

## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

### Our Bodies of Work

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**Embodiment** is a significant theme running through the contributions to this issue. The poems speak to the scholarly essays concerned with the Anzaldúan theorization of embodiment as simultaneously the site of colonization and resistance. Chew writes about the reconfiguration of gendered and racialized identities that the Mexican State imposed on Japanese Mexicans during WWII, and conversely the forms of cultural *mestizaje* which challenge these forms of control. Barrera on the other hand, invokes Anzaldúa's theorizations of the *mestiza* body in order to explore *Sleep Dealer's* dystopian critique of transnational neocolonial capitalism's dehumanizing and destructive effects. To quote Anzaldúa's famous line, "let the wound caused by the serpent be cured by the serpent." That is, if *mestizaje* is the "herida abierta" of colonization, then, perhaps, an embodied hybridity—*mestizaje*—that grapples with the pain and costs of this colonial wounding to imagine a liberatory alternative is in order.

The body, then, figures prominently in Chicana feminist theorizations of subjectivity, but also in how we conceive of the critical frameworks that shape the production of knowledge about the world beyond ourselves. Reading, as an act through which we "enter into the lives of others" is always an embodied process. Reading this issue of the journal by holding it in your hands, or by gazing upon a screen, your physical posture whether you are hungry or tired: all of these things shape your experience of reading. Our embodied perceptions, in other words, our senses, are central to our understanding

of the world and of each other. And we only understand that embodiment through various structures of knowledge and legibility that are always and already implicated in social structures of power (anything from language, to religion, or something else entirely). Anzaldúa's challenge to us, then, as Chicana feminist thinkers and activists, artists and teachers, is to use those sources of knowledge that have been historically wounded to generate alternative models of knowing to transform the meanings of the "herida abierta" in order to heal it.

The poems in this issue speak to and from the body and its perceptions. Pat Viera's "Seven," evokes but does not describe synesthesia, a perceptual neurological condition in which one sensory pathway evokes a response from another sense, "lemons and limes have always tasted like seven." The poem, then, unsettles the ordinary orders of knowledge. Numbers are adjectives and have physical properties that can be perceived by the body, rather than the mind. Similarly "Vanilla is an Orchid" and "The Good Storm" refuse the mind/body split, entwining memory, embedded in the senses and history, embodied in places.

Likewise, Alicia Vogl Saénz takes up some of these questions on a scale that is simultaneously human and geologic, the volcanoes and world maps evoked in "The Passing" shrink down to "a house of dark roses" in a poem about a family's dissolution. In "Meditation on Movement Through an ALS Telescope" Vogl Saénz foregrounds the physical body in illness as the lens through which we "see" the world and ourselves, linking celestial and human bodies. In the last of her poems published here, "Quinine" she figures the bitterness of quinine (characteristic of its medicinal properties) to transform the meanings of heartbreak, linking the ordinary and the mythic in the poem's final lines.

Finally, Gloria Alvarez writes of feminine empowerment rooted in an elemental figuration of the self that also links seeming opposites. Water and lightning, *chubasco* and *centella* combine in the declarations of being in “*Mujer de Mucha Enagua*.” Taking up these elements: water and light, “*Luz de Luz*” offers up a meditative prayer “stitched at her hem,” again refusing a binary that would split the ordinary from the divine, water from light, English from Spanish. The strength and resilience in the poem “*Machetona*” likewise comes from the linking of opposites, as in the linking of “*lo agridulce*.” The ordinary work of women sewing is, in this poem as it is in the previous one, the site of transcendence.

The body’s work is ordinary, much of it is involuntary, and yet it is through it that the extraordinary work of our lives is wrought. Thinking through and within forms of embodiment is one of the centers of this particular issue of the journal, a particularly apt one as it moves to a new institutional home. We speak of transitions in bodily terms: we experience growing pains, hitting our stride, and finding our feet. They are useful metaphors because they speak to the reality of the every day nature of the important work we do together as editors, as *colegas*, and as community in the pages of the journal, in *MALCS*, and beyond.