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DECOLONIZING COMMUNICATION THEORY

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the limitations of western communication models through analyzing the western colonial philosophical assumptions which underlie theories of communication. The themes of knowledge, reality, identity, and time and space will be analyzed through the postcolonial lenses of anthropologist Malidoma Somé and Latina feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa in an effort to understand these themes from the lens of the non-hegemonic "other". Through the epistemological and ontological restructuring of the western tropes of knowledge, reality, identity, time and space this dissertation argues for an alternative model of communication "transversal communication" which positions the process of communication outside the binary assumptions of western philosophy in order to legitimize non-western or "othered" epistemologies and ontologies.

INTRODUCTION

The Intelligent man quickly realizes
the impotence of
gold. –Hafiz

Shifts

After an hour and a half of class we were released for a fifteen-minute break from the lecture on research procedures. I had been longingly staring outside, as it was a beautiful spring day and the blooms from the Bradford pear trees blew effortlessly across the small patch of grass outside the window of our dungeon like classroom. I rose from my section of the table and made my way outside to a lone bench that overlooked the concrete sidewalk.

I sat for a moment, the strange meat-like smell of the Bradford pear trees mingled with fresh cut lawn and dust, simply staring at nothing in the distance across the sprawling campus. All at once I became aware of a vastness, as though a massive cavern of nothing had opened inside the entirety of my body. At first there was a sense of anxiety. Was I having a panic attack? Was my blood sugar too low? Was I hurt? However, soon all thoughts stopped completely and as I looked around my eyes started to fill with huge glassy tears. Not tears of sadness or exhaustion, but tears of an indescribable bliss. However, my ability to name what was happening to me vanished, and all that remained was awareness, emotion and sensation. No thoughts. No rationalizations.

I became aware all at once that the Latina girl walking down the sidewalk, the young White fraternity boy behind her, the grass under my feet, the bench I was apparently sitting on, and the sky above me were inseparable from "me," Sterlin

Mosley, a Black male, 28 year old 2ND year PhD student. I literally could not distinguish between their borders and my own. There was only vastness, connection and bliss. Staring at the girl I felt as though I was seeing from her eye…and the boy behind her, I can feel his stride on the concrete just as surely as I felt the clouds apparently above me moving through fluidly due to a soft western wind. The grass, graciously sitting under what I thought were "my" feet, sat silently watching us all from below. But how could my feet and the boy's feet be the same? How could I be both the grass and the sky? How could I be both Sterlin and nothing all at once? The tears continued to stream down my face and a euphoric, almost maniacal smile flashed across my mouth. At that moment there was nothing else, but a knowing of a weave I had only intellectually claimed to understand. I sat (or I should say we sat) there for perhaps ten minutes (although this "break" seemed to go on for hours) until finally we were startlingly interrupted by a classmate (who was also me) that tentatively popped her head outside to tell me class was resuming.

Seeing the tears on my face she politely asked me if I was okay. I nodded, with what must have looked like a silly grin, and slowly regained awareness of my individuated body and mind. As I stood up and made my way back inside the building an oppressive sadness fell upon me unlike any I had ever experienced. Anger, disappointment and confusion welled up inside the space that had been utterly empty and free as I became aware again painful separation. This was the return of. The return of fragmentation. My section of the table, my chair, my bag and notebook all stared back at me with cold dissociation, waiting for me to fall back into the familiar fold of ordered "ordinary" life. An avid scholar of mystical texts I knew that what I had

experienced was real, just as real as the cold table and the hard chair. However the explanation of it (of which even these words cannot begin to describe) would always elude me, taunt me with a vapid inadequacy and elicit blank stares or cock-eyed suspicion. I knew that as I tried to recount the experience the apparent separateness between me and the other would make words grossly insufficient, but having grown up in Norman, Oklahoma in the center of the Western world, the words would have to do. Despite it all there remained an openness floating in the background waiting for another opportunity where borders could diminish again. When my guard was down and my defenses sufficiently softened, it might fold back into me dissolving me in its universal profundity. I have not chased after the experience again, knowing that seeking the elimination of the binary would only reinforce its grip. I have had other experiences; moving, fantastic and unbelievable in their own right, but none quite as fundamentally altering. For those few moments in lineal time, I was gone; seemingly everywhere and nowhere at the same time, and my tears, a byproduct of having learned a secret that has been kept from so many out of fear, felt like their own pockets of the ocean, reminding me that there is so much more than meets the eye.

*

The experience I had is not new, in fact it is similar to one mystics have shared throughout the ages as a reminder that the apparent separateness of life's distinct realms is deceptive. Within the western modern-perspectival consciousness[1], notions of clear borders between subject and object limit any explanation of my experience, without pathologizing it. Western epistemologies and ontological frameworks sustain a binary

[1] Perspectival Consciousness refers to the nature of western consciousness and its tendency toward a linear, progressive and three-dimensional orientation to reality. This concept comes primarily from consciousness scholar Jean Gebser.

in which an autonomous, separate subject interacts with external objective reality but this framework does not leave room for understanding experiences of reality, knowledge, identity or time and space that challenge or negate this perspectival orientation.

In my survey of nine popular international and intercultural communication textbooks only four of those texts even mentioned spirituality, or even religion, and those mentions were brief at best (Hall, 2002; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Klukanov, 2005; Martin & Nakayama, 2007; Beatty & Takahashi, 2001; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Samovar et. al, 2007; Lustig & Koester, 2000). It is important to address the lack of discussion on spirituality in western communication scholarship since this dissertation focuses heavily on the role of spiritual knowledge in transversal communication. If non-western spirituality in communication is explored at all in the academy, it is approached as fetishized, and exoticized traditions removed from the western world. Despite the attempts of critical theories to question western exclusivity, non-western spirituality is *Othered*, explored as "primitive" elements of disenfranchised minorities, in anthropological or philosophical studies that suggest colonial superiority (Smith, 1999). Generally non-western spiritualties are holistic and tend to honor and encompass multiple levels of human experience and epistemologies: intuitive (knowledge which is arational or which stems from insight or inexplicably unrelated means), somatic (knowledge which is born from the unbridled impulses of the senses, such as "gut reactions", chills, flushing, sexual insight, etc.), emotional (knowledge that is informed by the range of human emotion) and multi-dimensional (knowledge which stems from understanding multiple levels of reality beyond the physical, Newtonian universe.

However, even mentioning intuition, spiritual insight, emotion or somatic ways of knowing in most academic settings will shift the conception of the discussion from academic to the fringe. As a result the "serious academic" risks marginalization or exodus if these subjects are pursued as a genuine scholarly interest. The disdain of non-western ways of knowing, , is evidence of this tendency in western academia (Pigliucci, 2008; Bradley, 2002; Dersken 1993).

Theoretical and academic insularity is commonplace in an intellectual culture unable to traverse multiple modes of understanding knowledge, reality, identity, and time/space. However, this rigidity serves an important colonial legacy;

> "[...] insularity protects a discipline from the outside, enabling communities of scholars to distance themselves from others, and in the more extreme forms, to absolve themselves of responsibility for what occurs in other branches of their discipline…and in the world" (Smith, 1999 p. 67).

For critical theorists saving the world means focusing on the atrocities of economic disparity, violence, hunger, sexual and racial inequality and the exploitation of labor and services. While these aspects must be critically understood and reformed if we are to move toward any kind of integral synthesis, it is important to understand how spiritual, intuitive, and emotional knowledges have been marginalized as western thought has evolved. Throughout this dissertation I illustrate how this process of subjugation has severely limited the ability of communication models to reach holistic solutions to what John Durham Peters refers to as "the problem of communication" (Peters, 1999).

Exploring Another Way

Western communication models have been efficient in explaining the binary relationships between subject and object. Communication is then understood as the process by which separate physical, autonomous, entities create and communicate meaning. As a scholar reared in the western tradition I appreciate the efforts toward understanding these processes and the theories and postulations that guide the discipline's research. However, there are those experiences that fall outside of the dualistic paradigm, making both "sense-making," and explanation of those experiences virtually impossible utilizing the limited language and theoretical assumptions of western modernity.

This dissertation seeks to understand the ways in which communication can break free of the limits of western modernity and strive for new ways of conceptualizing communication within ourselves, with each other, and with the environment. I seek to explore epistemological and ontological frameworks developed outside of Western notions, the ideas produced by the other—meaning those who are positioned outside of hegemonic western Cartesian paradigms—to attempt to build an alternative, non-Western understanding of communication.

I humbly and excitedly admit to stunning advancements in Western technology as our common modes of communication have become instantaneous, global, and multi-sensory. However, despite advances in communication technologies and practices, the ideas behind our communicative acts remain locked in a reductive straightjacket of subject/object relationships, that leave little room for the exploration or expansion of any spiritual notion outside of Cartesian rationality, nor understanding the roles of other types of knowledge, such as intuition, somatic knowledge, or emotion in human

communication. By charting the evolution of Western ideas since the beginning of classical antiquity I intend to show the ways in which Western understandings of communication are limiting. In broad strokes, I will describe the journey of western thinking from the Age of Enlightenment , and how notions of reality, knowledge, identity, time and space lead to a "theoretical straightjacket" in which communication can only be understood as linear process of interaction between two or more autonomous, separate entities.

I will illustrate how the denigration of non-western epistemologies suggests a sharp decline in spiritual awareness since the Enlightenment. This is not to discredit the richness of the age of Enlightenment or the technological, social or philosophical advancements of modernity that have been undeniably helpful in the material prosperity of the western world. I will show how the growth of the collective western ego has ushered the unmitigated expansion of materialism and the effects of that expansion on those whose experiences do not fit into the structured mold of western conceptions of reality, identity, time and space or knowledge.

It is my belief that much like a cell whose growth may become counterproductive and violent to home organism, the materialistic expansion of the west has begun to attack itself leading to a variety of social, environmental, psychological, and spiritual illnesses, many of which have grave and irreversible consequences for the integrity and preservation of both western and non-western life. My hope in writing this dissertation is to identify what I believe to be a facet of that denigration, and to propose new directions in the treatment of this problem through the lens of communication theory.

Research Motivation

The focus of this work was born from my own weariness of the spiritual and emotional dissociation rampant in the industrialized western world and its impact on the discipline and study of communication. Spiritual, emotional, and somatic intelligences were slaughtered in the “modern” age so that commerce could thrive, and many in the west have quantifiably benefited from the advents of western technology and efficiency while our spirits seem to be crying for something more deep and meaningful than the endless the hum of a digital server. However, questions abound about the destructive potential of western modernity resulting in frequent longing for a different alternative, a different path toward spirituality and interaction with nature.

As a lifelong seeker of spiritual depth I have been disappointed with the Romantic sensationalism of the New Age movement, the critical reductionism of extreme post-modernism, the ungrounded and lofty approach of the Idealists, as well as the myopic and grandiose focus of western ideology: Rational Scientism. These ideological camps fail to provide the nutrients needed to repair the pervasive modern malaise, partially due to a resolute assertion that science, reason and intellectual development *is* the curative for the diseases which have plagued the human spirit such as hopelessness, nihilism and existential anxiety. Many post-colonial scholars in the academy are all too aware that their research is often denigrated due to the marginalization of alternative epistemologies and ontologies. The "traditional" disciplines are “grounded in cultural worldviews which are either antagonistic to other belief systems or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge systems” (Smith, 1999 p.65). This work seeks to explore how traditional knowledge systems lead

to limited understandings of communication and how "Othered" knowledge systems have to potential to de-westernize communication models.

I am fascinated by the means through which human beings negotiate and communicate meaning, but as I felt my way through the hallowed halls of the academy I became disenchanted with limited assumptions of modern western communication scholarship. As I began exploring alternatives to traditional theories of communication, I was pleased to find a great deal of literature on multi-cultural and international communication; however, much of it steers clear of ideas of communication outside of the comfortable confines of the subject/object or physical based reality theorized by western modernity.

This dissertation offers an alternative to western binary models of communication. In an effort to move academic discussions in communication away from the pervasive dialectic of the western Cartesian binary I strive to illustrate how non-western epistemologies and ontologies can offer a basic philosophical basis for building a model of what I refer to as "transversal communication". However, implicit within a new model of communication is the integration of a more holistic notion of reality in terms that do not ignore or marginalize emotion, spirituality, or somatic understandings of reality. In other words, a communication model capable to embrace non-rational, non "scientific" modes of understanding.

Before theorizing communication outside the binary I will trace the development of western philosophical thought from the Age of Enlightenment through the 21st century in broad strokes, in order to show how, due to the over-emphasis on scientific, rational, materialistic thought, the dialectic of the binary was built through increasing

dissociation of spiritual, emotional, somatic, or nature-based knowledge.. I focus primarily on efforts to "climb out" of the morass of western modernity by outlining efforts by various philosophical camps inside and outside of western continental traditional philosophies. By painting this picture of western modernity I illustrate the staggering achievements of modern philosophical rationality, but also how, out of a desire to establish distance with subjugated others, the West has a long history of marginalization of Othered [2] epistemologies and ontologies.. In some cases, as I will show, the theoretical constructs meant to free westerners from the fetters of their seemingly hopeless existential conundrums ultimately only perpetuate limiting epistemological and ideological structures.

The second part of the dissertation explores two different paths towards an alternative understanding of communication. Ultimately, my goal is to draft a non-Western communication model able to explain non-western modes of interaction—what I refer to as "a transversal communication model." In my quest, I focus on the epistemologies and ontological positions of two scholars: Dagara cultural anthropologist Malidoma Somé and Latina feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa. Based on a rhetorical analysis of Somé's and Anzaldúa's work, this study explores their subaltern, indigenous, non-western concepts of knowledge, identity, reality and time and space. Once these foundational concepts are presented, they will serve as the basis to formulate an alternative communication model.

Overview

[2] The term "Other" will be utilized in the capitalized iteration to denote racial, economic, gender, and sexual minorities within the western world and is utilized in the feminist/queer and postcolonial context to refer to those whose identities are outside of the hegemonic western majority (White, heterosexual, male, middle-class, Protestant).

Chapter I: Climbing In: The Development of Western Consciousness

This chapter charts the development of the western consciousness from the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment through to the development of critical thought in western philosophy. This portion of the project is intended to illustrate the development of key epistemological concepts that lay the foundation for the philosophical suppositions for the creation and perpetuation of a binary epistemological system that will underlie communication theory throughout the bulk of the modern age. This chapter discusses Romantic, Idealist, Existentialist, Post-Modern, Marxist and Critical schools of thought and their efforts to reduce the influence and control of the binary model on human experience. In addition second half of this chapter looks at other philosophical ideas which seek to emancipate human beings from the confines of the binary philosophical assumptions of western continental philosophy This chapter ends with an in-depth literature review of postcolonial, Africana and Caribbean philosophers such as Homi Bhabba, Sylvia Wynter, Edward Said, Lewis Gordon, Gayatri Spivak, Patricia Hill Collins and Edouard Glissant.

Chapter II: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology utilized in this dissertation. I will explain why the data were chosen as well as offer rationalization for an empathic reflexive, critical-feminist and postcolonial approach analysis of the data. This chapter will largely serve as an introduction to the data and position it within the larger context of post-colonial rhetorical analysis.

Chapter III: Climbing Out: Analysis of Malidoma Somé and Gloria Anzaldúa

This chapter will utilize post-colonial rhetorical analysis to engage the data: *Of Water and the Spirit* and selected essays from Gloria Anzaldúa. I provide an in-depth analysis of the data in order to illustrate the limits of western epistemology and ontology and offer alternatives to the tropes of knowledge, identity, time/space and reality charted in Chapter One. Each respective section will end with implications on communication scholarship of the previously analyzed trope.

Chapter IV: Another Way: Toward a Theory of Transversal Communication

This chapter will seek a practical application in how communication scholarship can utilize the insights from the data in the previous two chapters toward developing a theory of transversal communication. A new working model of communication will be proposed in this chapter which positions reality, knowledge, identity, and time and space within the theoretical frameworks of Malidoma Somé and Gloria Anzaldúa.

CHAPTER ONE

Dissociations and Salvations: From Modernity to Postcolonialism

Literature Review

The philosophical and technological development of the Age of Enlightenment heralds the appearance of modern western philosophy as a monolithic force to be reckoned with. However implicit in that arrival is an increasing loss in the understanding of the value of emotion, spirituality and somatic epistemologies, as science would continue to cast them further into the shadow of fancy and tenuous speculation primarily associated with the mysterious, often feminized, Other. The growing ability to travel the world by sea creates an ideological fervor around the idea of expansionism that includes not only the drive to conquer and subjugate indigenous foreign lands but also the need to tame and domesticate the irrational native's spiritualties primarily through religious or economic subjugation (Mackenzie, 1990; Smith 1999; Nandy, 2010; Said, 1978)

The scientific discoveries and intellectual insights of the western world are indeed staggering, and the effects of explosive population and economic growth contributed to further investment in science as a means of salvation and rightly so, as the physical quality of life for the westerner was greatly improved through the developments of science. Science, intellectualization, and philosophizing were seen as the only ways to ensure progress and as effective ways to steer clear of the fanciful magic of the superstitious east or the barbarous south. Science appears to pull the western world back into a state of progressive bliss. After the lull of intellectual and technological development in the Dark Ages, The Enlightenment promises exciting

forward momentum. However, by the end of the Enlightenment science had mutated into a monolith of immovable ideology that troubled many thinkers and thus it became increasingly important for later schools (the Romantics, Idealists, Post-Modernists, Structuralists, Post-Structuralists and Critical Theorists) to dismantle its iron fisted rule.

Fragmented Meaning

The sheer volume of philosophical and scholarly text produced in the Modern Age (beginning after the rise of the Aristotle and Platonic schools) illustrates that the enshrinement of thought in text is a way to ensure the continuity of spirit beyond the scope of organic life. Ideas, thoughts, and intellectual musings are canonized in philosophical rhetoric, music, and literature as a way to express the predominance of mental activity; signaling humankind's supposed awakened state. Spirit is now tethered to the things of the earth where they enjoy permanence and density, however, now the world of the mind and its breadth of ideas are to be truly pondered, idolized, and worshipped as the great Mythic dynasties (such as the Ancient Egyptians and Ancient Greeks) once venerated the Gods. Isaac Newton, for all of his brilliance and contributions to modern science helped to codify an era in science that would dominate the western world for the next three hundred and fifty years . The use of "natural law" became dogmatic in its refusal to allow other explanations of reality. Descartes' famous dictum, "I think therefore I am" is heralded as the new western religion. However, Christian religion would be maintained as a form of ethical and moral rule, and in many cases as justification for attack or subjugation of the other.

Mechanistic and totally naturalistic ways of describing the world became increasingly fashionable for intellectuals. Charles Darwin, August Comte, Emile

Durkheim, and B.F. Skinner all display the emergent positivistic way of describing phenomena (Coppleston, 1966; Skinner, 1953; Darwin, 1963). Apparently supported by a growing cache of scientific evidence, these intellectual leaders wove a new kind of veil that would shroud humankind in a morass of hyper-physical rationalism for the next three hundred years.

The valuation of quantifiable science was further supported by the rapid growth of the world's population and the need for more efficient means of production. By the early 19th century Europe's population alone had grown from some two hundred million to four hundred million people (Bairoch & Goertz, 1986). The boom in population required more resources, greater need for medical and industrial goods, and larger more efficient cities to manage the growth. Scientific development was the most effective way to manage the needs of the western boom.

Romanticism and Idealism

As a response to the exponential growth of science in the Enlightenment many became critical of science's claim to answer all things. The sense of magic, myth, and spirit was being drained of society via the mutation of the scientific disciplines. Thus the emotional aspects of human life were being denied in favor of an over-estimation of the importance of reason and rationality. In addition, the west increasingly became a society of consumption. Rapid technological advancement meant that people became intolerant of boredom and in need of constant stimulation. The Romantics responded to this with great concern and believed that what was needed was a return to the "natural state" of humankind. Rousseau, and later Whitman and Thoreau, and their musical and artistic counterparts believed that the way out of the technological and scientific hell

created by the unmitigated growth of reason and materialism was to find refuge in the individual world of emotional reflection and a return to nature as a source of renewal.

Many Romantic philosophers fought the growth of the metropolis by retreating into nature and, as such, removing themselves from societal interaction. This supported a re-connection with the spirit that was lost due to the mechanization of the world The Romantics found themselves alone with their own reflections, writing poetry and painting beautiful works of art, but fell into a different kind of self-obsessed narcissism. The dignities of the Romantic movement include beautiful aesthetic contributions and have been recaptured by the modern New Age movement.

However, the promise of enlightenment through a return to faculties of emotional reflection, or the recapturing of the "natural man" through returning to a state-of-nature and retreat from society, does not address the state of society as a whole, and only serves the individual. Not until the Existentialists does the concept of the individual as a member of the collective whole become an integrated idea in critical thought[3]. Romanticism is also still blissfully unaware of the difficulties and structural power differences that had been created by scientism and colonialism. Anthropology was very fashionable during the Romantic's philosophical reign, and influenced the discipline a great deal. Additionally, the fetishizing and idealization of the Other begins during the Romantic Movement that would remain problematic for many years (Lewis, 1973; Smith, 1999; Said, 1979). Rather than looking to the Other as an equal they became figments of the western imagination, (this time with a touch less savagery). Nonetheless the conceptions of the other (as a way out of the emotionless and

[3] "Critical" implies critical in response to the scientism of the Enlightenment. Up until the Enlightenment critical thought was *critical* in response to intellectual deprivation.

mechanized landscape of the western world) was in most cases inaccurate, built from a gross misunderstanding of their rituals, cultures and traditions and decisively racist. "Rousseau has a particular influence over the way indigenous people […] came to be regarded, because of his highly romanticized and idealized view of human nature. It is to Rousseau that the idea of the noble savage is attributed" (Smith, 1999 p. 49). However, quite frequently the western expedition into exotic lands end in disillusionment over the "barbaric" and "horrific" acts committed by the noble savages.

The Romantics seek to find a way out, and intuitively look outside the west for direction, but are unable to adequately divorce themselves from the western paradigm. We can see many vestiges of the Romantic "way out" still at work in the New Age movement of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Idealists respond to the Romantics emotionalism in an effort to recapture the dignities of the rational faculties and prevent further sentimentalizing of the problems at hand. The Idealists, particularly the German Idealists, seek to re-establish a connection to a sense of spirit via understanding the nature of consciousness. Phenomenology is a method championed most heavily by philosopher Edmund Husserl, and seeks to understand consciousness divorced from the confines of theoretical constructs, objects, and ideas and rather explores the mechanics of consciousness itself (Husserl & Kersten, 1998). Phenomenology takes much of its ideology from Emmanuel Kant and the exploration of nouemna and phenomena. However, unlike Kantian philosophy, the relationship to external reality of phenomena is unimportant. For the Idealists such as Fichte, Husserl, and Hegel, the way out of scientism is through understanding the ultimate nature of the mind (Sokolowski, 2000). In many ways the

Idealists circle back to neo-Platonic sensibilities without explicit mention of God as an absolute entity. For the Idealist, the way out of dissociation and back to a sense of connection with the world is through understanding the world divorced from concepts. The theories of the world, for the Idealist, create the bulk of dissociation from spirit, and consequently, from other human beings. The Idealists do not believe in the regressive potential of the Romantics and are thus progressive in approach. Hegel, perhaps one of the more influential Idealist thinkers supposes that only through understanding the mind (divorced from phenomena, or theories) can one access any kind of knowledge (Hegel et. al, 1977).

Existentialism and Post-Modernism

By the end of the 19th century with increasing speed the technological development of the western world seems to threaten the very meaning of human existence. Factories are erected in place of valleys and the difficulties of maintaining the growing economic machine of the west is evidence of the growing dissociation of human meaning.

The Existentialists seek to re-inject meaning into the world but do so through a mixture of embodied action and a reconnection with the faculties of will power. Critical of the Idealists before them, the Existentialists reject the notion of mind as the only reality in the world. For Existentialists the lofty rationalization and preservation of lived experience in the mind is not a sufficient replacement for the dynamic lived experience of the physical world (Stewart, 2010). Existentialists claim that to state that Mind is the only truth is to claim a grand Truth, which is unacceptable and ultimately false. For the Existentialist the discourse of Truth has created the bulk of human dissociation and

despair in the world. Søren Kierkegaard believes that boredom, anxiety, and despair must be avoided in order to access any kind of happiness (Kieregaard et. al, 2000). The Existentialists communicate a somewhat melancholic perspective. The dissociation of spirit by the late 19th century was so rampant, that it appeared there was no return from the despair blanketed on the human soul through the insistence of materialistic science. So while Kierkegaard believed that the way out of despair was through the reintegration of faith into human life, some acceptance of that despair was necessary. Despair resulted from the realization of the potentiality of our finitude, and could only be navigated through courageous leaps of ideological faith. Interestingly, Kierkegaard never claimed the absolute existence of God, only that the individual integration of faith of as a faculty was important.

For Nietzsche (perhaps the most famous of the Existentialists), faith and God were concepts that needed to be abandoned all together if we are to access true freedom. His insights have been incredibly important for the formation of later critical theories because he rejects the grand Truths that he believes have been mostly propagated by both science and Christianity (Nietzsche & Kaufmann, 1968). For Nietzsche, a staunch materialist, the power to transcend dissociation comes from human will. In addition, he believed that the recognition of the symbolic powers at work in the world (the Apollonian and the Dionysian) and the balance of the two, would be paramount in helping to evolve human beings past the state of blind obedience where they have found themselves. Nietzsche also believed that human beings must evolve into a state of the *Overman*, which has transcended the animal nature and the over-control of the impulses placed upon them by Christianity. His proclamation that "God is dead" is a striking and

telling narrative of the 19th century and the existential dilemma. For him the narrative of the Christian myth had come to represent a weakness of will in human beings and that through the recognition of their own power (both individual and social), independent of the prescribed Christian myth, could mankind truly reconnect with any semblance of meaning.

Like Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre believed that religion has allowed people a convenient way out of ethical and responsible action in the world (Sartre and Barnes, 2001). He believed that only through the recognition of one's finitude and aloneness, one could truly transcend and move into any kind of action. In contrast to the early existential insights of Kierkegaard, by the time Sartre entered the scene, religion and science were under violent attack by the Existentialists who believed that we must return to the primacy of the individual as a free and autonomous human being. Unlike the Romantics who reveled in emotionality, and sometimes shifted into overt sentimentality, the Existentialists were anything but sentimental. Through the Existential movement nihilism became popular, and meaning itself became impossible and futile. So like the schools before them, Existentialism gives way to an over-growth of its own precepts and shifts from a focus on finding meaning to the belief that there is none. Identity, knowledge, and time are useless concepts to the existentialist who believes they are all constructs of a binary world filled with arbitrarily prescribed meaning. Nonetheless, the reaction to the growth of the industrial world and the increasing loss of humanity through massive mutation represents an important strain in critical thought.

The existentialists' argument is the lack of attention to power structures leaves plenty of intellectual room for the Postmodernists, Marxists, and Critical theorists of the late 19th and early 20th to explore in order to begin the seemingly endless task of reclaiming a sense of wholeness to an increasingly dissociated Western paradigm. Power and its role in both the physical and spiritual lives of human beings becomes the paramount focus of the 20th century, which in turn will open the ideological door for the other to re-enter the conversation.

Marxism, Critical Theory and The Frankfurt School

By the early 20th century the limits of Existentialism had apparently been reached because of its devolution into nihilism. In addition, the growth of the focus on the individual as creating the world, via thinkers like Nietzsche, and the tradition of psychoanalysis via Sigmund Freud, caused a radical reorientation toward the importance of the social world and creating history. Hegel spoke of the dialectic of the historical narrative, and the theory that history unfolds as a series of dialectical tensions that are resolved and then regenerated with each new idea (Hegel & Sibree, 1956). However, not implicit in Hegel's argument was the importance of the power structure, or the hegemonic structures (as Antonio Gramsci would call them) on human beings (Gramsci et al, 1971).

Karl Marx, who is not categorically post-modernist but whose ideas are in direct conversation with the growing dissatisfaction of the western 20th century philosopher emerges in the late 19th century. Marx's influence on critical theory is undeniable and in fact it is through Marx that the Frankfurt philosophical school would seek its theoretical grounding. The contributions of Marx have been heralded ad infinitum in academia;

nonetheless, his recognition of the economic and political nature of human life was a revolutionary response to the tendency toward intellectual navel gazing common with many modern philosophers. Marx stated that it is the means and modes of production that determine human life (Marx, 2010). As a staunch materialist he sought, due to the political upheaval in German life at the turn of the 20th century, to emancipate the working class from the drudgery and dissociation common in their own labor efforts. Marx saw that as the industrial society of the western world grew, so too does the capitalistic greediness inherent in humans. The only way out for Marx is to incite the savvy worker to liberate themselves from the confines of capitalistic control via socialistic and communist revolt. Marx also maintained that it is production and economies that determine the history and identities of the world (each society moving from slavery to feudalism to capitalism to socialism to communism) rather than the Hegelian notion that dialectics, or ideas, write the histories of the world. Marx's rejection of the loftiness that typified western philosophy moved critical philosophy out of the realm of intellectualism to a true praxis. Along with Marx, a host of other Marxist inspired philosophers are born (including Gramsci, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse) who would advance critical theory further into a state of action that has the potential to shift both the intellectual and practical aspects of society

In the 1970s French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard proposed the idea of the "Postmodern condition" (Lyotard, 1997). For Lyotard, human life has been dominated by a couple of important "grand meta-narratives". These narratives include; the notion that human life progresses toward something evolutionarily greater and as such is progressive and, that this progressive nature promises emancipation from suffering.

Lyotard states that these narratives have been endorsed mostly by positivistic science and Christian ideology. However, Lyotard states that these narratives are no longer acceptable and only seek to undermine the post-modern human being who doesn't believe these narratives in the first place. Much like Foucault, the narratives themselves create the history of the world and perpetuate our dissociation because they no longer serve the society at large. Alternately, Lyotard rejects the theoretical underpinnings of the Existentialists and Marxist schools; in a book titled *Adorno is the Devil* he states;

> "In Freud, it is judaical, critical sombre (forgetful of the political); in Marx it is catholic. Hegelian, reconciliatory (...) in the one and in the other the relationship of the economic with meaning is blocked in the category of representation (...) Here a politics, there a therapeutics, in both cases a laical theology, on top of the arbitrariness and the roaming of forces"(Lyotard, 1979).

Lyotard's attack of power-centric ideologies is typical of the post-modernist era.

Michel Foucault is cited by many as one of the founding fathers of Postmodernism, because of his focus on dismantling the apparent power structures inherent in the modernist construction of society. Foucault sought to uncover the discourses at work in creating the world and illustrated that those discourses both constrain and limit the experience of the human being (Foucault, 2002; Foucault and Gordon, 1980). Discourses are enacted through power structures that make a claim to truth through their statements. Foucault attacked the very institutions that support the western world such as the discourse of criminality (prisons) and what we constitute as criminal behavior, and the discourses of the body and sexuality, in his highly influential book *The History of Sexuality* (1990). For the first time in intellectual history the structures of human life were exposed for their power dynamics in a way that flew in

the face of the modernist notions of stability and rationality. The way to freedom is to recognize these inherent discourses as an overlay thrust upon the individual and the culture at large. Additionally, for the first time in intellectual history, the hegemonic privilege of the philosopher would be exposed. Through analyzing the discourses of power at work in creating "reality," Foucault uncovers an integral aspect of the turn toward critical discourse and the creation of theories of inclusive freedom such as feminist theory and queer theory.

Other post-modernists attack the very language we use to communicate in the world. Jacques Derrida asserts that the incessant search for meaning, via the linguistic faculties, is pointless because ideas lose their intended meaning as soon as they are released from the consciousness that holds them (Derrida, 1981). Derrida sought to show the absurdity of trying to hold onto meaning through deconstruction. He also kept pace with other postmodernists who gave primacy to the social world. Derrida sought to reveal that philosophy, and any text for that matter, was subject only to the meaning of the time and its theorems, postulations and claims would mean something wholly different at a later time (a decisively post-structuralist approach).

The Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and later, Jürgen Habermas) advanced Marxists theory considerably out of the realm of pure materialism, and re-inject traditional Marxism with doses of idealism, modern science and other interdisciplinary strands in order to seek their goal of the emancipation of society (Horkhiemer & Adorno, 2009). Habermas states that the goal of critical theory should be the integration of science and philosophy, and as such the critical theorist cannot ignore the insights of science or the insights of philosophy in constructing a theory of

social life (Habermas, 1985). Habermas, and to a lesser extent Horkheimer, Marcuse and Adorno, herald the Enlightenment as an important point in human history. For Habermas, the Enlightenment represents the principles of one of his most famous theories, the theory of communicative action, because it allowed for the exchange of ideas in an open forum between free individuals (1985). Thus the Enlightenment and its theories and constructs should not be demonized (as the post-modernists, existentialists, and post-structuralists tended to do), but should be recognized as an important step in the development of critical theory. For Habermas, communicative action is about the sharing of reason between two individuals. Reason however is not conceptualized as merely rational or scientific, but rather the cogent communication of one's viewpoint in a way that allows for open dialogue. The way out of dissociation for Habermas is through communicative action because it allows free and open discourse to thrive away from the crushing tropes of universal Truth. In addition, for Habermas, a grand narrative of cooperative and communicative action is the way toward reaching a sense of understanding between warring camps. The Frankfurt philosophers understood that the freedom of the individual could only be reached if the group as a whole is free. As such the social world cannot be forgotten. For Horkheimer, the unmitigated attention to survialistic needs has created a culture of narcissistic consumption. The need to preserve the self, through whatever means necessary, is supported by capitalistic governments who reward selfishness. The community is forgotten in favor of the one.

In conjunction with the efforts of The Frankfurt School in the 19th century, the importance of language (as first evidenced by Levi-Strauss and his exploration of the structure of myth across various cultures) was seen as the way out of rampant and

damaging scientism (de Saussure, 2006; Levi-Strauss, 1963, 1979; Bahktin & Holquist, 1981). However, the early Structuralists employed a highly methodical and rational approach to the study of language. In fact, it was merely the structure of language that was explored and not the meaning itself. Levi-Strauss's approach was an analysis of the structural components of language (Levi-Strauss, 1963, 1979). However, with Saussure, the meaning behind the *langue* (the body of language comprising linguistically focused societies) is paramount in creating the reality of the world (Saussure, 2006). Saussure noted that language and words themselves are only meaningful in relationship to other words. For the Structuralist the words that cultures use make up the stuff of their history (as opposed to the mental dialectics of Hegelian history or the economic structures of Marxist history). With the linguistic turn, human beings no longer shape the history of the world, their language does.

The Post-Structuralists however move to exploring the power within the linguistic structures of society. For example Roland Barthes explores the bourgeoisie transmission of values through language in his exploration of the association of wine with the French elite when in actuality it has various negative effects (Barthes, 1972). Barthes notes that wine's association with the bourgeoisie has all but eliminated the negative effects of the alcoholic substances detrimental effects on one's health, but that such is the nature linguistic power. Nonetheless, the association of a particular word with a particular idea subtlety conveys power and thus reproduces hegemonic values. In keeping with the notion of exposing the power differentials at work in language, thinkers like Umberto Eco championed the textual readings, because through the openness of interpretation one mimics the freedom of human life (Eco, 1984, 1989).

Closed texts do not allow for interpretation and as such the language seeks to confine and restrain the human experience by claiming an implicit and absolute Truth.

Feminist Theory

And where, through all of the masculine rationalistic musings, was the or feminine principle? The redeeming psychic energy that could possibly save human beings from their intellectual swordplay was disturbingly forgotten. However the feminine principle was there all along, pushed into subservience and service to a system that only served its continued oppression and a denial of the roots of its ancient wisdom. Emotion, intuition, love, and nurturance were pushed further into the Aristotelian right and deemed as hindrances to Truth and a distraction from the intellectual expansion at hand. Thus the feminine, and its historical energetic bearers, women would take a back seat to the intellectual power plays of the hegemonic elite for thousands of years. However, all historical appearances aside, women's voices were present and echoing important truths about the problem of connection, meaning, and existence in the mental structure. Aspasia of Pericles (470 BC-400 BC) is said to be one of the first Ionian Female rhetoricians and muse for Plato. Hypatia of Alexander (~355 AD-415 AD) is thought to be one of the first female mathematicians and contributors to astronomical study (ostracized and likely murdered for overstepping her intellectual bounds). Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) the Spanish theologian and mystic of the Middle Ages helped to reintroduce the feminine principles of the Magic age into Christian dogmatism. Throughout history evidence of the feminine contribution to the understanding of communication, knowledge, reality, and identity started early in the Mental age but have been largely lost to most mainstream contemporary academic treatments of theory.

Emancipation and freedom was something not afforded to women until the early 20th century, so their voices are conveniently left out of many philosophical discourses, and until fairly recently, out of modern intellectual discourse. The Aristotelian binary, which associated women with pathos, due to their changeable and emotional nature, ensured that women's voices were not heard because they could not offer reasonable and rational accounts of the world. Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Charlotte Bronte, Sojourner Truth, and Jane Austen are a few 19th century female writers who call for the emancipation of women's voices in the face of staunch Victorian ideologies steeped in religious and political limitations (Wollstonecraft, 2010; Woolf, 1992; Bronte, 2009; Austen 1995; Truth et. al 1993). The voice of the other had been stifled, and as such, the way toward freedom was not possible through one side of the story. To echo Nietzsche's call for the reintroduction of the Dionysian element, women would be integral in paving the way back to a sense of spirit. In the 20th century, as feminism spread in the west, the voices of women became louder and louder. Feminist scholars such as Carol Gilligan, and her call to recognize the disparities in ethics and care, and Judith Butler's call to dismantle the binaries of gender which constrain human experience are but a glimpse of the revolutionary ideas of feminist scholarship (Gilligan, 1982; Butler, 1990; 2004). Butler is a direct inheritor of the Continental philosophies of Michel Foucault and other post-structuralists. However, for the feminist scholar it's not simply a matter of finding a reasonable, balanced response to human dissociation but recognizing the value in the emotional, changeable, and embodied aspects of the human experience that have been lost in the cacophony of western hegemonic voices in scholarship.

Postcolonial Theory

Despite critical and increasingly more liberal turns in philosophy, epistemological eurocentrism is still highly evident throughout large strains of academic and intellectual thought. Colonial epistemological relics are often insidiously speckled throughout much of postmodern and critical scholarship and subconsciously undermine truly multicultural academic theories, despite noble critical aims to liberate the collective consciousness from western tropes. The postmodernists explored questions pertaining to the individual subject: its relative nature, its shifting semiotic associations, its cultural and political positioning, and its future in an increasingly dissociated western environment. Critical scholars questioned the over-arching meta-truths of the Enlightenment and problematized universal themes like being, reality, and culture. However, as postcolonial scholar Raka Shome notes, postmodernism is not necessarily decolonized and "in fact, a postmodern perspective itself may be Eurocentric and hegemonizing" (Shome, 1996 p.55).

The need for postcolonial theory in the cannon of western philosophy marks a turn toward attempting to ferret out the underlying epistemological dysfunctions responsible for the continued marginalization of the other. Furthermore, postcolonial theory was meant to halt and repair the damage of that denigration through deconstruction of colonial and imperial discourses and the illumination of anti-colonial or simply non-western narratives and forms of knowledge as valid, real, and important. Indeed all philosophical schools of thought from Idealism to Post-Structuralism sought to repair and halt the decay of a frazzled-dissociated western consciousness however, it isn't until the colonial discourses are systematically exposed in "critical scholarship" by

postcolonial scholars that the impact of those discourses was acknowledged as truly problematic and in need of reformation or destruction. The damaging implications of imperial thought created a proverbial box of western philosophical truths that would only further isolate the west from not only itself, but also the other. Academic critical cultural studies were created to allow the space for intersectional approaches to scholarship to develop outside of colonial intellectual influence. The theories and methods of the postcolonial scholar are meant to question the foundational narratives of western thought, particularly the idea of a binary, progress-centered, rational universe, and then to rebuild or propose alternative methods, theories, narratives, and histories that are created or informed by the subaltern, indigenous, or otherwise marginalized. Postcolonial theory challenges European and American imperialistic and colonizing epistemologies, "truths" and ontologies in the hopes of decentralizing those narratives.

Most critical studies tend to focus on the practical and pragmatic concerns of how hegemonic power controls the economic, geographical and political realities of the marginalized. Postcolonial theory began with a similar Marxist position focusing on the distribution of wealth, resources, and physical geographical landmass as a way to illustrate the colonizer's power over the colonized. However, postcolonial theory also focuses on the discursive power of the colonizer and the transmission of messages, ideas and master-narratives around the other, taking a page from Foucault's work on master-discourses (Foucault, 2002; Foucault & Gordon, 1980).

Postcolonial scholar Raka Shome notes that postcolonial theory addresses two primary questions; the first of which is how western discursive practices "legitimize global power structures" and "to what extent […] the cultural texts of nations such as

the United States and England reinforce the neo-imperial political practices of these nations" (Shome, 1996). I will briefly explore first the origins of postcolonial thought as a theoretical construct beginning with Edward Said and then illustrate how Homi Bhabha furthered Said's basic postcolonial precepts whilst applying a decisively psychoanalytical perspective. I will then discuss Gayarti Spivak and some of her over-arching neocolonial arguments and particularly her call for greater self-reflexive practice when dismantling colonial and imperial tropes. And finally I will explore some major contributors in the Afro-Caribbean postcolonial and anticolonial space as they will provide some of the primary theoretical groundwork for the analysis of Malidoma Somé and Gloria Anzaldúa in Chapter Four.

Edward Said and Orientalism

Many trace the beginning of a formalized approach to postcolonial theory to Edward Said (1978) although others cite African author Chinua Achebe (1958) as the "real" precursor to postcolonialism. Whatever the case, as a theoretical position, postcolonialism didn't gain notable intellectual footing until the late 1970s as the rapid technologizing of the world and quickly spreading media culture made the effects of postcolonialism more readily apparent. Said sought to reveal the ways in which the west has created a self-centered and inaccurate vision of the Orient in order to bolster its own economic, geographic and cultural superiority. For Said, the discourse of the west about the east created a superior collective egoic structure that permitted the continued perpetuation of racism and "othering" that does not disseminate accurate information about the east because stereotypes and master narratives about the other prevent inclusive, accurate cultural understanding from being reached (Said, 1978). Said notes

that through the assumption of superiority Eastern narratives are continually marginalized and even caricaturized. Said writes that the postcolonial thinker must seek to analyze "system[s] of discourse by which the 'world' is divided, administered, plundered, [and] by which humanity is thrust into pigeonholes, by which 'we' are 'human' and 'they' are not" (Said, 1978 p.41). Said coined the term *orientalism* to describe the act of dehumanizing and systematic cultural caricaturization of non-western nations and people. Through this idea Said called into question much of the so-called critical thought embarked upon by supposedly liberally minded scholars of the academy and revealed the subtle racist and ethnocentric myths that were created particularly during the time after the First World War and before the Cold War. It appeared to Said that even through the supposed intellectual inquiry into non-western culture the specious "differences" were used only to bolster and highlight the privilege and superiority of the westerner, and served mostly to paint a largely false and insidiously violent and untrustworthy image of the other.

Said did not address the academy directly in his original writing (this happens more directly with Spivak and Bhabha) but wrote more generally with a leaning toward Marxist sentiment. Said argues that the Orient was constructed in an irrational (or anti-rational), feminized image through various media, propaganda messages, and anthropological excursions that permitted the West to justify its continued "intellectualization" and cultural education of the other. Said notes that these intellectual or educational projects of the west are merely masks for the economic and political agendas that served the continued growth of western nations. In his estimation orientalism applies to any "underdeveloped" nation that is dehumanized by Eurocentric

western discourse, and is not relegated to the geographical region of the east, although writing reflexively his project reflects his own Palestinian ancestry. Said's intellectual project is closely tied to Foucault in that he maintains that it is a function of "intellectual power" which racializes the other in classrooms where their traditions, customs, lifestyles and identities become exoticized and fetishized, and the other is positioned as inferior to the civilized, educated westerner, through subtle but masterful discursive framing (Said, 1978 p.41).

Since Said was writing in the late 1970s he did not extricate his theory in an age of extreme and rapid media and information exchange. Nonetheless he was at least peripherally aware of the increasing interconnected technological development of the global "community" due to the rapid growth of computers in economic stock trading during this time. The monolithic media presence of western nations has made the Orientalizing of non-western people and their cultures even more pervasive across the globe in the 21st century.

According to Said's theory the "knowledge" gained about Othered communities and cultures is often garnered in an effort to understand and communicate more appropriately with the other, however, it often serves to discursively dominate those respective cultures, essentially saying, "this is what you're like". Furthermore those cultural education projects are often aimed at supporting the ego-expansiveness aims of the west. While some western critical scholars would likely recognize the subtle discursive power ideologies at work in their efforts to understand the other, orientalism and neo-colonialism subtly paints the ontologies, epistemologies and truths of the other as "valid" but "different", with a patronizing exoticizing tone. As a result the

regressive-Idealist critical scholar can then engage in the "commodification of the native" which refers to the practice of fetishizing the native person (JanMohamed, 1985).

Abdul JanMohamed, expanding on Said's original theory, notes that through commodification the native can be exchanged for any other "different" native and the result would be the same; and the focus becomes less on understanding, normalizing, or legitimizing indigenous cultures but rather on the fact that they are Othered and thus "interesting". We can see this phenomena played out in the recent attraction to tribal and native prints in the fashion and design industry since 2010. Through the appropriation of the native's cultural artifacts (i.e., tribal patterns, furniture, art forms, music, etc-whether they are African, Middle-Eastern, Native-American, South American or Asian) the west believes it is engaging in an act of praise-worthy cultural inclusion which celebrates indigenous aesthetics, but in actuality it is a superficial interest that circumvents the need for a real epistemological or ontological understanding of the nuances and meaning of the indigenous culture's artistic forms.

Homi Bhaba and Colonial Discourse Analysis

To address the discursive nature of postcolonialism and the need to move away from the continued construction of "us" and "them" we can look to scholars like Homi Bhabha and Gayarti Spivak. Bhabha in particular deepened the idea of postcolonialism as a discipline and is cited by many to be the true "father" of postcolonial thought. Bhabha's work "takes post-structuralist approaches and applies them to colonialism, producing what has been called colonial discourse analysis" (Huddart, 2006). For Bhabha the real work of postcolonialism centers on finding and becoming comfortable

in the liminal space between the colonizer and the colonized (much like Anzaldúa suggests). Influenced heavily by the work of Derrida, Freud, Said, Fanon and Mill, Bhabha embarks on what has been described as a psychoanalytic analysis of the imperial west. Bhabha shifts the focus from the Marxist perspective that Said's work analyzes, and rather seeks to understand the identity of the west and its relationship to the other. In addition, he asserts that the apparent disenfranchisement of the other is only a physical or economic reality and not necessarily a reality of identity or consciousness. For Bhabha the power of the colonizer is primarily psychological:

> "[Bhabha] is interested in a psychoanalytic approach to that power, and his work suggests that colonial discourse only seems to be successful in its domination of the colonized. Underneath its apparent success, this discourse is secretly marked by radical anxiety about its aims, its claims, and its achievements. So we might ask the question, 'what does colonial discourse want?' The answer seems to be, it wants only domination of the colonized" (Huddart, 2006 p.4).

In his book *The Location of Culture* Bhabha argues that the west actually recognizes its similarity to the colonized and as such seeks to relieve the anxiety of that realization through continued creation of the illusion of separateness; he presents that colonial discourse expansion is a psychic effort to maintain the individuated western collective consciousness in the face of intuitive understanding of sameness (Bhabha, 2012). The focus of Bhabha's work is to not only look at the effect of colonization on the colonized but to also look at the effects of colonization on the colonizer themselves. The anxiety of the possibility of sameness for the west pushes the act of marginalization and imperial discourse transmission in order to maintain the gap of perceived difference. In reference to the proposal of a transversal model of communication Bhabha's analysis

has important implications, as David Huddart notes of Bhabha's postcolonial model, "it operates on the assumption that a traditional philosophical sense of the relationship between one's self and others, between subject and object, can be very damaging in its consequences-something we see too often in the encounter of different cultures" (Huddart, 2006 p. 5). The traversing of the liminal state between self and others is indeed not only psychically anxiety producing for the individual but for the collective consciousness of a particular culture (in this case both the west and non-west). The need to create clear identity lines between the west and the rest allows the perpetuation of the binary model of communication and thus prevents true understanding because the apparent gap between me/not me often creates a hostile relationship between that which is perceived to be unlike the self, in other words; "if cultures are taken to have stable, discrete identities, then the divisions between cultures can always become antagonistic" (Huddart, 2006 p.5).

Bhabha also supports the idea of *cultural hybridity,* which refers to the inevitable cultural mixing that is inherent in all cultures and is intended to eliminate the notion of a pure cultural discourse divorced from outside influence. However, Bhabha notes that this form of hybridity happens not only on the cultural level but also on the level of individual. Human beings are a mixture of multiple influences that create a composite or apparent "self". However, Bhabha feels that hybridity itself is not as important as *hybridization*. Through hybridization, identity is constructed as an ongoing process thus Bhabha is proposing an idea of the transversing identitive borders (like Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness) in order to recognize that culture happens in the liminal space *between* identities, not in the apparent division that separates them. In this

way the colonizer and colonized must strive for the elimination of the singular identity in favor of a transpersonal identity that is at best willing to displace its own epistemological and ontological preconceived notions in the creation of new cultural meaning (Huddart, 2006). Bhabha, by shifting the conversation away from the physical location of culture, moves postcolonial discourse into the spatial and temporal location of culture. In this sense the liminal space is not simply between physical borders but between the borders of consciousness (if such borders exist).

Within this theory of postcolonialism the focus on hybridity and liminality is integral to understanding how colonial powers have attempted to establish discursive ideas around "pure cultures", which is yet another act of binary partitioning meant to perpetuate the system of the ruler and the ruled (Bhabha, 2012). David Huddart extricates this principle nicely:

> "In order to justify the material inequalities central to colonial rule. When Bhabha comes to study colonial power he argues that it is necessary to do something different. In other words, to continue thinking in terms of self and other, but simply to reverse the value of self and other so that the colonizer becomes the morally inferior, is not a productive approach and in fact does not offer any real change." (Huddart, 2006 p.7)

Implicit in Bhabha's postcolonial theory is the criticism of the narrative of modernity. He implores the postcolonial scholar to explore themes such as; "What is modern?" "What cultures/nations are considered modern?" and "What ideas are modern?" These questions allow one to uncover the repression behind the narratives of the other and the bolstering of the master narratives in the colonized nation. The "cunning of western modernity" is full of "historical ironies" and "disjunctive temporalities" (Bhabha, 2012). Even the postmodern critical values must be carefully probed because within those

values there is often the implicit suggestion of the pervasive binary latently inscribing the analysis itself (Bhabha, 2012 p. 64). The idea that modernity and progress are temporal and spatial facts is one I have explored throughout this chapter, however Bhabha delves deeper into these assumptions to reveal that the act of maintaining the image of progress (by positioning others as non-progressive and primitive) allows western anxiety to remain well controlled. This is what he refers to as the "psychoanalysis of modernity" because it reveals that the underlying terror of the west lies in its own realization that modernity and progress are illusory.

Gayarti Spivak and Postcolonial Reflexivity

While Bhabha provides a more thorough approach to how we may conceptualize postcolonial thought, Gayarti Spivak proposes methods to engage with narratives in a manner that thwarts the postcolonial intellectual "agenda". Spivak outlines a methodology for engaging and reading subaltern narratives which positions them with authority by minimizing colonial tropes that can undermine such authority. This is not to suggest that Spivak's work is merely methodological while Bhabha's is theoretical, indeed they both traverse each plane well, however Spivak, as an Indian born woman, reintroduces the idea of reflexivity, responsibility and self-reflection in the postcolonial process. Additionally Spivak shows the postcolonial speaker *how* to engage with both master narratives and colonized or Othered narratives. I will revisit the idea of the reflexive postcolonial analysis in the methods section in Chapter Four, however it is important to underscore the massive contribution of Spivak to the birth of contemporary postcolonial (or neocolonial) thought.

Spivak underscores the notion of subtlety in the neocolonial transmission of discursive rhetoric. To reclassify the colonial as neocolonial in her estimation is to acknowledge the shift away from physical colonization to primarily intellectual and discursive colonization. In speaking about this subtlety she states; "neocolonialism is like radiation-you feel it less like you don't feel it" (Spivak, 1991 p. 221). Neocolonialism is both a historical and economic shift (which she positions as emergent after the Gulf War of the early 1990s) but beginning as early as the computerization of the world Stock Market exchanges in the 1970s (Spivak, 1991):

> "GCS: Neocolonialism is what happened after the beginning of the dismantling of colonialism proper, that is to say, old territorial imperialisms which began with the rise of monopoly industrial capitalism which requires territorial imperialism in order to train up the subjects to establish markets, to free labour, and so on, but as post-industrial capitalism grows, this particular thrust of this project has been going on for two, three centuries and in the middle of our century then comes the time when these kinds of territorial undertakings are just too expensive, too old-fashioned, the world has been dividing itself in different was, they're not necessary any more. So then with the Second World War and the negotiated independence of India, it begins to change and, as Said said and many others have argued, the British Empire passes into the hands of the United States. Now at that point the kind of colonialism that you need is more economic and less territorial: this is neocolonialism […] [it] involves also political, military, ideological etc.—the whole paraphernalia" (Young, 1991 pgs. 2-3)."

For Spivak the term "postcolonial" is bogus because it positions colonialism as something of the past, which is far from the truth in her opinion. The neocolonialist movement takes part largely outside of territorial and local boundaries; it operates insidiously even within critical academic cannons and the rhetorical constructions of

"progressive" scholars and politicians. Part of curing the ills of neocolonial radiation involves the recognition of the narratives at work, and in this way takes a page from the poststructuralist ideas of Derrida and Foucault. Utilizing this approach one must practice "unlearning" the master narratives through analyzing and rewriting the rhetoric of those narratives while not digesting their fundamental epistemological and ontological precepts as true.

Spivak suggests that we unlearn our privilege through reflexivity, which requires the reader not seeing him/herself as isolated members of a particular institution. She speaks particularly to the scholar in western academia, stressing the importance of connecting all things that we do, think, say, and teach (or not) to the ideological practices of our home nations in order to recognize how those ideologies interact with the rest of the world. Self-reflexivity for Spivak requires acknowledgement of one's privilege and an effort to move away from essentialist communication practices. The act of essentializing the postcolonial subject is something that the postcolonial critic is faced with when challenging the discursive constructions of the non-western culture. Spivak notes that the postcolonial theorist should avoid the notion that there is an "authentic" cultural identity to be found, and should also avoid naming and categorizing that culture through their own lens (even when the critic hails from non-western culture). Constantly reminding oneself of the complications of essentializing prevents self-reflexivity from being abandoned from one's analysis, and thus leaves room for discourse and true cultural learning to unfold. As Shome notes "the question then is: How can the critic engage in such postcolonial criticism without being once again the totalizing voice of authority that determines an "authentic" racial or cultural identity?"

(Shome, 1996). I will revisit the concept of essentializing in Chapter Three but Spivak's recognition of the problem of the essentializing nature of western scholarship (and particularly postcolonial scholarship) is an important contribution to postcolonial theory.

Spivak (due to her reflexive focus) is interested in the experiences of subaltern women, thus many of her most famous critiques center on the experience of women in postcolonial and colonial narratives such as Mahasweta Devi's story "Breast Giver". Spivak positions Devi's protagonist Jashoda as a representation of the subaltern, lower class woman and argues that the brutalization of her body in the story is a metaphor for the colonial war on native independence (Morton, 2003). Spivak doubts that the discussion of feminist issues in the academy will actually change the experiences of disempowered subaltern groups, but instead implores the exploration of gender and feminist issues anyway. In this way she brings an element of praxis to postcolonial scholarship. Spivak's most controversial essay *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1985) looks at the histories surrounding subaltern cultures and the representation of those cultures through the colonial lens and specifically how the subaltern woman's narrative is thwarted by western feminism. Her aim is to serve the goal of unlearning the master narratives through critical analysis of its supposed and implicit truths.

