

Literary Contraband: Indigenous Insurgency and the Spatial Politics of Resistance

El presente artículo sostiene que, más que una instancia de asimilación o adaptación cultural, la (re)emergencia de la literatura indígena en las últimas décadas representa una irrupción o in-surgencia dentro de espacios normalmente, y hasta recientemente, limitados a blancos, mestizos y Occidente. Al conectar estas intervenciones en la ciudad letrada con prácticas de contrabando en sociedades fronterizas y rutas pre-hispánicas de comercio, examino lo que denomino contrabando literario en la poesía de Miguel Ángel López Hernández (Colombia/Venezuela) y en la novela Almanac of the Dead de Leslie Marmon Silko (Estados Unidos). Argumento que conceptualizar la nueva literatura amerindia en estos términos puede contribuir a ilustrar la interacción entre la poética y la política en proyectos contemporáneos de revitalización cultural. Sin embargo, más allá de celebrar la “dichosa llegada” de la literatura amerindia, sugiero que esta incipiente reconfiguración de la ciudad letrada demanda la continua elaboración de acercamientos críticos descolonizantes que atiendan a las dinámicas de poder que marcan la producción y el consumo de la literatura indígena.

Books have been the focus of the struggle for the control of the Americas from the start. The great libraries of the Americas were destroyed in 1540 because the Spaniards feared the political and spiritual power of books authored by the indigenous people. ... Now, fewer than five hundred years after the great libraries of the Americas were burned, a great blossoming of Native American writers is under way.

Leslie Marmon Silko

IN THE BLACK MARKET OF THE LETTERED CITY

From the very first moments of “discovery,” writing was an integral part of the colonial enterprise. The conquest itself, and the linkage between the

Old and New Worlds, was forged through the *crónicas* and letters addressed to the monarchy - specifically, a kind of writing not just about but in some sense upon the “New World” and its inhabitants. Columbus describes the Caribbean natives in terms of lack: they are without clothing, without religion, without writing, and without civilization. They are, in a sense - as is América as a whole - cast as blank slates waiting to be filled, inscribed, with European civilization. As Ángel Rama shows in his classic essay (1984), the lettered city emerges from the foundations of this nefarious illusion: the dream of an order imposed on an allegedly empty, nascent continent without a past. While the weight of history constrained the “Old” World, América was cast as a vast, open plane awaiting a predetermined future. For Rama, such a mentality entailed building *ex nihilo* “el edificio de lo que se pensó era la mera transposición del pasado, cuando en verdad fue la realización de un sueño que comenzaba a soñar una nueva época del mundo. América fue la primera realización material de ese sueño y, su puesto, central en la edificación de la era capitalista” (2-3).¹ As Silko’s epigraph indicates, such a process entailed not only an imposition but also a violent act of erasure that negated all other cultural geographies, dreams, and archives.

So what does it mean to speak of indigenous literature? Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver writes that “To discuss something labeled ‘Native American literature’ is to enter a thicket that would make Brer Rabbit... envious. Almost immediately, briarlike questions arise” (4).² For instance: How are we to define the terms *indigenous* and *literature*? Given that alphabetic writing has often served as an instrument of subjugation and colonization, how do authors appropriate it as a tool for liberation while navigating the existing power dynamics at work in the links between *letras* and the ideology of modernity/coloniality? How might Native texts both vindicate subjugated knowledges and frustrate their impending appropriation for purposes contrary to social movements’ objectives? These are some of the key questions facing not only literary critics but also indigenous authors, as they explore the tensions between oral traditions, their own forms of textuality in textiles and graphics, and Western alphabetic writing. As Quechua activist Hugo Blanco noted in 1972,

Hay que comprender que durante siglos los opresores del campesinado le han hecho ver el papel como un dios. El papel se ha convertido en un fetiche.

Las órdenes de arresto son papeles. A través de “papeles” aplastan al indio en los tribunales. El campesino ve papeles en la oficina del gobernador, del párroco, del juez, del escribano, donde todos los poderosos; también el hacendado hace las

cuentas en papeles. A cualquier razonamiento suyo, a cualquier argumento lógico, le refutan mostrándole un papel; el papel aplasta la lógica, la derrota.

Es célebre la frase “Qelqan riman” (“El escrito es el que habla”). Nosotros combatimos a muerte este fetichismo, y una de las formas de combatirlo es, precisamente, mostrándole al campesino que así como el enemigo tiene “sus” papeles, nosotros también tenemos “nuestros” papeles. Que al papel que está contra la razón y la lógica del campesino oponemos el papel con esa razón y esa lógica. (90)³

The point of this gesture, I would argue, would not be to proclaim, “We, too, can write!” but rather “We can use writing too (against you but also for ourselves).” For the most part, insurgent poets do not merely seek recognition within the framework of dominant society. Rather, they manifest an attempt to de-link the tool (alphabetic writing, the novel) from its product (modernity/coloniality, “universal” literature) and to construct alternative affiliations between indigenous peoples themselves.

This approach opens the possibility of reading indigenous literatures beyond the terms of adoption or adaptation, as models ultimately tied to the colonizing logic of assimilation. Yet perhaps the notion of appropriation, as an act of taking exclusive possession, is not entirely germane here either. More than *adueñarse de las letras* - becoming their proprietor or *dueño* - indigenous oral literatures arguably march in the opposite direction: they signal a process of expropriation of a common good.⁴ Suppressed voices penetrate that walled lettered city not to conquer it, but rather to expand and disjoint it, twisting its narrow, angular streets and scrawling graffiti on its ivory towers in protest: “Nuestros sueños son sus pesadillas,”⁵ claims a graffiti by Mujeres Creando in Chukiago Marka (La Paz). To appeal to a recurrent theme in the works of Miguel Ángel López Hernández, Wayuu poet from the Guajira Peninsula of Colombia and Venezuela, we might say that these texts engage in acts of literary contraband. As is the case for many indigenous communities worldwide, Wayuu contraband invokes a practice that is less against the law than prior to the modern State; originating in pre-Hispanic practices for the exchange of goods, it represents routes of travel later proscribed by federal and local laws.⁶ More than an offensive strategy or an attempt at material accumulation, it thus serves as a defensive mechanism: mode of preservation of a society in constant flux. Above all, the smuggler or *contrabandista* serves to displace a product from its official spheres, delinking it from its designated and regulated uses and placing it in circulation in other spaces.

By connecting the practice of smuggling in border societies and pre-Hispanic trade routes with indigenous interventions into the lettered city,⁷ this article explores the framework of literary contraband in the poetry of Miguel Ángel López Hernández (Colombia/Venezuela) and the novel *Almanac of the Dead* by Leslie Marmon Silko (United States). I argue that the (re)emergence of Native literature in recent decades represents a *surgimiento*: not just an insurrection or an act of defiance but also a transformative event, an indigenous in-surgence into spaces normally, and until recently, confined to whites, mestizos, and the West. The framework of what I call *insurgent poetics* - that is, a mode of writing that performs acts of resistance and partakes in the struggle for intellectual and political sovereignty - connotes a process of rising up and surging in that it threatens to reconfigure the domain of literature, the nation-State, and politics-as-we-know-it. Like a tidal wave, this surge washes over and destabilizes the ground we stand upon, opening space for alternate paths and the erection of new structures on the indigenous foundations of the nation's architectural and scriptural palimpsests. Yet beyond simply heralding the fact that Amerindian literature has "finally arrived" I suggest that this incipient reconfiguration of the lettered city commands the continued development of decolonizing critical approaches cognizant of the power dynamics at work in the production and reception of indigenous literatures.

