering revel in the misery of those earthbound souls, not yet released to their final rewards.” The speaker then confronts various members in the audience asking: “Will you enjoy the pain?” “The hangings, the spilled blood and shredded flesh?” In this very Gothic play, the fourth wall is broken—but also broken in the way in which ghosts interrupt strict boundaries. In fact, the whole production is quite Gothic in its nature, relishing *excessiveness* as an expressive mode. Yet, this does threaten to detract from the historic and cultural power of the stories which follow because it creates such a *spectacle* of entertainment. “Will you be thrilled by the terror of the rope...the mark of the vigilantes that in a reign of terror brought law and justice by hanging to a troubled land? Will your heartbeat to the stories of bathos and pathos of a century of living in these haunted canyons?” The orator cautions, “you are not among the land of the living...” and warns: “do not stray...for if you do, you may join this ghost walk...forever!” This final declaration is followed by maniacal laughter to again dramatize the threat of a purgatorial stasis.

The opening scene, the “Murder of Chief Snag,” is based on the actual 1863 murder of a Lemhi Chief (Tio-van-du-ah) in the outskirts of Bannack, though accounts,

mainly taken from the writings of Thomas Dimsdale and Nathaniel Langford, vary on the murderer and motives. Nevertheless, the scene relates a piece of dark history regarding Bannack as it shows the Lemhi chief being shot by Buck Stinson, accompanied by saloon owner Cyrus Skinner, both notable members of the road agents known as the “Innocents,” along with lesser-known member Haze Lyons. Stinson sprays out from drunken lips: “There’s no such thing as a good Indian around these parts...’ceptin dead ones that is!” Skinner also remarks: “Your people’s time has passed. This land is no longer wasted on your kind.” Both Skinner’s words and Stinson’s—even as speculative fiction—represent historical responses to the “Indian Question” that haunted/haunts American history. Skinner produces the “land isn’t being used correctly” argument and then projects the “disappearing Indian” assumption that fueled the perceived ‘inevitability’ of Anglo western expansion; Stinson simply preaches the ugly gospel of outright genocide.

Yet, it is Chief Snag who gets the last word here—not having totally disappeared, apparently. “I am Old Snag,” begins his ghostly monologue, and he speaks of his people’s connection and history with this land before his tribe was “mercilessly starved, beaten and slaughtered by hateful white men.” “Upon my murder,” Snag continues, “these men...then scalped me and displayed my mane high upon their saloon walls for all to view.” The chief then laments his lack of burial: “By leaving me dismembered and face down for the coyotes...Skinner left my spirit to wander these hills forever in search of my rightful place among my ancestors in the presence for the Great Spirit.” Purgatory again—and due to a malignant historical violence. The scene concludes.

A critical analysis of agency might focus on the fact that the Native American has the last word. Perhaps even “Scar” (as in a “scarred” body), offers a fitting reminder for the violence done to Native American bodies during America’s settler colonial event: the haunting trace, the “dismembered,” “out of jointness.” However, as Renee Bergland would note, Snag is “spectralized.” Bergland argues that “the interior logic of the modern nation requires that citizens be haunted” (4). This is particularly relevant to U.S. history and heritage as “American nationalism is sustained by writings that conjure forth spectral Native Americans” in a manner which is strangely ambivalent as Native American ghosts function both “as representations of national guilt and as triumphant agents of Americanization” (4). Crucially, what is happening in this instance is that the potentially ‘hegemonically destabilizing’ ghost has been ‘hegemonically utilized’ to undermine its deconstructive potential. Haunting within this scene does *potentially* inspire introspection by expressing a subjugated history, a “difficult” or “dark” heritage. Scar’s monologue illustrates a historical wrong and the historical and cultural “scar” of murder is realized upon the “body” of American western history. I haven’t found any substantial historical commentary on Scar’s burial or his scalp; however, Thomas Dimsdale’s 1866 account of the murder notes that “The scalp of old Snag, the butchered chief, now hangs in a banking house in Salt Lake City (44). There is a grim poetry in the idea that Snag is the victim of a *gold rush* and that his body parts become displayed in the house of western capitalistic enterprise. And even though the burial of Snag is in question, his continued “presence” in this Bannack skit points not just to burial wrongs, but to a cultural reality which subverted American Indian lives. However, the power of

this history and Scar's voice is diluted by his "spectralized" state. The fact that western culture has relegated the ghost to the superstitious, the irrational, and the superficial "popular" means that Snag's lamentation—as disturbing as it is—loses *affective* educational power. The affectivity of the play is bound by context and because the "signage" of the night and the 'excessive' event signals an entry into entertainment thrills—in the vein of western civilization's approach to the spectral and the uncanny. I doubt many people take away a historical insight or reminder of western history's racialized settler colonial destructiveness.