Spivak engages in deconstructing western narratives through rewriting classical English literary culture as an act of postcolonial criticism directly related to her own position as a western educated Indian woman. However, Spivak moves beyond simply analyzing the ways in which western imperial forces have encoded meaning throughout the subaltern experience and seeks to reintroduce the idea of agency and power for the subaltern, (hence her reading of Devi's "Breast Giver"). The inheritance of British

colonial rhetoric, particularly in India was not merely contingent upon military force and, according to Spivak, was not the primary means through which the British attempted to infiltrate Indian culture. Stephen Morton notes: "If colonial rule was managed through bureaucratic, economic and political institutions, it was culture-especially literature and philosophy-that provided the rhetorical basis for western colonial expansion" (Morton, 2003 p. 113). The single most important act of colonial rule for western forces in Spivak's opinion is the transmission of rhetoric. However, drawing from poststructural influences like Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man and Michel Foucault, Spivak notes that these rhetorical transmissions are nothing more than *tropes* and not *truths*, as western philosophy and science presents them. A trope can only be regarded as true if other tropes are marginalized. Indeed, these master-tropes must be systematically dismantled.

Spivak follows colonial tropes of national superiority, economic and political power and moral righteousness in traditional western philosophical and literary texts and illuminates examples where "ideas, concepts, or metaphors are deployed as truth within the broader historical and geographical context of imperial expansion" (Morton, 2003 p.113). Spivak engages with highly influential western philosophical texts like *The Critique of Pure Reason* to illustrate the tropes that are represented as truth. Spivak shows that as Kant poses arguments for the faculties of reason and rationality in the "cultured" human being he also positions what constitutes a human being by defining what culture is, which is largely contingent upon a western educated schema (Spivak, 1999). In *The Critique of Pure Reason* Kant "argues that it is primarily cultivated and educated men who can make judgments about taste and sublimity" and in doing so

eliminates the humanity of anyone that doesn't fall within those confines (Morton, 2003 p.115). The reading of the colonial text for Spivak requires revealing the tropes that perpetuate the position of the subaltern, feminine and non-western as unenlightened and in need of illumination:

> "As Spivak argues Kant's reading of the sublime presented itself differently to those people who were not represented as moral subjects within Kant's European philosophical system; 'Without development of moral ideas that which we, prepared by culture, call sublime presents itself to man in the raw [dem rohen Menschen] merely as terrible' (cited in Spivak 1999: 12-13). Spivak picks up on the German adjective 'roh' in Kant's text, noting that while it is normally translated as 'uneducated' the term 'uneducated' in Kant's work specifically refers to the 'child and the poor'; the 'naturally uneducable' refers to women' and 'dem rohen Menschen, man in the raw'. Connotes 'the savage and the primitive' (Spivak 1999: 13)" (Morton, 2003 p. 116).

In addition to reading colonial texts for imperial tropes, re-writing those tropes is important for Spivak as well. She does this through analysis of colonial and postcolonial narratives in Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1965) (which plays on the colonial tropes in *Jane Eyre*) and *Robinson Caruso* (1991). She finds it more important to explore the literary representation of the subaltern woman in these texts and how the derogatory association of the feminine with the uncivilized, lower-class other has further pushed subaltern narratives into the margins of the texts primary narratives. Methodologically Spivak positions postcolonialism and its power in written communication, narrative and literature.

Spivak asserts that the use of the metaphor of Mother India by Gandhi during the Indian Revolution as a nationalist motivator was merely a trope used to gain

independence, and that the nationalist movement was not concerned about the lower-class tribal Indian woman at all, but rather exploited the westernized Indian woman as the face of Indian independence. Through this analysis Spivak illustrates how gender inequalities even within postcolonial movements still perpetuate colonial tropes. The use of the Mother India metaphor has its roots in the 19th century anti-colonial resistance movements where influential and fierce feminine Hindu goddesses like Kali, Savarti and Durga were introduced as a rhetorical tool to help engender a sense of strength for the nation but in both cases the gendered metaphor was not used to emancipate women but rather seek the attainment of the goal of national independence (Katrak, 1992). In fact, when independence was achieved in 1947 women's rights and the use of the positive female metaphor was largely discarded and the acceptable submissive female role model of mother and wife were reinstated as primary cultural tropes. Spivak demonstrates, through postcolonial rhetorical analysis, the denigration of the strong female archetype further in the aforementioned Marxist-feminist analysis of Devi's protagonist Jashoda in which "Jashoda's reproductive body becomes a site of economic exploitation in the text" (Morton, 2003). In her analysis the oppression of the subaltern woman is placed within the context of nationalism and reveals that even inherent within the postcolonial rhetorical cannon misogyny and gender inequality still permeates existing critical tropes.

Said, Bhabha and Spivak represent deepening waves of postcolonial and neocolonial thought concerned with challenging the master discourses of the imperial west. Spivak's move toward the inclusion of feminist ideology is an important one, and one that coincides with Anzaldúa's belief in the power of the feminine and the queer as

critical instruments to neutralize binary western discourses. Combining queer thought and postcolonialism is a relatively new intersectional theoretical approach that positions critical analysis at the intersection between queer theory and postcolonialism examining notions of identity, sexuality, and normativity (Hawley, 2001).

African and Afro-Caribbean Postcolonialism

Because Malidoma Somé's text originates from within a west African indigenous perspective it will be beneficial to specifically recognize the contributions of some key American Black, African and Caribbean postcolonial philosophers, namely Sylvia Wynter, Edouard Glissant, Lewis Gordon, and Paul Gilroy. They present a different and important viewpoint due to the historical enslavement and extreme cultural suppression of Afro-Caribbean peoples. In most cases the theories proposed by these thinkers underscore the problem of lost cultural traditions due to slavery and as such take notions of hybridity and simultaneity to a different level.

Sylvia Wynter

Sylvia Wynter's *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom* and *The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism* are both extensive philosophical explorations of the nature of the colonial epistemological inheritance. *After Humanism* is a critical exploration of the development of humanistic philosophy, particularly that of the Transatlantic philosophers of the European west and the epistemological assumptions left behind in the wake of Enlightenment philosophy and Christianity. Wynter states that the development of the Western discourse on truth was highly solidified in the nineteenth century when the triadic disciplines of biology, economics, and philosophy/literary studies helped to canonize truth during the Industrial Age, and

states “the crisis of our times is precisely that of the self-dissolution of this age” (Wynter, 1984 p. 20). Humanism, a direct result of the scholasticism and objectification of the world through the Enlightenment and pre-Enlightenment era, was positioned as a response and rescue from overblown objectivism. However, according to Wynter Humanist epistemology merely sought to reposition truth through the socio-political lens and as such further solidified European epistemology based on “the truth”.

Wynter writes about the process of secularization of the subject from the Middle Ages (man as rational thinking being) to the 19th century (man as natural being) and how secularized and rationalized subsumed thoughts created the necessity for the postcolonial thinker to un-write and un-learn these histories. Even though the focus on rationality has moved away from the discussion of reason in and of itself and more the use of reason, the dualistic infrastructure of western modernity has remained intact and reproduced the myth of colonial duality. Wynter traces the theological development of the divine vs. the natural man with the development of the theological societies of classical antiquity (the late Mythic period) and states that as the delineation between spirit and flesh became more paramount to western understanding so began the ontological differentiation between the elevated notion of “self” and the debased flesh centered notion of the “other.” Wynter states that all civilizations both western and non-western have the need, according to Uspenskij, to create systems of order and chaos, which on some level assume the human need to create dichotomies. She likens this idea to Levi Strauss’s notion of the totemic order (1960) which espouses the operation of the principle of sameness/difference as a bonding tool for societies. Wynter notes that,

> “…the fact that once these structural oppositions have been put in place, they must then function according to laws applicable to all human systems, from that of the royal

> dynasty of Iron Age East Africa to that of Christian medieval Europe or to that of our own. By marking the mode of Desire-the desire of live and of aversion to death-these structural oppositional codes function to orient the parameters of motivations/behaviors of the order" (Wynter, 1984, p. 27)

Here, Wynter does not demonize the creation of the binary itself, which she illustrates is a function of all societies, but it is rather the valuation of the poles of the binary that create problems for human societies colonized by the west. This, she states, happened most obviously in the creation of the western binary of self and other. Although most communities avoid the negative pole of death, western epistemology and culture is unique in that it lost the ability to understand the cyclical nature of human existence. Instead, the West obsessively associates progress, birth, and growth with the positive pole whereas death, decay, and re-birth have been associated with the negative pole and as such associated with darkness, evil, or emptiness.

The secularization of knowledge, which Wynter traces to the late Classical period, occurred due to a "mutation" in the understanding of theological texts:

> "…a reversal had taken place. Instead of subordinating the lay activity of learning to the authority of theology, theology was now being submitted to the authority of the lay activity of intellectual and philological scrutiny in the name of accuracy of historical meaning. The category of the celestial was being submitted to the activity of the humanista, bearers of the inferior mode of knowledge, a mode which had now begun to constitute itself as a new *ordo* or *stadium*" (Wynter, 1984 p.28).

Wynter states that the continued intellectualization and materialization of the celestial discourse further solidified the loss of spiritual orientation in the Western psyche and as such pushes the west further into dissociation from holistic unity.

In *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom*, Wynter further expands her conception of the dialectic of otherness through the lens of philosophy from classical antiquity to humanism. Wynter traces the dissolution of the spiritual/celestial self to the reasonable self back to the development of the modern astronomies of the early medieval ages. Prior to the development of science as a discipline in the Scholastic age, man was at the mercy of a fickle and often vengeful God, and could only seek to know God through striving, via rhetoric and virtue, but could not reach the angelic status of the heavens. However, with the development of science as a discipline, so came the need to differentiate between the higher states of man and the lower states of man; as such the view of the cosmos shifted to position earth at the center of all creation. This repositioning of the cosmos also incited the shifting of mankind's relationship to the celestial bodies. The mapping of the cosmos in this way was the first time in history that the cosmos was positioned around human creation. Most societies, according to Wynter, have mapped their "master codes onto the heavens" and as such based the stability, or order of their civilizations, on those codes through stargazing (Wynter, 1995 p.271). Wynter's cites Bohm's postulations on the philosophical development of the modern cosmos by the Scholastics:

> "In a 1987 interview, the theoretical physicist David Bohm explained why the rise of the physical sciences would have been impossible in ancient Greece, given the role that the physical cosmos had been made to play in stabilizing and legitimating the structures/hierarchies and role allocations of its social order. If each society, Bohm pointed out, bases itself on a general notion of the world that always contains within it "a specific idea of order," for the ancient Greeks, this idea of order had been projected as that of an "increasing perfection from the earth to the heavens." In consequence, in

> order for modern physics (which is based on the "idea of successive positions of bodies of matter and the constraints of forces that act on these bodies") to be developed, the "order of perfection investigated by the ancient Greeks" had to become irrelevant. In other words, for such an astronomy and physics to be developed, the society that made it possible would have to be one that no longer had the need to map its ordering principle onto the physical cosmos, as the Greeks and all other human societies had done. The same goes for the need to retain the Greek premise of an ontological difference of substance between the celestial realm of perfection (the realm of true knowledge) and the imperfect realm of the terrestrial (the realm of doxa, of mere opinion) (Wynter, 1995 p.272).

Through the growth of Christianity, God was reimagined in man's image and became rational, virtuous and orderly, but not only did God become the narcissistic creation of the western man, this shift also signifies an important move away from the idea of God as supernatural to God as rational:

> Maurice Godelier reveals an added and even more powerful dimension as to why the mutation by which humans would cease to map the "idea of order" onto the lawlike regularities of physical nature would not be easily come by. This would come to be effected only in the wake of the Renaissance humanists' initiation of the processes that would lead to the degodding/de-supernaturalizing of our modes of being human on the basis of their invention of Man in the reoccupied place of their earlier matrix theocentric identity, Christian" (Wynter, 1995 P. 272).

God had, for the Medieval scholastic, created the world for the sake of mankind and as such must have been functioning under the premise of a rational, non-arbitrary, knowable and rule-centered framework. Only those who could first understand the rational and reasonable premises through which God created the universe were worthy

of God's grace. Implicit within that worthiness was that those who could understand it must also be well versed in western scholastic learning.

Eventually, according to Wynter's argument, man replaced God altogether with reason. However, God was kept as a symbol of piety, celibacy and loftiness, and as a reminder of the celestial aspirations of ordinary human beings, but God, as intuited by all societies prior to this point was stripped of a holistic entity. Furthermore as the sacred/profane duality was deepened so too were the categorizations of what constituted the profane, which in this case was almost always relegated to that which was seen as barbaric, savage and unreasonable or irrational.

By the early 16th century the Medieval Christian classifications of the celestial gave way to an almost entirely political definition of sacredness through which the notion of man's choice to remain enslaved to "fallen flesh and original sin or seeking to be redeemed-in-the-spirit through the sacraments of the church" were replaced with a complex hierarchy of divinity through which reason was at the top, and irrationality, sensuality, and impulse were positioned at the bottom (Wynter, 1995 p. 287). Furthermore those on the lowest tier of divinity were seen to be in need of a proper colonial education by means of enslavement and subjugation. In fact, "the concept of enslavement was no longer projected as being to the negative legacy of Adamic Original Sin, the concept of enslavement was carried over and redescribed as being, now, to the irrational aspects of mankind's human nature" and hence the "plan of salvation" was enacted through slavery itself (Wynter, 1995 p. 287).

Humankind was no longer salvageable through means of a celestial or supernatural method but rather secularized through the goals of the state. The goals of

expansion were valorized by the Spanish colonizers as evidence of the western mission to not only expand its political and economic interests but also to enact the work of God through colonizing the savages who were unable to grasp the perfection of God's plan. Wynter illustrates how this shift was plainly evident in the literature in the early part of the 17th century:

> "Nowhere is this mutation of ethics seen more clearly than in two plays written in the first decades of the seventeenth century: one the well-known play by Shakespeare, The Tempest; the other the less well-known play by Spain's Lope de Vega, written at roughly the same time and entitled *The New World Discovered by Christopher Columbus*. In the plot of The Tempest, the central opposition is represented as being between Prospero and Caliban; that is, between Higher Reason as expressed in the former, and irrational, sensual nature as embodied in the latter. The drunken sailors, Stephano and Trinculo, had also, like Caliban, been shown as embodying that enslavement to the irrational aspects of human nature (if to a lesser degree than the latter) which Prospero must repress in himself if he is to act as a rational ruler…" (Wynter, 1995).

In her exploration, Wynter goes on to map the development of the rational/irrational codes which were perpetuated by the subjugation of the other through means of enslavement, but what is most relevant to of the task of rethinking communication is her notion that through the creation of the west's dialectic of rationality, communication with anything other than the "civilized" and "rational" becomes. A corollary of this idea is that the archaic cannot possibly engage in communication except through subjugation. The rational west, fully inhabiting its position as savior, is unable to see or recognize the other due to its narcissistic position as "disciplining father". As slavery and the

continued colonization of the subaltern, indigenous, and Othered continued (including not only ethnic minorities but also gender and sexual minorities) the possibility for understanding between the western subject and the colonial other collapsed. Eventually the irrational other is positioned as a project invariably beyond repair. Assimilation becomes possible only after the other is sufficiently colonized through intellectual discourse but the possibility of the return to niggardliness and barbaric savagery is always looming in the background as a threat. The fear of the irrational other gaining either intellectual or physical power meant a return to the pre-Adamic state of darkness (which is perhaps why the darker the skin, the more dangerous the threat). Wynter looks to Poliakov for explanation of the irrational fear of the negro; "it is the population group classified as "negro" by the west who would be made to pay the most total psycho-existential price for the west's epochal degodding of both its matrix Judeo-Christian identity and the latter's projection of otherness" (Wynter, 1995 p.306). This shadow projection would be carried over into the biological and anthropological arguments of Darwin (which was eventually used as fodder for the Third Reich to justify the Jew's association with the sub-rational negro).

For Wynter the mutation was particularly powerful in inscribing the master codes of rational/irrational on the "great chain of being". As the west moved further into the realm of pure biocentric understanding of the world, those who were positioned as less-evolved (rather than damned) included everyone from the diasporic Blacks of the Americas to Africans, poor Europeans, and the indigenous. In this way racism, reformation, and rescue of the other was no longer seen as a divine goal (as God was most certainly dead by the 19th century) but as a crisis of biological and institutional

proportions. It fed the great explorations back into the dark lands over the sea through anthropological explorations and the subaltern was positioned as novel experiment, able to provide ample descriptive knowledge to the growing assuredness of the western intellectual ego.

Edouard Glissant

Martinician poet and cultural critic Edouard Glissant focuses primarily on the cultural, economic and political implications of globalization and subjugation of the other. Through the use of poetry and philosophy one of Glissant's major works, *The Poetics of Relation* (1997) serves as one of his most thorough works of postcolonial analysis. Glissant concerns himself primarily with the creation of identity and meaning and the displacement of indigenous peoples in western lands. The creation of language is a testament, in his estimation, of the creation of liminal identities (particularly of diasporic Black peoples). Through creolization, the removal of indigenous languages from their homelands into foreign lands, the navigation of the liminal identity is forged wherefore the people of a particular diaspora maintain power and cultural integrity through linguistic hybridity. For Glissant the stripping away of the identity of the slave through violent colonialization imposed a sort of spiritual asceticism, which Glissant credits to the spiritual and material resolve of Black people across the diaspora in both the United States and the Caribbean. *The Poetics of Relation* speaks to the emotional and spiritual consequences of colonialization, describing the displacement of the slave in terms of the dark black of the ocean abyss:

> "Experience of the abyss lies inside and outside the abyss. The torment of those who never escaped it: straight from the belly of the slave ship into the violet belly of the ocean depths they went. But their ordeal did not die [once they arrived]; it quickened

> into this discontinuous/discontinuous thing: the panic of the new land, the haunting of the former land, finally the alliance with the imposed land, suffered and redeemed…thus the absolute unknown projected by the abyss and bearing into eternity the womb abyss and the infinite abyss, in the end became knowledge" (Glissant, 1997 p.8).

The knowledge created by the displaced is a "hybrid knowledge" which consists of information about the new land and retained information about their former homes.

Glissant also looks closely at the duality of the concept of "other" through outlining the necessity for a split consciousness in order to maintain the concept (of other) in the first place. This dialectic prevents an integrated understanding of totality. Glissant acknowledges the recent turn by the postmodern movement to signal the differences between self and other, and illustrates that the west, by "allowing" those differences to manifest, presupposes a hierarchical relationship to the other that blocks the "dialectic of totality". Through this allowance Glissant aptly notes that, "one could get away with: "I can acknowledge your difference and continue to think it is harmful to you. I can think that my strength lies in the voyage (I am making history) and that your difference is motionless and silent" (Glissant, 1997 p. 17). It is this implicit message within the dialectic of self/other that perpetuates marginalization as it superficially allows difference while maintaining a position of superiority through prioritizing one's actions in the world as dynamic and the other's actions as potentially dangerous but ultimately benign. However, one must wonder whether it is the unconscious reframing of the other as benign that speaks to the colonizer's anxiety about the other's potential power and influence (if not materially then spiritually).

For the purposes of this project Glissant's major contribution to the postcolonial cannon resides in his proposition of a relational approach to identity and cultural creation, which for him is done primarily through the creation of language and poetics. For Glissant, the western binary creation of self and other is not only problematic but also impossible given the integration of multiple cultures/languages/traditions within western borders. Glissant appropriately criticizes the western preference for written language over oral histories but positions this as another falsely created hierarchical standard through which classical cultures can exert its hegemonic power. Glissant's commentary about the relational aspects of identity and cultural creation require the west to reorganize its conception of being and otherness. Without acknowledging dialectical tensions in ourselves and our interactions with others we risk covert subjugation by maintaining un-checked hegemonic assumptions about self and other. In other words by not acknowledging difference through potentially well-intentioned other-blindness we cannot begin to undo the dialectical foundations which superficially created these differences in the first place.

Paul Gilroy

Paul Gilroy, on the other hand, deals more specifically with the racial and political implications of the creation of otherness, the imperial agenda, and the cultural creation and maintenance of Blacks in the diaspora. However, like Glissant, Gilroy is concerned with the relational construction of culture in the face of colonialism. Gilroy posits that the west's insistence on ignoring structural issues of racism is evidence of its fear of acknowledging difference and otherness as acceptable forms of existence (Gilroy, 2005). In *The Black Atlantic* (1993) Gilroy problematizes essentialist

arguments surrounding culture and race and states that the essentialist arguments for racial identification have created difficult and polarizing dichotomies within races themselves and the discourses that essentialize them. Gilroy calls for the deconstruction of damaging binaries like colonial/indigenous, national/international, origins/diaspora and local/global because these tend to perpetuate the belief in an original or master culture (in this case, the west), which delegitimizes, marginalizes, and disempowers others into the negative pole of the binary creation.

Gilroy's project also addresses constructionism within the African American academic literature and the tendency to deny cultural hybridity that he argues have perpetuated essentialist arguments:

> "Regardless of their affiliation to the right, left, or centre, groups have fallen back on the idea of cultural nationalism, on the overintegrated conceptions of culture which present immutable, ethnic differences as an absolute break in the histories and experiences of "black" and "white" people. Against this choice stands another, more difficult option: the theorisation of creolisation, métissage, mestizaje, and hybridity. From the viewpoint of ethnic absolutism, this would be a litany of pollution and impurity. These terms are rather unsatisfactory ways of naming the process of cultural mutation and restless (dis)continuity that exceed racial discourse and avoid capture by its agents" (Gilroy, 1993 p.5).

In addition to his critical assessment of cultural and ethnic studies, Gilroy also calls for a restructuring of the idea of modernity, which he cites as a pervasive and sustaining discourse preventing hybridity and de-essentializing from occurring. As other postcolonial scholars have noted "when the idea of history as progress (the dominant paradigm in western historiography) confronts the lived and narrative critique of the

slave our idea of progress has to be completely rethought, along with our understanding of 'modernity'" (McBride, 1995 p. 388). The project of progress by the colonizer, which positions all movement and growth in the image of their own economic and moral expansive projects, runs antithetical to the narrative traditions of the colonized. Through a rhetorical analysis of both Frederick Douglass and Black rap and spiritual music, Gilroy illustrates how the production and creation of culture by Blacks in the diaspora have been anything but regressive and stunted but stand as strong examples of cultural hybridity in the colonizer's borders (an argument akin to Glissant's notions of creolization). In fact, for Gilroy these cultural creations serve as important "countercultures to modernity" through which the colonized resists master discourses. Gilroy's theory is useful in recognizing the need to merge borders in the construction of new theories of communication. Gilroy supports a notion of cultural hybridity that dissolves even well meaning marginalized nationalist conceptions of identity or culture as a means to create more meaningful connections with others beyond the false idea of racial or cultural preservation. The rigid categorization of Black communication, Asian communication, Latino communication, gay communication, female communication, queer communication etc. and those cultural subgroup's communications with dominant hegemonic culture, only further essentializes and supports colonial dialectical theories which does little to further true holistic communication.

Lewis Gordon

Much like Wynter, Fanonian philosopher and postcolonial scholar Lewis Gordon looks to the construction of the master philosophies behind the discourses that are created in the west, particularly around issues of beingness and epistemology.

Gordon, who has penned many philosophical articles addressing issues of Black and Africana philosophy and of course his extension of Frantz Fanon's intellectual project of anti-colonial philosophy, writes most accessibly about the "problem of whiteness" and colonialism and othering, in an essay *Below Even The Other: Colonialisms Violent Legacy and Challenge With Respect to Fanon* (2012). *Below Even the Other* is particularly illustrative of his primary intellectual project as he attempts to delve deeper into the philosophical structures that insidiously underlie the problem of othering, particularly those that have been under-addressed by the postmodern scholar. Gordon, while recounting experiences in philosophy graduate school, noted the tendency for professors and colleagues alike to delegitimize or undervalue the contributions of Black thinkers and rather focus on the biographical information that produces those thinkers (as if the fascinating aspect of the Black or Othered intellectual lies in the narratives that created the ideas and not in themselves).

Gordon also writes about the tendency of his professors to position master philosophical narratives (particularly the existentialists and idealists like Nietzsche, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Sartre) as infallible, even in their critical assessment of modernity, despite Gordon's recognition of anti-Black racism in some of the aforementioned author's texts. He notes that when such concerns were expressed they were often seen as a problem on his part, as though he didn't properly understand and comprehend their arguments because they had been elevated (particularly in postmodern academia) to God-like status; revered, celebrated, and decorated. This serves as yet another example of the secularization and intellectualization of worship in the west.

Gordon also calls into question one of the primary subsets of western philosophical discourse; the notion of being, but takes the postmodern argument further and theorizes what a metaphysics of being not steeped in dualistic assumptions of subject/object, essence/shell would look like. He explores these musings through the idea of relationality (much like Glissant) but takes a decisively more philosophical approach to the problem of relations. I quote at length here to retain the intricacy of Gordon's reading of Fanon's philosophy:

> "This raises the question of philosophical anthropology of dehumanization and the problem of relationality. There is a metaphysical assumption about the human being in discussion of violence. Much modern philosophical anthropology is premised on old-style Aristotelian metaphysics of substance, where one seeks to find the essence of a thing inside of it, what intrinsic element makes a thing what it is. But this model requires imagining a thing outside of its relation to any other thing, as being that it is independent of every other thing. It, in effect, requires taking a thing out of relations with other things and determines its reality nonrelationally. The problem, of course, is that even to think about it places one in a relation with that thing. In effect, one commits a performative contradiction of attempting to be in a nonrelation to a relation about a nonrelation. This raises the fundamental philosophical anthropological problem: The human being has to be understood fundamentally in terms of relations, which means that at the heart of violence is an effort to "de-relationalize," take outside of relations, the human being or transform such a being into non-relationality. In fact, an examination of all instances of violence reveals an effort to push human beings into the body as if the human being were an Aristotelian substance" (Gordon, 2012).

What Gordon reveals here is the dehumanization of the human being into Aristotelian binary substances, which is a gross mutation of the growth of western dualism. Beings

are replaceable with any other substance and as such become disposable giving way to all forms of violence; from racism, sexism, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Fanon, according to Gordon, found that the dehumanization of life perpetuates self/other dichotomies and also creates further more damaging dichotomies through theodicy (where some groups are pushed outside of framework of ethical relations), such as no-self and no-other which move into the realm of "non-being" which is where violence on both a discursive and physical level can become extreme and unlimited. This is because "the system of colonialism and racism depends on certain groups in effect not appearing, [and] not emerging, which means, in the end, not existing, [and thus] their appearance would be read as a violation of the legitimate sphere" (Gordon, 2012). In this struggle between the colonizer to rightly claim what was obtained (however ruthlessly) and the indigenous to rightly reclaim what was perceived to have been stolen, there is no resolution, only further ethical righteousness and violence.

Gordon acknowledges the shrinking nature of the globe through the use of technology and notes that "temporality and geospatiality" are shrinking in such a way that it will become impossible to ignore the effects of the binaries of modernity any longer. Gordon equally criticizes the neoliberalist and neoconservative movements for their regressive ideologies that do not want to address the urgency to embrace hybridity in the 21st century. Furthermore Gordon's intellectual project closely coincides with Wynter's call for a reorganization of the western philosophical assumptions of modernity and history. Additionally Gordon, while echoing Fanon, is concerned with the hybridity and the politics of language, truth, validity and cultural expression in the face of colonized epistemological discourses, which he explores more fully in *Fanon*

and the Crisis of European Man (1995). Obviously for communication Gordon's ideas have tremendous application; for example conceptualizing communication as a multi-relational process between beings rather than a negotiation between two dialectical entities would aid in de-dichotomizing communication theory. More important is Gordon's belief that we must work ever harder to recognize our being*ness* during communicative exchanges. This does not mean that we delocalize communication into a completely spiritual/mental interaction as this dissociates the body but rather considers the emotional, spiritual, physical and mental simultaneously while recognizing the value in all of them. We cannot afford to de-relationalize communication theories without reproducing dangerous forms of potential communicative violence. However communication relationality must be holistic encompassing aforementioned four spheres of experience, transcultural, transgender, transsexual, transtemporal, and transidentitive in order to be truly intercultural.

Patricia Hill Collins, Afrocentrism and Afro-Idealism

In the midst of the extensive discussion and attention to African philosophy and cosmology particularly as I engage in the data analysis of Somé's narrative it's important to address the potential for Afrocentrism and specifically Afrocentric idealism. Patricia Hill Collins addresses the tendency toward Afrocentrism in postcolonial critical studies in the chapter titled, *When Fighting Words Are Not Enough: The Gendered Content of Afrocentrism* which appears in her Black feminist text *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (1998). While the entirety of the work centers on the project of Black feminism, the issues of power and the construction of epistemological theories in academe to confront social justice, Chapter

Five addresses the subject of Afrocentrism in the construction of social theory amongst critical social scholars. Collins begins the chapter by outlining some of the primary contradictions of Afrocentrism, particularly its commitment to Black scholarship as resting on the origin of Blackness in the African continent. She notes that some scholars position Afrocentrism as a theoretical concept which defines Blackness or authentic Blackness through the lens of African ideologies. This position romanticizes rural/indigenous African philosophies while:

> "[…] ignoring social issues in the urban Black present; [and] suppresses heterogeneity among Black people in search of an elusive racial solidarity; [as well as] puts forward a problematic definition of Blackness as an essential, innate quality of a general ancestral connection to Africa; and remains male-centered and heterosexist" (Collins, 1998 p.95).

Without addressing the obviousness of the gendered and sexual problems with Afrocentrism which is beyond the scope of this dissertation it is important to at least address the romanticizing of African ideologies and the blanketed essentializing of African philosophies in the bolstering of postcolonial and non-western ideologies. Afrocentrism often seeks to center the Black experience on a unifying assumption of the power in African ancestry. Hill notes the problematic postmodern conundrum of centering any discourse in any one particular culture's ideologies. Afrocentrism evolved from the frustration Black academics experienced in articulating a cohesive Black experience within the parameters of White philosophies, they thus turned to African ideologies or Black nationalist sentiments as an answer to this predicament. Formulating theoretical constructions based on Afrocentric created various efforts to re-tool Black studies in academia to reflect greater Black nationalist or Afrocentric philosophical concerns, in order to find the "soul" of Blackness which was believed to

be buried within the African philosophical constructs that had been lost due to colonial violence and systematic oppression. However, what resulted, according to Hill is a "recasting [of] Black culture through an essentially and often celebratory corrective lens, African history, philosophies, religions and social systems" (Collins, 1998 p. 101). This search for the soul of Blackness, in the effort of building stronger and more cohesive Black communities however created a paradoxical romanticizing and fetishizing of Africa and African culture. This problem also ignores the multitude of differences and variances in African cosmologies, philosophies and epistemologies thus creating the illusion of a unified African philosophy. She goes on to state:

> "Efforts to verify how these key elements of the African philosophical tradition shape African influenced cultures throughout the Diaspora also stimulated scholarship on so-called classical African civilizations. Investigations of the roots of Black culture parallel efforts to reclaim Black history by empirically verifying how the elements of an African philosophical tradition have shaped both Black history and, in some versions, "Western civilization itself. This component has led to in creased. Interest in African civilizations and cultures, especially the study of ancient Egypt. Interest in ancient Egypt, or Kemet, perceived as the original "Black" civilization serving as the philosophical foundation for all subsequent societies formed by people of African descent, increased" (Collins, 1998 p.102).

So in the efforts to reclaim a sense of Black identity, what was created instead was an over-focus on a falsely unified philosophical legacy through centralizing the Black experience in the ancient and indigenous experiences of past cultures. In reference to postcolonial philosophy this meant that in order to re-legitimize ethnic ideologies they needed to be situated within a more ancient context than their western counterparts

(hence the focus on ancient Egyptian civilizations). Collins argues that while the Afrocentric intellectual project was a necessary process for critical Black studies in addressing "more than 150 years of scientific racism" that the production of Afrocentric ideologies runs the risk of "limiting its effectiveness" (Collins, 1998 p.102). Many of the Afrocentric intellectual forerunners such as Molefi Asante, writer of *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (1988) and Maulana Ron Karenga author of *Selections From the Husia: Sacred Wisdom of Ancient Egypt* (1984) helped to shape Black studies programs across the country, but as Hill argues they departed from the dynamic and changing, self-reflexive and complex cultural definitions put forth by Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral:

> "…By 2000 Afrocentric constructions of Black culture had replaced this self-reflexivity with an a priori set of cultural norms culled from the belief systems of selected African societies. These norms were often used as yardsticks for assessing normative qualities of Black culture. Afrocentric preoccupations with putting forward "positive" views of Black culture stem from these efforts to extract it from the uniformly "negative" constructions that have long permeated Western scholarship and popular culture. However as Michele Wallace observes, "Focus on good and bad images may be more fundamentally connected to the western metaphysical dualism that is the philosophical underpinning of racist and sexist domination than with radical efforts to reconceptualize black cultural identities." Ironically this type of thinking reifies the notion of a fundamentally good, essential Blackness increasingly submerged by an encroaching and inherently bad Whiteness. From this perspective, essential Blackness has much to offer an intellectually and spiritually bankrupt White world that has little value" (Collins, 1998 p. 103).

Collins argues that the risk of this orientation is that the foundation of Black philosophy is placed within the dialectic of Whiteness is wrong and Blackness is good, which is a gross and reductive act of the same colonial violence that is being condemned by Afrocentric philosophers. The project of Afrocentrism thus merely rebalances the colonial scales in favor of African or Black national historical philosophies and their supremacy over the spiritually bereft colonial tropes.

In all cases the Black and Afro-Caribbean anti-colonial movement is concerned not just with the identification of colonial discourses (as we saw with the East Asian scholars), but also with the problem of relationality, hybridity, and the creation of cultural meaning in the face of inevitable diasporic displacement. For the Black anticolonial scholar the problem not only lies in the delegitimizing of indigenous, Black, or subaltern knowledge, truth, identity, reality and narrative histories, but also in the reductionism of the colonized symbolic and physical space by colonizing forces that strip the colonial other of being and meaning. The aforementioned scholars call for a re-imagining subjectivity or perhaps the complete elimination of the definition of self and other all together. For the displaced Black the inheritance of indigenous knowledge, language, and identity conceptions have been hopelessly enmeshed with colonizer discourses which create both an often unrecognized crisis of cultural identification and hybridized spiritual and psychological power. Gordon suggests that the Black's identitive power is undermined further by the insistence on the creation of additional binaries through seemingly endless projects of dualistic philosophical reflection by postmodern scholars (Gordon, 2012). These insights are particularly useful for the reconceptualization of communication outside of the western binary, not just for

Black's but all marginalized or Othered peoples, because they present the inevitability of an integral turn in the concept of human relationships lest we risk continued dualistic overgrowth.

CHAPTER TWO

Research and Methodology

Research Questions

Due to the epistemological and theoretical scope of this project, the research questions are meant to address four issues regarding how communication theory has developed within the limited confines of the over-grown western colonial dualistic paradigm and how future theories can move toward less myopic understandings of communication:

1. How has western epistemology shaped binary communication models?
2. How can the insights of holistic, postcolonial, non-western epistemologies (specifically those of Malidoma Somé and Gloria Anzaldúa) help redefine the current western communication model?
3. In what ways can traditional communication models move beyond subject/object binaries and become more inclusive of holistic communication experiences?
4. How can communication scholars conceptualize a model of communication that can be utilized in practical application without the subject/object binaries in place?

The aim of these questions is to lay the ground toward a theory of transversal communication that not only integrates non-western consciousness structures and the knowledge and dignities of colonial ideologies, but also moves beyond the limitations of western structures toward a more holistic vision of communication that allows for both subaltern narratives and western narratives to coexist with equal authority. My hope is to explore these questions and not to "solve" to the problem of communication, as that is indeed a multi-disciplinary and collaborative effort that will continue beyond the scope of this project. I aim to re-introduce previously forbidden concepts in scholarly pursuit such as emotion, intuition, and the dissolution of the individual "self" as a means to explore how an integrated non-western approach can inform new communicative models. Furthermore, I want to explore how those concepts are important for both the individual integration of deeper communication between beings but also how reimagined communication theories can be socially and communally relevant.

The Paradox of Postcolonial Theory Building

As I move into theory building, I recognize the difficulty of writing theory that is not bound to the epistemological inheritances of the western world. Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes about the indigenous writer developing theory outside of the colonizer's epistemology:

> "…It is about centering our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes…As a site of struggle research has a significance for indigenous peoples that is embedded in our history under the gaze of western imperialism and western science. It is framed by our attempts to escape the penetration and surveillance of that gaze whilst simultaneously

reordering and constituting ourselves as…human beings in a state of ongoing crisis" (Smith, 1999 p.39).

I should also note that I am greatly appreciative to western philosophy and its efficacy in verbalizing complex notions of philosophical debate. I am not seeking to eradicate the use of western philosophy or its presumptions, even those assumptions having to do with the binary. In fact, there are ways in which a binary conception of reality is helpful in moving about one's day-to-day life (particularly if one was reared within the western paradigm). In this sense, I utilize the efficacy of rationality to help construct a model of communication that can conceptualize life outside of the binary that isn't exclusionary but truly inclusive. It is indeed a paradox to walk in both worlds (the unbounded and the dualistic), but the intelligence of the colonized has always rested on their ability to stealthily navigate both worlds.

Methodology

Non-western contributions have been systematically de-legitimized throughout the mainstream of modern western intellectualism and "…the production of institutionalized knowledge was largely defined by a white, male upper and middle class until the second half of the 20th century. The cannon of social theory has, until very recently, ignored the contributions by female and/or racialized scholars" (Rodriguez, 2010). More specifically the colonial discourses of European Imperialism are still rampant even within the critical schools of postmodern philosophy, as we have seen through the exploration of postcolonial thought. Thus, the selection of the texts and the method for this dissertation was a conscious effort to de-westernize academic discussion and integrate the epistemological and ontological position of the other in a largely westernized communication discipline. Additionally, the texts were specifically

selected as a departure from traditional communication literature as an interdisciplinary effort. Furthermore the text and its analysis seek not only to expand the discourse of critical intercultural communication, which has grown alongside western epistemology and ontology, but to seek what Gloria Anzaldúa refers to as Mestiza consciousness, or what Gordon calls hybridity within the communication discipline. I seek to explore how inhabiting these hybridized, liminal, holistic, multicultural, spiritual, somatic and creative consciousness states changes the process and understanding of communication as a static dialectic.

Reflexive Scholarship and Spiritual Activism

In seeking an appropriate existing methodology to explore non-western communication models it was clear that the research needed to be grounded in a non-western epistemological and ontological perspective but also integrate perspectives traditionally excluded from western scientific method, such as spiritual, emotional, and intuitive approaches to understanding consciousness and human communication. My aim in selecting Malidoma Somé and Gloria Anzaldúa was strategic and purposeful. Both scholars are quite obviously non-western, ethnically identified and racialized. Both scholars come from outside of mainstream western culture but learned to integrate and assimilate into western epistemic paradigms, and both offer suggestions not only for societal and cultural integration of non-western epistemological positions but also psycho-spiritual implications for the individual to integrate, in addition to a strong postcolonial critical analysis of western epistemology and ontology. In essence, Somé and Anzaldúa perform a thorough psycho-spiritual analysis of the pitfalls of the colonial western consciousness. My goal is to explore their work as a launching pad for a

proposal of a non-western communication model utilizing Anzaldúa's notions of conocimiento, spiritual activism and Mestiza consciousness. This is a delicate dance and I share the struggle of this integration with Anzaldúa:

> "…For anyone like me to make any changes or additions to the model takes a tremendous amount of energy, because you're going against the Pacific Ocean and you're this little fish and you have to weigh the odds of succeeding with the goal that you have in mind. Say my goal is a liberatory goal: it's to create possibilities for people, to look at things in a different way so that they can act in their daily lives in a different way. It's like a freeing up, an emancipating. It's a feminist goal. But then I have to weigh things: okay, if I write in this style and I code switch too much and I go into Spanglish too much and I do an associative kind of logical progression in a composition, am I going to lose those people that I want to affect, to change? Am I going to lose the respect of my peers who are other writers and other artists and other academicians when I change too much…So how much do you push and how much do you accommodate and be in complicity with the dominant norm of whatever field it happens to be?"- Gloria Anzaldúa (Lunsford & Ozagne, p. 40-41 2004).

My method is liberatory, but not only for the communication discipline itself, but for my own psyche. The confines of the dualistic model have had a stranglehold on the deepening of understanding between and throughout cultures. As critical scholarship moves, at least theoretically, to more decisively intersectional foci it must not reproduce the subtle "radiation" of colonial discourse through purely intellectual objectification, reification, and fetishizing of the subaltern experience. For me the task of liberation must come first within my own subjective experience and move outward, spiraling into an analysis of the culture at large and back again in order to be fully integrated. In this

way the reflexive process of analysis does not end, but rather swells and retracts to match the changing energy of those involved in the exchange.

I sought a methodology that would allow me to engage in the process of radical empathy to transcend my own personal, cultural, gendered, sexual and national identifications and borders (much like the personal vignette recounted in the Introduction). However, according to the colonial narratives in which I have been reared, inhabiting these states of consciousness is only possible through mystical means (or drugs), and certainly are not valid methods for engaging in serious academic scholarship. For Anzaldúa there needed to be another way to engage both western and non-western epistemologies and narratives. AnaLouise Keating nicely outlines the idea behind Anzaldúa's conception of the Mestiza consciousness as a methodological practice:

> "Anzaldúa's theory of the "new mestiza" has been equally influential and represents an innovative expansion of previous biologically based definitions of mestizaje. For Anzaldúa, "new mestizas" are people who inhabit multiple worlds because of their gender, sexuality, color, class, body, personality, spiritual beliefs, and/or other life experiences. This theory offers a new concept of personhood that synergistically combines apparently contradictory Euro-American and indigenous traditions. Anzaldúa further develops her theory of the new mestiza into an epistemology and ethics she calls "mestiza consciousness": holistic, relational modes of thinking and acting or, as she explains in "La conciencia de la mestiza," "a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.9).

In her essay *Forging El Mundo Zurdo: Changing Ourselves, Changing the World*

AnaLouise Keating describes spiritual activism as both a methodology and a way of being as proposed by Anzaldúa. In the tradition of the spiritual activist (or shaman) I want to traverse the spaces between spirit/body, magic/reason, art/science, skepticism/belief, western/non-western in order to demonstrate the process of this liminal conversation in academic discourse that is potentially useful in the creation of an embodied and socially active practice of transversal communication. Keating writes of active, critical and socially aware spirituality:

> "I want to emphasize the pragmatic dimensions of the spirituality Anzaldúa describes. She enacts an alternate mode of perception, a holistic way of viewing ourselves and our world that breaks downself/ other divisions and empowers individuals to work for psychic and material change on both personal and collective levels. On the personal level, her belief in an underlying constantly changing cosmic energy allowed her to develop a highly positive self-image that affirms her personal agency and enables her to resist the various forms of oppression she experienced both from the dominant culture and from her own culture. On the collective level, Anzaldúa's belief in a divine cosmic force infusing all that exists enables her to create a new identity category and a theoretical, ethical framework for social change. Positing a universal commonality, she can insist that— despite the many differences among us— we are all interconnected. As she explains in a 1991 interview, she believes that we are "almas afines," or "kindred spirits," and share an interconnectedness that could serve as "an unvoiced category of identity, a common factor in all life forms" (Interviews/Entrevistas, 164) (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 p.512).

At first glance the spiritual component of this project can appear woolly headed, anti-scientific and provocatively disruptive but this type of dismissal only perpetuates the

continuance of outmoded communication theoretical models and is a direct inheritance of western marginalization of non-western methodologies and epistemologies.

I seek to rediscover the magic that is, in my belief, a critical component of communication but has been sterilized, white-washed, excluded, exiled and mechanized by Aristotelian dualism.

Traditional Rhetorical Analysis in the Postcolonial Tradition

Through the development of rhetoric as a discipline in the beginning of the Modern age the focus on the message and purpose of a speaker has been central to the rational and reasonable analysis of an argument. Rhetoric, according to Aristotle, was meant to identify the appropriate means of communication in a given situation. In the classical tradition rhetorical analysis is meant to ascertain, define and illuminate a rhetor's arguments, particularly what is not being communicated overtly through the rhetor's language (Aristotle & Roberts, 2004). Classical rhetoric was meant to persuade, cajole or inspire a group or audience to adopt a belief or ideology or to arouse action (typically political in nature). However, Aristotle, Plato, and their students believed vehemently in the use of rhetoric and the analysis of rhetoric as an academic discipline in and of itself (Rapp, 2010). They believed it developed skills of reason and ethics and kept mankind focused on the interaction of the human soul, rather than the mere reproduction of written texts. The colonial tradition of rhetorical analysis is rife with various epistemic assumptions most of which center on the assumption of ontological and philosophical truth on the part of the rhetorician.

In traditional rhetorical analysis, arguments or artifacts are analyzed through one's own ideological position that ends up acting as a veil to seeing the artifact and its creator accurately. Of course, as with most western methodological approaches, the aim is objectivity, but therein lies the problematic element of traditional rhetorical analysis. Objectivity as a plausibility is in itself a problem; through the ideological assumption of objectivity or at best, self-removal from the artifact, the rhetorician assumes a position of omnipotence. It is presumed that through critical, dispassionate analysis of an artifact one can fully analyze the text and its inherent themes and messages. Additionally it is assumed that the rhetorician can accurately reveal the motivations, ideologies and purposes of the rhetor. This is not terribly problematic if the text or artifact is created in the western tradition, but when the text falls outside the paradigm of western ideology traditional rhetoric falls painfully flat.

Postcolonial scholars obviously recognized the ideological arrogance of traditional rhetorical analysis and as such, along with feminist and postmodern scholars, sought to de-hegemonize rhetorical analysis. This is done primarily through the act of self-reflexivity and through acknowledging and openly criticizing the rhetorical methods of the western colonial tradition as subjugating and limiting, particularly to artifacts and narratives belonging to subaltern, indigenous, and racialized voices. There have been numerous efforts to decolonize texts through postcolonial rhetorical analysis, and I highlight only a few here in order to illustrate some of the exemplary work done in the field. I briefly discuss the analytic work of three scholars: Musa W. Dube and her book *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (2000), Lidan Lin and her essay *J. M. Coetzee and the Postcolonial Rhetoric of Simultaneity* (2001), and Ruben Munoz-

Larrondo and his book *Living in Two Worlds: A Postcolonial Reading of the Acts of the Apostles* (2012). I chose these particular scholars for two primary reasons: first, because of their status as "Othered" rhetoricians analyzing both colonial and postcolonial texts from the outside they are presumably familiar with the limits of the colonial rhetorical tradition due to their position outside the dominant paradigm; and second, because they engage in a form of postcolonial rhetorical analysis that utilizes the traditional analytical methodological progression: select a text/artifact, analyze the text from an ideological/theoretical perspective, then reposition the text within the theoretical framework to persuade reader. I refer to this type of rhetorical analysis as rhetorical analysis in the postcolonial tradition because the method of analysis does indeed mimic the structure and "feel" of a standard rhetorical analysis but theoretically is positioned and constructed through a postcolonial lens, meaning they utilize counter-narratives positioned against colonial narratives. For the most part these scholars (aside from reflexivity and engagement with postcolonial, feminist, or queer theories) do not depart explicitly from rhetorical methodological conventions, but nonetheless construct masterful postcolonial rhetorical analyses within the confines of the classical method.

Musa Dube's Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation

In *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* Musa Dube embarks on a reading of Exodus and Joshua 1-12 from the *King James Bible*, *The Aeneid*, *The White Man's Burden* and *Heart of Darkness* using a feminist-postcolonial theoretical framework. Dube illuminates how biblical texts and colonialism were intimately linked, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. The discourse of Christianity and the Bible were used as colonial tools to subjugate indigenous people and move them out of perceived

savagery and moral stagnation. Dube states that the bible was used as a tool of moral reformation primarily to support the economic and physical expansion of the west. Dube notes that, particularly during the height of the biblical project to reform subaltern communities in the late 19th century, the ideological inscription of the bible as *the* moral compass was indoctrinated to most missionaries, scientists, and explorers who at the time were still at least cursorily identified with their interpretation of the bible's evangelical messages (Dube, 2000). To balance her rhetorical analysis, Dube analyzes postcolonial texts *The Victims* a Botswanian novel, *May Imperialism Perish Forever*, and biblical interpretations by the Independent African Churches.

Dube notes that western imperialism has depended upon the exchange of religion, culture and ideology for "land, mines, labor, energy and other economic riches" (Dube, 2000). She also illustrates that most postcolonial biblical scholars are still involved in colonial discourses because they fail to engage the voices of subaltern women, and instead engage only with the western feminist agenda focused on issues of Judeo-Christian women missing in biblical stories. Dube criticizes how feminist biblical interpretations scholar Schussler Fiorenza tends to "inscribe [herself] within the imperial rhetoric of subjugation" (Dube, 2000). Fiorenza (engaging in a heuristic, feminist histiography) fails to recognize her own privilege and overlooks African and subaltern voices in her methodology as a result. Dube explains the reasons for her methodological approach:

> "As biblical feminists, we can only ignore the challenges and demands of postcolonialism in our practice at the risk of reinscribing imperial violence and hindering the creation of meaningful coalitions among women of various cultural backgrounds" (Dube, 2000 "Voices of Other Women").

Dube prepares readers for her analysis by isolating what she believes are important thematic elements in postcolonial-feminist biblical reinterpretations that include land, race, power, readers, international connection, contemporary history and liberation, and gender. She chooses to analyze both colonizing and anti-colonizing texts to identify the above-mentioned themes from both perspectives as a way to avoid making subaltern voices invisible in the analysis. Dube analyzes the biblical story Exodus and *The Aeneid* stating that both texts illustrate prominent ideological discourses surrounding what she calls the "authorizing of travel" discourse as it relates to the themes of land, and how issues of race, power, and liberation are leaden within the discourse. For example, she notes that Egypt in Exodus is portrayed as a land of "milk and honey" where God imbues Joseph with the promise of the inheritance of African land. She illustrates how Egypt is depicted as an empire but that the biblical "main characters" are depicted as righteous, moral, godly, civilized, and manly whereas the native Africans are depicted as ungodly, barbaric, evil, inferior, feminine, and corrupt. Dube illustrates that the rhetoric of the westerner as rightful inheritor and reformer of barbaric lands and peoples through the story of Jacob and Exodus acts as an imperializing rhetoric "because it expressly focused on taking and maintaining power over foreign and inhabited lands" (Dube, 2000). Dube explains her methodological approach:

> "The story of Exodus-Joshua shows that lands are not only physical geographical spaces. They are in every way webs of intricately woven literary structures, whose people, like the scrolls, equally bear on their bodies these geographical tales. The colonizers narrativize themselves as exceptional chosen beings, while they also construct tales of derogation against their targeted victims as beings who deserve to be

invaded, dispossessed, subjugated, and annihilated if need be." (Dube, 2000, Chapter 4: "Conclusion").

To balance the postcolonialist reading of Exodus, Dube analyzes *The Victims* a Botswanian novel by Mositi Torontle, and briefly analyzes *May Imperialism Perish Forever* by Maina wa Kinyatti. Dube notes that in *May Imperialism Perish Forever* the colonizers are identified as "invaders, foreign occupiers, thieves and snatchers of the land belonging to others/I shall be delighted when I see/The colonists going back to their own country/So that our children will have their freedom/And live in peace in our own country/The same way their children live in their country" (Dube, 2000 Chapter 6: Method in *Colonizing Literature*). Dube shows that the natives in the poem seek to live peacefully away from the tyranny of the colonizer and contrasts her reading of *The Victim* with her assessment of Rudyard Kipling, which she positions as the ultimate British colonial literary artifact. Her analysis of *The Victim,* a novel written in 1950 about a young girl named Dineo and her experiences with western education and various male characters including her father, which represent various aspects of patriarchy, imperialism and the subaltern. Dube's *Victim* analysis is more thorough and typical of traditional postcolonial rhetorical analysis. Dube guides the reader through both the basic plot of the novella and positions it historically twenty-seven years after the Botswanian independence. She analyzes how the author subverts the genre through grammatical and linguistic usage, which openly thwarts traditional novel constructions, which she acknowledges is an obvious inheritance of British imperialism that was popularized in the 19th and 20th centuries:

"Grammatically, stretches of Setswana sentences, phrases and words are interpolated, some translated and some untranslated. In this way, the reader is rudely reminded that

> English is not the only or the standard language for all people. The Victims also openly problematizes the English language through characterization. First, Dineo who is selected to meet some dignitaries forgets all of her rehearsed proper English vocabulary when the moment arrives. Second, and more emphatically, on one of the African Independent Churches one uneducated old man begins to speak in tongues and speaks in English" (Dube, 2000 Chapter 6: Subverting Genre and Language).

In addition to analyzing the postcolonial implications of the novel in the next chapter she engages *The Victim* from a feminist perspective. Dube discusses the narrative as a dramatization of gender and imperial oppression. Based on a feminist analysis she proposes reinterpretations of biblical narratives by women in the Independent African Church and then applies a rich and thorough postcolonial feminist interpretation of Matthew 15:21-28. In this interpretation she isolates at the themes of land, mission, and gender. Alternating between a postcolonial analysis and an anti-colonial *re*-reading and reinterpretation, Dube centralizes the subaltern voice through her methodological approach. This is an effective method of analysis and allows the reader to firmly understand the necessity not only for a feminist reinterpretation of Abrahamic religious discourse, (particularly as it relates to its role as a tool of colonial and hegemonic oppression), and also the necessity of assessing traditional postcolonial analysis and the ways in which it can potentially reproduce colonial biases.

Ruben Muñoz-Larrondo and Postcolonial Interpretation

Ruben Muñoz-Larrondo's book *Living in Two Worlds: A Postcolonial Reading of the Acts of the Apostles* uses postcolonial theory to illustrate colonial representations of barbarism in the Acts of the Apostles. Munoz-Larrondo isolates major themes of postcolonial interpretation (hybridity, mimicry/mockery, alterity/diaspora, identity and

race) and illuminates how these themes are constructed in the Acts of the Apostles, and particularly how the text's construction of those outside the Roman Empire contributes to the perception of those people as barbaric, inferior heathens. Before embarking on his analysis, Munoz-Larrondo engages in reflexivity by addressing his own identification as "a dark mestizo South American – a Chilean reared and educated as a professional in the south of the American continent" to the theme of diaspora and alterity in order to foster self-reflexivity and reveal his own personal relationship and psychic-spiritual relationship to the colonial construction of "other" in displaced communities (Muñoz-Larrondo, 2008). He relates his experience as a Chilean transplant in Tennessee and the struggle to maintain cultural, theological and spiritual identity in the face of hegemonic pressures to abandon his mysterious, mystical and "barbaric" spiritual practices and beliefs.

The project then proceeds to de-whitenize and de-westernize biblical interpretation and reveal the imperial discourses that construct Othered spiritualty/religion as barbaric in biblical texts. He notes that the discourse of "subaltern religion as unsophisticated" still rings true through most Judeo-Christian rhetorical artifacts (Muñoz-Larrondo, 2008). As a biblical-literary critic Muñoz-Larrondo is particularly concerned with how barbarism is created and constructed as a literary device in Greek, Roman, and finally Holy Roman literature, and how that construction served to reproduce and support damaging ideologies surrounding the other (particularly the racialized other of the east and Sub-Saharan African nations in biblical lands). However, as a scholar writing in the western academy, he recognizes, despite

his identitive association with the racialized position of his ancestry, the conundrum of the Othered postcolonial scholar:

> "I foresee a reading that will uphold my own identity, even in adopting a hermeneutics of the diaspora that calls for using some criticisms and tools developed by the colonizer. I envisage not assimilating myself as a reader/interpreter or submitting myself to the task of being the object, but of being the subject in total control of my own reading without leaving my place." (Munoz-Larrondo, 2008 p. 63).

