A Decoloniality of Becoming: Cherrie Moraga’s Coloniality of Being in

A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness

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ABSTRACT

A Decoloniality of Becoming: Cherríe Moraga’s Coloniality of Being in *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness*

By

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This thesis locates Cherríe Moraga’s coloniality of Being within her work *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness*, and how it functions along with what I interpret as Moraga’s decoloniality of becoming. I elucidate Moraga’s engagement in these overlapping ontological processes through an analysis of her literary voices present in this work, and how these voices work in dialogical and complex ways, where the acts of suppression, occupation, and enunciation of voice work against, within, and through one another. By means of a textual analysis, I argue that these processes exist in a perpetual dialogical encounter, as Moraga’s efforts to resist a historically imposed existence guided by coloniality’s logics manifests itself along an ever-evolving desire to become decolonial and enact a counter-hegemonic ontological reality for herself. I contextualize how this desire is constantly met by coloniality’s always imposing oppressive tendencies that makes Moraga’s decolonial performance continuously difficult to proclaim. Hence, I propose this study as a contribution to decolonial theoretical works seeking to further understand the complexities and nuances inherit in decolonial performances.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

In this thesis I center an analysis of the writings of Cherríe L. Moraga (b. 1952), a Xicana lesbian playwright, poet, essayist, and current artist-in-residence at Stanford University, in order to center what continues to be held at the periphery; the writings, voices, and contributions of queer women of color (Reyes, 2001; Stanford Chicana/o Latina/o Studies, 2009).\(^1\) Due to the prevalence of sexist, racist, and heterosexist ideologies, writings by these authors have remained largely rejected by established canonical gatekeepers. The continued canonization of works predominately authored by Western white males, remains an ongoing project of exclusivity for some, and de-legitimization for others. In the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* (2002), co-editor Gloria Anzaldúa sees the literary interventions of queer women of color as vital in destabilizing rigid constructions of knowledge production and as efforts in imagining an alternative inclusive reality. She states, “Imagination offers resolutions out of the conflict by dreaming alternative ways of imaging/feeling/thinking. For positive social change to happen we need to envision a different reality, dream new blueprints for it, formulate new strategies for coping in it” (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. xxxviii).

Thus, the works of third world women writers, which includes the group this thesis emphasizes, Chicana lesbian writers, attempt to cast change through their literary constructs of imaginary possibilities in order to alter hegemonic constructions of

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\(^1\) Moraga spells *Xicana* with an “x” as opposed to the often used *Chicana*, in order to ground her identity in “Indigenous American belief systems and identities” (2011, xxi). The spelling of the sound “ch” with an “x” evokes a Nahuatl (Aztec) orthography.
knowledge that have historically rendered their words meaningless. Here I echo Anzaldúa’s notion of why it is important to emphatically pronounce these writers as Chicana lesbian writers. She states that whereas when the dominant culture pejoratively labels this group as such, “their reasons are to marginalize, confine, and contain. My labeling of myself is so that the Chicana and lesbian and all the other persons in me don’t get erased, omitted, or killed. Naming is how I make my presence known, how I assert who and what I am and want to be known as. Naming myself is a survival tactic” (Anzaldúa, 1991, p. 264). For the historically silenced and suppressed lesbian Chicana writer, writing becomes an opening through which their marginalized experiences are manifested for the reader to see a reality often ignored and cast as deviant. In highlighting a particular work by Moraga, this study intends to depart from these premises as part of the reasoning behind its intent; to add to the number of voices arguing on behalf of the invaluable importance of these works as epistemic, ontological, and philosophical disruptions.

This thesis locates Cherrie Moraga’s “coloniality of Being” within her work *AXicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000-2010* (Moraga, 2011), and how it functions along with what I interpret as Moraga’s decoloniality of becoming. I

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2 The term “third World women writers” is used to categorize women of African, Asian, Latin American, indigenous, and native descent.

3 Whereas colonialism is used to define the prevalence of foreign colonial administrators in positions of power and authority in areas where they are often the racial/ethnic minority, coloniality is used to categorize the ubiquity of colonialism’s governing ideologies after the collapse of colonialism’s authoritative structure. Decoloniality is in reference to the acts involved in highlighting and eradicating the contours of coloniality. A more detailed analysis of these concepts follows in Chapter 2. For the purposes of this analysis, the primary area of focus in regards to the impact of colonialism is the Americas.
elucidate Moraga’s engagement in these overlapping ontological processes, her
coloniality of Being and her decoloniality of becoming, through an analysis of her literary
voices present in this work, and how these voices work in dialogical and complex ways.\(^4\)

In this analysis I engage Nelson Maldonado-Torres’ concept of the “coloniality of
Being,” for which I would like to now elaborate.

In the article “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the development of a
concept,” Maldonado-Torres (2007) refers to the “coloniality of Being” as a concept that
situates the ramifications of colonialism impacting not solely “areas of authority,
sexuality, knowledge and the economy, but on the general understanding of being as
well” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 242). This concept implies not a singular mode of
being, but rather modes of being as “relations of power” tied to race, class, gender, and
sex, that thus, influence how groups like Chicana lesbians experience a reality far
different than say a queer Chicano or heterosexual white man (ibid., 242). In this sense,
“racialized subjects are constituted in different ways than those that form selves,” the
implication being that colonized actors’ ways of being, due to colonialism, have been
socially constructed according to perceived social categorization (ibid., 251).

For Maldonado-Torres, he sees coloniality “as a radicalization and naturalization
of the non-ethics of war,” (ibid., 247) where the realities of war become imposed upon
the everyday realities of colonized peoples in non-ethical ways. He goes on to detail that
the atrocities performed in times of war, such as murder, rape, and the enslavement of
captured peoples, become legitimate daily modes of conduct in colonialism that then

\(^4\) “Ontological” is defined as “relating to or based upon being or existence” (Merriam-
Webster, 2015).
transpire in modernity, such as slavery and anti-Black racism (ibid., 256). These acts and governing ways of thinking about people of color are justified along hierarchical racist frames of thought that present non-white peoples as lacking human characteristics, as it works to establish a reality where the ever-encroaching presence of death becomes the ontological experience for racialized peoples. Maldonado Torres cites Frantz Fanon’s analysis in *A Dying Colonialism* in regards to this presence of death, where Fanon states, “This ever-menacing death is experienced as endemic famine, unemployment, a high death rate, an inferiority complex and the absence of any hope for the future. All this gnawing at the existence of the colonized tends to make life something resembling an incomplete death” (ibid., 254-255). It is this normalized proximity to death that continues to be the ontological reality for racialized bodies in the United States, as it manifests itself through a number of debilitating factors.

These logics of coloniality continue to impact different racialized groups in distinct yet interconnected ways. The recent use of the phrase #BlackLivesMatter in response to the continued murder of Black people by authorities of the state, reflects activists’ concerns that the dehumanizing logics that enabled the enactment of the enslavement of African peoples across the Americas remains ingrained within the dominant American psyche. Black bodies continue to be seen as disposable and subhuman, as the recent murders of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and John Crawford III by police officers, were met without indictments or an acknowledgement of culpability by the police officers and departments responsible. The subsequent rationales that attempted to justify the murder of Brown presented him as deviant and unworthy, and showcased how an innocent Black life was never presumed, as Black lives are seen as
inherently criminal (Lewis, 2014). The rallying cry #BlackLivesMatter became an indictment on post-racial politics that ignores the sustained devaluation and dehumanization of Black lives, demanding that the lives of Black people be valued as such, as lives.

It is in the coloniality of Being that racialized bodies are presumed guilty and as inherently criminal and suspicious. The rise of Islamaphobia and anti-Muslim sentiment in the wake of 9/11, established a common discourse of dehumanizing particular brown bodies as distrustful. Through this discourse, the use of “terrorism” and “terrorists” became racially coded terminologies embedded into the American lexicon. The implementation of these terms falls in line with the use of the terms “illegality” and “illegal” to connote a Latin@ness seen as criminal, unworthy, and again lacking the full humanity that is often solely afforded to white individuals. Leo Chavez uses the phrase “Latino Threat Narrative,” to describe this prevailing discourse that sees Latin@s as refusing to assimilate and thus, “undeserving of social benefits, including citizenship” (2008, p. 3). This thesis takes the argument that these exclusionary discourses that remain implanted into the dominant American perception of bodies of color, bears a trajectory heavily influenced by colonialism. It is their perceived normalcy that then permits these dehumanizing logics to assume a transparent character, rendering them invisible and un-problematic to the un-critical eye.

This thesis emphasizes the coloniality of Being as a lens through which I read Moraga’s *A Xicana Codex*. In doing so I hope to contextualize how Moraga’s writing in the text depicts her coloniality of Being, as well as her response to this. It is within this context that I strive to reveal Moraga’s engagement in these concepts, the coloniality of
Being and her dialogic response to which I label her decoloniality of becoming, through her desire to speak. I construe this desire to speak as Moraga’s aspiration to communicate her embodied ways of being and knowing, and how the text depicts both the coloniality of Being and her decoloniality of becoming not as dichotomous entities, but as internalized intersecting ontological processes. I interpret the term coloniality of Being for its passiveness, its etymological construct of “be-ing,” and see it as reflective of the continued governing ideologies and classifications of peoples under colonialism in a manner that emphasizes the imposition of these ways of thinking “on” colonized subjects yet not “by” colonized subjects. In contrast, the term decoloniality of becoming highlights a liberating active, conscious, and continually developing response to this dilemma.

The analysis that I present in this thesis seeks to answer two questions. The first, in what ways does Moraga’s *A Xicana Codex* depict her coloniality of Being? In answering this question I hope to highlight how Moraga experiences coloniality as evidenced in her writings, and how she makes sense of these experiences. Secondly I ask, how does Moraga complicate this understanding and enact a dialogical response to her coloniality of Being? I seek to understand how Moraga responds and employs an active process towards transforming her colonial state of being beyond a dehumanizing, oppressive existence, and towards a self-liberating way of existence, what I see as her decoloniality of becoming.

In answering these questions over the course of this study, I argue that for Moraga, the perpetual fight to speak from her subaltern perspective bares itself in three interdependent and interweaving themes that I label as: 1) the suppression of voice, 2) the
internal occupation of a foreign voice, and 3) the enunciation of one’s own voice. These three dialogical processes combined are Moraga’s coloniality of Being and decoloniality of becoming, as they work within, against, and through one another in a perpetual desire to speak, write, think, and become in a liberating non-oppressive state. Within my analysis of these processes I emphasize how they exhibit moments of suffocation, pain, madness, joy, and love, and how this web of intersecting happenings cast insight into how Moraga’s decolonial literary and embodied aspirations present glimpses into the liberating yet complicated ways of becoming for decolonial actors.

Significance of the Thesis

While many works have centered Moraga’s texts as focal points of analysis, I am choosing to investigate her most recent work, a text that has yet to be privileged to the extent that her previous works have. Some of her previous works include the formerly mentioned anthology she co-edited with Gloria Anzaldúa titled This Bridge Called My Back, her collections of prose and poetry titled Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios (1983) and The Last Generation (1993), as well as numerous plays and other publications. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be solely focusing on her 2011 publication A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness.

In interrogating this work, I aim to contribute to the current literature depicting how developments arising from centuries of coloniality impact Chican@ literary engagements. I do so in order to complicate our understanding of the responses to the coloniality of Being beyond binary characterizations of oppression/resistance. By doing so, I hope to render this thesis an important contribution to seeing these processes as dialogically weaving through one another in order to witness how the oppressive logics
of coloniality are not linearly opposed by actors, but concurrently engaged and contested in a simultaneous activity that highlights the absorptive tendencies inherent within oppressive marginalizing logics. I use the term logics to emphasize how governing ways of racialization, criminalization, gendering and other marginalizing methods of thought and action, exist within Eurocentric paradigms of thinking that render them commonsensical in seemingly obvious ways. These paradigms bear trajectories rooted in colonialism and thus are seen as logical ways of knowing that embed dehumanizing ways of categorizing the world and its inhabitants into invisible realities.

This thesis investigates how Moraga herself deals with these complications, contradictions, and logics by perceiving her literary pieces beyond binary works of resistance. According to Patrick Hamilton, a significant amount of analyses that engage with Chican@ literary projects impose a binary reading of these works through a resistance paradigm that refuses to map these works according to their own worlds. By doing so, a binary resistance paradigm reading of Chican@ literary texts minimizes the depth of these texts and reduces their particular significance as cultural interventions. By moving away from a “tendency to flatten out both the literary and sociopolitical spheres in multifarious ways,” this thesis seeks to address Chican@ literary texts beyond the over-employed resistance paradigm and towards a reading that situates Moraga’s texts in a much more convoluted light (Hamilton, 2011, p. 11).

I would also like to stress the purpose of this thesis is to engage in the works of Chicana feminists beyond haphazard and un-engaging readings that merely relegate their

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5 I use the term Chican@ instead of the often employed Chicano or Chicana/o in order to further deconstruct binary notions of gender and make the term Chican@, to which I define here to describe people of Mexican descent geared towards social justice, further inclusive of gender non-conforming identities.
contributions in an extracurricular light. In particular, as Sonia Saldívar-Hull notes, these works are often ignored or glossed over by “Chicanos and Eurofeminists who footnote our work but have yet to discover or use our theories as theory” (Saldívar-Hull, 2000, p. 35). As a heterosexual cisgender Chicano, I am selecting to engage in these works not in an interjecting manner, but rather in a reflective self-interrogating light and for their theoretical, academic, personal, and transformative value.\(^6\) As Michael Awkward details in his use of black feminism, he writes that the potential for what he describes as “black male feminism” lies in how it takes its cue from how anti-patriarchal and self-inquiring black women are in their relationship to feminism (Awkward, 1998, p. 156). However, he reminds the reader to be cognizant of the male privilege afforded to the observant male so as not to fall into similar acts of appropriation and “hegemonic male power” (ibid., 162).

Anzaldúa asserts that “When a straight writer writes about us, perhaps also out of curiosity – or latent queerness or to capitalize on a trendy forbidden lifestyle – s/he often ends up appropriating our lives, paying them token attention and focusing on sex instead of the full complexity of our lives” (1991, p. 264). I engage in this type of analysis not as a means of misuse or fetishized curiosity, but rather as a means to witness, listen, self-inquire, and partake in expanding “feminist inquiry’s range and utilization” (Awkward, 1998, 156). As Cheryl Clarke states, “If radical lesbian-feminism purports an anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-woman-hating vision of bonding as mutual, reciprocal, as infinitely negotiable, as freedom from antiquated gender prescriptions and proscriptions, then all

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\(^6\) I use the term “cisgender” here to identify that my experiences and identity as a man fall in line with the gender I was prescribed at birth according to my sex. The term is a counterpart to “transgender” and seeks to render visible the normalized understandings of socially constructed gender binaries.
people struggling to transform the character of relationships in this culture have something to learn from lesbians” (2002, p. 148).

Outline of Thesis by Chapter

I would like to now detail the structure of this thesis by specifying the contents of each subsequent chapter, and conclude this introductory chapter by emphasizing the importance of this study’s particular area of inquiry, the impact of coloniality on Chican@ ontology.

Chapter 2 will document this thesis’ theoretical framework. As stated, Maldonado-Torres’ concept of the “coloniality of Being” provides a useful lens to situate Moraga’s writings. A discussion of the terms colonial, modern, and decolonial, as well as the relationship amongst the three concepts will provide the backdrop through which I read coloniality’s impact on modes of being and the repercussions this has on racialized subjects today. This chapter will unearth the value in these theoretical tools as guiding pillars in this study, and how I frame their use in my reading of Moraga.

Chapter 3 will incorporate a literature review of previous works relevant to this study. As previously stated, much of the analyses done on Moraga’s work highlight her 1983 publication Loving in the War Years. Although this study looks at Moraga’s A Xicana Codex, a review of these evaluations will nonetheless be useful in documenting other readings of her work. In situating my analysis alongside these works, I propose why my reading of Moraga’s text as an epistemic disruption contributes to the ongoing discussions surrounding her work.

Chapter 4 will detail the study’s methodological framework, and how I structure and define the parameters of my textual analysis. In doing so I elaborate on my
understanding of the three interrelated concepts of suppression, occupation, and enunciation that I read in *A Xicana Codex* and how I read them as continually linked to one another.

In Chapter 5, I will document my reading of Moraga’s *A Xicana Codex* and how it chronicles her coloniality of Being and decoloniality of becoming. This chapter will provide the bulk of my analysis in this study as I thematically outline and investigate how the text registers Moraga’s suppression, internal occupation, and enunciation of her voice. An analysis of this process will be supplemented with examples from the text that likewise highlight how these processes are met, reciprocated, and contested.

Lastly, Chapter 6 will conclude with a discussion and review of this thesis’ findings, as well as present its limitation and potential avenues for further research. I consider what can be gained from Moraga’s processes of becoming and how the tensions and contradictions found within her work provide useful moments into a vulnerable uncertainty.

This thesis is an attempt at deciphering the ways in which under represented and historically oppressed groups make sense of their ontological reality, and how they find ways of untangling the continual layers of oppression they encounter at every turn. It is in this decipherment that Chican@ epistemic currents are formulated that highlight the alternate ways of knowing specific to Chican@ ontologies. I say so not to essentialize a particular Chican@ness, but to articulate how vital it is for Chican@s within the current climate of massive deportations, the increasing criminalization of brown bodies, depoliticized multiculturalism, the delegitimization of Ethnic Studies, an increasing
emphasis on specialized technical knowledges, and the standardization of a Eurocentric curriculum, to define and promote Chican@ specific ways of being and knowing.