Of course, the Bannack Ghost Walk wouldn't be complete without a scene with Henry Plummer in it, but how "The Banquet Scene" is framed is uncannily fitting in terms its attention to representation and spectacles of power. This skit focuses on the banquet where Plummer brought in the famed forty-dollar turkey—all the way from Salt Lake City—to ingratiate himself to Bannack's elite. In this scene, the audience views the illuminated, but now vacated, dining hall where the great feast occurred: the partially emptied spectacle. The narrator announces, "it looks like a party is just ending," signaling—when read in terms of spectacles and simulations—that a glimpse 'behind the scenes' is about to take place, an opportunity to see how power was creating the spectacle. A smug and satisfied Plummer is in front of the building waving goodbye to his notable guests. And, once again, the fourth wall is broken: "Oh, hello. I didn't see you there," he remarks, initiating the shifting of visible planes, while *also bringing the audience into the play*. Importantly, breaking the fourth wall here does not merely act as Gothic reflexivity, or as common theatrical performance device but, within the context of

the ghost town, yet again allows the visitor to “visit,” to walk around and through the buildings/stories of Bannack’s past. Plummer boasts: “I, Henry Plummer, the Sheriff of Bannack, did my best to see that it was a Thanksgiving dinner to remember,” and he adds: “forever.” Once again, the stasis (and *repetition*) of time is important to these haunting narratives. Eventually, Plummer’s tone shifts. He laments the fact that his ruse failed, and becomes fixated upon the intuition that some element of ruination soon awaits him. His mood sours and he loses patience with the audience and then dismisses them abruptly, walking back inside, tidying up—alone—and then turns off the lights. However, the audience did gain illumination, if they were paying attention. Like the midnight full moon adding its pale light to this late-October play, Plummer’s haunting scene reveals an attempt to control the spectacle of authority. He succeeded for a while, too, making himself sheriff of both Bannack and Virginia City.

This scene beautifully illustrates haunting’s capacity for self-reflection, as a spectral Plummer fully discloses his attempt to control the cultural narrative by interacting with and becoming part of the cultural authority. While he remains haunted (perhaps forever) by his eventual inability to maintain the narrative of his ‘innocence’ and his “Innocents,” the poignant haunting here is the way in which power understood the value of spectacle and authority and attempted to dominate that spectacle to hide his own, self-serving interests. The skit does not provide Plummer a back story that creates a more complex “villain” to consider and this leaves Plummer in a one-dimensional state (his actual, pre-Bannack history remains a mystery). Nevertheless, the audience is allowed to witness his designs illustrates the spectral/Gothic capacity for unveiling

certain spectacles, while also crucially continuing an involvement in the “Bannack Experience.” Similar to the way the visitor may interact with the material environment, this play allows the visitor to be specifically *affected* by simulated figures from Bannack’s past. This scene is perhaps more educational and less harmful than Chief Snag’s because of the shifted historical context, although I remain yet “haunted” by why Plummer acted as he did. Was he merely “evil”? Or was he possessed by the cultural flame of the ignis fatuus, that “fools fire” which made so many good people desperate and greedy?

The Bannack Ghost Walk scenes cover a variety of race and gender issues that require more attention. Skits such as Nellie Paget’s story, aka “The Star of the West,” “It’s Hard Being a Girl in Bannack,” and “Chop Chop” offer some tantalizing gender analysis, performing both substantial Western narrative interruptions and, at times, reinforcements. Nellie Paget’s story is particularly important because it shows a woman participating in the dream of the West—having actually left her fiancé *behind* in the East and changing her name from Helen Patterson. “Nellie” engaged in the hurdy-gurdy scene (prostitution) in Bannack’s earliest days, and ended up being shot by a jealous lover. Of course, women *were* involved in Anglo-American frontier expansion, but their roles and agency has been dimmed by the spectacle of the male Western figure. And when women were included, it was often as the “second wave” of Anglo arrivals, and then usually gender-locked into the stereotypical Victorian role of domesticity. While I doubt Nellie’s occupation was as glamorous as the skit makes it out to be (more of a “dancing girl,” less as a “soiled dove”), understanding how women utilized and participated in the “promise”

of the West and then interacted with certain mining economies—perhaps especially “mining the miners”—is essential western history. And, speaking of economy, what is also notable is the *lack* of class-oriented themes or a focus on great economic loss—surprising within Bannack’s boom/bust context, especially because of the well-known tale of Xavier Renois who ended his life with a bullet to the brain in 1920 due to not just health problems but because of looming financial issues. Lack of a visible economic haunting in these skits haunts with its absence, echoing Clements’ words: “Bust is the gunfight that everyone forgets.” While Renois’ suicide may be too traumatic an event for a “hysterical/historical” show and points to the limits of “haunting” entertainment, the lack of focus on the tumultuous nature of the boom/bust event points to the lack of awareness regarding historical *and continuing* economic issues within the West—as illustrated in Wyckoff’s “waning West” analysis. The phantasmal dreams of economic equality and opportunity yet remain substantial, often distracting from very real economic trauma.