Muñoz-Larrondo hermeneutically connects with the text to show both the imperial discourses at work in Roman antiquity as well as the ways in which the Divine as a supernatural or holistic element was replaced with a socio-political conception of the deity through the exaltation of the Emperor. Muñoz-Larrondo works with multiple themes throughout the analysis, all of which illustrate the othering of supposed barbaric religious and spiritual practices through Judaic-Christian discourses. However, he does little to relate the material to his own experience aside from the above cited paragraph. Nonetheless, the text serves as a model of a postcolonial rhetorical analysis.

Lidan Lin's Analysis of J.M. Coetzee

Lidan Lin's analysis of South African writer J.M. Coetzee's novel *Foe* is constructed as a more traditional literary rhetorical analysis, but nonetheless serves as a thorough exploration of the Coetzee's postcolonial aims. Lin explores Coetzee's efforts to de-historicize and de-centralize the postcolonial struggle of South Africa and illustrate that the pangs of colonial expansion are felt more deeply at a spiritual or psychological level that can be related across all geographical regions. She positions much of Coetzee's work as creating:

> "…a *rhetoric of simultaneity* [and one] that emphasizes the importance of considering South African colonial trauma not as an isolated and autonomous event, but as one that relates to, and must therefore be juxtaposed with, similar human conditions outside South Africa" (Lin, 2001).

Lin's analysis is not self-reflexive however she addresses her assessment of Coetzee's work as "a rhetoric of simultaneity" by illustrating how his work shifts fluidly between anti-colonial discourse and spiritual allegory. Lin then proceeds to show how Coetzee's work, and specifically the style of his narrative bear on questions of being, alterity, and universality. This analysis is particularly interesting because it moves the methodology out of the typical preoccupation with geo-temporal location typical of postcolonial analysis, Lin states:

> "Coetzee's novels mark the emergence of a new mode of postcolonial writing characterized by postcolonial authors' willingness to de-essentialize the uniqueness of colonial oppression by bringing it to bear on similar human experiences outside the historical specificity of colonialism" (Lin, 2011).

Lin exposes three primary motifs that present themselves in the novel *Foe*: history, writing, and being. She summarizes the novel as a first person narrative from the perspective of Susan Barton, a female castaway who finds herself on the island inhabited by an English adventurer, and Friday, an African slave. Eventually the three of them are rescued, however Crusoe dies on the return journey. Susan and Friday are transported to England where Susan seeks out an author (Daniel Foe) to help her write her story so she can become rich and famous. However, the only way Susan can reconstruct the story of the adventure is with the help of Friday whose tongue has been brutally severed by slavers. The remainder of the novel is about Susan's struggle to

communicate with and re-construct her historical narrative with Friday who cannot communicate with her verbally or through written text.

Lin constructs Coetzee's novel as a clear rhetoric of simultaneity as she illustrates how Friday's lack of tongue serves as an allegory not only for the removal of the subaltern's voice and the colonizer's ability to narrate the colonized history, but also how Friday's inability to communicate verbally (or literately) with Susan also prevents Susan from reconstructing her own history and narrative. According to Lin, Coetzee positions the narrative as an act of simultaneity because it illustrates how history, identity, and narrative are negotiated and created simultaneously through communication with the other. Lin shows that Susan cannot recreate her own history and simultaneously she also knows nothing of the "other" (Friday), which contributes to her discomfort because the meaning that could otherwise be created through their interaction remains liminal and tenuous.

Lin alternates between her own reading of simultaneity and the analysis of other rhetoricians who criticize Coetzee's narrative as lacking in practical, economic, and political commentary as it relates to South African apartheid since he purposely subverts and mystifies the geographical location of *Foe*. Additionally she spends time analyzing some critics' claim that he constructs a poststructuralist vision of writing, "a concept that privileges the signifier over the signified..." Lin responds to this stating that:

> "the critics who note the postmodern strategies in *Foe* neglect the fact that Coetzee's use of them does not confirm their usefulness to postcolonial writing; rather, his use of postmodern strategies reveals their limitations, which can be overcome by postcolonial writing" (Lin, 2011).

Later in her analysis Lin illuminates how as Susan's awakening to her own identity and being is relevant only in relationship to Friday's *inability* to articulate his identity and being. Through the use of specific passages from the text Lin shows that the delineations between self and other by the author must be eliminated in order to progress what Lin believes is Coetzee's rhetoric of simultaneity. Her analysis also extends beyond the theme itself and addresses the creation of genre and the subversion of the traditional novel narrative as she again addresses his critics who claim the book fails the political aims of postcolonial text:

> "Coetzee's creation of fluid novelistic themes in Foe not only exemplifies his rhetoric of simultaneity, it also sheds light on his alleged escape from literary realism and, accordingly, his reticence on the economic and social reality in South African…Michael Vaughan observes that they [Coetzee's novels] lack a 'real connection with forms of class struggle'…[and Vaughan] goes so far as to blame Coetzee for expressing the 'predicament of a liberal petty bourgeois intelligensia' and for being 'a part of the system'"(Lin, 2011).

Lin engages criticisms of the text and uses those criticism to build her argument of simultaneity by stating that Coetzee's primary project is to decentralize issues of colonial oppression through deliberate mystification and subversion of temporal space. The analysis follows a traditional rhetorical methodological protocol in exploring the text and offers very little in terms of the author's personal reflexive position to the material. However, Lin's analysis serves as a demonstration of traditional postcolonial rhetorical analysis without the addition of reflexive meditation on the part of the rhetor. The above-mentioned analyses are thorough, ideologically sound and decisively resolute in their postcolonial aims. Furthermore they introduce valid, relevant and truly

postcolonial methodologies into the academic cannon without subtly marginalizing subaltern or Othered voices. The primary limitations of the above studies reside in their lack of self-reflexivity and as such show the difficulty in integrating the insights of the subjective sphere, which subtlety reproduces epistemological preferences for objective knowledge. The question then becomes how does one actively engage the subjective/spiritual and intuitive faculties transparently without falling victim to the trap of navel gazing and romanticism. Additionally as postcolonial, feminist, queer and critical scholars it's important not to reproduce epistemic methodological assumptions through unconscious neglect of our own reflexive and subjective experience of a text.

Postcolonial Rhetorical Analysis and Reflexivity

Critical scholars, writing in the west must be reflexively aware of how their scholarship and analyses engage, reinforce and reproduce colonial patterns and discourses. It is important within the context of rhetorical analysis that efforts be made to decolonize the humanist theories espoused by white men. Shome writes:

> "Dwight Conquergood (1991) recently and quite directly suggested, the limitation of rhetorical and communication scholarship is that it has ironically been "unreflexive about the rhetorical construction of its own disciplinary authority". Although calls for other kinds of self-reflexivity (feminist, postmodern, ideological) have been made, albeit all too briefly, the discipline on the whole has been disturbingly silent about its own disciplinary position in relation to issues of race and neocolonialism" (Shome, 1996 p.50).

While writing about the subaltern experience it's critical to recognize the ways in which postmodern scholarship has engaged in what Victor Li has termed *neoprimitivism* (2006). Neoprimitivism is the somewhat noble but misguided attempt by critical

scholars to engage in protecting the cultural traditions and ideologies of non-western cultures from colonial violence, yet nonetheless end up recreating and upholding standards of colonial discourse through a subtle recreation and adherence to western philosophical ideologies. Neoprimitivism seeks to resolve the anxiety of the western consciousness through the redemptive act of preservation; "the cultural other is appropriated by the reflexive, critical western self in an attempt to renew or reinvent the modern subject of knowledge. As such, the recalcitrant Otherness of the aboriginal or indigenous person is transformed into 'an emptied alterity'" (Li, 2006). Li's arguments for the neoprimitive western postmodern savior are well founded. He asserts that from Lyotard to Habermas the construction of the other has rested on a supposition of a progressive model of developing consciousness, and that the end result of the critical reflexive engagement with the subaltern has been to unconsciously reinforce a sense of intellectual superiority over the other (in order to allay anxieties of actual similarity), whilst supposedly "protecting" their cultural dignities. Within that construction postmodern scholarship has positioned the Modern age as a stage of evolution that indigenous civilizations must eventually reach.

Postcolonial rhetorical analysis should make greater efforts to challenge the truths of the binary epistemic model and as such will engage both lay-reader and critical scholar in exercises to suspend the dialectics of truth/untruth, me/not me, real/unreal, here/there. Therefore postcolonial rhetorical analysis is not concerned with validity, verifiability, plausibility or replicability nor should it endeavor to overstate the goals of a rhetor. Holistic postcolonial rhetoric strives to understand rhetoric as both a self and culturally sustaining narrative artifact, and a world in and of itself that coexists,

transcends and includes the supposed stability of the rational binary model. Much of this requires, as Spivak suggests, unlearning the rhetorical tradition and evaluating critically how knowledges and epistemologies continue to be "privileged, legitimated [and] displaced" in the analysis of our texts and the construction of our theories (Spivak, 1991). Additionally as a holistic methodology postcolonial rhetorical analysis should pay close attention to "what configuration of sociopolitical [and racial] privileging, displacing, and legitimizing has served (and continues to serve)" (Shome, 1996, p.50). Shome states that it is important to continue to push postcolonial self-reflexivity of the communication discipline, as well as individual scholarship so that the traditional paradigms of rhetoric are opened for racially and culturally marginalized voices (Shome, 1996).

Texts and narratives can be sites of power, which are "reproduced by their social conditions" (Shome, 1996 p.50). Thus it is necessary to reposition the subaltern text as equally powerful without engaging in neoprimitivism. The narratives of the west are well established, and quite meaningful to the way of life in the western world, and as such cannot be dismantled completely. It is overly idealistic to assume that mere engagement with non-western discourses will dismantle the historical traditions of western modernity. It is perfectly plausible however that through integrating the non-western voice scholars can relegitimize marginalized narratives. To utilize Bhabha's metaphor, we must work slowly at dismantling the western psyche so that some semblance of selfhood remains in order for west society to function without decimating its ego to a mess of dissociated non-functioning parts.

Anzaldúa's nepantla state, the stages of conocimiento, nor the trials of Somé's initiation are not palatable or easily digestible by the western consciousness because they imply dissolution of the boundaries of self and a reorganization of concepts of reality, identity, time/space, and knowledge. An appropriate postcolonial rhetorical analysis of non-traditional, inherently spiritual and decisively ontologically disruptive data will strive to mitigate the inevitable loss of western ideology by utilizing some of the analytical tools of the west so as to not alienate the westerner (as this would be reproducing colonial tendencies of dissociation). Through an act of rhetorical alchemy it is my hope that the postcolonial rhetorical analysis of Somé and Anzaldúa will allow the creation of a borderland or mestiza conception of communication to emerge.

Decolonizing Truth and Validity

Many of the stories and ideas found in Somé and Anzaldúa's work are beyond the rational scope of what some westerner's can easily allow into their conscious understanding of the world. This is largely due to the complications in de-centralizing western tropes of identity. For the westerner, there's no way to conceive of entering into communion with a tree because the tree is a.) Inanimate and as such possess no consciousness and b.) Is physically separate from the self, and therefore cannot be the self. These perceptual limitations are direct inheritances of western colonial tropes and its assumptions about space and identity. The magic of the possibility of communion with anything outside the self was eliminated through the perpetuation of the binary discourse in western philosophy, but not without great cost. Issues of knowledge, time, identity and space are constantly challenged by Somé and Anzaldúa which poses a

particular challenge for the western scholar who wishes to transcend predominate colonial discourses.

For some of those who have read the work of Somé in particular it can be difficult to accept his narrative as "truthful" in the traditional western sense of the word. Indeed most communication scholars can accept a seemingly fantastical narrative as allegorical, symbolic and metaphorical, but to accept the concrete happenings of his experiences and biographical narrative as factual would be to admit to the plausibility of a reality not accessible via traditional empirical methods. This not only stems from the colonial monopoly on ontology, reality and possibility but also speaks to the policing of the other's narrative to epistemological plausibility. When Somé communes with the spirit inside a tree, consensual western hegemony would automatically place his experience at best in the realm of fanciful imagination and powerful metaphorical narrative, and at worst as delusional hallucination. As I analyze Somé's autobiography I will consider his experiences as "real," suspending traditional western definitions of reality. Were I to maintain the poststructural position of narrative as subjectively real to those who communicate it, I would indeed be acknowledging the inescapable subjectivity of the individual experience, but in my estimation also subtly undermining the authority of Somé's experience.

Additionally I am not simply reading Somé and Anzaldúa as allegorical but rather engaging the data as it as it is presented. Indeed, allegory "interrupts notions of orthodox history, classical realism and imperial representation in general" but to assume that his narrative is only allegorical would perpetuate imperial realism by succumbing to western epistemological tropes of ontology (Ashcroft et. al, 2013 p.10).

The Data

A postcolonial rhetorical analysis of Malidoma Somé and Gloria Anzaldúa's primary works will allow me to not only illustrate how they are, for all intents and purposes, outlining a clear and effective argument for moving outside of the western communicative binary, but also allow me to construct a communicative model based on holistic, intersectional, transversal non-western knowledge systems. Having investigated the ideas of development and progress in Chapters One and Two I will illustrate how Somé and Anzaldúa build an argument for the value of a "multiplicity of selves" that can be utilized to inform how the dissolution of the subject/object binary as a necessary stage of development for western communication. I will illustrate how, without the epistemological and ontological positions Somé and Anzaldúa propose, the west risks the continued devolution of consciousness through the tropes of progress and dissociation. Both authors discuss the weight of the "tradition of silence" in one way or another and I will illustrate how this tradition, meant only to foster self-serving communication between colonizer and colonizer, or colonizer and colonized, has reached the apex of its development. If the west continues on this trajectory of dissociation it risks the continued denigration of the human being's relationship to itself, each other, = the environment and the social world at large. I will illustrate how Anzaldúa and Somé do not herald a complete destruction and elimination of western thought, ideas or contributions (it is impossible anyway), but rather champion the integral and holistic integration of subaltern, indigenous and Othered epistemologies and ontologies.

While I do not have sufficient space to review and analyze Anzaldúa's full literary cannon, I will concentrate heavily on the essay *Now Let Us Shift* which was published in the anthology *This Bridge We Call Home* (2002) and selected essays and poems from AnaLouise Keating's *Anzaldúa Reader* such as *Creativity and Switching Modes of Consciousness*, *The Presence*, *Metaphors in the Tradition of the Shaman*, *Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writiers* , *Spirituality, Sexuality and the Body*, *Border Arte: Nepantla, el Lugar de la Frontera*, *The New Mestiza Nation*, *Foreword to Cassell's Encyclopedia of Queer Myth, Symbol and Spirit* and *Let Us Be The Healing of the Wound*. Additionally, I will analyze Malidoma Somé's *Of Water and the Spirit* (1999).

Research Focus

I will primarily analyze their respective rhetoric and integral, holistic ideologies as well as illuminate their postcolonial arguments. Additionally I utilize my position as a Black, western educated, queer male (and the ascribed power and marginalization that entails) to understand their work as someone who straddles two worlds, as an act of self-reflexivity.

Through my analysis of their work I will illustrate how both authors provide within their respective theories the materials with which to build a cohesive model for transversal communication, by providing the reader with alternatives to western tropes of epistemology, ontology, identity, time and space through championing the use of the emotional, spiritual, imaginative and somatic faculties which have been suppressed through western rationality, reason, fact and mental dissociation. These alternatives are

necessary in constructing a model of transversal communication not based on the suppositions of the old western dialectical assumptions. Rodriguez suggests that the:

> "…transgressive and transversal work of Anzaldúa challenges readers not to merely adopt and digest the mestiza consciousness into their paradigm, [but also that] it is nearly impossible to do this without dissonance; […] she implores us to wrestle with the difficulty and the opposition of standing between two opposing forces in an effort to dance between the two and evolve, this is the essence of "border thinking" (Rodriguez, 2010).

Transversal Theory Building in the tradition of the Mestiza

At once instructive, academic, critical, spiritual, sexual and emotional, these scholars provide a snapshot into the transversal possibilities when one entertains the full range of human faculties. Capitalizing on their position between two worlds (the state of *nepantla*), both scholars make a concerted effort to straddle the lines of the western/non-western paradigm to create something entirely new. What is created in the space of the new has not yet been adopted in the communication discipline as a way to inform the creation of communication models outside of the dualistic paradigm, largely due to the discursive colonial ideology still rampant within the field as a whole. I explore their work not only for clues on how to build a transversal model of communication but also for the deeper meaning underneath the rhetoric; what it means for the human spirit itself. Through analysis I seek a borehole; a sliver of entrance in order to bring Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness into communication.

In an interview for the edited anthology *Race, Rhetoric and the Postcolonial* Anzaldúa speaks eloquently about her desire to create a "mestiza rhetoric," but notes that efforts to build such a rhetoric would be difficult, if possible at all. Unsure as to

whether mestiza consciousness could be taught, and acknowledging that if it could, such instruction would be fraught with difficulties, dangers and pitfalls (particularly for the western conditioned mind) she still nevertheless encourages the creation of new models in opposition to the hegemonic ones already in place (Olson, 1999). Anzaldúa notes that science, anthropology, literature, and philosophy are narratives, however, she also notes that there are master's narratives (such as science, anthropology, and philosophy) and there are relevant, intelligent and deeply meaningful outsider narratives (oral histories, rituals, spiritualties, art, and poetry) that are lost in the sea of colonizer discourses. Somé and Anzaldúa occupy both positions both as traditionally educated academics and as marginalized minority members.

Anzaldúa's compounded Othered identity or as she refers to herself; as an "other other other" (queer, Chicano and female) and Somé's position as an indigenous born, French educated tribesman provide an ideal opportunity to understand how one can both navigate within the confines of western culture and maintain a strong foothold outside of it, weaving both in order to create something new from within that liminal space. Furthermore they allow me to explore my outsider position and how I myself can "unlearn" the de-humanizing, de-spiritualizing and anti-emotional discourses of the western tradition through reflexive engagement with their marginalized voices. A progressive and transversal model must do more than instruct one how to maintain the status quo and should ideally indicate ways to break through to create something entirely new via the vehicle of spiritually activism as outlined by Anzaldúa. There is a delicate balance to be struck between forging something new, as Somé and Anzaldúa propose in their writing, and alienating those with whom you wish to integrate into new

state. One must not move too far outside of the boundaries so as to be complicated, cumbersome or threatening, but must preserve the spirit and intention of the original theoretical goal.

Avoiding Afrocentric Analysis

While this dissertation seeks to highlight the spiritual and epistemological philosophies of the Dagara tribe it does not presuppose that a.) The Dagara's philosophies encompass the philosophical assumptions of all African tribal cultures past and present or b.) That the Dagara (or any other African tribal society) are devoid of social, gender, sexual, political or economic problems that rival or in some cases surpass some of the various issues facing western civilization, and are thus superior to western cultures in every conceivable way. However, my approach is decisively critical and postcolonial in that I agree with Somé's critique of the tendency toward western philosophy (which underpins western culture) to delegitimize and undervalue non-western knowledge systems in order to perpetuate aims of economic, political and social growth and the maintenance of hegemonic power. I am also careful not to equate my discussion of Dagara and non-western philosophies specifically with Blackness (or any other skin color for that matter) as a deliberate effort to not centralize the non-western experience in race. Nor do I consistently relate the western experience with Whiteness (except where the data lends to such an interpretation). I have made efforts to underscore that many of the sentiments and philosophies laid out by Somé are common in many non-western (including outside of the African continent) spiritual traditions. At times referring to Hindu, Native American or other spiritual traditions is an effort to de-centralize the discussion of non-western identity and epistemology outside of the

African continent to avoid engaging in the project of Afrocentrism, for which I agree with Collins that to continue to situate the non-White experience in Africa risks essentializing and nationalizing a project that in my estimation can benefit the westerner and non-westerner alike. To centralize the construction of alternative communication theories in a specific racial or African subset (even though for practical and theoretical purposes it utilizes Somé's experience as a Dagara tribesman) risks alienating all of the non-westerners and westerners. I submit that what the western world has done quite well is focus on material, technological and political organization and power. Thus I also offer an integral holistic orientation to the project of creating theories of communication outside of the western binary. Through acknowledge the dignities of western philosophy and culture but I also recognize that those dignities are heralded daily in the west through the tropes of science, history, sociology, psychology, political science, etc., so the presentation of Dagara philosophies and the critical analysis of western culture embedded throughout this dissertation are thus not meant to claim an Afrocentric superiority of specifically African philosophies but rather to highlight (through the example of Somé's memoir and presentation of Dagara philosophy) alternatives to western communication models, and the underlying philosophical scaffolds of identity, knowledge, reality, and time/space.

Themes

As I analyze Somé and Anzaldúa I will work with the themes of knowledge, identity, time/space, and reality and explore how these themes are conceptualized in the west as well as how the authors themselves provide alternative understandings of these

concepts. This will in some ways recreate methodological approaches like that of Musa Dube and allow me to construct a more thorough postcolonial rhetorical analysis.

Knowledge

Valid knowledge in the west has largely become predicated on a factual, logical and rational understanding of the world. As has already been explored in Chapter Two, western knowledge has been primarily associated with the material and/or intellectual understanding of the universe. Through various "turns" in western popular epistemological positions from the classical to the postmodern, knowledge has increasingly been associated with skepticism, reason, and doubt. In some ways this development has helped to create important critical positions in both academic and political arenas and has prevented (to some extent) the over-growth of some forms of tyrannical power. However, with the growth of the western rational-dualistic paradigm the spiritual-intuitive understanding of the universe has increasingly become associated with the superstitious, irrational other. Both Somé and Anzaldúa propose radical ways of approaching the acquisition of knowledge that does not over-preference reason, rationality, and science, but do not necessarily abandon them completely. Through revealing how the authors construct validity, and understanding in contrast to western scientific methods I will uncover a clear integral proposition at work in both texts. Because both authors are positioned "between two worlds" it provides an opportunity to understand how many subaltern, colonized, or displaced (either epistemologically or geographically) others maintain cultural, ethno-spiritual connections with native epistemologies as well as work within the confines of western paradigmatic conceptions. I will explore the following questions in regards to knowledge:

I. How is knowledge obtained in the texts?

II. What constitutes valid knowledge according to the authors compared to western conceptions of validity?

III. What methods of knowledge acquisition do the authors cite and how do those methods differ than western epistemological methodologies?

IV. What are the spiritual implications of western epistemology according to the authors?

V. How is knowledge communicated according to the authors?

VI. What are the problems with the communication of knowledge according to the authors in the west?

VII. What is the role of emotion, spirituality and intuition in relation to knowledge according to the authors?

VIII. In what ways does the traditional conception of knowledge in the west inhibit communication?

IX. In what ways can the authors' conception of knowledge contribute to a model of transversal communication?

Identity

Identity as constructed by the subaltern, other, or colonized person is often conceptualized as an act of simultaneity. Identity and the construction of identity is a complex interplay between one's relationship to cultural and social practices, mores, and norms and a more intimate psycho-spiritual and socio-cultural grand life-narrative. Identity and consciousness are one and the same for the continental philosopher, and as

the move toward materialism became more prominent, identity/consciousness and the brain became inseparable (Noonan and Curtis, 2014; Shoemaker, 2013). However, subaltern identities are often more intimately interlinked with systems of power, dominance, and control and are sometimes constructed with greater emphasis on one's opposition or assimilation into the majority. This is particularly true of those who straddle both worlds such as Somé and Anzaldúa because the proposed appropriate identity of the dominant culture and the cultural identity of one's origins cannot be easily reconciled. The conception of identity is thus constructed in Somé and Anzaldúa as a complex mesh of intersections that subvert traditional western notions of self and other and include both communal, spiritual, individual, and natural associations that shift (sometimes uncomfortably) under the pressure to walk in both worlds.

I will explore the following questions in reference to identity:

I. In what ways do the authors conceptualize identity?

II. In what ways do the authors conceptualize consciousness?

III. In what ways are identity and consciousness related or separate according to the texts?

IV. Is the conception of identity altered depending on one's western or non-western identification?

V. How does identity develop in non-western paradigms versus western paradigms?

VI. What are the difficulties with the subject/object binary in reference to identity?

VII. What are the difficulties with the subject/object binary in reference to consciousness?

VIII. What are the spiritual, psychological and emotional implications with associating identity and consciousness with physical bodies?

IX. How is communication conceptualized between identities in the west philosophies according to the texts?

X. How is communication conceptualized between identities in non-western philosophies according to the texts?

XI. In what ways can the authors' conception of identity contribute to a transversal model of communication?

Time and Space

Time

Time, and specifically the conceptualization of linear time in western societies have contributed to the tropes of progress and development. The progressive notion of time in the temporal world allows colonizers to justify the commodification and exploitation of human beings in the name of economic, intellectual, and historical evolution. Western anxiety surrounding consciousness regression helps to justify various atrocities in the west to preserve the institution of progress as an ideological principle.

In contrast to the predominant western model of time, Malidoma Somé and Gloria Anzaldúa provide a circular, atemporal contiguous or at best non-linear perspective of time. I will analyze the themes of time, (and specifically history and progress) and how these western concepts diverge and coalesce with the alternative

conceptions set forth by Somé and Anzaldúa. I endeavor to understand how Somé and Anzaldúa connect with ancestral lineages, potential futures and temporal borders and how those conceptions inform their processes of communication with themselves, others, the environment and the community. My exploration of the theme of time will also include an understanding of how the evocation of ancestral knowledge, particularly through cultural and spiritual rituals, works to thwart western conceptions of time and history and how a constant communication with "the past" helps to foster the development of the present self.

I will explore the following questions in reference to time:

I. How is time conceptualized in these narratives and how does it differ from western conceptions of time?

II. How does the subversion of time and progress intersect with identity?

III. What value does the subversion of linear time hold for non-western communication?

IV. What spiritual implications does the inscription of western time have on the colonized?

V. How is history created for the westerner compared to the authors' conception of history?

VI. What are the spiritual and communicative implications of a non-linear conception of time?

VII. How is the past constructed within an atemporal time conceptualization?

VIII. How is the future constructed within an atemporal time conceptualization?

IX. How can the authors' conception of time inform western communication models?

X. What are the spiritual, psychological and emotional implications of an atemporal, non-linear conception of time?

XI. In what ways can the authors' conception of time contribute to a model of transversal communication

Space

Both Somé and Anzaldúa subvert temporal space. Physical, spiritual, identitive, and emotional spaces are negotiated in various ways through their narratives and an understanding of what constitutes the space of the self and the space of the other is no longer clear. Separate bodies become one, the thoughts of the other become the thoughts of the self, and entities practice all manner of space travel that obfuscate traditional western epistemological assumptions. In essence space becomes "no space". In both Somé and Anzaldúa's narratives when personal boundaries traverse another being's or the environment itself a *hybridity of space* emerges that defies western logic and understanding. In my own personal narrative given at the beginning of this dissertation, when my own personal space traversed the ground, sky and the girl walking down the sidewalk one must completely rework one's notion of temporal space. According to the current materialist paradigm there can be no intersection of separate entities into one entity, in other words, the space of one cannot merge with the space of another (except perhaps mentally through intellectual cohesion), however Somé and

Anzaldúa's indicate that the merging of spaces forges new understanding, meaning or insight for both entities. In identifying the instances where space is transversed we can hope to understand how and of what value this transversal creates for the understanding of communication outside the separatist western paradigm.

I will also explore the geographical and environmental space in which these narratives take place in order to uncover how the displaced other creates new spaces when uprooted (physically or ideologically) from their respective "home space".

I will explore the following questions in reference to space:

I. How do the concepts of space differ in the selected texts from traditional western conceptions?

II. What are the consequences of subject/object conceptions of space?

III. What are the implications of this subversion or transversal of physical space with astral or dream space for the westerner and the non-westerner?

IV. How is space created by the other when space is imposed upon them?

V. In what ways does space intersect with time in the text to subvert western paradigms in the author's texts?

VI. What are the spiritual implications of the western concept of space on the colonized?

VII. How does the dissolution of space effect identity?

VIII. How do individual borders merge according to the authors?

IX. What are the implications for spatial boundary dissolution for communication?

X. In what ways can the authors' conception of space contribute to a model of transversal communication?

Reality

Reality in the western world is conceptualized primarily through the assumptions of a Newtonian based universe. The tropes of physics have imbedded themselves in the very psychosocial structure of the westerner contributing to the limited perception of reality outside the confines of the material world. Furthermore reality has been historicized, centralized and essentialized by scientism which has contributed to the subjugation of non-consensual experiences of reality outside of acceptable scientific discovery. These ontological assumptions have positioned reality and the experience of reality within strict confines of the possible and the impossible (or the real and the imaginary). That which is relegated to the margins of reality include spiritual, intuitive, or supernatural experiences that may be commonplace within non-western (and particualrly indigenous) cultures. As a result the marginalization of non-consensual reality has silenced narratives outside of defined borders for fear of ridicule. Both Anzaldúa and Somé share experiences that challenge western notions of reality thus calling into quesiton the experience of reality. By exploring these non-consensual experiences we can begin to understand how these experiences can inform a model of transversal communication that embraces the expansion of the known (and traditionally accepted) scientific universe.

I will explore the following questions in regard to reality

I. How do the authors conceptualize reality?

II. In what ways do the authors' conception of reality differ than traditional western assumptions?

III. How do the authors delineate between real and unreal and how does this differ than traditional western delineations?

IV. How is reality percieved according to the authors and how does this differ than traditional western conceptions?

V. What is the function of imagination according to the authors?

VI. What are the tools utilized to percieve reality according to the authors and how do those differ than the tools utilized in the west?

VII. How does one communciate reality according to the authors?

VIII. What are the spiritual implications of western ontology according to the authors?

IX. In what ways can the authors' conception of reality inform a tranversal model of communication?

Empathic Reflexivity and Shapeshifting

In keeping with the desire to normalize the ontological and epistemological positions of Anzaldúa and Somé I make a concerted effort to not fetishize their narratives. Indeed the approaches and experiences they present fall outside of the common western experience, but as such should not be seen as "strange" but rather underrepresented and misunderstood. Decolonizing rhetorical analysis through empathic reflexivity requires me not to position myself as detached researcher, perusing the artifact for "evidence" of my assumptions, but rather emotionally, somatically and intellectually involved-participant constantly searching myself for understanding of the

experience. Through attempting to maintain this position I not only stay congruent with a critical postcolonial methodology but I also allow the narratives to unfold ways that allows access to all of my interpretive faculties.

This will be done primarily by placing my own subjective consciousness, my "self" in place of the narrator's; so when Somé communes with the tree, I will read it as though *I* am communing with the tree (or search deeply for a similar experience). Or similarly when Anzaldúa talks of her experience as a Latina lesbian woman growing up in southern Texas, I will read it as though *I* am a Latina lesbian woman growing up in southern Texas. This method forces me outside of my own personal identitive, epistemological, ontological and emotional boundaries and is informed by Anzaldúa's championing of the mestistaje consciousness. Indeed, because I do not share all of the historical, emotional and psychological experiences of the authors themselves I cannot presume to fully *understand* their experiences. However as one reads a narrative and places themselves within the author's subjective experiences, feels their emotion, anxiety, joy and confusion it challenges one to release one of the most pervasive and widely defended colonial concepts: boundaries.

In essence this method is an act of reflexive meditation that moves beyond the classic reflexive analysis that typically engages the narrative on a purely intellectual level. Utilizing empathy in this way personalizes the discourse that ideally engages all the human faculties. In the western tradition, rhetoric has been decisively rational and objective. As mentioned earlier in the chapter the aim of rhetorical analysis is to ascertain the narrator's motivations, arguments, or what they are trying to achieve or have achieved (consciously or unconsciously) through their discourse. Postcolonial

rhetorical analysis dedicated greater attention to the reflexive necessity of analysis but in most cases engagement stopped at a cursory acknowledgement of the cultural positioning of the rhetorician's cultural or historical position in relationship to the text. In my estimation one cannot begin to ascertain these things without some effort to suspend or merge the individual ego with its multitudes of emotional and mental identifications in an effort to engage the narrative beyond the objectification of the artifact through detached analysis. In essence I will actively and consciously utilize empathy in my reading of Somé and Anzaldúa, to merge with their emotional, psychological, spiritual and cultural experiences in a way that not only sympathizes with their narratives from the standpoint of a culturally sensitive rhetorician, but to *live* their experiences from the standpoint of a human being through drawing on the wellspring of my own emotional, psychological and mental experiences and when I cannot relate allowing the authors' experiences to permeate my boundaries.

As someone who, like Anzaldúa, has often experienced confusion in ascertaining where my emotional borders end and others' begin I endeavor to leverage this faculty into my methodological approach and allow it to inform my analysis. It is my assumption (however antithetical to traditional western objectivity) that through traversing identitive borders between the data and me can only inform a richer and more sensitive reading and understanding of the material. In fact, referring to this act as "a reading" is misleading because it is a conscious act of border crossing in the tradition of the mestiza. More experiential than intellectual dissection. This moves the act of empathizing into an active identitive position, that role of the empath, who not only engages in the act of traditional psychological empathy (which presumably most

human's have the capacity for) but enacts a sort of intuitive/spiritual empathic process which the empath dissolves personal boundaries in order to effect a healing on multiple levels of existence. Anzaldúa notes that inhabiting the role of the "spiritual mestizaje involves the crossing of borders [and] incessant metamorphosis. It is a spirituality that nurtures the ability to wear someone else's skin, its central myth being shapeshifting." I intend to shapeshift through the analysis of the text, in the tradition of the shaman.

In order engage the text empathically I will alternate between my own identification with the epistemological positions of the west drawing heavily on traditional philosophical and scientific tropes of the world set forth by continental philosophers, scientists and thinkers, and my own intuitive understanding of Somé and Anzaldúa's narratives in an effort to underscore the vast chasms that exist between the two discourses.

Engaging in this level of analysis will allow me to enter more intimately into the mestiza consciousness that this dissertation aims to support. If communication is to move beyond binary oppositions, scholars should ideally strive for ways to engage both voices with equal openness. However this requires moving into the dark liminal spaces between the two poles and questioning and continually unsettling one's cultural, epistemic, gendered, racial, sexual and national assumptions. Quite obviously the boundaries of my ego will not allow me to completely dissolve my sense of self to where I wholly believe myself to *be* Malidoma Somé or Gloria Anzaldúa, but through an empathic experience of the text I can practice a deepened level reflexivity in a way

CHAPTER THREE

PART I:

Negotiating Communication Boundaries

"Alienation is one of the many faces of modernity. The cure is communication and community--a new sense of togetherness."-Malidoma Somé

Maldioma Somé

Of Water and the Sprit by Malidoma Somé functions in two important ways for the purpose of this dissertation; first as a personal narrative of an indigenous person's experience in western education; and second, as a roadmap of how African philosophy can inform a non-western model of communication. Somé's biography is both a personal account of his own spiritual, intellectual, and philosophical evolution into a shaman, and a strong critique of western philosophy, western culture and the limitations of colonial ideologies. In his narrative Somé not only illustrates some of the basic ideologies of the indigenous but also demonstrates the ways in which the western world has inscribed and deleted aspects of indigenous knowledge and wisdom with the tropes of continental philosophy.

While reading the text I became immersed not only in his narrative as a philosophical alternative to western ideology but also as a spiritual journey that parallels (in spirit if not in literally) my own awakening from the confines of western understandings of reality. Somé articulates the limitations of modernity eloquently and does so in a way which introduces an important dialogue on how the western-conditioned consciousness can begin to move out of the dialectic of subject/object and embrace a more culturally inclusive consciousness, one closely related to

communication. Through his experiences as a young man displaced from his original tribal village in Burkina Faso to the French Catholic boarding school only miles from his original village, and then back to his native Dagara tribe to undergo initiation Somé charts an often painful, yet infinitely important arc from magic, to the deadening of magic, and eventually back to an integrated and mature spiritual understanding.

If we are to understand how communication models can move out of the codified dialectical model then it is imperative that we understand an alternative interpretation of reality not based on the dialectic subject/object. Somé, although not primarily theorizing about communicative practices but presenting life and philosophy through his indigenous autobiographical narrative, offers a useful alternative epistemology that can serve as the foundation to re-think communication theory. His experience, and the silencing of his own indigenous philosophies and spirituality through western education, give the reader a personal invitation into the disintegration western legacies, and the importance of reclaiming alternative epistemologies that reclaim traditional spiritual knowledge and ideologies.

Somé's journey and his loss of his own sense of magic, emotion, and intuition provides a metaphor for the loss of non-western ways of understanding and living experienced by any Othered individual as assimilation into the destructive melting pot of western modernity is forced or expected. However, instead of submitting to the loss of his traditional epistemologies, Somé's experience constructs the indigenous as an active agent of spiritual and philosophical rediscovery, rather than a passive victim of western imperial power.

Of Water and the Spirit illustrates how identity, knowledge, time/space, and reality are constructed in the Dagara tradition, and thereby illustrates how the same themes in the west have limited important faculties of the human experience such as emotion, intuition and a sense of holistic connection with the community and with nature. I will illustrate what these concepts mean according to Somé and how integrating the Dagara interpretation of these concepts can loosen the threads of the western communication dialectic and allow exploration outside of that binary.

I charted the development of some major philosophical themes in Chapter One, namely those of time, identity, knowledge, space, reality and the idea of communication. These themes serve as the scaffolding for all cultures as Sylvia Wynter notes in *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom* (2003). However, the western interpretation of these tropes has become all encompassing, not just for the western consciousness, but for the colonized consciousness as well. These themes have morphed from potential tropes to indisputable facts through which systems of inequality and marginalization have thrived due to the assumption of their absolute Truth. When those truths are challenged the voices of the challenger are either silenced or are pushed to the margins of western societies, with the resulting marginalization of the other's experience. Due to his identification and profound familiarity with both the western and non-western world, Somé's philosophical notions serve as both a challenging voice and a proposal of alternatives from within the margins of western experience.

While reading Somé I found myself switching back and forth between reason and intuition and emotion and logic, and was forced to find the liminal space between the poles in order to fully integrate the message of the narrative. It was not enough to

study the text as an artifact of rhetorical analysis, and it was not sufficient to read it as a reflection of my own psycho-spiritual journey.

Many of the passages subvert and queer western constructions of truth so heavily that to claim that the events recounted are not true becomes preposterous. One would have to wonder what the motive would be to fabricate aspects of an autobiography in such an obviously "deviant" way. Furthermore, to suggest deception would be insulting to Somé and the traditions, rituals and philosophies of the Dagara people. Instead I found myself reading the text as a marginalized person and cringing at the thought of the typical western reader scoffing at Somé's accounts of magical happenings, wondering why he chose to take it so far, and reveal so much to those who may understand so little of his experience. Why expose the secrets of his initiation when they were not meant for western ears? This orientation was interesting as it revealed my own assimilation and desire to "pass" as "normal" in the eyes of the colonized. At other times I found myself crying because he articulated an intuitive truth that I could not support with factual or scientific reason. My tears were not merely tears of happiness having read the articulation of a truth that touched a central part of my experience. My tears were also born of frustration as I thought about how inadequate it would be to communicate that experience using the current communication model and assumptions of objective western reality. Somé makes an immediate diagnosis stating, "western civilization is suffering from a great sickness of the soul" (Somé, 1994 p.1). As I read his narrative I am reminded repeatedly that this sickness is at work inside my own self as well as in the institutions around me. However, Somé assumes the function of the shaman or medicine man in a tribe, which is to heal the sickness, and his narrative seeks

to do that by diagnosing and cleansing the sickness in himself after he leaves Catholic seminary school. He opens the text blatantly outlining his diagnosis of western consciousness, giving a prognosis that is undeniably apt:

> "The West's progressive turning away from functioning spiritual values; its total disregard for the environment and the protection of natural resources; the violence of inner cities with their problems of poverty, drugs, and crime; spiraling unemployment and economic disarray; and growing intolerance toward people of color and the values of other cultures-all of these trends, if unchecked will eventually bring about a terrible self destruction. Unless we as individuals find new ways of understanding between people. Ways that can touch and transform the heart and the soul deeply, both indigenous cultures and those in the West will continue to fade away, dismayed that all the wonders of technology, all the many philosophical "isms" and all the planning of the global corporations will be helpless to reverse this trend" (Somé, p. 1-2, 1999).

His diagnosis reveals the danger of continuing to "relate" or communicate with each other in the limited, dualistic ways; and that reproducing modes of communication that dissociate people from one another and themselves will continually fragment the western consciousness until there is quite simply nothing left. Without implicitly stating it, Somé reflects on "the problem of communication" and notes that we are tasked with repairing not only our relationship with each other but also our relationship with ourselves. The use of the term "self destruction" in the passage can be interpreted both collectively and individually. His story is a story of one man, but his struggle implies the battle of many before him and what will surely be many after him. It is the destruction not only of cultural and spiritual difference in the face of western

colonialism, but also the destruction of the wisdom of unification with nature, emotion, sex and spirit.

The borders the west has constructed have calcified and Somé's experience can, if read in the spirit of emancipation, dissolve those borders in order to open one to the experience of communication outside the lines. Furthermore Somé notes that his narrative cannot fully be understood in the western tradition because it did not *happen* in the western tradition. As such the relationship of his narrative to the west must create a brand new hybridization that, in the process of building something new, becomes wholly unlike the original experience in many ways. Somé's narrative becomes hybridized and subtly damaged the moment it is translated, and it has been translated twice; first from Dagara to English (both linguistically and culturally) and from oral to written. He notes,

> "Although I have made great strides in orally communicating in [English], it was still very difficult for me to write this book. One of my greatest problems was that the things I talk about here did not happen in English; they happened in a language that has a very different mindset about reality. There is usually a significant violence done to anything being translated from one culture to another" (Somé, 1994 p. 2).

It was my task to recognize both the violence of the translation, the white-washing of the indigenous experience, as well as to experience the transformative nature of the narrative not only through his eyes, but my own. In reading Somé it became clear that although a great deal of magic was translated into the written expression of his experience most of it was lost the moment it became constructed for western ears; "modern American English…seems to be better suited for quick fixes and the thrill of a consumer culture [and] seems to falter when asked to communicate another person's

world view" (Somé, 1994 p.2). So then the question then becomes, how do you read a text that is admittedly lacking in translation, and experience the narrative in a way that can be transformative in the way it was meant to be?

There were many moments I found myself completing portions of his experience in my imagination, slipping in and out of an almost meditative state in order for my subconscious to gather the unspoken pieces left by Somé. I did this automatically so that I could immerse myself in his world in a way that didn't rely simply on the written words on the page. As he struggles to communicate the story of his initiation into two cultures I struggled to straddle both worlds and maintain a sort of "mediated objectivity" so that I could adequately identify appropriate rhetorical themes. The western consciousness, much like its language, is not meant to interpret unspoken or unwritten material, it is meant to communicate the concrete, define the ambiguous and outline the parameters. Dancing between the strictures then requires not only an effort to "read between the lines" using emotion, imagination and intuition but also "to ferry meanings from one language to another, and from one reality to another" which will naturally "denaturalize and confuse them" (Somé, p.2). I allowed myself to be confused, at times believing I heard Somé's native Dagara being spoken instead of my own native English, at those times I had to put the text down and allow only my imagination to continue the narrative often lulling me into sleep until I could "re-set" my western consciousness and continue attempting to straddle the two worlds.

Malidoma Somé was born in the 1950s in Burkina Faso in a region that is mostly populated by indigenous tribes under the larger umbrella of the Dagara clan. His life prior to western education was largely "idyllic" until he was literally kidnaped from

his village by a French-Catholic missionary and taken to a seminary type boarding school at the age of four years old. The Jesuits were slowly trying to convert the native villages in an effort to spread colonial influence, and particularly language, to the region in order to have a larger literate labor force to pool from. For fifteen years Malidoma was schooled in the western tradition, "which included lessons in history, geography, anatomy, mathematics, and literature. All of these topics were presented with a good dose of Christianity and its temperamental god who forced everyone to live in constant fear of his wrath" (Somé, 1994 p.2). Somé's time at the school was filled with various forms of physical and sexual abuse by both other students and school staff, as well as the violent stripping of his native traditions, language, and history. He was told that his customs were savage, violent, and godless and to abandon the ways of his home in order to find salvation under the light of the Christian god. He lost the ability to speak and remember his native language or customs and before his escape from the school after a violent altercation with a sadistic priest, had considered entering the seminary to become a priest himself. Not because he fully submitted to western religious ideologies, but because he desired to help change the violent practices of colonialism from the inside out, as an act of ultimate subaltern subversion. He discusses the violence of colonialism with candor:

> "These foreigners (white men) seemed to have no respect for life, tradition, or the land itself. At first my elders refused to believe that a race of people who could cause so much suffering and death could have any respect for itself. It did not take long before they realized that the white man wanted nothing short of the complete destruction of their culture and even their lives […] For some of my people, befriending the white man was the best way they could find to fight back […] others who knew little about

> military culture, imperialism, and colonialism thought that the white man must have destroyed his own land to have to come here and take the land of others. In spite of all the best efforts of all my people, the whites kept coming; kept on doing whatever they pleased; and kept on taking more and more of our lands, our beliefs and our lives." (Somé, 1994 p.3)

Somé's escape from the school after punching a priest was both a source of shame and his greatest achievement. After trekking unknown miles in the African bush back to his native village with no inclination of where he was going, he arrived at his home village only to discover that he had become an unacceptable white-washed hybrid that was unrecognizable to his clan and family. At the age of twenty he was selected for initiation (in contrast to the typical age of thirteen or fourteen) and it would prove to be the most difficult and dangerous experience of his life. His time in boarding school had afforded him both the knowledge of the western tradition that his tribe saw as both terrifying and valuable to their own survival, but it had also killed a part of his spirit, and it was tenuous (according to elders) as to whether he would be able to reclaim it. The text is part recounting of the horrors of western indoctrination and part rediscovery of his indigenous culture through the initiation ritual. He was always intended to leave his native home to understand the ways of the whites, but his destiny was no less arduous. This journey created a split consciousness through which he was afforded a unique perspective that most any western educated indigenous person can relate to. He became caught between two worlds, and the task of his initiation was to first allow him to reclaim his soul, and second to give him a firm foothold in the roots that would provide him with the stability to straddle the space between the west and the non-west.

Somé was tasked with learning not only how to live in both worlds but to communicate in both worlds which proved to be the most difficult, but also gave him the ability to assess the pitfalls of western communication models, despite efforts to force him to believe in their ultimate superiority. He had to re-learn how to extract meaning and emotion from language, how to communicate with the earth and with other human beings without the primary use of logic and reason, and how to feel the vibration of words in his body. More importantly he had to rediscover how to communicate with himself. Because of his violent fragmentation, his sense of time, reality, and space became further disjointed and as he would describe it, unsuitable for a life of any real joy. Somé's task in the west according to the ancestors and elders of his tribe was to present some of the knowledge of his tribe as a form of medicine, and as such sought further schooling at the Sorbonne in France, where he received a scholarship (despite his resistance to more western indoctrination). Through his college education he would become fully equipped with "the master's tools" in order to reveal the master's weaknesses so that he could in turn help heal him. Each theme (time, reality, knowledge, identity, and space) will be addressed as Somé conceptualizes them, and at times juxtaposed against the modern western conception of that theme. Communication as a concept will be explored as a separate yet unifying theme amongst all of the other themes, as a way of illustrating how re-imagining these concepts outside of the western paradigm contributes to the construction of a model of transversal communication outside the binary subject-object.

Gloria Anzaldúa

In order to help understand and provide ample theoretical orientation for Somé's experience I looked to queer Chicana feminist poet and scholar Gloria Anzaldúa, whose theories of knowing and identity help to illuminate the process of undoing the boundaries of colonized selfhood through deeply self-reflexive and transformative "spiritual activism". Throughout each of the following sections I utilize Anzaldúa's theoretical constructions, emotional musings, interviews, poetry and thoughts to support Somé's spiritual, emotional and intellectual shifts as he was becoming an initiated, integrated shaman and scholar living in the western world. Both Anzaldúa and Somé seek to bridge gaps between the subaltern other and the west, and although writing in very different styles and from different cultural traditions, gender and sexual identifications and spiritual ideologies, the similarities in their constructions and conceptions of knowledge, identity, time/space, and reality are noteworthy. Anzaldúa's work is decisively self-reflexive, introspective and purposely self-referential but her references to her experiences as an emotionally sensitive queer Chicano woman growing up in the United States illustrate the complexity of compounded otherness that parallel Somé's experiences in the Nansi Catholic boarding school.

Furthermore, Anzaldúa's writing is inherently transversal, she shifts between the poetic and academic, the western and the Chicana, the spiritual and the rational with great ease and explores the liminal spaces between each state. This style underscores and highlights Somé's experience well and aids in grounding Somé's highly spiritual experiences, which is one of the many gifts of Anzaldúa's writing. She also writes for a decisively feminist, queer and minority audience engaged in the process of western

scholarship and activism, and thus the passages from her work help to continaully reorient the reader back in the task of positioning Somé's experiences in an activist vein. From her earliest writings Anzaldúa explores the limits of her own identity and communicative effectiveness in a world where she is marginalized on multiple levels. Words, and communication become ambivalent tools, important in deconstructing the master's house, but ultimately unable to carry meaning well:

Specifically I utilize a cross-section of Anzaldúa's essays and poetry; *Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writiers, Spirituality, Sexuality and the Body, Creativity and Switching Modes of Consciousness, The Presence, Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island, The New Mestiza Nation, Let Us be the Healing of the Wound*, and *Now Let Us Shift.* The passages taken from Anzaldúa's work can be thought of as road markers in the development of Somé's expanding consciousness and provide us with tools with which to build a working model of transversal communication in Chapter Five. Her position as an activist and shamanic transformer allow us to understand that although Somé is writing from a particularly specific cultural experience, the epistemological, spiritual, emotional and intellectual legitimacy of his journey can be traced in the insights of Anzaldúa, born and raised across the globe. So while we cannot essentialize the experiences of the "other" there is something valuable to be gleaned from understanding the journey of conocimiento (knowledge) to deconocimiento (the unearlning of knowledge) back to integrated conocimiento and how those shifts bear on the conceptualization of communication outside the boundaries of western psychology and epistemology.

Knowledge

Western Knowledge

In Chapter Two I discussed the conceptualization of knowledge in the west, however it's worth revisiting these notions here because Somé's experience with knowledge occupies an important liminal space between western epistemology and the critical position afforded to him through his native cultural heritage. Knowledge in the west is often learned through memorization or the studying of text, rhetoric, and facts. Information comes from the outside world and is to be rationally analyzed and remembered by the knower. There is a great deal of philosophical inquiry around the notion of epistemology, how we come to know what we know, but for all intents and purposes, knowledge is garnered as a weapon to be used for surviving in the world. There is all manner of knowledge, but knowledge in the west is hierarchical. At the top of the hierarchy, rational theorization based on empirical facts, at the bottom is self-knowledge. Facts provide the westerner with the tools to delineate true/false claims and, on their basis, partition the world. Once the world is properly ordered, via classifications and data, then knowledge can be used to gain greater power. In the west knowledge is a means toward greater social and economic status. Somé and the other African students at the university recognized this early on and used the utility of education in the west as a means to an end:

> "The system did not care whether you really learned anything or not. It was based upon the regurgitation of memorized material fed to one by professors who read from their notes in bored, sleepy, and sometimes even drunken voices. Most of what they said was incomprehensible. Our only reason for being there was our need to transcend the alarming social and economic situation in which most of us were caught. We did not

> need to be told that a proper Western education was the key to good Western jobs and a decent life" (Somé, 1994 p.5)

Colonizing knowledge has had an almost ever-present effect on the indigenous world, and its influence seems almost supernatural due to its strength and virulence. Malidoma's grandfather conveys this sentiment in reference to the spread of colonial ideology to the indigenous person:

> "[…] some say the white man became smarter, stronger than us through the help of the avenging spirit of the ancestors. He conquered us through confusion" (Somé, 1994 p.42).

The cost for swallowing colonial knowledge is quite grave for the indigenous as acceptance of western methods of understanding often meant betrayal of one's own traditions. Furthermore going too far into colonial epistemology would result in illness, as was the case with Somé's father:

> "In your father's case, it was prophesied that his heart would melt in the face of the white man's fetish, that he would follow him. But it was not part of the plan that he go too far into his maze, just far enough so that our people would have something to work on, a sample of the white man's ways" (Somé, 1994 p.42).

Additionally western knowledge is used often to manipulate, cajole, and control both others and the environment at large, as Malidoma experienced during the first night of his kidnapping into boarding school as he cried for his mother:

> "The door opened and the catechist came in and ordered me to shut up. To this day I remember him telling me that he was my mother now, and that I should never call for her again. In my confusion the gentleness in his voice even sounded like my mother. It would be years before I understood that tenderness is the weapon used by the torturer to win over his victim. For me, the world ended that night" (Somé, 1994 p.90).

The priest's manipulation is indicative of the tendency to thwart or misguide when the colonizer has a goal in mind. This is highly ironic given the tendency of the west to classify indigenous knowledge as mystical (which implies that it mystifies and confuses often with ulterior motives).

Written language is used as a means for ensuring the proper communication of knowledge, but for Somé learning to write was a meaningless and painful process that he was forced to learn quickly if he were to become properly immersed in the western tradition. Stressing the absorption of written communication was a means of erasing meaning from indigenous language and replacing it with structured symbols known as the alphabet. The use of written language can be both empowering and upsetting:

> "On the mission hill my Dagara language eroded gradually as French painfully took its place. I still remember my first class. Mantié came to class with a textbook that he held like a sacred artifact. He also brought a huge stick and a broken engine belt. He started out drawing some strange signs on a large surface on the wall. I counted twenty-six of them."[…]"What do all these carvings mean?"(Somé, 1994 p.92)

However upon asking the question, Somé is met with punishment and wrath. The symbols aren't meant to convey meaning, a concept unfamiliar to indigenous cultures because they cannot contemplate the point of knowledge without meaning? What is sacred about meaningless symbols? Information for the sake of information is not only unfathomable in the Dagara tribe but a waste of time.

> "My first day of foreign language class filled me with terror and curiosity…and then there was the stick and the strap […] The ghosts of As, Bs and Cs kept flowing in our child minds…In a few days we could all identify the alphabet easily. Memory works well when threatened with punishment, and the teacher's stick was its trigger […]

> Although holding a pencil was not easy, the capacity to carve visible speech was like an initiation into secret practice. I cherished my performance because somehow I had the impression that these mysterious letters possessed the ability to say miraculous things if combined properly" (Somé, 1994 p.94)

Anzaldúa writes of the tendency to over-utilize rhetorical knowledge in the west and the effects of this overvaluation on one's intuitive capacities:

> "Many have a way with words. They label themselves seers, but they will not see. Many have the gift of tongue but nothing to say. Do not listen to them. Many who have words and tongue have no ear; they cannot listen and they will not hear. There is no need for words to fester our minds. They germinate in the open mouth of the barefoot child in the midst of restive crowds. They wither in ivory towers and in college classrooms. Throw away abstraction and the academic learning, the rules, the map and compass. Feel your way without blinders—to touch more people, the personal realities and the social must be evoked—not through rhetoric but through blood and pus and sweat" (from *Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writiers* in Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.34).

The abstraction perpetuated by academic education, rules, maps and compasses provide a false sense of security for the western consciousness and support practical or pragmatic understandings of the world but don't allow one to actually "see" through the forms of the world into other levels.

