TWO The Elegiac Addict

These pleasures, Melancholy, give
And I with thee will choose to live.

Milton, "Il Penseroso"

ALMA

On the cusp of her twenty-ninth birthday, Alma Gallegos was discovered lying in the parking lot near the emergency room entrance at Española Hospital. Like many patients that present at this ER, she was anonymously dumped by acquaintances who likely feared she might die or was already dead. According to the physician who treated her, Alma was close to death: her breath was shallow; her heart rate was barely discernible; and, despite the intense summer heat, her skin was cold to the touch. On quick inspection of her swollen limbs, the physician determined that Alma had overdosed on heroin, and she was treated with naloxone, which, if administered in time, revives the body's central nervous and respiratory systems. Alma's vitals were soon stabilized, and she remained in

the hospital until the local drug court mandated that she be transferred to Nuevo Día, the very drug treatment facility from which she had recently discharged herself.

Four days after her overdose, Alma emerged from the women's dormitory. Having privately suffered through the initial torments of heroin withdrawal, it was expected that she "join the program"—that is, participate in all aspects of clinic life, including bathing, cleaning, journaling, and daily counseling. I accompanied Alma to her first mandatory counseling session. The transition from private suffering to putting addictive experience into a social and linguistic frame—an exercise central to the clinic's therapeutic process—was a challenge for her. Alma pulled at her hair uncomfortably. Her body twitched, and pebbles of sweat collected on her brow. For several minutes she looked around the counselor's small, windowless office and then asked in the Hispano manner (more statement than question), "*¿Yo estuve aquí una vez, no?* [I've been here before, haven't I?]."

Indeed, it was Alma's second admission to the detoxification clinic in a year and her sixth admission to a drug recovery program in just five years. Addicted to heroin for half her life, Alma's affective world—from her embodied pains to her cravings to the quietude she experiences during a heroin high—was as familiar to her as the institutions intermittently charged to apprehend and/or care for her. It was a familiarity achieved through certain recurring fractures, indexed by long stretches of heroin use, arrest, mandatory treatment, and an eventual and ongoing return to heroin use, arrest, and treatment.

Though in clinical parlance returns to detox, such as Alma's, are considered a "relapse," a framing that correlates to an understanding of addiction as "chronic disease," Alma understood her presence at the clinic less as a relapse—which connotes a period of remission—than a "return." It is a return to living "once more and innumerable times more" (Nietzsche 1974: 274) *this* aspect of Hispano life: these weary limbs, this room, this familiar and anticipated question posed to her by the drug counselor: What happened?[1]

Alma plainly answered that nothing happened. The counselor persisted. She asked Alma about her relationship with her husband. Weren't

her friends and family supportive of her recovery? Why did she lose her part-time job as a teacher's aide? Was her living situation unstable? Each of the counselor's questions pointed to identifiable events that the counselor imagined might establish a foundation for Alma's relapse, and for her memory, ready for recounting.

Alma shook her head at each of the counselor's questions, even when her mouth sometimes answered, "Yes." Between gesture and voice, she seemed to say that everything and nothing happened. The counselor was confused. Alma turned to me in exasperation and, in a language the counselor couldn't understand, said, "*Es que lo que tengo no termina* [It's just that what I have has no end]."[2]

Two years later Alma was again rushed to the same hospital emergency room, where she was pronounced dead after overdosing on heroin.

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This chapter examines what I am calling melancholy subjectivity in the context of addiction. My interest is to show how certain forms of loss in this milieu are compelled by a set of social and historical situations. These losses, I argue, have led to a local ethos of melancholia through which heroin addiction, and heroin-related death, can be read as a kind of contemporary consequence. I focus first on the narrative of Alma, who powerfully described her condition as "*sin fin*"—without end—which I now understand as her insistence on the centrality of unfinished grief as an ineradicable truth of heroin addiction and Hispano life. Hers was a sentiment that is shared by many other addicts I came to know. I then turn to the narrative of Joseph and to an analysis of how his historically situated pains shaped his experience of addiction. But let me now return to Alma.

Between 2004 and 2006 I closely followed Alma as she moved within and between institutional and intimate domains: the clinic, the drug courts, her home, ancestral village, and church. My dual roles as front-line clinical staff member and anthropologist enabled an understanding of the strong relationship among them, and as the discursive forms and practices associated with them worked toward constituting Alma as recovering or *not*, a picture of return emerged. Outside of the clinic, Alma was a

part of a local world that readily used heroin to "treat" the recurring pains associated with the ongoing history of loss and displacement that had come to characterize Hispano life. Within the clinic, she was expected to prepare the grounds for her "recovery," even if the model of chronicity, on which the clinic's practices were based, alleged that her condition was, by definition, unending.

Embedded in these simultaneously opposing and conspiring worlds, Alma struggled to confirm her existence against their shared presupposition of inevitable return: a return to certain historically situated pains, a return to using heroin, a return to the clinic. It is my central argument here that the interplay of these biomedical and local discourses compelled the very dynamics of "endlessness" in which Alma felt herself caught and set the groundwork for her fatal overdose.

A WORK OF MOURNING

Anthropology has shown how following the life history of a single person can illuminate the complex intimate and structural relations that constitute a life, a community, and a social world (Biehl 2006; Das 2000; Desjarlais 2003; Pandolfo 1998). In following the plot of Alma's life, I also engage in this form of inquiry. I do so while recognizing that there are many elements of Alma's story that I do not know, and other elements that could be told in the voice of many other subjects I followed during the course of my research. All were caught in the same cycle of trying to live their lives without heroin and succumbing their lives to it. I thus present Alma as embodying a condition that is more than hers alone.

While certain refrains occur in Alma's experience and the experience of Hispanos more broadly, one of my commitments here is to convey Alma as she appeared to me—generous, reflective, and deeply engaged in trying to find a way to live. In relating Alma's life, and in trying to reckon with her death, I am presenting a kind of "work of mourning" but in terms that differ from recent anthropological works on violence and subjectivity, which examine discursive practices that seek to make possible the repair of injury and of the everyday (Das 2000;

Das and Addlakha 2001; Seremetakis 1991). Rather, this constitutes a work of mourning in another tradition—the Hispano tradition—which commemorates the singularity of death while insisting on the inevitable repetition of it.

Consider the ubiquitous *descansos* that are placed at or near the site of death. The *descanso* does not seek to reinhabit the site of loss, or repair the everyday, but insists on death's essential relationship to life. Over the years heroin-related *descansos* have gathered on the Hispano landscape. Frequently adorned with the used syringes that contained the lethal dose of the drug, they highlight just how enmeshed heroin has become in physical space and everyday life and pose the question of whether and how "mourning as repair" is possible or even desired in the face of unrelenting loss. Rising along the edges of dirt roads and scattered among the valley's juniper-dotted hills, the undisturbed presence of the *descansos* constitutes a kind of ethical commitment to that which was lost; they keep vigil over it; they coexist.

. . . . .

One day, while sitting together in my parked car in front of the Española Public Library, a certain memory flashed up for Alma, urgent and unannounced. It was a cold afternoon, already dark despite the early hour. I turned on the car's ignition and was ready to return Alma to the halfway house in which she resided after thirty days of heroin detoxification. To my surprise, Alma grabbed my hand and told me to wait; she wasn't ready to go back.

For a few moments we stared quietly at the library's iron-barred windows, our breath visible in the chilly air. Alma broke the silence and told me that her older sister, Ana, whom she had never mentioned to me before, loved to read. Ana had been killed by a drunk driver four years before. She had been on her way to work, Alma recalled, driving along the winding, two-lane highway that connects Española to the village of Chimayó.[3] "She loves reading," Alma said, stressing, it seemed, the present tense, as if Ana were still alive. We both stared at the tattered romance novels that sat on Alma's lap.

Following local custom, the Gallegos family put up a handmade *descanso* in the spot where Ana was killed. Alma told me that afternoon that it still marks her sister's death, and she asked if I'd seen it. She described the plastic yellow flowers and the fading family portrait that adorned Ana's wooden cross. I told Alma that I knew the *descanso*, and I offered to drive her there. Alma shook her head no, adding that for years she would have to turn her head and look away every time she passed the cross on her way to Chimayó to meet her dealer. She confessed that she still turned away from the sight but was able to conjure the image of the *descanso* in her mind. "Ahí está," she said, "mirándome [There it is, looking at me]."

In his examination of the English elegy, Peter Sacks (1985) notes that the traditional forms and figures of the genre relate to an experience of loss and the search for consolation. The passage from grief to consolation is often presented in the form of repetition—the recurrence of certain words and refrains. According to Sacks, the elegy's repetitive structure functions to separate the living from the dead and forces the bereaved to accept a loss that he might otherwise refuse.[4] In this way, the repetition creates a rhythm of lament that allows grief to be simultaneously conjured forth and laid to rest. But what if the structure of repetition creates not the working through of grief but the intensification of it? How might the structure of repetition become a constitutive force for a kind of mourning that does not end?

Passing her sister's roadside memorial on her way to score heroin, Alma created her own rhythm of lament—a counterpoint of yesterday and today, memory and forgetting, dead and living. Like her sister's *descanso*, the elegiac character of Alma's narrative offers a continuous double-take on thinking about the relation between history, loss, and the present: what is lost *is* what remains. In Alma's words, it is *sin fin*, forging the patterns of her experience.