DREAMS OF AN INTIMATE REBELLION

Wayuu poet Miguel Ángel López Hernández, recipient of the 2006 Casa de las Américas Prize, has published three volumes of poetry under two heteronyms, Vito Apüşhana and Malohe, each of which assumes a distinct poetic voice and addresses a different set of interlocutors. Through the voice of Vito Apüşhana, López assumes the task not of refuting and estranging injurious *arfjunas*, or non-Wayuu individuals, but rather of creating links of solidarity with sympathetic and receptive outsiders, perceiving in such a possibility the seeds of change.⁸ As illustrated by the title of his 1992 collection, *Contrabando sueños con arfjuna cercanos*, Vito provocatively juxtaposes the image of contraband as an insubordinate, illicit act with an atmosphere of intimacy and respect. The poem "Culturas" manifests this function of the poet in contrast with that of the *jayechimajachi*, traditional purveyor of Wayuu stories and histories:

Tarash, el jayechimajachi de Wanulumana, ha llegado
para cantar a los que lo conocen...
su lengua nos festeja nuestra propia historia,

su lengua sostiene nuestra manera de ver la vida.
 Yo, en cambio, escribo vuestras voces
 para aquellos que no nos conocen,
 para visitantes que buscan nuestro respeto...
 Contrabando sueños con arjunas cercanos. (7)⁹

For Vito, then, written poetry constitutes a tool for bartering and sharing dreams across cultural boundaries. As ethnologist Michel Perrin explains in *Los practicantes del sueño* (1995), the ritual practice of oniromancy (the interpretation of dreams) functions simultaneously as a mode of narration, a practice of interpretation, and a model of action. In Wayuu cosmology, dreams not only predict but also prescribe actions in daily life. As a middle realm between the other world of the gods, ancestors, and specters (*pūlasū*) and the present, tangible world of the profane (*anasū*), they function as a meeting ground where knowledge is created and transmitted. Most notably, dreams provide a means of maintaining contact with Wayuu cultural roots and ancestral spirits. Yet Perrin notes that they are also a space of encounter for the living; the verb *alapūjewaa* means “to want to dream with someone,” and *alapūjanaa* “to sense that you will dream with someone” (*Practicantes* 77). The connotation here - similar to Spanish but with different connotations - is not to dream *about* but rather to dream with, to meet in the dreamworld as a cohabited space.

For Perrin, the daily practice of sharing and interpreting dreams provides an opportunity for inter-cultural dialogue and communication with his hosts, Ishu and Jusé:

Yo expresaba mi deseo de meterme en su mundo “soñando wayuu” o sometiendo mis sueños a la interpretación indígena. ... Además, nuestros sueños mostraban a veces un entrecruzamiento revelador. Yo mezclaba imágenes de mi sociedad y de la suya; ellos tomaban imágenes de la suya para decir lo que les ocurría en la mía. (87)¹⁰

While this process of oneiric exchange conveys a gradual process of mutual *acercamiento* as Perrin gains fluency in Wayuu cultural language (and vice versa), it also simultaneously reinforces a necessary gap in ethnographic knowledge; he concludes that “Para acercarse al otro cuando es tan lejano, hay que amar su diferencia y admitir que será por siempre irreductible” (196).¹¹ In this sense, *Los practicantes del sueño* sheds light on López’s turn to poetry as a tool for bartering dreams and as a verbal space for epistemological exchange. His association between dreams and poetic writing convokes the possibility for intercultural exchange between

arjuna and Wayuu through the act of reading; yet, as Perrin's reflections suggest, the very possibility for such *cercanía* hinges on an awareness of the necessarily partial nature of intercultural knowledge. The poem "Arjuna (persona no Wayuu)" instantiates one such limit, highlighting a tension between anthropological knowledge and the spiritual perception of the intangible:

La antropóloga, de cabello de maíz,
me ha pedido que le muestre
una forma de Pulowi.¹²

Por fuerza interna la llevé
hacia Palaa... nocturna.
No sé si comprendió
que Pulowi estaba
En nuestro oculto temor de verla. (9)¹³

Here poetry becomes a means of expressing the inexpressible, of verbalizing an ephemeral, irreducible form of knowledge. Poetry, like dreams, serves to bridge the space between the visible and invisible, human and divine, or Wayuu and *arjuna*, while simultaneously emphasizing the distance between each of these terms.

Meanwhile, a much later collection published under the name Malohe assumes a different poetic voice and interlocutor: in his 2006 collection, *Encuentros en los senderos de Abya Yala*, López shifts the focus away from a direct engagement with dominant society and looks instead to the possibilities for collaboration between disparate indigenous communities united in a set of shared epistemological precepts and political objectives. *Encuentros* thus adds another dimension of contraband not present in *Contrabando sueños* by reinforcing a tradition of inter-tribal exchange that predates interactions between European and indigenous. Through a turn to what he calls "la multiplicación de los encuentros" (11), each section of the text positions itself at a different juncture of Abya Yala, informed by each region's particular cosmovisions and poetics.¹⁴ López enters into dialogue with other *oralitores* or Native authors across the continent, writing from their own respective corners of the world. "Desde la ruka de Lorenzo Nahuelcoy/ se observa el universo del sur ordenado en sendas," he writes in "Más allá de la frontera" (19).¹⁵ Though *Encuentros* as a whole recalls the appearance of *indigenista* literature, with its glossaries and anthropological explanations, it is primarily addressed to Natives from other communities as a possible poetic and political interlocutor,

proprietor of a shared history and a common future: “Hemos llegado hasta aquí, hasta los leños ardientes de tu fogón, / para volver a reconocernos en los esfumados rostros del pasado” (20).¹⁶

These two markedly distinct collections converge, however, in the figure of the “dreaming wayfarer,” or *caminante soñador* (Rocha 152). Amongst many images, that of the route or path predominates; even Malohe’s encounter with his own culture entails a journey to the family cemetery as a site of contact with his spiritual and corporeal roots (Encuentro II). Vito and Malohe represent distinct gestures that, together, point to the possibility for a poetic, ethical, and political encounter between disparate worlds. “Como wayuu, [López] es un ‘contrabandista’, es un camión que va de aquí para allá y de allá para acá, trayendo y llevando sueños, experiencias y palabras” (153).¹⁷ This motif evokes Camëntsá poet Hugo Jamioy Juagibioy’s conception of writing with one’s feet, beating a path across the land and recording a people’s story through its travels:

La historia de mi pueblo
tiene los pasos limpios de mi abuelo,
va a su propio ritmo;
esta otra historia
va a la carretera
con zapatos prestados,
anda escribiendo con sus pies
sin su cabeza al lado ...(117)¹⁸

The notion of tracing a history in living steps invokes a conception of contraband-writing as the circulation of stories proper to indigenous communities.