In Chapter Two I discussed how the equation of literacy and written communication was relegated to the pious and holy, beginning particularly with the late classical rhetoricians but becoming more evident with the Scholastics. It is this association that allowed the educational colonialism of Romantic languages to be associated with the taming of barbaric indigenous heathens. If they could only learn to

communicate knowledge (*western* knowledge, not their own indigenous knowledge) through the written word then they may be worthy of divine salvation. In fact, it is through gaining use of the primary tool of western knowledge (writing), that the indigenous can carve their way to heaven:

> "Before we left the mission hill, Father Maillot told us that our years there had provided us with an adequate preparation for the next step in our journey toward encountering Christ. How strange it sounded to be meeting Christ through the agency of literacy " (Somé, 1994 p. 98).

> "Rhetoric was conceived of as a technique by which to prove through argument that a fact, obviously wrong, was right. This skill was important because it meant that we were equipped to defend Christianity in the face of every contradiction." (Somé, 1994 p. 116)

Additionally colonial knowledge gained about the other is used as a way to force the other into civilized submission. This is done by way of the fear bred in the colonized collective ego that creates a god complex that must enlighten the untamed or uncivilized into an image acceptable to meet God's glory. However, this complex is often shrouded with various layers of denial and well-intentioned help, a problem that still remains (albeit less theologically focused) for the postmodern academic:

> "He (a graduate school educated priest) was, I learned later, an anthropologist who had spent his first years as a missionary in Africa, studying the relationship of the indigenous cultures to the divine. In an article he wrote about one tribe, he argued that the indigenous man or woman's instinctual worship of the inanimate is an indication of his or her innate longing for God. He emphasized the good being done for indigenous peoples by finally revealing the true God to them" (Somé, 1994 p. 125).

The more accurately the indigenous could learn to use the tools of western knowledge the closer to Christ they would be. Of course the colonizer, or in this case, teachers, positions themselves as generous and worthy of redemption because the act of teaching literacy afforded them a place in the kingdom of heaven. Christ is depicted as White throughout the majority of the western world, so the implication is not only that the indigenous would move closer to Christian salvation but also become Whiter as their literacy increased. It is thus not enough to teach the tools of colonial epistemology but the hope is that the indigenous will have their cultural and racial characteristics eliminated, or at best, washed clean of undesirable qualities through their immersion in western traditions. This initial fall from grace is described in the Bible in the story of Adam and Eve, however Anzaldúa suggests a different interpretation of this shift, steering the story away from the idea of other as sullied and fundamentally flawed to a more inclusive reading that integrates multiple levels of interpretation:

> "In the Christian myth about the Garden of Eden, the loss happened becase Eve at the apple; she is blamed for being tempted by and sucumbing to the serpent. But there's another interpretation of that loss: the leaving of Paradise occurred 3.5 billion years ago when the first sign of any kind of sentient life began on this earth. That "alteration" changed from the idea form (the dream-body, the non-physical entity) into care-free, unlimited. Because it had no body, it had no sex, it didn't have to scrounge around for food, it didn't have to protect itself. All of a sudden it changed into body and had to contend with its limitations, with having to clothe and feed and procreate itself. It became two sexes with two genders. Some believe there is a deeper spirit which ecompasses the body, that there is a physical level, a dream level, an image level, a soul

> level and an over soul level" (from *Creativity and Switching Modes of Consciousness* in Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 109).

In Anzaldúa's estimation the positioning of knowledge, through Christian myth, perpetuates the continued subjugation and internalized loathing of the other, which was heavily enacted through colonial education systems in conquered lands. She also suggests that rigid translations of the Bible do not allow for other interpretations and thus serve the controlling goals of the colonizer and does not allow the salvation trope to be perpetuated, in addition to demonizing archetypally feminine knowledge faculties like emotion, intuition and somatic knowing, she goes on:

> "In the pursuit of knowledge, including carnal knowledge (symbolized by the serpent), some female origin figures "disobeyed" casting aside the status quo of edenic conditions and unconscious "being", the took a bite of awareness—the first human to take agency. Xochiquetzal, a Mexican indigenous deity, ascends to the upper world to seek knowledge from "el árbol sagrando," the tree of life, que florecia en Tamoanchan. In another garden of Eden, Eve snatches the fruit (the treasure of forbidden knowledge) from the serpent's mouth and "invents" consciousness—the sense of self in the act of knowing" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 p. 542).

According to Anzaldúa's argument the pursuit of "forbidden knowledge" through the faculties of daring curiosity, desire, emotion and intuition are what allowed consciousness in humankind to be fully initiated. She reinterprets the knowledge tropes established through western philosophy and scholastic theology, and imbues the deomnized archetypal Eve (through her reframing) an incredible amount of power, autonomy and agency. Eve thus becomes the archerypal representation of all Othered peoples outside of the hegemonic majority.

Somé himself believed in the promise of salvation and absorbed himself in the study of language and rhetoric. He also found that the tools he had been given could be his only salvation in a world seemingly devoid of spirit. In his study he discovered that not only did some of the Africans in the boarding school question the dignities of the western world, but that there were those within the borders of the west that had begun to criticize the atrocities of the western world:

> "The world outside of Africa came into even sharper focus with French literature, which crystalized history by resituating it in a larger social and ethical context…I was astounded by Moliere and his eccentric, egocentric, avaricious characters. I loved Baudelaire. He was blasé toward morality, and for a good reason. He had discovered that the whole French world was a monumental lie--and I believed him" (Somé, 1994 p. 115)

The desire to understand and thus implode colonial epistemologies was always at the heart of Somé's journey, even before he began to rediscover the strength in the wisdom of his native traditions. He acknowledges the necessity of the indigenous awareness of colonial epistemologies in deconstructing its truth tropes:

> "I knew I wanted to be a priest, but not the kind I was being asked to be. I knew I could be one who would place dynamite in the middle of the whole system and explode it. That was what I wanted to do. I thought that, after all our group activities were preparing us to do this kind of job together, to send the Catholic establishment to the very hell it pretended to save people from" (Somé, 1994 p. 128).

However despite Somé's desire to fight colonial violence with rhetorical strength he reached the breaking point that all human beings eventually reach when continually oppressed and released the force of his spiritual, cultural, and epistemological

imprisonment loose on a priest in a fit of rage. Somé's emotional outburst is important because it is indicative of the final loss of subaltern patience. In Somé's native culture force is only sought when a person commits a conscious act of violence against another member of the community. This is the case in many tribal traditions, which is one reason the violence of colonizers seemed both irrational and confusing. Nonetheless when people are not only forced to homogenize with cultural and spiritual views that are grossly out of alignment with their intuitive way of life, and then continually pushed to not only regurgitate those ideas and knowledge, but also replace their own cultural traditions in favor of their abuser's traditions, violence is bound to ensue (against the self or another). Nonetheless it is the final push into the margins that often causes the other to reclaim their spiritual and cultural dignity despite colonial pressure. It is through the extremity of Somé's violence against his superior that caused him to revisit his tribal village and reinstate his heritage:

> "The cup was full; it had to be drunk, bitter as it was. The impulse to raise my hand against my superior had triggered an unstoppable flow of events pushing me like an avalanche toward the chasm of the unknown. In retrospect, my actions seem inevitable. Inside me was a void of rage so deep, so carefully nurtured over the past fifteen years, that I could have done nothing else, finally, but respond to violence with violence" (Somé, 1994 p. 139).

Dagara Knowledge

The manner in which the colonized consciousness obtains knowledge is, in theory, straightforward. One is to learn information, memorize facts, study figures, interpret written language, and decipher rhetoric in order to gain understanding of the world. The best and most respected knowledge is obtained through rational and

reasonable means, utilizing epistemological tools that support reason and rationality (science, math, history and rhetoric). Epistemological systems in the west are based on an assumption of logic, with intuition playing a secondary role (at best) in the interpretative process. The knowledge of the indigenous is largely reversed, with logic and "facts" sitting at the bottom of the hierarchical spectrum of trusted epistemological tools. In the colonial world for one to intuitively, psychically, somatically, or emotionally isolate an answer not only calls into question the accuracy of the answer but the sanity of its originator. This is largely in part due to the loss of full access of these faculties by the average western consciousness. For Somé and the Dagara culture as a whole, knowledge, and the tools of knowledge are sought in the symbolic, the ritualistic, and through exploration of the intuitive and emotional faculties, underneath the emotional and tonal subtleties of interaction, and through communion with the universe and nature at large.

Dagara Spiritual Technologies

The post-modernist would argue that knowledge about the indigenous world is sought through these means because this is the reality they live in (the magic reality), but this dismisses the use of such knowledge to understand the colonizer's world, yet still allows for the colonizer to understand the indigenous world through his epistemological techniques. Somé beats back the power of western epistemologies and knowledge through the strength of his spiritual and cultural identification:

> "For most people, top performance in that school meant hard work. As an initiated man, I did not have to work hard to get my degrees. I skipped a great deal of the classes, made sure I was present at the exams, and walked away with my diplomas. The answers

> to the exam questions were mostly visible in the auras of the teachers who constantly patrolled the aisles of the testing rooms (Somé, 1994 p. 5).

Somé is able to bypass the use of western rationality and logic and gain success due to his awareness of, and ability to navigate through, both epistemological worlds. Despite his ability to study and assimilate western knowledge it is his reliance on intuition and the ability to read the human aura that carried him through his difficult university courses.

> "During my second year in college, the teachers began to notice me. It was harder and harder to cut classes. When I was picked by the professor to reply to a question, I continued to instinctively seek the answers in his aura, as I did during exams. To me it was like being asked to read out of an open book. This method worked so well that one day one of my teachers looked at me suspiciously and asked, "Have you been reading my mind?" Of course, I said no. We were in the modern world, where such things are impossible" (Somé, 1994 p. 6).

Somé's ability to see the aura as a form of epistemological technology is one that would undoubtedly be rejected by any self-respecting western educated person. However, the ease and obviousness of this ability to navigate the classroom is further evidence of the efficacy of indigenous knowledge. The technologies of the other are however not impervious to western violence, and subjecting one's epistemologies and knowledge-technologies to the scrutiny of western analysis can weaken and dull their effectiveness:

> "…when I travel to conferences, I always take my medicine back with me…the first time I carried my medicine bag through the airport I realized, when I arrived at the X-Ray machine that I could not have my medicine X-rayed. I did not want my medicine to be seen. I realized that if I did I would have to explain its strange contents to the guards.

> This would be awkward to say the least. Besides, I was not altogether sure what this modern technological contraption would do to my medicine" (Somé, 1994 p. 7).

The X-ray machine is the ultimate in western analysis, as it mechanically "sees" through the material composition of an object down to its very organic structure. It is a testament to the modern world's reductionist desires. However, despite the X-ray machine's sophistication it cannot uncover the inscribed meaning and emotion instilled in the contents of Somé's bag, which was filled with various fetishes, talismans and trinkets that to the western eye would look at best like garbage, and at worst like evil "Voodoo stuff". It is not that similar technology doesn't exist in the Dagara tradition; it is rather that it does not strip those things of their humanity:

> "At night, when everyone was asleep, grandfather would watch over the farm and the compound from his room. Through the use of complex and magical security devices his thoughts were constantly tuned into the vibration of the farm, and he could always determine whether the fields were being raided by wild animals. The device he used to keep vigil consisted of a clay pot filled with virgin water. Rainfall that had never touched the earth in its fall from the sky. He saw everything that happened throughout the farm by looking into this water. The precision of vision it afforded superseded the simplicity of the device" (Somé, 1994 p. 25).

Both the X-ray and the water function as protective devices to prevent harm to a community. The X-ray in the airport is meant to detect weapons or other illegal contraband from endangering passengers, the water in the clay pot is meant to protect the village from possible attack from outsiders or animals. However, the X-ray machine strips objects and people of their humanity exposing nothing but the organic structure underneath, whereas the water employs the intuitive faculties of the diviner in order to

maintain the sanctity of the humanity of those being observed, (not to mention it is far less intrusive and biologically harmful). Nonetheless, it would be difficult for the westerner to submit that the water could even be classified as technology let alone admit to its overall superiority and greater omniscience in detecting danger and protecting those on whom it is used.

Esoteric Knowledge

Like Somè, Anzaldúa utilizes a variety of epistemological tools (some colonially legitimized, other marginalized) for self-revelation and knowledge about the worlds. Many of the tools in Anzaldúa's knowledge-tool belt have traditionally been associated with the occult, shamanic or esoteric wisdom or otherwise "superstitious" knowledge systems that are known to bypass western rationality and reason in favor the intuitive and emotional faculties, which she claims the west has attempted to bury deep within the psyche:

> "A lot of my awareness of spirituality comes from the psyche, from the soul in a psychological point of view. I read Jung on the archetypes of the unconscious, Neumann on the creative unconscious and the mythology, Hillman on dreams, death psychology, self help books, how to discipline yourself, Nietzsche's The Will to Power. I was sort of my own shrink and the writing was the medium. I couldn't' afford to see a shrink and I was fucked up because of traumatic events and a horrendous childhood. […] I study systems all the time—systems like psychology, archetypes, alchemy, all the stages of transformation, numerology, the Tarot, the I-ching the Sabian symbols and astrology. It's all for the purpose of knowing myself—knowing other people too, but especially for knowing myself. The more knowledge I have about the world, nature, psychology, philosophy, and all the different systems and belief systems of people, the

better I can know myself and other people, and the better I can write" (from *Spirituality, Sexuality and the Body* in Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.92).

Emotional Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge and the tools used to gain that knowledge often serve a dual function. On the one hand knowledge is meant to help the knower and their community survive (which is a characteristic shared with the west), and on the other hand it is meant to effect transformative change for the community. Nowhere is this more appropriately illustrated than in the grief and mourning practices of the Dagara people. Somé spends a fair amount of time discussing the necessity for proper expression of grief within the African tradition. The understanding of the emotional effects of unexpressed, repressed, or unacknowledged grief on the part of the individual and the community at large produces a need for cathartic emotional outpouring. This benefits not only the individual who is grieving but also the community at large. Grief therefore becomes an epistemological tool in the tribal community and expressing it allows the feelings and energy of its expresser to be known and thus transmuted.

> "When activated emotion has a ceiling it must reach. At its apex, grief turns the body into a vessel of chaos. But it is just such a climactic chaos that can cleanse both the person and his or her spirit" (Somé, 1994 p.58)

The Dagara's emotional intelligence is instilled in their ritual practices and the funeral ceremony serves as an opportunity for community members to purge emotional baggage that may be limiting the individual and the community as a whole:

> "At Dagara funerals, it is always necessary that the members of the immediate family be accompanied by groups of friends in order that they not injure themselves in the paroxysms of their grief. And it is these very paroxysms that are necessary if one's grief

> is to be purged. Unlike people in the west, the Dagara believe it is terrible to suppress one's grief. Only by passionate expression can loss be tamed and assimilated into a form one can live with. The Dagara also believe that the dead have a right to collect their share of tears. A spirit who is not passionately grieved feels anger and disappointment, as if their right to be completely dead has been stolen from them. So it would be improper for a villager to display the kind of restraint and solemnity seen at western funerals" (Somé, 1994 p. 57)

The suppression of emotion in the west only further frustrates the process of gaining holistic knowledge. Without expression or understanding one's emotional processes one denies a whole subset of information about the self and the world. Somé offers information about the Dagara death ritual as a remedy for the emotional ineptitude of the average western colonial consciousness. The avoidance of emotional display, particularly public emotional display, creates energetic and intellectual stagnation because the individual and community cannot move through emotional distress effectively (or quickly) due to the convention of suppression. The effect that this has on the community's overall "intelligence" is dire as it creates a palpable tension between the lived experience of a loss in the physical sphere, and the emotional experience of having to suppress the expression of the loss. In fact, in the Dagara tradition without the chanting, crying, moaning, and screaming of the funeral ritual, a person would not be able to fully understand the death as a "reality". They may wander around the village for days or months unaware of the death on all psychospiritual and physical levels. The expression of grief therefore serves to purge the individual of passionate emotion and also opens a communicative dialogue between the griever(s) and the community:

> "During a Dagara funeral ritual, all kinds of grief are released-not just regret for the departed, but all the pain of everyday life. The chanters, accompanied by the male xylophone, might sing that only an unmarried man has the right to cry for a meal, for there is nobody to serve him. The female xylophone would respond with her double note of agreement. Or a man who lost his crop to bad weather could use the funeral space to release his compliant, chanting his loss in unison with the melody of the funeral. Meanwhile the drum would broadcast its deafening rhythm penetrating every heart in search of hidden miseries" (Somé, 1994 p.58)

The funeral as a tool of emotional knowledge creates a space for the collective knowledge of the death where sadness over loss can be translated into joy and celebration over regeneration once the weight of the sorrow has been properly released. Anzaldúa notes that rituals serve a deeply important community goal in creating meaning and alliances amongst community members:

> "Ritual consecreates the allinace. Breaking bread together, and other group activities that physically and psychically represent the ideals, goals, and attitudes promote a quickening, thickening between us" (from *Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island* in Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 154).

In the context of the funeral ritual this alliance is the desire to exorcize the emotional sadness of loss. Without the participation of all of the community everything cannot be brought to light.

Understanding the value of emotional expression is almost as important as understanding how to utilize emotion and ritual in a communally productive way. These rules are often relegated to those who are the keepers of secret knowledge, which is essentially arcane knowledge passed down to ensure the appropriate use of magical or

spiritual technologies. The funeral ritual described in Somé's text is one such use of ritual magic to evoke change and shift the community's reality. Literacy through the eyes of the indigenous other is not garnered through memorization of written text but through understanding the meaning *behind* ritual practice. This counters many modern beliefs about the magic person's blind, unwavering dedication to ritual without understanding. In the Dagara tradition an action cannot be effective without awareness of the deeper meaning, and as such meaning and knowledge cannot be divorced lest one risk individual or communal ruin.

Knowledge, Spiritual Technology and Secrecy

Similarly different community members specialize in esoteric or spiritual knowledge, and not all knowledge is intended for all members of the community. As with all esoteric practices there are aspects of spiritual learning and knowledge that are to remain unspoken because giving them explanation renders the information dangerous to those who dispense it, and to those who hear it. Literacy then resides in the propriety of the learner and the appreciation of mystery and silence, which contrasts the western approach which prefers full informational disclosure:

> "To be literate in an esoteric practice one must belong to the school that teaches it and have the ability to keep silent about the school's secret practices. A promise is not enough, because the very existence of the technology practiced by secret societies depends upon its members' silence. To the Dagara, the esoteric is a technology that is surrounded by secrecy. Those who know about it can own it only if they don't disclose it. For disclosure takes the power away" (Somé, 1994 p. 60).

The use of esoteric practice requires technology, however the technology of the Dagara is often composed of the very earth itself and is rendered meaningful or effective

through emotion and imagination, making it both a transformative tool and a work of art:

> "The magical arts are Dagara technology, a technology characterized by practicality- what is needed, what is useful. When one of our elders carves a double headed serpent or an amphibious mammal, he is not just creating an image out of his imagination but cooperating with the spirits of those beings for the maintenance of natural order. Through this carving, spirits from the underworld manifest themselves to heal us in the world above and to repair our world" (Somé, 1994 p. 61).

There is also considerable power in the mundane and humble, as it is the invocation of meaning which imbues the technology with power, not its material worth. Somé explains the tools of the medicine man in the village:

> "These medicine objects were for the most part a collection of the very things that an uninformed person would normally overlook because they were too natural, too trivial to attract attention. Who would be attracted to an old bone or the kind of stone that could be found anywhere? There were bones and stones and pieces of broken metal- remnants of tin cans, broken bicycle parts, and other unidentifiable metal objects…power was in the trivial looking thing, the thing that looked weak and valueless" (Somé, 1994 p.164).

Technology for the indigenous thus does not seek to eliminate and control nature but rather to cooperate and communicate with nature. There is no knowledge without the integration of the natural world. Nature also includes the seen and the unseen.

"Supernatural" Knowledge

The Kontombili, the small human-like astral beings who serve as guides to the people in the bush, are an extension of the natural world and dispense valuable and practical knowledge to humans. For the westerner these beings would be at best myth

and at worst delusional hallucinations. Nonetheless many people in the Dagara community at large interact with these beings in order to garner knowledge about not only how they can continue to coexist with the natural world but also how to improve their quality of life through the respectful use of the natural world.

> "The Kontombili live very long," Grandfather once told me. "They can live as long as they want, but they can die when they are ready. We owe them most of the magic we know—and much of our joy. For example, before we met them we did not know how to brew millet beer. One day one of our women met a Kontomblé when she was out in the bush hunting for dry wood. He gave her a calabash full of foamy liquid and when she drank it, she was delighted. She felt merry and wanted to sing. When she asked the Kontomblé what she was drinking, he said it was dan, made from millet grains…The woman went home and did as she was told, and since then we have dan. Many secrets were thus divulged to selected villagers in the same way. Kontombili soon became the village consultants" (Somé, 1994 p. 71).

The Kontombili are but one extension of the indigenous awareness of various planes of existence and the interconnection of those existences with the human sphere, and will be explored further in the section on reality. Kontombili in the west are no longer perceived because the knowledge they hold (about the natural and spiritual worlds) is no longer valued. Many native tribes have seen and passed down knowledge of "little people" and their presence is always indicative of a connection to the earth and the wisdom of nature. This knowledge in the west passed into legend as stories about elves and gnomes first written about by early Druid tribes became fictionalized as children's stories as Christendom rose in power in Europe. The loss of this connection, and even the erasure of knowledge of these beings in the west via religious fundamentalism and

eventually scientific skepticism and inquiry, is not evidence of western superiority but proof of colonial violence, particularly against westerner's themselves.

Holism and Knowledge

Holism, or the interconnection of various aspects of reality, is not a fetishized concept reserved for only a few in the indigenous culture but a fact of reality. A holistic understanding of the communication between nature and humanity is a main feature of many African and Eastern cosmologies:

> "Grandfather used to call the rain "the erotic ritual between heaven and earth." The rain represented the seeds sown in the earth's womb by heaven, her roaring husband, to further life. Rainy encounters between heaven and earth were sexual love on a cosmic scale. All of nature became involved. Clouds, heaven's body were titillated by the storm. In turn, heaven caressed the Earth with heavy winds, which rushed toward their erotic climax, the tornado. The grasses that pop out of the Earth's womb shortly after the rain are called the numberless children of Earth who will serve humankind's need for nourishment" (Somé, 1994 p.75).

The connection between the embodied experience of existence and the transcendental aspects of spiritual bliss are married through the sexual metaphor at work in Somé's grandfather's explanation of the rain. Unlike in the modern west where nature, spirit, and sex are compartmentalized, the totality of knowledge can only be reached through the integration of nature/sexuality with spirituality/consciousness. The west has become dissociated from the weather, studying it as a wholly scientific entity, stripping it from its metaphorical, emotional, and spiritual significance. The Dagara interpretation holds a sense of appreciation for both the chaos and order inherent in weather patterns, as they both serve the continuation of humankind in vital and important ways.

Additionally there is no need to excessively categorize, differentiate or individuate aspects of reality to ensure that their power remains intact or to gain knowledge; for example the Dagara avoid identifying some seeds to ensure that the magical properties of the seeds stay alive, while other seeds are identified as the relationship to the energy of the seed need not be kept secret for them to effectively work. Unfortunately, the introduction of scientific knowledge and colonial ideas in the Dagara community incited a loss of a great deal of tribal knowledge.

Real and Imagined Knowledge

The intersection between imagination and reality is an important distinction for the indigenous consciousness. In the west, imagination is not a source of knowledge but rather a distraction from reality. However, Somé indicates that imagination is the primary source of information and to separate it from reality is virtually impossible:

> "Our minds know better than we are able and willing to admit the existence of many more things than we are willing to accept. The spirit and the mind are one. Their vision is greater, much greater than the vision we experience in the ordinary world. Nothing can be imagined that is not already out there in the outer and inner worlds. Your mind is a responder; it receives. It does not make things up. It cannot imagine what does not exist" (Somé, 1994 p.253).

Anzaldúa also illuminates the false split between imagination and reality and how utilizing the imagination to inform our experiences is an expression of holistic integration rather than a distraction from what we should actually be paying attention to:

> "To me everything is real. Fiction is as true as whatever happened literally to people. (James Hillman talks about similar ideas in Healing Fictions.) The body does not

> discern between different kinds of stimuli, the body doesn't distinguish between what happens in the imagination and what happens in the material world. Every time you have a nightmare or think about meeting someone, your mental/emotinal scenario makes you nervous and flustered. The body responds. The body mediates these two realities. It is in the body that they coexist. There's frusttration in trying to separate the two and in making distinctions between them. We, the body, are the union, and that's part of the frustration in trying to mediate between the two. You see yourself as body going through these things like in a film. You're lying down and present in external reality, and you're seeing yourself as though in a movie; your dream body (your imagined body) is actually walking on the ocean, by the hillside...it's real. That's what I meant about fiction not being fiction, or being real. Either that or everything is fiction, but it's not one or te other. What happens in the imagination is not fiction" (from *Creativity and Switching Modes of Consciousness* in Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 108).

She notes that the shaman, the poet and the artist utilize the information and images gained in the imagination (the dream worlds, etc.) in order to inform their work. These images can either aid in healing the self or the others and dividing the sources of information into heirarchcial categories of legitimate information.

Dagara Knowledge Preservation

The preservation of mystery in the Dagara tradition helps to preserve knowledge, rather than the use of questioning, common in the western tradition. Therefore questioning the imagined knowledge will neutralize its power in the world and as such render the imaginer spiritually impotent:

> "The Dagara refrain from asking questions when faced with a riddle because questioning and being answered destroys one's chance to learn for oneself. Questions

> are the mind's way of trying to destroy a mystery. The mind of the village elder has become accustomed to living with the questions while his heart dances with the answer." Besides, I had no more fear left to fuel my desire for information" (Somé, 1994 p.265).

Furthermore, the preservation of certain kinds of knowledge through reticence ensures that said knowledge does not harm someone else. As Somé completed his initiation, he understood that to share the experience in totality would not only be dangerous to the reader, but to the community at large. There is knowledge gained about the world, and knowledge gained about the self, and it is the latter which nourishes the human spirit. Furthermore the acquisition of this type of holistic knowledge goes way beyond facts and figures, it is (according to Somé) a matter of remembering what we have forgotten; nevertheless it is the facts and figures that are given primary attention in the west. Education in the Dagara tradition is thus a process of uncovering buried wisdom, and others in the community help to facilitate our remembrance.

> "Just as we came in this world alone, so we remember alone. The elders who facilitate our act of remembering do not mind what we remember as long as we do exactly what we are supposed to do according to our true nature. So it seems that, after all, at the deepest level, the Dagara are an incurably private people. The sharing of our knowledge stops at the doors of the esoteric. During the rituals of initiation or daily life, the presence of the other is symbolic. What I know may be dangerous for you to know and vice versa" (Somé, 1994 p.287)

Somé's immersion in the initiation process of his tribe forced him to rediscover the value of communal support in the formation of wisdom. In western education systems, difference is feared and to be eliminated through assimilation. However, in the Dagara

tradition, difference is celebrated and revered, which also counters the western conceptualization of magic cultures as undifferentiated, in fact it is through differentiation that community growth and understanding is dispersed:

> "The wisdom of village life celebrates difference—not material inequality but variations of depth in people's relationship with the otherworld. They see this difference as an opportunity for people in the tribe to benefit from each other's knowledge and to demonstrate their ability to share" (Somé, 1994 p. 302).

Undoing the differentiation and individual focus of western education was not easy for Somé, and his struggle to deprogram some of the colonial epistemological ideologies represents the struggle of any Othered individual straddling the dialectical lines between the west and the rest. This struggle initiated Somé's long and at times, difficult journey into conocimiento (knowledge) and it was initiated through the remembrance of knowledge outside what had been offered to him. Anzaldúa likens this to the opening of the third eye (located in the center of the forehead between the two physical eyes) that allows us to see beyond the structures presented to us into something beyond the intellect:

> "From the middle of your forehead, a reptilian eye blinks, surveys the terrain. This visual intuitive sense, like the intellect of heart and gut, reveals a discourse of signs, images, feelings, words that, once decoded, carry the power to startle you out of tunnel vision and habitual patterns of thought. The snake is the symbol of awakening consciousness—the potential of knowing within, an awareness and intelligence not grasped by logical thought" (from *Now Let Us Shift* in Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 p. 540)

Western and Non-Western Knowledge Tensions

Somé's return to village life was rife with complication. Despite the emotional trauma of having been displaced from his cultural traditions for many years, the knowledge that he gained while in the western education system became a spiritual liability in the eyes of his tribal elders. His experience with having to unlearn many of the ideologies of the western world is something I can personally relate to. Western epistemology has a certain virulence that insidiously erodes faculties of belief, intuition, and emotion with facts, reason, and logic. Resolving the dialectic between his western schooling and his indigenous roots communicates an important tension for the other's efforts to reclaim cultural or traditional modes of being in the presence of colonial influence. It is important to note that Somé's struggle while difficult was not impossible, and that his agency is maintained throughout the process, despite times of extreme hardship in recovering and trusting tribal knowledge in the face of western hegemony. The west had changed him in many ways, some positive (such as his ability to read and decipher the western world utilizing western epistemology), most negative. Literacy itself, while an asset in navigating colonial landscapes, became a burden in his tribal reclamation:

> "It all boiled down to the simple fact that I had been changed in a way unsuitable to village life, and that this transformation needed to be tamed if the village were to accept me as I was. People understood my kind of literacy as the business of whites and nontribal people. Even worse, they understood literacy as an eviction of a soul from its body—taking over of the body by another spirit. Wasn't the white man notorious in the village for his lack of morality and integrity? Didn't he take without asking and kill ruthlessly? To my people, to be literate meant to be possessed by this devil of brutality. It was not harmful to know a little, but to the elders, the ability to read, however

> magical it appeared, was dangerous. It made the literate person the bearer of a terrible epidemic. To read was to participate in an alien form of magic that was destructive to the tribe. I was useful but my very usefulness was my undoing" (Somé, 1994 pgs. 168-169).

Literacy and the Death of Indigenous Knowledge

Literacy had the ability to kill the soul of the tribesperson, not only because of its association with the brutality of whites but also because of its propensity toward killing mystery. However, it possesses usefulness for the practical concerns of everyday life as it allows the holder to become a translator and conduit for western knowledge, and potentially material success. Nonetheless, to hold the ability to communicate with western ideologies and live as a tribesman held a distinctive paradox. On the one hand one becomes a protective force as the ability to decipher potentially damaging intention could save certain tribal customs and traditions from being exploited. On the other hand literacy prevents the holder from interpreting emotional, intuitive, and spiritual knowledge without filtering it through western epistemological constructs. Literacy in the Dagara tradition was a form of colonial possession. An abstract ghost made up of "As, Bs and Cs" that becomes an arbitrary controller of one's subjective perceptual understanding of the world around them. One begins to trust the interpretation of the world through their literacy more than their own sensual or intuitive interpretation. For example, one may read a scientific article claiming the impossibility of hands-on healing and thus doubt their experience to the contrary. This rejection of experience and intuition is perpetuated simply because the As, Bs and Cs have essentially hijacked the one's personal truth. The subjective experience is thus denied in favor of the collective trope canonized through literacy. It is the process of abstraction at its best. For the

Dagara the subjective experience of one's self and the world, despite what the possessing ghost of written language proclaims, is of primary importance.

Even imagery (the original language of human beings) is abandoned in the western educational system in favor of literacy, writing and rational verbal expression. The strokes of the pen in western language are not indicative of deeper symbolic or spiritual meanings but dry representations of syllables in order to help the brain to create the sounds with which to speak. Anzaldúa stresses the importance of imagery in the deepening of one's understanding of self and in enriching one's communication with the world. For Anzaldúa, like Somé, written or verbal language in the western tradition expressed through traditional literate means cannot adequately express the full range of human faculties:

> "When I'm writing, I sketch images in order to gather and organize my thinking. For me, this sketching is better than making outlines. An image is worth a thousand words because there is a cluster of meanings associated with each image, with each thing that I sketch. There's a difference between people who use rational thought and people who use visual images, who use sensory images, to organize their thoughts. Images speak to us. They have their own meaning, and you sort of get behind the symbology and see what they are saying. Sometimes these images are very important because they connect different experiences that we have had, and give meaning to them (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.107).

For both Somé and Anzaldúa if there is such thing as valid knowledge, it comes first from the personal, intuitive and sensate experience of the world, not from symbols written on a page.

Relearning indigenous knowledge reaches beyond remembering how to speak the language. Integrated communication within the tribal context requires restructuring what forms of knowledge can be trusted. A feeling of unrest is bred in those educated under western ideologies. This unrest, a spirit of sorts, must be dispelled before one can reconnect with indigenous wisdom. Colonial knowledge threatens not only the individual but also the community through the spread of this unrest, which often masquerades as order:

> "The problem we are facing with you is not about an individual. It is about a community trying to learn from the past. Everyone has suffered at the hands of the white man, whether it be at school, in his church, or on the roads, working for him. The spirit that animates the whites is extremely restless—and powerful when it comes to keeping that restlessness alive. Wherever he goes he brings a new order, the order of unrest. It keeps him always tense and uneasy, but that is the only way he can exist. It took our community a long time to come to understand this (Somé, 1994 p.178).

It is not so much that western knowledge and literacy must be eliminated but rather shrunk to its appropriate areas of focus to allow other more meaningful epistemologies to inform the knower; because it is potentially through this integration that could incite transformation for both communities, a fact recognized by Somé's tribal elders:

> "They have seen you read and write, but they want to ensure that you get something else in addition to the white man's knowledge so you can be more present among us" (Somé, 1994 p.177)

Skepticism, Fear and Knowledge

Homi Bhabha theorizes that underneath the strength and assuredness of colonial ideologies resides a deep psychological terror that prevents the west from

acknowledging the epistemologies of the other. It is their own disowned and projected brutality that renders the other savage and chaotic in the eyes of the colonizer, and allows them to brutalize and subjugate the other as an act of psychological role reversal.

> "The white man is not strong—he's scared. His whiteness is made of terror, or otherwise he would not be white. He is consumed by his terror and wrestles with it to stay alive. Until he is at peace with himself, no one around him ever will be. The elders want to quiet the white man in your soul" (Somé, 1994 p.178).

The unwillingness of the westerner to acknowledge fear, vulnerability, and terror can serve as a defense mechanism against spiritual and emotional growth. The defense takes the form of doubt and skepticism, which are the primary tools for the development of a strong western mind. In Somé's case, (and the experience of many other western educated Othered individuals) it can be impossible to unseat colonial precepts while doubt and skepticism are present, because their presence prevents one from "digging into [one]self". After being both formally and psychologically initiated into the west by way of terror and epistemological brutality, unearthing indigenous or esoteric wisdom from within oneself is akin to trying to raise a vengeful and violent spirit, a concern communicated to Somé by his father as he prepared for his initiation rite back into the tribe:

> "There is a ghost in you; something dead that does not like to confront anything having to do with life. This thing will be on the defensive each time you try to come alive. For you to live as one of us, that one is going to have to die. Right now it is prepared to fight. Fire is cooking violence and resistance inside of you. If you allow the violence to have its way, it will kill you. I don't know what is fueling that violence, no one seems

> to know, but it is a ghost that comes from the white world. Though it is not alive as a human being is alive, it still smells its death" (Somé, 1994 p.179).

This desire to know is what, according to Anzaldúa is positioned in Christianity and the basis of western philosophy as "evil at the root of the human condition". While at once obsessed with facts, figures, rationality and literacy western modernity has perpetuated a fear of reflective thought:

> "…which translates into aspiring to conocimiento (reflective consciousness). Your reflective mind's mirror throws back all your options, making you aware of your freedom to choose. You don't need to obey the reigning gods' laws (popular culture, commerce, science) and accept fate as decreed by church and culture. To further the self you choose to accept the guidance and information provided by symbology systems like the Tarot, I Ching, dowsing (pendulum), astrology, and numerology. Throughout millennia those seeking alternative forms of knowledge have been demonized" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 542).

Breaching Western Epistemic Walls

As Somé begins the initiation ritual he is continuously riddled with opportunities to unseat his western rational conditioning, however it seemed that in the presence of his peers some of the inborn resistance, doubt, and skepticism was softened through the recognition of the significance of the ritual itself. The community of boys that surrounded him (all much younger, yet much better prepared) provided him with security. His propensity toward analysis and scrutiny was challenged from the first day of the initiation ritual. This is significant because knowledge, something he previously had to strive and work to obtain through active rhetorical or intellectual inquiry, was imbibed into him through his willingness to participate in the ritual of initiation. In fact,

the ability to think and analyze was rendered completely moot, allowing other ways of knowing to emerge. I quote here at length as he recounts the opening night of the initiation ritual:

> "The elder moved close to the fire, speaking again in primal tongue. With each of his movements the fire grew taller and taller until the violet flame stood almost six meters in the air. From then on I heard nothing and thought nothing…The elders had disappeared as if they had removed themselves unseen from the center of the circle. Only this ghost remained, roaring with a deep voice. I suddenly knew what we were going to be doing in the next six sets of five days, which make up the Dagara week, but nobody seemed to have told me this. Rather this knowledge seemed to have poured directly into my consciousness. I could not tell if it had been there before, or had come after the fire was turned into a ghost. Can a thirsty throat feel quenched without the cool sensation of drinking? Can a starving belly feel full without the pleasure of eating? The schedule of Baor (initiation) was somehow poured into us. Later I found out that everybody knew what I now knew" (Somé, 1994 p.198).

The knowledge of the ceremony was "poured" into his consciousness. It was not gained through reading, writing, memorization, or noticeable auditory transmission or any other "rational" means of communication. The information about the structure and happenings of initiation was received through the suspension of the thinking mind. It is through this suspension that we become available to receive other types of information and to develop other forms of knowledge and understanding. However this suspension requires a cessation of the analytical mind that obsessively resists to be silenced. The indigenous suspension of thought does not presuppose that the awareness of thought doesn't exist in the tribal context (which has been the erroneous assumption by the

modern west) but rather that the use of the rational mind is conceptualized as a tool to be used and put away when not necessary. In fact, reason is only necessary when a problem needs to be solved, and even then reason is not always the best tool at one's disposal

The fire used in the ritual is both spiritually symbolic and a literal tool of magical transformation. Fire works as both a force of destruction and a force of renewal in both physical reality and the realms of consciousness. To understand the value of fire in the ritualistic practice is to understand the value of the light of insight to burn through walls within the human psyche itself. In this case of the initiation ritual described above, fire functions to burn through the walls of doubt and skepticism built through western colonial conditioning:

> "The Dagara view fire much differently from Westerners, both literally and figuratively. The two ideas are almost exact opposites. In the west fire is thought of as something wild, dangerous and unmanageable. It drives the individual into controlled fits of passion and a restless pursuit of material things. It always seemed humorous to me that there are fire departments in America and Europe. To a Dagara, the craziness that fire inspires in the west comes from the fact that fire is upset that western people have forgotten their purpose in life" (Somé, 1994 p.200).

The wildness of the fire of the initiation ritual was a symbolic and literal tool used to help Somé to overcome the need to analyze and scrutinize. Colonial tools of consciousness are not easily pushed to the background and they often return at junctures when reality falls outside of the understanding of western reality. These moments were frequent and intense during Somé's initiation and serve as an indicator of those instances when anyone's rational faculties may usurp the meaning and deeper

significance of an experience. Events outside of the normal mode of western reality can awaken the ghosts of analysis, which ultimately prevent the full understanding of the occurrence outside western consensual reality. Somé articulates the pull toward analysis at various points throughout the initiation ritual:

> "I became conscious of an overwhelming urge to analyze and intellectualize everything I was seeing and experiencing. This impulse to question was cold and purposeless. I was tired of getting nowhere in my thoughts, tired of being constantly defeated in my understanding. I felt trapped, caught inside a stone wall, trying uselessly to break out. But I didn't know where I would be if I escaped" (Somé, 1994 p.200).

The metaphor of the wall illustrates the limits of western knowledge in understanding transformative experiences outside of western consensual reality. As soon as one wall was burned down, another one is erected to prevent the psychological dissolution of the western ego. These walls, although beneficial in organizing, categorizing, and regulating the physical world are an impediment to spiritual or esoteric growth as well as an obstruction to meaningful communication with others and the natural world. Some walls must be burned while others must be broken through, and sometimes still they wail with the memory of colonial tools: debate, rhetoric, argumentation, criticism, theory, etc, before being obliterated. However, this process is often precipitated through crisis for the westerner, rather than experienced voluntarily through initiation.

> "There was however, a part that did not know what to do with all of these changes. Myriads of questions were slowing down my journey toward traditional knowledge. I longed for debates, for theories, for criticism: clearly a legacy of the white world. But, I kept telling myself, one cannot continuously ask questions. One cannot always sculpt theories to frame experience, or top experience with the roof of theory. The techniques

> of indigenous learning were revealing themselves before my eyes, sweeping away my preconceived notions of how learning was accomplished" (Somé, 1994 p.203).

The propensity toward theorizing and scrutiny is not easily undone because it means that reality must be restructured and that the individual's position in that reality may be threatened as new information is integrated into the psyche. Without the structures of literacy, and rationality the typical westerner's organization of reality (a concept I will visit later in this chapter) becomes endangered. Analytical thinking serves then not simply as a tool of literacy to understand concepts, but as a way to siphon out emotional or intuitive data which could unseat the familiarity of the known world. Furthermore, rational analytical thinking keeps the uncertainty of life manageable, which therefore helps to manage the ultimate fears for the western ego: chaos and death.

Anzaldúa writes of the need for the west to shift from its fear based orientation to spiritual, emotional and intuitive ways of knowing to include broader perspectives of consciousness, those at the forefront of this shift in consciousness are those according to Anzaldúa like her and Somé who have been intimately schooled in the ways of both and seen the ultimately spiritually bereft value of overwrought rationality and reason:

> "Many are witnessing a major cultural shift in their understanding of what knowledge consists of and how we come to know, a shift from the kinds of knowledge valued now to the kinds that will be desired in the twenty -first century, a shift away from knowledge contributing both to military and corporate technologies and the colonization of our lives by TV and the Internet, to the inner exploration of the meaning and purpose of life. You attribute this shift to the feminization of knowledge, one beyond the subject-object divide, a way of knowing and acting on ese saber you call conocimiento. Skeptical of reason and rationality, conocimiento questions conventional

knowledge's current categories, classifications, and contents" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 p. 541).

Perhaps the most difficult test of Somé's overgrown western consciousness came when he was faced with trying to "see" something in a yila tree. I will discuss this incident in more length in a later section, but for the purposes of understanding the suspension of thought his experience is noteworthy. As part of the initiation ritual he and the other initiates were tasked with seeing into a tree. They were not told what to look for, or how to go about seeing the tree, but rather to inform the elders when they saw *something*. Because of Somé's split consciousness he experiences great difficulty in completing this portion of the initiation. Reason and logic had quieted his ability to see and thus he lagged behind the other initiates in completing the ritual task. The experience itself is an apt metaphor for the complication that the average western consciousness may encounter in trying to see past the confines of the physical structure of the tree into something deeper and more meaningful that could potentially transform the suffering spirit.

Somé's initial (decisively western) approach was to stare at the tree, as one would observe an object, considering it and all of its physical characteristics. Here the possession of the ghosts of As, Bs and Cs are at work as he attempts to scientifically "see" the tree. I've experienced a similar experience when I was tasked to stare into a darkened pool of water and see what it revealed to me. My inclination was to study the darkness itself, thinking that eventually the water would reveal something within its physical characteristics that would be deeply transformative. Unfortunately all that it revealed was my frustration and anger at merely seeing a pool of dark water in a bowl. Seeing past the physicality of an object requires surrender; the surrender of skepticism,

of physicality, of locality, of one's belief about what the object really is or what it can teach. To most in the west water is water and a tree is a tree, known for how they can best serve human needs. Indeed they may hold metaphorical significance but that was not what the elders of the tribe expected Somé to discover. The violence of western knowledge was expected to be an obstacle. The Elders sang mournfully of his tribulation:

> "He thought he was not blind
> and was proud to see
> but when asked to see the moving
> in the thing that does not move
> he decided he was blind.
> His eyes would not believe
> That the still was not still
> And that the moving could cease
> Because the only thing the moving knew
> Was move move and move.
> Seeing has become blindness
> And that which does not move
> Knows you lie to yourself
> When you lend trust to what you see now" (Somé, 1994 p.208).

Sight could not be granted with the eyes open, and the song itself released the knowledge held deep inside of him that had been lost within the tangled vines of analysis and theory. He began to understand that seeing, hearing, and touching on the material level were but cursory uses of these senses, and that there is *another* set of eyes, ears, and hands with which to navigate the world that is not contingent upon the object

itself, but a communicative fusing with the insides of the thing. Furthermore the elder's song reveals that there are worlds within those worlds that can only be perceived through the dissolution of mental categorization and rationalization. A transversal marriage of emotion, intuition, spirit, and nature that revealed a level of reality deeper than he had previously entertained:

> "I listened to the elder sing his mournful song over and over, and it made my body react in strange ways. Instead of hearing the song in a normal way with my ears, I felt as if I were hearing it in my body, my bones, my blood and my cells. With each repetition the meaning of the song seemed different and more helpful to me in some way" (Somé, 1994 p.208).

However, despite the elder's provocation sight was still difficult because the insistent force of western rationality was quickly erecting new walls where others had been burned:

> "Whatever he learned in the school of the white man must be hurting his ability to push through the veil. Something they did to him is telling him not to see the tree. But why would they do that? You cannot teach a child to conspire against himself. What kind of teacher would teach something like that? Surely the white man didn't do that to him. Can it be that the white man's power can be experienced only if he first buries the truth? How can a person have knowledge if he can't see it? (Somé, 1994 p. 209).

Colonial epistemology had to "bury the truth" of indigenous knowledge in order to conquer the world. One cannot engage in imperial violence without suppressing the ability to see the effect of that violence on the conquered. In this case the epistemological violence of suppressing deeper vision (the third eye) allowed for the emotional, cultural, and spiritual significance of colonial violence to be ignored. Things

must be reduced in order to render them meaningless. Trees must become a mixture of chemical processes, photosynthesis, ATP, oxygenation and osmosis in order to be slaughtered and harvested. This is because once a person connects with the tree on a deeper level, that person would have greater difficulty in destroying the tree for their own good without acknowledging its relationship to the tree or at least granting it its aliveness. People must be reduced to skin colors and perceived through cultural, linguistic, and geographical differences so they can be manipulated and/or exploited. These processes of reduction are the mechanics of colonialism, and what Wynter refers to as inscribing master codes on the Other in order to render all other tropes and realities false and irrelevant.

Somé's dissatisfaction with his inability to see produced a competitive hunger in him that was no more helpful in seeing beyond the physical opacity of the tree than squinting his eyes. In fact, as he moved into desperation the thinking mind produced in him the desire to fabricate meaning, something which was entirely foreign to the elders of the tribe:

> "I resolved that I would not continue to torture myself for the sake of a tree. Since I could not openly defy the elders (that would have meant the end of me), I would trick them. They expected me to see something so I would make something up. How would they know I was lying? The understanding of the traditional education I had gained from my year in the village had taught me that one was always introduced to the very thing that is part of one's own world. I had also learned that the self in the universe of these elders was autonomous. Knowledge meant knowing one's own world as it truly was, not as someone else told you it should be" (Somé, 1994 p. 218).

To lie about his spiritual transformation illustrates the slyness of the western psyche at work. Even the desire to lie given the direness of his initiation task is indicative of the inclination for the western consciousness to bypass the difficulty of spiritual effort for the easy way out. In many ways it is a metaphor for the lies told to the indigenous about spiritual salvation: work hard when possible but when all else fails lie and none will be the wiser. Nonetheless the lie did not hold with the elders and they saw through his falsely constructed story (that the tree became an antelope), but it is their disappointment, amusement, and concern for him that finally revealed the true breadth and depth of his "aloneness, broken pride, anger, alienation, ostracism [and] segregation" (Somé, 1994 p. 219). It was through his despondency and the realization of the ineptitude of all that he had learned and his supposed knowledge about the world and his tools of manipulation, rhetoric, and argumentation that he was able to speak to the tree in order to see the green lady that lie within its apparent inanimate structure. Through facing the inadequacy of western epistemology he reconnected not only with a buried part of himself but also with an integral part of the natural world. Somé was thus able to break free from the confines of predominantly rational thinking and unlock more of the potential of his consciousness through suspension of colonial epistemology:

> "My experience of "seeing" the green lady in the tree had worked a major change in the way I perceived things as well as in my ability to respond to the diverse experiences that constituted my education in the open-air classroom of the bush. This change in perspective did not affect the logical, common sense part of my mind. Rather, it operated as an alternative way of being in the world that competed with my previous mind-set—mostly acquired in the Jesuit seminary" (Somé, 1994 p. 225).

Synthesizing Knowledges

It is not so much that the rational mind must be completely eliminated, as it has its place, but that, as with any other tool, it has its usefulness only in certain arenas. The rational mind, like the ego itself, is a manifestation of one's need to solve practical survival dilemmas in the physical world. However, just as one would not use a hammer to screw in a bolt, one should not use the mind in all modes of understanding. Nonetheless the rational egocentric self, when unmitigated, begins to fear its demise and sees that demise in all things that threaten its well-partitioned existence, (which has little use for emotion, nature, or intuition). The ego seeks to answer all questions via rational thought or unexamined emotion. This methodology is decisively western and only seeks to perpetuate the use of the ego to prevent dissolution of the known world.

> "The contrast between this state of mind and what I had been accustomed to at the seminary was the same as the difference between liquid and solid. It seemed to me that Dagara knowledge was liquid in the sense that it was living, breathing, flexible and spontaneous" (Somé, 1994 p.203).

The flexibility of indigenous knowledge allows for those who can traverse both knowledge systems to embody freedom, or at least the path of conocimiento more wholly because stagnation is less likely. In fact, stagnation is an indication that one has become stuck in one mode or another. Indigenous knowledge is nothing if not knowledge of the inner journey; a journey that only mystics, seers, shamans, and witches can inform. This knowledge is not meant to teach one how to conquer, manipulate, argue, or reason but rather how to discover deeper more resonant corners of the universe in order to recover a sense of connectedness. The west, for all its outward conquests has forgotten the wisdom of the inner journey. However, as I will discuss

later about the Dagara conception of reality, it is not enough to lump Somé's experience as simply emotional or one born of internal sight. As with most deeply transformational For Somé, traversing the planes of this new knowledge meant consolidating and redefining western epistemology appropriately, rather than allowing the ghosts of doubt and skepticism to sabotage his traditional education:

> "This metamorphosis cannot happen as long as the body is weighed down by heaviness. One must go through a process of relearning, enforcement of these lessons, and the consolidation of new knowledge. This kind of education is nothing less than a return to one's true self, that is, to the divine within us" (Somé, 1994 p.226).

In this case relearning also meant reclaiming the racial, cultural, and traditional experiences of his tribe. This required a sort of reverse whitewash, where the colonial traces are painted over with indigenous knowledge in order to save the individual spirit from disappearing. Africa was lost in Somé under the heavy weight of European truth tropes, and the wisdom of nature was silenced in favor of the hum of incessant analytics.

After Somé's experience with the green lady, thinking as a way to produce knowledge became increasingly more difficult. As he completed the final trials of his initiation and was tasked with finding his way back home out of the underworld, the use of the analytical mind became a liability to survival and threatened his safe return back to the earth realm:

> "The sun was about to rise. The sky was so clear I knew it was going to be a sunny day. But where was I? When I asked this question in my mind I heard it so loud in and around me that the tears rushed out of my eyes. I thought again, why am I hurting myself so badly? And instantly felt sorry for ever having thought anything in the first

> place. Thinking was excruciatingly painful, but I could not stop my thoughts, no matter what I did" (Somé, 1994 p. 271).

The more the thinking mind was fed, the more painful his journey became. The more he sought to know the world through objective analysis, the more alienated from the real world he became. Once the proper balance was struck in his consciousness, the overuse of the rational mind functioned as a threat to his survival. It was not until the appearance of a young village daughter carrying a clay pot filled with water that he was able to find his way out of the underworld.

> "Suddenly out of nowhere I saw a girl, a real village daughter, as my people would call her. She was carrying a clay pot containing water. Most of her naked body was wet with the water that had splashed out of the pot as she walked…for a while I felt an immense relief at finding her. There was no doubt that she knew where she was going and must have some reasonable knowledge of this region…though I had wanted to inquire about this region and her business in it I instead found myself asking her for directions" (Somé, 1994 p. 284).

In both instances with the tree and his ascent out of the underworld it was the archetypal feminine that provided assuredness of self and a clear direction for the unfolding of his spiritual journey. The girl's body, covered in water is both metaphorically significant for she is at once virginal and washed "pure" and entirely free and unencumbered by clothing. She is also the guide that would lead Somé to the completion of his initiation ritual. Her confidence is indicative of the strength of the feminine principles at work in Somé's rediscovered epistemological approach to understanding. She is the living embodiment of fluidity, freedom, emotion, and strength. The water from the clay pot on her body is a symbolic of the liquidity of Dagara knowledge, and her pointing him to

the correct mountain to get out of the underworld is his final indication to put faith in that which shifts, changes, and moves like water. This heavily contrasts the marginalization of feminine knowledge and understanding in the western world where the "feminine mystique" is clothed, regulated, policed, raped, restricted, and pillaged but never trusted.

Ultimately it is Somé's task to balance traditional Dagara knowledge with his colonial education. He must walk the liminal state between both worlds, resting safely in the assuredness of his spiritual, emotional and natural connection with his community and cultural traditions while utilizing the knowledge of the west to bridge the world of his people with their potential exploiters in an effort to salvage his indigenous way of life before the ghosts of the west threaten the vitality of the village. The levels of knowledge from within the Dagara community are both communally and individually relevant as the members of the community provide each individual with the appropriate tools and information for their journey. This sort of specialized knowledge cannot be obtained through memorization or standardized educational tactics and ultimately is much more meaningful, and ultimately useful than knowledge obtained in the western tradition:

> "The learning one gets from a book, from the canons of the written tradition, is very different from the living, breathing knowledge that an elder has to offer—and different from the knowledge that comes from within, from the soul" (Somé, 1994 p.204).

Communication and Dagara Knowledge

Communication and Hierarchical Western Knowledge

In order to conceptualize the role of knowledge in communication for the Dagara we must first understand that knowledge in the west is a for all intents and

purposes something which can be ceased, digested and distributed to another. Through abstraction, knowledge needed to be measurable, quantifiable and materially useful in order to be truly beneficial for the westerner. To communicate knowledge is to communicate power. In fact "knowledge is power" is a common notion in western culture. Acceptable knowledge is that which can be verified and transmuted into some form of social, political, or economic power. Knowledge, and the acquisition of knowledge is competitive (the grading system of the western education institution is evidence of this phenomena) and linear. Theoretically as one climbs the ladder of traditional education one garners higher levels of knowledge. One thus must only communicate that which can be useful and which supports the predominant truth tropes of the west. All knowledge is not created equal and can thus not be communicated with equal confidence. Knowledge in the west is segmented into binary dialectical oppositions and is either objective or subjective. As I have illustrated in Chapter Three and through my analysis of Somé's experience of western knowledge in the French school, the objective is more highly valued because it is verifiable and quantifiable through science and reason. Subjective knowledge is positioned as secondary. To communicate a fact is to communicate with confidence. To communicate subjectively is to risk devaluing the knowledge itself because its integrity is called into question when factual evidence observable in the environment cannot support its existence. The value of emotional, intuitive or somatic communication is thus lessened under the immediate value of rational, factual communication. This is because of the highly changeable nature of subjective or somatic knowledge, which renders it tenuous and thus unsafe. However as Anzaldúa states, it is the task of those seeking to actively disengage

marginalizing tropes of epistemology to behave as spiritual activists so that marginalized epistemologies and knowledge systems are not continually bullied into the fringe; integrating their insights could be beneficial to the evolution of western consciousness:

> "Those carrying conocimiento refuse to accept spirituality as a devalued form of knowledge, and instead elevate it to the same level occupied by science and rationality. A form of spiritual inquiry, conocimiento is reached via creative acts—writing, art-making, dancing, healing, teaching, meditation, and spiritual activism— both mental and somatic (the body, too, is a form as well as site of creativity). Through creative engagements, you embed your experiences in a larger frame of reference, connecting your personal struggles with those of other beings on the planet , with the struggles of the Earth itself" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 pgs. 541-542).