Bannack’s Ghost Walk also importantly illustrates the *changing nature* of western heritage, reframing and reconfiguring past ghosts and their representations. This became most apparent when I recently found out that they had stopped doing the “Old Snag” scene. John Phillips said that with the rise of “black-face” awareness, they were no longer comfortable doing “red-face” and imitating a scalping. He mimicked a scalping movement several times—as if the *affectivity* of the movement had too much negative historic narrative power. Additionally, the “Horse Prairie Mine” skit has remained. This skit, based on legend, once again accesses historic violence towards native peoples as it

speaks of a haunted cave where the skulls (“man, woman or child”) of Bannock peoples were tossed after being murdered by marauding “cowpokes.” This happened after the Nez Perce scare of 1878. The narrator, an old timer miner, concludes: “Yup, them wuz hard days, and sometimes our forefathers were bloodthirsty beggars. But them days are gone for good now.” It is notable that it is not the obvious villain who does this historic injustice—as in the highwaymen committing the atrocities against Old Snag. Here, it was America’s nostalgic sweetheart, the cowboy. And, notably, the old timer poignantly mentions that the “local townsfolk...kept their bloody secret to themselves,” suggesting both a cover-up and an element of cultural guilt. The narrator does erroneously assume a homogenous audience with “our forefathers” and places such violence securely in the past. The latter aspect is especially disturbing regarding the continuous “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women” epidemic that plagues Montana. However, this skit nevertheless does allow for some counternarrative to an often unreflexive Western tale of white, male, civilizing progress. And, regarding the abandonment of the Snag scene, such adjustments exemplify a “changing West” and the shifting representations within haunting and heritage as negotiated within this presentation. Having said this, and in regard to the overall effect of the Ghost Walk, I am skeptical about its “historicizing” potential. I am loath to overly critique something that the public demands and that provides funding for a monetarily starved heritage site. Perhaps a short-term adjustment to the event would include a questionnaire or “fact sheet” which historically and culturally contextualized the events that the visitor just experienced.

Spectral Ruins, Spectral Interpretations, Usable Heritage

American Studies has long wrestled with both how to interpret American identity and what method(s) to use while doing so. I have brought a “spectral lens” into the discussion of western heritage and Bannack preservation to further understand how haunting functions in the West and to hopefully mediate between either/or and critical/unreflexive representations of a complex western heritage. In some respects, this still leaves difficult questions at hand. While the ghost has recently become privileged as a means by which the marginalized might speak, the Catch 22 is: “how can the ghost fulfill its deconstructive potential if it is not taken seriously?” By favoring a spectral lens, while I cannot always answer the question, discussions regarding the spectral in terms of representation, simulation, and heritage are at least forwarded. At the minimum, this oft overlooked problematic aspect of using the spectral as *solely* a deconstructive device is more closely studied. Additionally, and in a more general sense, focusing on the spectral helps delineate the relationship *between* these often-dichotomous western heritage and epistemological issues *precisely because* spectrality is revealed as essential to Bannack’s ghostly narratives and spectral preservations.

It is also obvious that this place-based “public history” reveals the ongoing discussions between historians, storytellers, management professionals, local organizations and the general public, to both hold onto and discern a *useable past*. As I’ve shown, spectral aspects are integral to the Bannack Experience. This is especially important considering how aspects of the spectral, “haunting” in particular, have been denounced by western civilization. The “problem of the popular” in Bannack is that

ghosts plague American heritage, yet we lack an awareness of how important they actually are, how they affect narratives, and how they are “affectively/effectively” utilized by respective power structures. In studying ghost towns, it is evident that American’s use “ghosts” in narrative and in ruins to connect with a perceived western past—but such specters can also deceive. Ambivalence swirls within this heritage. But this is not surprising within the larger historical context. America is haunted by an incredibly tumultuous economic history that helped propel the North American settler colonial event. The fact that settlers are *searching* for a place-based identity while also having to come to terms with the fact that “all men are created equal” regarding “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” has not been applied “equally” means that haunting ghosts are absolutely present. American heritage and a “usable” past are interrupted by such ghosts, but these specters can help clarify what’s at stake, if we let them. Ghosts express absences that need to be filled and this relates as much to the voices of those marginalized by dominant narratives as it does to a people who are attempting to fill the hole of an absent heritage. Realizing the western specter, then, hopefully neutralizes some of the antagonism between the “critical” and the “popular,” between the analytical “city intellectual” and the “defensive son,” that dichotomy Stegner so aptly articulates as the most pressing Western haunting.

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CODA: BLADE RUNNER 2049 AND “THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIMULATED
HUMAN IN THE POST-WEST”

...the decline of Empire witnesses the fraying of this map, little by little, and its fall into ruins, though some shreds are still discernable in the deserts—the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction testifying to a pride equal to the Empire and rotting like a carcass, returning the to the substance of the soil...

~Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations and Simulacra*

Denis Villeneuve’s recent film, *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), offers a provocative answer to the question “What then is the American?” And the way it frames what is at stake here is entirely engaged with my discussion regarding the Western, the American western region, and the way the affective human body, while always defined by its environment, acts as the affective site for haunting and alienation. It also pertains to the way I have made a “light” distinction between spectrality and haunting to better illuminate the “out of joint” moment where the “uncanny” happens and some repressed ghost surfaces. These distinctions have been necessary because of how spectrality interacts with the *spectrum* of representation in language and cultural constructs. It is necessary to be aware of this spectrum to understand that the human may indeed be always and already haunted by the “gaps” within our subjective and cultural interface with the world, but when such gaps become “out of joint,” haunting begins to affect the human. The stories of Luz Dunn and Billy Parham in my first chapter illustrated such haunting quite well: their “simulated” cultural reality of anthropocentrism was misaligned with their affective natures that found some integral part of themselves in the nonhuman. But getting to a point of self-realization within a western world which has ostensibly

“mapped” the human body to such degrees that the human is an alien to himself, to herself, means that the trek is arduous and riddled with pain, from self-doubt to cultural judgements to physical wounding. This film and its primary character, indelibly, provide such an illustration.