As the recent attempts in Arizona to outlaw Raza Studies have shown, non-Eurocentric pedagogies continue to be labeled as insufficient educational methods lacking value and merit. When non-Eurocentric epistemologies are embraced and when the histories of minoritized groups are told through their own words, dominant structures pounce on them for their perceived threat to the established order. Often implied in these attacks are singular perceptions of knowledge that define the Eurocentric as the universal, and see the enunciation of alternative ways of being that aim to assist in the humanization of racialized peoples such as Chican@s, as a destabilizing force demanding expulsion or co-optation.

In *Reframing the Practice of Philosophy*, George Yancey (2012) states that the political is profoundly part of the philosophical. He characterizes the *eventfulness* of certain bodies, bodies of color, in interrogating philosophical matters. In doing so he states how for him as a black man, he “was never even imagined as a philosophical interlocutor, a discussant, part of the audience, part of the conversation” (Yancey, 2012, p. 9). For a white man to discuss epistemic and ontological concerns is not eventful but rather *normal*, where “a black or Latina – is a sight to behold, something of a spectacle, something of an oxymoron, an aberration” (ibid., 10). I aim for this thesis to make the *spectacular unspectacular*, by highlighting how a queer Xicana is indeed inquiring into philosophical matters through her literary endeavors, and how myself as a Chicano engages in her works as such.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

In this chapter I would like to elaborate on the positioning of this study within the theoretical confines of a modern/colonial/decolonial framework. I use this chapter to contextualize how I approach decoloniality, by first outlining its relationship to modernity and colonialism, and also defining colonialism’s ideological succession that is coloniality. A preliminary discussion of such concepts is necessary in order to grasp the urgency and severity in adopting the decolonial option as a liberatory praxis and philosophical point of departure. Following this discussion I take a moment to further elaborate on a concept introduced in the introductory chapter, the coloniality of Being. The coloniality of Being is the fundamental axis guiding my analysis and thus in articulating its propositions, I likewise situate a nuanced interpretation of how this coloniality of Being is endured by Chican@s. In doing so I locate how I employ this coloniality of Being in my study as a lens through which I read Moraga’s *A Xicana Codex* for its dialogic relationship to this concept.

Modern/Colonial

The purpose of the term modern/colonial is to situate an understanding of modernity beyond the facetious perspective of it as a natural culmination of human achievement, and to render it functionally linked to colonialism. Modernity, colonialism, and its consequential decolonization, are all interconnected events and processes. A distinction made by decolonial scholars in interpreting these historical phenomena is a situating of modernity and colonialism as existing not as dichotomous linear processes,
but as dialogical concepts that coexisted in distinct yet interrelated ways as they created and also remapped global relationships.

Traditionally, modernity has been categorized as the beginning of a new era of human achievement. The Renaissance and, subsequently, the Enlightenment are two epochs traditionally faceted as markers of civilization, intellectual development, and economic prosperity; they are seen as particular European events that demonstrated the progressive achievements of mankind. It was during, what has been labeled as the long 16th century, the period roughly between 1450-1650 that these movements along with colonialism fundamentally altered the global cartography of the world and established a world-system of centers and peripheries that introduced globally interconnected economies (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 74 FN1). The project of modernity thus established a set of practices, customs, and ideologies that sought to categorize the world and its inhabitants in distinctly hierarchical fashions where the colonizing “I” invented the colonized “other” (Castro-Gómez, 2002, pp. 271, 278). By witnessing modernity’s endeavors as fundamentally linked to the exploitation and massive dominating enterprises enacted from Europe’s colonial projects, modernity is seen not as a particular local event as is often articulated, but rather as a global process unable to exist without its counterparts in the Global South and in particular the Americas. Furthermore, this stance addresses that colonialism was necessary first in order for the performance of a new era of supposed rationality, development, and progress to occur. Thus, this epoch of monumental importance for both Europe and the Americas was not a logical “unfolding of history but the hegemonic narrative of Western civilization” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 279). Hence as opposed to understanding the contemporary global structures as self-evident
and a supposed distinctively European modernity as self-developing, a modern/colonial formulation of modernity positions the modern as definitively colonial.

Decolonial scholars have vehemently emphasized how such Eurocentric events were indeed global in their capacity, as they could not have been possible without colonialism’s wrath on the Americas. The meeting of alternative belief systems, social arrangements, and cultures beginning in the late 15th centuries thus was not a benevolent meeting of peoples, but rather it violently sparked the introduction of particular dominating ideologies of sex, race, class, and gender previously unknown, that have since guided social arrangements in adaptive and evolving ways. This is not to assume that injustices did not exist prior to the European invasion of the Americas, but rather to position an understanding that colonialism “grafted modern abuse onto ancient injustice, hateful racism onto old inequality,” in such a manner that the supposed “campaign to civilize barbarism” in fact created a negation of such by instituting dehumanizing forms of interaction based on ideologies of racism previously foreign (Cesaire, 2000, pp. 45, 40). Modernity and coloniality indeed share a “genealogy” that demands an acknowledgement of one with the appearance of the other; as from the position of the subaltern it is not possible to speak of the modern without a mention of the colonial (Mignolo, 2000, p. 55). It is this “myth of modernity,” the belief that modernity was an exclusive Western European entity enacted solely by its own doing, that neglects to truly capture the other side of modernity, colonialism, and its everlasting coloniality (Dussel, 1995).
Coloniality

Although the formal ending of colonialism concluded with the banishment of colonial administrators throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries in the Americas, coloniality posits that the guiding ideologies inherent to colonialism’s dominating ways of social categorization (i.e., racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism) have long remained as embedded ordinances (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Modernity does not exist without coloniality as the modern does not arise without the slavery, genocide, rape, and mass exploitation of racialized peoples under the guise of colonialism. Therefore, the “coloniality of power” refers to the continual ramifications, processes, and dominating logics still with us today that share a lineage with those established under colonialism (Quijano, 2000). The ideologies that have remained, although distinctive to the current era, are themselves adaptive and dialogical, and are indebted to the power structures introduced hundreds of years ago (Bhabha, 1994). It is this continual process of coloniality that then develops into the contemporary modern/colonial capitalist world-system (Grosfoguel, 2002).

Coloniality can thus be read as an “uninterrupted practice of colonialism” that recognizes that the expulsion of foreign administrators via decolonization and independence movements, did not eradicate colonialism’s governing ideologies but rather funneled them into different actors and adaptive forms (Moraña, Dussel, & Jáuregui, 2008, p. 10). Coloniality is an “encompassing phenomenon, since it is just one of the axes of the system of power and as such it permeates all control of sexual access, collective authority, labor subjectivity/intersubjectivity and the production of knowledge from
within these intersubjective relations” (Lugones, 2007, p. 191). It is the acts that contest coloniality’s dehumanizing logics that are conceptualized as moments of decoloniality.

**Decoloniality**

The decolonial turn consequently is not a singular theoretical concept, but incorporates an understanding of the oppressive modern/colonial dimensions and the actions undertaken to liberate subjects from such legacies in non-oppressive ways (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). It is the liberating works enacted from the colonial difference, be they scholarly, activist, and/or communal, which then become conceptualized as decolonial activities. Maldonado-Torres describes the decolonial turn as a “family of diverse positions that share a view of coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern…age, and of decolonization or decoloniality as a necessary task that remains unfinished” (2011, p. 2). Herein decolonization is understood as not solely the absence of colonial administrators, but rather as a broader concept that denies the Eurocentric proposition that coloniality is a thing of the past, and acknowledges the continuities “between the colonial past” and our “current global colonial/racial hierarchies” as a means to “accomplish the unfinished and incomplete 20th century dream of decolonization,” a dream characterized by the introduction of liberal democracies and national independence movements in the last century (Grosfoguel, 2008b, p. 9).

Decoloniality is a turn toward a skepticism of “dehumanizing forms of thinking that present themselves as natural or divine,” and a movement towards an “epistemic decolonization” that seeks to accentuate a critical awareness to the normalized currents that deem applications of dominance as natural; as normal occurrences rather than constructed realities deriving from centuries of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, pp.
Decoloniality is a distinguishing point of departure that emphasizes coloniality from an indigenous/native perspective, and although it shares at times goals and means similar to other social justice efforts, it nonetheless has particular perspectives.

Decoloniality is not the same as anti-colonial, as the anti-colonial aims to remake and seize control for colonial subjects, decolonial activities strive to eradicate the entire frameworks of coloniality (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Hence, “to decolonize the US empire would require an intervention in many spaces of power relations that have historically been colonized by European/Euro-American conceptions of gender, sexual, racial, epistemic, religious, economic and political power relations” (Grosfoguel, 2008a, p. 620). Decoloniality poses itself as an option, as a move away from simplistic binary positions that emphasize reformist positions and thus maintain the inadequate structures that continue to find alternative means of dehumanizing the same racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed peoples. It is a delinking from the conservative, the modern, postmodern, and other new paradigms or epistemes that nonetheless strive to correct modernity’s wayward path, as decoloniality proposes that this path is not wayward but rather a logical outcome when one situates it honestly alongside its colonial roots (Mignolo, 2011, p. 274)

The “colonial wound” has established a dehumanizing logic that perceives racialized locales and individuals as lacking the mental capacities and means to think and in essence to know (Mignolo, 2009, p. 161). In establishing non-Eurocentric knowledges, decolonial scholars are articulating a move away from dominating, marginalizing modern forms of knowledge production that have influenced every sector of the academy, and toward radical non-dominating and thus liberating epistemologies (Barker, 2000). It is
what Fornet-Betancourt (2002) calls an intercultural philosophy, a philosophy capable of understanding a plurality of histories and ways of thinking, in contrast to the impact of globalization and its dissemination of a singular epistemology. Implied in the location of decolonial epistemologies is the need to learn to unlearn (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012). It is because of the absolute permeation of the discourse of the colonial/modern trajectory, it is because of the pervasiveness of a hegemonic Eurocentric epistemology throughout the Americas and in essence globally, that a decoloniality of thought is required to contest the legacies and devastating impact of this form of thinking on the lives of the subaltern. The normalization of the use of the singular knowledge already positions the idea that it is universal and singular, ignoring the fact that knowledge is a more accurate depiction and understanding of the diversity of knowledge systems in the world (Gordon, 2011, p. 95). Thus an epistemic pluriversality as a premise refuses to engage in reductionist and subsuming understandings of an epistemic universal that denies other ways of knowing (Grosfoguel, 2012; Tamgidi, 2012). Just as decoloniality sheds light on the violent suppression of non-Western epistemologies and the distinctive locales inherent in these epistemologies, a decolonial reading of ontology likewise positions a coloniality of Being that renders ontology as particular to colonial subjects and not as a universal as traditionally conceived.

**Coloniality of Being**

*Coloniality* posits an ethics of domination that works in excessive ways that hierarchically organizes the lives of all involved in regards to the social, personal, epistemic, and the primary focus of this study, the ontological, how coloniality effects existence (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Thus, here I am particularly focusing on the
“ontological colonial difference” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 254). Walter Mignolo takes this colonial difference to be “the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work” (2000, ix). It is because of the colonial difference that the “coloniality of being cannot be a critical continuation of the former…but must be, rather, a relocation of the thinking and a critical awareness of the geopolitics of knowledge” (Mignolo, 2000, p. 234). The colonial difference is taken to imply the difference between the “center and periphery, between the Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism and knowledge production by those who participated in building the modern/colonial world and those who have been left out of the discussion” (Mignolo, 2008, p. 231). It is where the subalternization of knowledge is demanded, contested, and reconfigured as what were previously deemed objects of study hence become visible as “new loci of enunciation” (Mignolo, 2000, p. 13). Here I use the notion of “subaltern epistemic perspectives” as describing knowledges coming from below that produce “a critical perspective of hegemonic knowledge in the power relations involved.” It is an emphasis of subalternity from a decolonial perspective that understands the non-Western as the often silenced, ridiculed, and exploited; and that hence seeks to make such proclamations from the exteriority of modernity visible (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213).

This study aims to make such realities visible by interrogating this ontological colonial difference. This is a primary focus on how ontology, how one exists, one’s being, is a fundamentally different experience for people’s whose history was tragically upset by colonialism’s contours. Maldonado-Torres (2004) poses that we must:

Think about those who are locked in positions of subordination, and try to understand both the mechanisms that create the subordination and those that hide
their reality from view to others. There is much in the world to learn from others who have been rendered invisible by modernity. This moment should be more about examining our complicity with old patterns of domination and searching for invisible faces, than about searching for imperial roots; more about radical critique than about orthodox alignments against what are persistently conceived as the barbarians of knowledge (p. 51).

It is this position of invisibility, these positions of subordination that characterize colonial beings. Thus while coloniality permeates all relationships, it does not affect all in the same manner. Just as all are raced, gendered, classed, and sexualized, intrinsic to these classifications is a hierarchy of power; a material, epistemic, and ontological reality that posits some lives worthy and as par excellence, and others as lives to be tolerated and endured and at times outright disposable. Thus, while “everyone in capitalist Eurocentered modernity is both raced and gendered, not everyone is dominated or victimized in terms of their race or gender” (Lugones, 2007, p. 192).

Lugones emphasizes how beyond the gendered societal arrangements carried out along economic, social, and personal relationships; the concept of “gender” in itself was not an idea in existence prior to colonialism (2007, p. 188). Coloniality has normalized discussions of gender to the extent that it has situated concepts of “heterosexualism” and “biological dimorphism” as always existing and always present (ibid., 190). It is coloniality’s gendered and sexualized projects of categorization that have named, introduced, and created identities along discourses that previously did not exist. This is not to presuppose that there were not “males” and “females,” but that there were not “men” and “women,” “straight” and “queer,” including the gendered and sexualized
concepts surrounding these terms and identities prior to the establishment of coloniality’s guiding frameworks that introduced these subjectivities. Coloniality as “an encompassing phenomenon” created and organized “sexual access” along axes of gendered and sexualized hegemonically conceived relations of power. These are relations of power that Chicana feminists have pinpointed and traced for quite some time as definitively linked to contemporary oppressive heterosexist and patriarchal discourses (Taylor-García, 2012). The establishment of superior/inferior discourses and relations, affected not only economic and newly conceived racial formations, but likewise established gendered hierarchies as well as hierarchies of sexuality that enacted heteronormative logics while simultaneously stigmatizing and violently suppressing non-normative sexualities (Lugones, 2007, p. 192). The interstices of racialized gendered sexualities have also worked to privilege male homosexuality as the “universal speaker of queerness,” that has also silenced and neglected Chicana lesbian counter-discourses; outcomes emanating from coloniality’s cascading hierarchies that perpetually reposition logics of superiority/inferiority in complex ways (Torres, 2003). Saldivar-Hull (2000) shares Lugones proposition that questioning the guiding parameters about how we discuss sexuality and gender are central to liberatory projects, as the imposition of hegemonic sexual relations among colonized peoples is not an additive function of liberation, but a central component to arrangements of social domination. Patricia Zavella details that the perpetual reconfiguration of colonialism’s prescribed gendered and sexualized oppressions affirms the presence of the “pervading themes of silence and violence” that work to preserve these discourses (2003, p. 247). It is this gendered, sexualized, and raced disposability, this proximity to death, which characterizes colonial subaltern
subjects existence in ways that reflect people’s particular relationships to colonialism. It is through education, culture, and a social environment still tinged with colonial auras that create a world where, “not everyone belongs to its memories, feelings, and ways of sensing. Many of us have been ‘trapped’ in the colonial matrix but do not ‘belong’ to it” (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012, p. 7).

It is this paradox of belonging and yet not being included that becomes the coloniality of Being. As Lewis Gordon articulates, racialized colonial peoples “are a function of a world in which they are posted as illegitimate although they could exist nowhere else…Such people are treated by dominant organizations of knowledge as problems instead of people who face problems. Their problem status is a function of the presupposed legitimacy of the systems that generate them” (Gordon, 2011, p. 97). It is a relationship to being that is complicated by a denial of racialized subjects to be on the same ontological tier as man, where man is the European man as the archetypal “I” and as human par excellence (Dussel, 1985, p. 8). Yet it is also a being that does exist albeit not fully human or developed; it is a perpetually liminal humanity. Thus, the colonial system of gender incorporated colonized males as “human-as-not-men, and colonized females became not-human-as-not-women” (Lugones, 2010, p. 744). This matter of indigenous people as not human and/or not yet human; people incapable of being saved or in need of being saved that began in the 16th century, now represents the two major racist discourses of biological racism and cultural racism that inhabit dominating discussions of race (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 83). The development of these discourses can be read as “We went from the 16th century characterization of ‘people without writing’ to the 18th and 19th century characterization of ‘people without history’ to the 20th century
characterization of ‘people without development’ and more recently, to the early 21st century of ‘people without democracy’” (Grosfoguel, 2008b, p. 4).