Holism, Knowledge and Dagara Communication

Dagara knowledge is holistic. It relies on what can readily be observed in the environment and also on what can be charted in the landscape of the self. The subjectivity of one's experience directly informs the communication of knowledge and thus changes what may be objectively true (something which will be explored further in my analysis of reality). Nonetheless there is no hierarchical relationship to knowledge but rather a symbiotic relationship of the subjective and objective experiences. What is ultimately communicated is ideally a more complete expression of a given moment than one might otherwise receive when subjective and objective knowledges are abstracted into separate experiences. For the Dagara somatic knowledge serves in understanding the needs of the body or the needs of the body of another and thus one must be able to interpret the needs of the body in order to tend to its desires and wants. Emotional

knowledge helps to understand the astral world (which is the domain of emotions and desire), so communicating somatically utilizes the body and its impulses, but must be carefully harnessed to avoid its potentially destructive properties. Intellectual knowledge is useful in communicating concepts but unlike western culture the transfer of this knowledge needs not be enacted verbally, (which was evidenced when Somé received a complete transfer of knowledge without words during the initiation rituals). One must also be aware of the communication of the environment and nature (which is always wordless and subtle), and the community itself (which is typically transferred through ritual and shared experiences). Anzaldúa illustrates the principles of integrating the multiple levels of awareness in conceptualizing knowledge:

> Conocimiento comes from opening all your senses, consciously inhabiting your body and decoding its symptoms—that persistent scalp itch, not caused by lice or dry skin, may be a thought trying to snare your attention. Attention is multileveled and includes your surroundings, bodily sensations and responses, intuitive takes, emotional reactions to other people and theirs to you, and, most important, the images your imagination creates— images connecting all tiers of information and their data. Breaking out of your mental and emotional prison and deepening the range of perception enables you to link inner reflection and vision— the mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, and subtle bodily awareness— with social, political action and lived experiences to generate subversive knowledges. These conocimientos challenge official and conventional ways of looking at the world, ways set up by those benefiting from such constructions. Information your sense organs register and your rational mind organizes coupled with imaginal knowings derived from viewing life through the third eye, the reptilian eye looking inward and outward simultaneously, along with the perceptions of the shapeshifting naguala" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 pgs. 541-542).

The Dagara strive to maintain balance between these four different levels of knowledge: mental, emotional, somatic and spiritual. Each level of knowledge has its corresponding appropriate media of communication. Ironically for the Dagara written communication is the least reliable because it codifies knowledge and allows little room for growth or expansion. It memorializes some things which are meant to remain fluid and flexible.

Secrecy, Knowledge and the Liminal in Dagara Communication

According to Somé, the Dagara philosophy contends that not all knowledge is suitable to be communicated to all people. Arcane and spiritually potent knowledge must remain secret in order to preserve the spiritual sanctity of the information itself; too much exposure renders the magic latent within the information useless. The knowledge holder must be careful what (and how) they disseminate information, lest it end up in the wrong proverbial hands at the wrong time. For example, one would only communicate the steps to creating a magical bow to strike an approaching enemy during war-time but during peace this knowledge could be dangerous and misused. The uninitiated therefore cannot receive information about the sacred rituals of initiation prior to initiation, as it will render the potential spiritual transformation of the ritual itself less potent or ineffective all together.

All knowledge is not meant for all beings because all beings are not at the same level of consciousness to understand the personal, interpersonal or communal significance of that knowledge. “To the Dagara, the esoteric is a technology that is surrounded by secrecy. Those who know about it can own it only if they don’t disclose it, for disclosure takes the power away” (Somé, 1994 p. 60-61).

The transfer of knowledge for the Dagara is most profound between verbal exchanges, nestled in the liminal spaces where emotion and somatic impulse arise. Between silences one has the opportunity to deepen their understanding of a particular interaction and being with whom they are interacting. Nonetheless, this does not presuppose the uselessness of literacy and verbal acuity. There is great power in literacy as Somé learned at the boarding school. "The ghosts of As, Bs and Cs" possess an alternatively magical possibility if utilized properly. In other words, it is within the discomfort between the spaces where one will uncover new frontiers of communication, because it is in this liminal space that new knowledge is born if one does not run from it, "another aspect of silence is the opportunity it provides us to discipline our mouths, and to learn to attend to the still small voice from within" (Somé, 1994 p. 106). In the west it is the hyper-verbalization and sophisticated refinement of knowledge through language and literacy which we believe improves our communication. However, Somé suggests we have mistaken words, and the knowledge of words and language for meaning. Children are taught to "use their words" to articulate themselves. Couples experiencing relationship difficulties seek expensive therapies in order to refine their verbal communication skills to improve marital satisfaction instead of feeling or sensing the emotion or somatic response people must learn to "tag" it, often before it is completely understood. The result is a society which is hyper-articulate and emotionally underdeveloped. Words become useless because the space around them is filled with thoughts of the next words to come. This facilitates missed opportunities for the deepening of self and relationship with others and the environment. Somé illustrates as he retells of his return back to the village when he is literally unable to communicate

with his mother whom he had not seen since his kidnapping from the village some fourteen years prior:

> "She watched my every movement with her tear-stained eyes, and I wondered how long she had been sitting next to me as I slept. We did not talk because we could not, but a lot was exchanged anyway. I could sense her every feeling. She was all care, love and sorrow, as if she understood that I had gone through immense suffering that her motherly care had been unavailable to alleviate" (Somé, 1994 p. 158).

The wordless exchange was communication between the spaces of language, residing only in intuitive understanding and emotional connection. Even when language is utilized in the Western world the loss of meaning is profound when one begins to focus more on the definition of the words than the feeling tone underneath the syllables. The communication of knowledge for the Dagara lies beneath, and between the spaces of the words and concepts, between self and other, and between known and unknown. This is the state Anzaldúa refers to as nepantla. This is also the space where transformation is possible.

> "In the transition space of nepantla you reflect critically, and as you move from one symbol system to another, self-identity becomes your central concern. While the opposing forces struggle for expression, an inner impasse blocks you. According to Jung, if you hold opposites long enough without taking sides a new identity emerges. As you make your way through life, nepantla itself becomes the place you live in most of the time—home. Nepantla is the site of transformation, the place where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited from your family, your education, and your different cultures" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 pgs. 548).

Identity

In the western tradition the development of an autonomous, rational and balanced individuated mind is presented as the way out of humans' animal impulses. Ancient Greece proposed the individuated ego as an autonomous entity that strives toward perfection and in this journey forges ideas and empires. In western consciousness the individuated ego is constructed to conquer and control both the impulses of the self (emotions, desire, physical sensations) as well as others, through manipulation and persuasion, rhetorical prowess, and intellectual might. The essence of the western ego is singular and can only be singular because it is the individual mind thinking itself into existence. Descartes's famous dictum, "I think therefore I am" is the epitome of this individuated, autonomous orientation. Only through the faculties of reflexive, logical, and individualized thought can man know himself. Within this philosophical framework identity cannot emerge from connection with the world. It must come from within. Identity is self-made and self-propelled. It is not until the late 19th century and the social constructivist movement (as mentioned in Chapter Three) that the social world was even considered important to the construction of one's identity. Nonetheless, despite the intellectual exploration of identity as a social construction the primacy of the individual is inescapable within western epistemologies. The west cannot abandon the individual ego because to do so would be to risk vanishing.

The west perceives symbiosis with another being or with the environment as problematic, as any kind of merged identities would be counter-productive to the goals of the individual ego who strives to maintain its autonomy and reach social, political, economic or psychological "perfection." In western psychological identity theory the development of the individuated self is the pinnacle of psychic growth. As Erik Erikson

noted in his theory of psychosocial development the “average” child must successfully individuate from the parents and community in order to fully reach personal, psychological and communal integration (Erickson & Coles, 2000). However, once the child has individuated, re-integrating the self, or merging the individual ego with the community or social world, is impossible because the westerner cannot readily eliminate or suspend the awareness of the individuated “I". For the westerner survival and sanity are contingent on the hyper-individuated ego. In the west the development of “ego defenses” is testament to the fear of losing oneself, and the dissolution of the borders of the self. To maintain the defenses, or buffer the barriers that maintain the autonomy of the ego, the westerner rejects any data that is dystonic, unacceptable or potentially dangerous to one’s conception of oneself as separate and autonomous. According to the father of modern western psychology Sigmund Freud, human beings posses “healthy” ego defenses and “neurotic” ego defenses; ideally one develops healthy defenses which effectively filter information that is considered to be relevant to another’s identity, so as not to confuse another’s selfhood for one’s own selfhood (Freud & Strachey, 1962).

One of the main problems of the western psychological identity framework is a seeming fundamental inability to “step outside of oneself”. The defenses built to maintain the autonomous ego can in some cases cause confusion and frustration, because despite layering barrier after barrier of psychological defense, westerners often develop a fear of the ever-looming “invader” who can break through those barricades and “pollute” the autonomous ego. Thus ego defenses stay fixated on minimizing the Other’s experience entrance into its carefully constructed borders so as to not interrupt

the illusion of individuation. Of course the goal of western psychological integration is to loosen one's egoic barriers but never eliminate them completely. Arguably, it is our defenses, both individual and collective, which prevent holistic communication. However, many non-western cultures, including the Dagara, have developed effective tools (such as ritual magic) for breaking through the walls of the autonomous ego. Unfortunately, these tools have been largely dismissed or ignored by western psychology.

Dagara identity development is constructed not simply as an individual psychological pursuit, but also a communal effort, which simultaneously serves the development of the tribe, the individual, and their relationship to the tribe. The ability to meld the ego with the community, nature, or another and still find the center of one's individuated self is the mainstay of Dagara psychological developmental theory. While the Dagara still, like many cultures, identify the individuated self and function from that state of ego identification, they have also preserved through ancient wisdom the tools that facilitate movement outside of the borders of the individuated self. These tools, coupled with the knowledge of the importance of the ability to transcend the individual "I", are largely missing from the western cannon. In the Dagara tradition, methods of identity merging are a part of many religious and communal customs. Traversing the individual self's borders *through* identification with the community and nature, Dagara boys and girls learn to develop a fully integrated and mature ego and spiritual self. In contrast to Dagara's conception of the dissolution of the self, western notions call for the transcendence of the limited egoic self, which is typically achieved by denying the physicality and sensuality of the body so that the higher faculties of mind can be

perfected. The Dagara act of eliminating identity borders intrinsically involves the community and the body.

Identity and the Body

Understanding the main differences in how the Dagara and the west conceptualize identity requires integrating a discussion about the body and physical locality. Concepts of time and space will be explored further in a later section; however, as identity and space/time are intimately linked for the temporally and physically obsessed westerner, some of concepts of the time/space continuum are helpful for understanding the concept of dissolving physical borders. For the west and the Dagara culture the body plays a unique and paradoxical role in identity philosophy. The body is at once central to the experience of the individuated ego for both the west and the Dagara and then wholly unimportant in relationship to consciousness. In fact, it is in this arena that the philosophical Idealist Georg Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the Dagara are close in their conception of consciousness as separate from the physical body (Hegel, 1977). However, It is in the judgment of the body and its role as a "tool" for consciousness for the Dagara where the two philosophies depart. In the Idealist tradition there is no integration of the body or its somatic and emotional impulses in formulating a theory of development. The body is seen as problematic to the pure, unadulterated experience of mind (or consciousness)-a sentiment which underscores many prayer or meditation centered religions.

Through the secularization of identity outside of spirituality and religion by Cartesian science, the material of the body itself has come to be seen as the only accurate manifestation of self. This categorization labels spiritual, emotional and

atemporal or liminal aspects of identity as speculative and unsubstantiated. Most in the west see individual bodies as separate autonomous entities which superficially relate to one another through subject/object communicative acts, however therein lies the problem of body-politics, race, gender, sex, abelism, nationalism, etc. When cultures are not afforded the philosophical framework with which transcend physical body barriers communication beyond those barriers is rendered infinitely frustrating and fraught with confusion, fear and misunderstanding. The barriers themselves become the focus of interaction, like two people wearing impenetrable cages of metal attempting to feel the warmth of each other's flesh, the core of communication becomes lost in the negotiation of the cages, rather than the deeper act of a spiritual meeting. The subject/object assumption of materialism eliminates the possibility of connection outside of binary interactions—identity is predicated and constituted by race, gender, sex, and nationality. Within this orientation, emotions, thoughts, and/or desires remain fixed within the confines of the individual body and cannot be shared with other bodies except through communicative exchange. Nonetheless as the structuralist Gottfried Leibniz states, the reality of the physical differences between entities renders sameness impossible in relationship to identity (Leibniz et al, 1996). In western philosophy identity is temporally locked in the body, thus there can be no union of selves (except in the case of child conception, but even then two selves have joined only to create a wholly new being distinct from and separate from the initial two entities made up of separate organic matter).

Western thinkers such as Derrida (1976) and Deluze (2001) have proposed a shift toward delocalizing and de-essentializing identity and interrogating western

assumptions about the impossibility of identitive shifting between beings. However, even within the post-structuralist shift, conceptualizing identity without reference to the individual material body, and autonomous ego is difficult. While intellectually destabilizing to classical western philosophy many post-structuralists ideas have further abstracted human identity and fail to integrate discussions of spirit and emotion.

Identitive Borders

Poets and artists have come closest in expressing the difficulty of identitive fusion in the west when writing about love. Virginia Woolf, in her experimental novel *The Waves* writes of the difficulty of transversing identitive borders; "But when we sit together, close,' said Bernard, 'we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory" (Woolf, 1931). Woolf seems to be implying that only when we truly fall in love and desire to merge with the other can most entertain the possibility and beauty of the dissolution of identitive borders. The difficulty in this fusion and the reeling of the individuated self against this merger is what contributes to the pain and tumult characteristic of falling in and out of love. It is the individuated ego's revolt against "unsubstantial territory" and the dialectical shifting of love to hate which has been the muse for a great deal of human art. The ego struggles against the uncertainty of permanent death through union while the spirit yearns for the deconstruction of barriers.

Other western experiences of identitive melting can occur temporarily during sexual merger for a brief moment(s). This may be why the experience of sexual release is so often pursued, and so strongly policed. The loss of one's self in the moment of orgasm is the temporary loosening of one's individual borders, an opening to ecstasy

and the dissolution of identitive rigidity. Anzaldúa writes of the orgasmic experience and the unifying potential of sexual release:

> "**LS**: How do you define the relationship between sexuality and spirituality?
>
> **GEA**: I feel I'm connected to something greater than myself like during orgasm. I disappear and am just this great pleasurable wave. Like I'm uniting with myself in a way I have not been. In this union with the other person I lose my boundaries, my sense of self. Even if it's just for a second, there's a connection between my body and this other's body, to her soul or spirit. At the moment of connection, there is no differentiation. And I feel that with spirituality [...] It's like all the Gloria's are there; none are absent. They've all been gathered to this one point" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.84).

The colonial critique of the uninhibited "barbaric" and "lewd" sensuality of Afro-Caribbean slave dance rituals may arguably be the western fear of the erotic experience as liberation from selfhood (Castaldi, 2006). The sexually suggestive dancing of Black people reminds westerners of the liberating power of the body's ability to shake loose the fetters of identitive rigidity and experience existence jointly with other bodies and spirits.

Identity, Dissociation and the Body

In the western world the association of the individual body to the individual consciousness was born out of a desire to ground the human experience in tangible reality. Notions of individual bodies and consciousness have allowed for both the pursuit of individual goals in the physical world and the exploitation of other individual's through the dialectical dissociation of spirit and body. This is the same psychological tactic used by expert game hunters in order to emotionally detach from

the kill. Another way of conceptualizing this is to consider the fact that power over nature or people require defined borders between the conqueror and conquered. Furthermore, the content within those borders must be deadened and objectified. One cannot exploit, kill, rape or pillage without first stripping the Other of their soul; once the soul is conceptually removed (or sufficiently abstracted) the conqueror can then justify the exploitation of whatever is inside the border because it is positioned outside the conqueror's sense of self. The western binary of individual identity, that is to say the separation of the spirit from the body, is one of the most violent epistemological and ontological constructions of the modern age. The Dagara conceptualization of the body and its relationship to the soul differs from the west in that while there is a dialectic of body/soul, the Dagara binary lacks the intellectual abstraction of western consciousness and the preference of the mind over the emotional/somatic understanding which resides in the body. The conflation of the body with consciousness has encouraged a loss of awareness of the constancy of consciousness, which is why fear of death in the western world is so prevalent and all encompassing. Somé's grandfather's wisdom captures this sentiment:

> "He would often say that the body is merely the clothing of the soul and that it is not good to pay too much attention to it, as if it were really us. "Leave your body alone, and it will align itself to the needs of the spirit you are" (Somé, 1994 p.26).

Among the Dagara the body is not forsaken in favor of disembodied intellectual awareness, but rather the temporality of the physical body and its senses is not given primacy over consciousness (including emotion and desire). The body clothes the soul so that the soul can gather the experiences and impressions of the physical world in order to advance the individual's consciousness and the community at large. The body

is a tool for experience and houses valuable faculties for which the soul would otherwise not have access to. Additionally the things of the earth are not avoided in one's understanding of the self but rather integrated into one's borders and serve as markers of one's understanding of the wisdom of nature.

Dagara Identity and Bodily Identification

The Dagara's relationship to dirt and filth illustrates the holistic understanding of the body, Somé connects the melding of the earth, decay and apparent dilapidation and the human body and the Dagara's relationship to this state, to wisdom and spiritual growth in his description of the tribal chief:

> "His appearance was unearthly. His spirit was so unlike his body that it felt as if two living entities were competing with each other. The level of detachment he had with his body was an unmistakable sign of the work of the spirit in a person who knows what ultimately lasts and what does not. Kyéré had abandoned any notion of external aesthetics, but one could see beneath the surface of his wasted body a spirit far more beautiful than any representation of the divine. The experience of such a spirit made me disregard the ugliness of his body as something superfluous to the expression of beauty, integrity, honesty and genuine life that glowed all around him" (Somé, 1994 p.184).

The wisdom of the earth, and her dirt, grime and visceral aspects are thus not denied but integrated both physically and psychologically as essential to the holistic development of wisdom in the human being. Without the support, wisdom and knowledge grained of from the ground beneath one's feet one cannot integrate the guidance of the heavens:

> "The priest at the earth shrine reminded me of grandfather, and made me understand why the wise pay little attention to their bodies. In their world dirt has no negative effect on life because they have no concept of it being evil. These earth people live like

> Mother Earth –their cleanliness is in their spirit. I wondered if those who spend their lives obsessed with looking beautiful are not fighting to cover up something ugly deep within. Our shallow appreciation of outward beauty might be more a confused reaction to the memory of true beauty than an actual encounter with it. In that case the beauty that exists on the outside of a person would serve only as a reminder to us of the real beauty of the spirit behind it" (Somé, 1994 p. 184).

Ironically, as the western conception of spiritual purity rests on distinguishing and elevating itself from the ugliness and dirtiness of the earth (which is likely a collectively unconscious desire to distance ourselves from death and decay); the Dagara development of integrated identity is connected not to the association of dirt with evil or wrongness but as an essential part of human and spiritual life, and as such both relatively unimportant and paradoxically essential. The Dagara elders are in essence melding back into the earth, no longer caring for the superficial appearance of the body but rather allowing themselves to be transformed by the dirt allowing the organisms to invade their identity borders, becoming like dirt again, as they hold the inevitable awareness of their return to dust they are then able to drop the existential fear of demise and access the power of their spiritual consciousness for the aide of the community at large.

Pathologizing Identities

Since the rise of modern Cartesian science and the growth of materialism, the "existential crisis" of individual identity has plagued the west. In western culture, once the ego has gained the ability to reflect upon itself, individuality is seen to be at the height of its development. Notions of losing the boundaries of the self are perceived as a mental disorder. In the western psychological tradition this is called dissociation,

(another Freudian inheritance). The ability to transverse identitive borders, known as Dissociative Identity Disorder in the DSM-V is seen as delusional and problematic to the appropriate functioning of a healthy human ego-identity. Dissociative identity disorder as described in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of mental illness is characterized by: "1.) Disruption of identity characterized by two or more distinct personality parts. This disruption may be observed by others, or reported by the patient. 2. True amnesia, rather than just dissociative amnesia. 3. The disturbance is not a normal part of broadly accepted cultural, religious practice, or part of the normal fantasy play of children" (American Psychological Association, 2013). Interestingly (albeit not surprisingly), only in the 2013 iteration of the cherished manual, the third criterion was added to allow for cultural or religious variation. Prior to this addendum the tribal and indigenous trans-identitive experience of shamans, medicine people, mediums, witches and seers would be quickly characterized as pathological and deviant. In the western world those with the ability to traverse identities would still be categorized as mentally ill, medicated, or worse yet, in need of hospitalization. This assumption created a bias that discredits the transversal ability of those whose identitive borders are not as static. However, those with non-static identities are often gifted with empathic and spiritual sensitivities that grant them access to deeper connectedness with other beings and cursed with the burden of overwhelming sensitivity, Anzaldúa writes of her own sensitivity:

> "I was totally alien. Also, I was this wide open little kid who was picking up people's feelings, thoughts and words and taking them all very seriously. It was very very painful. My childhood was a nightmare. I started shutting down where the pain was, in my body, and became nothing but reason, head, mind. When I started opening up to the

> body the spiritual thing came out too because it was really connected with the body and sexuality" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.84).

The west has "shut down" it's capabilities to transverse its own identitive borders and retreated into reason, head and mind as a way to prevent the pain of identification with the marginalized and victimized.

The western inability to understand and fear of non-singular identity results in the aforementioned "body cage" obstacle, which prevents meaningful communication. The "problem of connection" has pushed the western world to over-develop technology and artificial means of communication (telecommunications, digital communication, nano-networks, etc.) as a way to bridge the gap between beings:

> We are experiencing a personal, global identity crisis in a disintegrating social order that possesses little heart and functions to oppress people by organizing them in hierarchies of commerce and power— a collusion of government, transnational industry, business, and the military all linked by a pragmatic technology and science voracious for money and control. This system and its hierarchies impact people's lives in concrete and devastating ways and justify a sliding scale of human worth used to keep humankind divided (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 p. 541).

Integrating Ancestral Identities

In Somé's case the process of understanding his own identity could not be divorced from the process of rediscovering his cultural community. Therefore his individual identity, the identity the environment, and the identities of his tribe were fused allowing him to explore identity holistically. Each level (psychological, natural, and societal) had to be folded and integrated into the self before his maturation was complete. In addition to this multi-leveled identity integration, Somé had to also

integrate the cultural identity of the past and of his elders into his current self understanding, thus weaving traditional ancestral knowledge into his own personal experience. In this sense he was tasked with the conscious absorption of the ancestors identities (including their knowledge and histories) into his own being, a prerequisite for the development of the fully initiated person. He discusses the western tendency to ignore ancestral and historical wisdom in the conceptualization of the self:

> "Westerners forget that it is not only indigenous cultures that have a deep commitment to non-western ideas about reality. Even in a highly industrialized culture like Japan, a connection with the ancestors is taken very seriously. When the new emperor of Japan was installed, many leaders in the west were disturbed by the fact that, as part of his inauguration he went into the temple and spoke to his ancestors. Why is it that the modern world can't deal with its ancestors and endure its past?" (Somé, 1994 p.9).

The western desire to define the ego as an entity separate from the confines of history may be linked to the need and desire to erase the monstrosity of western colonialism. Only the ability to leave the past behind as if it had nothing to do with present allows the west to deny the past and consciously or subconsciously reproduce that brutality without responsibility. Modern science's rejection of the possibility of communication with the dead is another manifestation of the fear of merger. As was evidenced in Somé's experience of the death ritual upon his grandfather's death, however in the west such an experience would be an ample plot to a B-grade horror movie. The reanimation of his grandfather and the communication of grandfather's knowledge and wisdom through another's mouth would horrify and shock the westerner. The medium's ability to integrate and access another being's voice, thoughts or emotions triggers not only the primal fear of the unknown (as the spirit world is the ultimate in uncertainty) but also,

(and more importantly) the dissociative fear of the loss of individual self. For the westerner the dead are dead for a reason and one should not and cannot access them. If there was wisdom for them to impart it must be communicated solely through the written word or the memory. Somé notes that the dysfunction of the western world relates directly to its disconnection from ancestral knowledge:

> "It is my belief that the present state of restlessness that traps the modern individual has its roots in a dysfunctional relationship with the ancestors. In many non-western cultures, the ancestors have an intimate and vital connection with the world of the living. They are always available to guide, to teach, and to nurture […] When a person from my culture looks at the descendants of the Westerners who invaded their culture, they see a people who are ashamed of their ancestors because they were killers and marauders masquerading as artisans of progress" (Somé, 1994 p. 9).

Anzaldúa recounts an experience with the spirit world in which she learned of its ever-present effect on the construction of her own thoughts, emotions and creativity which she cites as a primary source of her own spiritual sustenance. The reality of her encounters and occasional merger with these beings into her own identity is what constitutes part of the spirit and could be considered an archetypal rendering of her own cultural or spiritual roots, a phantasmic reminder to stay connected

"The Presence
Yes, I've seen spirits
out of the corner of my eye.
But when I've whriled around
Fast, they've dived just behind the
Behind the edge of my vision.
But I feel them in th bedroom,

I remember one in particular,

A he-spirit. I called him my writing daemon

Because whenever I wrote

He'd always stand just behind

My left shoulder. He'd tell me what to write

What to write. No, not aloud.

In my head. I didn't have to

Think the words, the words just

Flowed out of my fingertips

Into my pen, spilling on the paper.

Sometimes this spirit would follow me

To the homes of friends

To the university, but after a couple

of blocks he would get further and furhter

behind as if afraid he'd forget the way back

to my apartment. He'd always be there

when I returned.

I never told a soul,

But one day a friend I was out with

Said, "You know that ghost

Or whatever? Well, it's following

Us again." My mouth fell.

He described the spirit

Exactly as I'd seen it, saying.

"It's the spirit of your dead

father." But it wasn't. It was

a spirit helper or a guardian spirit.

Or some sort of primordial image,

An archetype like the animus or something.

Behind my thoughts was a thinking

Without words, a thinking in pictures

Flashing so fast that when I tried to

Catch them they'd disappear behind me,

Slide out the edge of my mind's eye

Or blend into camoflauge of curtains,

Plants, furniture. I could almost track

It by its smell. Then the thinking covered

Its spoor like fine sand obliterated

Even my memory of it. If I had told anyone

I had followed the workings of consciousness

And that it was a spirit looking over my shoulder

My left shoulder, they would have held

Finger to temple and made circles.

Yes, there at the edge where the

Blankness resides, where the

Physical eyes don't follow, is

Is the spirit. Don't whirl around.

Stay very still and you'll see them" (*The Presence* in Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 120).

Between Dagara and Western Identity

Somé's "exile" into the western world provided him with a unique opportunity for integral identity development. Many other indigenous or ethnic minorities who are

forced to learn both the traditions of their native cultures and then, assimilate and accept the cultural expectations of the west share this experience. The dispersion of indigenous people into the west is not easy, and many abandon some of their cultural traditions, instead falling into the economic and success-laden seductiveness of assimilation. The price for Somé was the disconnection from the very traditions that could provide him with a sense of spiritual and emotional connection. He writes about the exile of indigenous wisdom in relation to his time in the French Catholic school:

> "My life had been taken away from me because during the years I was there, this institution assumed that its goal was my goal. The result was, of course, the slow death of my identity and the understanding that I was in exile from everything I had held dear" (Somé, 1994 p. 98).

Nonetheless, the ability to walk between both worlds gained through cultural displacement, if survived, allows the subaltern or subordinated person the opportunity to uncover deeper parts of their identity as they shift between the roles of their cultural heritage and the roles insisted upon by the colonizer. Thus the maturation process of the western educated Other is manifold, often encompassing the biological and mental development many human beings must undergo, in conjunction with the cultural maturation of their native culture *and* the western expectations of maturation typically defined by the ways in which one can best serve the perpetuation of the western ideals of material success and intellectual prowess. For the Other who is educated in the west there is the risk of extreme identity assimilation into the "white world", where one's cultural identity becomes harder to grasp as one swallows western philosophical precepts. The tendency for overt or subtle whitewashing can often make returning to one's indigenous or cultural roots difficult to navigate. For Somé the tightrope of

walking between two worlds and the hefty price he paid with his identity was most explicitly seen in the struggle within him to recover lost cultural traditions upon his return home from the French school. His father communicates the gravity of his condition:

> "You are not white, and because you were born here, you must be made to fit into this place. You must be able to come home completely before your white nature changes your village by forcing it to come to you. When a person has been changed the way that you have, one of two things always happens: either you die into the old part of yourself—and that is painful—or you make everything else die into you. The first one is human. The second one is not. In the first case, wisdom is at work. In the second case, fear is at work. The elders want to give you the chance to your village before you make it to adjust to you" (Somé, 1994 p.177).

In Anzaldúa's case adapting her identity and its inherent liminality as a Chicana queer, spiritually and creatively gifted academic was difficult to integrate with the European aspects of herself, not due to pressure from her indigenous culture but due to the difficulty in navigating her own identitive tension in a culture where there is no acceptable resting place for those caught between two worlds:

> "When I began to suspect that I might be una de las otras, "one of the others." Una mita' y mita', "half and half", I went to one of those places I always go to for solace, for guidance, and to better understand myself and others—books. That part of myself which is of European heritage—primarily Spanish and Basque—finds resonance in the term "lesbian" and in the vision of Sappho's thiasos on the isalnd of Lesbos. That part of myself whih is of indigenous American heritage takes delight in "patlache," Náhuatl for an Amazon-like, woman-loving woman. Yet I hunger for a spiritualty that will

embrace my mestiza ("mixed") as well as my queer self" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 p. 230).

Additionally Anzaldúa notes that her identity is in constant flux and negotation and that there are multiple selves, many of which are hopelessley caught between two worlds, functioning within her body at any given time:

> "My identity is always in flux; it changes as I step into and cross over many worlds each day- university, home community, job, lesbian, activist, and academic communities. It is not enough for me to say I am a Chicana. It is not enough for me to say I am an intellectual. It is not enough for me to say I am a writer. It is not enough for me to say I am from working-class origins. All of these and none of these are my primary identity. I can't say, this is the true me, or that is the true me. They are all the true me's" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pg. 209-2010).

The Nature of Western Ego Identification

In the western world the identification with the ego is immensely difficult to deprogram because the culture is created to support the individuated self and its drives for personal gain, Anzaldúa discusses this identification and its connection to complacency in development and fear of expansion beyond the individuated borders:

> "**LS**: You have an image?
>
> **GEA**: Yes, the ego image that wants to be top dog. It doesn't want to have masters; it doesn't want to share with anyone. So there's the conscious I's resistance: It doesn't want anything to do with the soul or the Self because it would see itself as a little clod in a big field, and it wants to be the big field. The other resistance is fear. To a certain extent you're happy with Linda and I'm happy with Gloria" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.86).

Deeper aspects of spirit are denied in favor of bolstering the "top dog" status the individuated ego needs in order to survive. It's important to note that the ego's "top dog" status can be easily perpetuated through negative identifications (i.e., the most downtrodden, the most marginalized, the most disenfranchised, etc.) just as much as it can be identified with the positive, success focused accolades.

Additionally, Anzaldúa notes that the tendency to shy away from the unconscious Id impulse drives are an effort to keep the similarities of human and animal instincts at bay, much like Freud's assertions, however for Anzaldúa like Focualt the cultural messages about acceptability and appropriateness dictate what impulses and egoic drives rise to the surface:

> "...But there are parts of Linda you probably keep down because you think it wouldn't be admissable for those parts—especially the sexual parts, the parts religion and society don't permit—to rise up. We're afraid of parts that are sub-human, that are like animals. We only know the consciousenss part of ourselves because we don't want to think that there's this alien being in the middle of our psyche. For my whole life I've felt like there's this alien being inside myself" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.86).

The metaphor of the alien is something which Anzaldúa finds apt for understanding the redemptive qualities of the ego but that religion (including eastern-based philosphies) have championed killing the ego in favor of the purity of disembodied spirit, however she believes this is more unnecessary fragmentation:

> "To me spirituality, sexuality an the body have been about taking back that alien other. according to society and according to eastern philosophy and religon, I must supress or kill a certain part of myself—the ego or sexuality. but I don't believe you have to slay the ego. I believe you have to leave it and incorporate all the pieces you've cut off, not

give the ego such a limelight but give some of the other parts the limeight" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.88).

The Nature of Dagara Ego Identification

While the Dagara do not necessarily dissociate the self into "ego" and "non-ego" there is a clear delineation between the physical confines of the body, which is conceptualized as important but not positioned as more important than the soul or spirit. Somé's conception of ego was not born until his extended interaction with western knowledge. The Dagara conception of ego is constructed upon the scaffolding ancestral knowledge, the knowledge of nature and survival, gender identity, and communal roleplaying. The Dagara ego is bolstered through the tribal traditions and practices that keep their history and rituals alive. The largest hurdle for the Dagara during initiation is the loosening of one's ties with the apparent solidity of the physical borders through surrender to the tenuousness of the physical shell. Additionally one must be willing to cast aside their fixated emotional identifications in order to fully dis-identify from their ego.

Somé experiences the dissolution of the limited "I" as he is plunged into the "light hole" (a dangerous gelatinous puddle of magical liquid created by the tribal elders) during his initiation in order to facilitate the dismantling of his duality identification (or the split between his body and his spirit). I quote here at length to illustrate the struggle he experienced in enabling this shift:

> "Perhaps my inability to see myself was directly connected to my perception of the environment; but why, if I could see everything around me, could I not see myself? My inability to see my body, however, did not challenge the conviction that I had that my body was there. Maybe, I ruminated, my body was truly absent but compensated for by

> an overwhelming presence of consciousness. Perhaps I had fallen into a visibility too high to contain the crudity of my body. At the same time I realized I did not feel terrified, nor did I feel strained, that is it did not take much energy to hold on to this bundle of light. I concluded I must be weightless […] Though the elder had assured me I would come here in my body, I had lost the sense of my own physicality as I experienced it on the Earth plane. I was now only visible to my consciousness" (Somé, 1994 p. 243).

The falseness of the duality of ego/body and consciousness/spirit was eliminated through his journey through the light hole. For the Dagara in order to become free of the confines of the physical shell one must first not give it primacy over other states, thus the ritual of the light hole serves to sever one's ties with this illusion and plunge the consciousness into other levels of reality (non-contingent on the physicality of the body). The fear of this bodily disidentification in the west could potentially evoke a crisis of reality which could irrevocably disturb the sanity of the westerner. However in the Dagara tradition the ritual can transform the orientation to self and one's environment and those in the environment (both seen and unseen) and allow for a deeply freeing permeation of identity boundaries. He goes on to explain the experience of connecting with other entities in the environment:

> "The spaces in between myself and the light source were blurred, imprecise like a city at night., but I felt presences in these spaces, too, to a lesser degree. I was aware of motion, as if a consciousness or intellgeince were moving about undistrbed by my presence. I thought I glimpsed a huge face with countless eyes that moved past me and continued upward, but I dismissed thoughts of this apparition for fear of awakening panic in myself" (Somé, 1994 p. 243).

Identity Dissolution, Anxiety and the Underworld

To allow one's space to be filled with the presences of an(Other) is the foundation of transveral identity. One must (at least at times) allow the borders of oneself to be penetrated by the other, whether that is the emotional expression of a fellow human being, a huge face with countless eyes, the organisms living in the dirt or the wisdom of a tree. Anzaldúa writes of her experiences with this merged state of identity and the bliss which can come from this kind of melding:

> "When I was young I was one with the trees, the land, and my mother there weren't any borders. Then I became separate and made other people and parts of myself the other. Then I went one step beyond into the supernatural world—the subtle world, the "other" world—and dealt with that kind of otherness. Plus the uncanny—the demon, the ghosts, the evil and the appiration—become even more "other". There are different gradiations of otherness. When I got so far from my feelings, my body, my soul I was—like other other other. But then something kept snapping. I had to gather; I had to look at all these walls, divisions, gradiations of being other other other, and determine where they all belonged. It was an energy of refocusing and bringing it it all back together" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.88).

When one willingly allows oneself to fragment and disperse with the environment "gathering" oneself becomes a matter of piecing together the Othered parts of the self in a constant negotiation of identity creation. There is a continuous motion of dispersing and reorganizing, much like invisible atoms which are constantly pulsating, reforming and dispersing to create the apparent solid matter we perceive in the ordinary world. In Anzaldúa's case she explores the underworld's energies (what she refers to as "the uncanny") with the same openness she explores the land and the deeper parts of herself. Again the bridge for both Somé and Anzaldúa are spiritual technologies meant to incite

deeper union and empathy with oneself and one's environment and community. However, this negotiation is often fraught with inner and outer conflict which is necessary in order to evoke lasting identitive change:

> "**LS**: Do you ever feel like all these different "you's" conflict with each other, in the sexual or the spiritual experience?
>
> **GEA**: Yes. It has to do with concentration. Instead of being with the event itself, I think about what I'm feeling, what the other person is feeling, where my head should be, or what I should do with my mouth. In the spiritual experience I wonder "When am I going to be enlightened? When is this energy going to flow into me? Or I think about what I have to do during the day, instead of keeping my attention on the soul's presence. It's the same kind of distraction. The trick is to get to the place where I don't think about things, where I just act" (from *Spirituality, Sexuality and the Body* in Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.85).

As a cultural practice the Dagara allow for their borders to be eliminated in order to fully learn what the other has to offer. This is why the filth that covers the elder is not immediately washed off or eliminated; in order to gain the wisdom of the earth one must allow the earth to seap into one's body. The borders must be fused. This allows for knowledge to be more fully transferred. In the light hole, although the knowledge Somé gained from the "presences" in the "spaces" was not readily articulatable, it was experienced on a spiritual and emotional level. However, due to his western conditioning this experience were highly exciting and not easily integrated since the duality of body and consciousness had been shattered:

> "From the beginning since I jumped into this place, I had been experiencing a sense of hysteria that made me constantly want to scream. It was not the kind of hysteria generated by fear, but the kind that comes from a vertiginous fall. Even though I had

> stopped my descent by grabbing this [light] bundle, I was still in a state of tremendous excitement. At times I experienced this excitement as the sensation of being jolted. The next moment I had the impresion that countless ants were crawling upward over m body, producing an imperative need to scratch that could never be satisfied because I could find no body to scratch (Somé, 1994 p. 245).

Somé does warn however that not all return from their journey in the light hole, and are unable to piece themselves back together after their disidentification from identity borders. He had already witnessed the unsucessful light hole journey of one unfortunate boy who withered in a pool of burning gelatinous green gel whom the elders did not acknowledge nor lament. He had failed to return from the journey into the light hole (the underworld/unconscious). The plunge into the light hole is the descent into the unconscious primal underworld. It represents on a symbolic level the human beings' fear of death itself, and if improperly tranversed the human organism would cease to exist:

> "I wanted to blot out of my mind the dreadful thought that something was going to go wrong and thatt I was going to become one of those green fiendish human gelatins, a leftover of a psychic catastrophe. It was important for me to remain focused, to recite the prayer of the ancestors, and to approach the gatewya to the otherworld as quietly as someone who was coming home [...] For the first time in my life I feared death. Things that I had once thought important were now becoming insignificant in the face of the real issue: death. A merciless avenger was demloshing things inside of me as if they had become irrelevant" (Somé, 1994 p. 240).

However, in the Dagara tradition the wisdom of the elders is utilized to help traverse the darkness of the underworld and unconscious. Without the prayer of the elders one may find themselves unable to utilize their intuition to grab hold of one of the dozens of

bundles of "light cords" which run throughout the underworld which initiates were told to find in order to find their way back. These cordings are thus not only cords linking the underworld and the ordinary world, but also a links from the individual consciousness to the collective consciousness of the tribal ancestors. It is the link of the singular identitive thread to the many. Grabbing hold of one of these light wires allowed Somé to successfully navigate the fall into the underworld without descending infintely:

> "I descended another dozen kilometers. Where was I going? What strange gravity was pulling me downward? But I had no time to ask such questions, let alone answer them. What I wanted, what I had to do most urgently now, was to open my eyes and grab at a wire of light [...] I had the feeling that I was caught in the middle of a vast intelligence, something thtaa knew i was there and wanted to do something to me. I was still holding on to the bundle of light, as well as to my own sense of being fully conscious and physically present in this strange world " (Somé, 1994 p. 244).

Somé's ability to successfully quiet the thinking, questioning mind and utilize the wisdom of the ancestors and his intuitive faculties allowed for his successful return to the ordinary world and an expanded experience of self independent from the physical, temporally located orientation of the ordinary three dimensional world.

Comparisons and references to darkness are common in the Dagara because in order to become fully integrated one must embrace both the light and dark aspects of selfhood. Carl Jung warned of the dangers of failing to integrate the shadow self, a process he stated was rarely embarked upon in the western world (Jung, 2006). By engaging in this kind of shadow work (which is done in the underworld in the Dagara tradition) one cannot hide from the inevitability of one's disowned darker impulses. Tribal elders illuminate that all human beings come from darkness, so in order to

discover the self darkness must be revisited and what is found there must be embraced and integrated or one risks death (as was the case with the initiate who did not return from the light hole). Darkness becomes light itself. In the west this relationship is paradoxical, however for the Dagara by plunging into the darkness the initiate discovers light, which thereby contains deeper and richer levels of darkness:

> "I see that you are all ready to return to the realm of shadow and mist where you had your beginning. He who does not know where he comes from cannot know why he came here and what he came to this place to do. There is no reason to live if you forget what you're here for" (Somé, 1994 p. 253).

The ritual of the light hole was described earlier in this section to underscore the relationship of embracing anxiety and Dagara identity development. The descent into the underworld is the most dangerous portion of initiation because it is the most important in the development of a mature identity. The process is described in a way that evokes birth. As the initiate is thrown into the cavernous, seemingly bottomless hole of the underworld he begins the process of being reborn and discovering himself underneath his earthly human existence. During this experience the physical body is seemingly eliminated and the awareness of self becomes somewhat all encompassing and interconnected with its surroundings in way that defies the limits of what western philosophy would call individuality:

> "I decided I would test myself to see whether I still had a body or not. I brought my left hand toward my chest. I searched in vain. There was no chest; yet I knew it was there, just the same way that I knew that my hand was there. Nothing can't search for something. Though the elder had assured me I would come here in my body, I had lost the sense of my own physicality as I experienced it on the Earth plane, I was now

> visible only to my consciousness. Where then was my physical body? I had little time to explore this subject as I needed to fix my full attention on the immediate environment. The most powerful presence was the light, which everywhere breathed life. The spaces in between myself and the light source were blurred, imprecise like a city at night, but I felt presences in these spaces too, to a lesser degree. I was aware of motion, as if a consciousness or an intelligence were moving about undisturbed by my presence" (Somé, 1994 p.243).

Somé becomes aware in his descent into the underworld of being pervaded and intertwined with presences in the spaces, which were not what he had taken to be him but were indeed part of him. It was only through the dissolution of the individualized self that he could sense the presence of others within him. Furthermore he is not entirely sure anymore whether the sensations, perceptions and experiences he is recording are a product of his own creation or a product of his symbiosis into the environment itself. Even breathing, although he experienced the incident as bodiless, seems to be symbiotically tied to the spaces around him further subverting the experience of the individuated self:

> "I tried to hold my breath in order to listen for more meaningful sounds and discovered that there was no breath to be held—yet I breathed just as surly as I knew I still had a body. I could hear the sounds of breathing all around me, the sound of my own breath and the breath of something else, and I became convinced that somebody was breathing for both me and himself" (Somé, 1994 p.246).

His experience in the underworld accentuates the philosophy of the circle. He further experienced the interconnectivity of his identity first with the physical world through the experience of the green lady in the yila tree and then through the experience of his

shadow through his descent in the underworld. In the underworld the permeability was even more extreme as his physical boundaries were blurred so much as to make his own breathing, speech and perceptions indistinguishable from the environment he found himself in. Furthermore the underworld of the Dagara is not a nightmarish, terrifying landscape filled with ghouls and monsters as is common in western myth, but a changing landscape of sensations, emotions, images and beings which only highlight the inner workings of the experiencer.

For Anzaldúa the underworld must be mined for the collective unconscious's projections of unacceptable psychological, cultural, sexual or societal shadows and reclaimed by the spiritual activist if any kind of integration is possible. The marginalized often have the most to gain by recapturing these shadowed aspects as the mythological imagery and energies found in the underworld are often representative of the western world's most unacceptable aspects: death, desire, violence, destruction and decay:

> "I'm very close to death, so I feel close to Kali, Tlazoltéotl, and Coatlicue. Also most of them have to do with sexuality, witchcraft, and the repressed. All my life I felt those bad parts of myself punished and so ostracized that I wanted to bring them to the light. Not only personally but collectively, like all women's religion had been taken and pushed into the underworld. I see a resurgence of all of it. My whole struggle has very much been represented by Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction and death but also of life, the blackness, the negativity, the alien" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.93).

Dagara Identity and Initiation

The necessity to eliminate fear bred in the western tradition is similar to what Somé must do throughout his initiation rites. Dagara initiation rituals are designed to force all

people in the tribe to face fear and self-doubt, and to explore one's mind and spirit through trials designed to be physically and emotionally taxing. The trials of initiation are meant to facilitate the multi-leveled, holistic and integrated Dagara identity. In the tribal context boys accept (with anxious anticipation) the trials of initiation, as an opportunity to explore multiple emotional, physical, and spiritual levels of both the world around them and themselves. In the western context initiation trials such as voting or learning to drive a car are often mere physical feats; demonstrations of mind over matter or the exertion of one's will over the physical world but do little to address the psycho-spiritual development of individuals, even if they do relate to the intellectual and sometimes social maturation of the initiate (as is the case with voting).

Initiation as a practice in the western world has been largely abandoned. Mythologist Joseph Campbell spoke extensively of the dangers of a society that eliminates initiation rituals. According to Campbell, as it has created an unformed and incomplete western psyche which trickles into the community at large creating immature and myopic social structures and relationships which are devoid of ancestral myth and understanding:

> "MOYERS: We have none of those rites today, do we?
>
> CAMPBELL: I'm afraid we don't. So the youngsters invent them themselves, and you have these raiding gangs, and so forth—that is self-rendered initiation.
>
> MOYERS: So myth relates directly to ceremony and tribal ritual, and the absence of myth can mean the end of ritual.
>
> CAMPBELL: A ritual is the enactment of a myth. By participating in a ritual, you are participating in a myth" (Campbell & Moyers, 1988 p.103).

The effects of the un-initiated are often seen in the tendency for adolescents and young adults to drift into crime, drugs or other communally destructive activities as a means to express their sense of frustration as well as to exercise their desire for a trial to test the limits of their autonomy. In non-western societies ritual initiation serves to prepare the individual for full integration into the community at large, and to provide the initiate the opportunity to delve into themselves and understand their holistic connection to the community, the land, the ancestors, history and myth and the spirit world. In fact, a lack of initiation is considered dangerous and even fatal to the individual for the Dagara:

> "When a child grows into an adolescent, he or she must be initiated into adulthood. A person who doesn't get initiated will remain an adolescent for the rest of their life, and this is a frightening, dangerous, and unnatural situation" (Somé, 1994 p. 23).

Among the Dagara identity unfolds both at the level of the individual's psyche and through interaction with nature and the community. Because the initiate's identity is a combination of self, nature, and community, he/she would never do anything to harm the community or the environment, and understands that while their initiation was a deeply personal and singular experience, it is also a process of continuous communication with community and integration of collective values. Dagara notions of individual gain or wealth come not from one's ability to manipulate the environment or those in their environment, but from one's *relationship* with the environment and those in the environment:

> "Wealth among the Dagara is determined not by how many things you have, but by how many people you have around you. A person's happiness is directly linked to the amount of attention and love coming to him or her from other people" (Somé, 1994 p.24).

The interrelatedness of the community provides the individual with a sense of foundation, and thus the individual is not only an autonomous being but also an integral member of the community at large. The value of this is seen in the funeral ritual where the expression of emotional turmoil in the bereaved which serves an important energetic and emotional function for the entire tribe, which thereby encourages all members of the community to express their own grief about whatever has been stored in the emotional body:

> "The general atmosphere was calamitous. Together, the voices of the mourners seemed to cast a malediction upon the dark cloud that had fallen over the Birifor family. Though funerals are a group activity, there is also space within them for individual initiative: the container created by ritual is big enough to satisfy everyone's needs. Occasionally the men and women touched by sorrow would move out of the singing crowd, their faces wet with tears, their arms outstretched as if to beg one last tie for the return of the departed. Promptly but gently, these individuals were escorted back into the thick of the crowd by friends and relatives. […] When activated, emotion has a ceiling it must reach. At its apex, grief turns the body into a vessel of chaos. But it is just such a climactic chaos that can cleanse both the person and his or her spirit" (Somé, 1994 p. 58).

The emotional expression of those who have lost someone facilitates understanding of one's own emotions through un-mitigated communal grieving. Therefore the emotional development of one spurns the emotional development of the many through cooperation, and the realization that when one looses one member of the tribe, the whole tribe losses something valuable.

Additionally those who do not harness personal emotional energy within the confines of the betterment of the community at large (such as practicing or developing a magical art without the wisdom or guidance of the elders) risk being energetically attacked by nature which will seek to balance the over-focus on the individual's emotional needs with the needs of the community and nature as a whole:

> "Those who have "gone private" who have failed to obey the laws of nature in some way by withdrawing from proper social interaction or by practicing an esoteric art outside the moderating influence of a secret society and have not done penance, are very vulnerable because their personal energies no longer flow in harmony with the general community energy. To go private is to break the laws of nature by which the community sustains itself. When a member of a secret society must practice his art publicly, those who have gone private must vacate the area or the force field of the art will be deadly to them […] This sudden release of energy is like a purge—it will harm only those who are no longer in alignment with the community. So funerals are a time when hidden wrongdoings come to light. Justice is not effected by humans but by nature […] No one can practice tribal magical arts without a stable and supportive community. A stable community reflects the laws of nature and dances with them" (Somé, 1994 p. 61).

Because identity among the Dagara is closely related to the community, ensuring that children receive proper guidance in the formation of their individual purpose and function in the community is of the utmost importance. Somé was tasked at birth with walking the liminal spaces between multiple worlds; most notably between the west and the Dagara as well as the spaces between the ordinary world and the spiritual world as a shaman in order for him to fulfill his destiny as a shaman. His

grandfather prophesized to him the dangers of the liminal identity but the importance of navigating the gray space between the two worlds:

> "Later, when you must go away once more from the warmth of your family compound, you will be forced to make up a new world for yourself. It will be a world where Patrice will be very present, and Malidoma will be very absent. Do not be confused when this happens. The Dagara rite of initiation must be completed before you come to full understanding of who you are. In your labyrinthine journey in the white world, the world of iron, learn to catch the thought behind the machine or it will swallow you" (Somé, 1994 p. 40-41).

Shifting between his tribal identity (Malidoma) and his western identity (Patrice) Somé learns that navigating the middle ground between the two is so difficult. Somé also states that both his Dagara tribal identity and the western identity are egoic roles rife with political, social, and cultural complications, which inhibit the authentic expression of spirit. However, Somé suggests that the western obsession with the ego itself prevents true spiritual communication.

Circular Identity

As a remedy to egoic imbalance Somé advocates finding a flexible "center" in navigating the inevitable liminality of the interpersonal, cultural and social complications of creating identities between one's native culture and western modernity. But unlike the western conception of center, which is a static and codified conception of self, the center of his imagining is non-central, nonlocal and atemporal. The center is a constantly shifting state that embraces the liminal spaces. Somé's conception of center is intrinsically related to the concept of individual identity and linked into one's maturation into adulthood. However, navigating this space requires the innocence and

flexibility of a child. So again unlike western culture the association of childhood with the undeveloped is subverted, and instead maturation becomes a circular movement back to the wisdom of innocence rather than a linear progression toward a distant future goal. Identity from the circular conceit moves from the undefined, to definition, back to an integrated melding, and the cycle begins again in the process of self-making:

> "What he said was this: The place were he was standing was the center. Each one of us possessed a center that he had grown away from after birth. To be born was to lose contact with our center, and to grow from childhood to adulthood was to walk away from it. The center is both within and without. It is everywhere. But we must realize it exists, find it, and be with it, for without the center we cannot tell who we are, where we come from, or where we are going" (Somé, 1994 p.198).

The circular metaphor of "the center" is important as it contradicts the linearity of the western conception of identity and development. I quote here at length as the Dagara wisdom on the holistic value of the center, or circle is worth repeating as it relates to the conceptualization of identity:

> "We are both the circle and its center. Without a circle there is no center and vice versa […] When there is a center there are four live parts to the circle: the rising part in the east and its right side, the south. All human beings are circles. Our setting part represents the coolness of water. It provides peace of the body and the soul, and bridges the gap between how we look on the outside and how we are on the inside. It brings us to our family, the village, the community. It makes us many. The god of the setting side is the god of the water, the water we drink, the water that quenches our first.

The elder speaks of the transcendent aspects of consciousness, that which connects human beings with peace and each other via communal participation. However as with all holistic systems it does not deny the passionate, and lived-experience in the body.

The circle as a metaphor for identity also connects us to the ecstasy of sexual release, the power of hatred and love and is correlated with the transformative and dangerous characteristics of fire:

> "Its opponent is the rising part, the fire, the god that makes us do, feel, see love, and hate. The fire has power, a great power of motion both within us and without. Outside of us it drives us toward one another, toward the execution of our respective duties, toward the planning of our lives. We act and react because this rising power is in us and with us. Inside of us, the fire pulls the spiritual forces beyond toward us. The fire within us is what causes our real family—those we are always drawn to when we see them—to identify us" (Somé, 1994 p.199).

Finding the center thus requires the initiated to acknowledge, integrate and connect with light and dark, peace and chaos, future and past, living and dead, love and hate, and everything in between. Since the circle is continuous there is no linear end, but rather a constant renegotiating and melding of one state into another. The identity is thus constantly in flux revisiting its origins and endings in an effort not to necessarily "get somewhere" but rather fully experience the self, not merely as an individual but as a holistic piece of the community at large. The person-as-circle thus cannot help but be in constant communication with everything in its radius. However, it's important to reiterate that the Dagara conception of the center is not the undeveloped, undifferentiated notion of the primordial unconsciousness that colonial anthropologists assumed about indigenous societies. It allows for and acknowledges the individuated "self" but also notes that the confines of that self is contingent upon connection with the community at large, yet cannot be found solely through communal interaction but as an integral fusing of individuation and collective participation:

> "No one's center is like someone else's. Find your own center. Not in the center of your neighbor, not the center of your father or mother or family or ancestor but that center which is yours and yours alone" (Somé, 1994 p. 199).

This sort of cosmological and holistic explanation of the self is not foreign to non-western societies that have long heralded the integration of identity with one's surroundings, historical traditions, ancestry and mythology. In this state Somé finally discovers the holistic integration of his identity during which succeeds in shifting him out of the dialectical western egocentric model where being and meaning are regarded separately:

> "Without being able to put it into words I understood what was happening, for at this stage of consciousness there is no difference between meaning and being" (Somé, 1994 p.201).