I have focused on the affective body and its capacity to haunt/be haunted for precisely this reason: to get in “touch” with the real of the body, to pierce the simulations of the West. However, paradoxically, the West has *always been a place where Euro-Americans searched precisely for this real body*. While the dominant Western narrative came to represent the “Winning of the West” as a taming of both body and land in a “civilization v. savagery” paradigm, the great paradox of America’s frontier West is that many participated within the “virginal” dream to *escape* various sorts of cultural mapping housed within “Old World” colonial realities. With this in mind, I would argue that the “frontier” remains not just a useful, but an essential term. This “sub-textual promise of the West” is also why the West and the Western continue to haunt American cultural consciousness in pervasive manners. The West as a region continues to help locate “what’s at stake” within issues of simulation, alienation, community, and environment as the traces of the promise of the ‘unmapped’ self remain (or less-mapped, at least). The fact that a spot such as Las Vegas exists within the West makes us “hyperaware” of the imaginative capacity of this “hyperreal” place, of the wide *spectrum* of simulations that wrestle for our attention here as western civilization piles up upon itself on its westward trek, in this space which has so *imaginatively* located Anglo-centric American hopes and fears. The fact that Villeneuve’s film utilizes a *simulated human* within a *simulated* LA

and, especially, a Las Vegas suspended in an apocalyptic “arrested decay” of capitalistic consumption, means that, through both hard-boiled noir and Western tropes, the West still captures our imagination in productive and provocative ways. *There is yet something usable here*—even in this dystopia of haunting simulations. Indeed, the fact that we can yet still be *haunted* means there is a “real”—of some sorts—to be haunted about or from.

Villeneuve’s *Blade Runner 2049* is a sequel to Ridley Scott’s 1982 sci-fi classic *Blade Runner* which was based off Phillip K. Dick’s novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Dick’s setting was a postapocalyptic, post-nuclear war San Francisco, but Scott made the setting a 2019 LA and focused on dystopic technological and environmental elements with a plot centered on the human/replicant border. The “replicant” is a bioengineered human simulacrum developed by the big brother-ish Tyrrell Corp to work (mining most specifically, but also for pleasure and military purposes) in off-world colonies. Rick Dickard—a perfectly hard-boiled name—played by Harrison Ford, is a “blade runner,” a cop that hunts down replicants that don’t pass the Voight-Kampff test, a test that measures emotional responses. Essentially, these androids shouldn’t be “feeling” anything because, well, that would make them dangerous—dangerously human. In this tech-noir, Deckard, though retired, is coaxed out of retirement rather easily to fill the role of Western lawman to hunt the most recent group of outlaw replicants in the goal of, ironically, “retiring” them (killing them). The irony runs deeper because there are hints that Deckard himself may also be a replicant; however, this remains a heavily debated topic. Deckard ends up falling in love with a

replicant, Rachel (Sean Young), a special new android, given “real” human memories, and the movie ends with the two of them together, supposedly running away.

Villeneuve’s 2017 version, set thirty years later, alters the primary “lens” of the movie by providing a blade runner protagonist who definitively *is* a replicant—at least at first. In this “Blade Runner Redux,” the simulation now hunts the simulation for humankind. In this manner, the replicant is in interesting conversation with “Western Authenticity”—the long established, and ever contested *real* of the American West. “[T]here is no other region in American,” argue William Handley and Nathaniel Lewis, “that is as haunted by the elusive appeal, legitimating power, and nostalgic pull of authenticity, whether in regard to ethnicity, cultural artifacts, or settings” (1). The very fact that the West is such a contestable space for the “real” makes the West *the contestable space* for the “real.” I mean, and to relate to my argument concerning “frontier,” the historic “promise” of the West is *intimately* connected with American cultural concerns regarding simulation, social freedom, and self-autonomy. There is something very precious at stake here. It is, then, perhaps not at all “uncanny” that this new Western hero is a simulacrum. We need this obviously simulated form to understand some integral aspect of the Western story.

This new *Blade Runner* chapter has “Officer K” roaming about a more expansive southwest region, notably experiencing not just the dark and oppressive, human-built, sky-high LA structures and neo-noir urban shadows, but also involves K leaving the metropolis to explore the western rural in horizonless junkyards peopled by untold numbers of slave-children junk sorters, tracking replicants participating in the agrarian

dream as farmers within toxic rural landscapes, and venturing out into the true ‘no-man’s land’ of Las Vegas. And here, Vegas is a highly stylistic and hauntingly lifeless urban landscape, frozen in a red-ochre fallout of old, dusty radiation and/or environmental decay. Because only the simulated reality of Vegas remains, this perception, when “interlinked” with the simulated western man, accentuates the film’s overarching plot issues of the omni-present, haunting, simulated real. Thus, Baudrillard’s “desert of the real” comes to mind, as does his discussion of hyperrealities that have lost what they signified—as if the simulation has taken over and dissolved the human being (1).