The insurgent poetics embodied in this model thus indicates a struggle to preserve millenary traditions anchored, paradoxically, in transience and fluctuation. As López himself has indicated, the concept of mobility lies at the very core of Wayuu cosmology and ethics (Simanca et al). “¿Qué hombre wayuu no es básicamente un caminante?” Rocha asks:

Cada uno parece personificar a su manera el principio móvil, poligámico e itinerante que es en sí mismo Juyá, como lo plantea Michel Perrin en *Camino de los indios muertos* (1980). No olvidemos que esa misma sed de vida interminable precede los roles de los wayuu como pastores, agricultores, comerciantes ... en el trasfondo es el origen nómada de una cultura de cazadores y recolectores que aún

se expresa en las estrategias de movimiento con que han afrontado las sequías, hambrunas, y, hoy en día, la 'falta de oportunidades'. (164)¹⁹

From pre-Columbian times to the present, Wayuu have migrated throughout the peninsula according to the seasons, responding to the demands of a harsh desert landscape where extended drought and intense rains can both prove deadly (Perrin, *Camino* 166). Today many spend part of each year in the rural Alta Guajira in small settlements known as *rancherías*, and then migrate across the border to Venezuela during the dry season in order to find work in Maracaibo. Their participation in smuggling activities is both a condition of this semi-nomadic lifestyle and a response to *aríjuna* attempts to undermine it.

Significantly, then, contraband represents much more than a simple metaphor by one indigenous author; on the contrary, it evokes a long history of resistance to colonization, as well as a distinctly Wayuu conception of movement and exchange intimately tied to the environment of the Guajira. From colonial-era piracy to contemporary drug trafficking, the strategic position of the peninsula at the northernmost point of the continent has rendered it a crucial corridor for commercial trafficking between inland South America and international trade routes via the Caribbean. Historian Eduardo Barrera Monroy indicates that the intensity of smuggling throughout the 18th century was facilitated by a pre-existing inter-regional trade network developed by the Wayuu and other indigenous groups over an extended period of time (119).²⁰ Giangina Orsini Aarón proposes that it was the Wayuu's cultural value of adaptability, combined with their intimate knowledge of a hostile terrain, that allowed them to resist Spanish conquest for the duration of colonial rule; their indiscriminate trade with the French, Dutch, English, and Spanish not only enabled them to maintain economic independence, but it also provided them with the weapons and ammunition needed to fuel an ongoing series of rebellions against the Spanish crown (6).

As with other groups throughout the Americas, the Wayuu successfully resisted colonial efforts at forced assimilation not only through armed rebellion but also, perhaps paradoxically, through the strategic adaptation of foreign goods and practices as a means of sustaining Native traditions. However, the nature of such cultural adaptation generally corresponded to the material and immaterial needs of Wayuu society, in accordance with their own norms and customs. While the Wayuu played a part in the trans-Atlantic trade circuit that was so central to the formation of the capitalist world-system, the type of commerce they engaged in differed fundamentally from that of their

foreign trading partners. Namely, they operated through the logic of reciprocal exchange and bartering, rather than adopting the mentality of accumulation that sustains capitalist enterprise (Barrera 123-27). Barrera notes that many Wayuu still adhere to these principles today: “En el estudio sobre la Alta y Media Guajira del Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi, se estableció que los aborígenes contemporáneos conservan la noción de haber cambiado un burro por maíz, aun cuando la transacción haya sido mediada por el cambio del burro por dinero en una venta directa” (132-33).²¹ The point here is not that Wayuu are somehow exempt from or outside the terms of capitalist interaction; on the contrary, the history of contraband illustrates a mode of participating without belonging, a practice of using foreign cultural mechanisms at the service of indigenous sustenance and survival.²² Such dealings are inevitably fraught with ambiguity - as evidenced, for instance, by the Wayuu’s involvement in slave trafficking during the colonial period²³ - but they also productively trouble any conception of indigenous peoples as mere victims of coloniality and capitalism.

By extension, then, the framework of contraband poses the possibility of reading indigenous in-surgence into the lettered city as an act of defiance rather than compliance, as well as a mode of cultural reinforcement and ongoing self-recreation. Barrera points out that the Wayuu had no reason to perceive their actions in terms of illegality; rather, they engaged in practices of exchange with various groups, and the Spanish represented just one trading partner among many (138-39). While *contraband* literally means “against the law,” its connections to pre-Hispanic trade routes in the Americas indicate less a direct form of opposition than a *disregard* for the law predicated on the exercise of autonomy. Contraband challenges the power of the State - and, by extension, the logic of modernity/coloniality - by engaging in lateral exchanges that refuse to acknowledge imposed hierarchies, laws, and boundaries. “To law enforcers,” notes U.S. historian Joshua Smith, “[borderland smuggling] was a crime that deprived the state of needed income, threatened the standing order, and undermined deference to political and social leaders. But to others, smuggling was a form of self-help, a way that neighbor helped neighbor in the grim business of survival” (1).

The arbitrariness of the Colombia-Venezuela border that bisects the Guajira Peninsula - and the Wayuu population along with it - speaks to the modern/colonial desire to divide and conquer, compartmentalize and confine. In the face of a Western, modernizing obsession with constructing fences and domesticating the wild - perhaps best epitomized by the

foundational Venezuelan novel *Doña Bárbara* - López presents an alternative poetic cartography that does not seek to partition, seclude, and enclose, but rather to expand and connect. In this context, López's use of the name *Abya Yala* is significant, as it replaces "Americas" with a toponym of indigenous origin. As an alternative to the colonialist notion of a "New World," it is increasingly the preferred term amongst many Amerindian groups. It therefore manifests a decolonial gesture of renaming as well as a burgeoning sense of connectivity between disparate groups across both continents. Miguel Rocha Vivas highlights the significance of the word's geographic origin: the isthmus that the Kuna call home provides a strategic link between North and South, Atlantic and Pacific (30). Thus, while *Abya Yala* is most often used as a synonym for Latin or South America, its geographic derivation gestures towards a broader orientation. *Encuentros* itself remains limited to Latin America, spanning no farther north than the Nahua of Mexico, but elsewhere López has expressed the need to expand the scope of the term and to construct meaningful alliances between Native poets across both continents.²⁴ This pan-Indian and pan-American vision diverges, however, from the Bolivarian supranational dream of a united Latin America. Namely, it is less focused on uniting Central and South America against its northern foe than in breaching the divisive political boundaries imposed first by colonial rule and later inherited by the nation-State (be that the United States, Canada, Colombia, or Chile).

"A BURNING NECKLACE OF REVOLUTIONS"

It is significant, then, that the implied map traced in López's poetic crossings strongly resonates with the "Five Hundred Year Map" sketched in the opening pages of *Almanac of the Dead*. Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko's own depiction of the Americas reintegrates time and space, traces routes of human and commercial traffic (drugs, weapons, migrations, and revolutions), and negates the primacy of national boundaries that would deny indigenous rights to the territories inhabited by their ancestors' spirits. "Native Americans acknowledge no borders," the map proclaims; "they seek nothing less than the return of all tribal lands" (front matter). In this case, the pivotal link between North and South lies not in Panama or the Guajira but farther north. Published less than three years before the onset of the Zapatista uprising, *Almanac of the Dead* prophesies a people's revolution spreading outward from Chiapas, the Mexican state just south of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which divides North and Central America in physiographic terms.²⁵ At heart, the novel embodies the promise of liberation encoded in an upper-class Mexican character's nightmare: "Alegría imagined a map of the world suspended in

darkness until suddenly a tiny flame blazed up, followed by others, to form a burning necklace of revolution across two American continents" (507).