Integrating Dagara Identity

Somé's western philosophical identification reinforced dual perceptions of selfhood, which separate meaning/being, ego/spirit, self/other and are not conducive to understanding identity through a transversal perspective. For the Othered person who seeks holistic identity, reconciling the unity of the indigenous identitive development against the linearity of western psychological development can indicate a particularly difficult conundrum of consciousness. Somé experienced the warring nature of the western and non-western identity profoundly during his experience with the yila tree.

> "I vacillated between two ways of thinking about myself. In the first I saw myself as a living example of the white man's medicine successfully competing against the medicine of the indigenous world—a force to be reckoned with. In the second I was

> convinced that everyone saw me as incompetent and foolish. The first idea inflated me with pride […] the second thought took this pride away" (Somé, 1994 p.210).

Simultaneously Somé's identification with the western rational identity and his confrontation with the "medicine of the indigenous" world served two functions. First, a sense of accomplishment at having outgrown or outsmarted the apparent superstitiousness of the exercise of seeing into the tree (an exercise incidentally that was meant to do nothing more than connect him more intimately with himself and his surroundings); secondarily, it brought to light the realization of his own cultural and spiritual abandonment which developed subtly through the indoctrination of colonial superiority. Only through the release of pride and surrender to his relative ignorance in the face of his advanced western education Somé is able to uncover the parts of himself buried under the weight of the colonized ego. The comforting embrace of the green lady in the yila tree is so intensely blissful that he is forced to recognize what he understands as a fundamental condition of being embodied, and the limited ability for the body to hold concentrated emotional energy:

> "Human beings are often unable to receive because we do not know what to ask for. We are sometimes unable to get what we need because we do not know what we want. If this was happiness that I felt, then no human could sustain this amount of well-being for even a day. You would have to be dead or changed into something capable of handling these unearthly feelings in order to live with them. The part in us that yearns for these kinds of feelings and experiences is not human. It does not know that it lives in a body that can withstand only a certain amount of this kind of experience at a time. If humans were to feel this way all the time they would probably not be able to do anything other

than shed tears of happiness for the rest of their lives—which, in that case, would be very short" (Somé, 1994 p. 222).

The Dagara conceptualize the development of identity as a process that unfolds through deep inquiry into the self and through the dissolution of one's ego-boundaries into one's surroundings. As opposed to the western model of identity development, which is linear, outward and progressive, the Dagara evolution of identity is more a process of involution; in which one continually contracts inwards while simultaneously allowing their borders to be eradicated to allow what is outside to permeate ever-decreasing borders. Like the circle, this process is continual and completion is not the end goal. Initiation serves as a ritual to signify the beginning of this involution, which in some cases can be difficult and dangerous due to the unknown possibilities that await the initiate. The elders comment:

> "There are details about your identity that you alone will have to discover, and that's what you have come to initiation to go and find out. To come to this planet you first had to plunge into the depths of a chasm. In order to return to where you came from, you will do the same thing" (Somé, 1994. 253).

After returning from the underworld Somé's consciousness was expanded further in such a way that the connectivity of life on the physical plane was heightened:

> "My eyesight too had changed, becoming super-receptive to everything around me. Details that I would have overlooked before were suddenly very prominent. A termite that I was about to crush under my bare foot suddenly grew enormous, as if to make me notice it. As soon as I changed the direction of my foot, it became small again. I saw a spider's web, and the spider grew huge just in time for me to avoid running into it. It too returned to normal size as soon as I passed by it. None of this surprised me…I

> understood what was happening deep from within myself, using a logic that did not come from my brain" (Somé, 1994 p.246).

The arc of Somé's journey illustrates the holistic nature of Dagara psychological development. From his experience in the shadowed underworld to the deepening understanding of the role of his ancestors Somé gained valuable perspective about the earthly world that afforded him greater sensitivity, understanding and an expanded sense of responsibility in relationship to the beings around him. According Dagara philosophy his newly awakened perceptions as a result of his initiation, afforded him an integrated sense of self not divorced from the willingness and ability to eliminate identitive borders but rather a necessary state of existence if one is to be a member of a holistically integrated community. This is humankind's true nature, rather than the ego-driven singularly focused construction of the western world, which has specialized in the creation of the disconnected self.

> "To be deprived of one's nature is a terrible loss" (Somé, 1994 p.278).

To merge one's identity with others is to reconnect with that which is lost through the individuated ego. In western modernity development is charted by the successful development of this individuation and essentially severs the connection with one's self and environment. Anzaldúa writes of the difficulty in maintaining identitive connection through conscious merger in the face of her western psychological barriers due to the tendency to personalize what one is experiencing from the environment. Those whose empathic abilities are highly developed often experience a great deal of emotional and psychological pain because they are not taught how to remain connected oneself, others and the environment without internalizing and holding onto what is filtered into one's borders:

> **“**[...] It comes and goes: At times I feel a real unification with people, real identification with someone or something—like the grass. It’s so painful that I have to cut the connection. But I can’t cut the connection, so instead of putting a shield between myself and you and your pain I put a wall inside, between myself and my feelings. For a long long time I had a really hard time getting in touch with what I was feeling—especially around pain because I had very severe menstrual periods . Instead of walling people out, I’d censor my feelings within my body. So the origin of my belief that there’s something greater than myself came from both that empathy and identification I had with things and from the isolation when I didn’t have it. When I had too much identification I couldn’t process the feelings; it was too painful. I’d be sitting and I’d be feeling the subway, the birds, you, wat you were feeling, the people below. I was like a tape recorder picking up everything. You and I are listening to each other and you’re focusing on what I’m saying and the other sounds fade, but with me it was different everything came at the same volume” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.78).

However, like Somé Anzaldúa was tasked with turning the pain of her identity search into something valuable for others, which is the role of the shaman in any given culture:

> “She wanted to know to become a knower, while she turned away from society and towards herself. Gradually, too, she turned back to her community. As soon as she alleviated or came to understand her suffering she tried to translate her insight into shareable form so that others could use it. Her life became a series of alternating withdrawals and returns, of sudden breakthroughs. She experienced numerous visions and changes in the configurations of her identity” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 237).

Identity and Communication

Dagara Identity and Western Communication

The Dagara conception of identity has key features that will be helpful in conceptualizing communication outside of the western binary system. One of the major features of Dagara identity is the notion of permeable borders. Identity for the Dagara is not a static concept bound within the confines of the physical body, it is permeable, malleable, and ever changing to reflect the shifting needs of the environment, the individual and the community at large. Dagara identity allows for one to shift beyond its physical borders into the space of the Other in a way that allows for fusion of thought, emotion, knowledge, sensation and consciousness in order to reach deeper levels of understanding. The body serves as an indicator for one's personal boundaries but is not restrictive and does not limit one's consciousness from experiencing the inner experience of the other. The body can be eliminated or fully inhabited depending on the needs of the communication at hand. For example, to communicate with a tree, one must be willing to allow one's sense of identification as human to dissolve into the tree in order to allow the consciousness to pervade the physical borders of the tree itself. Identity is also developed through a series of deepening exercises in which the individual understands the self as both an individuated "I" (ego) and in symbiotic relation with the natural environment. As such identity develops through a constant communication with the self and the other through the means of one's spirit, emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations. However, it is necessary that no sensory, intuitive or emotional information be disregarded or preferred as more important than the next because they all inform us on how to proceed with communication in a way that does not exclude ways of knowing the world (as was mentioned in the section on knowledge).

This is difficult because the immediate needs of the emotional or physical body often take precedence over a holistic perception.

Identity, The Unconscious and Dagara Communication

Navigating with dissolved identitive borders takes courage and a willingness to explore the shadow, because one looses the individuated self to reference. This means that the spaces between communicative acts and interactions must be acknowledged so that what is *not* said or what is *not* present is integrated into the experience of self and other. Paradoxically this requires less overt verbal or written communication (the west has spoken enough words) and more of the experience of the liminal space between those words. This means honoring the pause in between the thought and the syllable meant to articulate the thought, when twinges of emotion or sensation are most raw, before they are covered with verbosity. In this orientation communication becomes circular; a never-ending dance between one's identity and the identities of those beings or entities in one's environment. Communication outside the borders of defined identity calls for communicative "actors" to become shamanic shapeshifters.

Freud pointed to the tendency of the human being to seek stability from the shifting shadows of their unconscious perceptions. Jung notes that the unconscious is filled with the images of the collective dream that are disowned and released. However, Freud's unconscious was only filled with unacceptable "perversions" of the libidinal sort and did not leave room for the beauty of the underworld to be lived through honest, courageous identitive fluidity. The western human ego is constructed to prevent the breakthrough of unacceptable identitive liminality. The shaman walks willingly into the dark recesses of identity in order to mine the magic of the power buried in the

underworld's hidden formation and retrieve the complex jewels of the spiritual world. The shaman also shows us that behind the walls of the socially constructed conceptions of identity (including the tropes of race, gender and sexuality) there is much more that can be learned if we can suspend our selves for a moment in order to confront the liminality and ultimate illusion of difference beyond the body-cages we attempt to communicate through.

Somé suggests that until we learn to integrate all of those dark and slippery things into ourselves and transmute them we will remain frustrated with our communication. The Other, and particularly the colonized other occupy a distinctive liminal position that can inform communication outside the margins of western identity politics.

Communicating as an Alien

Communication for most in the western world must thus be undertaken as a sort of exercise in transfiguration. The dissociation and abstraction of the body, emotions and thoughts into a variety of rigid polarities makes one an alien to the self and thus the position of alien must be embraced in order to be lived in a powerfully integrated and holistic manner. The alien's communication and messages can be highly transformative for those with whom they come in contact with if those who experience the alien are not first scared by its unorthodox approach or varied appearance from the norm.

The darkness of the alien can be a source of fear for the alien themselves and others if the redemptive qualities of the alien's underworld powers are not seized. Anzaldúa links this abstraction of the Other with the archetype of the alien in American film *Alien*:

> "The movie *Alien* affected me greatly because I really identified with it. There was this serpent-like alien being, a parasite, in this man's chest. It exploded; the being rushed out (…) in the film it seemed like they were taking all the things they fear and hate about themselves and projecting them onto the monster. Just like we did with Blacks and like people do with queers—all the evils get projected" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pgs.87-88).

Because of the colonized Other's position between the supposed "darkness[4]" of the indigenous world and the apparent light of the western world their identities must find a hybridized space between both cultures. This often positions them as aliens in both cultures. This was seen in Somé's return to the tribe after his western education and in his experiences in the western world. As an "alien" the identity of the outsider becomes compounded creating an amalgamation of selves, unconscious projections, emotions, cultural inheritances, myths and realities that can only be navigated if one gracefully accepts the task of their alien mission. The compounded Other thus becomes a mutated alien strain, an apparently monstrous phantasm composed of multiple images of the west's disowned fears and projected hatred and encompassing the immense power of their indigenous philosophies, epistemologies and rituals. As Somé illustrates there is redemption in the alien's presence, for the alien is also a portal into another universe, a reminder of the uncharted potentialities between the lines of self and Other. The fear and hatred, if transmuted, become an entryway into the potential for shifting identities that thus allow for greater openness and understanding amongst beings. Additionally this state allows the impermanence which contributes to the fear of death to relax in the understanding that anything which is truly meaningful cannot be completely lost.

[4] Comparisons between the darkness and the indigenous became rampant in the early 20th century primitivist movement in anthropology.

Dagara identity is a negotiation of communication outside the borders of multiple selves and can be extended to communication across cultural, sexual, gendered and political borders as well, as was envisioned by Anzaldúa in her vision of "shamanic aesthetics" or identitive shapeshifting (as it is referred to by AnaLouise Keating). Identity in the Dagara tribe is nothing if not a series of shapeshifting endeavors:

> "En Posesión de la palabra. Despite language, class, and identity differences and conflicts there exist strong cultural links among Chicana, mexicana, Latina, Native, Asian, Black, and other women. We can safeguard and strengthen these links through communication. People in possesion of the vehicles of communication are, indeed, in partial posession of their lives (from (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 121).

CHAPTER THREE

PART II

Time and Space

Time

Time and space as concepts in the western world are in many ways the primary existential antagonists to human existence. Time floats above the head of the westerner like a suspended boulder waiting at any moment to drop and annihilate the individual self. For the physicist Aristotle time is evident in the face of change and movement in the physical world. Through the lens of the Aristotelian perspective because there is obviously change in the physical world, there is obviously time (Aristotle, 2008). More specifically Aristotle defines time as "a number of change in respect of the before and after", whereas change is defined as "the actuality of that which potentially is" (Aristotle, 2008). Space, or "place" exists because:

> "The existence of place is held to be obvious from the fact of mutual replacement. Where water now is, there in turn, when the water has gone out as from a vessel, air is present; and at another time another body occupies this same place" (Aristotle, 2008 p. 54).

From this perspective place/space exists a priori to bodies, and as such it is what contains each body, and is shape, matter, or some extension between these two poles or the poles themselves. One cannot replace a space already filled with a body because that place is filled. Therefore identitive transfer (as discussed in the previous section) is equivocally impossible because identities and bodies are inseparable.

The apparent inevitability of physical change and the presence of space/place thus became (and remains) the primary argument for the existence of space and time in

modern western physics, and despite idealist and postmodern criticisms to the contrary these assumptions maintain their foothold on western philosophy.

Time as a Historical Trope

Time in the west is utilized as a motivator for success and a justification for excess as well as a scapegoat for violence and conquest. Space is used to ensure that the individuated self and their world remain separate and defined. However, more central to the western experience than the concept of time, is the concept of history (predicated on the concept of linear time), which punctuates our most celebrated (and horrific) achievements. History is the grand narrative through which the west perpetuates its superior identity. It is through history, as Spivak argues, that the narrative of colonial superiority is preserved through rhetorical "truth tropes" that are reproduced repetitively, Stephen Morton writes of Spivak's argument:

> "The civilizing mission of European colonialism is indeed founded on the use of culture as a form of rhetoric. Drawing on the deconstructive criticism of Paul De Man, Spivak argues that 'the basis of a truth claim is no more than a trope' (Spivak 1986: 225)" (Morton, 2003 p.113).

Through the over-focus on linear time and the myth of progress the west has constructed a reality in which society is marching ever-toward a "bigger and better" future. The trope of progress is reflected in Aristotle's view of the "changing of things" as an early philosophy of evolution of form, ethics and culture (Aristotle, 2008). Most explicit doctrines on the value and goal of cultural progress sprung up during The Enlightenment through writers like Copernicus, Keppler, Newton, Hume, Turgot and Condorcet; with later expansion in the 19th century by Idealists like Hegel and finally the reductionist materially based progress vision of Karl Marx (Meek-Lange, 2011).

The comforting belief in the notion of cultural, political and economic evolution allowed the west to march forward fearlessly (often without responsibility) toward its perceived rightful superior position. Time is the rope which pulls the west toward total illumination and allows western identities to separate themselves from the antiquated, primal Other who is painfully stuck in the morass of superstition, ritual, magic and primitivism. Technology in particular has become a primary indicator of time's passage in the western world, and as technology advances so too does the belief in the improvement narrative. For some technological determinists technology is the primary factor that drives forward-moving social development (McLuhan, 1967; Friedman, 2005).

Linear time is a trope that prevents the west from facing the circularity which pervades Dagara conceptions of time, meaning that it allows for the illusion of progress to continue without full acknowledgement of a culture's history, particularly its shadowy aspects. In the west, time (although encompassing the past) is regarded without a real understanding of the oppressive implications of the past's events on the suppressed. In fact, the past is seen as an artifact to be studied rather than integrated. The Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment conceptualization of history is inevitable, linear and irreversible. This idea is supported through the philosophies of Comte, Kant, and Hegel who positioned history as the appropriate tool the progressively focused society utilizes to prevent intellectual and cultural retrogression (Meek-Lange, 2011). In the natural sciences Charles Darwin had already outlined the inevitability of the evolution of form but sociocultural progress was not as assured. Comte's positivistic conception of social evolution underlies the discipline of history. His assertion of the

evolution of mankind from the theological to the metaphysical to the positivist stage nicely summarizes the confidence in western rationalism as the pinnacle of cultural development (Bordeau, 2014). Implicit in this assumption is that through the study of the past the progressive society can continue on the trajectory of growth toward greater rational development. Nevermind that "rational" quickly became code for unscrupulous cultural narcissism by conflating the inevitable "rationality" of civilized societies with survivalism via the Social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer (Spencer, 1885). In this case "survival of the fittest" meant that any action that serves the economic or cultural gains of the rational being was deemed fair and just. Thus the atrocities of western history were positioned as inevitable markers on the road to utopia.

Arguably, it isn't until the late 20th century criticisms of Michel Foucault (1976) that the truth claims of history were even questioned philosophically and as such the annals of history remained (and still do) evidence of a civilization geared to progressive (and often morally and ethically irresponsible) development. Lessons of the past, and particularly the atrocities of the past, are not assimilated but rather archived and studied. The ghosts who may speak of their suffering are omitted from the annals, and dismissed through justification. In this way the past is regarded as a kind of myth, where the dangers of the mistakes of the barbarism committed are blotted out, never to be revisited all the while the phantoms of colonial violence appear again and again in revitalized forms; ideological ghouls masquerading as technological or political progress. Compared to non-western models of time, the western past is relatively un-important because the focus lies on the future rather than the present.

Within the modern social sciences many historical discussions of cultural origins were rendered passé since they tended centralize identities in ways that are marginalizing. Anzaldúa discusses the tendency of western historical theorists to deny discussions of origin, as origins are an important concept to consider in the context of many indigenous cultures because it links them with the past:

> "In the last few years, "origins" has become a bad word because the deconstructionists see everything as socially constructed. According to them there is no such thing as "origins." Deconstructionists and some feminist theorists assert that origins are falsely romanticized and idealized. In some ways this assertion is true. We do tend to romanticize origins and culture, but the new mestiza is aware of the tendency to romanticize. She tries to look at the past and examine the aspects of culture that have opporessed women. The past is constantly being constructed in a number of ways. First the perspective of the viewer of that history changes from one epoch to another; the perspective of a person changes from year to year. Second, the past has not been represented "truthfully" in history books. Written by the conquerers, history books distort and repress the histories of women and people of color" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pgs. 214-215).

The west engages in a gross dissociation from its past which allows for unintegrated lessons to endanger its present, perpetuating the continuation of violence and terror due to a lack of acknowledgement of the pasts relevance on current sociocultural situations:

> "Perhaps white theorists say that origins are passe or unattractive because they don't want to delve into their past. They may be afraid to discover that one of their ancestors enslaved people, raped indigenous women, or ripped off the land from Indians. As a Mestiza, I also look at my white ancestors who did exactly that. I look at the Aztecs and

> their cruelty. I look at things in my past that are not attractive. But it is scary for White people to think, "Who am I? Who are my people?" It is scary to see that a lot of the European immigrants were released from jails or came here as deserters of various causes, as convicts and criminals" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pg. 215).

Many philosophers write about the myth of time yet the west cannot unhinge itself from the apparent immediacy of the ticking clock. In the west children learn the concept of time in their formative years, when the clock becomes the idol through which children construct their day. Stopping periodically to "tell the time" keeps us on a forward march toward an abstract future goal of never-obtained salvation. Time also allows the western world to partition and segment the day, creating order out of chaos and logic out of uncertainty. Time is the stalwart of the Protestant work ethic and the west has not been able to deprogram its association with work, as was discussed in Chapter Two.

New Western Conceptions of Time

According to Aristotle time exists in the physical world because physical change exists, therefore time for the modern world is not merely a concept (open for interpretation) but a physical reality to which we are eternally bound. Over the last twenty years time as an unquestionable truth trope has been explored by quantum physicists who postulate that time is an illusion of perception, and that all things are in fact happening at once, eliminating time as a coherent tangible reality in the western ideological cannon. For example, according to physicist Julian Barbour time does not exist because there is no way to perceive the past or future because they are not occurring now, therefore time is a mere illusion created by the memory of a collection of projection of nows (an idea proposed by many ancient non-western spiritual and

philosophical texts such as the Baghavad Gita for centuries) (Barbour, 2000). Early twentieth century quantum theorist J.M.E. McTaggart proposes that time is illusory because humans cannot conceive of time descriptively without referring to it circularly, contradictorily or insufficiently therefore rendering a “non-entity” and a mere mental construction (McTaggart, 1908).

Modern quantum physicists Ekaterina Moreva, Giorgio Brida, Marco Gramegna, Vittorio Giovannetti, Lorenzo Maccone, and Marco Genovese postulate (based on the 1983 quantum entanglement theories of Don Page and William Wooters) that time is intimately linked with space due to a phenomena known as quantum entanglement (Aron, 2013). This theory posits that apparent objects entangle with their surroundings creating a particle equilibrium that merely organizes itself in the human perception as linear, explaining the seeming apparent "changes" posited by Aristotle but does not prove the actual changes in "time" rendering time an artifact of the human consciousness’s inability to perceive complexities of the anatomical process at work. For some physicists time is a trope for the quantum physicists which serves to merely organize an otherwise incomprehensible eternity of now moments (Wolchover, 2014).

Space

In the Newtonian world space is intrinsically linked to time, motion (or change) and is absolute in nature:

> "Absolute space, in its own nature, without regard to anything external, remains always similar and immovable. Relative space is some movable dimension or measure of the absolute spaces; which our senses determine by its position to bodies: and which is vulgarly taken for immovable space ... Absolute motion is the translation of a body

from one absolute place into another: and relative motion, the translation from one relative place into another " (Newton, 1972).

The definition reveals an important feature of space for the west as the defining element of order that prevents the reckless merger of one object and another. Space surrounds us yet is filled with countless things (bodies) that are meant to define and delineate the otherwise absolute nature of formless void. The formless nature of space was philosophized by Emmanuel Kant who postulated that the properties of space cannot be known by human beings because they exist only in the mental experience and not as an objective element (Janiak, 2009). In 1905 Albert Einstein published the precursor to the now famous theory of relativity which he called "special relativity" where he outlines the precepts of space and time as intertwined dimensional forces giving rise to the concept of *spacetime* (or the *space-time continuum*), which positions space as a three-dimensional element intercut by another fourth dimension (time) which governs universal physics. For Einstein the speed of light is the same for all observers regardless of the motion of the light source (Einstein, 1905). This theory reigns as the most complete and plausible explanation for the interaction of space and time in western physics and describes space as both inescapable (stable) and observable due to its interaction with time.

Defining Space

When we speak about space in the western world we are really talking about the *filling* of space, the *definition* of space, and the *limits* of space. Defining our spaces allows us to define ourselves. We even fill our verbal space with words, thoughts and concepts in order to avoid silence (or space). Without borders we become spaceless, much like the formless void, and anything can penetrate our being which could result in

undesired identification. Indeed this can be helpful when we defend our space against negative influences (war, hatred, bigotry, malice, etc), but we also wall our spaces against peace, love, cooperation and camaraderie or vice versa (as is often the case when the shadow is not integrated). When we only defend against the shadows of space we cannot integrate the potential lightness of it either.

As western civilization moved toward the mental age the need to define space became increasingly more important because it ensured that the Other maintained its position outside the boundary. Space became synonymous with the liminal unknown. The acknowledgement of space incites the nepantla state, or the liminal-discovery of otherwise undefined emotional, physical, mental or spiritual understanding. Anzaldúa strongly believes is necessary for spiritual growth:

> "Este choque shifts us to nepantla, a psychological, liminal space between the way things had been and an unknown future. Nepantla is the space in-between, the locus and sign of transition. In nepantla we realize that realities clash, authority figures of the various groups demand contradictory commitments, and we and others have failed living up to idealized goals. We're caught in remolinos (vortexes), each with different, often contradictory, forms of cognition, perspectives, worldviews, belief systems—all occupying the transitional nepantla space. Torn between ways, we seek to find some sort of harmony amidst the remolinos of multiple and conflictive worldviews; we must learn to integrate all these perspectives. Transitions are a form of crisis, an emotionally significant event or a radical change in status. During crisis the existential isolation all people experience is exarcbated. Unruly emotions and conflicts break out. In nepantla we hang between shifts, trying to make rational sense of this crisis, seeking solace, support, appeasement, or some kind of intimate connection. En este lugar we fall into chaos, fear of the unknown and are forced to take up the task of self-redefinition. In

> nepantla we undergo the anguish of changing our perspectives and crossing a series of cruz calles, junctues, and thresholds, some leading to a different way of relating to people and surroundings and others to the creation of a new world. Nepantleras such as artistas/activistas help us mediate these transitions, help us make the crossings and guide us through the transformation process—a process I cann conocimiento" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 310).

Anzaldúa suggests that through the liminal and unknown spaces that are not filled in with content, although chaotic, can bring about great social and cultural change if properly navigated. The mysteries that lie in the cavernous spaces require bridges but only after the dangers of the cavern have been properly explored. The cavernous, thresholds, although dark and potentially empty hold the keys to spiritual/emotional discovery. Sadly however, chaos in the west is avoided unequivocally on all levels of existence (emotional, physical, spiritual and mental):

> "According to Edward Hall, early in life we become oriented to space in a way that is tied to survival and sanity. When we become disoriented from that sense of space we fall in danger of becoming psychotic. I question this-to be disoriented in space is the "normal" way of being for us mestizas living in the borderlands. It is the sane way of coping with the accelerated pace of this complex, interdependent, and multicultural planet. To be disoriented in space is to be en nepantla. To be disoriented in space is to experience bouts of dissociation of identity, identity breakdowns and buildups. The border is in a constant nepantla state and it is an analog of the planet. This is why the borderline is a persistent metaphor in el arte de la frontera, an art that deals with such themes of identity, border crossings, and hybrid imagery" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 180).

Chaos, when identified in anything from the natural world to the racialized Other, is either quickly ordered or eliminated to avoid the spread of its influence. This idea filters into the very design of the western world where whole communities are constructed around the notion of defining space and limiting chaos. The plantation serves as a wonderful metaphor for the western definitions of space as a colonizing trope. The main house functions as the fulcrum through which the progress and bounty of the plantation's activities are readily seen (it is progress personified) through its palatial columns and craftsmanship it is a reminder of the upward movement of western ideals and the economic power of the master's family. Alternately, the smaller detached slave quarters functions to contain chaos (the Other), in a limited space that is easily monitored yet available from which to draw resources. The fields themselves (fashioned in neatly drawn rows stretching across acres) serves as another personification of chaos defined as the field represents nature controlled; a testament to man's need to tame and plow the chaotic freedom of nature for economic and social power. The layout of the plantation is thus the use of ordered, delineated space for the sake of power and progress and the containment of potentially dangerous chaotic elements. Nature and the Other are the main features that require containment, although what falls into those categories changes depending upon popular conceptions of what is threatening the west's collective sense of self. The western definition of space can be seen as a highly colonizing concept that has little to do with expansiveness and vastness and everything to do with constriction and restraint. Space is owned, claimed and protected, even in our every day vernacular we reveal our ownership over space; "get out of my space" or "I need some space," the implication is that space can be taken, invaded and owned. We

bombard our mental space with complex theoretical constructs, theories, plans, words, and images that serve to define our world, erecting boundaries upon boundaries with which to barricade the threat of vastness, leaving little room for emotion or spontaneous intuition to arise.

Dagara Time/Space

Dagara conceptions space and time are constructed with careful regard to the natural rhythms of the earth and the community. Time is not purely linear, (although it can be utilized linearly) but rather energy one can work with in order to achieve a goal. Dagara time can be circular, linear or non-existent which allows the perceiver to access wisdom in the present, the past, or the future depending on one's needs. Time is intimately connected to the rhythms of the earth. The rising and setting of the sun, the harvest moon, the first rain or the low rumble of thunder are markers which allow crop planning or other essential communal activities, and in this way, Dagara within linear time conceptions similarly to the west. The attunement of time to the natural rhythms of the Earth implies the awareness of the cyclical aspect of life and death. There is no "end goal" for the Dagara but instead the settling of one's consciousness into the flow of human existence in tandem with nature, or as a feature of the natural world (as was illustrated with the Chief covered in dirt to signify his eventual return to the Earth itself). Thus time is utilized and acknowledged but it does not enslave.

Somé acknowledges the western obsession with future fulfillment of goals and the tendency toward dissociation of time in his description of his tribal elders' response to *Star Trek*, (which personify the west's fascination with the future):

> "The events unfolding in a science fiction film, considered futuristic or fantastic in the West, were perceived by my elders as the current affairs in the day-to-day lives of some

> other group of people living in the world. The elders did not understand what a starship is. They did not understand what the fussy uniforms of its crew members had to do with making magic […] They had no problems understanding light speed and teleportation except they could have done it more discreetly […] My elders were comfortable with "Star Trek", the West's vision of its own future. Because they believe in things like magical beings (Spock), traveling at the speed of light, and teleportation, the wonders that Westerner's imagine being part of their future are very much a part of my elders' present. The irony is that the West sees the indigenous world as primitive or archaic. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the West could learn to be as archaic as my elders are?" (Somé, 1994 p. 9)

In the above passage Somé notes the irony of the west's tendency to fragment time as well as the western obsession with the future and its failure to recognize the limitations that dogmatic linearity have imposed upon the collective western imagination. For all of the west's hunger for progress and advancement there appears to be a stubborn refusal to acknowledge the metaphysical, spiritual or technological successes of the Other. Somé continues:

> "As in the case of "Star Trek", Westerners look to the future as a place of hope, a better world where every person has dignity and value, where wealth is not unequally distributed, where the wonders of technology make miracles possible. If people in the West could embrace some of the positive values of the indigenous world, perhaps that might even provide them with a shortcut to their own future" (Somé, 1994 p. 9).

In the west, the future (in theory) promises the fruition of utopian values and communal love. The magic of technology cures the ills of the unfortunate, and people live blissfully unafraid of harm from their neighbors. The problem is that the vision of the future is not cohesive because the connection to one another is not fully embraced.

Those with power seek to hold onto that power through the subjugation and systematic oppression of those who don't possess it. Therefore there are multiple futures in the west, none of which are terribly realistic given the dissociation from spirit and community. The future is constructed as a series of races; an arms race, a technology race, a space race, a rat race, toward an inevitable Machiavellian triumph where the strongest, craftiest, wealthiest and sneakiest survive at the mercy of those insidiously positioned at the bottom. Somé utilizes the *Star Trek* analogy quite early in the memoir as a way to introduce the reader to the notion of time and space as fragmented concepts perpetuated through western ideologies (and in this case, the metaphor of Star Trek), a lesson which he must learn and re-learn repeatedly through his trials in the initiation camp.

Dagara Time, Grandparents and Grandchildren

Prior to Somé's indoctrination into the western ideological cannon he learned the value of the circularity of time through integrating the value of the grandfather/grandson relationship. In the Dagara tradition the past is never fully gone, but rather interwoven with the present and the future, allowing for access to a broader spectrum of wisdom in any given moment. Through his grandfather Somé first experiences the relativity of time and space when grandfather shows him, through the use of tribal magic, his future destiny:

> "Grandfather seemed to have completely disappeared from my sight. Although I was seated right next to him. I could no longer see him. The voice I was hearing had ceased to have a location, but seemed to be coming out of the numberless containers lining the room. It was as if the walls themselves were speaking, the sound of it echoing everywhere as if in a bell jar. Grandfather had taken me into a world of wonder, for I

> myself was transformed. Thousands of images of a civilization I had never seen rushed at me, all alive and real: immense metal birds gliding high above the sky, their bellies loaded with humans; dwellings and roads covering the earth as far as the eye could see; houses that challenged the vault of heaven and dwarfed men, trees and anything else around them…" (Somé, 1999 p.41)

Somé experienced the dissolution of both his grandfather's physical form and the space of the hut through tribal magic, which afforded him a glimpse into his future. The experience foreshadows his movement into western modernity but access is given to him through his grandfather who serves as a link to the past. The future is thus not some distant goal but rather a current probability for the Dagara; it is accessible through the manipulation of perception and time in order to inform the present.

The Dagara belief in rebirth and reincarnation punctuates the tribe's focus on the integration of the past into the present. It also supports the community through granting access to past wisdom via the rebirth of a "new," old community member:

> "For the Dagara, every person is an incarnation, that is, a spirit who has taken on a body. So our true nature is spiritual. This world is where one comes to carry out a specific project. A birth is therefore the arrival of someone, usually an ancestor that somebody already knows, who has important tasks to do here. The ancestors are the real school of the living. They are the keepers of the very wisdom the people need to live by. The life energy of ancestors who have not yet been reborn is expressed in the life of nature, in trees, mountains, rivers and still water. Grandfathers and grandmothers, therefore, are as close to ancestral energy and wisdom as the tribe can get" (Somé, 1994 p.21).

The physical forms (bodies) we utilize are not nearly as important as the spirit that inhabits them. Therefore the transference of the grandparents' spirit to the child's form

is not remarkable because the forms themselves are somewhat disposable (useful but ultimately disposable like all forms).

The tribal focus on grandparents as an archetypal representation of wisdom and ancestral knowledge is quite prevalent in many Afro-Caribbean cultures (Sangree, 1992, 1993). For the Dagara the grandparents represent the crossroads of time, and serve as a link between the future (the grandchild) and the past (the ancestors). The grandparent is thus the medium between the unseen world of discarnate ancestors and the budding world of incoming tribal members. Both grandparent and grandchild seem to share the same physical space which allows for the wisdom of previous generations to flow to successive generations:

> "Consequently [grandparents'] interest in grandsons and granddaughters is natural. An individual who embodies a certain value would certainly be interested in anyone who came from the place where that value existed most purely. Elders become involved with a new life practically from the moment of conception because that unborn child has just come from the place they are going to go" (Somé, 1994 p. 20).

The grandparent is the bridge between the parent and the child linking present and future in an integral way. In fact without the presence of the grandparent a child risks falling into listlessness and despondency:

> "A child's first few years are crucial. The grandfather must tell the grandson what the child said while still a fetus in his mother's womb. Then, he must gradually help him build a connection with his father, who will help him with the hard challenges up ahead. My father used to complain that his life was calamitous because he never knew his grandfather, who disappeared before he was born. Had he known him, my father said, he would never have lost his first family, never spent his youth working in a gold mine

> or later embraced the Catholic religion with a fervor grander than the one that linked him to his ancestors. His stepbrothers, who knew their grandfather, did not have the kind of restlessness that plagued my father. The frustration of a grandfatherless male child has no cure" (Somé, 1994 p.21).

Here Somé illustrates the importance of connecting with one's past, and although the Dagara utilize the grandparent as a medium between the past and the future, symbolically it indicates the realization of the importance past lesson. Therefore the past is not seen as something to be forgotten and tossed away in a dusty bookshelf (or retirement village) but a living and vital connection to one's future:

> "While a grandfather is alive, the grandchildren do not have much of anything to learn from their father—until they reach preadolescent age. And the father knows that. He knows that a conversation between a grandson and a grandfather is a conversation between brothers of the same knowledge group. To know is to be old. In that, the grandson is as old as the grandfather. Consequently the father is too young to have a part in this relationship between wise men" (Somé, 1994 p. 21).

Anzaldúa links the connection of ancestral knowledge to the process of creativity and argues that one's link to one's ancestors an integral part of expression and communication. Without this tie the creative force of change and healing within oneself and the community at large would not be possible:

> "I have to allow el cenote, the subterranean psychic norias or reserves containing our depth consciousness and ancestral knowledges, to well up in the poem, story, painting, dance, etc. EI cenote contains knowledge that comes from the generations of ancestors that live within us and permeate every cell in our bodies […] An exchange of energy is what the process of creation is all about. Art is an exchange of energy and conocimientos (knowledge and insights). Writing, nature, and images give me a deeper

> connection to the sources of life, enable me to connect to certain energies. Every essay, fiction, poem I write is grounded in the land, the environment, the body, and therefore in the past/ancestors. Every piece enacts recovery" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pgs. 291-292).

Children and Wisdom

In the Dagara's acknowledgement of the potential wisdom of children (granted to them through their association with the ancestral past) the Dagara greatly differ from the west. The stimulation of ancestral wisdom is activated through a ritual that allows the child to actively participate in the preservation of tribal knowledge, which also links the child to the cultural heritage, which serves the community at large:

> "For the Dagara, the child's memory works better than the adult's if you trust something important to a child, he or she will keep it as long as he or she draws breath. There are also rituals that stimulate the child's power to store and recall things. One of the reasons why our elders are important to us is because the child within the elder is able to constantly retrieve things from the past that the community needs. The elder also knows how to transfer what he or she knows to the youth so that there is a continuity of special knowledge" (Somé, 1994 p. 71).

However, in the western world the tendency to marginalize children's wisdom can be linked to the propensity toward dissociation and differentiation. In many cases children are seen much like animals, devoid of rights due to their apparently undeveloped consciousness, superficially protected but not treated as complete and total living beings. Anzaldúa discusses this tendency with concern:

> "I'm concerned with why people differentiate animals from humans. To me, we're all related, even to the grass. People don't see animals... and they treat children the same way. I get really emotional when I think of this. Children are these little people with no

> rights. People aren't even aware that animals have a consciousness or souls or anything. Human is everything, and everything that's not human is a servant to mankind" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.94).

To contrast this dissociation the Dagara attempt to support each community member as integral to the expansive circular web of tribal history and tradition, this is because as the grandparent dies their ancestral knowledge is passed through spiritual communication (invoked by ritual magic) to the grandchildren, who then communicate with the next generation of grandparent elders, who in turn influence the parents and so on and so forth. With each transmission the narrative is personalized whilst still maintaining the essence of the original ancestral, as is the nature with most oral tradition cultures.

Western Time and Rigidity

Somé's understanding of time was greatly changed upon induction into the western milieu. His kidnapping and enrollment in Catholic school heralded the rude awakening of western linearity and temporarily severed his connection to indigenous time. He quickly learns that every moment is scheduled, planned, and carefully categorized in the west, leaving little room for creativity or spontaneity. Even children are expected to adhere to the strict codes of western time in order to develop into productive, righteous members of the community:

> "My life at the mission was much different from the relaxed, freewheeling life I had enjoyed as a child in our compound. Here, every moment of the day was planned, with little time off for fun" (Somé, 1994 p.91)

Time is constructed as a regulator rather than a tool to be utilized for a purpose and then disregarded. Time in the west threatens the spirit because it is conceptualized as a

relentlessly attacking spontaneity, fun and creativity. In the western world time takes no prisoners, and drags everyone regardless of age, sex, race or nationality to the grave eventually. In the above passages Somé experiences the dialectical tension of time in the west versus the more flexible "no time/no space" state of his indigenous roots. Western time strives to destroy the intuitive inner clock and imposes unnatural confines on the day that may not be conducive to the human beings' rhythms. In fact, Somé argues that western time imposes an unnatural rhythm upon nature:

> "On the mission hill, time stopped being my friend and became instead an overwhelming force. I could no longer tell how fast or how slow it moved. Something in me had stopped working. A year could have gone by, and I would not have known unless someone had told me. Our days were lived in fear, fear of being beaten for things we did or the things we neglected to do" (Somé, 1994 p. 91).

Time is a tyrant through which human beings must function in order to ensure successful living. This is further illustrated as Somé advances in his western education, and as a teenager the schedule imposed upon him is even more rigorous, leaving little time for reflection, play, or spontaneity of any kind. The theory of "time as regulator" is illustrated again through the schedule imposed upon him at Nansi (the primary all boy French Catholic boarding school):

"5:30am	Wakeup
6:00am	Morning Prayers
6:30am	Mass
7:30am	Gymnastics/athletics
8:00am	Breakfast
9:00am	First Class
10:00am	Second Class
11:00am	Third Class
12:00pm	Lunch Hour
1:00pm	Siesta/rest period
3:00pm	Fourth Class
4:00pm	Manual Work

5:00pm	Study Hour
6:00pm	Spiritual Lecture
6:30pm	Evening Prayers
7:00pm	Dinner/Recreation
8:30pm	Study hour/Higher division Vespers/lower division
8:45pm	Bedtime/Lower division
9:30pm	Vespers/higher division
10:00pm	Bedtime/Higher Division
10:30pm	Lights out everywhere" (Somé, 1994 p.165).

The extreme order of the schedule is a testament to a fundamental fear of freedom in the west. Of course freedom is sought on an ideological level, written into the constitution and philosophized about endlessly. However true freedom is highly regulated to prevent disorder and chaos. If the atrocities of colonialism are any indication, freedom in the west is positioned as an enemy, an opportunity for sin which has the potential to foster dissention, such is the basis of the Protestant Work Ethic which still dominates western culture (Hill, 1996). The schedule is a representation of that fear and more so since it is imposed on the indigenous Black Africans who populate the school. Historically in the west, since Greek antiquity, order and linearity represent the divine, particularly after the rise of Christian scholasticism—a concept discussed in Chapter Three (Watkins, 2013). To impose such order on the savage spontaneity of the indigenous Other is to introduce divinity into that which is seen as sinful and blasphemous. The boys' schedule at Nansi is thus the time equivalent of holy water, purifying chaotic freedom in the name of structure and order.

The only freedom Somé enjoyed was the freethinking expansiveness he found in literature. Through reading Somé escaped the daunting monotony of the day's schedule. Somé was able to trace and critically understand western history as a history of violence and egotism at the expense of the Other. Through the study of western history Somé discovered that in the pursuit of liberty and freedom the west had beaten a path of

subjugation and denigration. However, he also discovered the reframing power of the rhetoric:

> "History focused on the white man's deeds, and was a tale of violence and death. It was about war, and the strife that arose form man's greed for power. It was about the instability and insecurity of an existence where one's life was constantly at risk, either to serve the ego of another life, or to be plainly wasted. From the pages of our history books sprang figures of violence and terror who were presented as symbols of strength and models of civilized humanity. Occasionally a bright spot shone through: I saw the French Revolution as an example of humanity's reaction against oppression. But most of the time history seemed one was war. "*Qui para pacem, para bellum*"—if you want peace, get ready for war" (Somé, 1994 p.112).

The progress trope present within western culture not only perpetuates and excuses violence in the name of development but also creates the need for constant activity, which prevents the deepening of one's awareness of life outside that activity. Furthermore, Somé suggests that the collective consciousness of the westerner adopted the characteristics of a machine, where each process allows another process whereby a particular goal or end is to be met (typically centered around economic or political growth):

> "Westerners, on the other hand, seem to seek meaning in the realm of the machine, where one finds neither peace nor wholeness, but ceaseless movement. In the West, people are always frenetically rushing somewhere in the countless lanes of the multiple highways of progress" (Somé, 1994 p. 178).

The "machine" Somé speaks of stretches far beyond the physical creations of technological advancement and also encompasses the mechanistic economic and political systems of western life that allow for little opportunity for rest, or is

fragmented and scheduled like all other aspects of western life. Capitalism is in and of itself a machine by which much of the west is ruled not only materially but philosophically, rendering other more organic ways of being and living in the world on a day to day basis moot. There is no room for cyclical or nonlinear time in a capitalist economy because it requires a reverence and appreciation for the natural world and the inevitable ebb and flow of things (life, death, decay and rebirth).

There is little room for anything resembling death and decay in the west as efforts are made to keep life perpetually in a state of fresh renewal to avoid existential anxiety. Some of the cultural practices of the west illustrate the tendency to move away from reminders of decomposition. Plastic surgery is pursued to keep us looking young, fresh and vibrant. The well-proportioned gardens of homes and public spaces are weeded, and the remnants of death are removed so as to prevent evoking thoughts of decay. The elderly are tucked away in homes with each other, forgotten in order to avoid facing the mirror of our own mortality. The reminders of the return back to the earth, the "negative" phase of the life cycle (death, decay, dissolution and decomposition) are positioned as bad or horrifying (the typical western depiction of the "angel of death" as a monstrous skeletal creature is evidence of this. They are spoken about with somber reverence, or avoided altogether in everyday speech. Or, in a more obvious way the west's focus on physical cleanliness, hygiene and freshness in contrast to, for example the Dagara chief's filthy dirt-caked body, is another manifestation of the avoidance of death.

Redefining the Spacetime Continuum

Eventually as Somé broke away from the seminary he was able to rediscover the natural rhythms of time and integrate the lessons of "no-time" which was indeed quite terrifying for someone who had been indoctrinated into the western time-keeping system. He narrates this tension as he recounts his retreat into the jungle after escaping the Nansi school. According to Somé his acclimation to western time/space juxtaposed against the apparent chaos of the jungle felt like moving backwards in time and facilitated a rapid psychological and philosophical orientation to the concepts of time and space outside of the organized western paradigm:

> "Every step toward the wild outer rim of the seminary seemed like a step toward doom, dragging me backward in time. In front of me was the infinite green mystery of the jungle, speaking a language I could not decipher; behind was the sealed door of a haven of security and protection that had suddenly been transformed into an inimical alien world" (Somé, 1994 p. 141).

Even his body's natural rhythms had to adjust to a state of long lost resourcefulness and efficiency many indigenous cultures cultivate as a means of survival:

> "Two things were becoming more important than anything else: food and rest. But for a person accustomed since birth to having these needs met by other people, it was not natural to think creatively about how to obtain them for oneself. In the seminary, when one felt hunger, there was always the guarantee of a meal within the next hour or so. After all these years my system was like a clock that would register hunger shortly after morning mass, then later after the Angelus at noon-time, and in the evening prior to Vespers. But these were sweet triggers because the food was always there" (Somé, 1994 p. 143).

Years of having the day scheduled and partitioned eliminated awareness of the body's needs. It was fed when it wasn't hungry and forced to rest when it wasn't tired. Ironically the self-sufficiency that the western schedule was meant to instill created a greater, more pressing deficiency when the rigidity of order was absent. The reality of the uncertainty of his journey back to his native village (of which he initially had no clue how to find), was sobering as he traveled back to what his western educators would refer to as an "antiquated village," to discover his future self:

> "Thoughts of my home reminded me of the horrendous reality of my situation. I was lost, sandwiched between a past that had utterly forgotten me and a future that was undecided" (Somé, 1994 p.143).

Not surprisingly references to time become less frequent in Somé's text as he integrates back into life in the village. This is because he settled back into the natural rhythms of nature and the tribal atmosphere, and slowly released the rigidity of seminary life. Both time and space as concepts become expanded simply through his lack of reference to them as necessary concepts. However there are notable references to the expansiveness of the ideas of time and space that help to illuminate some of the major differences between western conceptions of the concepts.

Spatial Boundary Dissolution

As Somé is trying desperately to fit back into village life and adjusting to the eating ritual he finds the practice of sharing a meal quite different from the western tradition in that it is highly communal. The following quote illustrates the sense of community, ritual and dissolution of the individualized spatial boundary and occurs around a simple evening meal:

> "Dinner began with the hand-washing ceremony. The male leader was first, followed by the next-oldest person and so on till the youngest had washed. The first bit of food was always offered to the spirit of the earth shrine. This is called a clearance bite. My father always performed this ceremony. He would take a bit of cake and dip it into the sauce, say something rapidly between his teeth, and then throw the thing away as if he did not want it. The dog loved it—even though it was not destined for him but for the Spirit of the earth shrine […] Seven hands assaulted the dishes, determined to empty them, and the meal was enjoyed in silence. For the Dagara there is no such thing as a plate for each person, because in the context of real community, separate plates cultivate separateness" (Somé, 1994 p. 172).

There is no personal possessive pronouns in the Dagara eating ritual ("mine", "yours", "theirs", "ours", "his", "hers", etc), and even other species are welcomed to join in the feast (as later monkey are mentioned as inheritors of evening leftovers). In fact, it would be unthinkable to partition the food to individual members because this is not the way in which members of the tribe consider others or their resources. Spaces bleed, food is shared and the silence allows for the camaraderie and warmth of the collective tribal consciousness to be felt throughout the experience.

Somé is similarly faced with the dissolution of spatial borders as he is reintroduced to the concept of the Siè, or a person's spirit, which exists as both connected to a person's physical self and separate from the organism. The Siè is both a link to the past and an eye into the future; it also imparts the personality (ego consciousness) with valuable information. Because of his time in the western seminary, Somé learned that his Siè had been separated from him. The separation of one's Siè is

what contributes to the identification and overvaluation of the personal physical boundaries:

> "The Siè is a person's spirit, the part of him or her that is connected to the ancestral world. A person who is suffering from serious psychological problems is said to have left his spirit somewhere. Living away from your double is like living with chaos, terror and insecurity. Dogo continued, "I don't know how someone can live without a Siè. I suppose that this is what happens when someone is swallowed by a foreign way of life" (Somé, 1994 p.186).

The structured order and inherent disconnection present in the western lifestyle had disconnected Somé from his spirit. Anzaldúa speaks of a similar spiritual presence which lives intertwined with her own individuated body-space. She experiences the Sie as a completely separate entity yet wholly interconnected with her own mental-emotional space, she writes in *The Presence*:

> "He'd always stand just behind
> My left shoulder. He'd tell me what to write
> What to write. No, not aloud.
> In my head. I didn't have to
> Think the words, the words just
> Flowed out of my fingertips
> Into my pen, spilling on the paper.
> Sometimes this spirit would follow me
> To the homes of friends
> To the university, but after a couple
> of blocks he would get further and furhter
> behind as if afraid he'd forget the way back

to my apartment. He'd always be there

when I returned

[...]

Yes, there at the edge where the

Blankness resides, where the

Physical eyes don't follow,

Is the spirit. Don't whirl around.

Stay very still and you'll see them" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 120).

To become acquainted with the world of spirit (including one's own spirit) is an exercise in spatial dissolution because as one's perception opens to that which cannot be seen one engages in exercises in identity negotiation out of the experiential understanding of boundary illusions:

> "Things from another world were all around me. But they were very amorphous; I couldn't concretize them and say it was this shape or that shape. I just felt presences around me" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.83).

The Other often experiences themselves as highly penetrable because the dominant culture's forms, shapes, ideas, emotions, projections, etc., cannot be dispelled because they are nothing of not persistent. Anzaldúa also suggests that the permeable boundaries of the Other are often forcefully removed through assimilation and neocolonial manipulation. In the following passage Anzaldúa links both space and historical time as perpetuated through colonial discourses and how the intersection of the two, when imposed rather than willingly adopted, creates dangerous psychosocial splits, that while helpful for the spiritual growth can be highly disorienting:

> "We are exiled. Not only are they undermining us by assimilating us, but in turn, we are using these very same theories, concepts, and assumptions that we have bought into

against ourselves. Mestizas internalize those theories, concepts, and labels that manipulate and control us. We buy into these distortions and then we use them on ourselves. Many of us have become split from our ethnic, racial, and class communities. We are trying to figure out terms and ways of being in the world so that we will not be destroyed, so that we will not be co-opted or assimilated, so that we can make sense out of and teach our histories to ourselves and those who come after us. As we create a more diverse curricula we learn ways of teaching and knowing that are more representative of a mestiza nation" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pg. 206-207).

Reintegrating Space

As Somé began to experience the transformative events of his initiation he eventually began to reintegrate his spirit and physical self and embrace the dissolution of his limited individualized space as reinforced by his western upbringing:

> "Everybody began singing one of those songs you suddenly know the words to, as if you had learned it in a previous life. I lost the analytical part of my mind and was drawn irresistibly into participation. I sang full-throated, clapped my hands, and danced. I could not see the other people, but I knew everybody was there. I could perceive their presence by a different sensory apparatus than the usual five senses. Soon I experienced my self in the same way, as if I were invisible, yet all the more concrete, cogent, powerful and inalienable. This feeling was wonderful. Never before had I experienced something so real, so true, and so befitting a human being" (Somé, 1994 p.214).

This spatial merger into the communal joy through the act of singing was the first of many spatial expanding experiences during his tribal re-acclimation. Somé later found himself immersed not only in the space of his fellow initiates but also merging into the very atmosphere itself:

> "I wanted to join with the stars way up there in the infinite spaces of the cosmic realm. There was the night and there was the bush and there was me. Nothing else mattered. I did not even notice that I had been crying quietly until the stars became blurred. My tears were the language of the longing that I felt to merge with the stars. They sent a message to them, sharing something I could never express in human terms, and I felt the sky accept my tears as a response to their attention" (Somé, 1994 p.216).

Experiences of timelessness and spacelessness were common throughout Somé's initiation and never more evident than his experience with the Green Lady, the guardian spirit of the yila tree. The elders tasked Somé with "seeing something else" as he stared at what appeared to be a yila tree. As he sat, stuck in the cement of his limited western orientation trying to peer into the tree with his physical eyes (not knowing he was really trying to see the Green Lady) in order to achieve some mysterious spiritual transformation he began to experience less and less of ordered time and more of the circular or "now" time in order to prepare him for his union with the Green Lady/yila tree. Ironically because of the conditioned dialectical orientation of his consciousness the only reference he had for the ceasing of his chronological consciousness was death. Paired with the physical hardship of the elements around him and the emotional exhaustion of feeling inadequate in his quest he finally began to crack open:

> "I thought about the hardships of the day—the baking of the heat of the sun and my sweat falling into my eyes and burning them like pepper. I had lost all sense of chronology. I told myself that this is what the world looked like when one had first expired. I felt as if I were being quite reasonable. I could still think and respond to sensations around me, but I was no longer experiencing the biting heat of the sun or my restless mind trying to keep busy or ignoring my assignment. Where I was now was just plain real" (Somé, 1994 p.220).

Only upon the cessation of his mind's chatter and its subsequent identification with the individuated spatial borders could Somé begin to experience "realness" unlike he had known previously. In other words, Somé could not merge with the tree to experience her on this "real level" until the illusion of the individual spatial borders were eliminated:

> "The sensation of embracing her body blew my body into countless pieces, which became millions of conscious cells, all longing to reunite with the whole that was her. If they could not unite with her, it felt as if they could not live. Each one was adrift and in need of her to anchor itself back in place. There are no words to paint what it felt like to be in the hands of the green lady in the black veil. We exploded into each other in a cosmic contact that sent us floating adrift in the ether in countless intertwined forms. In the course of this baffling experience, I felt as if I were moving backward in time and forward in space" (Somé, 1994 p.221).

The above experience of the Green Lady defies western conceptions of time and space because his physical body appears to have completely disintegrated momentarily as he melded into the space of the tree. Of course as space is eliminated time must dissolve as well because in the western paradigm one cannot have space without time, so if one predefined space becomes another then time must also disperse to allow for this merger. He does not compare this union to sexual union or the union experienced in camaraderie as he states that these are insufficient to describe the emotional/spiritual feelings of connection:

> "Never before had I felt such love. I felt as if I had missed her all my life and was grateful to heaven for having finally released her back to me. We knew each other, but at the time I could not tell why, when, or how, I also could not tell the nature of our

> love. It was not romantic or filial; it was a love that surpassed any known classifications. Like two loved ones who had been apart for an unduly long period of time, we dashed toward each other and flung ourselves into each other's arms" (Somé, 1994 p.221).

This union of spirits/entities/energies is not possible in the western paradigm because there is no room for the dissolution of the individuated self, body or timeline. This is why Somé experienced the initial sensations of this state as death. Perhaps the merger experienced in the African bush of Somé's homeland is not easily accessible in the western world due to the structural violence held within the atmosphere due to unexorcised emotional, cultural, mental and spiritual energies. Anzaldúa writes of her own merger with the environment numerous times in *Spirituality, Sexuality and the Body:*

> "The land was my ally, but I also felt the dangers there. The phsysical and psychic energies there could also harm me. I'd hear people say that evil spirits (mal aigre aire) rode the wind, and that when a person got sick it was because the bad air had gotten in. When I grew up I scotted at these ideas but now that I'm older I know it's true. Bad vibrations come in the air; when someone is thinking bad about you—feeling envy, jealousy or whatever and directing it at you—you get the evil eye; people really get sick" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.77).