Stephen Tatum and Nathaniel Lewis discuss Baudrillard’s phrase while scrutinizing Las Vegas, appreciating the way “the hyperreal—the speeded-up circulation of signs or copies without origins—produces the so-called desert of the real, whose towns ‘have about them something of the mirage, which may vanish at any instant’” (10). In this way, the film interacts with many of my concerns, from haunted western humans dealing with “mismapped” bodies “out of sync” with their “felt” posthuman hybrid bodies, to the way that Western heritage’s ghost stories have some intimate spectral relationship with a frozen, simulated built-environment of semi-ruined, celebratory western ghost towns.

These issues—and especially Villeneuve’s powerful portrayal of Vegas as a site of *dark heritage*—remind me of Nathaniel Lewis’ and Stephen Tatum’s recent work, *Morta Las Vegas: CSI and the Problem of the West* (2017). This is notably not “Viva Las Vegas”—a phrase indicative of a “live” and lively Las Vegas, ripe with the evergreen promise of material consumption and freedom from yesterday’s cares. The authors examine the “problem” of the West through a decidedly more spectral lens with the help

of an old western ghost, Frederick Jackson Turner, and his 1896 article, “The Problem of the West.” Turner puts the “problem” into economic terms explained by social Darwinism, based on a ‘savagery to civilization’ evolution that involves repeating “new,” demarcated “stages of development” which often rush to forget and/or obscure the past (5). Turner’s method also involves a very patrician historiographic style which tidily summarizes history in a progressive and very secure narration that provides ‘closed box’ answers. Lewis and Tatum ruffle the methodological style of “certainty” with the introduction of a spectral reality while challenging progressive “starting over” development stages by illustrating how traces of the past always remain. The authors note that, “in the American West, the traces of the past are often hidden from view,” and “taken together, the erasure of history, the obscurity of traces, the rapid development of the West, and the cultural narrative of expansion present a *problem*” (2). This “problem” of erasure via “starting over” simulations and rampant material consumption, is most explicitly located and exacerbated in Las Vegas, in the “sleek *frisson* of anxiety and promise” experienced in the Vegas Strip, as Dave Hickey has noted (6,7 original).

“Melancholy” is a central affective term for Lewis and Tatum in this simulated western town, thus tapping into the *afteraffects* of the “cruel promise” (from Berlant) and emphasizing the “out of joint” (via Derrida) nature of this western/Western inheritance. History can only be “repressed,” argue the authors with reference to Freud’s comment that such a history will “return in uncanny fashion through the primary mechanism of repetition and compulsion” (7). And, with reference to Ernst Bloch, Lewis and Tatum illustrate how the ‘Western uncanny’ has something to do with technological assumptions

and the fact that “where technology has achieved an apparent victory over the limits of nature...the coefficient of known and, more significantly, unknown dangers has increased proportionately” (8). Mike Davis’ thoughts are also noted, and he comments on Bloch, adding that “for the bourgeois utopia of a totally calculable and safe environment has paradoxically generated radical insecurity (*unheimlich*)” (8 original). Davis and Bloch are speaking about assumptions of “control” and “safety” and the uncanny moment when such assumptions—often housed within technology—are suddenly swept away in a way that probes the ultimate fear that, as Lewis and Tatum note, the original and continued Western promise “is now vulnerable to widespread, systemic collapse” (8).

Las Vegas is not my sole concern, but the corresponding “Queen city of simulations” that harbors a “sleek frisson” of promise and anxiety *and* which “may vanish at any instant” produces a problem that is *most definitely* explored in *Blade Runner 2049*’s affective human replicant body and the “problem” about replicant reproduction. Indeed, for students of American and colonial history “problems” have been framed quite literally: “The Irish Problem” for the English, “The Indian Problem” for American settler colonists, “The Negro Problem” during abolition, “the Woman Problem,” for men during suffrage. The “problem” is a named and notable cultural Other. I would argue that this new blade runner story perfectly articulates Lewis and Tatum’s (and Baudrillard’s) concerns with a historically simulated West by fantastically framing the age-old “problem of the authentic” as “The Replicant Problem.” Such a framing, and the way the movie “humanizes” the human simulation allows the audience to realize and walk within the skin of the Other to better understand exactly *how the*

human has become the cultural Other in the West. This Other's central position in this film crucially allows the viewer to experience the way something might just feel "off" about our Western reality—to the point that we feel like *we are* the "simulated Other." Thus, K's simulated exterior, but very human, affective, emotional interior. Thus, his *transformation* from simulacrum to emotional body *trapped in a simulacrum*. While the movie cries out for a heavy interrogation of the human/simulated border, a quick glimpse at a few scenes frames how the "problem" of the West continues to be "framed" within the boundaries of the male, but this time in the "not human," simulated body.