Envisioning a massive northward march of Native peoples, *Almanac* casts the recent trend of immigration to the United States as a revolutionary reclamation of stolen land and a radical negation of borders. In part, Silko's migration story reprises a Chicano mythology of return based on the reoccupation of Aztlán, the Aztecs' legendary place of origin. However, by looking past mestizos and contemporary Nahua to focus instead on the Maya at the Mexico-Guatemala border, she also circumvents and undercuts the standard orientation of border narratives, activating other possible mythologies of return. John Muthyala has argued that *Almanac of the Dead* challenges the perspective of writers and critics such as José David Saldívar, Gloria Anzaldúa, and others who view the Mexican-American population as paradigmatic of the border experience (358); while Anzaldúa does "acknowledge Mexican antipathy towards Indians and seems eager to undercut the internalization of this colonial mindset in Chicanos/as," she also places primary emphasis on la *mestiza* as border subject (360). In response to this approach, Silko reinscribes indigenous transnational histories of dispossession, removal, and migration "as the structural framework within which to envision the final uprising of the dispossessed and marginalized of the Americas" (Muthyala 360).

With the Five Hundred Year Map as its visual referent, *Almanac* presents a narrative theory of the borderlands as a space "literally frayed with multiple, permeable borders" (Muthyala 361). The four boxes that serve as "legends" to the map (and to the novel as a whole) highlight the links between different indigenous populations through colonial experiences. One box labeled "The Indian Connection" claims that "The Indian Wars have never ended in the Americas," while another recalls that "When Europeans arrived, the Maya, Azteca, Inca cultures had already built great cities and vast networks of roads. Ancient prophecies foretold the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. The ancient prophecies also foretell the disappearance of all things European" (front matter). Nothing on the map is to scale; the shape of Mexico is abstracted and approximated, distorting the relative location of different cities and towns.²⁶ The drawing is clearly more ideographic than strictly representational: more important than the physical distance between these locales are the symbolic and political connections among them. Lists of characters associated with each city fill empty spaces on the page, and dotted lines plot the movement of people and commodities through space and time. Virginia Bell argues that these lines render the sketch "a map of circuits that undo spatial and temporal borders," resulting in "a map anxious about its own pretensions,

a map refusing the neutral claims of sciences like cartography and history, and refusing the logic of national history" (18). Moreover, the geographic orientation of movement within the novel counters the Eurocentric assumption that, in the words of Henry Kissinger, "The axis of history starts in Moscow, goes to Bonn, crosses over to Washington, and then goes to Tokyo. What happens in the South is of no importance" (qtd. in Krupat 52). Arnold Krupat points out that by insisting that "history happens north to south, south to north," Silko effectively "shifts the axis of where is important, thus shifting the axis of what is important" (53). I would add, however, that in doing so, she also opens a space for South-South dialogue and maps a common ground of subalternity that undercuts the geopolitical demarcation between North and South as such.

It follows that *Almanac* should strive to re-establish the kinds of inter-ethnic ties severed by the modern State, not only in the immediate context of the U.S.-Mexico border but also on a hemispheric scale. One of the ways it does so is to illustrate the U.S. government's complicity in the poverty, exploitation, and genocide of people in the Global South. The corrupt and perverse Judge Arne paradigmatically justifies the national security strategy of the 1980s, noting that drug trafficking represented a lesser evil than communism:

Cocaine smuggling could be tolerated for the greater good, which was the destruction of communism in Central and South America. The fight against communism was costly. A planeload of cocaine bought a planeload of dynamite, ammunition, and guns for anticommunist fighters and elite death squads in the jungles and cities of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Communism was a far greater threat to the United States than drug addiction was. Addicts did not stir up the people or start riots the way communists did. (648)

Through the perspective of Arne, Silko effectively underscores the connections between the so-called war on drugs and the war on communism, indicating that one directly sustains the other. In this case, the practice of smuggling does not primarily represent a form of subversion from below; instead, the U.S. government's own participation in, or unofficial sanction of, select forms of contraband symbolizes its own fraudulence and corruption. By trafficking drugs across the U.S.-Mexico border, Zeta and Calabazas inadvertently lend support to the very forces their illegal activities are meant to undermine, enabling the government's plot to subdue insurgent activity by fueling drug addiction.

Silko grants, however, that in its natural form, coca is dangerous to (neo)colonial authorities because it gives the Indians "too much power,

dangerous power; not just the power money buys, but spiritual power to destroy all but the strong" (503). As a sacred object used in offerings, divinations, and shamanistic rituals, as well as a natural remedy against fatigue, hunger, thirst, and altitude sickness, the coca leaf has long constituted a symbol of Andean fortitude and resistance. "Mama Coca had sustained [Indians] all along," *Almanac* proclaims, "and now Mama Coca was going to help them take back the lands that were theirs" (502). By juxtaposing revolutionary and counterrevolutionary uses of the coca plant, Silko highlights the complicity of commodified psychosomatic substances in the reinforcement of state power, yet she also illustrates their deployment as a powerful tool of resistance. Under the guise of an International Holistic Healers Convention, various characters converge on Tucson at the end of the book, not to sell each other their Inca long-life capsules and healing crystals, but rather to organize for the coming *pachakuti*.²⁷

In many ways, the novel's closing image, like that of the Healers Convention, encapsulates the novel's hemispheric vision. In the last chapter, Sterling finally realizes the meaning of the stone snake that mysteriously appeared outside the Laguna Pueblo Reservation at the beginning of the novel: "The snake was looking south, in the direction from which the twin brothers and the people would come" (763). Silko suggests that if American Indians in the U.S. are to have any hope of rising up and retaking their lands, they must join forces with indigenous groups in countries to their south where Native populations are greater and more heavily concentrated than in the U.S. Moreover, they must also gain the support of other subjugated populations and transcend the limiting bounds of ethnic-based protest. It is remarkably befitting, then, that a mere two and a half years after the novel's publication, the Zapatistas were to launch publicly their "war of words" and initiate their massive, peaceful marches from Chiapas to Mexico City. In an interview with Ellen Arnold, Silko recalls that the hairs on her neck stood on end when she read the newspaper headlines of the Zapatista uprising in January of 1994 ("Listening" 8). *Almanac* appears to be visionary in ways that even Silko could not anticipate; the dreamworld of the novel fuses with reality, both heralding and enacting a political awakening of international import.

Significantly, dreams occupy a central place in the novel, not as an imaginary realm removed from reality, but rather as a space for action that exerts a profound impact on the material world. The Maya twin leader Tacho, inspired by the messages of the spirit macaws, professes faith that "one night the people would all dream the same dream, a dream sent by the spirits of the continent" (712). The Barefoot Hopi, too, "worked only in

the realm of dreams ... Even redneck bikers ate up the Hopi's stories, but that was because the Hopi had already infiltrated their dreams with the help of the spirit world" (620). However, lest we assume such communal dreams entail an effortless, peaceful transition, Silko reminds us that they can also induce nightmares: according to Wilson Weasel Tail, "The spirits are outraged! They demand justice! The spirits are furious! To all those humans who were too weak or too lazy to protect the mother earth ... The spirits will harangue you, they will taunt you until you are forced to silence the voices with whiskey day after day" (723).²⁸ We might say that, like López, Silko envisions a practice of dream trafficking as the basis for transformative, ethical alliances between disparate populations and ethnic groups.