This dehumanizing reality positions racialized colonial subjects as inferior ontologically because they are inferior epistemically, and inferior epistemically because they are inferior ontologically (Mignolo, 2011, p. 277). In this sense the “native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values” (Fanon, 1963, p. 41). This perpetually dehumanizing existence thus positions the coloniality of Being as an always lacking, always insufficient Being; a damned existence (Fanon, 2008). It is to live life at a discount, to live something that always resembles an incomplete death (Fanon, 1967, p. 173; Fanon, 1965, p. 128). The object of racism is thus always a form of being, “a certain form of existing” that is read as unstable, unnecessary, and always suspiciously subhuman (Fanon, 1967, p. 32; Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 5).

**Chican@ Coloniality of Being**

For Chican@s, this coloniality of Being reveals itself in such a way that makes its multitude of parameters inescapable and forever encroaching. This suffocating existence impacts Chican@s regardless of the awareness or knowledge to its existence, as subjects are always already incorporated into ideologies (Althusser, 1977). The dominating knowledge crafted about Chican@s bears a genealogy spanning centuries, and thus whether an individual’s ancestry has resided in the American Southwest for generations, or whether they are recent arrivals, nonetheless difference facets of the Chican@ coloniality of Being will find their way into how such individuals are seen, heard, and interacted with at every social level. As Ramón Grosfoguel (2008a) states:
Migrants do not arrive in an empty or neutral space. Migrants arrive in metropolitan spaces that are already ‘polluted’ by a colonial history, colonial imaginary, colonial knowledges, a racial/ethnic hierarchy link to a history of empire, in other words, migrants arrive in a space of power relations that is already informed and constituted by coloniality. There is no neutral space of migrant incorporation (pp. 607-608).

It is in the following section that I would like to discuss the particularities of this colonial imaginary and history for Chican@s in defining a Chicano@ coloniality of Being.

As a people who have experienced colonialism twice over, the 16th century Spanish conquest of what is now Mexico and the colonial war of aggression between the United States and Mexico that culminated with acquisition of the American Southwest and the subsequent exploitation of Mexican/native resources and people, Chican@s are “colonial/racial subjects of empire” (Grosfoguel, 2008a, p. 608). At times described as an internal colony within the U.S., Chican@ communities are often viewed as foreigners to lands that they are native to (Almaguer, 1970; Barrera, 1979). As “alter-Native,” Chican@s are “immigrant but native, not foreign but colonized, not alien but different from the overarching hegemony of white America” (Gaspar de Alba, 2003, p. xxi).

Chican@s are a complex amalgamation of indigenous/migrant/colonized/settlers that refuse binary and simplistic definitions of colonial impositions, thus in every sense Chican@s are modern/colonial/decolonial as subjects/actors that negate easy categorizations in the settle/native/slave triad (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

As a people consisting of European/Indigenous/African/Asian roots, Chican@s likewise escape simple racial/ethnic categorization. Nonetheless discourses of white
supremacy work to establish inter-Chican@ anti-indigenous and anti-Black racism. Chican@s relationship to white supremacy emanates from the Spanish racial caste system imposed in colonial Mexico and is further complicated by the evasion of being subsumed in the U.S. black/white binary following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Whereas the one drop rule for Blacks in America worked to prove Black ancestry for anyone with “one drop” of African blood, for fair complexion Mexicans capable of passing, “one drop” of Spanish blood was used to determine such individuals as white, a position assisted by the granting of U.S. citizenship to Mexicans living in the Southwest at the time of U.S. colonization (Gomez, 2007; Menchaca, 2001).

However, this citizenship can best be described as second class citizenship, as the post-Mexico Southwest quickly became an arena under which both old and new ideologies surrounding Mexicans/Chican@s would gain a foundational hold, ideologies that have developed into contemporary dehumanizing frameworks. The construction of Mexican women as either Spanish beauties or prostitutes, and its racist tinge, paired with the colonial gender system that created the virgin / whore dichotomy for Mexicanas/Chicanas, has been a colonially induced dehumanizing legacy that has remained embedded in hegemonic discourses (Castañeda, 1990; 1992). Likewise the use of anti-Hispanicization, anti-Catholic sentiment, and anti-indigenous racism has created a hegemonic perception of people of Mexican descent as embodying the worse characteristics of all their ethno-racial roots, an ideology otherwise known as the Black Legend (Paredes, 1978).

Hence, the migratory corridors that Mexican migrants have traveled through over numerous generations and centuries prior to and after the American conquest of the
Southwest, are then and now pathologically viewed as cultural deficient markers of a people incapable of understanding legality and thus lacking the comprehension required of entering the American polity (Acuña, 2007). It is a removal of Mexicans as conscious agents and rather positions people of Mexican descent as fundamentally unlawful who *don’t know better* and are in need of guidance/reprimand. The prison industrial complex’s wrath on marking black and brown bodies as definitively criminal, and the perpetual devaluation of Chican@ thought, communities, and culture positions these lives as never enough, never worthy, and as intrinsically flawed (Aldama, 2002). Moreover, this logic creates a situation for Mexican women in which they are denied prenatal care and whose bodies are spoken of in neoliberal terms of management and surveillance for the state (Inda, 2002; Gutiérrez, 2008; Ruiz, 2008). The increasing incarceration and the perpetual need for racialized subjects to convince others of their worth and value, often through economic terms that cast their significance in terms of labor and their bodies as commodities, creates a point of reference fundamentally different than the universalized and decontextualized “Being,” as their bodies are interpreted as always inhabiting potential criminalities (Cacho, 2012).

The coloniality of Being for Chican@s has historically perceived Mexicans as a “problem” and culturally deficient ethno-racial group lacking a desire for personal betterment, proper hygiene, and other racist induced characterizations that have maintained a trajectory into the larger categorization of Latin@s as a threat to American normalcy (Chavez, 2008; McWilliams, 1990, p. 188). Mexicans have historically been deemed a disposable and at times a necessary labor group, reduced into particular areas of racialized and gendered employment (Acuña, 2015). Similarly, the “colonial/modern
gender system” has singularized the sexuality of Chican@s into heteronormative constructs that fails to acknowledge Chicana sexualities that exist outside of the virgin/whore dichotomy (Alarcón, 1989; 2006; Lugones, 2007).

As I have outlined, the coloniality of Being for Chican@s bears itself in a variety of interrelated oppressive tendencies that situate a Chican@ existence within numerous dehumanizing discourses. Through the axes of gender, race, class, and sexuality, a Chican@ being is always available to be calculated as inherently illegal if the contexts presuppose such a necessity. As colonialism enacts technologies of erasure and social and personal occupation, any desire to enact subaltern Chican@ voices from this colonial difference are always read as “criminal epistemologies” for their desire to further disrupt the always present reality of inequities that trail and prematurely exist for Chican@s (Acosta, 2007; Serna, 2013). The problem is not Western culture per se, but rather our relationship to it, a relationship that has always existed in dehumanizing terms that perceive our existence as an unfortunate yet always disposable reality.

Relevance to the Thesis

One specific development of coloniality that I center in this thesis and have focused on in this chapter, has been the dehumanizing processes and logics that censor, ignore, and marginalize the existences of subaltern peoples that then creates a “coloniality of Being” far different than the normalized and supposed universal point of reference implied in traditional discussions of “being.” In his criticism of canonical philosophical texts concerning ontology, Maldonado-Torres cites these works’ complete disregard for subaltern ontologies as the “forgetfulness of coloniality” (2004, p. 30). It is in these discussions that racialized, sexualized, and gendered identities emanating from
the colonial difference are rendered illegible, unworthy of inclusion, and thus as categorically subhuman. This is the coloniality of Being, a Being that is rendered insufficient of centering let alone including beyond tokenized renditions. It manifests itself by means of an embodied proximity to death via police brutality, lack of resources of every kind, and whose existences are rendered illegal and thus as lacking. The coloniality of Being is embedded with epistemic racism that likewise “disregards the epistemic capacity of certain groups of people. It may be based on metaphysics or ontology but its results are nonetheless the same: the evasion of the recognition of others as fully human beings” (ibid., 34). It is a “being-colonized” as it permits being to already exist in certain dimensions, identities, and locales, and that concurrently makes it non-existent for colonial subjects, subjects that are unable to be, i.e. Chican@s as always inherently illegal and hence unable/unwilling to be full members of inclusion; an unfulfilled humanness (ibid., 39). The coloniality of Being posits colonial subjects as objects of be-ings that must always vie to be, must always prove their humanity. As I position in this study through Moraga’s writings, for the decolonial actor it is a perpetual motion of not only proving one’s being-ness, but also finding ways to become for one’s own self, for one’s own humanization in the face of a “preferential violence” that is always already discriminating peoples and targeting communities (ibid., 43).

This study is an attempt to read Moraga’s Codex for how it desires and enacts these responses; her mechanisms of enunciation. Thus I position a decoloniality of becoming as a theoretical concept in which I read Moraga’s work as a knowingness to this lack of being-ness from a decolonial and indigenous perspective grounded with an awareness to the fluidity, negotiability, and survival instincts and lessons necessary to
perpetually be i.e. become. Whereas Maldonado-Torres situates the colonality of Being as a “possible way to theorize the basic fundamentals of the pathologies of imperial power and the persistence of colonality,” Moraga’s decoloniality of becoming is the conceptual framework through which I read how this colonality is dialogically engaged through the language and discourses of her work through her own ontological colonial difference (Maldonado-Torres, 2004, p. 44). I answer the logical question of how do Chican@s contest the colonality of Being and what would such actions appear as, by reading Moraga’s work as a particular example of the realities of the question stated, its answers, and the processes that are always answering this question.

Although this perspective has been applied in other realms, this study’s approach of rendering the common-sensical invisible, remnants of colonialism legible, and de-naturalized pivots itself around how these legacies have affected and are affected by Chican@s, in this instance through the words of Cherríe Moraga. I read Moraga’s work as “epistemic disruptions” that unveil the geopolitics of knowledge and the “epistemic silences of Western epistemology” that have cloaked the humanity of colonial subjects (Mignolo, 2009, p. 162). It is important to remember that the universality of Eurocentric discourses that position the Western point of reference as the point of reference were constructed under hegemonic violent conditions. The supposed rationale supporting the particular superiority of Western thought behind meritocratic conditions ignores the violent suppression and denial of other ways of knowledge production that allowed/allows for such rationales to present themselves as benevolent logistical outcomes (Maldonado-Torres, 2012). For epistemology is not without history; knowledge is constructed with a particular geopolitics and history defining its contours, application,
and dissemination, and thus decolonizing epistemologies defines an “epistemic disobedience” (Mignolo, 2008; 2012). Epistemic privilege allows the dominant groups who decide what constitutes knowledge to disavow and ignore the introduction of non-dominating forms of knowledge (Isasi-Diaz & Mendieta, 2012; Mendieta, 2012).

This study likewise seeks to create knowledge from a Chican@ colonial difference and is an aim to contribute to the goals of conceptualizing, creating and advocating for knowledges historically and currently subalternized, by understanding the ontological variants embodied by colonial subjects. A basic premise of this stance is that knowledge is particular; it is always specified as emanating from identities and locales with particular histories. Thus, I am aiming to delve into Moraga’s codices for what knowledge she is aiming to construct and deconstruct, and what can be absorbed from these processes that struggle to position an ethics and way of life delinked from dominating and oppressive ways of thinking, living, and being.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter I would like to discuss how previous analyses of Cherrie Moraga complement and contrast with the particular intent and premises I propose within my analysis. In doing so I aim to position an evaluation of why this particular study at hand complements larger dialogues of the importance and purposes for which queer Chicana literary works like Moraga’s can be further gleaned beyond what previous critics have composed. Here I imply that as Chapter 2’s documentation of the suffocating and contemporary facets of coloniality impose a particular way of knowing, Eurocentricity, Moraga’s work can be recited as an epistemically disruptive endeavor through the many counter-hegemonic voices through which her choirs entertain (Mignolo, 2009). Moraga’s literary voices are vital contributions to a pluriversal recategorizing of knowledges, as they are constantly sung in ongoing yet historically continuous contestations of the ever-present dominating forms of knowledge development, deployment, and concurrently, denial (Grosfoguel, 2012; 2013).

Literature Review

It is in this section that I would like to broach an understanding of works relevant to my argument for both their relatability and assistive points of departure. An underlying premise of my thesis is to complicate readings of Chicana feminist literature beyond the perceived yet much deserved appraisal of them for their affirmations of lives lived yet unheard. It is in part due to institutional and quotidian enactments of oppressive ideologies that continually render the diversity of works under this banner as ignored and/or silenced. Here I emphasize quotidian for the everydayness of these encounters, for
the repetitiveness and monotonous oppressive realities that Chicanas have and do endure as they combat tiresome minimalizing tropes.

As Chabram-Dernersesian (2006) notes, not only did/do Chicana writers have to endure the hostile nature of critics unwilling to perceive the worth in Chican@ writings bicultural and multilingual stylistic components, but have also had to and continue to similarly endure that de-legitimization from their Chicano counterparts who ignore and relegate Chicana contributions further to the margins as inauthentic Chican@ works. It is in the establishment of heteronormative patriarchal ethno-nationalist constructions of Aztlán, the Chicano homeland, that Chicanas have had to historically fight their erasure and re-write themselves into the “movement script” (ibid.; Pérez, 1999; Pérez L. E., 1999). Chicanas have had to continually do so in spite of academic marginalization and institutional violence within academia at large, as well as within Chican@ Studies (Blackwell, 2011; Garcia, 1996; Lomeli, 1985). Heteropatriarchal concoctions of Chicano history have worked to create a gendered history that has sought to erase and essentialize the contributions of Chicanas (Pérez, 2006). In perpetually re-inscribing Chicana legacies, Chicana feminists have also reconfigured Indigeneity beyond the often-glorified heteropatriarchal manifestations favored by Aztlán-centering cultural nationalist ideologies (Contreras, 2008). Chicana feminists have disrupted patriarchal fixations of essentialized submissive women by emphasizing current and historical Chicana/Mexicana political agency; in particular through a refaceting of archetypal objectified constructions of Chicana/Mexicana femininity, La Malinche/Malintzin Tenepal and La Virgen de Guadalupe, into embodied historical signifiers of feminist negotiation, survival, and defiance (Alarcón, 1989; Quiñonez, 2002). In embracing
matrilineal genealogies and constructing Indigenous feminist icons, Chicana feminists have reconfigured how Indigenous culture and thought can be utilized and embraced beyond exclusionary principles (Alarcón, 2006).

As I position this thesis as a solidaritous act alongside Chicana feminist counter-hegemonic genealogies, I move away yet not against from affirming the validity of these works as self-affirming acts, and rather option to emphasize how these works provide valuable theoretical and philosophical critical enterprises in ways that are often ignored. I read Moraga as philosophy and as epistemically refreshing, and thus as ontologically positioning a re-allocation of what philosophy looks like.

In “Thinking familiar with the interstitial,” Kristie Dotson (2014) highlights how women of color feminist philosophy incorporates a diverse range of critical views and constructs through often interdisciplinary approaches. A fundamental insistence of Dotson’s is that these works intentionally and unintentionally broaden the scope of what constitutes philosophy in a disruptively liberating sense, as they seek to break the limits of how philosophy is both understood as well as the parameters and definitions that are assumed to be its defining characteristics. They are works that routinely cross “disciplinary boundaries and normative, academic expectations” (ibid., 6). Thus it is no surprise that these epistemic disruptions continually fail to be acknowledged by constricting academic standards and the scholarly gatekeepers that uphold such definitions, as the performance of these epistemic disruptions is “often at the expense of one’s place and ease in the academy” (ibid., 7).

It is in proclaiming a geo- and body- politics of knowledge that women of color philosophy, in this particular case Moraga’s decolonial Xicana ontology, positions an
exposing of the “epistemic silences of Western epistemology...[by] affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devalued” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 163). There is no Cartesian detached observer present but rather a deeply embodied epistemic enunciation of that which continues to be silenced and ignored, a queer Xicana epistemology. My reading of Moraga places her work as epistemically disruptive philosophical works. Her works enact a decolonial gesture that claims “knowledge-making for well being rather than for controlling and managing populations,” and that similarly contests the canons of knowledge created about colonialism’s others that academic discourses had a role in constructing and perpetuating (ibid., 178).

Moraga’s works move beyond the confines of compartmentalization and the perceived boundaries of intellectual and academic disciplines. The multi-genre and multiplicitous voices within Moraga’s writings work to deny the reader the option of reading them in a singular light; rather, they present a transdisciplinary approach that blurs the confines between the literary, critical, philosophical, and the theoretical into a stability within supposed instability, a comfortable in-betweenness (Quintana, 1996; Sánchez, 1985). I take Anzaldúa’s proposition that “the world I create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me,” and likewise read Moraga for both the world that she lives in that has been created for her, her coloniality of Being, and the world she creates for herself, her decoloniality of becoming (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 187). These worlds become an arena in which sitios y lenguas particular to Chicanas became avenues of survival and negotiation (Pérez, 1993; 1998). As academic delegitimization and institutional violence exclude feminist’s discussions, these conversations must then craft and develop their own sites and discourses (Blackwell, 2011).
Moraga’s work, in particular her inaugural collection *Loving in the War Years* (1983), has been thoroughly conceptualized for its *lenguas* of lesbian sexuality, and its interjection of sexuality as a liberatory practice and viable frame of analysis (Yarbro-Bejarano, 2001). Yarbro-Bejarano’s *The Wounded Heart* (2001) is a collection of essays that categorize Moraga’s writings as efforts at making “desire(s) legible” (p. xiv). Yarbro-Bejarano emphasizes how Moraga’s literary mappings routinely display the fragmented lesbian body, particularly the mouth, lips, and throat, in a disembodied manner that highlights how patriarchal practices and discourses force women to separate themselves from their bodies as commodified entities (ibid., 12). It is in these movements that Moraga’s work is read as inhabiting heterosexism’s terroristic implications for queer Chicanas and casts how dehumanizing rhetorics impact self-understandings. Yarbro-Bejarano’s analysis provides a glimpse into how Moraga’s deeply personal work can be referenced for how oppressive discourses then impact how Chicana authors deal, resist, and converse with these pervasive ideologies.