In the opening scene, Officer K D6-3.7, a nexus-9 model replicant (played by an excellent Ryan Gosling), travels out of LA in his flying car, his "spinner," on a mission to "retire" a nexus-8 model. This model 8 is introduced via a huge, hulking humanoid form, wrapped in a heavy protective suit, working in a protective greenhouse. Sapper Morton (the imposing Dave Bautista) is a protein farmer, and reveals the current, very reduced condition of America's agrarian dream within a ruined landscape, the "ruined garden." The interaction between the two models is especially interesting, and framed within a dark, simple farmhouse—with a boiling pot on the oven. Contamination is an obvious issue. The "farmer" takes a decontamination shower as he enters the building. Contamination awareness helps create a pressurized atmosphere of bodies needing protecting from contagion: body boundaries are under threat. And this pressurized anxiety is compounded by the low boil of the food on the stove in a way that affectively signifies and initiates K's overarching journey where he's forced to navigate "prescribed" and "felt" human body boundaries. After some glib dialogue where K reveals his snappy,

hard-boiled pedigree, a brutal fight ensues and K overpowers the much larger, but less advanced, model. Before the scene finishes, however, Sapper says, gasping, “How does it feel, killing your own kind?” “I don’t retire my kind,” K responds, “We don’t run. Only older models run.” And Sapper replies—with a feverish determination: “You new models. You’re happy scraping the shit. *You’ve never seen a miracle.*” And with that, rushes K and is shot dead. K takes Sapper’s eye for identification purposes, but just as he’s about to leave, K spots a lone yellow flower propped against the base of a large, very dead tree, its stark skeletal form supported by a taught web of guywires. A beacon of hope set against the simulated form: a trace. He orders his flying drone to scan down into the earth. There is a footlocker buried below.

After ordering a dig team to come and excavate, K then comes “home,” as ordered by his superior officer, Lt. Joshi (Erin Wright). Upon arriving he immediately takes his “baseline test” to examine his emotional response time. The meter, cadence, and language of the test create a truly mesmerizing experience, but he passes—easily, apparently, and as usual. The test administer calls him “Constant K.” No human emotion here. It sounds like a cereal brand, high in fiber to “regulate” the human body. The test establishes that he’s *not* becoming irregular—i.e. human. The paradox is that emotions are out of control and therefore human, yet humans maintain control over him via his “baseline” parameters, aka, his normality on a “constant,” unemotional scale. “Constant” here equals “controlled.” Trying to “take the human out of the equation” has been a point (and boundary) often discussed in this dissertation in terms of cultural control, knowledge structures, and objective truth, and the movie frames this issue

beautifully, hauntingly. Control is central here, or, rather, the illusion of control, the *simulation of*. In this manner, and often illustrating Gothic aspects, the story confronts the illusion of control, and the haunting aspects in this film marries control over the environment with the control over “humanity” itself, or control over “what is human” and, most importantly, who gets to reproduce.

The footlocker produces the most mysterious contents: the body of a woman who died during childbirth. What is more interesting, however, is *that she is a replicant*. This sets off a tectonic shock wave, a desperate race for *control* over the now “out of control” reality: control over this material evidence of the “truth,” control over the narrative, and control over the means of (re)production. This latter aspect is crucially important for Tyrell’s fanatical successor, Niander Wallace (a very effective Jared Leto), who, in other, masterfully crafted scenes, dramatically laments the fact that he’s been denied the knowledge, and therefore control, of this divine reproductive capacity.

The ramifications of the discovery play out in Lt. Joshi’s office. After a long, stiff drink, Joshi says to K: “The world’s built on a wall that separates kin. Tell either side there’s no wall—you bought a war—or a slaughter.” She continues, “There’s an order to things. This turns it. That’s what we do here, we keep *order*.” And here the most crucial boundary of the movie is established: the boundary between the human and tech that serves humanity. Thus, Ernst Bloch’s comment regarding how “technology has achieved an apparent victory over the limits of nature,” is highlighted—and ruptured. It also pivotally illuminates the boundaries of the replicant Other and places it within the frame of Western justice in a way that forces Gosling’s protagonist character—even despite his

replicant status—to reconsider the Other’s relationship with cultural justice. This latter aspect has long been a trope of Western and hard-boiled literature in which the lawman confronts a crime which inevitably leads to his reconsideration of justice. And here, organic self-reproduction, self-replicating, is seen as only a human gift—like emotion, as if emotion and reproduction are linked, or “interlinked,” as his baseline test might suggest. So, Joshi commands K to get rid of “everything.” K hesitates, saying “I’ve never retired something born.” “What’s the difference?” asks Joshi. “To be born is to have a soul,” he responds. “You telling me no?” she asks again. K says, “I wasn’t aware I had a choice.” “Attaboy,” says Joshi—as if K needed the “human” support.