Perhaps the most paradigmatic instance of smuggling and migration within the novel is the journey of the almanac that lends the novel its title. Inspired by the form of textuality encoded in the sacred Maya folding books, Silko imagines that a fifth codex escaped the infamous library fires of Diego de Landa as well as the cold confines of museums and archives in Europe.²⁹ Sewn into the clothing of four Yaqui children fleeing conscripted labor in the Yucatán, this assortment of local histories, cosmologies and prophecies makes its way across the continent, transforming along the way to reflect the passage of time: some pages are lost in transit, while others are gained through their new caretakers' personal additions. Rather than an eternally fixed document, this manuscript painted on horse-gut parchment grows and shrinks like a living organism. When faced with the threat of starvation, one of the four Yaqui children charged with its protection secretly tosses it into a pot of diluted broth made from meager roots and bulbs. Upon making contact with the boiling water,

The thin, brittle page gradually began to change. Brownish ink rose in clouds. Outlines of the letters smeared and the page began to glisten, and brittle, curled edges swelled fat and spread until the top of the stew pot was nearly covered with a section of horse stomach. Well, it was a wonderful stew. They lived on it for days and days ... (249)

This single page of the book thus allows three of the children to escape the secret plot of a starving old woman to kill and eat them. Though the youngest girl is not so lucky, Yoeme (one of the document's contemporary caretakers) explains that "The first night, if the eldest had not sacrificed a page from the book, that crippled woman would have murdered them all right then, while the children were weak from hunger and the longer journey" (253). The story of the Yaqui children thus lends credence and

substance to Yoeme's claim that "the almanac had living power within it, a power that would bring all the tribal people of the Americas together to retake the land" (569).

By placing a history of forced relocation at the center of the novel, Silko binds the Yucatán to Tucson through the framework of an indigenous diaspora. The Yaqui's deportation from Sonora to southern Mexico as forced laborers towards the end of the *porfiriato*, and their subsequent dispersal across a vast expanse of territory, renders their story ripe material for Silko's reflection on migration and inter-tribal communication.³⁰ As a result of the Mayan Caste War as well as the Yaqui's own tendencies toward rebellion, their dislocation from their homeland became a symbol of the State's power to control and coerce movement not only across its borders, but also through the deportation of racialized bodies from one periphery to another. This experience of conscripted labor thus lends a different twist to the Wayuu's own history of smuggling from the 18th century to the present; in this case, travel across regional and national boundaries has the effect of diminishing indigenous autonomy rather than sustaining it. And yet, like the Wayuu, the Yaqui's adaptability afforded them a distinctive capacity to preserve their sense of self in the face of change and adversity. Evelyn Hu-DeHart argues that "They have demonstrated flexibility and ingenuity in defining and redefining their position, in devising and revising strategies for survival with each new situation" (3-4).

By extension, placing the almanac in the hands of Yaqui refugees allows Silko to reinforce a model of textuality based on fluidity and adaptability. *Almanac of the Dead* embodies a model of revitalization and cultural exchange predicated not on the historically "accurate" recuperation of the past but rather on a process of constant transformation in dialogue with indigenous pre-Columbian and colonial roots as well as the present. Furthermore, these connections between migration, text, and intertext serve to trouble both essentialism and assimilation as the predominant idioms of indigenous identity. As a corollary to the Army of Justice and Redistribution's struggle to reclaim stolen land, Angelita "la Escapía" engages a process of reappropriation as a gesture towards epistemological decolonization. Where some see a form of indoctrination in her "love affair" with Marx, Angelita claims the exact opposite: she was not co-opted by Marxist ideology, it was Marx who pilfered the notion of egalitarian communism from Native American societies.³¹ Angelita thus questions the directionality of cultural exchange through the colonial enterprise by claiming that communalism never belonged to Marx, or to Western thought in the first place.

Likewise, by drawing on prophetic Mayan codices and hieroglyphic writing, Silko provocatively repurposes and expropriates a Western literary genre, infusing the novel with a different logic of textuality based on the almanac as living text. Through her appeal to the Mayan codices, she enacts a productive encounter between two distinct forms of textuality that troubles the presumed boundaries between them. Yet the end result is arguably not a harmonious fusion in the form of narrative transculturation. Rather, the prevalence of contraband in *Almanac of the Dead* points to a different conception of cultural exchange predicated on a radical affirmation of presence. In response to the presumption that indigenous peoples' only hope for survival is through transculturation and assimilation (as Ángel Rama famously proclaimed),³² Silko inverts the formula, declaring the imminent extinction of "all things European" in the Americas. Her use of the novelistic form thus represents a kind of disruptive in-surgence that proposes to put European goods and practices at the service of indigenous resistance. Meanwhile, by performing a similar operation on the Maya codices, she also offers a critical perspective on indigeneity itself, effectively challenging the essentialist underpinnings of any political project predicated on the demarcation of boundaries and the production of cultural "authenticity."

AGAINST COUNTER-CONTRABAND

The differences in style and form between López and Silko are significant, ranging from a nine-page collection of short poems - all eighteen lines or less - to a sprawling 763-page novel of epic proportions. Yet in their own ways, both authors appeal to poetic writing as a tool for reconfiguring the social landscape, awakening indigenous consciousness, and forging new links between disparate communities. Their itinerant poetics convey a fluid territory shaped not by its borders but by the shared and intersecting paths carved on the face of the earth like veins - or, like hoof prints stamped in the mud, a living writing traced in ritual crossings. Nightmare of the lettered city, these literary bandits traffic dreams between North and South, propagate savage thought, and cultivate aberrant uses of the written word.³³ In turn, their alternative routes through Abya Yala open space for an alternative literature opposed, external, and prior to the codes of the lettered city.

That said, however, an approach to indigenous literature focused primarily on transgression and border-crossing arguably runs the risk of obscuring certain poetic and political meanings that do not fit comfortably within such a framework. Since indigenous conceptions of sovereignty profess a profound connection to place and land, Quechua-American critic

Sandy Grande claims that seemingly liberatory constructs such as circulation, mobility, diversity, and mixture are in fact part of the “fundamental lexicon of Western imperialism” (117). For Grande, the framework of postmodernism has primarily served the interests of whiteman America; in spite of its “democratic” promise, “its ludic theories of identity fail to provide indigenous communities the theoretical grounding for asserting their claims as colonized peoples” (112). Likewise, Hardt and Negri indicate that

Many of the concepts dear to postmodernists and postcolonialism find a perfect correspondence in the current ideology of corporate capital and the world market. ... Trade brings differences together and the more the merrier! Difference (of commodities, populations, cultures, and so forth) seems to multiply infinitely in the world market, which attacks nothing more violently than fixed boundaries: it overwhelms any binary division with its infinite multiplicities. (15)

Paradoxically, it would seem that the increasing connections between indigenous social movements are simultaneously facilitated and threatened by globalization: the mechanism by which they unite is also the primary impetus for their shared struggle. That is, the widespread renaissance of indigenous cultures in recent decades represents an act of survival in response to the homogenizing force of multinational capitalism, which appears to privilege difference while simultaneously stripping it of any radical potentiality. It is therefore important to note that the transnational turn among indigenous movements in recent years, while promising, does not necessarily challenge the logic of late capitalism and global modernity. Likewise, border crossings and itinerant poetics do not inherently constitute a threat to the dominant political order; in certain contexts, deterritorialization - both in theory and in practice - may actually work against the interests of indigenous communities.