> "For example I was in prospect Park in Brooklyn for a picnic everyone was smoking cigarettes and putting them out in the grass. My whole body reacted. I could feel the pain of the grass. These people were turning their live cigarettes on it" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.77).

> "Sometimes I'd be walking around a neighborhood and feel everything going on in the block; a lot of times I don't want to go out. New York City has such tragedy and poverty and people selling drugs on the street" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.77).

In each of the above examples Anzaldúa experiences the environment as self and does not differentiate between her own individuated space and the space of what is around her. However, because the pain of the environment of New York was so palpable to integrate the emotional and spiritual content of the environment was often unpleasant. Nonetheless, through her empathic relationship and dissolved spatial boundaries Anzaldúa exprienced a different manner of melding than Somé's yila tree experience which illustrate effects of boundary dissolution.

Connectedness

Truly merging into the Other means accepting that the individuated self is only one mere possible expression of the spirit, and that through communal transposition to the other one can experience a greater range of emotions and potentially an expanded and more enriching sensation of love and connectedness that is not otherwise available when trapped in chronological time and defined space. Logic must cease, at least temporarily, in order to allow other faculties to take over such as emotion and intuition. Nonetheless the fear of even temporarily suspending logic for the westerner keeps the apparent order of the universe intact whilst simultaneously preventing more expanded ways of being in the world. More notably in his experience merging into the Green Lady was Somé's experience of love beyond the typical human expression. It appears that Somé experienced the kind of love mystics across all cultures have been writing and speaking about for centuries; unconditional love, where one can lose themselves in a timeless merger with the Other (Radler, 2010; Underhill, 2010). He notes that love as

we have defined it in the west seems bound by the limits of our perceptual reality and as such is not love but a subversion of the actual state:

> "Love consumes its object voraciously. Consequently, we can only experience its shadow. Happiness does not last forever because we do not have the power to contain it. It has the appetite of a ferocious carnivore that has been starved for a long time—this is how much love and bliss and happiness there is in nature, in the place that was there before we existed in it" (Somé, 1994 p.222).

Nature, free from the bondage and restrictions of order imposed by western paradigms, is for the Dagara a pure expression of love in that it exists as it is, content in the moment without the need for excessive categorization, delineation or confines. The natural world is thus a reminder of both the cyclical and timeless nature of life for the Dagara and is the pure expression of unconditional love because it simply exists. Indeed nature is rife with complex ecological systems, processes and mechanics but it does not plan them but rather unfolds them graciously as needed. Nature allows both the ant and the human to live in its out-stretched arms without so much as a word, and nature gives and takes life unapologetically in order to ensure the balance of the whole. Somé thus implores us to consider loving and expanding as nature does, which is metaphorically what the Green Lady taught him as she embraced him in her arms as the archetype of nature embodied.

The concept of losing the physical body through spiritual immersion, expansion and connection is common throughout the Dagara ritual initiation process and is evidenced again through Somé's descent into the underworld. For the western mind the body must accompany the mind and is not separable. In order to embark on the journey into the light hole Somé and the initiates are tasked with the separation of the body and

consciousness. However, this journey, as mentioned in the section on Identity, is rife with various psychological and physical complications if improperly navigated. The journey into the light hole is reminiscent of the birth process and is simultaneously symbolic and literal:

> "Today you will spend time with all of yourselves—earthly body and soul—in the world below us," the elder began. "There is nothing to fear. What you will pass through is a light hole. It won't hurt your body it will just lighten it a little so that you can stay in the other world long enough to remember where you have come from. Those who want to live a serious life go there and come back. Those who don't want to live a serious life go there—but don't come back" (Somé, 1994 p.234).

The passage through the light hole is an important symbolic representation of returning to the darkness of the womb, however my use of metaphor here is not to reframe the experience as not "actual", but rather illuminates the multiple levels of importance of this stage in the initiation process. The divine feminine lives inside the underworld through its changing landscapes. It allows the initiate to remember who he was outside of the confines of the physical shell and recall the archetypal feminine energy present in the darkness. Compared to the darkness imagined in the West the Dagara Underworld is an opportunity for self-renewal and enlightenment. Without traversing the landscapes of the underworld one cannot return to the physical sphere whole. Plunging into the darkness fosters spiritual and emotional maturity. For the Dagara one must be able to see oneself wholly without bias, (another impossibility according to western psychology). Duality perpetuates the notion that we cannot know ourselves fully. This is because the Other is needed for projective and comparative purposes and aids in the maintenance of self-as-separate (a concept we discussed in the section on identity).

However, with the ability to dissolve physical borders comes the ability to dissolve emotional, psychological and spiritual barriers that prevent self and Other-awareness. One must be willing to become the Other through dissolution before this process can unfold. At times the body itself is an impediment and must be dissolved in order to see through to the core of one's experience:

> "Was it possible for someone to be blind to his own presence? Perhaps my inability to see myself was directly connected to my perception of the environment; but why, if I could see everything around me, could I not see myself? My inability to see my body, however, did not challenge the conviction that my body was there. Maybe, I ruminated, my body was truly absent but compensated for by an overwhelming presence of consciousness. Perhaps I had fallen into a visibility too high to contain the crudity of my body. At the same time I realized that I did not feel terrified, nor did I feel strained, that is, it did not take much energy to hold on to this bundle of light. I concluded that I must be weightless" (Somé, 1994 p. 243).

Somé's experience is not uncommon for those who master the heights of meditative bliss, where the physical body is vacated through identification with pure consciousness. However, it must not be confused for a purely transcendental mental exercise. The ritual promotes the literal removal of time/space barriers in order for the initiate to experience spatial merger.

Shapeshifting

The fluidity of borders for the Dagara and many indigenous cultures allows the limits of physical reality to be manipulated in order to shapeshift. Shapeshifting serves two primary functions for the shaman. First it allows the shaman to utilize a form that will be most beneficial for their own or someone else's spiritual, physical or emotional

development. Often shapeshifting involves a release of one's current conception of physical, emotional or spiritual boundaries. Somé utilizes the art of shapeshifting in the latter stages of his initiation after witnessing a deer shapeshift into a bull in order to escape his arrow, and was taught a valuable lesson for his soul's development:

> "One day I tracked a deer and shot a poisoned arrow at it. To my great astonishment it turned into a bull and charged me. Remembering from my past life how to change my shape, I quickly turned into a bird and flew to the top of a tree that I judged high enough to protect me from the bull. At that moment, however, the bull disappeared and a menacing vulture rushed toward me. I had just enough time to remember that a porcupine will counter the temper of a vulture, so I flew down and turned into a porcupine. The vulture disappeared and I was immediately enveloped by clouds of smoke that made me cough and sneeze to the point where I had to shift form again. I decided to become a bush in the middle of a wide clearing I had reached. No sooner had I turned into a bush than there was another bush next to me that threatened to invade me. When I moved, it moved closer until I finally gave up. "Do with me as you wish. I know I should have recognized what you truly were. Whoever you are. I am at your mercy." Saying this, I resumed my human form and the bush beside me became a beautiful white lady" (Somé, 1994 pgs. 279-280).

Somé's fluidity in changing form due to the fear of being invaded and attacked by an outside entity allowed him to instinctively change form, however he was met with a more adept and experience shapeshifter than him and thus had to surrender his boundaries to the wisdom of the woman who eventually transports him into a past life where three-breasted women ruled and men were subservient to female wisdom. Somé relived the lifetime (in present time) and after being told he would be reborn into a human village in some time to his then grandson was executed due to unethical hunting

habits. The circularity and spacelessness of his recounted experience demonstrates the fluidity of the Dagara timespace continuum and the power of liminality in teaching valuable lessons. Additionally his death sentence in the life he glimpsed relates back to his experience as a child in his lifetime as Malidoma chasing a rabbit (with the intention of killing it) and the lessons of love and peacefulness he failed to learn in the previous lifetime.

The ability to shapeshift needn't be physical in order to be significant for the development of the spiritual, cultural or emotional identity. Anzaldúa expands on the notion of shapeshifting as an act of spiritual, intellectual, and cultural activism and how it relates to crossing borders as a postcolonial act:

> "Years ago, when I first studied the Mayan glyph, or pictogram, that depicts a king covered in part by a jaguar pelt, and read that the glyph is called "The Way," the word and the image resonated throughout my being. "The Way" has multiple meanings. It refers simultaneously to the shaman, to an animal and/or spirit companion, to metamorphosis, to the art of "dreaming" worlds. For a "postcolonial" mestiza like myself, any single way is not "the" way. A spiritual mestizaje weaves together beliefs and practices from many cultures, perhaps including elements of Shamanism, Buddhism, Christianity, Santeria, and other traditions. Spiritual mestizaje involves the crossing of borders, incessant metamorphosis. It is a spirituality that nurtures the ability to wear someone else's skin, its central myth being shapeshifting. In its disturbance of traditional boundaries of gender and desire and its narratives of metamorphosis - as amply presented here-as well as in its traversing of cultural and historical borders, Queer Spirit qualifies as a kind of spiritual mestizaje" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 230)

The “incessant” metamorphosis in this case is not the shifting of human to bird to porcupine to bush, but instead to the shifting of oneself from male to female, from gay to straight, from Christian to Buddhist, and back again only to repeat the processes indefinitely in a constant negotiation of one’s identity and spatial boundaries. The ability to weave one’s identity with various cultural traditions is the act of shamanism in the sociocultural world. Also inherent in Anzaldúa’s definition of shamanism is the value of knowledge gained through shapeshifting and boundary dissolution, and that to not engage in the act of shapeshifting is to perpetuate colonial discourses and conceptions of limited body-centered reality (a concept we will explore further in the next section):

> “When we refuse to consider the value of knowledge that is rooted in the body, in the psyche, in paralogical experience, we fail to challenge colonialist, post-Renaissance, Euro-Western conceptions of reality. We need to move beyond the facile dichotomy of "essentialism" and “constructionism” to embrace other theoretical paradigms inclusive of embodied and in-spirited knowledge” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pgs. 230-231).

Communication and Dagara Time/Space

Communication and Dagara Time/Space

For the Dagara, the western belief in essential separateness creates unnecessary division, and once the experience of wholeness is lived and held within an individual’s perceptual state, it shifts the physical particles of the outside world to reflect the internal shift—this is how shapeshifting is possible despite the “laws” of western physics. In this state individuated consciousness is responsible for the creation of the whole universe and can partition or dissolve physical boundaries as necessary, in order to garner greater experience because it realizes that it is not separate from creation itself.

Once the consciousness is freed from its perceptual limits (i.e.; the body) shifting of one form to another is child's play. In many tribal traditions, including the Dagara, the shaman is cast in the role of tribal or communal liberator and is given special permission to utilize the magical arts in order to heal and rescue those in the tribe who suffer from ailments of separateness. The role of the shaman is to facilitate spatial and identitive shifts for the sake of healing and is, as Anzaldúa notes, the oldest archetypal role in human development. She discusses the process of writing and its relationship to shamanism, a role of the she adopted:

> "I realize I was trying to practice the oldest "calling" in the world—shamanism—and that I was practicing it in a new way. The Sanskrit word for shaman, saman, means song. In non-literate societies, the shaman and the poet were the same person. The role of the shaman is, as it was then, to preserve and create cultural or group identitiy by mediating between the cultural heritage of the past and the present everyday situations people find themselves in. In retrospect I see that this was an unconscious intention on my part in writing *La Borderlands/La Frontera"* (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 121).

The ailments of separateness include the overuse of logic, rationality, emotion, or in Somé's case, literacy that cause people to fragment due to a lack of holistic integration of the self. In fact, most ailments, illnesses and frustrations, are problems of separation and fragmentation, and the Dagara shaman seeks to piece together the broken parts of the individual in order to promote wellness and wholeness

The diagnosis of these ailments often require the shaman to merge into the patient or community as a whole in order to diagnose the problem from inside its spatial borders: a form of empathic identification. In reference to the process of communication Anzaldúa utilizes shamanism through the creation of art, and likens heartfelt,

emotionally aware and spiritually transformative expression to the process of shamanism. I quote here at length as her explanation of shamanism and its role in curing communicative, societal and cultural imbalances is quite adept:

> To carry the poet-shaman analogy further, through my poet's eye I see "illness," lo que daña, whatever is harmful in the cultural or individual body. I see that "sickness" unbalances a person or a community. That it may be in the form of disease, or disinformation/misinformation perpetrated on women and people of color. I see that always it takes the form of metaphors. La curación-the "cure"-may consist of removing something (disindoctrination), of extracting the old dead metaphors. Or it may consist of adding what is lacking-restoring the balance and strengthening the physical, mental, and emotional states of the person. This "cure" leads to a change in our belief system, en lo que creemos. No longer feeling ourselves "sick," we snap out of the paralyzing states of confusion, depression, anxiety, and powerlessness and we are catapulted into enabling states of confidence and inner strength […] Because we use metaphors as well as hierbitas or curing stones to effect changes, we follow in the tradition of the shaman. Like the shaman, we transmit information from our consciousness to the physical body of another. If we're lucky we create, like the shaman, images that induce altered states of consciousness conducive to self-healing" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pgs. 121-122).

For the Dagara the boundary-free existence of consciousness is one's natural state. The duality of the Western world serves only to complicate and obfuscate the divisions that prevent westerners from dissolution or identification with an Other. A communication model based on Dagara notions of time and space would imply the dissolution of linear time and linear space, opening the possibility of holistic communication. While western models of communication maintain the separateness between sender and receiver, Dagara communication strives to capture the experience

of complete, boundary and timeless interaction, where space and time between sender and receiver disappear and multiple levels (emotional, physical, intuitive, astral, mental) understanding are conveyed. The linearity of the western communication model, as supported through dualism and rationalism, are in fact violently opposed to the Dagara conception of time and space. Linear time and physical space are used merely as potentials for communication in order to manage the most rudimentary level (the most basic level) of physical human reality. Linear time is the human beings' way of working with nature and the natural world in order to achieve a practical goal but does not encompass the totality of potentialities of communication, particularly as they relate to emotion, intuition, sex, spirituality or any other communicative methodology outside of subject/object communication. Without the possibility of the dissolution of time and space Dagara traditions are rendered mere fantasy, which means that the communal nature of their way of life will be positioned as false. This is a grievous error in the formation of a holistic communication theory. In the western model one cannot commune with the tree or fully integrate with another human being because separateness remains a fundamental feature of human communication.

In order to fully integrate an expanded concept of communication in relationship to time and space there are a few basic features that must be embraced. First, the dissolution of the space/time continuum, or at least the possibility of this dissolution, allows for room within the theory of communication to extend beyond the limits of the three-dimensional rationalized western world and is more inclusive of non-western modes of understanding and relating to the world at large and other beings. This dissolution is of the utmost concern in conceptualizing communication outside the

margins because one cannot communicate outside margins that are impermeable due to rigid definitions of the margins themselves. When linear time ceases to control communication then one gains access to all time. This includes acknowledging the history and future of those with whom one is communicating; this is a reflexive and intersectional process which requires awareness of the racial, gendered, sexual, economic history and potential future of those with whom we are interacting.

Second, communication theory in the west is predicated on filling the spaces between separate, autonomous entities. For the Dagara (and Anzaldúa) the voids (chasms, or states of nepantla) are just as important than the entities which fill those voids (thoughts, emotions, words, actions, etc). Thus, in order to conceptualize a theory of non-western transversal communication, a new theoretical model must open itself to the value of the void which requires eliminating fear of such a suspension. The awareness of the liminal spaces between bodies/things is what creates the western compulsion to fill voids. The fear of liminality has also created a need to be in constant motion which in turn dulls the perceptive capabilities of the human being because one cannot be still enough to allow the intuitive, somatic or spiritual insights to penetrate one's awareness. As Somé has illustrated, the thinking/rational mind occupies so much of western interactions that it leaves little room for emotional or spiritual transmissions from others or the environment to filter through. In order to allow these levels of awareness to filter into one's consciousness one must first address the anxiety that lies within the spaces. This can be done in communication by honoring the inevitable liminality spaces by allowing them to exist without immediately filling them.

Finally, communication must be viewed as a cyclical, non-linear, and/or atemporal process rather than a liner exchange between two separate entities. For the Dagara there is no end goal in communicating (unless there is a practical goal to be reached) because the purpose of communication is to deepen one's awareness of oneself in relationship to the other. Again, this requires dissolving the concept of borders which requires de-centralizing our identities (which was discussed in the previous section). However, one cannot communicate outside of identitive borders without first dissolving the spatial confines of one's personal, cultural, economic, gendered and sexual selfhood:

> Crossing cultural and class borders requires that one look at the blood in one's veins, examining the history of one's people, including its religious and spiritual practices. Taken back far enough, one discovers some kind of shamanism in their cultural pasts. Look for and build on the positive" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pg. 215).

For the Dagara the self is loosened through initiation practices such as the descent into the light hole. However, since most will not experience such profound shifts in perception they must willingly engage in the process of softening spatial boundaries through empathy, conscious awareness of their and other's emotional and spiritual states and a willingness to allow others to at least temporarily permeate their boundaries. Although Anzaldúa writes specifically to the minority writer, her words are indicative of how the role boundaries, difference and separation can be healed through the process of transversal communication through codified boundaries:

> "From our own and our people's experiences, we will try to create images and metaphors that will give us a handle on the numinous, a handle on the faculty for self-healing, one that may cure the depressed spirit, the frightened soul. En posesión de la

palabra. Despite language, class, and identity differences and conflicts there exist strong cultural links among Chicana, Mexicana, Latina, Native, Asian, Black, and other women. We can safeguard and strengthen these links through communication. People in possession of the vehicles of communication are, indeed, in partial possession of their lives" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 pg. 122).

Reality

Western Reality

Reality in the west is constructed through the ideals of scientific discovery. Reality, like time and space, is a hegemonic trope which ultimately seeks to maintain structure. For the Hegelian, reality, through which a great deal of the philosophy of science is derived, can only be perceived through a series of analytic categorizations of the world (Hegel, 1931). Much like all other spheres of human existence, notions of reality are highly policed by hegemony enforcing power structures frequently linked to economic or materialistic gains (Marx, 1847). As discussed in Chapter Two, notions of reality in the modern world are primarily an inheritance from classical philosophies and scientific ideologies, which state that the knowable world (or material world) is the only realm which can be trusted. As Aristotle posited, the stable, measurable and known universe provides human beings and civilized society with its promise of salvation (Aristotle, 1999). The universe thus had to become meticulously differentiated through years of scientific discovery, classification and measurement, all of which sought to stabilize ephemeral spaces and voids of the world in order to prevent mounting terror, and serve the collective arrogance of western science. So, in a swift act of reductive materialism, modern philosophers, borrowing from the monoist traditions of early classical and Renaissance philosophies, reduced reality and all of its potentialities and

mysteries to clunky chunks of matter, and nothing more (Dennett, 2010; Fodor, 1974). "Realness" is in essence only measured by the depth and breadth to which humans and their various tools can interact with and "know" an object.

From Idealistic to Materialistic Reality

Without interaction in the noumenal world nothing is truly real. According to the Idealists, to whom we owe much of western philosophical conceptions of reality, if one has a conversation in one's mind with another it is not "real" in the consensual western sense of the word because it was not experienced in the three-dimensional, perspectival world. It could not be heard, recorded or understood by others. It cannot be relied upon unless one was to record the conversation and even then it is a recounting, which is not real because it is too subjective. In the modern western world reality is, (despite years of post-modern philosophical argument to the contrary), objective and stable. In fact, efforts by the post modernists to de-stabilize notions of reality as a pervasive concept have only superficially been integrated into the popular milieu, but for most, if the five senses can't track it, it isn't real. Jean Gebser referred to the preference for the three-dimensional world as a mainstay of the mental age (Gebser, 1985). The turn away from the mythic structures of pre-modern civilizations was necessary for the evolution of the perspectival conscious-human. The veil between the emotional and the objective world had to be removed in order for the material growth of western civilization to reach its epic and eventual decline.

According to Empiricists, Materialists and even early Idealists, "real" interactions with the world require a stable sense of that reality throughout time and space in order to circumvent insanity (Coppleston, 1993). Being able to differentiate

between what is possible and impossible, based on the predefined notions of plausibility (as determined by modern science), is a key feature of living in "reality". Most modern philosophers and realism scientific adherents scoff at the transcendental or idealistic notion of the mind as supreme ruler (Hale, 1997; Miller, 2006). According to modern physics and its materialistic philosophical grandfathers, matter exists absolutely, and this is evidenced through historical philosophizing of the nature and implications of the atom (Berryman, 2008). Despite progressive efforts, the pervasiveness of the concrete physicality of the reality trope is not easily overthrown, even through progressive scientific branches like quantum physics.

The Hegemony of Reality

The Spivakian postmodernist version of reality, as a historical narrative, has been relatively immovable because it has been consensually accepted since the Classical Period. As I outlined more extensively in Chapter Two the classical philosophers ensured the adoption of their reality trope through their association of that which is not stable and readily observable through the senses as unvirtuous, which was thereby adapted by the empiricists and rationalists of later centuries and associated with both sin (in the early part of the Scholastic period) and primitiveness (in the rise of the modernist movement of the 19th and 20th centuries). The fetishizing and marginalization of indigenous and non-consensual or non-western realties has a long history in the anthropological tradition:

> "Anthroplogists like Levi-Strauss talk about the "primitive" mode of consciousness, what they call the "participation mystic," the magical mind, the savage mind. From this perspective, "mind" is the world of imagination, the world of the soul, the world of the spirit, and these worlds are just as real as the physical reality. The White

> anthropologists claimed that Indians are unsophisticated, that their minds are too primitive, that they cannot think in the "highest" mode of consciousness, rationality. These anthropologists split the world of imagination from the world of the spirit from the world of the soul from waking conscious reality, defining external reality as the offical reality" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 106).

Because of the persistence of modern western philosophy, the concepts of reality and fact became interchangeable and synonymous.

If those who construct reality (and in the west this is most exclusively hegemonic groups) make a proclamation of "what is", then that is indeed, what is. This is what Antonio Gramsci conceptualized as cultural hegemony which proposes the idea that reality as constructed by hegemonic majority members serves the economic and political aims of that majority and thus must subjugate the reality of the minority in order to maintain order (Gramsci & Hoare, 1971). Subjective or cultural experiences to the contrary are at best considered interesting matters of philosophical inquiry and at worst positioned as insanity. If consensual reality states that seeing little people that can walk through walls is impossible, then anyone who experiences such phenomena is said to be "not living in reality", which is to say, insane. These reality tropes remain intact until enough of the minority challenges the majority trope (as was the case with the Civil Rights and Feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s).

Pathologizing Non-Consensual Reality

The link between sanity and consensual reality is undeniable. Since the dawn of western psychology in the late 19th century the association of mental illness with non-consensual reality states became the predominant marker of cognitive stability, The medical model of mental illness is predicated on assumptions of real and unreal, and as

Hussein Bulhan argues of Frantz Fanon theories, acts as a policing colonial force which aids in maintaining social subjugation through psychological diagnosis (Buhlah, 2004). It is real to experience yourself as a three-dimensional physical being, and unreal to experience yourself as a collection of lights, or a bundle of sounds. The former is the state of a rational human being; the latter are experiences of someone exhibiting symptoms of schizotypal personality disorder.

Schizotypal personality disorder is described as having various pathological features that underscore many assumptions about the "normal" conception of reality: a. Eccentricity: Odd, unusual, or bizarre behavior or appearance; saying unusual or inappropriate things. b. Cognitive and perceptual dysregulation: Odd or unusual thought processes; vague, circumstantial, metaphorical, over-elaborate, or stereotyped thought or speech; odd sensations in various sensory modalities. c. Unusual beliefs and experiences: Thought content and views of reality that are viewed by others as bizarre or idiosyncratic; unusual experiences of reality (The American Psychological Association, 2012).

As in the instance of schizotypal personality disorder, the western medical model positions anything deemed bizarre or idiosyncratic as "Othered" and as such, disordered, wrong, bad or sick. The pathologizing of reality is policed through two primary colonial disciplines: science and history (Bulhan, 2011). Science as the reigning champion of truth. By proclaiming that what can be perceived and measured by the five human senses is "real", science has perpetuated a perceptual schism that cannot be challenged if one is to maintain their position as sane. As is evidenced by the

scientific method and scientific realism, if a phenomenon is observable through a period of time, can be replicated, reproduced or is relatively predictable, then it is "real".

In the west when people seek to explore reality outside the confines of the western norm their efforts are typically delegitimized. This principle was nicely exemplified during the rise of spiritualist movements in Europe and the U.S. during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in response to growing mortality rates due to war (Coon, 1992). Skeptics heavily scrutinized those who sought to expand their perceptual reality through communication with ghosts and other spiritual phenomena via mediums and other spiritual technologies (Coon, 1992). As the impulse to expand perceptual reality outside of the replicable and predictable materially based universe increased during this time, de-bunkers and anti-spiritualist sentiments increased to beat back consciousness expansion through rigid skepticism and airtight empiricism (Peters, 1999; Mill, 1855, 1859). Entire organizations such as the British Skeptics Society were developed to combat the "problem of spiritualism" and to preserve the integrity of rationalism and reason in the face of "growing belief in nonsense".

The Colonization of Normalcy

With the evolution of Imperialist anthropological explorations of the 19th and 20th centuries, European and American anthropologists described non-western cultures as "primitive" natives. Racial differences of the negro and their superstitious rituals were used to fetishize subaltern peoples of color and their cultural practices as simultaneously exotic and potentially dangerous (Armelagos & Goodman, 1998; Fichrow, 2000). Magic practices were thus studied as artifacts and were placed firmly outside of the realm of reality because they could not be replicated, and were not

reliable or measurable, nor did they serve any real purpose in the world (for the modernist) except as superstitious and self-soothing practices engaged in by the primitive indigenous who didn't understand the true workings of the material universe. For the westerner magic depends too heavily on the use of imagination, emotion, and intuition and therefore cannot be considered a stable source of reality.

Dagara Imagination and Manifestation

Imagination in the western world differs from reality in that it is comprised of fantasy, desire, and emotion and therefore not considered "real". Imagination exists outside three-dimensional/perspectival reality because it is not yet manifested. For the westerner, the actualized/manifested world is not interchangeable with the imaginary world. However for the Dagara there is no manifestation without imagination.

Imagination for the Dagara is intrinsically linked to reality because there is no conceptual separation between the two:

> "The world of the Dagara also does not distinguish between reality and imagination. To us, there is a close connection between thought and real-potential to bring that something into being. Thus people who take a tragic view of life and are always expecting the worst usually manifest that reality. Those who expect that things will work together for the good usually experience just that. In the realm of the sacred, this concept is taken even further, for what is magic but the ability to focus thought and energy to get results on the human plane? The Dagara view of reality is large. If one can imagine something, then it at least has the potential to exist" (Somé, 1994 p.8).

The Dagara view however is not contingent purely on the material needs of the individual but on the community at large. The tribe and its relationship to the natural world are considered in the practice of manifested magic.

Melding Reality and Imagination

Not dissociating reality and imagination is literally a foreign concept for the westerner whose sense of sanity and stability is built upon the separation of the two states. Anzaldúa explains how the experience of realness and imagination is only separated by the perception of one being "more real" than the other:

> "To me everything is real. Fiction is as true as whatever happened literally to people. (James Hillman talks about similar ideas in *Healing Fictions*.) The body does not discern between different kinds of stimuli, the body doesn't distinguish between what happens in the imagination and what happens in the material world. Every time you have a nightmare or think about meeting someone, your mental/emotinal scenario makes you nervous and flustered. The body responds. The body mediates these two realities. It is in the body that they coexist. There's frustration in trying to separate the two and in making distinctions between them. We, the body, are the union, and that's part of the frustration in trying to mediate between the two. You see yourself as body going through these things like in a film. You're lying down and present in external reality, and you're seeing yourself as though in a movie; your dream body (your imagined body) is actually walking on the ocean, by the hillside...it's real. That's what I meant about fiction not being fiction, or being real. Either that or everything is fiction, but it's not one or the other. What happens in the imagination is not fiction" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p.108).

The process of reintegrating reality and imagination is difficult for the western consciousness because dissociation and separation occurs early as children learn the difference between "real" and "make believe" and then are encouraged to maintain a strong foothold in the realm of the "real". Imagination is relegated as unreal in favor of the west's need to differentiate the two states.

In the previous section's discussion of time I explain Somé's analysis of *Star Trek* in relationship to the idea of "future time" and "progress" as conceptualized in the western world. However, Somé's reading of *Star Trek* illustrates a fundamental tenant in the Dagara philosophy: the liminal or flexible nature of reality and imagination. In contrast to the western world where fiction and reality are clearly delineated, the concept of fiction for the Dagara is foreign because the melding of the imagination and the "real" is commonplace. Due to greater flexibility in their use of different modes of consciousness, the Dagara are able to fuse multiple levels of reality and collapse them into their present experiences. Gloria Anzaldúa compares this to the work of the artist during creation:

> "There are many modes of consciousness: the rational, reasoning mode, which to me is connected with the extranal reality, with the world that we inhabit right now; and other modes of consciousness connected with the world of imagination, the world of fantasy, and the world of images. Writers, artists, and creative scientists traffic back and forth between these worlds, switching from one mode of consciousness to another. There are probalbly many intermediary modes of consciousness that we're not even aware of, that we tune out, because we're so focused on physical reality. (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 103).

Seen though the lens of Anzaldúa's discussion of multiple consciousness, the Dagara can be thought of as "creative scientists" constructing, deconstructing and painting the world without limits for what is possible or impossible. Additionally, the fusion between imagination and reality serves two important functions. First, it allows for a communal narrative of reality to be created and recreated through imagination, which reduces the possibility for hegemonic narratives to supersede minority narratives.

Additionally it allows for emotion, intuition and desire to become a relevant means of reality construction aside from the material. In the Dagara tradition imagination is not subjugated to objectivity. In fact, one might argue that there is no objective in the Dagara tradition because everything is woven into the fabric of their reality. What is real now may be imagination in a moment. Or furthermore what is real now was once imagination.

Magic is the invocation of desire and intention on the material world, and simply because something has yet to manifest on the sensory plane does not mean it is not real. Different worlds and the endless possibilities of those worlds are not a matter of science fiction for the Dagara but an acceptable part of reality, a fact that Somé discovered during his initiation after he dove into a pool of water only to discover a new world similar to but wholly unlike his "normal" reality:

> "It was clear that we had come to the mountain to plunge once again into the infernal and hermetic order of another world, a world different from the ones we had seen before. How many of them were there? This world and endless layers of reality? The elders seemed to have no doubt about the existence of all of these worlds. They knew a great many of them" (Somé, 1994 p. 253).

What we deem imagination in the west is the perception of that which is not readily seen by western traditional perceptual understanding of reality. The preceeding passage was already quoted in the "knowledge" analysis, but is worth re-visiting here in the context of reality according to Somé and most indigenous, shamanic and Eastern mystical traditions:

> "Our minds know better than we are able and willing to admit the existence of many more things than we are willing to accept. The spirit and the mind are one. Their vision

> is greater, much greater than the vision we experience in the ordinary world. Nothing can be imagined that is not already there in some outer or inner worlds. Your mind is a responder; it receives, it does not make things up, it can't imagine what does not exist" (Somé, 1994 p.253).

The "mind-as-responder" concept is a mainstay of the Dagara epistemological understanding of reality. The mind is the creator and therefore what it creates, paired with intention and emotion, can change the ordinary world. The communal focus of individual minds is what helps to create what some may consider the impossibility of the dead walking back to their village, or pots and pans swirling around the ceiling during a funeral ritual. Rather than dismissing these communal experiences as delusional, these experiences are integral to the connectedness of the society as a whole. The communal "imagination" coalesces with desire to create magic, and if harnessed is in no way limited by the dualistic tropes of science or the so-called "laws" of physics. The lack of dualism in the Dagara conception of reality is further explored by Somé:

> "Is it possible then, that everything my mind could imagine exists somewhere in some other world? Where, then, is the place for that which is not real? In the world of my people there is nothing but reality, alone without its opposite. When something comes into our lives that we label as impossible, like a buffalo running into a hole one foot in diameter, or a brand new landscape opening up right before us, an elder would interpret this way of thinking as a manifestation of our own rigidity in the face of a new idea. When we resist expansion, we foster the unreal, serving that part of our ego that wants to limit growth and experience. In the context of traditional world, the geography of consciousness is very expansive. Consequently, in the mind of the villager, the unreal is just a new and yet unconfirmed reality in the vocabulary of consciousness. It is brought

> to us by the ancestors. A little hospitality toward it will quickly make it part of us" (Somé, 1994 p.254).

The idea that a ripple in the comfortable reality of the ordinary world is a gift to the perceiver is one that will be further explored in the next chapter in the analysis of Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of nepantla. However Somé explains an important feature of Dagara reality in the above passage. The Dagara understand the intrinsic link between mental energy and physical manifestation. The west understands this through the simplistic ideologies of science; for example, if I think about building a car, I may go through the process of gathering the materials to then manifest the car, which began first in thought.. However, outside of the widely accepted Newtonian physics trope of physical reality one cannot manifest or experience that which is not "real" within those confines. Consciousness for the Dagara is unlimited; it is the creator of the physical plane but it is incomplete without a working and vivid imagination. What is considered surreal in western reality (i.e., buffalo running out of holes in the ground, or new landscapes burgeoning in front of our eyes) is the consequence of the consciousness' need to expand its scope. In the Dagara tradition the experience of these realities is an opportunity to grow emotionally, intuitively, and as a community. In the west this type of experiences is grounds to be medicated or institutionalized. The western world has left no room for possibility, except through scientific discovery, which often takes many centuries to accept new understandings of reality.

Intention, Meaning and Dagara Reality

In the tribal context shifting reality through magic is closely linked with communication, and more specifically musical and verbal communication. As mentioned in Chapter Two the magic structure relies heavily on intonation, meaning,

and emotion as vital communicative strategies. Creative acts are the means by which the Dagara manipulate and shift reality, a process also described by Anzaldúa:

> "When I studied painting and writing, I discovered that I could create concrete universes. Rather I didn't create them; I was the conductor for them, the channel. Sometimes these worlds would write or paint themsevlves out (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 104).

Music, creativity, and emotional expression (often through music) are necessary and integral parts of tribal magic; they are often enacted communally and are central to ritual practices, which seek to bring healing on a communal level. The Dagara funeral ritual, as colorfully explained by Somé, is filled with expressions of song, dance, instrument playing, wailing, and incantations in order to shift the energy of grief:

> "During a Dagara funeral ritual, all kinds of grief are released—not just regret for the departed, but the pain of everyday life. The chanters accompanied by the male xylophone, might sing that only an unmarried man has the right to cry for a meal, for there is nobody to serve him. The female xylophone would respond with her double note of agreement. Or a man who lost his crop to bad weather could use the funeral space to release his complaint, chanting his loss in unison with the melody of the funeral. Meanwhile a drum would broadcast its deafening rhythm, penetrating every heart in search of hidden miseries" (Somé, 1994 p.58).

> "Without music and chanting there is no funeral, no grief, and no death […] the general atmosphere appeared festive. It was hot and everybody was sweating. Outside the compound I could hear the music of the xylophones, the songs of the chanters, and the crowd's monotonous, persistent murmur. Everywhere cries and laughter mixed to create an atmosphere of festive tragedy. The apex of grief had been reached by most the day

before. The reality of death had been absorbed and people were more relaxed" (Somé, 1994 p.59).

At various points during the funeral of Somé's beloved grandfather ancient rituals facilitated dramatic shifts in perceptual reality for the whole community. Ecstatic dancing in the village square, meant to evoke primal emotional expression, precedes many shifts , that tear the fabric of the ordinary world and evoke changes in consciousness, emotional growth and healing:

> "Suddenly and methodically someone blew a wéle, a hunting whistle, its sharp notes penetrated every ear. In the special language of hunters, it proclaimed that a herd of walpiel (deer) were headed southwest straight toward the compound […] a general alarm ensued. People ran for their lives, screaming unintelligibly, in the search for hiding places. Some men hid behind trees. Others, realizing the uselessness of any attempt to confront these ferocious animals, hid just behind the baobab tree trunk outside the compound. The most courageous among the crowd never moved. These few individuals knew that the herd was created and being controlled from Grandfather's room, where only a few minutes ago the council of elders and healers had gone. The materialization of this herd was a perfect illusion—these animals were as harmless as the air, yet the sound of their deafening hoofs pounding on the ground was growing deafening as the distance between the crowd and the herd narrowed [….] the herd finally ran directly into the crowd and, with a cavernous noise melted away into the air" (Somé, 1994 p. 67-68)

The manifestation of the herd served an important focus in honoring Grandfather and the manifestation of the illusion was a magical tool meant to evoke strong emotion to honor the deceased grandfather :

> "The medicine men created the illusion of this herd of wild beasts because of Grandfather's close relationship, as hunter and healer to the natural world. They wished to bring this world into the funeral ritual" (Somé, 1994 p.68)

The displays grew more fantastic and evocative as the day's long ritual continued, and the intensity and realness of the visions increased in order to evoke more and more emotional response from the community transforming grief into joy:

> "The last boburo—medicine man—had barely disappeared into the compound when all of a sudden there was a piercing noise right above our heads. All eyes looked up in the sky, searching for its source. There was a light circling grandfather's paala, about three hundred meters above him. The arrow's speed was so dazzling that, had it not been for its luminosity and the dark trail of steam it left behind, nobody would have seen it. The arrow of light circled three times around the paala, then shot straight into the midst of wet ground and reappeared twenty meters away, shooting up from between the legs of a woman who was seated with her back toward the compound…the woman leaped to her feet and executed a bizarre dance" (Somé, 1994 p.68).

> "The funeral participants had barely recovered from the display of the magical arrow when the next wonder appeared. Because my grandfather had been a great medicine man and the leader of our family, it was fitting that the supernaturals that befriended him and aided him in his work would come to pay their last respects. Within the world of the Dagara closely aligned with the worlds of nature and the worlds of the spirit, these beings are commonly seen—just as angels and other heavenly apparitions were once commonly experienced by devout Christians in the West" (Somé, 1994 p.69).

For the Dagara, who value the emotional and spiritual worlds equally with the physical/manifested world, reality is multileveled and varied. Shifting the community's

emotional reality is as important as agricultural or economic practicalities. Indeed, the physical practicalities of daily life are interspersed with the emotional and spiritual realities and there is no separation because the Dagara believe that each level of reality interconnects with the next. This is possible again due to the Dagara's ability to shift modes of consciousness, in this case facilitated by the funeral ritual. Anzaldúa discusses the crossing of the upperworld with the underworld and her own connection to the multiple levels of existence, which underscores Somé's recounting of the funeral rituals:

> "I want to talk about the interfaces one crosses when switching between the upper, or external, reality and the underworld, the world of the soul and its images. One reason I'm concerned with these realities is because my last name, "Anzaldúa" is a Basque name, where "an" means above, the upper worlds, the sky, the spirit; "zal" means the underworld, the world of the soul, of images, of fantasy, and "dua" is the brdiging of the two; and the bridge to me is the interface" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 103).

The funeral ritual was integral for the community because the ceremonies shifted the emotional and spiritual reality of the grieving participants and once the emotional reality of the community was shifted from grief to joy, daily practical living could resume. In the west emotional reality is largely ignored in order to tend to objective and rational reality.

The Kontombili

Kontombili, are small demi-human like beings and are prevalent in the Dagara world. These beings occupy a liminal space between the ordinary world and imaginary world, but are no less "real" than creatures in the natural world, and can manifest in the physical world when they need to communicate with humans with less sensitivity.

Somé first glimpses a Kontombili as a child accompanying his mother in the bush when he spotted and chased a tiny white rabbit into an earthen hole:

> "Where I had thought there would be a rabbit there was instead a tiny old man as small as the rabbit itself. He sat on an almost invisible chair and held a miniscule can in his right hand. His head was covered with hair so white and so shiny that it seemed unnatural. His beard was long and white too, reaching almost to his chest, and he wore a traditional Dagara mantle, also white. All around him was a glow, a shiny rainbow ring, like a round window or portal into another reality. Although his body filled most of that portal, I could see that there was an immense world inside it. But what surprised me most was that the laws of nature in that world did not seem to operate like anything I had seen before. The little chair was sitting on a steep slope, yet he did not fall over backwards. I noticed that something like a thin wall sustained him. He was not leaning against the chair he was sitting on, but against that thin wall even though he appeared upright in the window […] "I forgot to scream as the little man said, 'I have been watching you for a long time, ever since your mother started bringing you here. Why do you want to hurt the rabbit, your little brother? What did he do to you, little one?'" (Somé, 1994 p.18).

The Kontombili appears, subverting Somé's experience of realness by defying the laws of "normal reality" . Somé notes that it is customary for Kontombili to appear in order to impart wisdom, and that children in particular are prone to perceiving these creatures, due to their sensitivity to other worlds. It is also noteworthy that in this case, the little man imparts an early lesson in interconnectivity and compassion to the young Somé.

Kontombili appear frequently in contexts of funeral rituals. They remind villagers of the unseen, and often appear in times of emotional upheaval or communal celebration. They are keepers of wisdom:

> "Approaching Grandfather's paala from the north came a strange group of beings, short red creatures who looked like humans. They had pointed ears and were two feet tall at most, with genitals so long they had to roll them around their necks, and hair so long it touched the ground […] though they looked tiny and helpless, the Kontombili are the strongest, most intelligent beings God ever created. Grandfather told me they are part of what he called the "universal consciousness," but even though they are immeasurably intelligent, like us they do not know where god is. They come form a world called *Kontonteg*, a fine place, far bigger than Earth, yet very difficult to locate in time and space. They make their homes in illusionary caves that serve as portals between our world and theirs" (Somé, 1994 p.69).

In this instance, the whole tribe sees the little beings which is unusual because, except those with the gift of second sight, most villagers cannot see them. In the western world the Kontombili can only be understood as fictional or mythological representations of human beings' fantasies. The Kontombili communicate through rhythm, rhyme, and musical intonation. In the west the appearance of the Kontombili at the funeral ritual described by Somé would be categorized as a sort of mass delusion, induced by the community's grief over the loss of an important tribesman. The Kontombili's language transcends rational, linear thought, and speaks to the intuitive or emotional understanding of the humans they seek to guide toward higher wisdom. I re-quote a passage first introduced in the section on knowledge to illustrate the value of the Kontombili in tribal wisdom:

> "The Kontombili live very long," Grandfather once told me. "They can live as long as they want, but they can die when they are ready. We owe them most of the magic we know—and much of our joy. For example, before we met them we did not know how to brew millet beer. One day one of our women met a Kontomblé when she was out in the

> bush hunting for dry wood. He gave her a calabash full of foamy liquid and when she drank it, she was delighted. She felt merry and wanted to sing. When she asked the Kontomblé what she was drinking, he said it was dan, made from millet grains…The woman went home and did as she was told, and since then we have dan. Many secrets were thus divulged to selected villagers in the same way. Kontombili soon became the village consultants" (Somé, 1994 p. 71).

The above quote also illustrates the interconnectivity of different planes of reality and how one level has the ability to profoundly affect another. The Kontombili reside on a more subtle plane than ordinary reality but essentially slow down their vibrational frequency in order to impart wisdom to the Dagara and improve their practical daily living in a variety of ways.

Dagara Language and Magic

The conception of language as a magical tool has been largely lost in western communication, but in the indigenous context it is the only way to effectively utilize language for change. Prayer, or the repetition of names or phrases (termed Japa in, Hindu and Buddhist traditions) evokes energetic forces in order to transform internal (consciousness) or external (material) realities (Mataji, 1997). In the west, prayer became primarily utilized as a religious tool to prevent calamity, but aside from the liturgical tradition in Catholicism, the musical nature of prayer was largely lost, as conservatism in spiritual expression became the norm due to the influence of Protestant religious restrictions on emotional expression in public (Zaleski, 2005). The ecstatic and often passionate nature of indigenous spiritual rituals became a source of fear and disgust. Nonetheless the concept of sound as transformative magic is still widely held in many African, Black, and Afro-Caribbean spiritual practices (Edwards, 2011).

> "The dwarf began a prayer that lasted forever. He spoke very fast. The speech was punctuated here and there by spitting and coughing and growling. Grandfather's name kept coming up over and over. I could also hear the regular refrain *k'a suo mwan kur*, *k'a kur mwan suo*, meaning, "so that the iron can cut iron." The man was obviously conjuring up the world of the ancestors for protection against evil forces. Every time higher forces are invoked to intervene against higher forces, elders use these terms. Meanwhile the other medicine man was repeatedly shaking a *kontonbgele*, the bell that calls the spirits, and a *kuor*, a ritual drum. The cacophony was hallucinatory" (Somé, 1994 p.84).

The use of ritual language is seen again during the initiation ceremony numerous times. Language, often repetitive and highly tonal is used to invoke magical transformation, which facilitates the shift of participants in initiation rituals into non-habitual states of consciousness:

> "Suddenly my perceptions changed, turning inside out in an instant. No—the elder had been speaking all the time! He had never stoped talking and gazing into the fire. This new perception, however, did not help stabilize me in reality. Instead, I felt as if I were jumping from one contradiction to another, from one strange realization to another, registering reality in an abnormal way. I was too busy trying to make sense of something that was probably supposed to challenge my habitual perceptions (Somé, 1994 p. 200).

Learning to See

For most westerners, "ordinary" or physical reality will be the only mode of consciousness experienced over time. However, the various modes of consciousness which allow for multiple perceptions of reality outside of the ordinary mode often occur

when least expected, and are typically evoked through crisis, chaos, lapses into dream states or a momentary spontaneous de-centralizing of one's individuated identity:

> "The alarm goes off, you get up and this reality is privileged over the others. But there is another world, and it crops up when we least expect it...when we're sitting and go in and out of different states of consciousness. When we least expect it usually when we're tired or bored, daydreams may come. Daydreams are images or scenarios that occur in little sequential dramas [...] Most people don't realize that they are switching modes or when they do switch modes [...] Nothing is separate. It all filters through from one world to another, from one mode of consciousness to another (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 106).

Consciousness states invoked during Dagara initiation rituals through extreme and chalenging conditions usher in a view of the ordinary world which transcended Somé's western rational, physical understanding; as a result this new consciousness allowed him to bore through the consensual reality of his colonial schooling to discover more expansive conceptions of reality. He writes evocatively of his experience in the underworld:

> "All around me and underneath me I could feel life pulsating, down to the smallest piece of dirt on the ground. The way this life expressed itself was otherworldly: sounds were blue or green, colors were loud. I saw incandescent visions and apparitions, breathing color amid persistent immobility. Everything seemed alive with meaning. Even the stonelike circle of people partook of the same cacophony of meaning. Each person was a sum total of all the emanations taking place. The people however, were not in charge of the operation of the universe around them—they were dependent on it and they were useful to it as well" (Somé, 1994 p. 243)

The elder's incantation induced a synesthesia state of blending perceptual data that forced Somé out of the comfort of the ordinary world, much like the deer running through the village, or the appearance of the Kontombili at the funeral, these rituals are meant to shake lose the fetters of ordinary reality for the community at large. However, as Somé discovered repeatedly throughout the initiation process, the rational mind does not easily release its foothold on the known:

> "The contrast between this state of mind and what I had been accustomed to at the seminary was the same as the difference between liquid and solid. It seemed to me that Dagara knowledge was liquid in the sense that what I was learning was living, breathing, flexible and spontaneous. What I was learning only made sense in terms of relationship. It was not fixed, even when it appeared to be so. For example trees are not immobile, they travel like us from place to place […] Still I kept asking myself questions. Could one reality contradict another? What kind of new reality was I being introduced to? What is reality predicated upon? […] An old man had started speaking and suddenly I began knowing, or remembering something" (Somé, 1994 p.204).

The apparent solidity of the colonial world was a clear impediment to the fluid state of reality being proposed through the incantatory words of the elder. Dagara reality was no less "real" than the apparently solid western world Somé had grown accustomed to, but was ripe with emotion and meaning and through the deliberate use of language, music, and rhythm was infinitely more alive than the increasingly deadened world of the boarding school.

> "When I opened my eyes the circle looked like a wonderland. The fire was alive in a magnificent way. It had ceased to be a fire and become a luminescent circle of dynamism, the window into a marvelous world populated by Lilliputians. They were suspended in the middle of it, singing a curious melody. I watched these beings,

> magnetized by their unceasing motion. They were suspended in midair. I realized they appeared small only because they were far away, yet I also knew that this was happening in the light right there in front of me. The song that rose from the fire did not necessarily come from the floating people, but seemed to emanate from everywhere and everything. Soon the luminescent circle of the fire grew bigger and bigger. I could not tell what exactly was happening bug I did not care. It felt great" (Somé, 1994 p.214).

Perhaps no perceptual shift was more important than Somé's experience with the Green Lady in the yila tree. I have written about the transformative nature of his experience with the tree at some length in previous sections, but in the context of discussing notions of reality his account of the encounter with the Green Lady is fundamental to understanding Dagara understandings of reality. Through the initiation trials of "trying to see" Somé continuously strives to overcome internalized colonized perceptual barriers. In the initiation camp Somé learned that glimpsing at other realities is not always a grand production of magical transmigration but can quite often occur by surrendering to one's suppressed emotional and intuitive faculties. The transformation of the yila tree is experienced when the insistence of stubbornly held reality constructions is dropped in favor of true openness:

> "I then spoke to the tree again, not angrily, but respectfully. I told her that, after all, it was not her fault that I could not see, but mine. I simply lacked the ability [….] my words were sincere, I felt them while I said them […] The sun, the forest, and the elders and I understood that I was in another reality, witnessing a miracle. All the trees around my yila were glowing like fires of breathing lights. I felt weightless, as if I were at the center of a universe where everything was looking at me as if I were naked, weak and innocent (Somé, 1994 p.220).

Through the deceptively simple act of surrendering the logical mind to apparent chaos, Somé was granted access to a transcendent experience which, in the western context, would be viewed as a psychotic break brought upon by extreme physical and emotional stress from sitting outside in the baking sun for two days without food or water. However, to dismiss his experience as a state only enacted through deprivation is to engage in an act of colonial epistemological and ontological ignorance of the spiritual world. Anzaldúa explains the possibility of Somé's experience:

> "The spirit world, the underworld, and the world of imagination can be experienced as one world or as several. A person in the Santeria tradition will say that stones talk to her. Somebody in the western mode will disagree and insist that stones can't talk to her, but for the Santeria both are equally real. Because the various worlds are equally real, we can have the presence of the tree or the rock talking to us. The wind or the whirlwind are bringers of messages, while "Western man" would call these messages acts of imagination or fiction. People make up stories, entirely fictitious" stories according to the way they've been raised" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 107).

Therefore in seeking to understand and integrate Somé's experience into western consciousness it's important to recognize the trope of "fiction" and the tendency to dismiss that which is not understood as fictitious or worse yet, fabricated.

Somé's experience was catalyst through the evocation of language; a sincere emotional outpouring that, like the funeral ritual songs and incantations, facilitated a transformation of reality which would prove beneficial for Somé's development. Nonetheless, the experience itself, and his feeling of being nurtured by the essence of nature was the first real breakthrough in the journey toward psychological and spiritual integration. Not surprisingly this entry point was accessed through the feminine

principle of nature itself (changeable, mysterious and nurturing) and stands in stark contrast to the harsh and demanding nature of the masculine initiation ceremony itself:

> "When I looked once more at the yila, I became aware that it was not a tree at all. How had I ever seen it as such? I do not know how this transformation occurred. Things were not happening logically, but as if this were a dream. Out of nowhere, in the place where the tree had stood, appeared a tall woman dressed in black from head to foot. She resembled a nun, although her outfit did not seem religious" (Somé, 1994 p. 221).

The subverted nun-like appearance of the Green Lady can be seen as a symbolic reminder of the rigid Catholicism that helped to create the bars of his perceptual jail cell. She acts as an anti-colonial heroine for Somé; made of green luminescent fluid, in many ways she was the answer to the rigid confines of western structure: organic, mysterious and the "expression of immeasurable love" (Somé, 1994 p. 221). The Green Lady serves as Somé's true savior intimately connected with his home culture and intrinsically tied to the natural world, she is the antithesis to western reality, unbelievable and incomprehensible both in emotional depth and physical presence. It is no accident that both The Green Lady and young village girl that helps Somé to find his way out of his final travels in the underworld at the end of his initiation are feminine in representation. It takes the feminine principle to break the rigidity of staunch, masculine western conditioning.

In many respects Somé's immersion into Dagara notions of reality began with her appearance, as he learned that the transdimensional perception that had been stolen from him in the French school is actually the expression of greater understanding, not delusional superstition:

> "Traditional education consists of three parts: enlargement of one's ability to see, destabilization of the body's habit of being bound to one plane of being, and the ability to voyage transdimensionally and return. Enlarging one's vision and abilities ahs nothing supernatural about it, rather it is "natural" to be a part of nature and to participate in a wider understanding of reality" (Somé, 1994 p.226).

Somé proposes a reordering of our conceptions of natural and supernatural, where what we consider supernatural is actually quite natural if our perceptions of reality can expand to include and transcend the ordinary perspectival world. Somé does not suppose that the three-dimensional physical world does not exist, but rather implores us to recognize that it is no more real than the unseen world the west has tried so hard to bury under centuries of scientific categorization. What Somé refers to as traditional education is the stuff of secret societies and fantasy films in the western world, however, in the Dagara tribe it is simply life. What he gains in perception during his initiation trials afforded him a vision of reality richer than the flat vision of the world proposed and perpetuated in the west. He also suggests relearning the use of imagination in our understanding of the world. Seeing the world through the lens of a child prior to the imagination faculties being shut down with "real world" concepts and laws. In learning to see past the ordinary appearance of the three-dimesional he was able to push past the boundaries of western modernity drilled into him in order to maintain order and linearity, to uncover a holistic reality which supports a more natural and innocent state inborn in the human being.

Reality and Communication

Communication and reality are intimately linked as communication in the western tradition is seen quite often as an act that must be, in some way, enacted in the

physical world (either by living organisms or the extension of those organisms via technology) in order to be considered complete and valid. The western binary presupposes the presence of a sender and receiver, (or a subject and object) in order for a complete communicative transaction to occur. However, as we've seen through Somé's experience in the Dagara tradition, communication also occurs between the spaces of the subject and object via emotion, magic, and communion with nature and other intangible forces (little people, tree-spirits, etc.). The urge to sing out, dance, beat a drum, wail, or talk to a tree comes first from an emotional or intuitive impulse to change ordinary reality in some way. Nature plays a significant role in communication, and the natural world is used as a conduit to higher levels of communication between beings and the environment itself, rather than an obstacle to be tamed and regulated.

Shifting Reality and Communication

The colonial insistence on the binary order of communication in the "real world" limits the awareness of reality outside of what is deemed real. If western epistemology can accept that communication between a tree and a human being is possible (without labeling such communication neurotic or positioning it within a biological scientific lens) then it no longer limits its perceptual bandwidth.

For eons seers and mystics have engaged in the process of automatic writing; the stream of consciousness channeling of either aspects of the unconscious self or the spirit world in order to gain insight into a particular problem or issue. Modern psychology of course deems this kind of communication as a purely metaphorical exploration of one's own psyche because the possibility of communication with other realities, or beings within those realities, shatters the stability of scientific certainty. With the admission of

the liminal states of reality one must allow in the reality of the tenuous and changeable, which evokes terror in the western psyche. To communicate with these forces is to communicate with potentially destabilizing truths, the true ontological chasms of nepantla, Anzaldúa states:

> "In this liminal, transitional space, suspended between shifts, you're two people, split between before and after. Nepantla, where the outer boundaries of the mind's inner life meet the outer world of reality, is a zone of possibility. You experience reality as fluid, expanding and contracting . In nepantla you are exposed, open to other perspectives, more readily able to access knowledge derived from inner feelings, imaginal states, and outer events, and to "see through" 9 them with a mindful, holistic awareness. Seeing through human acts both individual and collective allows you to examine the ways you construct knowledge, identity, and reality, and explore how some of your /others' constructions violate other people's ways of knowing and living" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 pgs. 543-544).