THE MELANCHOLIC SUBJECT

In "Mourning and Melancholia" Freud writes (1989: 586), "Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some

abstraction." It designates a psychic process to loss where the mourner is able to gradually work through grief, reaching a definite conclusion whereby the lost object or ideal is essentially let go and the mourner is able to move on. Melancholy, by contrast, designates a kind of mourning without end. It entails an incorporation of the lost person or ideal as a means to keep it alive and thus suggests that the past—that is, the lost past—remains persistently present. Regarding its somatic features, Freud describes the sleeplessness of the melancholic, suggesting that it attests to the steadfastness of the condition. "The complex of melancholia," he writes, "behaves like an open wound" (589).

In Freud's conception, the melancholic's sustained devotion to what is lost is pathological. He warns that the intensity of the "self-tormenting" condition can culminate in the melancholic's suicide (588). More recent efforts to examine Freud's exploration of melancholia have been critical of his understanding of it as a strict pathology and have offered important modifications to his theory.[5] An important area of such work concerns the productive possibilities of melancholia, in particular, in terms of subjectivity, art, and politics (Butler 2004; Cheng 2001; Eng and Kazanjian 2003; Kim 2007). But here I want to pursue Freud's original suggestion regarding the danger to life melancholy may pose. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud writes that the unrelenting nature of melancholy transforms the subject into one who mourns—transforms her, first and foremost, into a melancholic subject. But what if we conceive the subject of melancholy not simply as the one who suffers but also as the recurring historical refrains through which sentiments of "endless" suffering arise?[6] How to attend to these wounds?

The melancholic subject here is Alma, and the structures in which her fatal overdose took root. And it is the all-too-familiar experiences of loss, articulated now as addiction, that have been shaped, in part, by the kinds of attachments that the logic of chronicity assumes. The recent work of anthropologists shows us how medical and technical forms of knowledge and intervention shape the experience and course of illness and, more broadly, affect subjectivity (Biehl 2006; Cohen 1998; Petryna 2002; Scheper-Hughes 2000; Young 1995). In the context of addiction, chronicity as knowledge and practice has become the ground for a new form of

melancholic subjectivity, one that recasts a long-standing ethos of Hispano suffering into a succession of recurring institutional interactions. As Michael Fischer (2003: 51) writes, "We are embedded, ethically, as well as existentially and materially, in technologies and technological prostheses," and these take us into new models of ethics in which "our older moral traditions have little guidance or experience to offer." In the context of emerging technologies, Fisher aptly describes us as being "*thrown* . . . to new forms of social life" (51; emphasis added). But I want to suggest that the Hispano ethos of suffering is a social referent for addiction's recent biomedical turn, and the disparate technologies in which this turn is embedded (drug treatment centers, drug courts, NA meetings, etc.) deepens this ethos of suffering in unexpected, even dangerous ways. In the context of its preceding Hispano forms, I want to examine how these technologies not so much throw us as *bury* us beneath the weight of that which does not end.

A PERSISTENT MEMORY

> I'm thirty years old. Ana died five years ago. She never did drugs. She never caused nobody harm. She was twenty-six when she died. My mother said to me, *It should have been you*. She cried and said she was sorry for saying it, but I told her it was okay. She was right. There were so many times I should have died. You can't imagine the situations I've been in. Situations where you think nobody can survive that. Nobody should survive that.
>
> Sometimes I'd shoot up and be sure it was like the last time, that I wouldn't be around to see the day. The needle'd be in me and I'd be pushing the plunger in thinking, *this is it! ¡se acabó!* [it's over!]. But I'd wake up and life for me . . . [pause] it doesn't stop. Even when it should, you know? There's no reason to live a life like this. Not one like this. Do you know what I mean?

It was 2:45 in the morning when I recorded these words. Alma was coming off a four-day heroin binge, which culminated in being sent back to Nuevo Día after testing "dirty." I was surprised when I saw her walk in the clinic door; she had just successfully completed a ninety-day heroin

detox program, followed by a short stint at a halfway house. We had been at the library together only a week before. Things seemed to be going well.

It was now Alma's third admission in one year. The counselor asked why she "sabotaged" her recovery yet again. Alma responded that there wasn't anything to sabotage; that this was her life.

I had just fallen asleep on one of the sagging couches in the clinic's common room. Technically, I wasn't allowed to sleep while on duty, but I justified a short nap because I was, once again, covering for a no-show. I set my watch alarm for 2:00 A.M., the next dosing hour, and tucked the keys to the medicine cabinet deep in my jeans pocket. I turned off the fluorescent overhead lights and turned on a dim floor lamp beside the couch. My shoes remained on, and I carefully positioned my body so that I could easily monitor hallway and bathroom activity—just in case the patients woke up from their drug-induced sleep. I'm a light sleeper, I thought—"hyper-vigilant," I'd been told by a therapist who treated me during a bout of insomnia. If someone wakes or something happens, I'll surely know.

But somehow I had slept through my watch alarm and woke up only to the feeling of Alma anxiously shaking my shoulder. She was kneeling down beside me, her face inches from my face. *¡Dios mío!* She cried. She told me she thought I was dead. I jumped up from the couch and began making my dosing rounds—first giving Alma her medication and then serving the other patients, whom I had to rouse awake. Afterward I made a fresh pot of coffee and splashed water on my face at the kitchen sink. When I returned to the common room, Alma was still there.

"I can't sleep," she said.

I sat on the couch across from Alma and suggested that the Robaxin, a muscle relaxant, would soon take effect and hopefully she would be able to sleep. Alma said that although her body surely ached, the problem wasn't her muscles; she hadn't slept well her whole life, and she wanted to talk.

Up to this point, I had formally interviewed Alma a handful of times in my capacity as a researcher. None of these interviews was particularly fruitful; when my tape recorder was on, she answered my questions with,

"Well, what is there to say?" and then said nothing. When my tape recorder was off, she was equally vague. On this night, however, Alma had a lot to say, and she allowed me to record her. We sat at a small table in the common room, tape recorder between us. She began her story.

I think I told you before I grew up in T.A. [Tierra Amarilla]. That's where my family is from. They've been there forever. There's nothing up there no more. Nothing but memories. My brother moved to Denver and works construction. Me and Ana moved to Española, 'cause what are you going to do? There's nothing up there no more. In my opinion, there never really was, but at least there was family. It's a lot of *viejos* [elderly people] now. I still have memories, some of them good. You been there?

Yeah. That's where Tijerina had his rebellion.

Sí, pero no existia [Yes, but I wasn't alive then]. And that was a long time ago. You know [Tijerina] wasn't even from T.A.? . . . Anyway, *es inalterado* [it's the same]. Ana used to talk about doing stuff, you know, different things: moving to Denver, going to school. Joe, he's like that, too. *Pero* I never talk about stuff like that. Never did. Why is that? How come some people can imagine things and others can't? In my opinion, *es como un abismo* [it's like an an abyss].

What is?

The future. Life. It's the same thing every fucking day. I went to Escalante [the high school in T.A.]. In my junior class, there were like thirty students. I think maybe half of them are dead now. Probably more.

They're dead from drugs. Boredom. In my opinion, *pa' nada* [for nothing]. *Pues*, then there are people like Ana who die even though there's no reason whatsoever. Did I tell you she was pregnant when she died? Nobody fucking knows that but me. It weighs heavy on my heart, you know? She told me like two days before and was all optimistic about it even though it was a bad situation. She kept saying it would be okay and said it was a good reason for me to clean up. She was always looking for reasons for me to clean up. *Pero*, I told her, *what about the reasons I'm fucked up?* She didn't like to hear that. In my opinion, nobody does, not even the counselors who ask you straight up. [Telephone rings.] Who the hell is calling at three in the morning?

I left Alma at the table and answered the phone in the nurse's station. It was Lara's boyfriend, Manuel. Lara had been admitted the previous

evening for heroin detox. When she arrived at the clinic, she had a black eye and a broken wrist and was wearing urine-stained jeans. Manuel said it was an emergency. I told him that Lara could not come to the phone but that I could relay a message. He shouted obscenities at me and hung up.

I sat at the nurse's desk, exhausted. I could hear Alma talking into the tape recorder in the other room. I heard her say, "Angela, it weighs heavy on my heart." It was as if I were still sitting beside her.

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Several weeks later I began the process of transcribing Alma's recorded narrative. She spoke of her sister, of Tierra Amarilla, of memories that were her own and memories that she had inherited. At one point in the recording, she paused for a long time, and then she said, "It all keeps me awake at night." And minutes later: "It weighs heavy on my heart." Alma repeated the phrase "It weighs heavy on my heart" throughout the recorded narrative. I kept rewinding the recording and replaying it, trying to locate all the events that explained such heaviness. But Alma's admission of *feeling*, her moving descriptions of her embodied pains, were usually temporally disconnected from specific recollections of the past. For example, in one segment of her narrative, Alma talked of her sister's death, then digressed into a recent trip to Albuquerque, and *then* talked of a heavy heart. Throughout, phrases of pain dangled precariously, isolated utterances that seemed to speak, as it were, for themselves.

I tried to understand the nature of this seeming disconnection between feeling and event. Perhaps it was a consequence of heroin withdrawal, during which orientations to time shift according to the process of detox and to the organizational structure of clinical life.[7] Perhaps it was an effect of the predawn hour and the dimness of the room, which created an otherworldly environment. Or perhaps it was me—I was so exhausted that night—maybe I wasn't putting the pieces together, wasn't asking the proper questions.

Whatever the reason for this apparent disconnectedness, one of the themes that Alma kept returning to was the sense that nothing changes,

that life and its ensuing pain is unalterable and without end. Indeed, it was in such terms that she explained her relapse and at one point acknowledged that she *knew* she would return to the clinic, as if her relapse and readmission were simply part of the order of things, simple cause and effect. Referring to the so-called responsibility and challenge of staying clean—which is stressed by counselors at the clinic—Alma said, "It's not that I wasn't *ready* . . . it's that there's nothing to be ready *for*."