López and Silko’s itinerant poetics undoubtedly resonate with the theoretical framework of nomadology. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari’s preference for non-codified, non-hierarchical modes of thought reflects a decolonizing push towards deconstructing oppressive mechanisms in society. Moreover, their transposition from the concrete antagonism of war machine and State apparatus to the abstract realm of nomadology and State thought can be useful in highlighting the connections between indigenous struggles for land rights and epistemic decolonization. Yet Francophone scholar Christopher Miller argues that it is precisely in the space between the practical and metaphorical valences of nomadism that their argument loses traction, particularly in post-colonial contexts where

nationalism and identity politics constitute key idioms of struggle. Undoubtedly, essentialist politics have contradictions and pitfalls of their own; however, Miller maintains that “Neither the identitarian nor the nomadological mode of thought has a monopoly on truth or justice” (7). After all, “rhizomes can colonize just as well as trees can” (208). In short, border-making and border-breaking can both be used in the service of colonialism, or they can provide the tools for struggle against it.

In the face of constant expropriation and forced removal, the struggle for land rights and tribal sovereignty is a crucial counterpart to pan-Indian affiliations and border crossings. In response to constant violations of treaty conditions, indigenous activists in the U.S. have repeatedly invoked the rule of law in order to protect themselves against outside intrusions and further misappropriations. American Indian nations thus depend on federal authorization and enforcement of the reservation system to protect them not only from non-Native individuals and corporations, but also, paradoxically, from the government itself. In this regard, reservation boundaries serve as a stark reminder of the misappropriation of indigenous homelands, yet they also provide a defensive mechanism for protection against further encroachment (Grande 110). In other words, it matters immensely who is drawing borders or transgressing them, for what purposes, and at what cost. The foil to contraband is the Trail of Tears, and Indian removal counters nomadism as a colonialist form of deterritorialization.

Moreover, Grande’s critique of postmodernism highlights certain undesirable consequences of positing the borderlands as the primary locus of indigenous cultural and political interventions. I would argue that, as a result, it is absolutely essential to understand contraband not only in terms of appropriation and border crossing but also as an exercise in autonomy that disregards the imposition of foreign law and societal values. Of López’s two complementary modes of bartering in *Contrabando sueños* and *Encuentros*, perhaps the more interesting in political terms is the latter, as it challenges the primacy of the *aríjuna* world as the Wayuu’s primary interlocutor. In other words, just as important as how emergent Amerindian writing relates to and transforms the existing sphere of World Literature is the question of how it interacts with native communities themselves and their own preestablished artistic and intellectual registers. In this regard, the nationalist approach to *Almanac of the Dead* also illustrates an undesirable consequence of identifying the borderlands as a privileged locus of enunciation. In *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, Craig Womack expresses some discomfort with Gloria Anzaldúa’s configuration of the borderlands, protesting that even some Indian mixed-

bloods may self-identify “as Indians rather than hybrids, socializing with Indian people *and viewing themselves in the center, rather than at the periphery, of Indian worlds*” (136, my emphasis). That is, what if their objective is not to *fronterizar* modern/colonial thinking but rather to *centralizar* their own peripheralized traditions? Womack virulently objects to the assumption that Amerindian intellectuals must dedicate themselves first and foremost to subverting Eurocentric thought:

What if someone like me comes along, too dumb to know about the universal law that all Indian critics must challenge Eurocentric discourse, and I decide I want to do something else like try to get Creek people excited about Creek literature or participate in a discussion about how literature might play some role in community building at home? If I am not speaking about the non-Indian world does that mean I am not saying anything? Can Native scholarship become something other than a defensive presentation geared toward non-Indians? (100-1)

By framing indigenous nationalisms as a form of “gathering from within” (Brooks 229) rather than dividing, opposing, and excluding, Weaver, Womack, and Warrior emphasize the use value of literature and literary criticism in communitarian cultural “upbuilding” (6), proposing a productive alternative to the 19th century model of imagined communities as described by Benedict Anderson.

Their critical framework thus serves as a reminder that while contemporary indigenous literature represents a new phenomenon in many ways, it also emerges out of particular cultural, epistemological, and spiritual traditions. Like Western literature, indigenous poetics is heavily codified and structured by complex linguistic and macrosymbolic forms, though of course in very different terms than the dominant strains of literature. Accordingly, critical reflections on the function of indigenous literature must attend to the ways in which Native communities interact with their own artistic traditions and how these factors relate to their struggle for intellectual and political sovereignty.

In this regard, the framework of American Indian literary nationalism poses a challenge to Walter D. Mignolo’s concept of *border thinking*, as it sidesteps the Western/non-Western (or Euro-American/indigenous) dichotomy that arguably underpins his conception of the colonial difference. The problem with this concept, as Catherine Walsh has argued, is that it tends to relate all thought back to the West, even if it does so through a sense of opposition or critique (29). It thus ends up being partly Eurocentric, despite Mignolo’s declared intentions. The examples that he provides of “border thinkers” throughout *Local Histories/ Global Designs*

seem to privilege a certain kind of subject or discourse that has the effect of contaminating or, at least, “borderizing” dominant Western thought. Mignolo’s reading of the ways in which intellectuals such as Anzaldúa, Marcos, and Du Bois manipulate the conflictive intersection between dominant and subjugated forms of knowledge is productive, yet his framing of the concept as a whole ultimately replicates a logic of Occidentalism that, to borrow a phrase from José Rabasa, “inevitably harnesses the identity of the non-West to the subversion, transculturation, and appropriation of the West” (98). Even if Occidentalism has served as “an enabling mode of resisting Western hegemonies,” Rabasa notes, “there is no reason why we should limit the identities of West and non-West alike to conceptual frames in which each defines itself in opposition to the other” (98). As Walsh suggests, the concept becomes more interesting if we conceive of multiple borders, such that Silko’s juxtaposition of Maya and Pueblo cosmologies in *Almanac of the Dead* or López’s journey to Mapuche, Nahua, and Kogui territories also constitute instances of border thinking, by producing a kind of poetic knowledge at the juncture of two or more indigenous systems of thought.

I propose, therefore, that emphasizing contraband as a modality of insurgency can help to challenge the binary sense of opposition implied in the concept of “resistance” and even in “insurgency” itself. Understanding contraband as a kind of disregard for the law through the continuation of millennial indigenous practices can help to avoid the pitfalls of Occidentalist understandings of indigenous struggles. Additionally, emphasizing poetics as part of the equation leaves room for the plurality of meanings and the coexistence of complementary, or even contradictory, modes of insurgency. Perhaps it is most productive, therefore, to think of *poeticizing insurgency* as an act of pushing the term to its limits to reveal what kinds of assumptions it contains, to explore the limitations and potentialities of poetic language and the concrete obstacles that social movements face, and to challenge the ways in which we understand resistance and anticolonial struggle. Insurgent poetics would thus comprise a constant push and pull, a complex interplay of positionalities in flux between centrality and periphery.