Yarbro-Bejarano posits how Moraga’s desires themselves do no exist free from outside influence, as at times these desires reinscribe norms and devised constructions of proper etiquette. Moraga’s sexualities are thus ways of displaying and interrogating “culturally informed” desires as well as her performances of sexualities “devoid of power exchanges” (ibid., 88). In *The Last Generation*, Moraga’s seeking of the Indigenous woman in the context of her whiteness similarly constructs and etches a racialized system she critiques; a construction of whiteness through the desirous need of the dark Other (ibid., 110). In a comparison between *The Last Generation* and Moraga’s work in *Bridge*, Yarbro-Bejarano describes how different each text situates difference. Whereas *Bridge*
sought to complicate the singular Chicana by embracing her multiplicities, in *The Last Generation* Moraga articulates racialized loyalties by selecting which identities to refute (ibid., 113). In truly juxtaposing the layers of Moraga’s writings, Yarbro-Bejarano details how by uncovering both the liberating and limiting points within Moraga’s work that we find a value otherwise unrealized. Although my analysis will incorporate elements of Moraga’s use of racialized/sexualized desire, my point of reference from coloniality rather selects to place a greater emphasis on Moraga’s contestations of how these desires dislocate and coexist with colonial tropes. Thus, although my area of emphasis poses a different lens than Yarbo-Bejarano’s, nonetheless I aim to similarly position how the depths of Moraga’s works provide unique areas of analysis in her aims to resist essentialization.

Similarly, other analyses of Moraga center the role essentialization and authenticity play in her work. Sharpe’s (2003) reading contextualizes Moraga’s embrace of Indigeneity by problematizing how this gesture too easily falls into essentialist casting of racialized identities. Sharpe also adds that an important development in Moraga’s writing from *Loving in the War Years* to *The Last Generation* is a move from a contradictory coalitional emphasis critical of cultural nationalist discourses, and towards a refashioning of cultural nationalism to fit a more inclusive approach. Romero’s (1993) reading of *Loving* also moves to criticize Moraga’s portrayal of the community she returns to, in particular for painting the “community” in abstract essentialist terms. Oliver-Rotger (2003) likewise notes that although Moraga at times herself falls into an essentialist characterizing of a monolithic Chicano movement and discourse, they argue
that such tendencies should be read as strategically employing said moves in order to further supplant a subjectivity historically silenced.

Another important facet of Moraga’s embodied subjectivities is her articulation of a Xicana queerness. While some analyses have ventured into what I perceive as erroneously removing the sexual implications of *queering* (Romero, 1993), others have centered Moraga’s queer motherhood in *Waiting in the Wings* as formatting a queering of ideal bodies, i.e. idyllic images of motherhood (Bost, 2010). Tattonetti’s (2004) evaluation of Moraga’s queerness casts her works as always exhibiting an always-fluid queerness, where the movement of such sexualities/identities is never the same from text to text and thus is always already queer. I take this queering in a similar way as I examine the colonial/decolonial ontologies present in *A Xicana Codex* as always passing alongside, through and within one another in a moving, yet, nondeveloping not yet there manner.

Soto’s (2010) de-masterful intent behind her queer reading of Moraga’s already queer works, likewise, is useful yet for a different focus, as I similarly seek to interrogate the obvious. In fully unearthing Moraga’s queer literary acts, Soto’s analysis stops and reads Moraga not as simply oppositional or complicit in racialized desires, nor does Soto read what some see as perhaps dichotomous arguments in Moraga’s writings as “authorial failures,” but as untapped crevices through which we can gain a greater understanding of racialized sexuality (2010, p. 17). Indeed, Soto finds that Moraga’s writing emits a proposal that in shame, in verguenza, we can find all the possible routes available to us and how Moraga’s honest vulnerability is not only evidence of what racialized desire at times looks like, but also the illogical limits and construction upon
which this racialization is based on. Soto proposes that while some have disregarded Moraga’s writing as lacking merit and worth, and others have positioned it as exceptionally valuable, both camps neglect to see in Moraga how “the contradictions, shame, aporias, and even self-loathing that underwrite her narrative of outsidersness and homecoming bring into sharper relief the very logic of racialization and racism” (ibid., 37). Hence, whereas Soto queers an already queer Moraga, I want to decolonially investigate what is already skeptical of coloniality, Moraga’s codices; and present such decoloniality witnessed in Moraga’s work as nonlinear, as always incomplete and always past, present, and future. Although Moraga’s works can be read as explicitly critical of colonial discourses and coloniality’s grip on Chicanidad’s oppositional discourses, an excavation of her decolonial deconstructive dialogues within A Xicana Codex has yet to fully be addressed. It is in making that which is visible magnified that I aim to delve into why and how Moraga’s enunciations can provide insights into decolonial Chican@ ontologies as understood within the conceptual avenues of the coloniality of Being and a decoloniality of becoming.

In “Suspending the Desire for Recognition,” Gonzalez (2011) likewise contextualizes Moraga’s Loving in the War Years and The Hungry Woman alongside the coloniality of Being. In doing so, Gonzalez sees Moraga’s decolonial utopian exercises as centering precisely what the title states, an illustration of queer Chicana love beyond the stifling contours of coloniality’s ever present aura of death that both interrogate and then reformulate Chican@ love. In doing so, “Suspending the Desire” catapults a reading of Moraga’s work as “soul-making,” designed at interrupting dominating ways of inter- and intrapersonal love, and as a path of liberating love’s intent, boundaries, and embodiments
Gonzalez’s reading of The Hungry Woman highlights the play for its interplay between colonialism’s de-spiritualizing attempts towards Indigenous communities, and how the play excavates indigeneity within these confines. In this analysis, the Mexican Media character in the play embodies the dialogical fluidity between being decolonial in a colonial world, and upsets any framing of such acts as pure in any form. I stress Gonzalez’s analysis in particular for its links to my own, specifically how we both center Moraga’s coloniality of Being. However, the differences lie in our use of this concept to stress specific yet comparable renditions of how this coloniality transverses in her texts. Although my analysis will incorporate elements of how Moraga seeks to interject a decolonial love, my analysis is guided by an increased focus on the dialectical synthesizing of the coloniality of Being and decoloniality of becoming. Thus, I choose to garner much more focus behind how these processes weave throughout a text that has yet to be privileged in this manner, and seek to shed light on how Moraga contests and re-enacts these conflicting yet at times supportive discourses.

In this chapter I have showcased why this thesis contributes to the discussion surrounding Moraga, and how it builds upon previous readings of her work. I propose my reading as additional to and complementary of previous analyses, and hence amplify the importance of Moraga’s work in a coexistive scope that has yet to receive comparable attention in regards to other thematic elements within her works through a selection of a more recent and less critically accentuated work.
Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter delves into how I methodologically deconstruct and read this coloniality of Being and Moraga’s responsive decoloniality of becoming. In particular, I discuss my framing of a literary analysis and how I use such an agenda to structure a reading of the three thematic elements that I find within the text; a suppression of voice, an occupation of voice, and an enunciation of voice. In discussing these concepts I shed light on their relationship to coloniality and how these elements are themselves discursive and fluid, and how these processes and elements refuse totalization. The intent behind this particular section is to emphasize how I see these processes occurring, and how I read them in particular yet overlapping tendencies that refuse easy categorization. I aim for this chapter to present the foundation upon which my analysis resides on. The methodological propositions that I engage herein sets the tone for which I read Moraga’s *A Xicana Codex* and lays out the schematic which my exploration pursues.

Methodology

A textual analysis approach will prove useful as I privilege Moraga’s *A Xicana Codex* as my primary source of investigation. Through a textual analysis, I will interpret the texts for what I subjectively believe to be their intended and implied meanings as I read these works as individual yet dialogical texts in conversation with one another (McKee, 2003). My examination of Moraga’s texts is done with the acknowledgement that a text is “not a computable object,” as it does not simply exist or spring forth on its own; it is my duty as a researcher employing this analysis to bring existence to the text through my interpretation and consequent dissemination of its discourses (Barthes, 1986).
Therefore, my “systematic exploration” of the data (text) is done to both understand the messages conveyed as well as the nature and reasons for their assembly (ibid., 85).

As a critical qualitative researcher, I am articulating my analyses and observations in order to make visible those endeavors that remain marginalized; efforts to decolonize epistemic and ontological understandings beyond limiting Eurocentric discourses and towards liberating frameworks of thinking. I understand the texts as pieces of performativity and representation, and as efforts to make visible a specific reality (Denzin, 2008). By employing a critical interpretive methodology, I intend to analyze the texts for the ways in which they articulate a desire to make their work transformative for themselves as well as for the reader. Similarly, I intend for this thesis to produce knowledge capable of positively impacting Chican@ Studies and other similarly invested decolonial projects and histories (Denzin, 2008). As my analysis of the aforementioned themes will showcase, these topics bare themselves across the essays dialogically.

Hence the structure of my study will be carried out emphasizing how these thematic elements exist across these passages. In Moraga’s “Prólogo” she states that although the writings are presented in a predominately chronological order, their arrangement “most closely reflects the Mesoamerican cyclical sense of time, space, and movement, in which to advance forward is to return again and again to the site of origin,” to which she later adds, “life is not a progressive plot line” (Moraga, 2011, p. xvii). My method of analysis takes this cue as a way to then position my investigation for how this particular work speaks to the simultaneous concepts of the coloniality of Being and Moraga’s decoloniality of becoming through the suppression, internal occupation, and enunciation of her subaltern voice. I position all of the essays, poems, and writings within
A Xicana Codex in conversation with one another and as such, as a dialogue between Moraga’s voices of coloniality and decoloniality that live in a perpetual fluctuation; what Moraga describes as her changing consciousness. Consequently, this codex becomes a performance of consciousness through her literary voices, as it positions determinate, finite glyphs as fluid, changing artifacts that embrace her writings as thinking. This intertwined web of her coloniality of Being and her decoloniality of becoming are thus manifested within three interconnected themes of the suppression of her voice, the internal occupation of her voice by a foreign voice, and the enunciation of her own voice. It is this framework of analysis that guides my study to which I would like to turn to now in order to further define how I interpret and use these themes.

The coloniality of Being / A decoloniality of becoming

As an ever evolving process, I read these elements as discursive and as always fleeting and fluid, and never static or still. As this chapter has highlighted, coloniality implicates all and to different degrees maintains its influence throughout social and interpersonal arrangements. I have discussed its impact and its manufacturing of dominating ideologies in social arrangements through racial, gendered, sexed, and classed lines that instigates particular ways of being for alternatively impacted individuals. Within these diverse levels of impact, I have stated how being is not universal, as there are levels of being and different ways of being that reflect both dehumanizing tendencies, suppressed non-Western epistemologies, and privileged Western cultural forms of thinking/being that reflect asymmetrical power relations. In emphasizing these dynamics in Moraga’s text I have focused my reading primarily on how these elements work for the intrapersonal, how colonial subjects instigate responses
to their perceived, lived, and resisted reality that they are not yet fully human, not yet acknowledged as a fully incorporated member of society, and not seen or read as completely existing on the same plain as the heterosexual cisgender white male as the quintessential human.

A method of interpreting decolonial actors as subjects-in-process helps to situate how these constructs are always adaptive and negotiable alongside one another as never complete practices but as unfixable entities of fluid peripheries. In Norma Alarcón’s analysis of the multivoiced subjects in *This Bridge Called My Back*, she situates “consciousness as a site of multiple voicings” for feminists of color, where these voicings “are not viewed as necessarily originating with the subject, but as discourses that transverse consciousness and which the subject must struggle with constantly” (1991, p. 38). Essentialized gendered constructs of Chicanas have thus constructed the conscious Chicana subject as unable to be “as she can only exist negatively, as it were, through the refusal of that which is given” (Alarcón, 1996). It is in Moraga’s engagement with these multiple voicings, through the coloniality of Being and the decoloniality of becoming, that is the focal point of my analysis. Here I quote Arturo Aldama at length in his discussion centering Chican@s as subjects-in-process. Aldama (2001) states that employing this point of reference can work to:

Liberate our understanding of subaltern subjectivity and signifying acts of cultural and political productions. This model disrupts totalizing and inferiorizing forces in colonial discourse that attempt to regulate and contain subaltern subjects in static and oppressable modes of production…By de/constructing or de/colonizing our subjectivities as hybrid, mestiza/o, and indigenous peoples, we can resist and
disrupt different loci of social power and being to understand ourselves as bordered and multiple beings who can draw on different reservoirs of signifying practices. Instead of returning to an essentialized, anthropologically imagined place – the lost Eden of Western civilization – we can reclaim a vital heterogeneity that reconfirms our interconnectedness with all of our relations. Speaking and acting as anticolonial, antiracist, and antisexist subjects-in-process is generative, a way to be in the world that speaks against our otherized selves and further situates possibilities and tactics of strategic and spontaneous resistance (p. 33).

Aldama’s positioning provides a useful proposal in contextualizing how I situate my analysis, in particular for Moraga disrupts inferiorizing majoritarian discourses and positions her ontologies in a dialogical manner, as “persons are free and at the same time historically determined – that is, conditioning is not absolute, but relative or partial” (Dussel, 1985, p. 39). It is the infinitely dialogical dance of suppression, occupation, and enunciation, that I investigate below as enacting tension between the inferioring, totalizing, and liberating discourses that make up the decolonial subject-in-process; i.e. a decoloniality of becoming.

**Suppression**

Coloniality presupposes that colonialism’s governing ideologies of dominating classification remain embedded in contemporary discourses, and a prominent component of such ways of thinking seek to not only privilege Eurocentric ways of thinking, but concurrently pursue a suppression of indigenous non-Western institutions and cultural frameworks through a culturally deficient lens. Over time this line of thinking has worked
to categorize precolonial ways of thinking as ancient, limiting, and un-imaginative. Although indigenous cosmologies have remained, albeit at the periphery and/or culturally appropriated along decontextualized and depoliticized lines, nonetheless dominating discourses have historically worked to suppress non-Western cosmologies. This process, what I have interpreted as a suppression of non-dominating non-Western ethics, reflects itself along numerous patterns of thought.

Colonial people’s immense difficulty at both remembering indigenous patterns of life and also resuscitating their cultural legacies is a byproduct of colonialism’s reoccurring attempts at erasure and continual eradication of indigenous cosmologies. It is a suppression of memory as a mental sensation but also as a material reality. Fanon describes such a process as “cultural mummification” that leads to a ”mummification of individual thinking” (Fanon, 1967, p. 34) This suppression of non-Western life, life that did not/does not prescribe to a Eurocentric value system, works to systemically kill that which cannot be made useful (appropriated) under coloniality. The “colonized’s institutions are dead and petrified. He scarcely believes in those which continue to show some signs of life and daily confirms their ineffectiveness. He often becomes ashamed of these institutions, as of a ridiculous and overaged monument” (Memmi, 1991, p. 103). Here Memmi’s “He” is not read as solely inhabiting the realities of men, but rather as showcasing the general reality of coloniality. As I have previously stated, coloniality itself instigated a gendered structure and gender as a concept in and of itself, and thus it is no surprise that even for conscious decolonial actors, such normalized gendered interpretations have also influenced their line of thinking. This “mummification” leads to something resembling “a great void” (Memmi, 1991, p. 104). It is an erasure of anything
resembling worthy of celebration or pride or exuberance over cultures, ideologies, or memories that are native to colonial subjects. It is both a suppression of material and physical memories but also of establishing a void incapable of being filled by none other than Eurocentric discourses, it is essentially a preliminary step to a forced hegemonic assimilation.

This suppression is essentially a depersonalization that is individual, collective, and social as it works to deny/exploit/appropriate the thriving of non-Western entities (Fanon, 1963, p. 293). Colonization becomes a process of what Aime Cesaire calls a “thingification,” a suppression of agency or subjectivity (Cesaire, 2000, p. 42). This move to suppress desires, voices, and resistant articulations works to cast the collective and the individual as a singular bloc incapable of diversity or heterogeneity, as the colonial “others” are always rendered as a fixable body. As Albert Memmi details, “another sign of the colonized’s depersonalization is what one might call the mark of the plural. The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity (e.g., They are ‘this.’ ‘They are all the same.’)” (Memmi, 1991, p. 85). Coloniality marks racialized subjects as a “faceless, problem people [who] are derailed from the dialectics of recognition, of self and other, with the consequence of neither self nor other” (Gordon, 2011, p. 100). It makes all movements a defense, a negation of that which has been made familiar within oppressive tropes (Fanon, 1965, p. 130)

It is what Homi Bhabha describes as a “fixity.” It is a paradoxical move to make rigid ideologies that were crafted under violent and disruptive conditions, where the non-Western must be made fixed and the Western as definitively evolving. This “fixity”
positions stereotypes as suppressive modes of knowledge about the other, where colonial subjects can always be fixated as unmovable depersonalized identities vulnerable to occupation (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 74-75).