One of the things Freud's conception of melancholia offers—especially in his later construction—is a way of thinking about how loss and melancholy attachments possess the power to shape the subject's psychic life in a fundamental way. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud writes:

> We succeeded in explaining the painful disorder of melancholia by supposing that [in those suffering from it] an object which was lost has been set up again inside the ego—that is, that an object-cathexis has been replaced by this identification. At that time, however, we did not appreciate the full significance of this process. . . . Since then we have come to understand that this kind of substitution has a great share in determining the form taken by the ego and that it makes an essential contribution towards building up what is called its "character." (28)

I began to understand Alma's reflections on the inalterability of life through Freud's elaboration on melancholy and subject formation. I began to see how her experiences of loss—those shared and not—became permanently embedded in her. I began to understand that her heart was heavy with the residue of these accumulated losses and that, perhaps, her inability to sleep resulted from her own kind of vigilance: she was keeping watch over this loss. Seen in this way, Alma's melancholy, her insomnia, her heaviness of heart, and her insistence on the inalterability of life were a kind of ethical commitment to that which was lost. And this commitment was altering her "psychic economy" and perhaps determining her future (Ruti 2005: 643). "I knew I'd be back," Alma said. "What I have has no end."

And yet this apparent determinism bothered me. Though Alma's identity was certainly deeply entrenched, I did not like to think of it as immutable or ahistorical.[8] Furthermore, the question of the relation between the psyche and the social remained. Aside from the experience of

loss itself, what social constraints were weighing heavy on Alma's heart and shaping her horizon?[9]

YELLOW EARTH

Shortly after transcribing Alma's narrative, I drove up Highway 84 to Tierra Amarilla. It was mid-fall and the cottonwoods along the Chama River were in full yellow bloom. As I climbed higher into the San Juan Mountains, tall, full-bodied ponderosa pines flanked the road. Set back from the highway were clusters of adobe houses and trailers and, adjacent to these, neat stacks of firewood ready for the coming chill of winter.

As I entered Tierra Amarilla, Alma's words began to echo in my mind. I imagined that she was in the passenger seat beside me, accompanying me with her memories. What memories might she have of that empty lot, or the burned-out trailer next to it? Did she know who scratched out Reies Lopez Tijerina's name on the historic marker that welcomes visitors to the infamous mountain village? Only a generation ago the residents of this village lived primarily off the land—ranching, farming, and working the forests. Now, each weekday morning, the village empties out and becomes a virtual ghost town as locals make the eighty-five-mile drive to Los Alamos or Española for work. Among the abandoned lumber mills, dilapidated corrals, and boarded-up houses, I imagined events Alma might have participated in or witnessed: parties, marriages . . . overdoses, deaths. She had spoken to me of some of these things that night at the detox clinic; told me, for instance, about the suicide of a trusted schoolteacher who had tutored her in reading. "She slashed her wrists in the woods and didn't leave a note," Alma said. "My brother's friends found her when they were out partying. The only thing we could think is that her son died in Desert Storm."

Tierra Amarilla: Yellow Earth. Perhaps more than any other *norteño* New Mexican village, it is the symbolic ground of the Hispano history of dispossession and longing for land and times past that has inspired decades of political struggle—by turns mainstream and underground, through means violent and not. Tierra Amarilla was first settled as a land

grant in the mid-1600s. Like all land grants in northern New Mexico, Spanish and, later, Mexican settlers were allotted land for an individual home, an irrigable plot for personal farming, and the right to share common land with other settlers for pasture, timber, and hunting. According to the deeds, personal allotments could be sold as private property, but common lands could not. The commons were just that—collective property—and were to be used and preserved for the community's economic and ultimately cultural well-being.

Since 1848, when New Mexico became part of the United States, generations of land grant heirs have found themselves in an uphill struggle to regain lost lands. Even today they continue to argue that the United States broke the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which was intended to protect titles secured before the war, thereby preserving the economic and cultural integrity of Hispano people. Indeed, over the years the majority of land grants were usurped through chicanery that was at best on the margins of the law. The heirs of the Tierra Amarilla land grant alone lost over half a million acres, much of it now part of the Carson National Forest. But the "commons" of a national forest comes with strict land use regulations that tourist and local alike must abide by, even if the latter's forebears were once the rightful owners.

The idea that the land was "lost" is no mere exercise in nostalgia; over generations it has given rise to a constant stream of rebellion, most famously in Tierra Amarilla forty years ago when Reies Lopez Tijerina and a group of armed insurgents stormed the local courthouse, a symbol of an "outsider" authority that drove a wedge between the people and the land. The Courthouse Raid, as it is now known, prompted the governor to activate the National Guard and send in tanks to suppress the rebellion. A five-day manhunt by five hundred law enforcement agents ensued. Tanks and small aircraft were used to search the forest and nearby villages for the fleeing insurgents. Eventually, twenty individuals involved in the incident were indicted on various felony charges. The incident captured national media attention but was not taken as a serious social justice issue as other civil rights movement causes were. Instead, the media largely depicted the event as anarchy in the Old West.

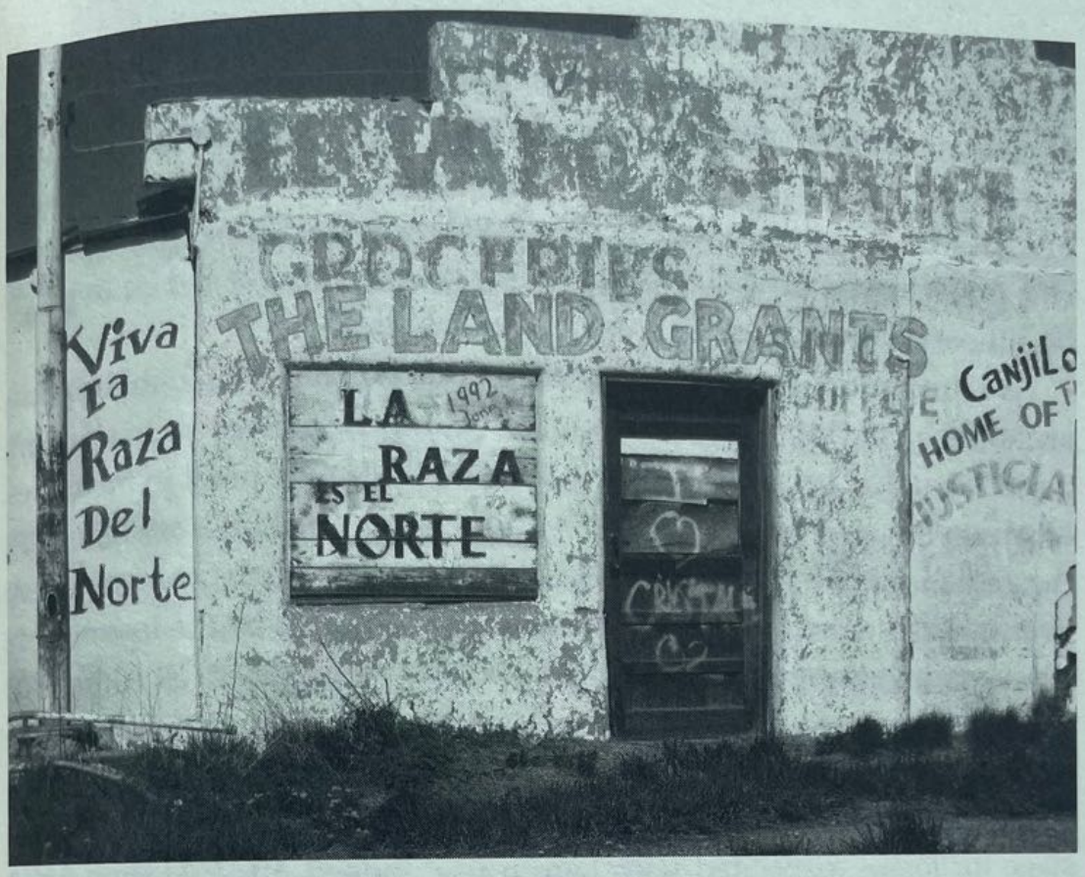

Figure 4. General store. Photo by the author.

The rebellion was nevertheless successful in symbolizing how deep passions run on the issue of the land and who has rights to it.[10] In an interview after the raid, Tijerina exclaimed, "These people will always remember how they lost the land. . . . They have not forgotten after hundreds of years. . . . They will never forget.' "[11] Indeed, the land grant movement continues apace. Every February 2, the anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, land grant activists stage a demonstration in the state capital that draws heirs from around the state.[12]

Memories and sentiments regarding land loss remain powerful tropes among elders and youth alike, in that locals draw a connection between land loss, poverty, and addiction. The ultimate irony is that which was "lost" is still *there* for Hispanos to see: it's all around them in the mountains, rivers, mesas, and buttes. One wonders how Freud's conception of melancholy can be extended to address such material losses, losses such

as land that remain present but out of reach, especially in a context in which land is constituent to cultural identity and economic survival. How might Freud's reflections on *individual* experiences of loss apply to community and intergenerational experiences? In the Hispano context one sees that experiences of loss and melancholia emerge through specific political and historical contexts. To ignore these would be to privilege theory at the expense of history and politics.