What’s also interesting in this film is that Lewis and Tatum (and Turner’s) ‘problem of history’ becomes a ‘problem of memory’ and how the “authentic now” corresponds to the “authentic past” in a way that not only defines the “human,” but links built simulations and material history. And K, again, provides an excellent medium for exploring this relationship. Of course, every good story utilizes the affectivity of the protagonist to attract and engage the viewer. Through ‘affective transference’, the viewer connects with the experience of the protagonist, becomes, to different degrees, the protagonist. And this film creates a “constant” uncanny experience by juxtaposing the “not human” onto the “human.” Most particularly, in a masterful twist—like anyone who thought they were special and/or desired to have a validated past/history—K finds out that *he might be the child*. He might actually have a mother, and thus, his memories—which he’s been told are implanted, but which have plagued him with their affective power—might actually be *real*. Authentic. And this allows him to therefore have *real*

feelings. He might very well be a “real boy.” Here, for K, is the question: “Whose memories are mine?” The Problem of the West is then “Whose West?” Or “Which West?” And so, this boils down into issues of heritage. Part of the initial “authentic” deals with getting away from cultural “mismatching” and simulations of the real, but then the second deals with needing a heritage to establish one’s self. So, there’s another paradox here that replicates part of the difficulty in managing placed-based sites of heritage in the West, as I’ve spoken about previously.

The possibility that his memories might actually be real inspires K—along with the only real “constant” about K, his loneliness—to search out the “memory maker” (a great term for the cultural historian). He travels to Doctor Ana Stelline, a very young and brilliant doctor—and who has a bit of mysterious wispiness about her that seems absolutely fitting for one who makes memories. What’s more, she is a bubble child, forced to live within a contained atmosphere. She explains in paradox, “...compromised immune system, a life of freedom so long as it’s behind glass.” And so, we have another example of layered freedom/nonfreedom, boundaries and barriers to add to our complexly simulated cinematic story. But K’s more interested in his own personal boundary with the past. He asks, “What makes your memories so...authentic?” She explains that not only did her isolation cause her to be creatively imaginative, but “Wallace needs my talent to maintain a stable product. ‘Provide content for unavoidable affect’.” She focuses on affective authenticity in her memoirs. “It feels authentic. If you have authentic memories, you’ll have real human responses wouldn’t you agree?” Of course, this is paradoxical territory because we don’t want replicant human responses

that are *too* real. She explains that because replicants lead such hard lives, they should have good memories to bring them joy. While there may be some plot holes here, I'd say there is a "truth" in the fact that hardship can definitely precipitate "exceptional" cultural memories *and* can equally demand a "starting over" historical dream that helps facilitate a "less harsh" future. Lessons for the American critic. But Ana gets into what makes her memories special, explaining that it's not about details, what "they" assume (as if the scientists of replicant production can only conceive of a rational, logical process), but "feelings...and our feelings are awful students. The mind is an impressionist. Anything real should be a mess." Again, order, control, and feelings—with the latter as the miserable "students" of human definition. And this sets the tone for the scene's apex and the film's first climax.

K asks Ana: "Can you tell if a memory really happened?" She directs him to sit down and Ana looks into a device that presumably scans his eyes. K, in his often subdued, but Ryan-Gosling-playful manner asks, "Does it hurt?" Well, of course it won't, right? Or maybe it will be the most excruciating experience imaginable. As he conjures a particularly emotional and plot-relevant memory that has repeatedly haunted him, Ana's face shifts into distress and then into tears. "Someone's lived this, yes...This happened." K's gaze gradually lowers. The music subtly pressurizes. K's body begins to tremble. "I know it's real," he says, as if to make it real. His head drops into his hands, and he rubs his eyes, hard, as if to wipe away the soiled layers of doubt and despair—the dusty vestiges of the *desert of the real*—and to release the pressure that's built since that first boiling water scene in the farmhouse. He repeats himself, "I know it's real." And

K's bodily tremors increase until he finally explodes upwards, off the stool, and with an expunging scream: "GOD. DAMMIT!!" He violent kicks the stool, sending it clattering across the concrete floor and ricocheting off the echoing wall. K leaves without looking back. Ana wipes her tears, watches him turn and leave.

I am haunted by this scene. There is something so unequivocally "human" about it. It is my favorite of the movie, and especially makes me value K and his story. The way the movie funnels into this moment, a slow boil that explodes with not joy over K's realization of his own "truth," but with a curse (hurled at the creator, I'd say) is remarkably beautiful and fitting. It is *most* human. It is an incredibly affective *frisson*. Except, there's another "problem". Outside of Ana's workshop, he's greeted by cops. They're suspicious of him visiting a memory maker and they take him in for an impromptu baseline test. He fails, miserably. But he gets a brief pardon from Joshi because he tells her that he found the kid and 'took care of' the situation. She gives him 48 hours to get "back on track." Tracks, lines, and baselines are such well-ordered simulations.

Still searching to clarify a past obscured by his own simulated reality (as a produced android), K follows a trail that leads him into the old Las Vegas, an empty Bacchanalian paradise of now environmental *rust*. It resembles "arrested decay"—and offers a *mise-en-scène* of truly deliberate, and seductively simulated American consumption where the fluid, skyscraper-tall, holographic female nudes of current LA are here locked in frozen, erotic poses. And it is notably absent of humans—well, absent of all organic life, but most notably humans because of the human-built environment. And

in a film about simulacra, this “arrested decay” (decay in stasis) snapshots the source of the apocalypse, the “heart” of American simulation and America’s unreflexive western gaze of progress within the West-as-region which has resulted in the *desert of the real*. And here K meets the original blade runner, Rick Deckard. “Replicant survivor in the land of simulation?” or “survivor of replicant hunters?” It remains unclear. K hears about Deckard and Rachel’s separation, and the role of the replicant resistance to ensure their miracle child’s safety. Rachel was indeed the replicant mother K found. However, before he can get to the “real” questions, Wallace’s top android, a female, gorgeous, cold, and ruthless: “Luv” (irony, yes)—tracks them down and captures Deckard.