Communication with other realities need not be highly metaphysical or stem from esoteric spiritual practices in order to be immediately useful. Acknowledging the presence of other realities outside of the material world can quite simply mean acknowledging the emotional, somatic or spiritual reality of a given situation. In the Dagara tradition this was done for example through exercising the grief of a recent death through song and communal emotional expression. In everyday communication this would mean acknowledging the emotions, sensations or intuitions of a given situation rather than ignoring their presence and interaction. Thus other realities are not stifled under the pressing concerns of physical expression or speech.

In the Dagara tradition music, dance and incantation seek to bring forth the mystical forces of the other worlds necessary to implement change in the physical universe. These acts seek to bring forth deeper meaning for the participants. Such is the goal of art in most cultures. The goal of expression is often to evoke a shift in both the performer and the spectators.. The experience of expression in the Dagara tribe is representative of the belief in the interrelatedness of various planes of reality. As the emotional expression of the performer has the ability to radically shift the emotional experience and the reality of the community as a whole. Therefore healing through art, music or simply the public display of emotionality is possible which shifts negative emotional states to positive emotional states, not through denial but through transmutation.

Aperspectival Reality and Communication

There is no separation between sender and receiver and as such the rules of communication are not bound to western limitations of possibility. Nonetheless, theories of communication, which insist on the binary construction of reality in order to quell existential anxieties will continually subjugate and delegitimize indigenous understandings of communication until they can accept, as Somé and Anzaldúa suggest, the efficacy of modes communication outside the binary construction (spirit communication, ritual dance, magic, etc.) as more than just mere entertainment or fantastical fiction. Without the expansion of the possibilities of non-consensual realities in the west, indigenous and Othered conceptions of communication, reliant on emotion, intuition, and the connection humans/nature will be relegated to the fringe and remain speculative theories at best and delusional or psychotic at worst. =Somé and the

philosophies of the Dagara offer a model of reality that expands beyond the three-dimensional perspectival world and the possibilities for communicating within and outside of the three-dimensional sphere. Until the potentiality of reality outside of the known physical universe is accepted, communication beyond the physical binary universe perpetuated by western philosophy and science is and will continue to be impossible, and opportunities to communicate beyond the margins will be systemically missed. Anzaldúa suggests that approaching reality from the dream-like state where consciousness temporarily fades may be helpful in aiding perceptual expansion beyond physical reality, which would free up alternative modes of communication by granting access to other levels of reality within the imaginary realms of understanding. She again relates this experience to the act of creation for the artist:

> "Have you ever been on a train, plane or bus, and you were tired but you couldn't sleep, yet you knew that for about thirty seconds you did go to sleep...isn't that a weird kind of twilight time? I belive we all live in this world some of the time, but only a few people are aware of it. Artists cultivate entrance into this state because it gives them material to work with. We artists live half the time in the imaginary worlds and the other half in other kinds of mental worlds. I'm not sure that we live in physical reality all that much or that physical reality can exist without being represented by the mind" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 109).

For both the shaman and the artist, reality is not separate from the imagination; the spirit world, the emotional world, and the intellectual realities are constantly negotiated in order to bring about change for the individual or the community. Both of these archetypal positions indicate that communication outside the comfortable realms of western reality can be enacted through the volutnary disruption of one's personal and

cultural tropes; where consensual reality and personal realities disappear, and something entirely new is born out of the dialectical tensions, moving us out of "conceptual mind-set[s]" and into the ability to see through the "surface of things and situations" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002 pgs. 547).

CHAPTER FOUR
A Theory of Transversal Communication

Theories of communication produced within western scholarly frameworks are efficient yet limited to binary models. In order to understand the necessity of communication theory to move outside a conceptual framework based on binaries, we must first review the basic dialectical transactional models of communication. A review of four Introduction to Communication undergraduate textbooks found that the models of communication that underlie basic communication education in the west are very limited when it comes to understanding non-dualistic modes of communication. In fact, all four textbooks, while excellent in describing traditional understandings of communication, failed to even suggest communication theories outside of the western paradigm. There are three basic models of communication: the action model, the interaction model, and the transaction model, all of which rely on dialectical binary relationships between subject and object. A brief review of these models illustrates how strong the binary foundation of communication theory is.

Western Models of Communication

The action or linear model of communication presupposes that all communicative acts involve a sender and a receiver. This assumes that an individual (sender or source) has a message/thought they intend to communicate (or encode) to another person (receiver); then the receiver must decode the message (Floyd, 2011; Adler et. al, 2015). The medium through which someone chooses to communicate is considered a channel which is "the method by which a message is conveyed between people" (Adler et. al 2014 pgs. 8-9) however one must also be aware of potential "noise" which is "a term social scientists use to describe any forces that interfere with

effective communication" (Adler et. al 2014 pgs. 8-9). Noise can be psychological, physiological, and/or external; noise can make the actual decoding of the messages more difficult or simplistic depending on the level of interference. The environments are of a particularly important aspect of communication transaction and can include not only physical location "but also […] the personal experiences and cultural backgrounds that participants bring to a conversation" (Adler et al, 2014 p.9).

Communication as interaction or the interaction-based model of human communication was developed to allow for more complexity in human communication:

> "The interaction model takes up where the action model leaves off. It includes all of the same elements: source, message, channel, receiver, noise, encoding, and decoding but it differs from the action model in two basic ways. First the interaction model recognizes that communication is a two-way process. Second, it adds two elements to the mix: feedback and context" (Floyd, 2011 p. 8).

The interaction model is intended to be more realistic than the linear model due to the added complexity of feedback (various verbal and nonverbal messages) and context (the environment one is in—either psychologically or physically).

The transactional model of communication was developed as an antidote for the simplicity of the linear and interaction models, which researchers found to be inadequate to explain the varied nuances of human communication. The transactional model "shows that both sending and receiving are simultaneous" rather than a simplistic tennis match-like exchange between two communicators (Adler et. al, 2014 p.10). Sender and receiver are interchangeable in the transactional model, which claims that in any given moment participants are capable of "receiving, decoding and responding to another person's behavior, while at the same time the other person is receiving and

responding to ours" (Adler et. al, 2014 p.10). The transactional model also introduces the concept of "feedback" which can be verbal or nonverbal and positive or negative, which helps communicators to gauge reactions. Messages are being conveyed between the source and the receiver(s) and their respective roles are interchangeable at any given moment. This model is presented to communication theory neophytes as particularly complex since sender and receiver are in constant flux of message decoding and encoding whilst factoring in noise, content, and environment and working with various channels or media (Floyd, 2011).

Each model of communication can be applied to different communication contexts with the action model being applied to very simplistic communicative exchanges, and the transaction model being applied to more complex interpersonal or group communication endeavors where both parties are sending and receiving messages simultaneously (Floyd, 2011). All in all communication theory for western scholars is a fairly straightforward process despite its elements of complexity; while it can be complicated by a multitude of elements introduced into the binary models in order to address communication efficacy, the models are still founded on dichotomous processes.

Noise, environment, and channels are all aspects to be overcome in western communication so that the foundational binary subject/object can receive the messages being sent properly and clearly. Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth and Harter suggest that communication is an inevitable, complicated process in which one is in constant interaction with an autonomous, separate other, interpreting, decoding, sending and

receiving messages in a variety of contextual environments and with varying levels of noise (Pearson et. al, 2013).

For the western communication scholar, all communicative acts between two or more individuals operate within a premise where entities maintain separate identitive, cultural, emotional, and physical borders. However, as the previous chapters explained, not all human communities understand communication as a process that happens among autonomous, separate individuals. Somé and Anzaldúa—each based on their own non-western cultural communities—explain how much of human communication involves the dissolution of borders. These non-western scholars insist on the centrality of entities that dissolve into each other, complex and invisible communication channels that link and connect, rhizomatic fibers that allow subjects to merge with each other or the environment. I the following pages I attempt to design a communication model that could articulate such understanding of communication—a transversal communication model. One of the major differences between western binary models of communication and a transversal theory of communication lie in the role of the potential obstacles; while traditional communication models understand noise and environment.as obstacles to overcome, many non-western traditions conceive of contextual elements as central to communication. In the Dagara tradition noise and environment are not elements to be tuned out but entities through which one can communicate, to be incorporated into the communication process, not to be overcome. In the western models, communication competence lies in tuning out noise and decoding messages through mental delineation, thus competence is:

> "[…] simply the ability to effectively exchange meaning through a common system of symbols or behavior […] Communication competence can be difficult because your

> goals and others' goals may be discrepant. Similarly, you and those with whom you communicate may have a different understanding of your relationship. Cultural differences may cause you to view the world and other people differently. Indeed different perspectives about communication may themselves create problems in your interactions with others" (Pearson et. al, 2013 p. 19).

The above definition excludes various levels the communicator's *experience, such as interaction with* the environment, with emotions, and with other people; communication competence is defined as a process which should be "noise free" and clear-cut. The communicatively competent in the west gains greater skill by decoding, encoding, and interpreting messages between sender and receiver with relative detachment from symbolic, emotional, cultural, and psychological stimuli. This is done through separating rational consciousness from all other types of interaction during the process of communication; this process leads western communication toward dissociation and abstraction. The western communicator is understood as a subject that can reach perfect autonomy, a fragmented subject who can silence non-rational stimuli, a subject who can separate fragments of experience in a mechanistic process of sending and receiving.

Ruth Finnegan and Multiple Modes of Communication

The potential for the synthesis and fusion of multiple identities has only been recently postulated in the study of communication. In her book, *Communicating: The Multiple Modes of Human Communication,* Ruth Finnegan suggests that human communication has been limited by western notions of identity, verbal, and nonverbal communication processes, and in recent years, technology mediated communication. This gap has left large aspects of communication outside of the traditional western structures unexplored by communication scholars (Finnegan, 2014). Finnegan

discusses the role of spiritual, emotional, and somatic communication from an anthropological perspective. She also discusses the role of near-death, psychic, dream and intuitive experiences and their implications on communication theory as grounded in material reality. Finnegan addresses the binary, materialistic, logocentric, process-oriented elements of traditional communication scholarship:

> "Looking back at my own experiences, I felt the need for a wider view of communication. There seemed a place for a book which could draw together something of the many current insights into the importance of all the senses in our human interconnecting, of material objects, contacts across space and time, and the significance of experiential dimensions of human life, not just the cognitive. Too many of our assumptions and analyses have been logocentric or unidimensional, cutting out the dynamic processes of gesture, movement, dance, often even sound itself" (Finnegan 2014, *Preface*).

Finnegan also notes how the varying hegemonic western models of communication appear on the surface to be quite thorough in describing the various means human beings use to communicate, but are limited to linguistic, non-verbal, and meaning-making theories about the processes of communication. Finnegan argues for a definition of communication that is more indicative and encompassing of the idea of communication as a series of unfolding understandings, multidimensionally across physical, spatial/temporal, cultural, and ontological boundaries utilizing a variety of different means, faculties and technologies that is more akin to communicat*ing* rather than communication (which implies a finality):

> "In other words, 'communicating' is not one single once-and-for-all thing which you either have or don't have, but a bundle of features, themselves graduated rather than

> absolute […] Communication in this view is a relative process with multiple features each of which may in any given case be present to a greater or lesser extent — a multidimensional spectrum of acting and experiencing, not a bounded entity. And just because the spectrum is multifaceted the boundaries between communicative and non-communicative action are not absolute (Finnegan, 2014 *Communicating-a multiple, relative emerging process*).

Expanding Beyond the Dialectic

I have shown through the analysis of Somé's narrative that the abstractions, delegitimization, and dismissal of experiences that lie outside of the colonial tropes of identity, knowledge, time/space, and reality have had various detrimental effects on communication. These abstractions function primarily to maintain structures of hegemonic power in both the western and non-western world.

As Malidoma Somé suggests in his memoir's introduction, European and U.S.-based philosophies have focused primarily on material and political power and are supported through the propagation of dualistic ideologies. These ideologies produced various cultural and economic benefits, yet were profoundly damaging to the spiritual and emotional development of the healthy western consciousness (Somé, 1994 p.6).

Much like other academic disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology and the natural sciences, theories of communication have been constructed and continually built within the dissociated dualistic paradigm. Strict subject/object binary relationships subjugate experiences outside of those dialectical boundaries and marginalize epistemologies and ontologies that suggest alternative perspectives.

The dualistic ideologies that typify western philosophy have not only stripped a great deal of meaning from interpersonal and community interactions through various forms of neocolonial violence (such as the overvaluation of literacy, the canonization of imperial historical tropes, the practice of scientism, and philosophical neocolonialism), but have also aided in the perpetuation of the profound fragmentation of the human spirit in the west.

Healing the Problem of Communication

The "problem of communication" lie in the barriers of hyper-articulation and over-analysis. The philosophical barricades built by western scientific tropes against non-binary understandings of time, non-consensual experience have become too strong and as such threaten alternative versions of experiences. To paraphrase Gloria Anzaldúa: only our labels split us now, turning human beings and their experiences into efficiently, rigid, and linearly categorized elements of a process defined only on criteria of efficiency (Anzaldúa, 2009).

Western over-emphasis on dissociation and abstraction and the marginalization of non-dominant philosophies of identity, space/time, reality, and knowledge limit our ability to understand the potential of human communication. For the west, death must be avoided at all costs, and the existential need to evade death leads to compulsive impulses to legitimize only that which is measurable and predictable.

Most westerners do not have access to initiation rituals and communal experiences such as followed by the Dagara. In the same line of thought, most non-indigenous, white or otherwise racially or gender privileged westerners will not willingly seek the experiences of nepantla as described by Anzaldúa. Many westerners

will never participate in a magical or spiritual ritual designed to unseat the familiarity of hegemonic versions of identity or reality. Unfortunately, even if westerners do experience a transcendent meditative or spiritual experience, they will lack the context with which to explain those experiences. However, this does not presuppose that transversal experiences are only reserved for the indigenous Other. It also does not presuppose that the benefits of transversal experiences are only gained through extraordinary circumstances. The crux then becomes how to socialize the possibility of experiencing transversal communication without Dagara-like magical initiation or profound near-death experiences as described by Anzaldúa The task is to develop theories and models of communication that can circumvent rigid western dualism and linearity, models able to explain elements of human communication that fall outside of the rational exchange between subject and object. Such alternative communication model should embrace emotional, intuitive, magical, and spiritual sensitivities..

Conocimiento

Engaging in transversal communication (which I will elucidate further in the following section) is much like engaging in Anzaldúa's stages of conocimiento, or the path of knowledge. Anzaldúa's path of conocimiento breaks away from the "traditional" forms of knowledge to propose a multi-sensory, multi-leveled process of constructing knowledge which integrates the shadow and light aspects of selfhood, identity, culture, gender and/or sexual identifications. Conocimiento is understood in terms of shifts; liminal states between what one knows to be and what one will discover, rather than a linear progression toward understanding, which typifies traditional western conceptions of knowledge (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009).

For Anzaldúa, conocimiento is a verb rather than a noun. It is a process of becoming, which constantly unfolds. People carry conocimiento rather than obtain it as we might some tangible force. Anzaldúa explains how we are constantly finding ourselves buried between the identifications, relationships, and narratives we rely on for stability. For Anzaldúa, conocimiento is enacted through creative acts, somatic and emotional exploration, and spiritual activism at both the personal and collective levels. Conocimiento is the state of unfolding spiritual inquiry, a process that rejects fixed categories that limit our knowledge about ourselves, the world, the environment, race, gender, sexuality, ability, economic background, etc. To follow the path of conocimiento we must allow our perceptual faculties to expand, to include what our culture has deemed to be false, impossible or untrue, *as well as* listen to the inherent wisdom of the mind (intellect), heart (emotion) and gut (body) equally in order to fully integrate experiences to facilitate deeper personal and cultural shifts:

> "Conocimiento comes from opening all your senses, consciously inhabiting your body and decoding its symptoms— that persistent scalp itch, not caused by lice or dry skin, may be a thought trying to snare your attention. Attention is multileveled and includes your surroundings, bodily sensations and responses, intuitive takes, emotional reactions to other people and theirs to you, and, most important, the images your imagination creates— images connecting all tiers of information and their data" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009 p. 541-542).

Transversal Communication

Transversal communication is an attempt to develop a communication model based on Somé's memories of Dagara initiation rituals and Anzaldúa conocimiento, Transversal Communication (TC) is akin to the process of engaging in conocimiento or

the spiritual transformation of initiation. TC should be able to explain a series of expanding and contracting flows that can be experienced under certain circumstances, allowing the human subject to communicate and interact with others and the environment in a ore holistic way. A transversal model of communication must consider certain essential aspects in order to counter existing binary models. First, than a closed or "purpose driven" interaction, TC must be able to capture processes characterized by blurred boundaries, non-conscious or purpose interactions, forces that cannot be explained by rationality. . Second, TC must consistently allow communicators to make sense of individual or collective experiences of boundaries that expand beyond personal, cultural, epistemological and/or physical definitions of identity. Focusing on alternative understandings of identity, knowledge, reality, and time/space, I propose a model of Transversal Communication to make sense of human communication.

In Figure A I offer a model of western communication which positions the themes of knowledge, time/space, reality, and identity as they are currently conceptualized within western philosophy. In Figure B I offer an alternative model of communication that considers the themes of knowledge, time/space, identity and reality within a holistic, transversal and multidimensional philosophical context as set forth by the theoretical proposals of Gloria Anzaldúa and Malidoma Somé. I present two models proposing the same process of transversal communication. The first, Figure B re-maps identity, knowledge, time/space and reality as a way to de-centralize western tropes. Figure C is a simplified version that shows the process of transversal communication without the labeling of the various aspects of experience (such as reality, space, culture, etc.).

In both transversal communication models the communicative "flow" can direct one deeper into experience/communion with the other or can flow out of one's subjective personal/physical experiences, through one's reality and culture and into the unbounded nature of consciousness itself. Alternately one can engage in both the "inflow" or "outflow" of transversal communication at the same time. In either case, the liminal state is experienced whether it is deeper into connection with another/self or further out of oneself/the other into the formless.

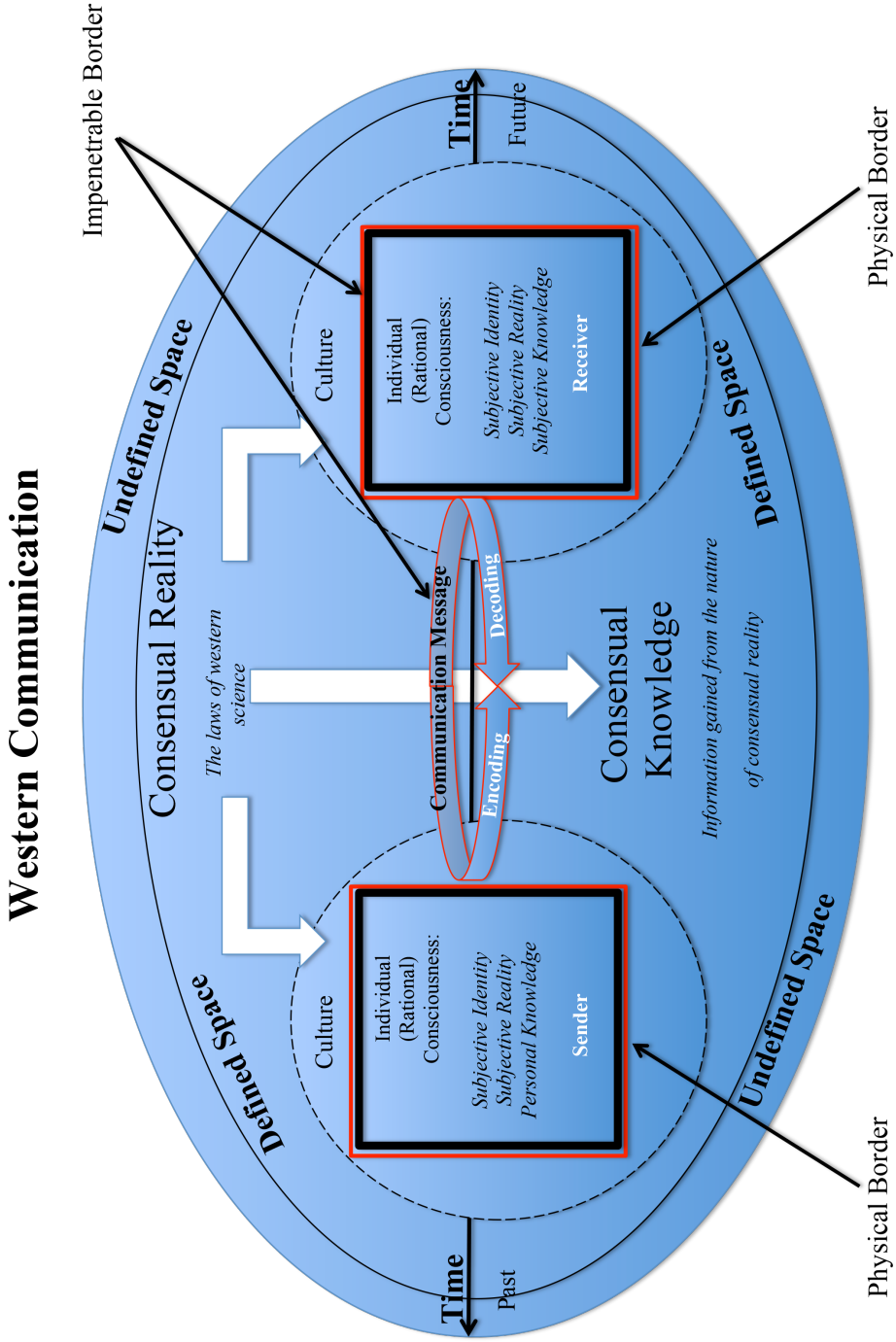

Figure A: Western Communication Model

Positioning of Themes Within Western and Non-Western Communication Models

Reality in Western Communication Model

In the western model of communication (Figure A) consensual reality is always the umbrella that surrounds the communicative exchange. Western notions of objective reality predicate that knowledge or individual consciousness does not create reality but rather understand the nature of reality—this understanding thus becomes consensual reality. Within the western model of communication one can only learn about consensual reality as defined by science but cannot in fact change the nature of reality. To illustrate this in Figure A there reality dictates communication, or communication happens within consensual reality (through layers of culture or individual consciousness); consensual reality exerts a top-down influence of on all aspects below it, including culture, subjective identity, consensual knowledge, and linear time. Within the western model consensual reality is hegemonic and governed by prevailing truth tropes of modern western physics. The white arrows penetrating the areas of culture and cutting through the linearity of time and the communication exchange indicate that the effects of consensual reality are all pervasive. Subjective reality within the western model is where imagination and possibility reside, but are secondary to the ultimate hegemony of consensual reality.

Communication within western reality seeks balance within the confines of the time/space continuum. In other words communication exchanges must "make sense" within time and space according to western tropes of possibility. Consensual reality in the western model helps to nestle human experience within comfortable impenetrable

boundaries. The boundaries that enclose consensual reality and the communication process can only be expand when western scientific knowledge discovers more about the nature of reality. Effective communication meets at the apex of consensual reality and consensual knowledge, (interpersonally this is referred to as *agreement*). Ideal communicative exchanges value reason, consensus, and balance, and honor the nature of consensual reality, thus perpetuating its legitimacy and hegemony.

While culture is considered as part of consensual reality and indeed is known to shape certain aspects of reality, culture is still governed by, and subject to, the permeation of prevailing reality truth tropes. Although subjective reality (housed within the physical border of personal identity) is permitted, it is described as a form of reality that should always be subordinate to consensual, objective reality. Allowed to exist only as a secondary form of reality, subjective reality is only communicated through communication processes between two autonomous beings, but always subjected to the ultimate governance of consensual reality. For example, a culture may be afforded its myths, narratives, and rituals within the larger western sphere, but those tropes are policed by prevailing truths about what is "real" about the universe. Consensual reality in this model presupposes a western ontology.

Knowledge in Western Communication Model:

In the current western models of communication, knowledge is twofold in keeping with the theme of the binary. Consensual knowledge comprises the nature of facts (discovered or undiscovered) about consensual reality (indicated by the arrow descending from the top of the diagram). Consensual knowledge is relegated to the confines of predominant consensual reality tropes as set forth by western science; in

other words, you can only know what is real, what has be declared "to exist." We can only learn what already exists about the nature of reality. Consensual knowledge penetrates culture (which in Figure A is permeable) but holds a more central role than culture in the ultimate experience of reality. Within the western model we can contribute to consensual knowledge via subjective and cultural experiences yet because consensual knowledge is primarily shaped by consensual reality, it is hegemonic, hierarchical, and difficult to alter. Contributing to the construction of knowledge is conditioned on adhering to philosophical and scientific protocols enacted through the principles of empirical evidence, scientific experimentation, and validation. Therefore we can only know what is already true about reality (or that which has been discovered by the laws of western science). Knowledge outside of the confines of consensual reality is impossible within the western model.

Any non-western epistemologies and their various tools used to produce knowledge (such as spiritual, somatic, emotional, or cultural ways of knowing) are secondary (or tertiary) and subject to the dominant tropes of reason, rationality, and the material understanding of the nature of existence. Communication of non-consensual versions of reality and forms of knowledge must pass through the barriers of consensual reality and consensual knowledge and as such are rendered speculative or secondary to factual/rational understanding.

Furthermore, knowledge must be communicated through the physical form and can only penetrate individual consciousness through the physical senses or their extensions. Knowledge is subject to the linear nature of time and can therefore be

progressive or regressive, but because communication happens only in the present, any knowledge of the past or future is merely reflective or speculative.

Time/Space in Western Communication Model:

Time within the current western model of communication penetrates and transverses space. Time is conceptualized as linear and progressive. Within Figure A time intersects all experience (culture, individual consciousness, reality, space, communication, and knowledge). In Figure A time is represented linearly as progress (or the future) on one end of the spectrum, while past is indicated on the other end of the spectrum. This implies that one cannot directly affect time as one is simply subject to the laws of time . Communication must thus happen within linear time and as such cannot happen in any place but the present moment. One cannot communicate forwards or backwards in time because consensual reality and consensual knowledge dictate the impossibility of these interactions. One can only subjectively reflect on past interactions or preemptively speculate when it comes to communicating outside of the present. Accessing passed time can only be done presently through examination of physical records or verbally listening to or reading historical accounts but cannot be experienced directly. Conversely future time cannot be experienced because it is as yet un-manifested within consensual reality and thus not available to consensual knowledge.

Space in Figure A houses the experience of reality. As such, aspects of space can only be known through understanding the ultimate nature of reality and the expansion of consensual knowledge via scientific discovery. Space cannot be affected by the individual selves, the boundaries of space are always determined by western science. Forms can be manipulated (within the confines of consensual reality) but the

nature of space itself cannot be altered. As consensual knowledge "discovers" new features of space, its margins expanded. Form is created within defined-space and is subject to the laws of physics—to produce consensual reality. Communication always happens within the margins of defined space. The boundaries of the physical self are determined by the laws of space and the physical senses or their scientific extensions. Communication can touch the borders of the physical entity where understanding may be imbibed within the consciousness, but the borders themselves cannot be removed or penetrated. Autonomous beings can move about consensual reality within the confines of their physical forms and their defined spaces, and communicate with other physical entities within the precepts of consensual reality, but autonomous entities cannot move outside of the physical borders of their bodies/forms, nor can they move into the undefined nature of space. Communication always happens within perspectival space because space houses reality, and viable communication must always happen in reality.

Identity in Western Communication Model

Although influenced by culture, the current model of western communication understands identity as residing within physical form and defined by consensual knowledge. Identity is the most limited aspect of western communication theory because it is subject to the whim of the more important tropes of reality, time/space and knowledge, and is rigidly confined within physical form. Furthermore western philosophical models divide physical identity (which is more clearly defined, knowable and predictable) as more primary than subjective identity and knowledge. This is represented in Figure A by a solid black rectangle which contains subjective experience; intrapersonal communication happens within the physical borders of the conscious

entity but does not breach the physical border itself. Cultural identity, conceptualized as a permeable container, surrounds and influences personal identity but is subject to the laws of consensual reality and knowledge..

This interaction between culture and personal identity is the basis for cultural communication and larger sociological and social change theories. For example an individual that operates within a cultural milieu can affect (or not), transform or not their culture; however, the entire process is still mandated by the laws of consensual reality, their messages and attempts to transform their cultural milieu have to align with consensual knowledge/reality tropes. Additionally because the tropes of reality, time and space are seen as prevailing and "true" until consensual knowledge accepts the changes proposed by individual or cultural identities, consensual reality remains unchanged and as such the individual in western communication philosophy is disempowered (particularly if that individual/culture is positioned outside of dominant hegemonic forces). Individual consciousness is experienced within the smaller sphere of culture and the larger sphere of consensual reality.

Within the western model individual consciousness cannot permeate the boundaries of reality to experience formless space nor can it operate outside of linear time (which traverses consciousness). Communication between entities occurs via the interaction of the physical senses (or their extensions) in consensual reality. Therefore the physical or tangible outcome of a particular communicative event is primary. Any subjective outcome, any element that is only intelligible within non-western cultural boundaries is deemed secondary. Western models tolerate subjective experiences and exoticized othered experiences to be part the individual experience, or part of the

cultural sphere of the other, but is kept out of consensual reality. Only when that outcome is deemed legitimate by western science, it can be accepted into consensual knowledge and thus becomes part of the prevailing trope. Consciousness is housed within the physical form and as such one identity cannot interpenetrate another as dictated by the laws of western science, the understanding of consensual knowledge, and the nature of consensual reality.

Within the liminal space of nepantla one can experience both all time and/or no time and thus engaging in transversal communication (whether traveling outside the physical border via the expansion of consciousness) or traveling deeper into the subjective experience and union with the other, one eventually within the model of transversal communication experiences the absence of lineal time. Furthermore time, within this model can be influenced by the unmanifested which means that the tropes of time present within Figure A are lessened or eliminated completely as new understandings of the nature of time are created, and old, outmoded or irrelevant definitions of time are eliminated or transformed. For those adept at transversal communication (such as the shaman) future time and historical time mold into the present as the concept of time is eliminated completely as one rests in the liminal state of nepantla via union with the other, or the nepantla-state beyond the margins of one's individual consciousness (via meditation).

Reality in Transversal Communication Model

Within a theory of transversal communication, reality must be conceptualized as permeable, malleable, not necessarily subjected to the tropes of western science, cognizant and allowing of emotional, somatic, and otherwise inexplicable realism.

Transversal Communication understands a reality that must allow for moments when the coordinates of consensual reality cease, recognizing that present reality is partial and limited, and shaped by prevailing cultural tropes. Reality in Figure B is represented three times. First, a porous line represents consensual reality. In order to de-centralize the pervasive tropes of the West, consensual reality has been reduced and is contained within consciousness rather than encompassing it. Consensual reality is no longer a closed, impenetrable structure but an open, porous realm potentially influenced by all other parts of the system via transversal communication.

Second, a realm of *shared reality/no identity* is created in the liminal space in the center of the diagram; shared reality can only happen during communication, emerges out of communication. This is where the reality of one autonomous subject intermingles, fuses and/or dissolves into the reality of another subject in order to eliminate physical, psychological, and cultural boundaries creating a new reality during the communicative exchange.

Finally, the model includes a third version of reality called Nepantla consciousness; this form of reality houses possibility, potentiality, and imagination and is accessible by the individual consciousness via transversal communication. Transversal communication includes a multiplicity of filament-type interactions that form a communicative flow. In and out communicative flows permeate each barrier of experience (including individual consciousness) in order to access Nepantla and feed back into the liminal space indefinitely allowing for reality to be created, destroyed, and created anew with each interaction. Through the inclusion of Nepantla consciousness and permeable borders, reality cannot remain stable. The power of communication

becomes evident, as reality can be created and destroyed repeatedly through communion between different subjects in the space of nepantla where western scientific precepts are eliminated. The model of Transversal Communication can thus explain instances in which a subject experiences reality outside of Cartesian tropes, moments in which a subject experiences reality without boundaries, or when consensual reality ceases to exist. In either case present experiences of consensual reality cease and a wide array of possible experiences of reality is created in its place.

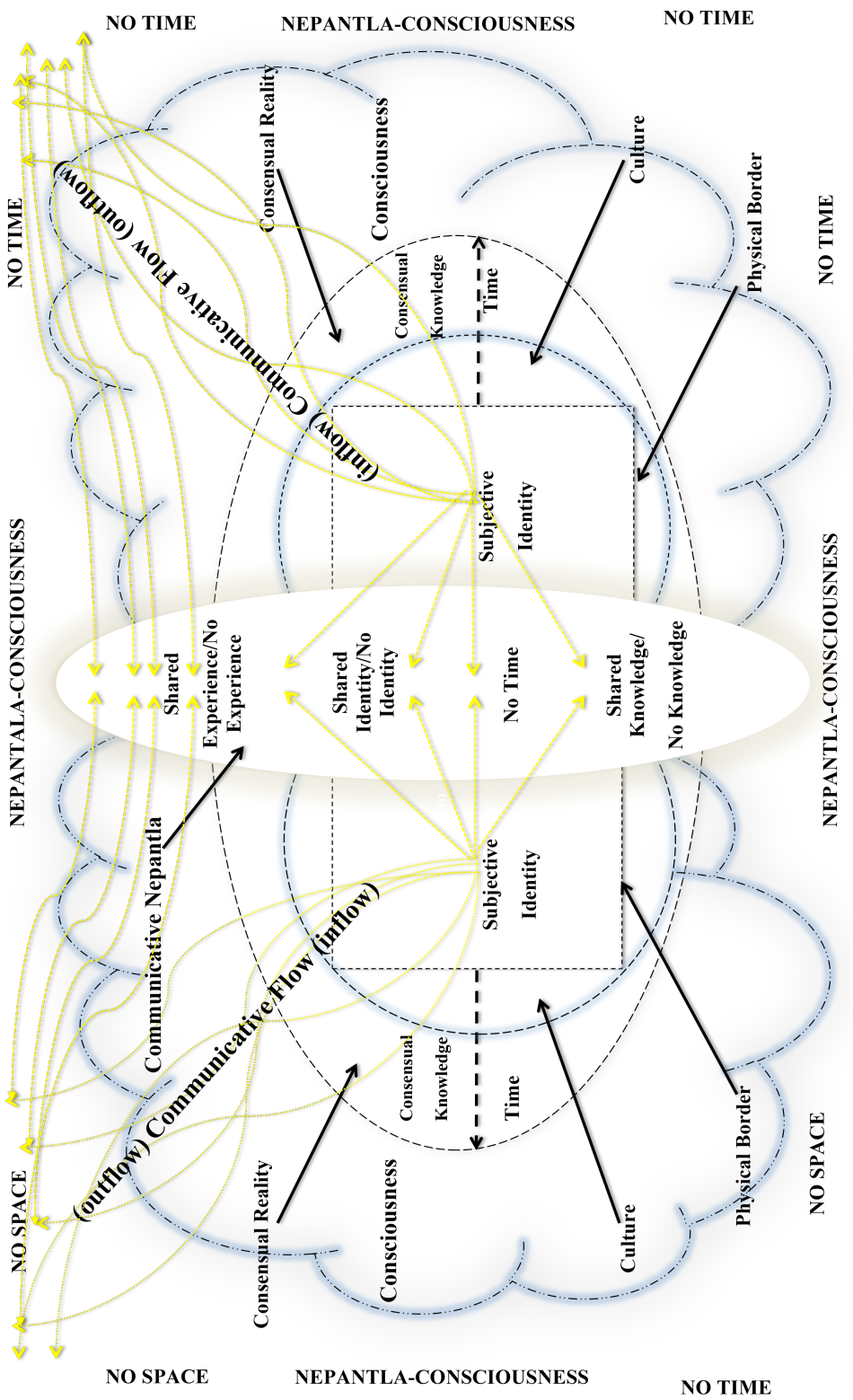

Figure B: Transversal Communication

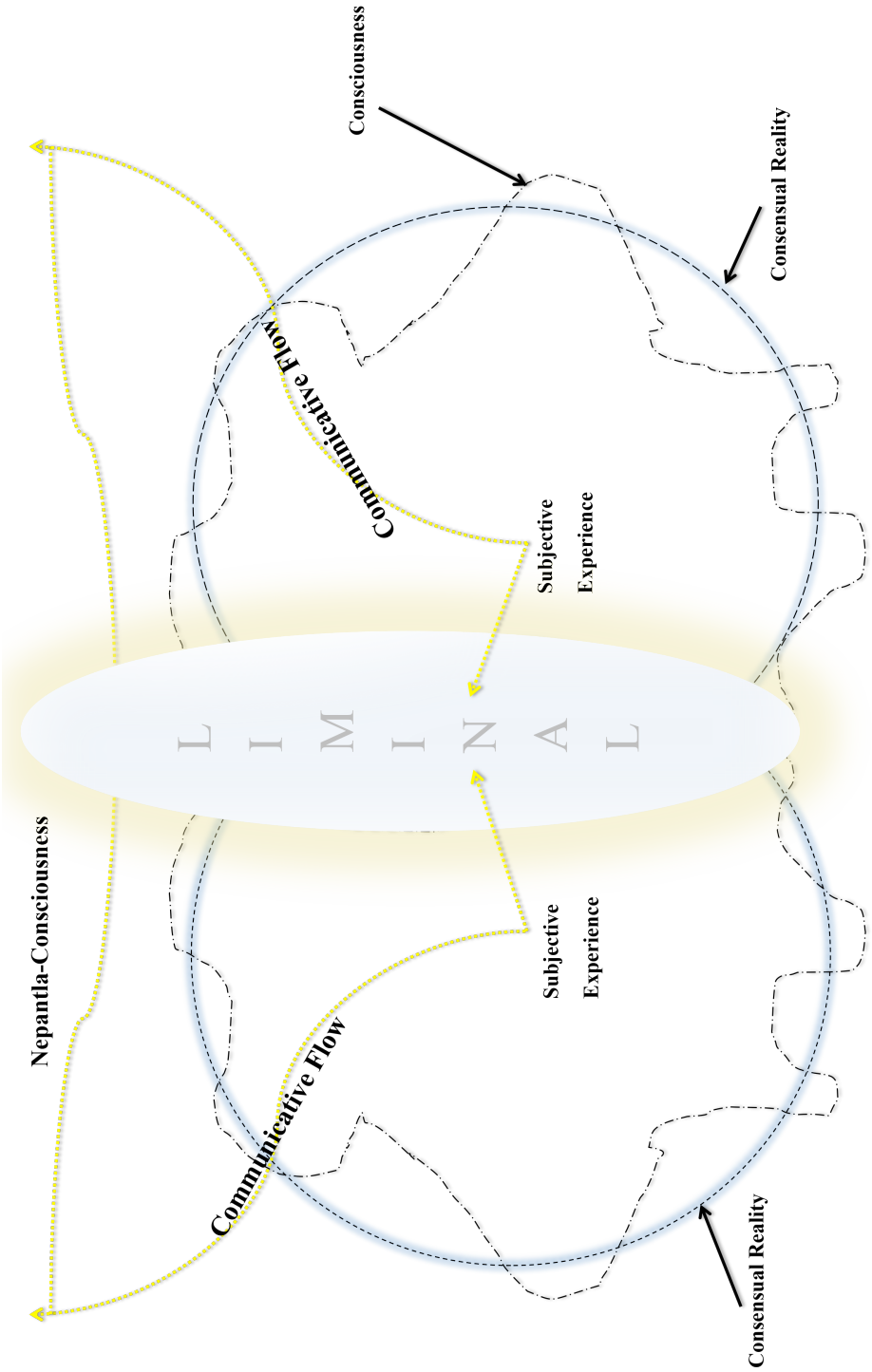

Figure C: Transversal Communication (Simplified)

Knowledge in Transversal Communication Model

Within a theory of transversal communication knowledge must be holistic, non-hierarchical, and liminal. Essentially the transversal communication model intends to resist the western propensity toward valuation of the rational/reasonable in communication. Transversal communication understands that valuable knowledge comes in a variety of forms, including emotional, mental, spiritual, nature, somatic knowledge. Transversal communication considers all these different forms of knowledge to participate in communicative interaction. Transversal communication transcends and includes all of these epistemological methods and utilizes them in the creation of new knowledges. Additionally knowledge is not relegated to verbal exchange but can be integrated from the environment itself.

Knowledge is represented twice within Figure B: first consensual knowledge, which is positioned inside consensual reality much like in Figure A yet within Figure B has been reduced to allow individual consciousness to encompass and influence it. Consensual knowledge within Figure B is no longer only influenced by the nature of consensual reality and its hegemonic assumptions but is now influenced via transversal communication by consciousness itself, as well as by culture and by subjective experiences. This positioning broadens the means through which one can access and transform knowledges allowing spiritual experiences of consciousness, subjective (emotional or mental) experience, somatic experience, and cultural experiences to bear on the creation of new knowledge and understanding.. Transversal communication is a process of interacting on different planes of reality (consensual, subjective, and Nepantla) utilizing a multiplicity of ways of constructing knowledge, including intuition,

emotion, thinking, and even magic and somatic. Transversal communication can explain instances in which communication allows a subject to overcome the boundaries of physical identity, overcome the limitations of time/space, and feed into a liminal space where one individual consciousness can co-mingle with another's consciousness.

Knowledge from beyond the space/time (what I have termed *Nepantla*) is accessible via the consciousness whose margins are permeable and know no limits of possibility. Somé's experiences during initiation, where he gained knowledge via traditional means or his experience in the underworld where he experienced the pulsating knowing of a formless, seemingly all-encompassing presence, illustrates the process of acquiring knowledge beyond the physical border or the mind itself.

Time/Space in Transversal Communication Model

Space within a theory of transversal communication must be penetrable, adaptable, and permeable. Within Figure B all boundaries are represented by dotted lines to denote the permeable, penetrable nature of space. In Transversal Communication space is expressed and accessible beyond the margins of time and consensual reality. In Transversal Communication, a subject is able to access the realm of Nepantla, where the coordinates of consensual reality, including time and space, disappear. Through the process of going deeper into a communicative exchange, the subject can then experience a process of going "out" or experience "no space". Physical borders are permeable and as such subject to be shaped by consensual reality, subjective experiences, culture, and consciousness. Space is so permeable that the physical borders of self can be overcome, communication can happen to a point where individual consciousness dissolves, and can invade and comingle with another, creating entirely

new spaces or eliminating spaces completely. This process can be seen as Somé communed with the Green Lady in the yila tree. The borders of each apparently physical object dissolved allowing a new-shared experience which re-defied the confines of consensual reality and the precepts of individuated identity.

In a theory of transversal communication time must be permeable, aperspectival, non-linear. The model of transversal communication recognizes that the autonomy of identities is only partially stable in the recognition that we are all linked not only biologically through our humanity, but through consciousness, environment, emotion, and spirit. This inter-connectedness allows the boundaries of time/space to blur and become more partial. Past, present, and future can inform our interactions beyond the set boundaries of linear time. When Somé interacts with his ancestors, they are all in the same time plane; the ancestors are not locked in the past and Somé in the present. Communication can allow them to dissolve the rigidity of time coordinates. The presence of time in Figure B is represented twice. First, temporal time which is illustrated within consensual reality and traverses the physical and subjective experience. However it is represented by a dotted line which stops at the borders of consensual reality, implying that one can access no-time during transversal communication producing the dissolution of time. In any case linear time is reduced to consensual reality. The model is setting the limits of Western tropes and expands to allow for non-western experiences to exist. The experience of No Time can be accessed beyond the margins of known experience (along with No Space). The individual consciousness has access to No Time quite easily as it leaves the margins of subjective or physical experience (such as it does in sleep or meditation). Additionally the individual

consciousness can access No Time via deepening connection with another via the transversal communication process (as it does via sex, or deeply engrossing conversation, or intense shared emotional experiences).

Identity in Transversal Communication Model

Identitive borders must be permeable, malleable, and inhabit the paradoxical space of both the individual and collective. These borders are thus no longer negotiated primarily through the physical reality but also through the recognition of the partiality and instability of identity. The model allows for instances in which identities are subject to dissolution and the possibility that what the West calls "the subject" is at once here and potentially not here as borders drop. Identity is represented three times within Figure B. First the physical identity/border which comprises the form of a particular entity or subject. However, in Figure B, form is penetrable and open to influence by the environment and others. Via transversal communication identity borders can dissolve, allowing subjects to merge into each other, going more deeply into the other, creating a liminal space of shared identity. Transversal communication can also allow individual subjects to expand and dissolve their physical borders beyond the limits of consensual reality, which can lead to experiencing oneself as larger than oneself in a kind of fusion with the surrounding environment (as I shared in the prologue when I felt I was the sky). In this type of transversal communication the identity of the self fuses with the realm of Nepantla.

The model also expresses identity in the form of subjective experience (housed within the physical form); however, identity is not limited by physical boundaries. Because of the porous nature of the physical form, the subjective experiences of one's

emotions and thoughts can enter in communication with the subjective experiences of another subject. Communication between two subjects consists of a complex mesh of different types of interactions, emotional, mental, or somatic. The subject's "identity" can also break out of the boundaries of the physical body when the subject interacts with the world around, with the natural world, the surrounding cultural universe, or any other aspect of consensual reality. Finally the transversal communication model includes an elements labeled Nepantla, which refers to a layer of reality that goes way beyond consensual, objective reality, to include other dimensions not recognized as "real" in the West. This cloud of Nepantla, which is highly permeable, porous and penetrable by other "clouds of consciousness," is the sneaking awareness which sits behind those who have traveled the path of conocimiento and understood that everything is intimately connected. Communication can happen between all of these various iterations of identities; identities can interact inward or outward, expanding border, and merging and spilling over the identities of other human subjects, the natural world, or into Nepantla.

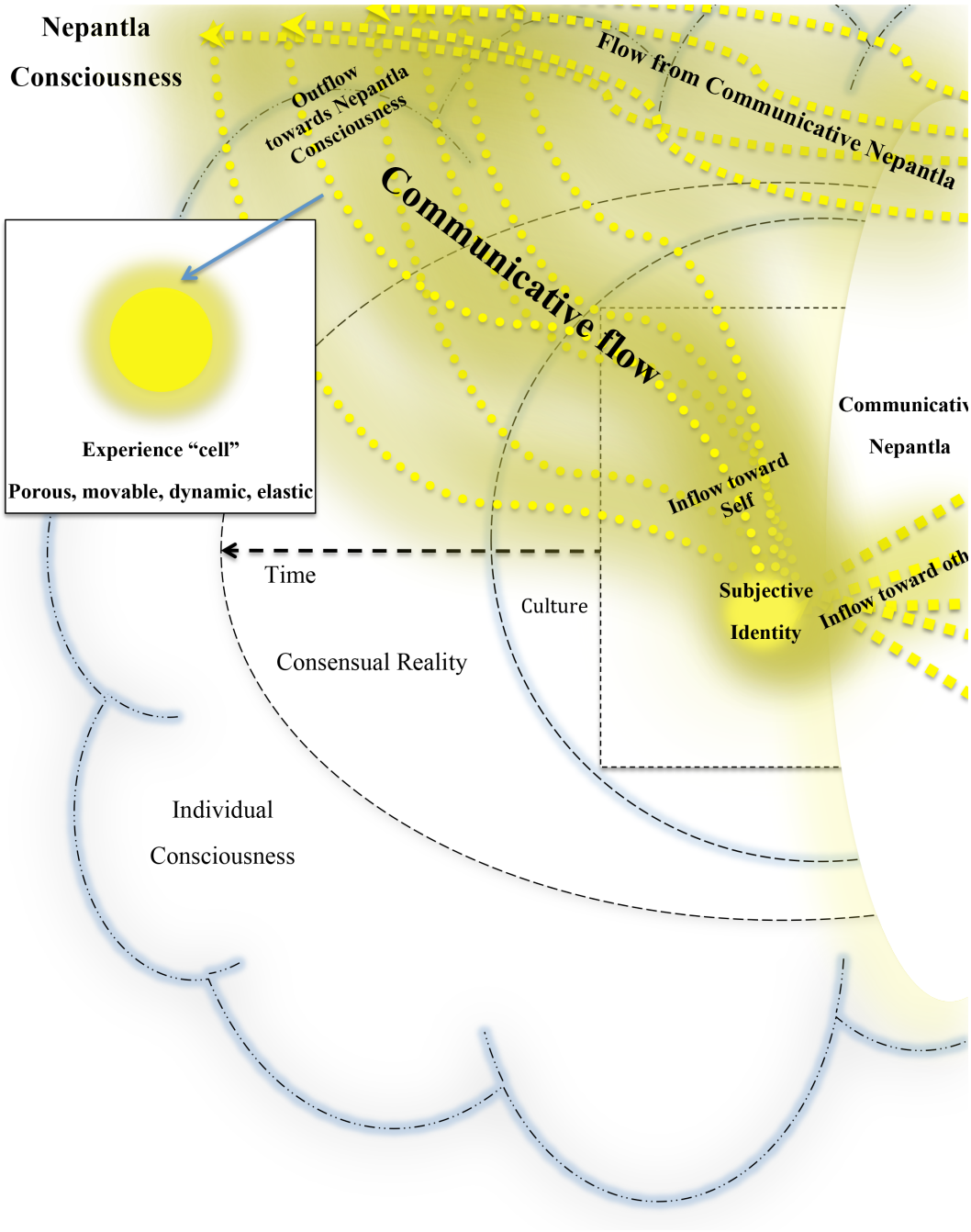

Figure D: Transversal Communication Process

Communication in Transversal Model

As discussed throughout this dissertation, transversal communication is a model that represents communication as a complex and multi-leveled mesh of interactions. Transversal communication proposes an alternative to the binary reductive model of communication as a process between a sender and a receiver. In figure A communication is shown as a transaction between two rational beings (the sender and the receiver). For communication to be successful, messages must be encoded, decoded and interpreted by the rational minds housed within sender and receiver.

The transversal communication models represents communication as a flow that can travel in multiple directions, connecting communicating individuals at very different levels. The borders and boundaries of communicating subjects are porous. Different types of interaction travel back and forth traversing boundaries, including rational, emotional, spiritual, magic, and somatic interactions. As interactions break the rigidity of borders, subjects can fuse with each other, with the natural environment, and with Nepantla—a realm of reality that exists beyond consensual reality. The yellow filament-like threads shown in Figure B (and in closer detail in Figure D) illustrate the communicative "flow" that can be experienced within and outside of individual consciousness. These filaments can flow deeper into communication with oneself/the other, or can flow-out into the liminal Nepantla consciousness.

Transversal Communication explains how in communication many different types of interaction have the potential to connect individuals including interactions based on emotions, reason, intuition, magic, feelings, perceptions, etc. In either direction the communicative flow leads to the dissolution of boundaries within the

liminal (either in union or in the nepantla-consciousness). The scattering and dispersion of cells allows greater flexibility in communication and is akin to the quantum biological models of interaction and interrelatedness, which posit the notion of constant cellular communication between everything (Ball, 2011). To expand further, each emotional, spiritual, mental, somatic and cultural experience can be thought of as a "cell"; the willingness and openness of the communicator create flow. Transversal communication represents the interaction between willingness/openness, and experience between self and other, self and self, and self and environment. The encoding/decoding process represented in Figure A is thus no longer reduced to the rational transcription of the sender/receiver model. Instead encoding/decoding, sending/receiving, subject/object become simultaneous, infinite, multi-sensory, emotionally resonant, somatically cognizant, and spiritually flexible.

The Liminal Spaces

The liminal spaces in the model of transversal communication are of utmost importance because this is where potentiality is manifested and identities dissolve or transform, spilling out of their boundaries. In Figure B and 2B the center area represents the fusion of two individual subjective experiences, signifying the dissolution of cultural, identitive, temporal, spatial, physical, and epistemological boundaries. It is within this space that Anzaldúa's "spiritual activism" becomes possible as one takes the experiences of nothing and everything back into our subjective and cultural experiences within a given context. The liminal re-appears in the model as Nepantla, a realm of reality that exists beyond Western coordinates of time and space, and represents yet another way we can access liminality, an experience frequently documented in non-

western cultures. Acknowledging liminal spaces is important when the goal is to de-centralize and de-stabilize western epistemological tropes.

Transversal Communication

As the domain of holistic or spiritual understanding enters our awareness we are no longer content in allowing the confines of personal boundaries to inhibit our interactions. We inspire, engage, and cajole others through empathy, compassion, and consciousness raising, to explore the joys of communication outside the walls of our particular cultural, psychological, or societal boundaries. The transversal communication model can serve as a tool to make sense of instances in which the individual subject ceases being an "I", and becomes a "we", able to explore the slashes between us/them, male/female, black/white, material/spiritual, nature/culture and all other manner of dichotomies that aim at partitioning our existence.

By conceptualizing communication outside the boundaries of the subject/object binary Transversal Communication allows us to break through these binaries; the model embraces the experiences of cultural Others that fall outside of western tropes.. The exclusion of the experiences and ways of communicating of non-western communities have been perpetuated by centuries of historical and ideological narratives that warned against hybridization, re-tribalization, and synthesis with that which is foreign. However, through the process of transversal communication we reject the inheritance of these separatist histories. We communicate the realities of our apparent differences in the physical realm and then move beyond them. We recognize and acknowledge our racial and physical differences, our emotions, our power and privileges, our struggles and victimizations, our respective narratives, archetypal roles and belief systems and

then we move beyond and through them. We weave our own identities and experiences into a new tapestry of reality, recognizing that communication is much more than using reason to encode and decode messages; that we can achieve greater intimacy in ourselves and our communities. We cease marginalizing those who, further along the path of conocimiento, have been singing the praises of this level of connection for eons. We listen to the wisdom of the trees, the sky, and the water not because we are trying to enact some trendy New Age cultural practice of re-appropriation but because we acknowledge levels of interaction and communication never understood by the West. We do not stop listening when we hear a story we "can't identify with" because we remember that somewhere, beyond the boundaries of our imposed or proposed limitations, we can empathize or connect with an aspect of that story. We cease turning away when confronted with a reality that is too harsh, disparate, beautiful, or ugly because it is the act of turning away which reinforces our disconnection. We embrace knowledge on all levels and resist marginalizing the spiritualties of subaltern, indigenous, or other oppressed peoples as primitive, undeveloped, or superstitious. Alternately, we guard against dismissing the value of scientific data or the insights of traditionally privileged populations simply because they are privileged.

Transversal communication is a holistic act, an enlivened system of shifting, moving, swelling, and deflating processes that interacts simultaneously within the individual self, with the Other, and with the natural environment. It does not restrict the experience of communication to two sentient beings and acknowledges that multiple levels of information and communication are being transferred and interpreted at any given moment, many of which are situated well beyond the perception of the five

primary senses. Transversal communication acknowledges that our experiences of time and space are only shaped by our understanding of these concepts within limited historical philosophical narratives and are just as true as the narratives of subjugated and excluded Others. And then we seek to communicate beyond all phenomena, noeuma, ideologies, languages, bodies, emotions, spiritualties, and realties and find something even deeper. We recognize that with the multitude of energies swirling around us at any given time, communication cannot be limited to subject/object binaries, but rather should be understood as a complex mesh of porous identities interacting at multiple levels of realities. And once we tire of shifting, allowing, imbibing and opening, we push ourselves to do it again and again until we are able to look at the person/entity across from us and know unequivocally, at the core of our being, "yes…you are me".

We are ready for change.
Let us link hands and hearts
together find a path through the dark woods
step through the doorways between worlds
leaving huellas for others to follow,
build bridges, cross them with grace, and claim these
puentes our "home"
si se puede, que asi sea, so be it, estamos listas,
vámonos.
Now let us shift.

-Gloria Anzaldúa

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