As I drove through Tierra Amarilla on that fall day—through the plaza anchored by the infamous courthouse—Alma's narrative was fresh in my mind. I couldn't help but wonder what role "the land" plays in memories of women like Alma; women who, in her words, "didn't exist" during the most militant phase of the land grant movement; women whose lives have been dominated not by the loss of land but by the loss of people. Certainly these forms of loss intersect in powerful ways. Alma's insistence that there is "nothing there," "nothing but memories," speaks to tragedies of earlier generations, tragedies indelibly linked to the present. And the material legacy of land loss in northern New Mexico is the very stage for losses associated with heroin use. Indeed, the first time Alma shot up was deep in the forest, in a crumbling adobe on a large parcel of land that once belonged to *"la familia Mascaranes."*

For generations, the Mascaranes were shepherds, pastoralists. Like many families, they lost land use rights when much of the common land was designated a national forest, a transformation that erased their livelihood. Today the Mascaranes live in the village of Tierra Amarilla and no longer raise sheep. Their old adobe remains locked in the forest. It is the site of many of Alma's heroin-related memories.

I remember the first time I went in there I felt bad. I felt like I was trespassing. The windows were all busted out. You could see like the bricks and wood from inside the walls. It was a mess, but it was like our spot, our *chante* [house]. But we called it *los Mascaranes. Vamos a los Mascaranes*, we'd say. And that's where we partied. That's where I got high. The first time I saw somebody overdose was at *los Mascaranes*.

I wanted to talk to the Mascaranes family, but I didn't know how to find them. I thought of asking a clerk at the general store, but the general

store no longer existed; it was boarded up. I drove to the county offices—a newer complex painted the color of adobe and the only building in the plaza that wasn't in a state of complete disrepair. Despite being a weekday afternoon, even it was closed.

And, as I drove home that afternoon, I thought of Alma's words. "There's nothing up there no more. Nothing but memories."

INTOLERABLE INSOMNIA

Alma left the heroin detox clinic three days after our predawn interview. According to the detox attendant on duty at the time of her departure, she simply "walked out" at approximately two o'clock in the morning. I asked to see her discharge papers, which patients are required to sign in acknowledgment that they had received counseling on the potential consequences—legal and not—of leaving detox before "successful completion." Alma signed her name in bubbly, childlike script. In response to "Reason for Self-Discharge," she wrote, "CANT SLEEP."

Jorge Luis Borges (1998: 98) writes of the "unbearable lucidity of insomnia." He describes sleep as a state in which one is able to forget oneself. When one awakens, however, time, places, and people return—the self returns. One of the many words in Spanish for "to awaken" and which Borges regularly employs is *recordarse*, which translates literally as "to remember oneself."[13] In this sense, when one awakens, one remembers oneself. By extension, in the absence of sleep, the self never leaves, never forgets, and thus remains vigilant over itself and its memories. Borges understood that this vigilance can lead one to a state of despair. In his short story "The Circular Ruins," a man who suffers from insomnia walks miles through a jungle in the hope of tiring himself, losing himself to sleep. "In his perpetual state of wakefulness," Borges writes, "tears of anger burned the old man's eyes" (98).

According to the attendant who was on duty the night of Alma's departure, no one picked her up at the clinic, which suggests that she would have had to walk fifteen miles of dark highway to reach Española. I called the only telephone number that I had for Alma, which was for

the trailer that she shared with her on-again off-again husband: there was no response. Over the next week I tried to call again and again. Eventually, a recorded voice answered, curtly informing me that the number I was trying to reach had been disconnected.

Several weeks after my visit to Tierra Amarilla, Alma called me. She wanted me to know that she was okay and that although she knew what people must have thought regarding her discharge, she hadn't "screwed things up yet." Her tone was casual, even happy. She told me that she found a job at the local Subway sandwich shop. It was easy, she said: boring, but easy. She also told me that she had begun to attend services at a growing Evangelical church in Española. She liked the music, she said, as well as the upbeat message of the pastor. I asked Alma about her living situation: was she with her husband, Luis? Where was she? After a long pause, Alma reported that Luis had left. "I'm living alone now," she said, and then asked me to come by the following afternoon after her work shift. We planned an early dinner at a place of Alma's choosing.

I drove to the trailer that Alma had shared with Luis. When she answered the door, she was still wearing her work uniform: baggy khakis and a green pullover. Although it was still light outside, it was almost completely dark inside the trailer. Alma invited me in, informing me as she did that her home currently lacked phone service and electricity. But she quickly added that she was confident that her utilities would be reinstalled within the week, thanks to help from the Fellowship. I asked Alma if she was warm enough, worried that winter was on its way and the trailer would get terribly cold. Did she need anything? Alma told me that she was okay and laughed that her recent weight gain—a benefit from quitting heroin and eating on the job—was helping to keep her warm.

Votive candles flickered on a small coffee table in the living room, where I waited for Alma to change out of her work clothes. Aside from a threadbare couch, the coffee table, and a large wall hanging depicting the Virgin of Guadalupe, the living room was completely bare. I wondered if this was a consequence of Luis's departure or if it was simply amplified by the absence of heat and light. I looked at the votives and the Virgin of Guadalupe. Alma had not entirely let go of her Catholic roots, her ties to the past. I was curious about her foray into evangelicalism and

wondered about her desire to be "born again," for a future. I wondered how Alma's transition from Catholicism to evangelicalism might be understood as a reflection of her complicated relationship with her own past and of a desire to forget.

SECOND CHANCES

Positioned between a discount grocery store and a mobile home showroom, the Rock Christian Fellowship is a sprawling cinderblock complex located in the center of Española. It can be spotted from some distance by an enormous neon billboard depicting the face of Jesus, which reads, "Rock Christian Fellowship: Making Disciples." In addition to traditional church services, the Fellowship offers a child care center, a men's recovery home, a "spiritual university," and a restaurant. The Solid Rock Café sits on the northern edge of the complex. Alma suggested we go there for a light dinner. When we arrived, the café was nearly empty. We sat at a small table near the window and watched the evening rush hour traffic gather along Riverside Drive. To my surprise, Alma pulled out two Subway sandwiches from a backpack. I ordered each of us a soft drink, and we ate our sandwiches, which had grown soggy with time, in comfortable silence.

"This place is helping me out a lot," Alma said. "I don't know what I would do, you know, without it." It was the first time since we reestablished communication that Alma acknowledged that things had been difficult. I asked her about the night she left the clinic.

> I shouldn't have gone back. I'll tell you something: that place don't work. Its focus is all wrong. They want you to always be thinking about what you did, why you did it, how you're always gonna be an addict and you got to stay clean, fight the temptation. Your always 'ceptible to heroin, and there's no cure. . . . [That's why] I like it here [the Fellowship]. They're not always looking back, you know? The pastor talks about the future; he says that's what counts. The future—so you can be blessed and go to heaven.
>
> At Nuevo Día, with Twelve Steps . . . it's like with Luis, always reminding me of the fuck-ups, you know? The things I've done. It's like, you

> don't have to keep reminding me! I know better than anyone else what I've done and where I've been. I can't forget. But don't keep pushing me down there, you know? I have a hard enough time dealing with my demons.

Alma's account of being "pushed" into remembering that she is at perpetual risk of relapsing into addictive behavior provides a powerful critique of contemporary medical and community models of drug treatment that liken addiction to chronic illness. Although this relatively new approach to drug dependence began as a well-meaning attempt to dispel the moral implications of being a drug addict—in other words, to not view drug addiction and relapse as a moral failing—Alma's framing suggests that there are, in fact, moral and psychological repercussions to approaching addiction as a chronic, unending process.

Jean Jackson (2005: 332) has written of the ambivalent status of the chronically ill, of being seen to "confound the codes of morality of sickness and health." According to Jackson, the uncertain ontological status of the chronically ill—depressed, asthmatic, or addicted—can incite stigmatizing reactions. This is true in Alma's experience, though I would add that the idea that her addiction is chronic—that is, its chronicity, its unendingness—may provoke other moral responses, including depression and a sense of hopelessness. And while some might read Alma's appeal for "the system" and her husband to stop "pushing [her] down there" as "denial," an alternative reading may be that it is a genuine plea for a new understanding and approach to addiction.

I began to understand Alma's turn toward evangelicalism as an attempt to carve out such a response for herself. "I don't want to go through this anymore," she said of the seemingly perpetual cycle of treatment and relapse. Perhaps it was in evangelicalism, and the promise of being born again, that Alma was able to envision putting an end to chronicity as such and to seek for herself a true and lasting recovery.

Indeed, that evening in the restaurant, Alma quietly swore to me that she hadn't used heroin since she left the clinic, crediting the Fellowship and her new, forward-looking perspective for her sobriety. The only

problem, she said, was that she still couldn't sleep. I could see in her eyes that this was true. Bloodshot and watery, they conveyed the culmination of too many sleepless nights. She told me she hated nighttime because she worried, even before getting into bed, that sleep would not come. I asked her how many nights it had been since she slept. "Nights!" she laughed. It had been so long that she didn't even remember what sleeping felt like. She described her insomnia:

> It's not just being uncomfortable, you know, like sleeping but waking up because your body hurts or you'd have to go to the bathroom or something. I'd watch the other women at night [in the clinic's women's dormitory]. They all slept, but in the morning they'd all complain like babies, *"No puedo dormir."* [I can't sleep.] But they did sleep! I know because I watched them! I was awake all night watching them!
>
> I'd love to sleep like that.