Resemanticizing this term would not simply constitute an academic ruse to make it do the work that we want it to do, or even a mere gesture for the sake of pluralizing. Instead, I suggest that we might think of pushing the term ‘insurgency’ to its own limits as a means of reflecting upon the challenges that indigenous movements face in the confronting diverse iterations of coloniality. Doing so might facilitate a more polysemic understanding of the term capable of capturing multiple, even conflicting,

forms of political action and representation. This critical gesture demands an exploration of the ex-centric and centripetal force of insurgency as an expansive, proliferating gesture that challenges the parameters of existing boundaries and systems of thought and knowledge, as well as movements' centrifugal turn in towards the community in an act of self-reconstitution and critique. In effect, it requires understanding Amerindian subjects as entities in constant motion that circulate in a global society, inhabit and transgress the boundaries imposed by modern/colonial reason, and appropriate foreign cultural elements without ever ceasing to be indigenous.

That said, a key question remains: how can we be sure that these insurgent texts will not be reappropriated and reincorporated into the lettered city's circuits of power, that this counter-spell will not merely strengthen the immunity of the *letrado*? In other words, how can we avoid commercializing and commoditizing this poetic exchange, converting it into a motive for capitalist commerce rather than a reciprocal bartering of political dreams? After all, the capacity to incorporate and neutralize difference has subsisted from the palimpsestic methods of colonial evangelization to the totalizing force of neoliberalism. Let us not forget the long history of appropriation of indigenous artifacts, bodies, and ideas, even by well-intentioned *aríjunas*, for myriad political agendas from mestizo nationalism to revolutionary Marxism. While Wayuu contraband originates in pre-Columbian travel circuits and inter-ethnic trade practices, it also evokes a memory of forced labor and slave trafficking. Likewise, indigenous cultural artifacts are repeatedly displaced from the context of their production and put to other uses, as static displays of cultural authenticity in museum exhibits, as marketable commodities, or in folkloric adaptations for national celebrations. The contemporary practice of *contrabandeo* amongst the Wayuu, and especially the Yaqui, thus conveys a response to having been objects of contraband themselves, in either a literal or a figurative sense.

So how can non-Native scholars such as myself be sure not repeat the age-old transgressions of appropriation and disenfranchisement? Postcolonial critic Margery Fee sums up the problem succinctly: "Interpretation can be a kind of respectful listening, or it can be a kind of appropriation, and we have to raise the issue that what we hope has been the first may in fact have been yet another example of power disguising itself as benevolence" (2). To what extent do *aríjuna* academics essentially engender a process of recolonization in the attempt to categorize, apprehend, and explicate emergent Amerindian textual productions, as the academic norms of knowledge production in the discipline of literature

would command? In short, how can we avoid codifying and circumscribing a series of enunciations and inscriptions produced at the margin of law, often destined in their origin to circulate outside controlled systems of thought and knowledge? Who exerts ultimate terminological privilege in marking or transgressing the boundaries of indigenous literature as such?

These questions are much larger than I can hope to answer here. They are, I would argue, some of the key theoretical and practical issues concerning the reception and function of indigenous literature as a whole; they remain open not only to further academic interrogation but also to the political interventions of indigenous communities and artists, as they strive to work through the entrenched problem of internal colonialism and the contradictions inherent to the ongoing process of decolonization. In a sense, they point to tensions we would do well to sustain rather than attempt to resolve through a convenient theoretical formula. That is, as problematic yet productive ambiguities, these questions serve as a constant reminder of the thin line between collaboration and co-optation that Native and non-Native scholars alike must keep at the forefront of all critical discussions of indigenous literature within the framework of academia. I suggest, however, that it is ever more crucial to keep the question of power dynamics and representation at the forefront of our discussions (or at the very least in the back of our minds) as we engage with these texts. In the words of Christopher Miller,

We must heighten rather than diminish our capacity to understand divisions of world space, even as those divisions shift, dissolve, and reform. We must enable ourselves to think through borders without simply pretending that they don't exist: when faced with a forest, we should not simply declare that we don't "believe in trees." (209)

Perhaps what we need is a nomadic way of reading that nonetheless remains rooted to, and cognizant of, our own respective positions in society.

Lycoming College

NOTES

- 1 "Having cleared the ground, the city builders erected an edifice that, even when imagined as a mere transposition of European antecedents, in fact represented the urban dream of a new age. The cities of Spanish America were

- the first material realization of that dream, giving them a central role in the advent of world capitalism” (Rama, *Lettered City* 2).
- 2 Brer Rabbit is a folkloric figure that emerges out of the encounter between Cherokee and African oral traditions in the Southeastern U.S. As such, Weaver notes, to speak of Brer Rabbit already to appeal to a hybrid construct (4).
- 3 “It is necessary to understand that for centuries the oppressors of the peasants made them regard paper as a god. Paper became a fetish: Arrest orders are paper. By means of papers they crush the Indian in the courts. The peasant sees papers in the offices of the governor, the parish priest; the landowner, too, keeps accounts on paper. All the reckonings you have made, all your logical arguments, they refute by showing you a paper; the paper supersedes logic, it defeats it. There is a famous saying: Qelqan riman (What is written is what is heard). We fight this fetishism to the death. And one of the ways to fight it is precisely to show the peasant that, just as the enemy has his papers, so we have our papers. To the paper that contradicts the reason and logic of the peasant, we counterpose the paper that bears that reason and logic” (Blanco, *Land or Death* 84-85).
- 4 I am thinking in particular of the feudal connotations of this term.
- 5 “Our dreams are your nightmares.” All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
- 6 In this sense, smuggling as an illegal activity is a product of the modern State and did not exist as such prior to European conquest.
- 7 In this case, I focus on two borders straddled by indigenous communities whose conception of territory predates and conflicts with the boundaries of the modern State: the Guajira Peninsula of Venezuela and Colombia, inhabited by the Wayuu, and the Mexico/U.S. borderlands, where the Yaqui ritually migrate across the border and indigenous laborers from Mexico and Central America pass through on their way north.
- 8 Given the lack of phonetic distinction between the /l/ and /r/ in Wayuunaiki, this spelling is often used interchangeably with *aljuna*. I have opted to follow the spelling used by López in his 1992 collection.
- 9 “Tarash, the *jayechimajaachi* of Wanulumana, has arrived / to sing to those who know him... / his language celebrates our own history, / his song sustains our ways of seeing. / I, on the other hand, inscribe our voices / for those who don’t know us, / for those visitors who seek our respect... / I traffic dreams with close foreigners.”
- 10 “I expressed my desire to insert myself in their world ‘dreaming in Wayuu’ or submitting my dreams to indigenous interpretations. ... Additionally, our dreams at times intertwined in a revealing way. I mixed images from my society with theirs; they took images from their society to explain what happened in mine.”