**Occupation**

An interconnected feature of the suppression of colonial voices is the internal occupation of foreign voices. It is not sufficient that that which is non-Western is denied and rendered illegible, but this idea must also be believed by racialized, sexualized, gendered, and classed colonial subjects. This amounts to an internal occupation of a foreign voice that becomes so normalized that its foreignness becomes unrecognizable. The totalizing efforts of coloniality make certain that “Nobody escapes the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies of the ‘modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system’” (Grosfoguel, 2008b, p. 3). Although it’s goal of complete totalization is never made complete in an originative form, coloniality rests on the idea that in order for oppressive logics to exist in the subsuming and legitimate manner in which they do, “it is not enough for the colonized to be a slave, he must also accept this role” (Memmi, 1991, p. 89). This internalization is necessary for such dominating ideologies to not only exist but also rather thrive.

It is the institutionalization of dominating ideologies that normalize such behaviors and makes such adoption of the self-dehumanizing logics of internalized racism, the internal beliefs about one’s cultural deficiency, and the belief that in “mimicry” of the dominant modes of being, one can become human, one can become whole, seems perfectly logical and reasonable (Bhabha, 1994). Indeed this occupation and welcomed suppression has material benefits in particular moments, as the contours of
assimilation makes the internal adoption of such self-dehumanizing ideologies economically and socially beneficial. As Memmi poses, as even if the resistive voice “were insensitive to calumny and scorn, even if he shrugged his shoulders at insults and jostling how could the colonized escape the low wages, the agony of his culture, the law which rules him from birth until death?” (Memmi, 1991, p. 91). However this drive that formulates internalized beliefs about the barbarism of racialized subjects and the non-Western as the insufficient, simultaneously builds a self hatred, a “rejection of self and love of another,” as this occupation creates elements of self doubt and shame (Fanon, 1963, p. 211; Memmi, 1991, p. 121).

Thus it is in these moments of conscious and unconscious internalized occupation that the colonial subject finds themselves proving their worth, their humanity via a mimicry, through a miming of behaviors, ideologies, and actions that position the individual as now exhibiting humanity. It becomes a “self-imposed subjectification,” an “autocolonization” (Arteaga, 1997, p. 76). Here the suppression and occupation work to categorize the colonial subject as “homogenous and static, a silent text that can be written and read but never talked with,” where this speech is more so regurgitation than it is enunciation (ibid.). As Arteaga details, it is “in the endeavor to mimic the monologue of power, the other harmonizes with it and suppresses difference. Autocolonialism discourages dialogue. It is monologic” (ibid., 77). It is a gesture towards that which dominates; to that which institutionally guides behaviors, interactions, and dialogues and determines what is recognizable and thus heard.

It is in this occupation, an occupation that is normalized and often hegemonically structured as the only viable means of being, that the alienation of the “other” takes place.
It is through a denial and erasure of that which is native to them through a systematized alterity, an attempted totalization of exteriority, an eradication of that which is marginal, that that which is not suppressed or occupied, is read as that which is not yet suppressed, not yet occupied, and that which is not yet legitimate (Dussel, 1985, p. 53). It is in these occupying and suppressive instances of colonial subjectivity that something else is enacted that refuses to aspire to legitimation that seeks a personhood for and by the colonial self (Fanon, 2008, p. 132).

**Enunciation**

In highlighting how Moraga’s decoloniality of becoming enacts a dialogical enunciation that supplants and complicates easily digestible renderings of subjectivity, I desire to render the enunciation, suppression, and occupation of colonial/decolonial voices as overlapping, evolving/devolving, and cascading into one another. It is this pronunciation for something new, something emanating from the exteriority of the colonial difference that categorizes this enunciatory category. I have thus far presented how I interpret elements of suppression and occupation that emanate from coloniality’s grip, and I would like to clarify that the arrangement of these process in the order presented does not presuppose a linear interpretation of such processes as existing in such an order, as they were arranged in this manner solely as a means to make my arguments and conceptualizations clear. These elements are always near each other and at times in the same vicinity. Just as elements of coloniality are always present, likewise so are these, which I conceptualize as inherent to the coloniality of Being/decoloniality of becoming.
An important distinction of this enunciation, is its importance in desiring it for oneself, for one’s own humanity and not for the colonizing other. It is not a move to be heard as in an occupatory stance elaborated on previously, but rather takes on the character of being able to hear oneself, to witness one’s own humanity regardless of whether it is legitimized by majoritarian discourses. A consequence of colonialism is the attempted but never successful totalization of the elimination of dialogical symmetrical relations between dominating and subordinate groups. This attempt at the elimination of a cross pollination of seeing each other as humans, as oneness, strives to eliminate speech, a dialogue, a non-dominating reciprocal conversation “of concomitant conditions of possibility.” Thus, it is not that “colonized groups fail to speak. It is that their speaking lacks appearance; it is not transformed into speech” (Gordon, 2011, pp. 99-100).

Now this is not to suppose that actions are either exclusively done for liberation or legitimation, as they can and often do coexist, but rather to emphasize moves that aim to highlight subaltern ontologies in an influential manner, in a move to shift the geography of reason (ibid.).

This enunciation always exists in flux, as it is a refusal of that which suffocates, coloniality, and that which aims to liberate, decoloniality. It is a struggle against that which demands a suppression to liberatory desires that itself never reflects an originative thesis or antithesis. It is a becoming emerging from that which was, that which will be, and that which they would want to be; it is a cathartic yet “painful discord” (Memmi, 1991, pp. 140-141). It is in flux and never pure, as it is relational to the suppressive and internalized dehumanizing procedures that make enunciation an act of self-assurance, an act of consciousness, and an act of life not yet lived. It is a fractured enunciation, a border
Decolonial enunciations exist, rather survive and thrive, on the exteriority of western discourses (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 87). It is a move to delink from oppressive tendencies that dictate and monopolize in order to enact options not readily made available or made worthy of consideration given the oppressive circumstances that make liberating actions seem nonsensical, a bore, and a waste (Mignolo, 2011, p. 276). Although these movements that I have been describing as decolonial enunciations do strive to enact change, they exist whether these efforts enact change or not, as it is the movement that matters, the voicing of that which is not considered worthy of proclamation. It is a move motivated by and for deference, but one that is not defined by its successful achievement of deference. Maria Lugones’ (2010) articulation of how she situates her understandings of resistance provides a useful insight into what I am articulating here:

When I think of myself as a theorist of resistance, it is not because I think of resistance as the end or goal of political struggle, but rather as its beginning, its possibility. I am interested in the relational subjective/intersubjective spring of liberation, as both adaptive and creatively oppositional. Resistance is the tension between subjectification (the forming/informing of the subject) and active subjectivity, that minimal sense of agency required for the oppressing resisting relation being an active one, without appeal to the maximal sense of agency of the modern subject (p. 746).
Enunciation is adaptive, it is minimal and it is grand, as its desire is what makes such possibilities material realities; moments that enact a temporal suspension of coloniality and that position otherwise fleeting decolonial emancipatory desires as momentary actualities (Chávez, 2013, p. 9). It is an enactment of “being-for-self” that is always be-ing, becoming (Fanon, 2008, p. 192). It is liberation at “the praxis that subverts the phenomenological order and pierces it to let in a metaphysical transcendence” (Dussel, 1985, pp. 58-59).

**Conclusion**

It is in these interconnected and genealogically related concepts of suppression, occupation, and enunciation that I thus privilege in my literary analysis of Moraga’s coloniality of Being and decoloniality of becoming in her publication *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness*. I have sought to contextualize how I render these processes not as essentialized frameworks of exclusivity but as a movement enacted by decolonial actors to endlessly create themselves (Fanon, 2008, p. 204). As Emma Pérez states, “One is not simply oppressed or victimized; nor is one only oppressor or victimizer. Rather, one negotiates within the imaginary to a decolonizing otherness where all identities are at work in one way or another” (Pérez, 1999, p. 7). It is this uncertain tension, this “conflict” that “actively informs the subjectivity of the colonized self in multiple relation” (Lugones, 2010, p. 748). This multiple voicings can be characterized as “moments of continuums” and continual relocations of peripheries in the same manner that characterizes contemporary global cartographies (Mignolo, 2000, p. 33). A decoloniality of becoming is an “inherent polyglot,” a “cultural mestizaje” (Arteaga, 1997, p. 78). It is in this polyglot, this mestizaje, this decolonial imaginary, that optimism
is bred, enacted, and perpetuated in exterior subaltern discourses. I argue that these themes described depict the facets of the ontological reality for colonial subjects as defined by the coloniality of Being. These theoretical components will situate my lens as to how I filter Moraga’s literary acts in *A Xicana Codex*. 
Chapter 5: Analysis

Introduction

Within this chapter I argue that the collection of writings in Moraga’s *A Xicana Codex*, exhibit Moraga’s coloniality of Being and articulation of a decoloniality of becoming through a reoccurrence of three prevailing premises. I argue that for Moraga, the perpetual fight to speak from the subaltern colonial difference reveals itself in the interdependent and interweaving themes that I label as: the suppression of voice, the internal occupation of a foreign voice, and the enunciation of one’s own voice. I construe this desire to *speak* as Moraga’s aspiration to communicate her embodied ways of being and knowing, and how these writings depict both the coloniality of Being and her decoloniality of becoming not as dichotomous entities, but as internalized overlapping ontological processes. These three dialogical processes combined are Moraga’s coloniality of Being *and* decoloniality of becoming, as they work within, against, and through one another in a perpetual desire to speak, write, think, and *become* in a liberating non-oppressive state. In doing so I disentangle how these processes are experienced for Moraga within this work by tracing the development and interconnected nature of these elements. Before advancing into a discussion of these themes, I would like to use this introductory segment to further contextualize the parameters Moraga has set for these writings as I further elaborate on this chapter’s premises.

In situating the intent behind these works, Moraga reflects on her naming of the collection as “Codex,” in order to follow in the same tradition as the inaugural Aztec codices that were written in order to create a particular “cartography of time and place”
Much of the surviving codices were written after the arrival of the Spanish and consequently recorded under the auspices of colonization. In this manner Moraga’s codices are a documentation of her “stumbling steps of evolving political and spiritual awareness and activism” within and against the “daily advance of neocolonialism” and the events of the first decade of the twenty-first century (p. xvii).

Throughout these codices Moraga’s selection of terms and her use of language itself enacts a refusal of the “linguistic terrorism” imposed by coloniality that simultaneously works to hierarchize and erase subaltern tongues (Anzaldúa G., Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza, 2007, p. 80). Her use of phrases and terms like “xicanadykemamá,” “culludgirls,” and “poorwhitegypsytrashfemcommiedyke,” evoke a refusal to submit to not only static and hegemonic impositions of language, but that likewise enounces a language that adequately describes her perspective, her subaltern difference, and that reaffirms stigmatized labels as prideful oppositional markers. Her decision to not translate or italicize Spanish words and her continued use of Nahuatl phrases situates a blend of vocabularies that refuse to be silenced that she describes as a “bilingual Xicana sensibility” (p. xxii). These epistemic choices enable a “sitio y lengua” that is hers, and re-affirm the text’s assertion of itself as a changing consciousness that decenters coloniality’s linguistic impositions (Pérez, 1998). Likewise, Moraga details her choice in naming her partner “Linda” in conversations of a more private and intimate manner, and using her “public” name Celia Herrera Rodriguez in situations that merit such (p. xxii). I take her decision to capitalize her use of “Linda,” Spanish for “lovely,” as a demonstration of the multiple identities we embody, negotiate, and maneuver.

7 Herein after all citations in this chapter marked solely by a page number are in reference to A Xicana Codex.
Similarly, Moraga’s use of “I” is a refusal to situate a singular and stationary voice, and is rather an “I” that embodies a greater depth and fluidity:

I have encountered the “I” of “character” who is and who is not me, one which allows me the freedom of incorrect politics and a bravery not realized in my own life. So in that sense, this writing is as much an autobiographical narrative as it is a dream waiting to happen, based on some irrefutable facts. (p. 4)

It is this “I” that is and is not both the real and the potential, the lived and the imagined. It is a changing consciousness indeed, as it is an enunciatory uncertainty of that what is, what is not, and what it aims to be in an embodiment of past, present, and future. It is a decoloniality of becoming that embraces that which was and that which is not yet here, where Indigeneity is not a rebirth but rather a veneration of that which was Indigenous, is Indigenous, and will be Indigenous.

For Moraga, this move towards the future of decoloniality does not fear the potentials of coloniality, as the encroachment of coloniality is nothing more than a containment of past and present inequities in different forms. A component of the coloniality of Being is to witness that “the apocalypse has already occurred for those of us standing in the line of cruelty’s fire” (p. xviii). Our stories often act as dystopian memories grounded in colonial traumas of pasts already shrouded in contested acts of genocide. The logics that undergird colonial traumas are embodied and lived through the coloniality of Being, as Chican@s feel the border etched through us like a bleeding wound (p. 135). It is to live the writing on the wall as embodied prophecies, where we read the potential future of Raza by witnessing the present moments of dehumanization we experience today, and to “live daily inside the politics of paradox” (p. 136, p. 139). It
means to never be full members of modern society and also to be “without the ‘formal’ language to articulate” feelings of protest as we “remain so colonized within and without” (p. 148-149).

I comprehend Moraga’s multiple ontological actions, reactions, and reinterpretations of this “colonized within and without” not as a means to an end that perceives consciousness or decoloniality as fixed entities with a definitive conclusion, but as the purpose themselves that position the act of humanizing oneself as the starting point of potential utopian possibilities. They express what Moraga calls “the price of beans” (p. 173). “The price of beans” is not only the price of putting food on the table and the negotiating tactics that Chican@s endure and tread in order to survive and thrive, but also, I interpret it as the price of becoming a decolonial Chican@, the cost of striving to live decolonially in a world that believes colonialism as something of the past that no longer bears any trace on relations today. It is the price, “the murderous toll it takes on our bodies, mind, and spirits,” to live and become as Chican@ (p. 173).

I take these insights into Moraga’s process towards wholeness, as a move away from the “daily advances of neocolonialism” and towards a perpetual struggle to enact an always changing consciousness. It is a consciousness that must always be on guard, always be weary of regurgitating that which she contests; coloniality’s wrath on the psyche of subaltern epistemic and ontological realities striving to speak that which is always suppressed and occupied. It is a consciousness striving to reveal the invisibility of the presence of coloniality’s scars that have become so naked to the eye, soul, and mind, that their disfigurements are worn and spoken of in normalcy, that hence makes decoloniality a tremendously eventful project of ordinary aspirations. The decolonial
project is filled with ambitious desires to live and become in gestures of love and “receptive generosity,” so that in the words of Fanon we can “touch the other, feel the other, discover each other” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 260; Fanon, 2008, p. 206). They are gestures of what I envision as the desire to witness and exhibit our humanity in ways that enounce liberatory acts of love. It is to push back and against the logics of commodification, competition, and domination that find their means in racist, heterosexist, and classed ideologies housed in institutions that make such logics appear as unable to be overcome. It is a motion to become as we wish in the continuing desire to showcase coloniality’s continual influence in social interactions, that seeks to encounter and enact decoloniality in the personal, social, and communal.

I present the following themes, suppression, occupation, and enunciation, in this order for the sake of making a coherent argument, and should not be interpreted as indicative of a linear process, as they are in constant dialectical fluctuation through, within, and against one another. Coloniality proposes no innocence, as we are all subsumed and located somewhere within colonialism’s mappings. It is why a desire to speak against and make known such mappings is always fraught with potential suppression and a continued occupation at the hands of these dominating and dehumanizing legacies and the actors and institutions that praise them.

One purpose I see in Moraga’s work is its will of formulating an alternative imaginary that is guided by the embodied, but that also exists in a dialogical dispossession; one in which the embodied and the imaginary are motioned and influential of one another. Moraga’s pieces of decolonial performativity found within A Xicana Codex are moves to “progress forward in imagination and living practice,” embodied
within a queer Xicana feminist praxis (p. xvii). Just as the embodied gives birth to conceptual understandings cognitively mapped, the imaginary likewise makes it possible for the embodied to feel and move in ways that perhaps are not previously believed to be possible (Enck-Wanzer, 2012).

**Suppression**

In this section I would like to explore Moraga’s awareness to how coloniality impedes her desire to express her own speech, and how its contours and asphyxiating mechanisms of racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism to suppress and inhibit her voice and the ability to exist in contrast to these structures. Likewise, I will expand on how she uncovers the ramifications of this suppression and how this acknowledgement is the foundation to her “Existo Yo” (I exist), the title of section one of the book. The enunciation of an “Existo Yo” implies attentiveness to the prior inExistence of a “Yo.” The suppression of consciousness as voice works to perpetually reinscribe within the colonial subject a reoccurring doubt to their own humanity and ability to speak. These dictatorial acts of suppression are not singular nor are they always clear and specific, but rather due to their institutionalization as mechanisms of oppression and the insidious nature in which they are enacted, they are always ever present yet difficult to pinpoint.