Alma is right. True insomnia is not merely tossing and turning on a bad night. Rather, it is sleeplessness night after night, a mind and a body in revolt against themselves. Alma described wanting sleep like a hungry person wanting food; her insomnia was a kind of starvation, or another kind of withdrawal. It had gotten to a point where normal patterns of wakefulness and sleep no longer made sense, or seemed permanently unavailable to her. During the hours that preceded her departure from the clinic, Alma said her mind started "playing tricks":

> I kept going over things in my mind, you know? I'd tell myself to stop, but I couldn't. My thoughts were like separate. I can't control it. It's always been like that for me.
>
> [That night] I was thinking about my parents and how they're getting old and are probably going to die. How I messed things up and, like, my mom hates me now and she's up there in T.A., and I don't go there no more. I don't. I don't even like to call. But mostly, I kept thinking about Ana and how fucked up everything is, how she died with her baby inside of her.
>
> This is what I kept thinking that night.

"Insomnia," the Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran (1998: 140) writes, "enlarges the slightest vexation and converts it into a blow of fate, stands

vigil over our wounds and keeps them from flagging." Night after night, the same thoughts appeared to Alma. She asked me why that is—why, during the day, she is able to get by, but why at night the same thoughts and memories swell up, always in the same way.

Alma wanted a physician to write her a legitimate prescription for a sleep aid. In the meantime, she resorted to buying prescription meds—mostly tranquilizers—off the street. But it's too expensive, costing up to $10 a pill, and the effect too temporary. The thoughts, Alma told me, always return. They are, in her words, without end.

> The only time I can sleep is with *chiva*. That's the only time, and it's the best sleep, you forget everything. There's nothing, just this quiet. I can't explain it to you. It's the best medicine.
>
> *Are you ever worried that you'll start again? That your sleeplessness will lead you back there?*
>
> Always. It's always on the back of my mind.

PERPETUAL PEACE

Alma's estranged husband found her lying on her couch, alone and unresponsive. Within minutes she arrived at Española Hospital, a short distance from the trailer they once shared, and was pronounced dead. A toxicology examination performed by the Office of the Medical Investigator determined that her cause of death was a lethal combination of heroin and the prescription medication diazepam (Valium). Her death was classified an "accidental poisoning," the standard classification given an overdose with no corroborating evidence of intent.

Less than a year after Alma's death, I returned to the Española Valley and visited Luis. We sat together in the living room of the trailer he once shared with Alma, which was aglow with a scattering of decorations left over from Christmas. Luis recalled the month preceding Alma's death—how he and Alma were trying to reconcile after being separated for nearly two years. For the past decade, Luis, like Alma, cycled through arrest, hospitalization, and incarceration. Unlike Alma, he conveyed no misgivings

about his heroin use, describing his repeated institutionalization as simply "part of the territory."

According to Luis, "Alma was always the one talking about getting clean, not me. This is who I am. I told her you go do *your* thing, but this is me, a *tecato*. I stayed away when she was cleaning up. I respected that she was trying to live another way. But you know Alma, she couldn't maintain. So we'd get back on it together. That's how we lived together."

The morning of Alma's death Luis was in a neighboring village, with his children from a previous relationship. He said that he had encouraged Alma to spend the morning with her parents in Tierra Amarilla so that she wouldn't be alone, and promised they'd meet up in Española later that afternoon. But Alma refused to go home because she couldn't deal with her parents' judgment and grief. I asked Luis whether he invited Alma to join him. He shook his head and said, "It was just supposed to be for a few hours. It wasn't supposed to be a big deal."

When Luis returned to the trailer that afternoon he thought that Alma was sleeping. He described the chain of events preceding his recognition that something else had occurred: he went directly to the kitchen and began cooking his heroin, wondered if he should also cook hers, knowing she'd want some, and that her need might interrupt *his* moment. So as he prepared both their fixes, he noticed that heroin was missing from his stash. He again counted the *papeles* that contained the drug to make sure he hadn't counted incorrectly the first time; when he realized he hadn't miscounted, he called out Alma's name, and he continued to call her name as he went to her.

Luis told me he didn't want to talk anymore, that he wanted to take a drive. We piled into my rental car and headed north, along Highway 84. Ten, twenty miles passed, and, with the distance, the snow level began to rise. With his eyes half-closed, Luis told me to keep going. The *norteño*-style music on the radio turned to static.

As we entered Tierra Amarilla, Luis pointed out a small, A-frame house set back from the highway. It was his parents' house, the one he grew up in. I asked if he wanted to stop, and he shook his head no, gesturing with a hand for me to keep going. Less than a mile away, he pointed out another house, its chimney releasing smoke the same color as the

sky. Luis told me it was Alma's home, the one she grew up in and where her parents still lived. "We grew up together," he said.

We kept on, into the forest that surrounds Tierra Amarilla, the cheap rental car skidding and jerking along a rutted dirt road. Finally, at an intersection with another forest road, Luis asked me to park the car. I watched him from the driver's seat as he walked into the trees, which stood like exclamation points against the snowy ground. About twenty-five feet in, Luis turned to me and gestured for me to join him. The snow crunched loudly beneath my boots. When I reached him, he pointed downward with his cigarette. It was Alma's *descanso*.

Her memorial was a cross made of tree branches, woven together with bits of rusted wire. Overlaying it was another cross, this one made of intersecting syringes. Etched into her *descanso* were the following messages: "ALMA; R.I.P."; "Siempre" [Forever], and "No te olvides" [Never forget].

Luis told me Alma's father made the wooden cross and had etched into it her name, the day of her death, and the command to never forget. And it was Luis who later added the cross of intersecting syringes. Standing in the forest, the *descanso* voiced the losses of Alma's parents, losses that she had inherited and had affirmed, again, through death. At the same time the cross of intersecting syringes affirmed *her need* to forget. It was a need produced by the collision of history and chronicity, a need that took hold of her life and that finally ended in her what had become endless.

THE ENTANGLEMENTS OF TIME

In thinking about the temporal dimensions of loss and sentiment, I have found Raymond Williams's concept "structure of feeling" especially useful. It refers to actively felt sensibilities derived from lived, material histories. According to Williams, at any given time there are multiple structures of feeling in operation, corresponding roughly to the generations living at that time. Each generation creates its own structure of feeling in response to the world it inherits—taking up or abandoning the sensibilities of its predecessors. His way of thinking about "the living substance

of perceptions and relationships" (1977: 34) thus has a temporal dimension that helps elucidate the interlocking nature of experience and affect.

Consider, for instance, expressions often repeated among elder Hispanos: "Todo es historia" [History is everything]. It is a saying that simultaneously acknowledges the loss of times past and the longing for continuity in a precarious and changing world. Another: "La historia es una herida" [History is a wound], which is frequently evoked in the context of expressing the material and cultural losses that resulted from the region's past. And another, repeated by the addicted: "Chiva es el remedio para todo" [Heroin cures everything]. Thus, while elders worry that the younger generation is all too willing to forget the past, the young are just as likely to understand the heroin problem as a contemporary consequence of it, while still offering heroin as a remedy for the pain that accompanies the past. In this way, young and old insist that to meaningfully address the heroin problem, one must also address the region's deep historical scars.

There are other kinds of scars, such as those on the skin. The needle marks and abscesses that map an addict's body—open wounds in the literal sense—powerfully attest to how addiction is also a historical formation and an immanent experience. These are wounds in which the future, the present, and the past commingle through the force of recurring need: the need to score heroin, the need to get high, the need to find a vein. Alma once described it to me like this:

> The thing about being hooked is you're always thinking ahead, thinking about your next fix, how and where you're gonna get the money, who owes you money, who owes you heroin, who'll help you out. It goes on and on and on. And now, I've been using so long, nothing ever lasts. The high . . . it's over before you know it and you're back to it, thinking about the next fix, making calls. It never stops.[14]

Hispano heroin addicts and Hispanos more generally are not the only ones to engage this structure of "endlessness" when describing their lives. Indeed, academics have long relied on it to explore the poverty, isolation, and cultural and temporal "rootedness" of northern New Mexico, and artists have engaged the trope in their own imagined constructions of the region (Kosek 2006).[15] One of the earliest and most influential

scholarly articulations of this can be found in George Sánchez's 1930s study, *The Forgotten People*, in which he celebrates the "traditional culture" of Hispanos—resulting in part from an intrinsic "unwillingness to change" (1996: 28). But Sánchez ultimately argues that the unrelenting poverty and cultural and geographic isolation of the region has made Hispanos "pathetic in [their] hopelessness" (28). Only with the influence of modernization, Sánchez argues, will Hispanos finally be "freed from cultural bondage and from the despair of dire poverty" (98). Later studies echoed this sentiment, fluctuating only in tone.[16]

Of course, this reading of Hispano New Mexico would become a driving force for generations of artists and writers who moved to the region seeking an alternative to modern, capitalist America (for example, D. H. Lawrence, Georgia O'Keefe, Willa Cather, and contemporaries such as John Nichols). Their idealized renderings of the region and its "enduring traditional culture" continue to propel the notion of the region as a space of cultural endlessness, the place that time forgot. This imagined regional geography would also become the basis of the region's growing tourism industry, which promotes the idea that the traveler—in visiting isolated Hispano villages or pueblos—is able to literally "Exit the Present" to encounter a way of life that has never changed and presumably never will.[17] The cultural politics of this *imagined* geography are crucial to the work of dispossession and displacement of Hispanos (Rodriguez 1987).