- 11 "In order to become close to the other when he is so distant, you have to love his difference and admit that it will be forever irreducible."
- 12 One of the principal spiritual entities in Wayuu cosmology, Pulowi is the counterpart to her male partner, Juyá. Where Juyá represents rain, nomadic activity, and masculine qualities, Pulowi is primarily associated with wind, dry seasons, and multiplicity. Together, the couple represents the natural cycle of life and procreation as complementary forces. The reference to Pulowi in this poem evokes the understanding that she inhabits particular locations within the Guajira associated with these qualities.
- 13 "The anthropologist, with hair of corn, / has asked me to show her / a form of Pulowi. // From some internal force I took her / towards Palaa... at night. / I don't know if she understood / that Pulowi was there / in our hidden fear of seeing her."
- 14 Abya Yala, as I will explain more at length below, is a name derived from the Kuna language for the Americas which has been increasingly adopted in recent years by indigenous groups (primarily in Latin America) as a decolonizing act of renaming that highlights the connections between different Amerindian populations.
- 15 "From the *ruka* of Lorenzo Nahuelcoy / the universe of the south comes into view, arrayed in myriad paths." According to the glossary corresponding to Encuentro I, *ruka* means "home" in Mapundungun.
- 16 It is worth noting, however, that these glossaries might even serve a didactic or auto-ethnographic function for Wayuu readers themselves, as well as *arfjuna* and non-Wayuu Natives.
- 17 "As a Wayuu, [López] is a trafficker, a vehicle that travels from here to there and from there to here, carrying dreams, experiences, and words."
- 18 "The history of my people / has the clear steps of my grandfather, / it moves to its own rhythm; / this other history / goes to the highway / with borrowed shoes, / it walks writing with its feet / without its head alongside it ..."
- 19 "Each seems to personify in his own way the mobile, itinerant, and polygamous principle of Juyá (a principal Wayuu deity associated with rain, life, and procreation), as Michel Perrin suggests in *Camino de los indios muertos* (Journey of the Dead Indians) (1980). Let us not forget that the very same interminable thirst for life that precedes the roles of the Wayuu as shepherds, farmers, and traders ... is, at heart, the nomadic origin of a culture of hunters and gatherers still expressed in the strategies of relocation they have used to confront drought, famine, and, in the present day, the 'lack of opportunities.'"
- 20 For an in-depth look at the construction of roads and the complex web of trade networks in pre-Columbian South America, see *Caminos precolombinos: las vías, los ingenieros y los viajeros*, eds. Leonor Herrera and Marianne Cardale de Schrimppff.

- 21 “The Agustín Codazzi Geographical Institute’s study of the Alta and Media Guajira established that contemporary aborigines still consider themselves to have exchanged a donkey for corn, even when that transaction was mediated by the exchange of the donkey for money in a direct sale.”
- 22 Similarly, Chippewa scholar Duane Champagne has distinguished between Western and tribal forms of capitalism, arguing that participation in capitalist markets does not necessarily entail loss of Native American traditions, institutional relations, and cultural values. In the context of the fur trade in colonial North America, for instance, he observes that “Native middlemen engaged in a form of barter but not in the organization of production for a capitalist market” (314). Yet even in the early 21st century, he claims, capitalist entrepreneurship on U.S. reservations tends to be communitarian rather than individualistic, and tribal leaders generally prioritize Native American cultural values over economic development and prosperity (322).
- 23 The Wayuu were known to own African slaves, whom they often bought by selling captives acquired through periodic wars with their indigenous rivals (Barrera 155). However, as was the case in other Native groups such as the Inca, the conception and practice of slavery most likely differed in significant ways from that of the Europeans.
- 24 Personal communication. See also Rocha 158.
- 25 Although Chiapas now belongs to Mexico and therefore forms part of North America in geopolitical terms, its history reflects a tenuous state of belonging that attests to its liminal position. During the colonial period, the region was relatively isolated from the administrative authorities in both Mexico City and in Guatemala. Following the declaration of independence from Spain, a lengthy dispute ensued over whether Chiapas would integrate into Mexico or the United Provinces of Central America (1823-29), or whether it would become its own sovereign nation. The precise border between Mexico and Guatemala was not fully established until some 77 years later, when Guatemala finally recognized Mexico’s annexation of the Soconusco region.
- 26 For instance, Silko portrays Mexico in a funnel shape pointing directly south, rather than curving to the southeast. As a result, the capital city of Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, appears to lie directly south of Yuma, Arizona, rather than Houston, Texas.
- 27 In Quechua/Aymara thought, *pachakuti* denotes a significant world change, or an inversion of space and time.
- 28 Emphasizing the heterogeneity of insurgent strategies within the novel, Joni Adamson contrasts the patient reserve of male characters such as the Barefoot Hopi and the Maya twins Tacho and El Feo with the more militant posture of women such as Angelita and the Yaqui twins Lecha and Zeta (152). However,

consistent with the novel's resistance to such clear-cut dichotomies, Wilson Weasel Tail's angry tirades also trouble this easy distinction.

- 29 The four existing codices known to have survived the colonial period are currently housed in Paris, Dresden, Madrid, and Florence, though Silko does not mention the latter. By contrast, quite a few Aztec screenfolds survived the colonial period. However, Silko links the *Almanac of the Dead* specifically to the Maya codices through the migration of the Yaqui from the Yucatán to Arizona. See p. 136.
- 30 Historian Edward Spicer notes that the Yaqui are "the most widely scattered native people of North America ... as a result of forced dispersal" (158).
- 31 "Later when enemies in the villages, people related to her by clan or marriage, accused La Escapía of being a 'communist,' she let them have it. Didn't they know where Karl Marx got his notions of egalitarian communism? 'From here,' La Escapía had said, 'Marx stole his ideas from us, the Native Americans,'" the novel explains (310-11). The Native American conception of communitarian societies made their way to Karl Marx through Lewis H. Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877), in particular his descriptions of the matrilineal structure of Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) society. Although Marx died before he could publish his reflections on the subject, he left behind a series of notebooks that served as the inspiration for Engels's *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), which juxtaposes early human kinship with the modern familial structure. See Franklin Rosemont, "Karl Marx and the Iroquois" (1992). For more on *Almanac of the Dead's* appraisal of Marxism, see Tamara Teale, "The Silko Road from Chiapas or Why Native Americans Cannot Be Marxists" (1998).
- 32 When asked in an interview whether there was room for hope for indigenous culture, Rama responded: "Sin duda, pero no de la cultura indígena sino de la cultura mestiza, porque la cultura india ya no tenía sentido. Lo que él [Arguedas] comprendió es que efectivamente la salida era esa barrosa salida del mestizaje. Ese zigzagueante, y muchas veces sucio camino, como la vida misma, pero que era mucho más rico en posibilidades" (Without a doubt, but not for the indigenous culture *per se*, but rather for mestizo culture, because Indian culture no longer made any sense. What he (Arguedas) understood is that, in effect, the way out was the muddy road of mestizaje. That tortuous, and often dirty, road, like life itself, but that was richer in possibilities) (Díaz 32).
- 33 I refer here to Juan Pablo Dabove's *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latin America, 1816-1929*, which examines how the lettered city deployed the trope of the bandit in order to assuage its own internal conflicts, anxieties, and desires. In this case, however, the bandit is more than a mere subject of discourse; by laying claim to authorial agency, López, Silko, and other insurgent poets perform acts of resistance through the process of

writing itself, challenging the elitist logic of texts like *Facundo* and *Doña Bárbara* by subverting the sociopolitical order that they encode.

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