K ends up being rescued by the resistance—but it becomes a “god damn” miserable rescue. I use that phrase to connect with the previous scene at Ana’s—except here, the curse is directed at not the simulation of past emptiness, but of recent promise. K learns that he was only a decoy; his memories *were* real, but they were Ana’s. *Ana is the child*. This is a soul-crushing moment for K (if he had one). His Western male laconic nature returns, possessing him, and his head simply drops onto his chest, onto his now terribly beat up body. So, what can a guy do? In the true Western male sense, part Western frontier justice, part hard-boiled detective, he realizes that he still has a somewhat functioning body and a mission that involves justice and the saving of a “beloved”—even if it’s not his own. He rescues Deckard after a brutal battle with the “Luv”—as if “simulated Luv” needed to be cast aside—and takes Deckard to see Ana. The film closes on his mortally wounded body, lying on the steps outside Ana’s memory clinic.

The closing shot on K is *the* illustration of melancholy, an affective/affecting western melancholy. It also, however, aptly frames Lewis and Tatum's concerns when they summarize *Morta Las Vegas* with the statement "that something deeper at stake counters, finally, on what does or does not constitute an ethical relation between one's own body and being in the world, and between that body and being in the world of the Other, whether alive or dead" (239,240). Here, because the unhuman Other was so human, we don't want him dead. However, K's death does help frame our melancholy humanity—more so for those of us who relate to such "ethical relations" in the face of simulated alienation. Such issues of haunting "Other borders" are fantastically scrutinized within "simulated human" stories—perhaps from Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a post-Enlightenment anxiety of technology and control onwards into the edges of this futuristic American West. Except here, the western dream has ended with an intimate linkage between simulated human and a simulated built environment.

What is usable? I want to leave this concluding space somewhat open as a blurred exclamation point to a discussion about spectrality, boundary, and heritage, but emphasize the power of this film's embodiment of the simulated human in the West, this post-frontier dream. The affected/affecting human body is central here, with the haunted body directing the gaze toward issues of alienation within a culture which wrestles with a problematic history—combined with the desire to have a "real" history—and the myriad manners in which western culture feebly simulates a reality of rational "control" that seems to dim some essential aspect of an emotional human existence. I'm haunted by K's relationship with Western roles and destruction in a way which reminds me of the

other orphans of this postwestern dissertation—especially Billy Parham’s story. I’m also thinking about Derrida’s spectral “justice” and Avery Gordon’s “something-to-be-done.” In many ways, Derrida links justice with haunting in a way which simply establishes how America’s prolific crime stories are really just the “problem” of solving particular hauntings, specific “out of joint” moments which plague individuals and cultures. In this way the ghost functions as an affective truth seeker.

So, it’s no surprise, really, that the simulation becomes the detective in the West, investigating cultural truths that always relate back to his own individual ghosts. And while K’s final, last-gasp-on-the-steps scene might be most aptly indicative of the feeling of concluding a dissertation, I would also stress, in a way that’s more pertinent to my actual arguments, that this allows me to reflect on my text. This scene isn’t necessarily purely tragedy, of course. I say this because in this dissertation I’ve defended a spectral lens against a sort of defeatist, deconstructive nihilism. Here, too, resides a productive haunting for both the character K, and in the affective transmission from the screen to the audience in a way which advances, when properly contextualized, a better understanding of American western culture. The film, without a doubt, accesses anxieties which have haunted America about its cultural ideologies as they’ve played out in the West. Material consumptions, self-autonomy, aspects of cultural and individual control, and “reason v. imagination” are hugely influential aspects in the Western narrative which so often orbits around this strange concept of the “authentic.” In fact, the “authentic real” has translated into the quantifiable empirical to such an extent that the more ephemeral concepts of emotion and haunting have been denied to the human. This

is a *problem*, beginning with the fact, as I've shown throughout, that haunting yet remains an *essential* human experience *and* because it has a very affective relevance on both personal and cultural levels. At the minimum, I've hoped to have raised an awareness of haunting within the West—and in a way which adequately expresses the need for a better “conversation with ghosts” on both a theoretical boundary level and in regard to the quest for a more usable heritage. This involves a better understanding of, to follow my chapters: the hybrid “posthuman” body, the spectro-geographies of memory, culture, and the built environment, the affective reality of spectro-textuality within language and storytelling realities from indigenous and Anglo cultural points of view, and realizing the desires, challenges, and problems within an American western heritage of commercialized hauntings and “arrested decay” preservation strategies. While ghosts have been relegated to the “uncontrolled” and/or “superstitious” realm of the “unreal,” they are absolutely present within us and our West, and a better conversation with them, I would argue, will lead to a better relationship with the land, each other, and, perhaps most importantly, our affected/affecting selves.

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