These discursive practices intersect in unexpected ways with sentiments articulated by land activists and "old-timers" who frequently lament cultural loss. They worry that the younger generation—especially those who are addicted to heroin—are all too willing to forget the past. In this context the act of remembering the past—in particular, the continuing struggle against dispossession from the land—provokes an alternative idiom of continuity and longing that, for many, is vital to the community and individual identity. Reworking the trope of timeless cultural ties and an idealized past articulated by earlier generations of artists, one land activist said, "Our past[,] . . . our connection to the land and to our heritage *is* our future. The problem is young addicts are lost without it. That's why they use. They don't have a tie to their history." Many other locals whom I spoke with echoed this sentiment.

But what about women like Alma—women who want nothing to do with the village and the land in which she was raised, land that has been the site of conflict over claims of ownership and belonging? The traffic between these varying "structures of feeling" points to the differing ways Hispanos relate to the past and the differing emotional resonances associated with it. It suggests that it is also people's *specific* histories with the past—and not some idealized or inherited notion of it—that leads to a sense of attachment to, or alienation from, it.

MEMORY AGAINST FORGETTING

The question of why the past, especially in its painful incarnations, reenters or is memorialized in contemporary life is a concern of many scholars. Idelber Avelar (1999) argues that images of ruin—that is, the anachronistic object, the museum piece, or, in Alma's case, the *descanso* that marks the site of her sister's death—are crucial for memory work, for they offer anchors by means of which a connection to the past can be reestablished. These images become especially powerful and urgent where there is an incessant replacement of the "old" with the "new." Similarly, Andreas Huyssen (2000) links "contemporary memory cultures" to reactions to dramatic political or social change. "The turn toward memory," he writes, "is subliminally energized by the desire to anchor ourselves in a world characterized by an increasing instability of time and the fracturing of lived space" (28). Memory is a kind of survival strategy against the increasing fragmentation of daily life. According to Huyssen, memory can also be viewed as being in the "grips of a fear, even a terror, of forgetting" (28).

The fear of forgetting is a powerful sentiment in the Hispano context. In the realm of addiction, many addicts described to me their fear of forgetting loved ones who died from a heroin overdose, as well as their fear that they might die from the drug. Both forms are embedded in the repetitive experience of having lost so many friends and loved ones to heroin. In other words, heroin-related deaths are so common that they culminate in the worry that the specificity of each loss will be forgotten. A young heroin addict named Marisa matter-of-factly told me, "I can't

even remember how many people have died [because of heroin]. It's that many." In this constellation of heroin-related death, loss, and forgetting, addicts fear that their *own* deaths will be forgotten as well. Marisa admitted that sometimes she foresees her death and wondered, "Will anyone even know if I'm even gone?"

Hispano northern New Mexico represents a contemporary memory culture insofar as there is a pervasive and articulated fear of forgetting history concurrent with public and private strategies of cultural preservation and memorialization. In the realm of tradition, there are yearly reenactments of the Hispano colonial past, including ceremonial dances, such as Los Matachines, that blend the region's Moorish, Spanish, and Native American roots with centuries-old Catholic processions. Agricultural practices with Spanish colonial roots, such as the acequias, remain vital to the cultural and economic survival of some villages. And language itself speaks to the past, as the unique Spanish dialect of Hispanos is still peppered with archaisms that date back to the original *pobladores*, or townsfolk. But these traditions and practices, which Hispanos claim have been around "forever," are also being abandoned.

Many ancient acequias that once brought water to the fields now sit dry as townsfolk increasingly leave agricultural work for low-wage jobs—largely a consequence of nearby Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The laboratory, and the cultural construction of national security, became a fulcrum for land dispossession (Gusterson 1996). Many locals bitterly recall that the land on which it sits was "stolen" by the federal government in 1943 by invoking the power of eminent domain.

The presence of LANL has profoundly reshaped the Hispano landscape, ushering in an epochal transition from local autonomy and sustainability to dependence on the state. LANL is now the largest employer of Hispano valley residents; Española's Super Walmart is the second. A report by the Rio Arriba Department of Health and Human Services (2000) also considers LANL a contributing factor to the region's declining cultural integrity and worsening heroin problem. Some locals describe Los Alamos as "*una herida*," a wound.

LOS ALAMOS INTERLUDE

During my research, I was invited to participate in a consortium of researchers and treatment providers working on northern New Mexico's drug problems. The consortium included individuals and agencies from the state-defined Region Three: Santa Fe, Los Alamos, and Rio Arriba Counties. As a concerned community member, my task was to represent and advocate on behalf of the needs of heroin addicts in Rio Arriba County, by far the poorest county of the three and the one with the most entrenched drug problem. I looked at serving on the consortium as a means to acquaint myself with the tensions and contrasts between Los Alamos and Rio Arriba Counties and to explore what many residents of the Española Valley had said to me—that Los Alamos is the very opposite of what *norteño* culture *means*, that it is the ultimate Other of Hispano life, and that the relationship between Hispano New Mexico and Los Alamos is one of dependency and distrust.

From the beginning of the consortium there were problems that resonated with these claims. First, Los Alamos was chosen by a majority of members to be the site where the regional meetings would be held. Organizers from Rio Arriba County immediately objected, arguing that Española should play host, especially since it had the severest drug problems. Further, they expressed concern that housing the consortium in Los Alamos would reinforce the already unequal power relations between the two counties. A heated debate centering on "convenience" ensued, and, by majority rule, the meetings remained in Los Alamos. Fittingly, they were held at the Fuller Lodge, a high-ceilinged log building that was once home to the Los Alamos Boys Ranch School. The Boys Ranch was established in 1917 to help sons of the East Coast elite become strong young men through rigorous outdoor activities in addition to a classical education. In later years the Fuller Lodge would be converted into guest quarters for the Manhattan Project.

Participating in the consortium meant that I joined the flock of Hispano commuters who left their small villages early each morning for the "nuclear city" that overlooks the Española Valley from its perch at the base of the Jemez Mountains. At seven o'clock on one such morning, the highway

that connected my village, Velarde, to Española was already bustling with commuters. A parade of pickups and dented sedans whizzed by at speeds ten to twenty miles per hour over the speed limit.

A cautious driver, I wasn't able to even enter the highway from my narrow county road for several minutes. Finally I joined the torrent of traffic and drove with relative ease down Highway 68, until I hit San Juan Pueblo, just north of Española. The traffic came to a crawl. I was surprised to see that the parking lot at San Juan's Okhay Casino was already filled to capacity, likely from commuters drawn in for the famous 89-cent burrito breakfast. Others, I imagined, had likely been there all night, fueled by free coffee and imagined fortunes.

As always, I averted my eyes from the adobe, now boarded up and heavily inscribed with graffiti, that sits directly across from the casino. The story goes that three years before, a young man addicted to drugs and desperate for money broke into his grandmother's house. Caught by the matriarch who had raised him, he stabbed her to death in a drug-induced psychosis while his deaf grandfather slept peacefully in an adjacent room. The recollection of the house haunts me still.

In Española the traffic came to a halt. Stressed commuters punched their car horns or pulled out angrily from the choked lanes in search of alternative routes. Slowly, I passed the Super Walmart, liquor stores, fast-food restaurants, discount tobacco shops, and Mexican *tienditas* that make up Española's main drag. It took twenty minutes to reach Santa Clara Pueblo, a mere four miles from Española's center. I passed the Tribal Clinic, surrounded by dilapidated trailers.

Santa Clara: a pueblo renowned for its micaceous pottery, pieces that are sold in high-end Santa Fe galleries. Santa Clara: a community that barely survives on an average per capita income of just over $9,000. As I passed the pueblo the road narrowed, but the traffic, paradoxically, quickened. Now San Idelfonso Pueblo was before me, resembling Santa Clara, though it has a new cluster of cement-block houses (sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs). Santa Clara Pueblo expects that it, too, will soon be able to move its residents out of trailers and into similar accommodations. But the stretch of land in which the pueblos are located share the troubling problem of groundwater contamination, mostly from

radioactive waste that seeps into the aquifer from LANL. Thus radioactivity was the great equalizer in the region: the families in trailers and the ones in cement-block homes were equally at risk. Both pueblos are in the radioactive shadow of the nuclear city and suffer unusually high rates of cancer, especially of the thyroid.

From San Idelfonso to Los Alamos is undoubtedly the most picturesque stretch of the commute. My car slowed as the road began the steep climb. I shifted into third gear as anxious commuters sped past me. I passed through Bandelier National Monument and the juniper-dotted canyons of the Pajarito Plateau. The highway twisted and turned. Every hundred feet or so, I would spot a *descanso* on the side of the road and couldn't help but imagine my own demise. I imagined how easy it would be for my car to slip on a stretch of wintery ice or for my brakes to fail. Envisioning my fall over one of the treacherous cliffs that hugged the highway, I slowed down further, amazed and intimidated by the commuters who continued to pass me with such focused speed, seemingly unaware of the danger. Or, perhaps, the commuters were intimately aware of the danger and sped along with it, along with the idea of risk and loss.

As I entered Los Alamos via Trinity Drive, I recalled the remark frequently made by local Hispanos regarding how incompatible the city was and how it clashed so violently with the rest of northern New Mexico: Los Alamos "didn't belong." The statement was more than just a commentary on its neat wood-framed houses. And it was more than the fact that the land on which LANL sits—acquired or "stolen" by the U.S. government in 1943—belonged to Santa Clara and San Ildefonso Pueblos, as well as heirs of the Spanish Vígil Land Grant. All were relocated to the valley below. It was the people themselves—94 percent Anglo and among the wealthiest and best educated in the country; *they* didn't belong. At least not in a region that is overwhelming Hispano and Native American—a majority population that is nonetheless considered a "minority."