For Moraga, this suppression is definitively tied to her Indigeneity as a queer Xicana. In the essay titled “Indígena as Scribe: the (w)rite to remember,” Moraga emphasizes the necessity of Xican@s and other subaltern personalities to speak and write from an Indigenous perspective as a vital act of testimony to ways of being perpetually on the verge of extinction. She writes how she has witnessed “the ways in which the
authors and transmitters of the Euro-American imagination deny us the authority to imagine outside of their cultural constraints” (p. 82). Later in the essay she writes:

How do we authorize ourselves to write toward what is aesthetically original in us when the majority culture insists that aboriginal thought is useless…and to look backwards is to be backwards? How do we counter a dominant narrative that rewrites our history in the effort to erase that history and its peoples? (p. 83).

Herein lies an articulation of the denial of subaltern people’s ability to imagine themselves in their own image. When the narration of one’s own story is denied and only made legible through as Moraga states, “their cultural constraints,” speaking from the subaltern colonial difference becomes un-imaginable.

These constraints and the erasure of subaltern Indigenous cosmologies have supplanted and eradicated the roots of Indigeneity for people of Mexican descent at large. Thus, here the awareness of such a suppression often arrives in the instigation for future Indigeneities; we become aware how much we suppress in those moments of striving to enact our liberatory desires. For Moraga, the X in Xicana presupposes a consciousness to coloniality’s continual erasure of Chican@ Indigeneity beyond glorified reinterpretations of an Indigeneity of antiquity. She details, “as many Raza may not know their specific Indigenous nation of origin, the X links us as Native people in diaspora” (p. xxi). This historical suppression of an Indigeneity, and the suppression of a queer Indigeneity creates a cascading effect that works to deny that which is native, natural, and mundane in our lives. It likewise works to inscribe the belief that to “look backwards is to be backwards,” in conjunction with Eurocentric notions of progress.
For Moraga, the constant suppression works to limit that which is not considered viable, legitimate, and worthy. In doing so, it also seeks to limit the possible conduits of release so that the only options available are between hating oneself and hurting another, as she becomes “mad enough / to hurt someone other / than myself” (p. 52). The coloniality of Being is a suppression of options, of possibilities, of livelihoods. It is the enactment of “systemic institutionalized ignorance,” as ignorance is not natural but rather imposed and constructed to exist as a supposed naturality, an occurrence of fact and not manifested flaw (p. 144). She goes on to detail:

The poor quality of public education in this country is intended to ensure that most working-class and poor people of color will not become allies for progressive change. They too will grow up to become, at best, members of the service class for the next generation of assimilated middle- and upper-class Americans, who may very well be your own children and grandchildren. At worst, they will continue to be used as fodder for American wars of imperial aggression or to take their required post behind bars in state and federal penitentiaries. (p. 144)

This suppression that conceals itself behind meritocracy and multiculturalism denies and removes lives from being lived as other than for another’s needs or desires. The coloniality of Being is to be a *Being* for someone else, to exist as an appendage, an essence of extracurricular disposability. I pose this lack of *Being* as similar to Lisa Marie Cacho’s (2012) notion of social death; the incompleteness of racialized subjects as constant signifiers of an already vulnerable criminality unworthy of social inclusion, and hence embodying an already social death. Moraga’s cognizance to how these oppressive
logics bear themselves across the bodies of Chicano men is evident in her fearful worries of the potential dehumanizing outcomes that her and her partner’s sons could face as they come into adulthood. Moraga’s Xicana feminist politics embody a contradictory love in her continued efforts to affectionately raise young boys who so easily seem ready to embody the heteropatriarchal ideologies she has faced in her own life. In these moments Moraga herself experiences the oppressive realities imposed upon brown men in this country in ways that she could never have imagined, as she states that “every barrio boy’s death diminishes me” (p. 9). So it is as she suffers these experiences through the eyes of these young men she’s raising that she remains a “resistant combatant,” fighting misogynistic discourses while simultaneously seeing what they are doing to her family (p. 9).

Moraga touches on the aspect of how the complicity of these ideologies works to often cast us as enablers of these same discourses, as we partake in the suppression of our own communities. It is an aspect of internalization that I will further elaborate on in the subsequent section but that nonetheless highlights how these elements of suppression and internalized occupation are not independent of one another; rather they are dependent and reliant on each another. It is a suppression that displays itself through censorship via “poverty or imprisonment” and enacts a consent through control (p. 144).

Suppressive acts are also not singularly done by an outside or foreign entity but are also reproduced amongst and within our own communities. To be “inside the first world” as United States people of color means also combatting how dominating colonial ideologies have stricken our own social movements in manners that again value the rights of particular marginalized groups over others. Heteropatriarchal constructions of nations
constrict how movements and future societal imaginaries are fought for as they have and do severely restrict “women’s freedom of movement and expression.” It is so that while women of color are “barred from most sites of political influence,” they nonetheless bear the scars and traumas of these movements “as survivors of rape perpetrated in the name of nation, as widows of race wars and the mothers of mass murdered children” (p. 30).

It is the privileging of heteronormative sexual desires of nation construction that erase and eradicate lesbian voices. If we begin to understand these fantasies of heteropatriarchal making as manifested imaginaries of family, community, and people, and as attempts at establishing creation stories, stories about how movements and conscious actors come to be and develop; then we can begin to see them as attempts at creating particular fountains of knowledge that potentially see these developments as epistemic wells for these imagined communities (Anderson, 1991). If we also take Carla Trujillo’s (1991) proposition that Chicana lesbians are disruptions to this marginalizing ideology of community development, then we can understand suppressive anti-queer acts of oppression, as attempts at eradicating the sources of knowledge before they can be written and spoken, and are attempts to censor the potential epistemic disruptions embodied in queer Xicana theories of the flesh. To suppress queer Xicana voices is to suppress people, voices, and epistemologies of dissonance that counter and contest constricting normative logics. It is the unfortunate reality that within our own political struggles of affirmation we become complicit in normative reformist positions that cast out those that exist on the margins of the margins. Moraga goes on to attest:

Further, as a queer Xicana, I recognize that it is still dangerous to speak publicly of lesbianism in most (North and South) American Indian gatherings, even among
women. But queer identity cannot remain a private matter when it is not publicly protected. The censorship of queer issues (including sexuality and transgenderism) continues to be prevalent in most ethnic-based political struggles. The idea that all aspects of human freedom are intimately interdependent may be given lip service within our politically active ethnic communities, but it is seldom practically implemented. What these personal meditations attest to is that there is no safe place for any of us in revolutionary work. (p. 31)

In this testament, Moraga complicates how suppression is not a singularly specific act or moment but rather itself imposes hierarchies of suppression. In moments of supposed liberatory discourse, censorship nonetheless exists as a viable means of progress, where a supposed categorizing of oppressions works to argue the fallacious point that doing so is somehow liberatory. The last line in the aforementioned paragraph highlights how safe spaces do not exist for queer Xicanas but must be created as they perpetually evade locales of suppression that exist within assumed movements of social justice; in a formation of Xicana sitios y lenguas.

I interpret the suppression of language as both in terms of speech and also in a more expansive manner. In the essay “An Irrevocable Promise/2002: Staging the Story Chicana,” Moraga details the motivations behind her plays, in particular how she understands her theatrical writing “as close to direct political activism as I can get as an artist” (p. 35). She situates her playwriting as a form of documenting what her Xicana body innately remembers, as a means of bringing to light what has long remained suppressed without a proper channel or tongue to speak through. For queer Xicanas, native tongues are “ripped from the mouths,” to which the “taboo languages of the body”
then becomes the language necessary to make renderable an existence whose tongue has been cut out (p. 45). The reclaiming of the body becomes a means to combat the suppressed queer Xicana tongue in order to move “beyond the colony” (p. 45). In the essay’s concluding stages, Moraga states that she strives “to use the Xicana body as a way to dig up the dirt, to find something of what is left of us” (p. 46). This phrase highlights what Moraga sees as the epistemic potential inherent in Xicana bodies as tools of insight into something that has been made un-articulable, yet still known because of its corporeal existence. The suppression of this voice works as a means to kill a sense of self for the subaltern subject, where I interpret this death as not finite or complete, but as understood through Moraga’s Mesoamerican centered logic as cyclical, as always returning to life. The recognition of death, as constituted here by Moraga’s awareness to coloniality’s suppression and denial of the means to speak her native tongue and thus imagine herself as she chooses, allows for her to give life to the statement “Existo Yo.” This suppression and the death of a speaking subject as definitively characterized by the coloniality of Being is not a finished product, but the start, middle and end as it fluctuates and shifts through Moraga’s decoloniality of becoming. Although her tongue has been cut out, her awareness and excavation of its existence allows it to grow back in a form different yet genealogically linked to its predecessor through her decoloniality of becoming.

In her eulogy for the “Xicana Indígena (Choctaw) artist and activist” Marsha A. Gómez titled “And It Is All These Things That Are Our Grief,” Moraga writes of Gómez’s death, a murder at the hands of her own son, as “not an accident, but the result of a murderous history still in the making,” a history that “none of us here is immune to”
Here Moraga echoes the Fanonian point that to live under the silhouettes of colonialism is to live an incomplete death, to live against the ever present breathe of death lurking behind you in all its oppressive tendencies (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). The coloniality of Being is to bare the real and potential weight of a suffocating pressure that continually refuses to let one become decolonially. It is a suppression that is a slow suffocation and that aims at withering the spirit, mind, and body, in order to create a “docile citizenry” of un-“thought-full people” (p. 143). In maintaining the belief that colonialism is that which is in the past, that which bears no relevance today, contemporary Eurocentric ideologies work to negate any belief in acts of decoloniality; as to deny a problem exists is to deny its solutions, as justice cannot be argued for that which is not recognizable as injustice. As the following section on internal occupation will prove, it is not only that native tongues, thoughts, and ways of being are suppressed and denied, but also that in this denial there exists insidious movements that work to infiltrate and supplant native perspectives with self-defeating foreign ways of being.

Internal Occupation

Here I focus on what Moraga expresses as “the cost of internal occupation” (p. 60). I read this as a sense of feeling internally occupied by an identity, a dehumanizing mode of thinking and seeing, that is foreign and works to inscribe within the subaltern subject a normalized complicity in seeing such a process as natural. It is the presence of a way of being that is often the only way subaltern subjects are familiar with; yet that is not their own, not from the subaltern perspective. It is foreign not in a manner that proposes a binary imposition of foreign/native, but a foreignness that levies itself as supreme as Eurocentricity often does, and that centers itself as it simultaneously decenters and
marginalizes subaltern alternatives to this way of being and knowing. It is the invisibility of the dehumanizing colonial logics within the subaltern decolonial being that Moraga alludes to when she admits to the presence of Western thought within her training, as she states of being “suspicious of Western thought, even as I stand here as its product” (p. 44). I choose to elaborate how Moraga expands on the concept of “Existo Yo” to then delineate the coloniality of her “Yo,” and the internalized processes that work to re-inscribe the scars of coloniality within her concept of self.

In the essay “Weapons of the Weak: On Fear and Political Resistance,” Moraga weaves experiential anecdotes concerning feelings of fear, panic, and anxiety over death, and their relation to her feeling as if there are parts of who she is that are not hers. Moraga’s detailing of her familiarities with internally occupying foreign ways of being, acting, and knowing, is her conceptualization of the coloniality of Being. In detailing the effects of 9/11 on the psyche of some U.S. Americans, and their extreme surprise and amazement of a newfound vulnerability to unexpected atrocities, Moraga defines how this vulnerability is nothing new to Americans of color, as our communities are often invaded and disruptively occupied. It is this normalcy that breeds an unfortunate familiarity with the potential of being under siege as well as a Being under siege (p. 19). Moraga relatedly poses the paradoxical state of the United States as a nation built upon wars of conquest that yet feels “entitled not to suffer the consequences of its actions. This country constructed through acts of thievery and invasion imagines it will never be robbed or invaded” (p. 23). It is the coloniality of Being of those communities and remnants left of these wars of conquest that are all too familiar with such feelings, as the victims of these invasions are not surprised or alarmed at such ideas, as our ontological
reality continually evolves from those initial operations of occupation. There is no *disbelief* when Chican@ communities are invaded as collectives harboring *illegalness*, as our history within this country for more than 150 years has been one which poses our very existence as somehow criminally inhuman in nature. It is a familiarity to being discussed in dehumanizing terms that is our ontological reality, our coloniality of Being.

It is within these discourses that Moraga describes what she sees as “Weapons of the Weak,” and I translate as decolonial acts of becoming. The emphasis in my analysis here lies in how suffocating internal occupation can be, as Moraga describes it as the state of “each morning, fearing my own madness” (p. 56). This psychosis rooted in the coloniality of Being creates an ontological condition characterized by a constant “warring inside” (p. 59). This “warring within” for Moraga becomes an insurmountable essence that she finds herself at times incapable of dealing with, as she becomes “most concerned about my own inability to control the warring inside me” (p. 60). It is this internal occupation that is fundamental to the coloniality of Being, a debilitating madness that derives from an awareness to the absurdity and deceptive nature of dehumanizing dialogues. I read this “warring” not as Moraga’s fixation with the conditions themselves, but rather as occurring when one’s awareness to these conditions works as a disempowering realization; to become aware of how unaware we have become complicit in our own dehumanization. It is an awareness to feelings of incapacitation brought on by the daily schooling “in passive acceptance of the standard, uncritical story of Western world entitlement, where Capitalist Patriarchy, in concert with Judeo-Christian fundamentalism, becomes the new rule of law and is propagated every night on the network news hour and each morning in the daily paper” (p. 27).
Indeed it is the coloniality of Being, this “internal occupation,” that becomes necessary in order for coloniality to exist, as it relies on the “complicity of oppression” of those who are themselves made subjects of coloniality (p. 59). When Moraga describes that “in this colony, our anger remains intimate, as it remains a disguise for our fear of loss, death, oblivion…The United States counts on the fact that people-of-color anger turns most violently against itself,” she is observing a foundational premise of the contours of coloniality (p. 60). The “coloniality of power” is so structurally pervasive that being complicit becomes a natural state of being (Quijano, 2000). As the foreignness of oppressive discourse becomes internally naturalized, subaltern subjects become consensual actors of hegemonic dehumanizing logics through violent acts of rage directed against similarly dehumanized communities. The overpowering and smothering reality of being surrounded by domineering ideologies works to cast this gaze upon ourselves, while we strive “to see ourselves reflected in mirrors not distorted by the imperial gaze” (p. 145). In internalizing these beliefs, coloniality makes certain that we see ourselves through the eyes of those which are no longer our own, as we begin to exist and act as though embodying prescribed subhuman tendencies becomes a viable means of Being. It is to internalize the gaze because the asphyxiation of it all makes it logical to see oneself in terms that are not our own, natural to feel a lack of wholeness as an embodied dis-embodiment, that makes empowerment seem only possible through similarly oppressive acts. It is when a Being incomplete becomes a normalized order of apparent completeness.

Yet, the “weapons of the weak” are the answers to the “warring inside,” the conflict Moraga has experienced, witnessed, and internalized. The “warring” becomes a
daily reality, as the coloniality of Being manifests itself as “the normalization of the extraordinary events that take place in war” and “the production of a world in which exceptions to ethical relationship become the norm” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, pp. 255, 259). It is the daily reality of folks who endure, resist, and confront daily occurrences that inhibit their ability to live, indeed that makes un-livable situations for some, daily rituals of perseverance for others. This is not to presuppose that the world can be characterized into rigid camps of oppressor/oppressed, but that the complexities, contradictions, and nuances deriving from a subaltern perspective are stressed as legitimate epistemic points of reference existing within “unethical relationships.” The external warring of state sanctioned violence and institutionalized racism becomes internalized as Moraga’s “warring inside;” a warring that she wonders whether she lacks the strength to confront. It is here that I stress this “warring,” these “weapons,” and this internalized suppressive doubt as an occupatory existence met on the road to becoming. This perpetual roadblock to becoming decolonial is to always meet and contend with an internalized self-inflicted yet colonially induced reoccurring doubt, a doubt that questions our abilities and desires to disrupt and become beyond oppressive logics. These “weapons of the weak” are ontological disruptions that confront the supposed neutral point of being and make visible how being itself is a socially constructed process, and aims to create and make visible a subaltern decolonial ontological construction of and for the self, what I later contend are enunciatory acts of self-recognition.

What makes these moments so difficult is that occupation is often followed by displacement, and thus as we internally believe these dehumanizing discourses we simultaneously work to displace and further distance subaltern Indigenous cosmologies.
In her appraisal of Gloria Anzaldúa’s life and work in “The Salt That Cures,” Moraga details:

Her autobiography writings remind us that, as Xicanos and Xicanas, our home tribes are so infected by colonialism – the Indian woman raped, our lands pillaged, our self-governance dissolved – that we are forced into psychic and physical displacement. These acts of colonialism were all sites of visceral knowing for Gloria and are a daily occurrence for tribal Indigenous peoples all over this planet. (p. 125)

The occupation by that which is not only not ours, but that seeks to eradicate humanizing empowering Indigenous Chican@ epistemologies and ontologies, works to also create this forced “psychic and physical displacement.” In these moments of occupation and suppression lies a displacement and a further blurring of an Indigenous Chican@ horizon of possibilities. It is a hegemonically induced forgetfulness and erasure of memory that makes decolonial efforts of pluriversal understanding seem like antiquated ideas that must be negotiated and fought for routinely.