Ultimately, I was late getting to the Fuller Lodge, and the consortium meeting was already under way. I took my seat next to a community activist and great-grandfather from Chimayó who has lost two children and a grandchild to heroin overdose. He leaned over and whispered to me, "Get ready for a fight."

INTIMATE ENEMY

Despite all the symbolic contrasts, the sense of disconnection between Los Alamos and the Hispano villages that surround it only goes so far. Nearly all the Hispanos I interviewed were intimately connected to Los Alamos in some way—usually through a job but also through landscape, imagination (how each imagines the other), and memory. They were also connected to Los Alamos through certain "wounds." Sometimes these wounds were of a corporeal nature, such as the ones suffered by Abel, a retired LANL inspections employee. For more than thirty years, Abel ventured deep into the "Vault," where he monitored containers of hazardous waste. Flashlight in hand, he looked for signs of deterioration or leakage. In the process he was exposed to neuron radiation that far exceeded the "allowable" rate. Abel suffered from stomach cancer, an illness that he and everyone else at the clinic attributed not so much to "the job" as to Los Alamos itself.

At other times the wounds are perhaps more abstract, such as the wounds of colonialism. David, a thirty-five-year-old community activist and agriculturalist, was one of the few Hispanos I knew who grew up in Los Alamos. He "went back to the land" after enduring what he calls a "colonial childhood."

I visited David one late-summer day at his current home in Taos, hoping to talk about his "colonial wounds," but his interest seemed to lay elsewhere. He wanted to talk to me about acequias and their increasing abandonment, which he considered a "cultural scar." As we toured the three-acre property that he inherited from an uncle, David said:

> A generation ago people took pride in working the land. The acequia represented our culture and survival. It was like a parent. We needed the acequia, and the whole community nurtured it. We loved and depended on the acequia. Now, you see them neglected and full of trash. Beer cans, needles, dirty diapers. It *hurts* to see that.

I found it interesting that David would liken the acequia to a parent and talk about need, given that a single mother raised him "off the land." In fact, David's mother made the decision to leave the land and move to

Los Alamos, where she worked, because the commute was too taxing. Plus, she wanted to give her son the benefits of living there: a safe neighborhood and a good public education. Less than 15 percent of Rio Arriba County residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, and one in two students drop out of high school. Los Alamos, by contrast, has the highest rate of Ph.D.'s in the world, and more than 90 percent of its high school graduates go on to receive a four-year college degree.

Like a commuter, David grew up shuttling between his "first world home" in Los Alamos and his "cultural home" in the valley. In Los Alamos he was subjected to racial stereotyping and admits to having felt ashamed of his Hispano roots and his mother's low-level job. But life wasn't much better when he was in the valley, where was made to feel *pocho*—a half-breed who didn't fit in anywhere. The conflicted, subjective state David described was reminiscent of the situation Frantz Fanon (1963: 25) describes, where the constant, painful deliberation of the self in the form of the question, "In reality, who am I?" becomes a crucial battleground for the maintenance of colonial control.[18]

For eighteen years David asked precisely this question of himself as he moved back and forth between these seemingly disparate worlds. He told me he understood the sting Hispanos feel when they leave their communities each morning to work at the laboratory. It's based on necessity, he said matter-of-factly—a more effective way to make ends meet, even if one faces exploitation and stigma on either side of the economic and cultural divide. On the other hand, David resented this necessity, citing, like so many Hispanos do, the psychological and cultural wreckage that ensued. He spoke of his own "broken connection to the land," and he suggested that the figure of the abandoned acequia was symptomatic of the ongoing and unequal relationship between the valley and Los Alamos. "Up there, it's manicured lawns. Down below, things fall apart."

David is now part of a small movement of Hispanos helping youths "get back to their roots." It was a path that he himself took after years of drinking and drifting—living, in his view, the life of a typical Hispano male whose connections to the land were broken by circumstance. "I always had *querencia* [love of the land]," he said.[19] "But I had no idea how

to *work* it. I had to learn as an adult because there really wasn't anyone left in my family who could teach me. But it was here." He pounded his heart with his fist as he said this. Today David looks to the past that he was in some ways denied—not as a "relic," but as an engagement with the future. He knows it's a hard sell for many Hispano youths, especially those who are two or more generations removed from agricultural life.

In the afternoon, David guided me through his sprouting rows of garlic and corn and tender bunches of native spinach called *quelite*. We watched the water from the community-controlled acequia form slow-moving streams between his crops. The rows of water glistened in the setting sun. David leaned against a hoe, beer in hand, and contemplated his crops. "The thing is, they're [acequias] etched in the ground here, all over the place. Even when they're full of trash, they're still here."

Across the Española Valley, the abandoned acequias—like the abandoned adobes or the decaying *descansos*—are an image of ruin occasioned by the forced abandonment or loss of a former life. Their ubiquitous presence represents a past that is also the present: absent but remembered, lost but still loved. Whether one calls them relics, scars, or wounds, they represent a permanent awareness of that which was loved and lost in the course of history and may never be returned to, however strong the yearning. And yet the will to reminisce and carry these scars into the present is powerful. David remarked that even in its neglected form, the acequia maintained a certain beauty, maybe even possibility.

MOONRISE

On an early fall afternoon, Joseph announced to me that it was going to be a dry winter. He could tell by the air, he said, by how dry and warm it is, and by how little rain there was over the summer. He pointed to the tiny garden plot that Ricky, his five-year-old son, planted in late spring. The plot was no bigger than a bathtub, but Ricky had big hopes for it. He planted tomatoes and squash, but neither did very well. "It's the land here," Joseph said, as his son lingered within earshot. "It's too dry and rocky. It's not meant to grow." Ricky approached me and asked if I have

Figure 5. Feeding the crops. Photo by the author.

a garden. I told him I did but had the very same problem—too much concrete mixed in with the soil. I could see the look of disappointment on Ricky's moon-shaped face. But he brightened when he told me that his father was going to buy him chickens next year, so that he could gather eggs. "Chickens can live anywhere," Ricky said.

Joseph and Ricky lived in a trailer park on the outskirts of Española. During this visit, Joseph sat on a metal folding chair, his face to the sun. The door to his trailer was ajar, and the strains of northern New Mexican music wafted toward us from the radio inside. It was a Saturday, and, like every weekend, Ricky was in the care of his father. He ran in and out of the trailer, bringing me objects from his bedroom: a tarantula encased in a glass dome, a book about spiders, a leather baseball glove nearly as big as his arm. Joseph suggested that next time he went inside he should bring us a couple of beers.

The telephone rang in the neighboring trailer, less than twenty feet away. I couldn't help but listen as a young woman made plans to meet a friend at a restaurant in town. Joseph tossed his cigarette into an empty beer can and lamented the lack of privacy. Though he had lived in the trailer park for three years, he hadn't gotten used to living in such close quarters. "I didn't grow up like this," he said. "I grew up with a lot of space to run around in, you know?"

Joseph grew up in Hernández, a village about five miles northwest of Española. The photographer Ansel Adams memorialized Joseph's village in what is perhaps his most famous work, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*. I described the image to Joseph—the brightly illuminated clouds, the glowing church and cemetery. Joseph shook his head; he was unfamiliar with the photograph, but he knew the cemetery; several of his relatives are buried there. "I used to get high there," he said as he took another sip of beer.

I met Joseph at Nuevo Día's men's support group, a weekly meeting composed of men in various stages of drug recovery. I was allowed access to the meetings in my capacity as a researcher, and I sat as unobtrusively as possible in a back corner, where I was generally (but not always) ignored. The meetings were in a barren room that smelled strongly of cheap coffee. Like the women's group, the meeting was always filled to capacity, sometimes standing room only. Most attendees were under the age of thirty and court appointed. Dressed in "cholo" attire—baggy work pants, sleeveless white undershirts, and flannels—the young men tended to out-talk their elder counterparts—often expressing the challenges of young fatherhood, their disdain of "the system," and the difficulty of staying clean in an environment where heroin seemed to be everywhere. Rarely did the older cohort of men speak up. When they did, it was usually only at the prompting of the meeting facilitator, at which point they would generally describe feeling worn out, tired of having worked a long day, frustrated at not being able to make ends meet at home.

At forty-six, Joseph was equally reticent to speak on his own accord. When he did speak, he held the attention of the younger men. It wasn't

until much later that I learned he was a legend of sorts, renowned as much for his voracious heroin habit as his acts of bravado. It was rumored that he killed the man who abused his sister and that he saved another man from a burning house. (Indeed, he had the leathery burn marks on his arms and face to prove this tale, but when I once asked about his scars he changed the subject.) One young addict described Joseph to me as a "badass *tecato*" who, by all accounts, defied Española's drug life by having managed to stay alive.

When I met Joseph he was four years clean and among the group's few "long-term survivors"—that is, he had managed to kick his habit and remain clean. He noted with irony that Hispanos reserve the distinction "*veterano*" for lifelong junkies. But Joseph considered himself a *veterano* in another way. After too many close calls and a tremendous amount of loss, Joseph survived what he calls his own *war*—his war with heroin.

Joseph warned me before my visit to his home that he liked to drink beer, which was not something that he hid from the recovery program. In fact, given his struggles and his commitment to staying off heroin, Joseph frequently told staff members that he *deserved* to drink. On the morning of our interview, he called and asked me to bring him a twelve-pack; not the hard stuff or the fancy stuff, he said, just Bud or Miller Light, whichever was cheaper.