It is not just that Moraga has to fight everyday with the structures that mark her existence as lacking, as secondary, as disposable; but that this disposability becomes a daily battle to fight within, as oppressive colonial logics work to constantly replicate cognitively as ontological foundations. It is a:

Confrontation with the mundane thoughts that preoccupy us…thoughts [that] occupy us as in “occupation,” as in some exterior force imposing itself upon our natural states. We live in the state of occupation with so many stories to explain away our grief. But I wonder, is it only that we are not our own authors? That we
hold other’s stories in our minds and try to persuade our hearts that a conquest that occurred more than five hundred years ago is no longer remembered in our DNA? I wonder if we were to grow quiet enough, might we collect what has been scattered and desecrated by history? Might we re-member ourselves? Might we reconcile a suffering that cannot be rendered by language? (p. 195)

In these reoccurring moments to articulate ourselves as authors, to “re-member,” to interject ourselves into and embrace a non-dominating empowering Indigeneity, we can not only humanize ourselves in our own terms, but also grieve in our own terms as well. The inter-supportive processes of internal occupation and suppression that Chican@’s experience, this coloniality of Being, enacts an *ethos* that demands an economic valorization of everything including life. It initiates a logic that makes acts of “re-membering” necessary in the first place but that bars them from existing outside continual evaluations of illegitimation.

To be *already* subsumed under coloniality and to make this often times the natural state which one’s growing consciousness and awareness revolves from, actions understood as “weapons of the weak,” is to make suppression, occupation, and displacement *feel* as though they *ought* to be the ontological reality for Chican@’s. Thus, learning to delink “from the naturalized vision of society” by speaking through a subaltern locus of enunciation becomes one of Moraga’s “weapons” to the “ever inventive forms of intellectual colonization” (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012, p. 36; Moraga, 2011, p. 86).
Enunciation

It is Moraga’s awareness to the colonial difference that demands a constant assertion of “Existo Yo,” a constant affirmation of self that disrupts hegemonically imposed ontological formations in a dialogical manner that attests to the enunciative element of her decoloniality of becoming. Within this segment I propose that Moraga’s “Existo Yo” is more than a simple call for recognition; it is a call for the recognition by and for the self, it is a demand of self-acknowledgement that centers what has long been cast as the peripheral, Moraga’s queer Xicana “Yo.” I interpret this “Yo” as Moraga’s “fractured locus of the colonial difference,” as it is an enactment of multiple subjectivities housed within Moraga’s embodied theory in the flesh (Lugones, 2010, p. 748). Below I emphasize how Moraga highlights how this pronunciation is possible, but not limited to, the processes of “re-membering” as remembering, writing, and her “taboo language of the body.” It is the act of writing as an act of remembrance, a documentation of what the body believes to be true. As Moraga accentuates it is in “the daily practice of placing oneself in the position of remembering in order to arrive at something beyond oneself,” that she is able to write and speak from her colonial difference (p. 93).

It is through the act of remembering that Moraga channels her decoloniality of becoming. The re-centering of her subaltern perspective from her periphery to her center becomes an obvious yet intricate project as she writes, “Sometimes…I feel my task comes down to the simple fact of declaring, ‘Si existimos’” (p. 44). Under the sub-heading “Beyond the Colony,” Moraga speaks of this declaration as the “stutter, garbled utterance caught in the silence between tongues” (p. 45). The notion of this speech as a “stutter, garbled utterance” is a testament to the inability that she feels in articulating
words that she knows to be hers yet that she is unable to speak without an inherent hesitancy, an internalized stumbling suppression of assertion. It is the un-naturalness of speaking that emanates from the normalized relations of coloniality that make speaking a specific phenomenon while paradoxically extracting a recognizable perception of “something lost” (p. 45). It is in this hesitancy that is the commonplace contradictory existence of desiring that which has been suppressed as undesirable. It is the fact that in spite of the “so-called liberation” that resides within the contemporary United States, for many, “queerness is still unnameable” (p. 114). It is made “unnameable” within the violently suppressive shifts of heteronormativity that then creates the reality of a vocabulary lacking a descriptive queer lexicon beyond a “stutter, garbled utterance.” It is why the desire to speak, to write, and to become as subjective as her queer Xicana desires intend, is always relevant, is always liberatory, and is always ontologically disruptive of the constricting overbearing imposition that is her coloniality of Being. It is why “courage still matters. Naming ourselves in true ways still matters…[there is] No rhetoric here. Just a lesbian poetry of heroism” (p. 114).

Previously I mentioned how the body as a medium of language for queer Xicanas was a product of suppression; here I present how for Moraga it can just as well become a physically linguistic “weapon of the weak,” a performance of that which is “unnameable.” Moraga articulates how for her, going “beyond the colony” involves using what she describes as the “taboo language of the body,” in particular the epistemic value in the existence of her lesbian sexuality. It is through the use of her body that she is able to articulate “Existo Yo” in a way that is not a “stutter, garbled utterance,” but rather that is a language that she speaks. It is not foreign to her, it is not imported but that which
resides within, as it becomes a vehicle through which she enacts a suppressive joy, an exaltation of sexual desires that makes the always denied, undeniable. What is made suppressed is made liberatory in enactment; in moments where the enunciation of that which is always on the exteriority is centered as undertakings of decolonial proportions as a queer Xicanidad. Moraga tells that it is in “that fierce determination to come home to one another in the woman-of-color body. No separatism here, just return. Sometimes the journey home was ruthlessly executed; for it was so hard in those times to find one’s way there.” (p. 113). Here this desire to speak, this enunciation of subalternity is proclaimed via the embarkation of a love that refutes the modern/colonial gender system’s imposition of patriarchal heteronormativity, and that embodies via a “taboo language of the body” a desire to return (Lugones, 2007). It is a “return” to that which is displaced, suppressed, and always rendered invisible, what for Moraga is a queer Xicana love. In her tribute to Audre Lorde, Moraga writes that “the essence of Audre’s work was love. ‘The erotic as power’ she named it; the power of that desire to come home to oneself” (p. 113). I read this passage as detailing a reflection of coming “home to oneself” as not a mirror in the manner that occupation creates a falsely imposed internalized Eurocentric gaze of self, but a reflection of an-other, a praxis of queer feminist longing that enacts a journey that is never far from coloniality’s heterosexist and racist logics, and that is always decolonially treacherous as it is momentous as an act of enunciatory love. It is in returning to the “lesbian-of-color-body of desire,” that forever “wounded body,” that acts as “re-membering” a love that was not always cast as marginal, deficient, and wrong, and that refuses to remain suppressed or occupied. Moraga takes these moments of an “unnameable” love “beyond the colony” and towards an ontology of liberatory desires.
For Moraga, these acts of “re-membering” and remembrance are once again specifically situated within her evolving Indigeneity. The title of Moraga’s essay “Indígena as scribe: The (w)rite to remember,” references how she sees her Indigeneity as a catalyst for how she remembers, writes, and speaks. Moraga’s interpretation of the dialogical relationship between her remembering and writing symbolizes a rite, a pathway to humanization. She writes, that in “(w)riting” lies the “risk we are willing to take to speak our truth, where its justification may be nothing more than intuition” (p. 95). It is in “(w)riting” that we give essence to that which we are told to forget and taught to ignore as that which no longer exists, the Indigenous ways of being and knowing that were not subjectively removed, but that were/are forcefully denied, suppressed, and eradicated through genocidal means. It is in writing as “re-membering” that moments of pain and suffering stemming from socially prescribed and self-inflicted dehumanization tendencies are used as enunciatory acts of both grieving and reinvigorating life. Moraga details that “Tomorrow something else will come. / Today I write / because I do not want to suffer / for / no good / reason” (p. 99). It is in enunciating the coloniality of our Being that disruptions occur, that coloniality’s objects transform as subjects of decoloniality as the awareness to dehumanization becomes a conduit for self-humanization.

It is through the act of remembering, and subsequently writing what is remembered, that Moraga “risks” unlearning the legacies of coloniality embedded within her process of being. Writing as Indígena becomes a method of ousting a foreign occupying voice in order to give breath to what the body knows and remembers. Moraga declares, “I write to remember. I make rite (ceremony) to remember. It is my right to remember” (p. 81). Here “writing” becomes “rite-ing,” a ceremonial gesture of relocating
forgotten and eradicated epistemologies and ontologies from the past for the present in order to demand a future. This longing to remember and “re-member” is not nostalgic however. For Moraga, these acts of remembering are essential for the undertaking of re-humanizing herself. The lines that follow detail such:

Our journey of return is not romantic; it is ordinary. It is the dusty road of our own pitiful colonized preoccupations, which I have come to call the “mundane.”

The marvelous mundane of our lives, where the barest truths are revealed. (p. 85)

These lines highlight how liberating and enriching such an ordinary thing as remembering can be. These “mundane” acts of remembering, writing, and speaking gravitate as ontological disruptions when they are contextualized within the confining unimaginative Eurocentric processes that routinely seek to inhibit their enactment. They are “mundane” not because they lack importance, but because they are part of Moraga’s ordinary and basic rights and rites. Yet, because of colonial legacies, because of the coloniality of Being, these ordinary actions proceed as extraordinary moments, as they become intertwined within a wrestling, struggling, and occupying “warring within” that reciprocally enacts a decoloniality of becoming. It is in these acts of enunciation, of speaking, living, and becoming against our encroaching proximity of death via the coloniality of Being, that “we can take possession of that displacement,” that erasure (p. 122).

These articulations however do not act as a culmination that renders her struggles as victorious, but they become points of departure for future possibilities. The following passage on the oppressive logic of heteropatriarchy, underlines how suppression, occupation, and enunciation are intertwined within the interrelated processes of the
coloniality of Being and Moraga’s decoloniality of becoming, as they exist in perpetual motions through and alongside one another. Moraga demands:

How is it that they no longer regard the mother’s burden, the grandmother’s bulto, the sister’s carga of worry?...They refuse our lessons, reduce the female to the role of nurturer and render all our other sentiments as perverse, abnormal, taboo.

(p. 62)

In these lines Moraga is questioning how her ontological and epistemic contributions as a queer Xicana remain unacknowledged as such. Moraga is raising how her decolonial ontological character remains ignored and devalued as she declares “Existo Yo.” I stress this passage in order to accentuate how enunciating, asserting “Existo Yo,” is not a solution or event free of encountering suppression and occupation once more. Enunciation is another step in this process of becoming, albeit liberatory, that is not free of influence.

Another moment that underlines this point is in Moraga’s detailing of what contributed to her and Anzaldúa’s separation and traveling in different yet clearly related journeys. Anzaldúa’s initial accusation of plagiarism resembled perhaps the position of her enunciation as her enunciation, as singular and definitively hers. Yet, Moraga alludes to perhaps it was in their ability to truly hear each other’s enunciation that conceivably led to their split; the insurmountable vulnerable love each had for one another that was perhaps an exposure “not always welcomed” (p. 117). A love not romantic per se, but rather an incredibly affectionate closeness resembling a reciprocal bond and joyful companionship. In this instance, in this terrifying pinnacle of a vulnerable love free of suppression but too-glaringly present, that highlighted maybe a “return” too strong, a
strength too-unfamiliar that combusted an otherwise loving camaraderie. Later, Moraga details the differences in approaches the two had in their practice of Xicana feminism during the publication of Anzaldúa’s anthology *This Bridge We Call Home*. She interpreted Anzaldúa’s perspective, “We define who we are by what we include,” as perhaps *too inclusive* of communities not privy to what Moraga thought was *Bridge’s* original intent, enunciating a queer women of color feminism by and for women of color. (p. 123). For Moraga, her fear of being appropriated and the extent of the inclusion of men and white women into the anthology, was indicative of insinuating that women of color voices had “developed beyond the need for an autonomous dialogue” as a whole (p. 123). It was an instance of assuming such dialogues had arrived when indeed the same old battles against white feminism and heteropatriarchy were still being waged. Moraga’s fear and hesitancy, as well as her admitted failure in seeing a compromise between the two perspectives at the time, is linked to her initial hesitancy in “coming out” (p. 190).

After prying Moraga’s lesbian “confession” from her, her mother explains to her “there is nothing you could do that you wouldn’t be my daughter.” Moraga then leaves on her journey to Northern California at least certain that she would not do so as a “queer orphan,” with a renewed desire to live “for all of us who ever suffered silence” (p. 191). These two events in the *Codex*, Moraga’s remembrance of Anzaldúa and this particular conversation with her mother, highlight why enunciation is not a privileged state of counter-discourse testimony, but is itself linked to internalized doubts based from real, violent experiences of suppression, denial, and fear of *both* the vulnerability that liberatory feelings bring as well as the vulnerability to oppressive repercussions made possible in making such a visible counter-hegemonic statement. There are real reasons
why enunciation is marked by hesitation. Its enablement in itself is often an act of
courage that becomes further complicated by the realization that it arrives with real, often
vicious and damaging repercussions. This process of enunciation I am outlining is a
potential of both liberating and harmful possibilities. Moraga’s enunciation becomes not
the end but the beginning of future liberating endeavors within the auspices of an ever-
suffocating coloniality. She iterates under the essay titled “A Xicanadyke Codex of
Changing Consciousness”:

I don’t know where we’re going. I can only conjecture, which is why I write, to
allude to a future for which we must prepare. And so, to that end, may we strive
always for illegitimacy and unlawfulness in this criminal culture. May our
thoughts and actions remain illicit. May we continue to make art that incites
censorship and threatens to bring the army beating down our desert door. (p. 17)

To this end, Moraga believes that because our being marks us always “illicit,” that our
decision must be to speak to and for ourselves, to negate a partaking of seeking an
approval, an acknowledgement, from those voices and structures that mark us as always
illegitimate. It is a move to speak to hear one’s own voice, one’s own humanity, and to
“allude to a future” that is not yet here but that can always be ushered in in moments of
decolonial desire, in moments of becoming that which is not yet here. To dare to become
in non-dominating ways is to do so in the face of an omnipresent death, as Moraga states
in her quotation of Lorde, “We were never meant to survive” (p. 112). It is in perpetual
acts of survival and humanization, indeed becoming human as the focal ontological
struggle for colonized peoples, that enunciatory acts put themselves in the line of fire as
they make visible the “complex equations that hit women of color harder, the literal
heartache of carrying so many warring identities” (p. 111). These gestures, desires, and moves within a suppression, occupation, and enunciation of becoming carry on because:

We want to stop the destruction; I imagine that is why we imagine. We proceed with some infinite faith that if we say it, write it, walk it well enough that it will matter somehow – that spirit can be materialized as consciousness can be materialized. (p. 174)

In aiming to perpetually become decolonial, to materialize that which is always made fleeting and evasive, that a desirous liberation and liberatory desire can be pronounced in moments of a decolonial love that envisions such movements as never static, never pure, and unfortunately never free from coloniality’s incomplete eradication of subalternities. In enunciation, in speaking, in articulating a pleasure in becoming as one pleases, in acts of writing and re-membering that which is felt but always dulled, can epistemic disruptions be enacted. In these always fluid moments of becoming decolonial, amongst all of our “warring identities,” that Moraga’s Codex is a proposition of thinking, acting, and becoming in a perpetually epistemically disruptive ontology.

Conclusion

Earlier in this study, I mentioned Albert Memmi’s continued centering of the subaltern “he” in The Colonizer and the Colonized, and it bears repeating that theoretical decolonial works are themselves not far from marginalizing discourses. I mentioned how I did not read their gendered dialogues as definitively only characterizing subaltern men, although clearly as I have attested coloniality’s gender system has created and imposed different effects for all gendered subjectivities. I state this point in order to contextualize what has been read as Moraga’s own complicity with colonial ideologies within her own
counter hegemonic works, in particular for her transphobic remarks in her anti-assimilatory essay titled “Still Loving in the (Still) War Years: on Keeping Queer Queer.” I want to conclude this chapter by briefly discussing this particular essay and its criticisms in order to highlight what I have been proposing to deliberate in this study, the interlocking dialogues of coloniality and decoloniality existing in ontological perpetuity via Moraga’s enunciatory desires to oppositionally engage in dominating logics, that nonetheless at times veer into waters of marginalization.