When I arrived at Joseph's trailer, twelve-pack in hand, I immediately noticed a pot of pinto beans simmering on the stove. Leafy plants hung in the narrow windows, and photographs of Joseph's children—ranging in age from five to twenty-seven—were arranged neatly on a handmade bookshelf. Looking around the tidy trailer, I asked Joseph if he lived with anyone else, imagining that the domestic touches were the work of a girlfriend or a wife. Joseph knew what I was thinking and, challenging my stereotypical assumptions, told me there hadn't been a woman in his life since he split with Ricky's mother four years earlier.

> I try to make this place nice for my son for when he's here. And for me, too. . . . When I was in *la pinta* [prison] there was nothing. Nothing green

except the piss blanket they gave you for your bed. There was no comfort. *Nada, nada.* Most of my life was like that, you know. *Hard.*

Joseph continued:

When you're a junkie you don't care about these kinds of things. You don't think about your kids or your home or nothing like that. Your only comfort is heroin. But when you kick [quit heroin], you need something else. I'm not talking beer or pills or whatever keeps you from going insane. You need a life. This is what I got right now. Here, *like this* [referring to his trailer]. It's not where I want to die. But it is what it is. It's what I got.

Joseph and I spent the afternoon outside, sitting side by side in the green canvas chairs he used for camping. He told me that he only recently began to spend time in the outdoors again, hunting and camping with his eldest son, Ray, who he was estranged from during his drug years, which amounted to most of Ray's life. Staring at his son Ricky, Joseph told me he regretted the years he missed with his older children and that he regretted not being a father to his children in the way that *his* father was to him: present, disciplined, and unyielding in his values.

But life "back then" was easier, Joseph reasoned—easier, even if it was extremely hard. His entire family struggled to make ends meet, yet there was cohesiveness in that struggle—a sense of purpose and unity in caring for each other, for the house, and for the land. There was always so much to do, Joseph recalled: sow the fields, gather firewood, patch the adobe walls, in addition to odd jobs in town. There wasn't time for drugs.

Joseph absent-mindedly knocked on the metal wall of his rented trailer with his bronze-colored fist. And then he began to describe his home in Hernández, where he lived from the time he was born until he was twenty; the home his grandfather built. He recalled how, from one of the deep-set windows in that house, he could see a portion of an adobe wall from the *original* house his ancestors had lived in. Joseph remembered his grandmother nagging her husband to tear the wall down. But his grandfather refused, saying the wall was a part of history.

There is something of his grandfather's refusal in Joseph's recollections of life "back then," for, occasionally, when he talked about the past,

he slipped into present tense—as if his deceased relatives were still alive, as if he still lived in Hernández, on the land. But more often than not, Joseph emphasized *then* and *now* with authority. His story, like those of many of his generation, was full of temporal signposts, many of them pointing out the way the land had changed. *The road back then was unpaved. That store didn't exist. There used to be an apple orchard there.*

In Joseph's case, the signposts were more than spatial; they also related to his drug history, one intimately linked to a changing familial, political, and economic landscape. "I started shooting about thirty years ago. Thirty years," he said in disbelief. "It was the mid-seventies, I guess. Some of my buddies came back from Vietnam, the real *veteranos*. That's how I started. That's who showed me."

During the Vietnam War, Hernández and the surrounding villages of the Española Valley, depleted by the draft, resembled ghost towns. Joseph's older brother was among the nearly 850,000 young men chosen during a "draft lottery" in 1969. Less than a year later, he would die in the American incursion into Cambodia. Joseph was eleven years old at the time. He told me his brother wasn't soldier material; he was groomed for traditional agriculture and fixing cars—for shooting elk, not men.

While most of the Hispano men who left for Vietnam eventually returned, each village experienced some loss relating to the war. Soldiers who returned had a difficult time resuming life as it had been, not only because they had been deeply affected—psychologically and sometimes physically—by their experiences during the war, but also because life back home had changed, too. Indeed, it was during the war that many Hispano families, such as Joseph's, began parceling off and selling land. Joseph described a scenario in which selling land wasn't merely related to the fact that there was an economic need and fewer people to work the fields; there was a shift in the experience and meaning of family life. "It was a hard time," Joseph said, alluding to the many miseries a family suffers with the loss of a loved one and the loss of livelihood and tradition. He added with bitter irony that from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s many of the people who began buying these familial lands were "draft dodgers" or "hippie types" who had come to northern New Mexico seeking refuge from Vietnam and its political and cultural repercussions.

But there was no refuge for Joseph, or for the Vietnam *veteranos* who would become his drug buddies. Joseph was reticent to talk about those early years of drug use, perhaps because they were so intimately tied to Vietnam and memories of his splintering family and lost brother. But it was through those experiences that Joseph would come to be a *veterano* himself. It is a local distinction that he remained deeply ambivalent about. He told me that he doesn't understand why Hispanos continue to valorize the *tecato*, adding disdainfully that it doesn't take bravery to shoot up, overdose, and die.[20] And yet he understood powerfully and viscerally how heroin addiction—much like war—can take over one's life, as well as the life of one's family and community. I suggested that perhaps that's why we make *veteranos* out of addicts—to give that experience a framework of meaning. "Maybe," Joseph shrugged.

Though he was reluctant to give me much detail, Joseph said that for more than twenty years he lived what he called the "hard and useless life" of a *tecato*. He had three children, none of whom he fathered in any meaningful way. He held odd dead-end jobs, all of which he quit or was fired from. His relations with his family were nearly nonexistent during those years, mostly because of his own doing. He says he never had a death wish, but neither did he care about his life. In a way his addiction to heroin prevented him from feeling anything—not even the knife wound in his side or the burn of fire on his skin.

> Those years [1980s and 1990s] were tough. I could tell you a bunch of stories, but what's the point? I will tell you I spent a lot of that time *en la pinta*. There wasn't no drug court then. If what you did was bad enough, you just went to jail. For a long time, I got away with stuff, but at some point your luck runs out. Well, my luck ran out.

Joseph was sentenced to the New Mexico State Penitentiary in Santa Fe for burglary in 1994. When I asked him about this period, he looked at me wryly and replied, "What's there to say? I was locked up," as if the fact should speak for itself. Eventually he told me that throughout his six-year sentence his heroin use continued, though it was more intermittent, given the irregularities of the prison drug trade.

His breaks from heroin offered him a period of reflection, though always short-lived. One of the things he acknowledged thinking about during these interludes was his family's home in Hernández, which his mother sold in 1998, after the death of his father. From his prison cell, Joseph could remember everything about that house—each fissure in the adobe wall, each creak of the floorboard. I asked Joseph if since his release in 2000 he ever returned to the family home in Hernández. "What's the point?" he said. "It's not ours no more."

And yet Joseph called to his son Ricky to bring out the photograph of "the house in Hernández." Ricky ran back into the trailer and returned with a small, well-worn photo, which he gingerly placed in my hand. The photograph felt like silk. I studied the yellowing image of Joseph, his two brothers, and their father standing before a large woodpile stacked neatly against an adobe wall. "How old are you here?" I asked Joseph. He popped open another beer and, without looking at the photograph, told me that he was ten years old.

MEANING IN MELANCHOLIA

Despite the advances made in the study of melancholia since Freud, there remains an implicit understanding that the melancholic subject is trapped in affect and incapable of sublimating the pain of past loss so that he may live meaningfully in the present. Even melancholia's contemporary interlocutors tend to agree that such sublimation can occur only through the process of narrativization—such as in analysis or art—through which the past is resurrected but with the intent to vitalize the present (Ruti 2005; Silverman 2000). In this conception the past, though unearthed for its potentiality in the present, is simultaneously laid to rest. To tend to the past as such, to remain loyal to it without this presentist perspective, is to remain its prisoner and to live a life as a partially realized subject.

This seems to me a rather liberal view of how loss and the past structures subjectivity. The idea that the past must be relinquished and/or appropriated to serve as the foundation for the present echoes Nietzsche's work on the liberatory uses of forgetting. In his work "On the Uses and

Disadvantages of History for Life," Nietzsche writes that when the past "attains a certain degree of excess life crumbles and degenerates" (1997: 67). He calls for the abandonment of the past because it "returns as a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment" (61). Much like contemporary theorists of melancholy, Nietzsche suggests a critical discourse on the past that would be attentive to the needs of the present and proposes that one "actively forget" those haunting moments—again, so as not to disturb the potential of the later moment.

To a certain degree, the narratives of Alma and Joseph attest to the tensions of trying to live the past in the present. There are moments when both attempt to relinquish certain aspects of the past for the sake of a more livable (though not necessarily more meaningful) life. However, the past remains a fundamental force in everyday experience, and it is not a force that is "appropriated" in the goal of defining a future or that teaches how to self-actualize or even heal. Rather, their past, which is undeniably filled with the sorrow of loss, is experienced *as such:* painful, heavyhearted, and sometimes seemingly endless. Does it mean that to be passionately engaged with the past on its own terms, one necessarily sacrifices the potential for a present and even sacrifices the self? Can one live a melancholy life that is meaningful on its own terms?

Alma's and Joseph's commitment to the past and to certain losses in particular has not precluded them from living in the present. It is through the experience of melancholy that Alma and Joseph are, in my view, living a moral life—that is, a locally and interpersonally engaged life, however precarious these engagements may be. "Seeing the world as dangerous and uncertain may lead to a kind of quiet liberation," Arthur Kleinman (2006: 10) writes, "preparing us for new ways of being ourselves, living in the world, and making a difference in the lives of others." I would add that seeing and experiencing the world and the past as painful—and to not appropriate, forget, or sublimate this pain for other purposes—is likewise a way of living in the world. In other words, there is meaning in melancholia, meaning in wounds that haven't healed, perhaps may never heal.