As previous criticisms of this essay have attested, Moraga’s “Still Loving in the (Still) War Years” reads in moments as incredibly transphobic and presents trans* people in an incredibly limiting and pathological light (Collado, 2012; Galarte, November 2014). I mention these critiques in order to both highlight the flaws in Moraga’s articulations and how she herself enters into prolonging marginalizing discourses, but also to present how the essay is also an indication of her desire to nonetheless profess her love for trans* men in particular. The essays anti-assimilatory critiques of the gay rights movement provides a backdrop to her criticisms of trans* men specifically, as she pleads for them to remember that “there is something in being born female from a female in a female-hating world that still matters” (Moraga, 2011, p. 189). It is in pairing moments of Moraga’s objectification and essentialization of trans* identities, in particular her dehumanizing use of naming trans* men’s bodies as “surgically scarred” and as people who are not “choosing freedom,” with moments of what I read as a mother’s unconditional love, that present the humanizing /dehumanizing complexities involved in

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8 The use of the asterisk in “trans*” is used as a more inclusive term encompassing gender non-conforming identities. This is not to presuppose that all of these identities share the same experiences, struggles, and issues, but to center non-binary affirmations of gender as fluid (Ryan, 2014).
trying to make sense of oneself in a world that racializes, genders, and sexualizes Chican@ bodies. Within the essay Moraga states, “I do not mean to prescribe for anyone what his or her journey should entail as a queer,” (p. 186). I read this proposal along with her encounter with a young trans* man that she documents as opening her “eyes to another way to interpret promise in this/his change. In his tattooed, flat-chested, masculinity…I feel him as my boy, like I feel my own blood boy…a member of my queer nation,” that problematizes a reading of this essay as essentially transphobic (p. 189). As others and I have mentioned, the essay is not without its flaws, however I highlight this essay to propose that it inhabits Moraga’s processes of the coloniality of Being and decoloniality of becoming in such a vivid, striking light, a light that sheds emphasis on the complexities in trying to enact a liberatory love while at times failing and falling into perpetuating inferiorizing ideologies that makes becoming decolonial a perpetual ontological struggle.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

In this thesis, I have addressed two central concerns: how does Cherrie Moraga’s *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness* showcase her coloniality of Being?, and how does Moraga ontologically disrupt this imposed Being through what I define as her decoloniality of becoming? In doing so I have argued that these processes work in non-linear, contradictory ways, where the acts of suppression, occupation, and enunciation of voice work against, within, and through one another. I read Moraga’s coloniality of Being and what I call her decoloniality of becoming for how the text exhibits these thematic elements centered around a desire to speak. In tracing Moraga’s embodiment of these elements I have outlined how they are always fluid and always contested in exceptionally complicated forms that produce alienating as well as liberatory moments. Counter-discourses that seek to negate inferiorizing tropes are perpetually fraught with complications that pose such movements as never pure or original. They are always exemplifying elements that perhaps its actors would like to otherwise eviscerate from these moments of becoming decolonial. I have expressed how Moraga’s “changing consciousness,” her coloniality of Being and decoloniality of becoming, disruptively present ontological formations beyond a passive existence, and enounces an already moving and always contested discourse.

In this analysis I positioned “speak” as the desire to articulate ways of being and knowing from the subaltern colonial difference as characterized through Cherrie Moraga’s experiences as a queer Xicana, where Moraga details the acts of writing, remembering, and “re-membering,” among others, as processes that enable an
Indigenous, critically engaged spoken truth that interrogates the oppressive colonial inheritances both within and outside herself. It is in this dialogue that Moraga has affirmed a Xicana Indigeneity, an Indigeneity that detests the supposed inauthentic desire and nature of a Chican@ decolonial aesthetic that “some less informed North American Indian Activists” as well as anti-Indigenous Mexicans and Chican@ still profess (p. 7). That is why here I have not aimed to prove Moraga’s decolonial Xicana actions, but rather sought to dwell in their aims, actions, and intent in order to witness these acts of becoming decolonial.

These ontological disruptions, these acts of contesting what is constructed as an inherent natural Chican@ ontology of deficiency and subhumanity, are acts of possessing her own existence, her own forms of becoming. It is as she fears the onslaughts of AIDS, gang violence, a prison industrial complex, and breast cancer; a reoccurring fear of loss, that Moraga seeks to interject feelings of internal possession, of an agency of desire (p. 8). It is to say “Existo Yo” in the face of annihilation, and to dare to believe in a future so far removed from the logics of coloniality. Decoloniality proposes a point of departure that acknowledges the pervasiveness of coloniality within internalized ontological processes that manifest through how we come to know and understand the world and ourselves; how we exist in a world that begrudgingly permits our existence in often dehumanizing ways. The process of decoloniality works to enact liberating measures that strive to move beyond dehumanizing logics and towards a functioning of societal relations and internal dialogues in non-dominating, humanizing, and loving ways. It is to always work against erasure, against the silencing, against that that sees all that is native
as archaic, and to suggest Indigenous cosmologies as futuristic propositions of a reciprocal sovereignty.

It is in a decoloniality of becoming that we can glimpse the contours of an always colonial and always decolonial existence of possibilities and pitfalls. It is in “knowing that we are all just moments, creative at best, in a small and troubled history of a planet and its people” (p. 16). For Moraga, these codices are “counter-tales of courage I may never fulfill in life…a record of my imaginings” (p. 16). These movements and desires are engagements of that which is possible, that which is desired to be possible, and that which has not yet conceived to be possible. In Cruising Utopia (2009), Jose Esteban Muñoz proposes queerness as a "performance because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (1). Here I evoke Muñoz's temporal "not-yet-here" in a similar vein, and see decoloniality as performative, as something one does and not is, and such as an encouraging expression to enact what is not yet here, un mundo decolonizado (a decolonized world). Becoming decolonial in the manner that I read Moraga’s Codex is to work towards realities not yet available, but that could possibly become moments tomorrow in order to re-member that which is perpetually facing annihilation. Enunciation is not a move away from dehumanization, but through it; as in enactment it returns and seeks to disrupt paths of oppression in order to build networks and roads of a love not yet here, not yet allowed to become. A decoloniality of becoming is a pilgrimage that has no end, but that strives to make the journey everlasting, to make decoloniality not a stopgap or achievement but a process through which Indigeneity is a conduit of growth of limitless paths without
destinations. It is a motion towards “knowledges that may predate (and transcend) the modern, the nation-state, and the advent of globalism” in a continuum of subalternities, that similarly sees the discomfort, pain, and suffering allocated by dehumanizing tendencies as a “pain on the red road to wellness (Moraga, 2011, pp. 126, 195). For Moraga, decoloniality exists within, through, and against the oppressive normalized legacies of coloniality in a perpetual performance of consciousness as a means of healing being, as a means of establishing an alternative method of existence that allows subjugated peoples to breathe without hesitation, walk without alarm, and become as they love.

Limitations

As previously mentioned, Moraga’s work now spans three decades, and thus a more nuanced reading of the themes presented in this thesis would be given greater clarity alongside an interpretation of how her previous publications have conveyed similar topics. Likewise, a central concern of this thesis is that by focusing on Cherríe Moraga, one of the most well known queer Xicana writers, this thesis is privileging an author whose work already bears some prominence in academic and literary circles at the expense of highlighting an author whose work can be read as similarly engaging, yet, whose name does not carry the same weight perhaps. Deena J. Gonzalez (1991) criticizes the “pedestal-creation process” that authors like Moraga are given when their works are routinely centered in discussions of lesbian Chicana writers. Gonzalez questions how routinely employing the same voices in these avenues of study implicitly works towards an “iconography based on the solitary voice” that privileges few voices as speaking to the experiences of all queer Chicana writers (1991, p. 62).
In centering Moraga’s *A Xicana Codex*, I have sought to address some of these concerns by emphasizing how previous analyses have neglected to interrogate and dwell within Moraga’s colonial contestations. Admittedly this does not alleviate Gonzalez’s appraisal of the lack of prominence given to non-canonical Chicana literary voices, however, I have aimed to contribute to the larger discussion in proposing Moraga as an epistemically disruptive voice countering static conceptions of Chican@ ontology.

Likewise, previous analyses have overwhelmingly centered on Moraga’s *Loving in the War Years* while her other works have been relegated to secondary status. In focusing this inquiry on one of her more recent texts, a work that has yet to be analyzed to the extent that this study has aimed to do, I have proposed this study as nonetheless a contributory selection to Chicana literary criticisms. This thesis shares and acknowledges Gonzalez’s concern, and thus, recognizes that this analysis should only be interpreted as singularly particular to the text of analysis at hand. Consequently, future work along this path would better be suited if accompanied by other works as equally as engaging but perhaps written by queer Chicana writers not as recognized.

Another limitation this study inhabits is its methodology. In centering a literary analysis, it privileges the written word and operates along a fixed set of data, the essays within *A Xicana Codex*, that although allows this essay to dwell and delve into the writings, nonetheless limit the findings to a very particular source. The subjective interpretive outlook presented in this thesis has presented a particular nuanced reading that although has aimed to be contribution to related conversations, has also confined the analysis to a specific subjective outcome. The wealth of possible analyses inherit in interpretive textual readings can also work to limit studies of this manner in the way that
their findings can be retested and applied by others. Although I have contextualized my reading along a particular lens and theoretical framework, it undoubtedly registers what my reading of such framework entails, and hence another decolonial reading of Moraga could present an altogether different analysis.

My previously stated subjectivities could also be seen as limitation in my reading. As a cisgender Chicano reading a queer Xicana text, my unfamiliarity in reading queer literature could have influenced an inability in comprehending particular nuances and dialogues. What may present as obvious to other critics has the potential to pass along unnoticed in mine. As Gloria Anzaldúa states in "To(o) Queer the Writer," "making meaning is a collaborative affair. Similar class, ethnic, and sexual identity is a strong component of a bond between writer and reader" (1991, p. 269). She later states that "men aren't taught to read women," whereas often the case women read and write as "men" because of the gendered constructs guiding how writing is taught and what classifies as adequate writing (ibid., 271). Anzaldúa goes on to say, "A straight woman reader of dyke writings would likely not catch a lot of the undercurrents having to do with dyke sexualities or sexual experiences...Queers (including cultural Others) can fill in the gaps in a lesbian text and reconstruct it, where a straight woman might not" (ibid., 271). If Anzaldúa were proposing that straight women could perhaps miss particulars conveyed and implied in queer dialogues, then certainly the same notion would apply to a heterosexual Chicano. Although I have sought to read Moraga for all her raced, classed, gendered, and sexualized conveyances, my subjectivity could indeed pose as a limitation inhibiting my ability to "fill in the gaps."
Future Research

As I personally continue along in developing this notion of becoming decolonial / decoloniality, this study has directed me towards new areas of inquiry I could not have foreseen at the start of this process. In framing decoloniality from the perspective of a Chican@ ontology, in particular for how Moraga endorses her counter-hegemonic decolonial existence, I have sought to use this study as a springboard and space to discuss and elaborate on what particularly does a Chican@ ontology look like and how do we continue to live, embody, and think decolonially.

Personally, this idea has helped me further conceptualize how I can embody, live, and become decolonial. I previously cited Moraga’s affirmation that for many Chican@s, our indigeneity exists yet without a memory, without a recollection from where or from whom, or without any semblance of particular indigenous ways of thinking or being passed down. This is my reality, as in searching for my lineage and navigating those paths, I have all too often encountered dead ends to histories that exist yet, have been difficult to locate. This is not to presuppose that biology is the only marker of indigeneity, but that seeking our personal indigenous histories is what Moraga would call, a very “mundane” act. As I continue on my journey, I have learned to re-member this indigeneity beyond a supposed biological trace or disheartened failure to find such histories, and to embrace that I know of my indigeneity and to not seek its evidence, but rather to embrace what I already am in order to further become decolonial. This is the unfortunate and intentional legacy of 500 years of colonization, the removal of legacies considered unworthy of remembrance.
In Chapter 5, I have posed how this notion of becoming is read as something that has yet to arrive, as something that disrupts ontological time and embraces a past and future in the present in order to re-member the past and future. Xamuel Bañales’ application of Jotería Studies *as decolonial* provides a useful perspective for future research geared in decolonial studies (Bañales, 2014). In proposing this stance moving forward, and in centering decoloniality as Jotería and Jotería as decoloniality, we can begin to position these frameworks as espousing an epistemically disruptive pull of the not yet here into the now, as a desire to re-member that which has been maimed. As mine and other scholars analyses of Moraga’s “Still Loving in the (Still) War Years” highlights, potential research centering transgender subjectivities within decoloniality is an avenue necessary in order to understand how decoloniality can better allocate and construct its humanizing proposals. Further inquiries into understanding what Maria Lugones characterizes as the “modern/colonial gender system,” and how non-normative identities disrupt this encompassing system, can better guide how decoloniality can serve a liberatory and counter-hegemonic purpose in eradicating oppressive sexual and gender constructions.

In accordance, understanding decoloniality as a “utopian performativity” suggestive of “another modality of doing and being that is in process, unfinished;” allows us to witness it as a becoming (Muñoz, 2009, p. 99). In performing Indigeneity in fluid and ever developing humanizing ways, decoloniality creates a knowledge that oppositionally contrasts discourses of illegality and racialization that vehemently strike our communities. Potential inquiries juxtaposing discourses of criminality, illegality, and (exclusionary) citizenship along a decolonial framework can also work address how these
racialized judgments bear a relationship to coloniality’s continued massive displacement of marginalized peoples across the global south.

It is in radical proposals of Indigeneity as futuristic, that we question modernity’s logics in order to develop realities based in futuristic utopian decolonial enterprises, in spite of the always present dehumanizing and genocidal Eurocentric project of ensuring that Indigeneity is a thing of the past. In balancing how love, in particular what Chela Sandoval describes as a “de-colonial love” evidenced by a “hermeneutics of love that can create social change,” promotes a counter-discourse of Chican@ Indigeneity as past, present, and future, prospective studies can further extend how love as a mechanism for change and humanization provides a valuable strategy of interpersonal decolonization (2000, pp. 144, 136). Potential analyses of texts like A Xicana Codex and other works exhibiting similar politics that focus on a “hermeneutics of love,” can provide further developed analyses on how non-Eurocentric perspectives of love, loving, and receiving love, can work to humanize communities devastated by coloniality’s logics.

**Conclusion**

In witnessing the dialogic interventions of liberatory desires within dominating logics and vice versa, I ask how do we become decolonial while we bring along our internalized scars left over from dehumanizing ideologies?; ideologies that seem to not only follow us in in our desires of liberatory engagements, but unfortunately are at times already there waiting in anticipation. Perhaps it serves us better to ask not where do we go from here, but where do we go with here, with coloniality’s baggage that seems to follow, track, and anticipate our moves. I revisit Cacho’s *Social Death* (2012) and her proposition of moving away from a value-based form of thinking that presents valuation
as dichotomous, where the valorization of particular forms of thinking inevitably leads to a devaluation of that which it is not, in order to situate my subsequent dilemma on thinking *differently* and not *better*. How do we continue to become, yet remain weary to Eurocentric notions of progress that prioritize the future as inevitably *better*, but look forward in a humanistic equitable light of justice? This is not to presuppose that “progress” is an inherently bad notion, but that clearly the capitalist world system has established economic development and wealth accumulation as “progress-ive” notions of the future. It is rather an embrace of what Chapter 5 was alluding to, a not-yet here. I embrace this not yet here in a similar manner as Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia*, and propose that if queerness is that which is not-yet-here, and is embraced as moment-of utopian realities in the present, and similarly take Chavez’s use of moments in *Queer Migrations* (2013) as enacting a politics that seizes the moment in a queered temporal sense, I believe that this merger can help us understand decolonial Chican@ ontologies in ways that assist to enact so in a much more liberatory Chican@ indigeneity than unfortunately has and continues to be professed. Here I allude to the glorification of indigeneity along heteropatriarchal dominating applications.

In articulating her modes of becoming, Moraga presents how these ever developing formations enact an activeness to existence, an indication of a queer Xicanidad that queers ontology as never a “be-ing” in existence, but a becoming, an existing. Yet, moving forward I wonder if possibly in locating Moraga’s disruptive actions as ontological, has worked to stifle my interpretations of her actions. What I mean by so is, I probe whether ontology is perhaps the wrong point of reference, and am lead to pose the question whether in situating ontology, epistemology, and philosophy as the
points of departure, the points of reference, if I am indeed imposing conceptual arrangements that are inaccurate and cannot fully comprehend a Chican@ way of becoming as I have proposed. As Rabasa (2008) states in “Thinking Europe in Indian Categories,” “The mere fact of speaking of Nahuatl philosophy entails a process of translating statements not conceived as philosophical into the languages of aesthetics, ethics, epistemology, ontology, and so” (p. 50). This is not to assume that Moraga’s articulations are definitively Aztec, but that maybe genealogically European conceptions such as “philosophy” are not adequate to read her codices. As Linda Alcoff addresses, “the fact that language, space, time, and history have all been colonized through the colonization of knowledge must give us pause before we borrow the founding concepts of Eurocentric thought” (2007, p. 86). Burman (2012) similarly poses:

Is there not a risk that a project aimed at decolonizing knowledge and decolonizing the university precisely by way of books and lectures – i.e., in a logocentric, or as I would suggest, a ‘librocentric’ project of decolonization – ends up reproducing the colonial epistemological asymmetries of knowledge production?...there is no way we are going to intellectually reason our way out of coloniality in any conventional academic sense. There is no way we are going to publish our way out of modernity. There is no way we are going to read our way out of epistemological hegemony. (p. 117)

This is not to presuppose that we cannot turn to our academic tools as sources of learning and enacting subaltern constructions of knowledge, but that we recognize the methods, avenues, legacies and limitations, through which we are interpreting written words as purveyors of knowledge. In accordance I have not proposed this study as some hubristic
notion of letters or written forms of thought as the method achieving an epistemically
disruptive path, but as a method of incredibly subjective knowledge that can serve as one
viable means of interrogating possible solutions in our efforts to assert our decolonial
existence in a resistive liberatory light that always has coloniality breathing down its
back. To defend or demand a subaltern ontology, epistemology, and cosmology, if I can
call it this, “becomes a question of political, existential, and even cosmological import”
(Burman, 2012, p. 105)

This is not to essentialize or think of decolonial thought in purified or saintly
terms, but to position the notion of how do we think in terms we have no language to
think in, when the act of “thinking” is itself brandished with coloniality’s imprint? I
believe Moraga attempts to inhabit a rasquache tongue of sorts in her writing, but even
then is our interpretations themselves guided by an order imposed? It is the fundamental
difficulty in trying to learn to unlearn in a world that already positions what it means to
learn. I do not have the answers to these terms yet I remain committed to interrogating
these social and also deeply personal inquiries, since I have detailed that these dilemmas
carry an utmost importance in how we choose to become decolonial.
References


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